

VIII.—CRIMINAL AND POLICE.

The total of all cases reported to the Police was 17,566 being an increase of 3,366 or 23·7 per cent. as compared with 1923. There was in 1924 an increase in serious offences of 548 or 13·7 per cent. as compared with the previous year. The number of serious offences reported was 170 over the average of the quinquennial period commencing with the year 1920. The number of minor offences reported shows an increase of 2,818 as compared with 1923 and was 3,424 over the average of the quinquennial period.

The total strength of the Police Force in 1924 was Europeans 235, Indians 504, Chinese 805 making a total of 1,544 exclusive of the six superior officers and staff of clerks and coolies. These figures include police paid for by the railway and other Government departments. Of this force 15 Europeans, 29 Indians, and 141 Chinese were stationed in the New Territories during the year.

The District Watchmen Force, numbering 122, to which the Government contributes \$2,000 per annum, was well supported by the Chinese during the year. These watchmen patrol the streets in the Chinese quarter of the City. They are placed on police beats and are supervised by the European police on section patrol. A detective branch of the force has done useful work under the supervision of a European Inspector.

The total number of persons committed to Victoria Gaol was 7,382 as compared with 5,338 in 1923. Of these 1,644 were committed for criminal offences against 926 in 1923. Of committals for noncriminal offences there were 23 more for hawking without a licence, and 30 less for unlawfully boarding steamers, than in 1923.

The daily average of prisoners confined in the Gaol was 106 the average for 1923 being 861, and the highest previous average being 707 in 1922. The percentage of prisoners to population, according to the daily average of the former and the estimated number of the latter, was 0·13. The average percentage for the last ten years was 0·12. 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 Victoria Gaol has accommodation for 700 prisoners including patients in Hospital. The Branch Prison at Laichikok has accommodation for 350 prisoners in association.

The prison discipline was very satisfactory, the average of punishments per prisoner being 0·43 as compared with 0·5 in 1923 and 0·52 in 1922.

Long sentence prisoners serving two years and upwards are taught useful trades, including printing, book-binding, tin-smithing, mat-making, tailoring, carpentering, etc. The profit on the work done was \$121,664.03 as against \$116,714.72 in 1923. A sum of \$4,427 was received and credited to Government for non-Government work as against \$4,207 in 1923.
