

The prison quarry still continues to be the chief source of revenue, the gross returns from the year being £476 8s. 4d. ; while the prison garden, after supplying the institution's own needs, shows a credit balance of £3.

As in former years, all suitable prisoners were transferred to Wellington for allocation to prison camps, &c.

The industry and conduct of the inmates has been good, no serious breaches of the regulations having to be dealt with. The officers' cottages have been thoroughly renovated, and the institution has been kept in thorough repair.

The social side of prison life has not been overlooked during the year. Again I have to thank the Misses Ellison for gifts of magazines and papers ; also Messrs. W. Letham, of the Cosmopolitan Club, Mr. E. Swailes, and others, for their generous gifts of fruit, cakes, &c., which made Christmas a pleasant one, and conveyed to the inmates the fact that although in gaol they were not forgotten.

The health of the inmates has been good, only complaints such as colds and the after-effects of drink requiring the attention of the Medical Officer.

I wish to express my thanks to all those kind friends who during the year have assisted me in finding work and in other ways helping the discharged offender to make good again.

NEW PLYMOUTH PRISON.

(Superintendent, Mr. W. DINEEN.)

At the beginning of the year 1929 there were 58 prisoners in custody ; 157 were released, 66 were handed to the police or transferred to other prison institutions, 155 were received, and 56 were in custody at the end of the year.

The main industry for the year has been the quarrying of metal for roadmaking, the output being disposed of to the New Plymouth Borough Council. Gardening, &c., has been carried on, and, in addition to the providing of a plentiful supply of vegetables to the institution, there has been a surplus which has been sold by auction, the cash return therefrom being £69 2s. 8d.

The general conduct of the prisoners has been fairly satisfactory when the weak mentality of the class of prisoners confined here is considered. There were no escapes or attempted escapes, and only one case of serious misconduct.

The general health of the prisoners has been good, and there has been no case of serious illness. One man was sent to the public hospital for operative treatment of an old-standing hernia. He was successfully treated, and has been returned to prison.

On every Sunday Divine service is held in the prison, the different denominations taking their turn in supplying the minister to conduct the service.

For the first time at this prison an educational class was commenced under the teachership of Mr. Johnston, of Fitzroy. Mr. Johnston has given his services free, and is deserving of the greatest thanks from all concerned. It has been very gratifying to see the progress made by his pupils. The success is all the more noted when one realizes that a number of the pupils would in a school be termed retardates. Several of the men have been complimented by their friends and relatives on the wonderful improvement in their letter-writing. The improvement in this one subject alone would make the school worth while.

As the majority of the prisoners in this prison are more or less mentally weak, and the nature of their offences is inclined to have a depressing effect, it has been deemed advisable to counteract the feeling of despondency that might ensue from these circumstances. With this object in view you gave permission for the giving of lectures and sing-songs to the prisoners. On one night a week each sentenced prisoner has been allowed to attend a lecture from 7 p.m. until 9 p.m. Many of the lectures were ably given by prisoners, and the time taken in their preparation was well and profitably spent. Local gentlemen gave lectures on a wide range of subjects. Prisoners are also allowed to attend wireless recitals on two evenings a week. The thanks of the Department are due to a number of citizens for the great assistance they have rendered in these matters ; the culminating act being the donating of a piano to the prison by the Rotary Club. At Christmas and New Year special teas were provided by the Methodist and Christian Science Churches.

No report from this prison would be complete without mention of Mrs. A. Eason. This good lady has visited the prison weekly for the past four years, and talks to the men who have no local friends. Her visits are eagerly looked forward to by the men, and there is no shadow of doubt in my mind as to the beneficial influence she has with the prisoners. She is one of the few social workers who can continually visit and assist in prison work without desiring to interfere with the management, and, as a consequence, Mrs. Eason is as popular with the staff as she is with the prisoners.

Schoolmaster's Report.

I am pleased to say that, considering the mental equipment of some of the members of the class, general progress has been very satisfactory.

As you are aware, one pupil is to be presented shortly for examination for his proficiency certificate ; two others, one in book-keeping, the other in English literature, have made excellent progress ; while four, whom I may class as distinctly subnormal, have astonished me at the all-round improvement they have made.