

superannuation has been that of Chief Warder Foreman, of the Wellington Prison, who is now enjoying a well-earned rest after long years of useful and honourable service.

As in previous years, I have to express my appreciation of the work of the different controlling officers and their staffs. The activities of the Department are now so many and so varied that it would be quite impossible for us to carry on as successfully as we have done were it not for the energy, resourcefulness, and self-sacrifice of the men who are operating our backblock camps, our farms, and our other undertakings.

C. E. MATTHEWS,  
Controller-General of Prisons.

INSPECTOR OF PRISONS AND WORKS SUPERVISOR to the CONTROLLER-GENERAL OF PRISONS.

SIR,—

Prisons Department, Wellington, 23rd July, 1923.

I have the honour to submit my report for the year 1922-23, dealing with the work of inspection of the prisons and prison institutions. A further report is also supplied dealing with the various works and industries carried on during the year by prison labour.

Throughout the year my time has been fully occupied in visiting the institutions, and also in supervising the many and varied works which the Department is now carrying on. Owing to the fact that the Prisons Department has of late years extended its operations in a manner formerly unthought of, the work of inspection has considerably increased. At one time the whole of the prisons of the Dominion were located in the cities and towns, and were therefore easily accessible. Under the present policy, which requires that every prisoner who can be trusted shall be sent out into the country and there engaged on farming, roadmaking, or other undertakings, the work of inspection has become more difficult, involving a considerable amount of travelling in out-of-the-way places. I have, however, been able during the past year to visit the larger institutions at intervals of not more than three months. The farm and roadmaking camps I have visited oftener. On the whole the work of inspection has been kept up to a satisfactory standard. It has become more noticeable of late years that prisoners as a class are less given to complaining, and the Inspector's work is therefore rendered more easy in consequence. I am of the opinion that this is largely due to the more intelligent and humane methods now in force, and also to the fact that the work upon which the men are employed is of a more useful and interesting character. Another contributing factor is the altered relations existing between officers and prisoners. Formerly the prisoner looked upon his officer as being his enemy, always looking out for an opportunity to entrap him and have him punished should he infringe the slightest rule. The officer on his side considered that failure on his part in the matter of reports would be regarded as indicating that he was not enforcing proper discipline. This naturally created mutual antagonism, and did not tend towards creating mutual regard between officers and prisoners. This atmosphere has almost entirely disappeared, hence we rarely indeed hear of prisoners assaulting their officers. I myself can well remember when such was of almost daily occurrence. Referring to officers as in former years, I again have to report a great difficulty in securing men of the proper type. The prison system has immensely improved. The conduct of prisoners as a whole has undergone a change for the better, hence the improvement already referred to.

The work of classification, which after all is at the root of all efforts of reform, still progresses. I am still of opinion however, that the best means of classifying prisoners is the one which you have already adopted—that of setting apart certain prisons for the treatment of particular classes. The results so far obtained fully demonstrate this. Invercargill and Waikeria in the case of the larger institutions, and Waikane and Hautu in the case of the smaller, have fully proved the value of such methods, as opposed to the old system of endeavouring to house all classes in one large building and to then divide them into different sections. I am convinced that the system now in force in the four prisons already mentioned is far and away the best. From time to time we hear a great deal about the "honour" system said to be in operation in some of the American prisons. In this connection I am afraid that the general public of this Dominion have no idea as to what is being done in this direction at their very doors. As a matter of fact the "honour" system, not in a limited but in a most advanced form, is in full operation in many of the prisons of this Dominion, and, what is more, is being carried on most successfully. Personally I must admit that the results as a whole have far exceeded expectations, and fully justify your having departed from the old-established custom of never trusting a prisoner. The "honour" system has proved a success, and has come not only to stay but, I hope, to be still further extended. For almost forty years I have been engaged in and have had experience of the conditions existing in practically every prison in the Dominion. My opinion should therefore be of some value.

I am again pleased to report that the standard of industry amongst the prisoners as a whole still continues to improve. It is really surprising to find the amount of interest taken in their work by men employed on our farms and roadmaking camps, and to such extent that when an accident occurs to machinery, &c., many of them ask to be permitted to work on necessary repairs up to as late as 10 p.m., and if not completed then to resume at as early as 4 a.m., just in order that the output shall be kept up. The work at present being carried out in our prisons is helping to fit the men themselves for taking up work in outside life when they are released, and is giving those who desire to do so a reasonable prospect of "making good." Some of them, of course, have no such