

SOCIAL CONDITION.

FROM very early days the Australasian colonies have been regarded somewhat in the light of a working-man's paradise, the high rates of wages which have generally prevailed and the cheapness of food permitting the enjoyment of a great degree of comfort, if not of luxury, by a class which elsewhere knows little of the one and nothing of the other; and even in these times of trade depression and reduced wages it may safely be said that the position of the wage-earner in Australia is equal to that occupied by him in any other part of the world. Although a high standard of living is not conducive to thrift, saving has gone on with great rapidity, notwithstanding the checks which it has received from time to time from adverse conditions of the labour market. Some idea of the rate and extent of this accumulation of wealth may be obtained from the tables showing the growth of deposits with banks. The banking returns, however, afford in themselves but an incomplete view of the picture; it should also be regarded from the standpoint of the expenditure of the people. Both of these subjects are dealt with in their proper places in this volume, and these evidences of the social condition of the people need not, therefore, be further considered here.

NEWSPAPERS AND LETTERS.

Few things show more plainly the social superiority of a civilized people than a heavy correspondence and a large distribution of newspapers. In these respects all the colonies of Australasia have for many years been remarkable. In proportion to population it is doubtful whether any country in the world can boast of a larger number or a better class of newspapers than they publish. Great advances have been made in this respect since 1871, and the rate of progress, both in number and in excellence of production, has been even more rapid between 1881 and the present time. There are no means of correctly estimating the number of newspapers actually printed and distributed in the colonies, because the Post-office carries but a small proportion of the circulation. For purposes of comparison with other countries, however, it may be stated that during the year 1896 no less than 113,613,000 newspapers passed through the Post-offices of the various colonies, giving the large proportion of 26·5 per head of population. In the same year the number of letters and post-cards carried was 201,264,900, being 47 for every person in Australasia. An examination of the statistics of other countries shows that these colonies stand

third among the countries of the world in the transmission of correspondence, being only exceeded by the United Kingdom and the United States of America per head of population.

PARKS, MUSEUMS, AND ART GALLERIES.

All the Australasian capitals are liberally supplied with parks and recreation-grounds. In Sydney and suburbs there are parks, squares, and public gardens comprising an area of 3,131 acres, including 530 acres which form the Centennial Park. Then there is the picturesque National Park, of 36,320 acres, situated about 16 miles from the centre of the metropolis; and, in addition to this, an area of 35,300 acres, in the valley of the Hawkesbury, has been recently reserved for public recreation under the name of Ku-ring-gai Chase. Thus Sydney has two extensive and picturesque domains for the enjoyment of the people at almost equal distances north and south from the city, and both accessible by railway. Melbourne has about 5,400 acres of recreation-grounds, of which about 1,750 acres are within the city boundaries, 2,850 acres in the suburban municipalities, and 800 acres outside those municipalities. Adelaide is surrounded by a broad belt of park lands, and also contains a number of squares within the city boundaries, covering altogether an area of 2,300 acres. Brisbane, Hobart, Perth, and the chief cities of New Zealand are also well provided for in this respect. In all the colonies large areas of land have been dedicated as public parks. There are fine Botanic Gardens in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide, and Hobart, which are included in the areas above referred to. Each of these gardens has a special attraction of its own. They are all well kept, and reflect great credit upon the communities to which they belong.

The various capitals of the colonies, and also some of the prominent inland towns, are provided with museums for the purposes of instruction as well as recreation; and in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide, and Hobart there are art galleries containing excellent collections of paintings and statuary. All these institutions are open to the public free of charge.

PUBLIC CHARITIES.

