

been sent to prisons would have been £3,551 8s., which sum, added to the amount of costs actually paid, totals a saving of £3,874 6s. 9d.

Of the 1,768 persons placed on probation since the passing of "The First Offenders' Probation Act, 1886," 1,486 have been discharged, after satisfactorily carrying out the conditions of their licenses; 99 have been rearrested and sentenced to various terms of imprisonment, 1 committed suicide, 2 died, 2 were sent to mental hospitals, 2 to industrial schools, 38 absconded, and 138 still remain fulfilling the terms of their licenses.

It is more than satisfactory to find from the foregoing that a percentage of 84·05 have done well, while only a percentage of 2·14 have eluded the vigilance of the Probation Officers and the police and escaped.

There is no gainsaying the fact that the Act, carefully administered, as it appears to be, is one of the best ever placed on a statute-book; and if a percentage of upwards of 84 can be considered reformed, with a percentage only of upwards of 2 per cent. absconding, it is thought that those who in 1886 opposed it as dangerous legislation must now admit that such opinions were erroneous. The pains taken in investigating the cases, and the reports tendered to the Courts by the Gaolers and police Probation Officers show a praiseworthy and judicious method of making inquiries, and deserve the thanks of the public.

I have, &c,
A. HUME,
Inspector of Prisons.

GAOLERS' REPORTS FOR 1905.

AUCKLAND PRISON.

H.M. Prison, Auckland, 18th January, 1906.

I HAVE the honour to forward herewith the annual returns for this prison for the year ending 31st December, 1905.

The number of prisoners received during the year was 1,155 males, and 174 females, a total of 1,329, being an increase of 126 males and 46 females on the number received in 1904.

The daily average in prison was 202·70 males, and 21·56 females, a total of 224·25. This is an increase of nearly 27 males and 6·50 females on the previous year.

The health of the prisoners has been very satisfactory. There was one death only during the twelve months, and this was a man on remand suffering from *delirium tremens*. An inquest was held, and a verdict returned according to medical evidence. It appears to be quite futile to point out year after year the impropriety of sending persons suffering from *delirium tremens* to prison. According to law such persons may be remanded to "some hospital, infirmary, or other fitting place for curative treatment and care." I cannot think that any one will say that a prison is a "fitting place." In previous reports I have given reasons for this contention, and I need only say now that the system is unfair to the officers of the prison, and must be unfair to the person concerned, who is in many cases a violent lunatic for the time being, or else is so weak as to require constant medical attention and food which cannot be obtained in a prison. When it is remembered that 1,535 prisoners were dealt with during the year, I think it will be admitted that it is a remarkable fact that there should have been one death only; and that one from a cause such as *delirium tremens*. The daily average on the sick-list was 2·96 males and 0·53 females. One very old woman was responsible for nearly all the days' sickness of the women; and two men who spent most of the year either in the prison or district hospitals. This immunity from disease is a sufficient testimony to the perfect sanitary arrangements of the prison, more particularly when the condition in which many of the prisoners are when received is taken into consideration.

As far as the conduct of the prisoners is concerned, I may say that the vast majority of them behaved very well. There were 15 males and 1 female individual prisoners punished on forty different occasions, which means about one out of every hundred dealt with. The conduct of some six or seven men could hardly have been worse; and the means of punishing such prisoners is quite inadequate. When the Prisons Act of 1873 was in force men could be flogged for such conduct, and the prisoners themselves knew this, consequently there was seldom or never occasion to resort to the use of the cat. No prison officer that I have ever met with likes to have anything to do with corporal punishment, yet they all agree that as a deterrent it has no equal. Cowardly and brutal persons (not worthy to be called men) think nothing of committing gross outrages and assaults on officers so long as they cannot be made to feel some physical pain as a consequence. Nearly all of the worst of the prisoners are old offenders from other countries, and having been used to serving sentences in prisons where such gross misconduct is dealt with by corporal punishment, the mild manner in which they are treated in this colony for similar offences is no deterrent. This question is on all-fours with capital punishment; no one wants to see it inflicted, but having it on the statute-book acts as the strongest preventive, and in whatever country the law has been repealed, or relaxed, the crime against which it was directed immediately increases. The common objection against corporal punishment is that it tends to harden and brutalise men, but I contend that there is a class of men whom no treatment could make more brutal than they are, who are cowardly, cruel, and depraved to a degree that no one who has not had to deal with them can possibly conceive.

There have been no escapes during the past twelve months, but there were some daring attempts to break prison; these, however, were confined to two men who are experts in this particular branch of criminal knowledge. Thanks to the strength of the building and the vigilance exercised by the officers, these attempts proved abortive.