

The decrease in the number of serious crimes as evidenced by the length of the sentences imposed, which was remarked upon in last year's report, still continues. The gradual reduction that has taken place from year to year is well illustrated by the table given below (No. 2), which is compiled from Table A of the statistics accompanying this report:—

No. 2.

Prisoners received during the Year sentenced to	1906.	1907.	1908.	1909.	1910.	1911.	1912.	1913.
One year's hard labour and upwards, and habitual criminals	411	390	434	412	291	214	157	141
Three months' hard labour and under one year	741	739	651	740	604	501	442	494
Criminals for reformatory detention only	..	..	..	..	..	68	53	76
Total number received for sentences of three months and over	1,152	1,129	1,085	1,152	895	783	652	711

From the above table it will be seen that, although the daily average for 1913 was still slightly higher than that for 1911, the total number of prisoners received into the various prisons for periods of three months and upwards was considerably less in the later than in the earlier year. The increase in the number of minor offences referred to in last year's report still continues, the figures supplied by the Government Statistician in Table A showing that the total number of prisoners received for simple imprisonment and for sentences of under three months was 3,555 for 1913, as against 3,313 for 1912, and 3,116 for 1911.

Like last year's figures, the above table again indicates the fluctuation of the prison population, and emphasizes the impossibility of arriving at any definite conclusion as to the reasons for the increase or decrease of the number of prisoners for any particular period when analysing statistics of past years.

HABITUAL CRIMINALS AND PRISONERS SENTENCED TO REFORMATORY DETENTION.

As in previous years, the statistics in regard to the administration of the Crimes Amendment Act will be published in the annual report of the Prisons Board.

TREE-PLANTING PRISONS.

The reports of the Acting-Gaolers in charge of the tree-planting camps at Kaingaroa and Waipa show that this branch of prison-work has been satisfactorily carried on during the year.

As forecasted in last year's report, the camp at Hanmer was closed in October, and the prisoners and officers were transferred elsewhere.

Payment for Tree-planting.—The recommendation contained in the 1913 report that the Department should be given a financial credit for this work has been given effect to, the amount paid by the Forestry Department for the period from the 1st April to the 31st December, 1913, being £1,998 3s. 11d. The assessment of the value of the work has been made by the officers of the Forestry Department, and the arrangement is giving satisfaction to all the parties concerned.

It is hoped in the immediate future to give a larger number of prisoners the benefit of employment at tree-planting by arranging transfers from the town prisons to Kaingaroa, where there is sufficient hut accommodation for some additional men. As the Waipa camp is set apart for first offenders, the daily average there cannot be increased in the same way.

EMPLOYMENT OF PRISONERS.

The question of the proper employment of prison labour was dealt with exhaustively in last year's report. Suffice it to say that the agricultural policy then laid down is being continued, and will be prosecuted more vigorously as soon as sufficient labour can be spared from the work of erecting the necessary prison buildings at Waikeria and elsewhere. It is understood that an area of land suitable for prison purposes will soon be available in the Canterbury District, and when this is taken over by the Department it should not be long before agricultural work is provided for a large percentage of the prison population of the South Island.

PRISON BUILDINGS.

Auckland.—The Gaoler's report shows that the foundations of the south-wing extension, in which provision is being made for a prison hospital, schoolroom, officers' quarters, and store, in addition to a number of new cells, are now almost ready, while the west and south wings have been completed.

New Plymouth.—No alterations or additions to this building have been made during the year, but some much-needed repairs to the floors of the cells have been carried out.