

7. From Table A it will be seen that the health of the prisoners has been good, the daily average of sick being 6.62 males and 1.50 females, an increase in the males of 0.19 and a decrease in the females of 1.33 as compared with the previous year. There were no cases of infectious or contagious diseases.

8. Three deaths occurred amongst prisoners during the year—one in Auckland, one in Dunedin, and one in New Plymouth.

9. There was one execution during the year, at Lyttelton, death being instantaneous.

10. From Table A it will be seen that at the commencement of the year there were 511 males and 57 females in custody, and at the close of the year there were 637 males and 76 females, an increase of 126 males and 19 females. During the year 4,141 males and 729 females passed through the various prisons, as against 3,771 males and 706 females in the previous year, an increase of 370 males and 23 females—a total increase of 393 prisoners for the year. This increase is referred to elsewhere in this report.

11. During the past year the daily average number of prisoners in the different prisons has been 593.83 males and 62.76 females, an increase of 64.04 males and 8.59 females.

12. From figures supplied by the Registrar-General the population of the colony at the end of the year 1901 was 437,335 males and 393,465 females, a total of 830,800 persons, whilst on the same date the number of prisoners (males and females) was 713. The average percentage of prisoners according to population was 0.0859, as against 0.0707 in the previous year, an increase of 0.0252.

13. During the year 1901 30 male and 1 female misdemeanants in default of bail, and 46 males and 7 females, supposed lunatics, were detained in the prisons, a decrease of 24 males and an increase of 1 female in the former and a decrease of 4 females in the latter.

14. During the year 1901 511 males and 59 females were acquitted after remand, as against 478 males and 55 females in the previous year, an increase of 33 males and 4 females.

15. From the figures given under Table B it will be seen that the prisoners were maintained at a gross cost of £45 16s. 10d., as against £48 9s. in 1900. The gross totals are made up as follows: Staff supervision, £29 7s. 5d., as against £31 7s. 11d.; maintenance, £13 10s. 3d., as against £13 1s. 2d.; incidentals, £2 19s. 2d., as against £3 19s. 11d. Of the incidentals, £359 6s. 2d. is recouped to the Government—viz., Railway Department, £256 5s. 9d.; and Post and Telegraph, £73 0s. 5d. As the tree-planting prison was not started till March, the accounts for that prison are not included in Table B.

16. As regards the educational attainments of prisoners, a reference to Table C shows that, out of a total of 3,630 males and 672 females received during the year, 38 males were of superior education; 3,233 males and 588 females were able to read and write; 114 males and 37 females could read only; whilst 245 males and 47 females could neither read nor write.

17. It is interesting to notice from Table F that a comparison of the previously convicted prisoners sentenced during the past year with those sentenced five years ago—viz., in 1897—shows in those once convicted an increase of 133 males and 11 females, in those twice convicted an increase of 68 males and 7 females, and in those thrice or oftener convicted an increase of 334 males and 36 females.

18. It is satisfactory to be able to report that, as shown by Table D, only 1 child under ten years of age was confined in the prisons last year, as against 2 in 1900. In those aged from ten to fifteen years there were 19, as against 23 in 1900, while in those aged from fifteen to twenty years there were 252, as against the same number in the previous year—a total decrease of 5 in those under twenty years of age. The child under ten years of age was only detained *en route* to an industrial school awaiting a steamer.

19. A reference to Table J shows that there was a decrease of 35 in prison punishments—viz., 117, as against 152 in 1900. Of these 106 were minor punishments inflicted by the Visiting Justices, while 11 were more serious or aggravated prison offences, and, after first being investigated by the Visiting Justices, were adjudicated upon in open Court. This system of remanding cases of aggravated prison offences to open Courts continues to work satisfactorily.

20. The number of offences recorded against subordinate prison officers last year was 7, as against the same number in the previous year—viz., drunkenness, 1; gross neglect of duty, 1; negligence, 3; absence from duty, 1; and late for duty, 1. When it is remembered that there are some 105 subordinates on the strength, and that only 7 offences have been recorded against them, it will be readily admitted that all concerned are deserving of high commendation for the manner in which they carry out their arduous duties.

21. Vacancies amongst the warders have for some time past been filled from contingent men returned from South Africa who are tradesmen, and it is a pleasure to be in a position to report that there has been an improvement in the staff, particularly amongst the more recently appointed, who maintain a high general level of intelligence and physique. The system introduced some time ago of placing these new hands on probation for six months and then subjecting them to an examination prior to permanent appointment is to a great extent answerable for the improvement.

22. The cost of medical comforts in the Wellington Gaol up to September last was high as compared with most of the other gaols. In the month of October last the drop in medical comforts at that prison was as follows: Milk, from 174 pints to 80; rice, from 36½ lb. to 13 lb. 9 oz.; and tobacco, from 4½ lb. to nil. A corresponding reduction has continued since October, and there is a large saving under this head this year, the medical comforts being now as low in Wellington as in any other prison. It is needless to point out that Gaol Surgeons alone are entirely responsible for the use of medical comforts, as their recommendations are invariably strictly and carefully given effect to. The amount of alcohol used in the prisons during the past year was one bottle of brandy, three bottles of port wine, and five pints of ale.