

The INSPECTOR OF PRISONS to the UNDER-SECRETARY FOR JUSTICE

SIR,—

Department of Justice (Prisons Branch), 29th June, 1912.

I have the honour to forward my report for the year ended 31st December, 1911.

The number of persons in custody in the prisons of the Dominion at the beginning of 1911 was 881 (males, 801; females, 80), and at the end 873 (m., 812; f., 61). The number at the beginning of the previous year was 949 (m., 882; f., 67). The daily average of prisoners was 863·26 (m. 799·08; f., 64·18).

Classified according to length of sentence or nature of custody, the above were distributed as follows:—

	1st January, 1910.			1st January, 1911.			31st December, 1911.		
	M.	F.	T.	M.	F.	T.	M.	F.	T.
Sentenced to simple imprisonment	11	1	12	10	..	10	12	..	12
Sentenced to hard labour, under three months ..	106	16	122	110	16	126	95	6	101
Sentenced to hard labour, three months and under twelve	199	28	227	167	31	198	120	20	140
Sentenced to hard labour, one year and upwards	499	17	516	452	29	481	400	27	427
Habitual criminals	15	4	19	26	2	28	39	2	41
Criminals receiving reformatory treatment ..	..	..	..	..	..	..	80	1	81
In custody waiting trial or on remand ..	49	1	50	35	2	37	65	5	70
Debtors and persons of unsound mind ..	3	..	3	1	..	1	1	..	1
Total in custody	882	67	949	801	80	881	812	61	873

The Crimes Amendment Act, 1910, having come into operation in 1911, a new element was introduced, that of prisoners undergoing reformatory treatment, which in a large measure destroys the comparison in detail of the statistics of the year under review with those of previous years. Comparing the numbers at January, 1910 and 1911, it will be seen that the reduction among ordinary prisoners has been more pronounced in those with longer sentences. The 9 additional habitual criminals—their residue must necessarily be an increasing factor—had they been treated as ordinary prisoners, would in all probability have been serving long hard-labour sentences; and though a few of the habitual criminals carried over from the previous year may have completed an ordinary sentence and been discharged, the probabilities are in the direction of the majority being in the longer-sentence hard-labour class. Be that as it may, there were 68 fewer persons in custody at the end than at the beginning of 1910, and 8 fewer at the end of 1911. The above table must not be taken as giving a measure of the changes in the prison population throughout the year, but accepted simply as a statement of the number of prisoners classified according to sentence at given dates. The totals at the beginning and end of 1911 are practically equal, but the details are rearranged showing a reduction of 25, 58, and 54 respectively in each of the hard-labour classes. The difference is accounted for in part by the larger number in custody awaiting trial or on remand, in part to prisoners transferred to the class of habitual criminals on the completion of the head sentence, but mainly to the provisions of the Crimes Amendment Act, 1910, which made it possible to sentence prisoners to reformatory treatment with or without head sentences.

A reference to Table G in the appendix shows that while in this class in 68 instances the prisoners received no original or head sentence, in a number of cases the head sentence was of short duration, with the result that at the end of the year, allowing for 7 discharges during the year, there were 81 (Maori prisoners not included) classed as receiving reformatory treatment. Considering the specific crime and the character and antecedents of a number of those receiving reformatory treatment, it may be presumed safely that under previous conditions a fair proportion would have been sentenced to hard labour for a year or upwards, and that the statistical ratio of the classification would have been maintained. The numerical relation of the different hard-labour classes at a given date shows an increasing number in custody as the sentence increases up to the year-and-over class—a condition of affairs which is reversed if the total number of admissions during the year be enumerated. In an enumeration of receptions the prisoner, especially if he belongs to the in-and-out section serving comparatively short terms, may be counted more than once. In this connection it may be noted that the more the Reformatory Institutions Act, 1909, is taken advantage of, the greater relatively should be the reduction of the shorter sentences of imprisonment to which the class of persons segregated under that Act are liable. Certain habitual criminals and persons sentenced to reformatory treatment, being placed beyond mischief for a considerable period, are also excluded from contributing their quota.