

PRISON LABOR.

If one is to believe all one hears, the chief penal establishment of the State at St. Helena is viewed by the class who frequent it as a somewhat idealistic habitat in times of stress. They gradually come to look upon it as "home," and when the time arrives for a compulsory severance of home ties, the most hardened inhabitants accept the parting stoically, but with a solemn conviction that they are only saying an revoir and not good-bye. The present conditions of existence on the island are to be shortly improved by the introduction of chairs, tables, literature and electric light into the cells of the good conduct prisoners. All of this is in consonance with the modern system of regeneration, or reformation in the treatment of criminals, but there are some people who hold the view that the same object could be attained, and with more benefit to the State and the community, by the utilisation of prison labor on work outside the walls. For instance, it has been suggested that prison labor from St. Helena could be used for the reclamation and improvement of some of the islands of Moreton Bay, in brushing the undergrowth, forming approaches, erecting accommodation sheds, etc. The idea, however, meets with no favor in Home Department circles, and a request by a Northern local authority to utilise prison labor on the roads, was peremptorily refused by the Home Secretary, who forecasted that such a scheme would inspire a great outcry if adopted in Queensland, and that even those who in theory might favor it, would join in

the outcry if it was put into practice. He believes, he says, in treating prisoners in a manner that will conduce to their reformation, but has set his face against their employment at work outside the precincts of the walls.