

7. All reports, complaints, and requests made to me by both officers and prisoners have been brought to your notice and fully investigated; and all petitions from prisoners have been forwarded to His Excellency the Governor for his decision.

8. A reference to Table A shows that at the commencement of the past year there were 532 male and 98 female prisoners confined in the prisons of the colony, and at the close of the year there were 511 male and 78 female prisoners; giving a decrease of 21 males and 20 females. In the year 1884 there passed through the prisons 4,691 males and 1,095 females, while during the past year the numbers were 4,776 males and 1,059 females; being an increase of 85 males, with a decrease of 36 females: giving a total increase in cases dealt with of 49.

9. During the past year the daily average number of prisoners in gaols has been 554.9 males and 72.4 females; being an increase of 43.3 males, and a decrease of 28.4 females: giving a net average increase of 14.9 for the year as compared with the previous year.

10. According to figures obtained from the Registrar-General, the population of the colony was, at the end of the year 1885, 340,393 males and 286,124 females—total, 626,517 persons; while the number of prisoners at that date was 511 males and 78 females—total, 589 persons. The average number of prisoners to population was therefore .094 per cent.; being a slight decrease on the previous year. It is satisfactory to find that the increase in population is not bringing with it a corresponding increase in criminals.

11. During the past year 152 male and 5 female misdemeanants in default were detained in the gaols of the colony; and during the same period 66 male and 14 female lunatics were confined in the various prisons; giving a decrease on the previous year of 6 male with an increase of 2 female misdemeanants in default, and a decrease of 5 male and 3 female lunatics. I must again record my annual protest against the prisons of the colony being utilized for the detention of supposed lunatics and persons suffering from *delirium tremens*.

12. In former reports I have called attention to persons being continually sent to prisons for medical treatment, and pointed out the hardships of many such cases; but I would draw your special attention to two somewhat glaring cases which have happened during the past year. In the one a prisoner was sentenced to one month's imprisonment for having no visible lawful means of support, and the committing Magistrates wrote as follows: "The man was employed some months ago on railway works, and, through over-straining himself, has almost completely lost the use of his eyesight. He has been in a hospital for some months, but, not being cured of the loss of his eyesight, he has been returned to ———, and has been kept here by the Benevolent Society for one week, but, being unable to keep him any longer, he was handed over to the police this morning, and sentenced as aforesaid." I am happy to be able to add that His Excellency, on your recommendation, was pleased to grant a remission of the sentence as soon as the matter was brought under his notice. In the other case the gaoler made the following report: "A prisoner was sentenced, at ———, on the 11th instant, to three months' imprisonment for having no visible means of support, and, received at this prison at 3.15 o'clock, p.m., 13th instant, was at once examined by the prison surgeon, and admitted to the infirmary, suffering from heart disease and dropsy. The surgeon recommended his immediate removal to the hospital, which recommendation was acted upon on the morning of the 15th instant. The man had only a short time before been discharged from the ——— Hospital, and, being without relatives or friends who could assist him, he, from sheer destitution, gave himself up to the police. The man has never been in gaol before, and the surgeon considers that he cannot live long, and may die at any moment. As I have already stated, this prisoner was removed to hospital on the 15th instant, where he died on the 21st of the same month."

13. During the year 1885 486 males and 66 females were acquitted or discharged after remand, being an increase of 47 males and 11 females on the previous year.

14. With reference to penal-servitude prisoners, there were at the close of last year in the various prisons 194 male and 4 female prisoners, giving a decrease of 1 prisoner on the previous year.

15. As regards the financial table given under heading B it will be found that the prisoners were maintained last year at a gross cost per head of £53 9s. 9d., as against £55 9s. 9d. for the previous year, and at a net cost per head of £41 7s., as against £44 14s. 5d. for the year 1884. The gross totals are made up as follows: Staff supervision, £34 14s. 7d.; maintenance, £15 8s. 5d.; incidental, £3 6s. 9d. It must be borne in mind that every item of expenditure incurred in connection with the gaols is charged against each institution respectively; but, on the other hand, no credit is taken except for goods manufactured, for the full value of land reclaimed, or for cash received. I may here point out that a comparison of the expenditure and receipts during the last five years with the expenditure and receipts of these institutions before that period, when some of them were erroneously said to be self-supporting, will show that a very much more economical system is now adopted, and that the expenditure is curtailed as much as possible. Comparing the daily average of prisoners with the number of prisons it is considered requisite to keep open, and the number of supposed lunatics, cases of *delirium tremens*, default prisoners, and sick persons sent to prisons for treatment at a heavy cost for maintenance, medicines, &c., it appears that so low an average net cost as £41 7s. per head shows that the strictest economy has been exercised throughout the different gaols.

16. In the gross cost per prisoner Hokitika is the highest, at £111 11s. 1d.; Invercargill coming next with £99 18s. 10d.; while the lowest is Mount Cook, at £39 4s. 9d.; followed by Auckland, at £41 7s. 9d. It should, however, be here noted that Mount Cook has never been occupied by any of the expensive class of prisoners referred to in the foregoing paragraph. Hokitika Prison, from its isolated position, and the fact of provisions and living being more costly on the West Coast, must always be an expensive institution to maintain.

17. The receipts and credits for prison labour, road-metal, needlework, maintenance of prisoners, &c., for the past year amounted to £7,481 15s., as against £6,555 9s. in 1884.