

The daily average of prisoners confined in the Gaol was 701, the average for 1911 being 595, and the highest previous average being 726 in 1904. The percentage of prisoners to population, according to the daily average of the former and the estimated number of the latter, was 0·14, which is the average percentage for the last ten years. Owing, however, to the large floating population, which is constantly moving between the Colony and Canton, the percentage of crime to population does not convey an accurate idea of the comparative criminality of the residents of the Colony. The Gaol has accommodation for 590 prisoners.

The prison discipline was satisfactory, the average of punishments per prisoner being 1·40 as compared with 1·61 in 1911 and 1·33 in 1910.

Long sentence prisoners serving two years and upwards are taught useful trades, including printing, book-binding, washing, mat-making, tailoring, oakum-picking, etc. The profit on the work done was \$60,976 as against \$51,833 in 1911. There was \$4,636 received and credited to Government for non-Government work against \$4,627 in 1911.

IX.—VITAL STATISTICS.

(a.)—POPULATION.

The civil population of the Colony, according to the Census taken on May 20th, 1911, was 456,739, of whom 104,287 reside in the New Territories and in New Kowloon; at the Census taken in 1906 it was 301,967 exclusive of the New Territories and of New Kowloon. The estimated total population at the middle of the year under review was 467,777, but this includes the New Territories; and, as the death figures given below do not include those from this area (with the exception of New Kowloon), the population for the purposes of calculating death-rates is estimated at 377,183, of whom 21,163 were non-Chinese.

The distribution of population at the Census was as follows:—

Non-Chinese Civil Community	12,075	
Chinese Population.	{ City of Victoria (including Peak) 219,386 Villages of Hongkong 16,106 Kowloon (including New Kow- loon)..... 67,602 New Territories 80,622 Population afloat 60,948		
		Total Chinese Population 444,664
		Total Civil Population <u>456,739</u>

(b.)—PUBLIC HEALTH AND SANITATION.

There has been great activity in regard to building operations during the past year, to meet the urgent demands for house-room created by the immigration of some forty to fifty thousand Chinese, who poured into Hongkong during 1911. These people were of all classes, and came principally from the neighbouring provinces of Kwangtung, Kwangsi and Fokien, seeking refuge from the political

unrest which ultimately led to the overthrow of the dynasty and the establishment of a Republican Government in China.

Pending the erection of sufficient dwellings for the accommodation of so large an increase in our normal population, the existing dwellings became greatly overcrowded, but any very strict enforcement of the overcrowding laws was deemed impossible while the penalty which had to be paid for this abnormal state of affairs—amounting practically to the conversion of Hongkong into a huge refugee camp—was a severe outbreak of Plague, no less than 1,847 cases being recorded. These cases were generally distributed throughout the City, except in the European business quarter (where only a few cases occurred), and throughout Kowloon, and the most probable determining cause of the epidemic was a considerable augmentation of the rat population consequent on the general overcrowding of the native dwellings. The overcrowding naturally led to a marked increase in the amount of waste food, both in the houses and in the yards and lanes adjacent thereto, and although efforts were made to deal with this excess by improved scavenging, yet it is obvious that where houses are overcrowded with human beings and their belongings, the cleanliness of the premises must fall below the average and refuse of all sorts will lie concealed among the lumber.

The rat population depends almost entirely upon the available food supply, and this large increase in the amount of food refuse would promptly lead to a corresponding increase in the number of susceptible rats by more frequent breeding and larger litters. Plague is endemic among the rats of Hongkong and the infection is known to be carried forward from season to season by the *Mus Decumanus* or drain rat, among which species Plague-infected animals are found throughout the year. During the human Plague season—February to July—the infection spreads to the house rat (*Mus Rattus*) and although cases of human Plague do certainly occur when only infected drain rats are being discovered, the infection being acquired in warehouses, basements, workshops, and outhouses generally, into which these rats are driven by the rain storms flooding their underground haunts, yet the maximum incidence of human infection corresponds exactly with the maximum incidence of the *rattus* infection, and the main efforts of the Sanitary Department are therefore directed to the exclusion of rats from human dwellings, and the limitation of the food supply of the rat population. The latter is secured by a daily collection of garbage from all dwellings, and by the efficient scavenging of lanes and alleys, while the former object is aimed at by the concreting of ground surfaces, the protection of drain openings by gratings, and the prohibition of ceilings, wainscottings and hollow walls. There is unfortunately however a very large number of old houses in the Colony which possess these hollow walls, constructed of soft bricks, which form ideal nesting places for the *Mus Rattus* and enable him to enter the dwellings at night to forage for food, and it is in those districts in which such buildings are most numerous that Plague has displayed its greatest incidence since the infection was first imported into the Colony in 1894. There is no remedy for such faulty construction,

short of actual demolition of the premises, which is too heroic a measure to be practicable on any extended scale.

