

do this successfully, the prisoners' general natures and dispositions must be carefully studied, instead of placing them all, as a matter of course, on one common level, and governed by some hard-and-fast rules based on the system of "Give a dog a bad name," &c.

23. On my reporting that a serious irregularity had come to my notice in connection with the Dunedin Prison, and finding that an assistant warder had been drunk on night duty and suspended in consequence, but relieved from suspension without a report having been made to the Visiting Justices, and allowed to resume duty without punishment, you were pleased to order an inquiry into the matter, which was accordingly held (I regret to say, privately) by Mr. Carew, R.M., as a Visiting Justice. The charges were fully proved; but, as a Royal Commission is to be shortly held to inquire into the management of this prison for the past few years, I refrain from making further comment.

24. From Return marked I it will be seen that there have been thirty-six offences committed by officers during the past year, as against twenty-four for the previous twelve months; but this may be accounted for by the fact of the number of officers being increased in consequence of the opening of another prison, and also that stricter discipline has been enforced generally.

25. The candidates selected for appointments in the subordinate ranks during the year have generally given satisfaction, and there is now a long list of names registered for appointments, the most suitable as to character, physique, and intelligence being selected as vacancies occur.

26. The system introduced into the English convict prisons, some four years ago, on the recommendation of the Penal Servitude Commission, of having official visitors (not necessarily Justices of the Peace) for each prison, is working well, and might, I believe, be introduced with beneficial results in this colony. The duties of these gentlemen are to visit the prison from time to time as they may find it expedient, and to make inquiry as to the state of the prisoners and the discipline and condition of the prison, but to abstain from giving any order or interfering with the administration of the prison, and to communicate any complaints or irregularities that may come under their notice at once direct to the Secretary of State.

27. The daily average number of prisoners in the larger prisons, as will be seen by Return marked B, was 667·9, as against 726·03 in 1881, viz., 571·5 males and 96·4 females, at a gross annual cost of £51 10s. 7d. per prisoner, made up as follows, viz.: Staff, &c., £34 0s. 6d.; rations, &c., £15 12s. 3d.; and incidentals, £1 17s. 10d.: but, deducting the sum of £4,558 15s., received for labour, road-metal, &c., the net cost per prisoner is reduced to £44 14s. 1d. This increase on the previous year is to be accounted for by the fact that the new scale of salaries to officers, voted in 1881, did not come into effect till October of that year. I believe a considerable saving might be made by reducing the Nelson and Timaru Prisons to Principal Warders' charges, the number of detentions in these two prisons now being so small.

28. Those who administer prisons are exposed to two opposing lines of criticism: one party contending that the treatment in prison is harsh, tyrannical, and injurious to the health and well-being of the inmates; and the other, that the prisoners are too comfortable, and obtain so many of what are termed luxuries that prisons fail to deter from crime, even if they do not tend to promote it. But the good physical condition of those who have spent and are spending a great part of their lives in the prisons of the colony totally disproves the former; and the decrease in the percentage of convictions for serious offences in proportion to the population offers, I think, a reasonable contradiction to the latter supposition.

I have, &c.,

A. HUME, Captain,
Inspector of Prisons.

The Hon. the Minister of Justice.