

21. There were only 6 reports against subordinate officers last year, as against 7 in the previous year—viz., Dunedin, 1 neglect of duty, 1 absent without leave; Invercargill, returning to the prison drunk; Lyttelton, 1 acting as an intermediary between persons outside and the prisoners; Wellington, 1 insubordination and 1 gross carelessness. The officers have performed their duties in an intelligent and praiseworthy manner, and appear better satisfied with their positions since their working-hours have been shortened.

22. As regards new works, in Wellington a new male as well as a new female wing are much required; the present wooden building is out of date, and should be pulled down. As a large quantity of bricks are stored at Mount Cook the expense of brick buildings should not be great. Warders' cottages are required at Auckland, New Plymouth, Wellington, Wanganui, Napier, Hokitika, Dunedin, and Invercargill. A new prison is required at Gisborne, and the plans for the new gaol at Invercargill have been completed. A new stable and coachhouse is required in Auckland. A proper drainage system for the New Plymouth Prison is urgently required, and the matter is in the hands of the Public Works Department.

23. When warders cottages are not available for married officers they are granted an annual allowance of £20 in lieu of quarters, but it is needless to point out that house rents have gone up so much all over the colony in recent years it is impossible for £20 per annum to get any decent cottages within a reasonable distance of the prisons; and for obvious reasons it is desirable that as many of the older and experienced officers as possible should reside in the immediate vicinity of their prisons.

24. The Auckland Gaoler says there are some six or seven men in his prison whose conduct is so bad that the means of punishing them is quite inadequate; but it has been found that putting such prisoners by themselves both at work and at exercise prevents their concocting mutiny and suchlike, in which a few old offenders like themselves are only too ready to join. There are a few of the same class of prisoners at Lyttelton, and it has been found necessary to treat them on a similar system, and keep them entirely apart from other prisoners; and at both those prisons that mode of treatment is bearing good fruit. The Auckland Gaoler attributes the increase of crime in that district to gambling on the totalisator, playing "two up" and suchlike. The reports from the Gaolers of the tree-planting camps are interesting reading, showing the class and number of trees that are being planted, as well as the quantity of ground fenced and cleared.

25. The prisoners at the tree-planting camps not only work well, as is demonstrated by the amount of trees already planted, but many who have served sentences there are now doing well, and are unlikely to be inmates of prisons again. The difficulty ex-prisoners find in getting employment might be reduced if there were more Discharged Prisoners Aid Societies established. We know that in England, America, and elsewhere such individuals are drafted by aid societies into large towns and work found for them, and they are very soon lost in the crowd; but in New Zealand it is different, and owing to the thinly populated out-districts it is difficult for discharged prisoners to find work without being identified, and employers of labour naturally hesitate before giving employment to such persons.

26. A question of the utmost importance, which should not be dealt with without mature consideration, is that of the treatment of habitual criminals which, as stated in last year's report, was receiving considerable attention. The indeterminate sentence, as applied to such criminals, has been adopted by different countries, and it is believed that the time has now come when it may, with fair hopes of success, be introduced in this colony. There can be little doubt that it is now required to deal with the few real habitual criminals with which the colony is cursed. These individuals have from their young days preyed on society, and are not entitled to the rights of a citizen or to their liberty. They boast that they have never done a day's work and never intend to, and though they do a certain amount of work while in prison, they are no sooner released than they commence their nefarious mode of life again and return to gaol. In those cases reform appears to be out of the question, and although the problem of dealing with this class of persons has exercised the minds of criminologists for a long period, they have not as yet arrived at any real solution.

27. It is satisfactory to find this question now becoming a burning one with the majority of prison reformers, and there seems no reason why the colony should not now place a measure dealing with habitual criminals on the statute-book. A Select Committee set up by the House of Commons reported their opinion that Judges should be empowered to sentence such individuals after they had served the due sentences for their crimes to be detained for long periods and made to work under less severe rules than apply to those undergoing an ordinary sentence of hard labour. A Bill giving effect to the recommendations of the Select Committee was afterwards introduced in the House of Commons in 1904, and, though favourably received, was not proceeded with. Many persons, who have probably not studied the subject, think these habitual criminals, or some of them, should be reformed in prison; but experience shows that when an offender has been convicted three or four times it is almost hopeless to expect any such result, for as soon as he is released he forthwith commences to prey on society and gets a fresh sentence. The protection for society therefore seems to be an indeterminate sentence. Another indication that such a measure would do good is the alarm existing at present amongst the prison population that such an Act will be passed.

#### FIRST OFFENDERS' PROBATION ACT.

A reference to Table K shows that 111 persons were placed on probation last year, as against 91 in 1904. Of those, 30 have satisfactorily carried out the conditions of their licenses and have been discharged, 4 were rearrested, 1 absconded, 2 were sent to industrial schools, 1 to a mental hospital, and 73 still remain under the supervision of the probation officers.

The amount of costs ordered to be paid by the various Courts before whom the offenders were brought was £588 11s. 10d., of which £322 18s. 9d. has been actually paid, and there is every reason to suppose the balance will be forthcoming when due. The approximate cost of keeping these offenders had they