

Hereunder, according to the form followed in Table B, the receptions during the year are compared with those in the previous year :—

Prisoners received.	1910.	1911.
Sentenced to—		
Simple imprisonment .. .. .	51	57
Hard labour, under three months.. .. .	3,444	3,059
Hard labour, three months and under twelve .. .. .	604	506
Hard labour, one year and over .. .. .	269	209
Death .. .. .	..	1
Reformative treatment only .. .. .	..	68
	4,368	3,900

Though this shows 468 fewer admissions of criminals under sentence, it does not necessarily imply 468 fewer criminals. That there is a decided reduction is more than likely, but it may be that in the previous year a much larger number of prisoners were convicted several times. Taking these figures alone, and not going into questions of undetected crime, it is satisfactory to observe that apparently fewer offences were committed. But were there fewer offenders? Table F in the appendix is designed to answer this question. Here we are dealing with persons, not convictions, and therefore a prisoner is not counted more than once in the year in which, after conviction, he was admitted to the prison. For six years the total number of distinct persons (exclusive of Maoris) imprisoned after conviction is given, and also the ratio of prisoners to the general population. It will be seen at a glance that the year under review occupies a conspicuously favourable position, there being fewer persons convicted than in any of the five previous years (365 fewer than in 1910), and with a reduction in the criminal population coincident with an increase in the general population the fact is further emphasized. During 1911 there were 2,877 distinct persons imprisoned after conviction, a number which represents 28·35 per 10,000 of the general population. The next lowest ratio, 31·84, was in 1908, and the next lowest number of prisoners, 2,966, was in 1906, when the ratio was 33·12 per 10,000.

Mention has been made of prisoners in custody for reformative treatment under the provisions of the Crimes Amendment Act, 1910, and it may be of interest to summarize the procedure under that Act before subjecting to analysis the statistics created thereunder.

A Judge before whom any person is convicted or committed for sentence may, if he thinks fit, "having regard to the conduct, character, associations, or mental condition of such person, the nature of the offence, or any special circumstances of the case," in addition to or in lieu of an ordinary term of imprisonment, sentence him to prison for reformatory purposes for a period not exceeding ten years. In like manner and after a like weighing of the circumstances a Magistrate may impose a similar sentence upon any person brought before him and summarily convicted of an offence punishable by imprisonment for more than three months, save that the maximum of reformative detention in that case is limited to three years.

The length of the reformative part of the sentence actually served in prison in any particular case is determined by His Excellency the Governor upon recommendation as to probation, &c., made by the Prisons Board set up under the Act. The Board issues a statutory report of its operations.

The sentence under this Act is an approach to the indeterminate, the moral force of which is undeniable. Many prisoners serving ordinary sentences, knowing the remission that can be obtained by marks, with the date of discharge in front of them, tend to settle into a negative state, in which they keep from actually offending, and labour just sufficiently to gain the allotted marks with a minimum of mental and physical exertion. (It may be stated, parenthetically, that, recognizing this, where the conditions of the prison and prisoner have made it possible, we have held out the hope of recommendation for special remission for the profitable employment by prisoners of time outside the ordinary working-hours, a reward to be obtained only when the prisoner's conduct and ordinary industry have also been good.) In the absence of an absolutely indeterminate sentence, the Act effects a good working compromise by placing the maximum period at ten years. The average reformative sentence imposed was about three years. One can only speculate in any particular case, but, speaking generally, we may safely assert that this average, especially if the original sentence be included, makes a higher average than would have been the case under ordinary sentences. It is a fact already noticed that those detained under this form of sentence realize that the period of their incarceration depends upon their conduct and industry, and the efforts that the majority are evidently making to gain their release upon probation justifies the hopes expressed when the Act was passed. One has observed that a number of these prisoners (especially the younger ones) are of lower mental capacity than the average, and that a fair proportion are advanced in years and crime, which makes the above statement the more significant.

The total number of persons sentenced during the year to reformative treatment was 156 (males, 147; females, 9), and of this number 96 (m. 91; f., 5) had no original sentence or a short one, with the result that they entered upon the reformative part of the sentence during the year, leaving 60 (m., 56; f., 4) not emerged from the original hard-labour sentence.