

6. There was a slight increase in the daily average of prisoners on the sick-list—viz., 9,856 males and 1,32 females—an increase on the previous year of 0.19 males and 0.01 females. This increase is accounted for by epidemics of influenza, but the health of the prisoners generally has been very good.

7. Six deaths in prison occurred during 1907, as against 10 in 1906—viz., 1 at Auckland, 1 at Lyttelton, 1 at Napier, 1 at Wanganui, 1 at Gisborne, and 1 at Dumgree. In each case an inquest was held, and verdicts of deaths from natural causes returned, with the exception of the death at Dumgree, which was accidental, and a verdict returned "Death from drowning, and no blame attached to any person."

8. There were no executions: one prisoner was sentenced to death, but the sentence was commuted to imprisonment with hard labour for life.

9. From Table A it will be seen that at the commencement of the year there were 812 males and 79 females undergoing detention in the various gaols of the Dominion, while at its close there were 764 males and 83 females, a decrease of 48 males and an increase of 4 females. In 1907, 5,815 males and 663 females passed through the various prisons, as against 5,461 males and 585 females in the previous year, an increase of 354 males and 78 females; but if these numbers are accurately looked into it will be found that 739 males and 198 females are included more than once, so that the actual numbers of persons who passed through the prisons during the year 1907 were 5,076 males and 465 females, or a total only of 5,541 persons. This decrease is the more satisfactory when it is remembered that with each session legislation is brought in making imprisonment a penalty for offences which could previously have been dealt with by fines. It is impossible to make any reliable comparison of crime to population in the Dominion and other countries without taking into account the various statutes under which imprisonment can, or may, be awarded in the various countries concerned.

10. During the year 1907 the daily average number of prisoners in the different prisons of the Dominion has been 791.35 males and 80.90 females, a decrease of 10.73 males, and an increase of 0.17 females.

11. According to figures supplied by the Registrar-General, the population of the Dominion at the end of the past year was 524,408 males and 465,152 females, a total of 989,560, while the number of prisoners at the same date was 847. The average percentage, therefore, of prisoners to population was 0.0855, as against 0.0931 in the previous year.

12. During the year 1907, 27 male misdemeanants and 1 female in default of bail, and 46 male and 4 female supposed lunatics, were detained in the prisons, an increase of 1 male and 1 female in the former and an increase of 15 males and a decrease of 2 females in the latter, on the previous twelve months. The fact of fifty persons having been detained in prisons for the purpose of ascertaining their fitness or otherwise for mental hospitals is unsatisfactory alike to the persons under surveillance and to those who have to look after them. It seems clear from clause 67 of "The Lunatics Act, 1882," that it was never intended that such persons should be so treated.

13. Last year 714 males and 59 females were acquitted after remand, as against 696 males and 52 females in 1906, an increase of 18 males and 7 females. As it may be justly concluded that the majority of those persons were innocent, we may fairly deduct them as criminals from the number who passed through the prisons, which shows the real aspect on the increase of crime and criminals. As a further instance of how the number of persons who pass through the prisons can be increased, it may be pointed out that on the 13th November last a batch of no less than 12 persons was received into the Lyttelton Prison with sentences of one and two months for trespassing on a racecourse; but surely no one would dub such persons as criminals.

14. A reference to financial table marked B shows that prisoners in the town prisons were maintained last year at a gross cost per head of £50 0s. 6d., as against £47 8s. 7d. in the previous year. The gross totals are made up as follows: Staff supervision, £30 14s. 5d., as against £28 5s. 3d.; maintenance, £15 14s. 11d., as against £15 12s.; and incidentals, £3 11s. 2d., as against £3 11s. 3d. The increase, which it will be observed is in the staff supervision only, is easily accounted for by the increase of 6d. per diem granted last year to all the subordinate officers of the Department.

15. As showing the difference of prices at the various localities, it will be noticed from Table B that in Wellington it cost £1,578 7s. 8d. to feed a daily average of 145.37 prisoners, while in Auckland it only cost £1,883 13s. 9d. to provision a daily average of 246.85. At New Plymouth it cost £399 4s. 5d. for a daily average of 31.62, while in Wanganui it only cost £270 0s. 8d. for a daily average of 27.18, notwithstanding that rations are of the same quality and amount, and are tendered for in the same way all over the Dominion.

16. As regards the expenses of prisoners at tree-planting prisons, which are not included in Table B, at Dumgree (since abolished), where there were 3 officers and 28 prisoners, the gross annual cost per prisoner was £55 7s. 6d., made up as follows: Staff supervision, £16 17s. 1d.; maintenance, £31 12s.; and incidentals, £6 18s. 5d. At Waitapu, where there were 6 officers and 60 prisoners, the gross annual cost per prisoner was £44 3s. 11d., made up as follows: Staff supervision, £16 8s. 11d.; maintenance, £19 12s. 5d.; and incidentals, £8 2s. 7d. At Hanmer, where there were 3 officers and 24 prisoners, the gross cost per prisoner was £47 0s. 10d., made up as follows: Staff supervision, £18 15s. 6d.; maintenance, £23 6s. 1d.; and incidentals, £4 19s. 3d. At Waipa, where there were 3 officers and 25 prisoners, the gross cost per prisoner was £47, made up as follows: Staff supervision, £19 19s. 9d.; maintenance, £19 1s. 8d.; and incidentals, £7 18s. 7d. At present there are 13 officers and 109 prisoners employed at tree-planting prisons.

17. A reference to educational Table C shows that, out of a total of 5,003 males and 584 females received during the past year, 40 males and 1 female were of superior education, 4,663 males and 534 females were able to read and write, 88 males and 16 females could read only, whilst 212 males and 33 females could neither read nor write.