The general birth-rate for the year was 9·0 per 1,000 among the Chinese community and 16·2 per 1,000 among the non-Chinese community, as compared with 6·3 and 19·2 during 1911.

The general death-rate for the year was 26·33 per 1,000 among the Chinese community, and 14·51 among the non-Chinese community, as compared with 21·13 and 13·38 during 1911.

The higher death-rate among the Chinese as compared with the previous year is due in part to the severe outbreak of Plague and in part to the influx of Chinese from the mainland, while the latter cause contributed also to the higher birth-rate.

The number of deaths from Malaria (432) shows an increase on the previous year (338) which can be accounted for by the exceptional influx of infected persons from the mainland. The deaths of Chinese from this cause in the City of Victoria numbered 214 out of a population of 225,500; but more than 34 per cent of these deaths occurred in Health Districts Nos. 2 and 9 where most of the coolies reside who have been engaged on the extensive building operations that have been in progress during the year.

The deaths from Plague numbered 1,768 as compared with 253 in 1911 and 23 in 1910. The probable causes of this epidemic have already been discussed herein.

Small-pox deaths numbered 565—all Chinese, with the exception of two British children and one Indian child, all of which were returned as showing no signs of vaccination; only two of the fatal Chinese cases were returned as having been previously vaccinated.

There were 2,317 deaths from respiratory diseases among the Chinese, as compared with 2,487 in 1911. Phthisis claimed 757 Chinese victims, while other forms of Tuberculosis represent an additional 379 deaths, making a total of 1,136 or 12·1 per cent. of the total deaths among that community.

Beri-Beri was responsible for 231 deaths, as compared with 320 during 1911, and 566 in 1910. During the past few years circulars have been distributed to all large employers of coolie labour calling their attention to the fact that Beri-Beri is produced by the consumption of white rice as the staple article of diet without a sufficiency of other foods, and advising that beans should be supplied with the rice, when fresh meat or fresh fish cannot be afforded, and it is possible that the dissemination of this information may have had some influence in reducing the mortality from this disease.

A tabular statement of the principal causes of death is appended.

(c.)—CLIMATE.

The mean shade temperature for the year at the Royal Observatory, Kowloon, (108 feet above mean sea level), was 71°·9 as compared with 72°·1 in 1911, and 72°·1 for the ten preceding years. The maximum temperature was 92°·5 on the 10th September and the minimum 45°·3 on the 28th December. The hottest month was July, with a mean temperature of 83°·0, and the coldest, January, with a mean temperature of 57°·3.

The temperature at the high levels of the Peak District is from 3° to 8° less than at the Observatory. At Victoria it is practically the same. The rainfall and humidity are considerably greater at the Peak than at Victoria, the Observatory, or Tai Po (New Territories).

The total rainfall for the year was 63.93 inches, as compared with an average of 84.21 inches during the ten preceding years. The wettest month was August with 15.71 inches, the driest, October, when 0.01 inch was recorded. The greatest amount of rain which fell on any one day was 6.12 inches on the 15th August, while no rain fell on 218 days of the year. The mean relative humidity of the atmosphere for the year was 74%, as compared with an average of 78% during the ten preceding years. The average daily amount of sunshine was 5.5 hours, being 49% of the possible duration.

X. POSTAL SERVICE.

The total revenue from the Postal Service in 1912 was \$401,054.32 and total expenditure \$296,867.12 leaving a credit balance of \$104,187.20. The total amount of payments during the year was \$256,582.88 less than that estimated for owing to the high rate of exchange, non-receipt of the claims in respect of mails sent *via* Siberia during the years 1910 and 1911, and non-payment of the shares of the Peninsular and Oriental Mail Subsidy for the 4th quarter by the Crown Agents.

Agreements to regulate the exchange of correspondence and parcels with the Portuguese Colony of Macao were signed on 23rd October, 1912.

XI.—GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

The Chinese territory adjoining the New Territories was in a disturbed condition during the greater part of the year owing to the withdrawal of the military posts along the frontier to meet exigencies elsewhere. As a result some serious raids were made by armed bands of robbers into British territory. To guard against these incursions 354 officers and men of the 8th Rajputs and 153 officers and men of the 126th Baluchistan Infantry were, by the courtesy of His Excellency the General Officer Commanding, South China, drafted on the 26th of June to various places along the frontier. This force furnished patrols which moved about the country at various hours by night and by day. It was withdrawn on the 30th of November for annual training in Camp in the New Territories. These patrols proved most efficient and the thanks of the Colonial Government were conveyed to the officers and men concerned and to the Military Authorities for the valuable assistance thus rendered.

On the night of the 19th of August an attack was made on the Police Station at Cheung Chau, where 1 European Sergeant and 4 Indian Constables were stationed, by a gang of pirates and robbers about 40 strong who came from Macao in a junk, landed