

on his receipt at Lyttelton Prison, sent to work at Ripa Island without any special orders being given to the officers to be particularly vigilant with him. The result of this gross carelessness on the part of the Gaoler was that he again escaped on the third day of his being sent to the island, and has not since been heard of. It is to this successful escape the other attempts may be more or less attributed, and it will probably be some time yet before the prisoners forget this success and abandon the hope of escaping—a fact which it is somewhat difficult to get prison officers generally to grasp.

5. A reference to Table A shows that the health of the prisoners throughout the year has been fairly good at all the prisons. The daily average of sick has been 16·68 males and 4·31 females, showing a daily average increase of 6·45 males and 1·72 females over the previous year. One case of diphtheria and another of typhoid fever occurred; but, owing to the complete isolation at the development of the illness in each case, any risk of contagion or infection was prevented. The large increase in the daily average number of sick is mainly, if not entirely, due to the large number of persons who, I regret to say, are still sent to prison suffering from the effects of drink, and of those who, from old age and infirmities being unable to earn their own living, come to prison as vagrants instead of being sent to some refuge or home. This is a very serious blot on our administration, and a gross injustice is done to these unfortunate aged persons who, through no fault of their own, are sent to gaol because they are too old and infirm to earn their bread. The same number of deaths (4) occurred in prisons during the past as in the previous year—viz., 1 male and 1 female at Addington and 2 males (Maoris) at Napier. The usual inquests were held in each case.

6. There were no executions, nor were any prisoners condemned to death last year.

7. Table A further shows that at the commencement of the past year there were 592 male and 99 female prisoners confined in the gaols of the colony, and at the close of the year 563 males and 78 females; giving a decrease of 29 males and 21 females. In the year 1887 there passed through the prisons 4,478 males and 945 females, whilst during the past year the numbers were 4,242 males and 938 females; being a decrease of no less than 236 males and 7 females, giving a total decrease of cases dealt with of 243. When it is remembered that in 1887 there was a decrease of 169, and that this is again followed by such a substantial diminution as 243, it may with justice be claimed for the system now in force that these statistics absolutely prove it to be deterrent, and probably reformatory.

8. During the past year the daily average number of prisoners in gaols has been 591·26 males and 86·13 females, being an increase of 25·16 males and 14·63 females—a net average increase of 39·79 for the year as compared with 1887.

9. According to the figures obtained from the Registrar-General the population of the colony was at the end of 1888 347,788 males and 301,561 females; total, 649,349 persons: whilst the number of prisoners at that date was 563 males and 78 females—641 in all. The average percentage of prisoners according to population was therefore ·099, a decrease of ·001 on the previous year.

10. During the past year 105 male and 6 female misdemeanants in default were detained in the gaols of the colony, and during the same period 69 males and 30 females, supposed lunatics, were detained in the various prisons; giving a decrease of 9 male and an increase of 4 female misdemeanants in default on the previous year, with a decrease of 16 males and 9 females, supposed lunatics.

11. With reference to prisoners under sentence of penal servitude there were at the close of last year in the various prisons 192 males and 6 females, being an increase of 3 males and 1 female on the previous year.

12. During the year 1888 423 males and 63 females were acquitted or discharged after remand, being a decrease of 38 males, and an increase of 3 females, on the previous year.

13. With regard to 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 £44 3s. 1d., as against £49 4s. 4d., and (exclusive of the work done at the fortifications) at a net cost per head of £33 9s. 4d., as against £28 3s. 5d. for the year 1887. The gross totals are made up as follows: Staff supervision, £27 14s. 11d., as against £31 12s. 7d. in 1887; maintenance, £13 4s. 9d., as against £14 5s. 6d.; incidental, £3 3s. 5d., as against £3 6s. 3d. It will be noticed that there are substantial reductions under each of these heads on the previous year's expenses; and if £7 6s. per head, the average value of prison-work done at the fortifications is deducted, the net cost is further reduced to £26 3s. 4d., or £2 0s. 1d. less per head than in 1887. Again, if the sums transferred to Government departments—viz., post and telegraph, £129 8s. 9d.; and railways, £353 6s.—are considered as mere transfers, it must be admitted that the prisons are now conducted as economically as efficiency will admit.

14. The receipts for value of prison-labour, sale of road-metal, bricks, drainpipes, needlework, maintenance of prisoners, &c., for the past year amounted (including £4,809 3s. 6d. for work at fortifications) to £11,851 11s. 9d., as against £13,037 4s. 9d. in 1887.

15. As regards the education of prisoners, a reference to Table C shows that, out of a total of 3,650 males and 839 females, 3,057 males and 636 females were able to read and write well, whilst 391 males and 123 females were unable to read or write.

16. It is some small satisfaction to be able to report that there has been a slight decrease in the number of children under the age of ten years who have been confined in the gaols of the colony during the past twelve months, though it is a source of much regret to find that there have been as many as 22 of that tender age actually serving sentences in the prisons. Table D shows that during the year 1888 22 infants under the age of ten passed through the prisons of the colony, as against 30 in 1887; whilst in those from ten to fifteen years the numbers are 88, as against 83; but in those aged from fifteen to twenty years there is a substantial diminution, the numbers being 241, as against 336 in 1888: a total decrease of 3 in children under the age of fifteen years, and of 95 in young persons under twenty years of age.