

average of prisoners for the year has therefore been mainly caused by the increased number of minor offences. This will be seen on further reference to Table A for 1911 and 1912, from which it appears that in 1911 the total number of prisoners received for simple imprisonment and for sentences of under three months was 3,116, while in 1912 it was 3,313.

A study of No. 1 table shows that the most marked feature of the figures quoted is the decrease in the number of female prisoners, the daily average falling from 94·37 in 1881 to 64·07 in 1912. The lowest point in the descending scale was reached in 1897—viz., 48·5. Between 1897 and 1907 (80·03) the figures were again in the ascending scale, but since the latter year until 1912 there has been a decrease in the daily average of 15·33. The reduction in the average number of female prisoners from 94·37 per day in 1881 to 64·07 in 1912, although the population of the country practically doubled in that time, is somewhat remarkable, and, whatever the predisposing causes may have been, there is no doubt that there is now less crime among the women of the country than in earlier years, and very few of the female prisoners are of an essentially criminal character.

The figures with regard to the male prisoners show a gradual growth of the daily average from year to year, but this increase is by no means commensurate with the increase in our general population. The average number of male prisoners confined in our prisons during 1912 shows an increase of 54·74 per day over the previous year, but this is partly accounted for by the fact that the prison population was augmented by the incarceration of 69 men in one of our prisons for the non-payment of fines in a certain industrial dispute, and partly, as already pointed out, to the increase in the number of minor offences. This may be taken as an illustration of the fact that a sudden increase in the number of prisoners in any one year does not necessarily mean a proportional increase of crime, although in after-years when the statistics are published in the blue-books without explanation or comment such an interpretation is naturally placed upon them.

HABITUAL CRIMINALS AND PRISONERS SENTENCED TO REFORMATIVE DETENTION.

The complete statistics regarding the administration of the Crimes Amendment Act, 1910, are set out in the annual report of the Prisons Board, and there is therefore no necessity to republish them in this report.

The Board expressed an opinion upon the difficulty of classifying and treating reformative prisoners, because of the latitude which the Courts had given to the interpretation of the class of persons it was intended, under the Crimes Amendment Act, to segregate under this form of sentence. The difficulty is certainly felt by the administration, in that the sentence cannot be accepted as a primary classification, there being no line of demarcation in criminal character between many reformative and hard-labour prisoners, and, in some cases, even habituals.

The number sentenced to reformative detention has therefore exceeded estimates, and their character and the nature of their crimes has precluded their being grouped together provisionally without injustice to the more hopeful.

TREE-PLANTING.

The utility of the tree-planting camps, both from the point of view of the prison administration and from the importance of afforestation to the State, has passed beyond question, and it will be of interest to give a brief survey of the work done since their initiation.

The first camp was established at Waiotapu on the 1st February, 1901; on the 5th September, 1902, a camp was established at Hanmer; on the 1st May, 1903, a camp was established at Dumgree, in the Marlborough District; and on the 1st August, 1903, a camp was established at Waipa, Rotorua.

The camp at Dumgree was closed in 1908, the value of the work carried out in that locality being £2,365; and the work at Hanmer is nearing completion.

The following is a statement of the total work done at the various camps:—

No. 4.

Tree-planting Prison.	Number of Trees planted.	Acres cleared (approximate only).
Waiotapu (now Kaingaroa)	19,020,031	6,923
Waipa	4,970,620	1,799
Dumgree	503,975	75
Hanmer	4,358,331	1,448
Totals	28,852,957	10,245

The total value of this work, as estimated by the officers of the Forestry Department, is £41,575. Though it may be impossible to estimate the future commercial value of the trees that have been planted, it will be recognized that they provide the State with a very considerable asset. Apart from the economic value of the work, the camps are recognized by the Prison authorities as being of very great value from a reformative standpoint, and as affording an opportunity of removing well-behaved prisoners from town prisons.