

8. During the past year the health of the prisoners has been good, as shown in Table A. The daily average on sick-list was 7.24 males and 2.26 females, an increase on the previous year of 0.11 males and 1.75 females. There was one case of enteric fever at Dumgree, but the patient was at once removed to the Blenheim Hospital, where he speedily recovered. The cause of the disease was attributed to eating watercress.

9. Five deaths occurred during the year—viz., 2 in Auckland, 2 in Wanganui, and 1 in Wellington. In each case a Coroner's inquest was held, in accordance with the Prisons Act, and the usual verdicts were returned.

10. There were no executions during the past year.

11. A reference to Table A shows that at the commencement of last year there were 677 males and 62 females in custody, and at the close of the year there were 678 males and 72 females, an increase of 1 male and 10 females. During the year 1904, 5,244 males and 665 females passed through the various prisons, as against 4,813 males and 626 females, an increase of 431 males and 39 females. It must be borne in mind, however, in considering these numbers that they include persons who, having been received many times during the twelve months, are counted several times. Many, again, have been in through being unable to pay fines; others, again, are included who are too aged and infirm to maintain themselves. It is needless to point out that none of the above-mentioned class can be, in any true sense of the word, termed "criminals," but merely tend to swell the figures and create an erroneous impression as to the criminal statistics of the colony.

12. During last year the daily average number of prisoners in the different prisons has been 707.57 males and 71.05 females, an increase of 33.72 males and 3.03 females. The largest increase was in Wellington—161, as against 133; while the largest decreases were in Lyttelton—107, as against 140; Dunedin, 48.58, as against 60.20; and Auckland, 190.84, as against 199.74.

13. From figures supplied by the Registrar-General, the population of the colony, including Maoris, at the end of the year 1904 was 477,104 males and 423,578 females, a total of 900,682 persons; whilst on the same date the number of prisoners was 750, the average percentage of prisoners therefore, according to population, was 0.0832, as against 0.0844 in the previous year, a decrease of 0.0012.

14. During the year 1904 9 male misdemeanants in default of bail and 39 males and 8 females, supposed lunatics, were detained in the prisons, an increase of 5 in the former and a decrease of 3 males, with an increase of 1 female, in the latter. It is to be regretted that such subjects as supposed insane patients are still sent to prisons for treatment.

15. During the year 1904 553 males and 30 females were acquitted after remand, as against 506 males and 30 females in the previous year, an increase of 47 males.

16. As regards awaiting-trial and remand prisoners, comments are made from time to time to the effect that the system of dealing with these persons is utterly and entirely wrong; that they are kept in their cells twenty hours out of the twenty-four; are fed on half-rations, and, in fact, are much worse treated than the convicted prisoner; but persons so reasoning lose sight of the following facts: First, that a *prima facie* case has already been made out against them; second, that, in the majority of cases, they have the option of obtaining bail or being placed on probation in lieu of being sent to prison; third, that they or their friends can provide food in lieu of the gaol rations; fourth, that they can volunteer to work, and when at work they are fed on the same scale of rations as are issued to hard-labour prisoners.

17. A reference to Table B shows that the prisoners were maintained last year at a gross cost of £48 9s. 6d. per capita, as against £47 14s. 4d. in 1903. The gross totals are made up as follows: Staff supervision, £30 3s. 3d., as against £28 5s.; maintenance, £15 2s. 1d., as against £15 17s. 6d.; incidentals, £3 4s. 2d., as against £3 11s. 10d. Of the incidentals, £338 3s. 2d. is recouped to the Government—viz., Railway Department, £268 13s. 2d., and Post and Telegraph Department, £69 10s.

18. As an exemplification of the different prices in various localities, referred to in paragraph 3, it will be noticed in Table B that in Auckland a daily average of 190.84 prisoners were fed for £1,184, while in Wellington it cost £1,588 to feed a daily average of 161. Again, in Napier a daily average of 38.13 were fed for £296 16s. 2d., while in Wanganui it cost £401 18s. to feed a daily average of 31.70 prisoners. During the past year the whole of the tin cell-utensils have been replaced by enamel ware, which is considered for sanitary reasons better and more cleanly; but the substitution has, of course, swelled the annual expense. It was also necessary to increase the staff at some of the prisons; but, considering the increase there has been in the cost of living in the colony generally, it will be admitted that economy, consistent with efficiency, has been observed.

19. As regards the expenses of prisoners at tree-planting prisons—which are not included in Table B—at Waiotapu, where there were 6 officers and 61 prisoners, the gross annual cost per prisoner was £45 15s. 2d., made up as follows: Staff supervision, £15 17s. 11d.; maintenance, £21 6s.; incidentals, £8 11s. 3d. At Dumgree, where there were 3 officers and 36 prisoners, the gross cost was £34 12s. 11d., made up as follows: Staff supervision, £8 0s. 11d.; maintenance, £20 13s. 7d.; incidentals, £5 18s. 5d. At Hanmer, where there were 3 officers and 22 prisoners, the gross cost was £47 18s. 7d., made up as follows: Staff supervision, £19 12s. 5d.; maintenance, £21 7s. 5d.; incidentals, £6 18s. 9d.; and at Waipa, where there were 3 officers and 19 prisoners, the gross cost was £37 5s. 11d., made up as follows: Staff supervision, £9 10s. 2d.; maintenance, £14 8s. 8d.; incidentals, £13 7s. 1d. The Dumgree accounts are for eight months and Waipa for five months, those prisons having been opened on the 1st May and 1st August respectively. There are at present 15 officers and 146 prisoners employed tree-planting.

20. As regards the educational attainments of prisoners, Table C shows that out of a total of 4,567 male and 603 female prisoners received during the year, 18 males were of superior