One of the most satisfactory features of the social condition of the Australian communities is the wide distribution of wealth, and the consequently small proportion of people who are brought within the reach of want. In the United Kingdom, the richest country of Europe, only nine out of every hundred of the population possess property of the value of £100, while in Australasia the number is not less than fifteen, and the violent contrast between the rich and the poor which blots the civilization of the old world is not observable in these young states. It is, unfortunately, only too plain that a certain amount of poverty does exist in the colonies; but there is a complete absence of

an hereditary pauper class, and no one is born into the hopeless conditions which characterize the lives of so many millions in Europe, and from which there is absolutely no possibility of escape. No poor rate is levied in Australasia, the assistance granted by the State being usually tendered to able-bodied men who find themselves out of employment in times of depression, and taking the form of payment, in money or in rations, for work done by them.

The chief efforts of the authorities, as regards charity, are directed towards the rescue of the young from criminal companionship and temptation to crime, the support of the aged and infirm, the care of the imbecile or insane, and the subsidising of private institutions for the cure of the sick and injured and the amelioration of want. Even where the State grants aid for philanthropic purposes the management of the institutions supervising the expenditure is in private hands, and in addition to State-aided institutions there are numerous charities wholly maintained by private subscriptions, whose efforts for the relief of those whom penury, sickness, or misfortune has afflicted are beyond all praise.

The rescue of the young from crime is attempted in two ways—first, by means of Orphanages, Industrial Schools, and Reformatories, which take care of children who have been abandoned by their natural guardians, or who are likely, from the poverty or incapacity of their parents, to be so neglected as to render them liable to lapse into crime; and second, by sequestering children who have already committed crime, or whose parents or guardians find themselves unable to control them.

Although a century has elapsed since settlement commenced in Australasia, its resources are by no means developed, and very many men are at work far away from the home comforts of everyday life, and from home attendance in case of sickness or injury. Hospitals are therefore absolutely essential under the conditions of life in the rural districts of the colonies, and they are accordingly found in every important country town. Below will be found the number of hospitals in each colony, with the number of indoor patients treated during 1896, and the total expenditure for the same year. Unfortunately, the South Australian returns are defective, as will be seen by the note appended to the table:—

Colony.	Hospitals.	Indoor patients treated.	Expenditure.
	No.	No.	£
New South Wales	107	26,697	133,085
Victoria	52	23,140	137,751
Queensland	59	16,420	102,952
South Australia.....	8	*2,633	*14,890
Western Australia.....	21	4,143	17,469
Tasmania.....	10	2,522	12,050
New Zealand	39	10,660	96,379
Australasia	296	86,215	514,576

* Adelaide Hospital only.

All the colonies possess institutions for the care of the insane, which are under Government control. The treatment meted out to the inmates is that dictated by the greatest humanity, and the hospitals are fitted with all the conveniences and appliances which modern science points out as most calculated to mitigate or remove the affliction from which these unfortunate people suffer. The following table shows the number of insane patients under treatment in the asylums of each colony in 1896, the total expenditure on hospitals for the insane during the year, and the average expenditure per inmate under treatment. The question of insanity is treated farther on in this chapter :—

Colony.	Insane Patients under treatment.	Total Expenditure.	Average Expenditure per Inmate under treatment.
	No.	£	£ s. d.
New South Wales.....	4,591	103,928	22 12 9
Victoria	4,841	96,744	19 19 8
Queensland	1,884	39,154	20 15 8
South Australia	1,125	21,459	19 1 6
Western Australia.....	249	6,948	27 17 8
Tasmania.....	412	8,145	19 15 5
New Zealand	2,680	50,972	19 0 5
Australasia	15,782	327,350	20 14 10

The amounts expended on Destitute Asylums and Benevolent Societies cannot be separated from other items of expenditure in some of the colonies. As far as they can be ascertained they are given in the following table, together with the number of inmates of the various asylums at the end of 1896, except in the case of Victoria, for which colony the returns are made out to the 30th June of that year :—

Colony.	Inmates.	Expenditure.
	No.	£
New South Wales	8,581	145,253
Victoria	7,650	104,385
Queensland	1,981	39,953
South Australia	1,706	28,991
Western Australia.....	506	13,843
Tasmania	1,258	7,593
New Zealand	3,702	89,669
Australasia	25,384	429,687

A liberal amount of out-door relief is given in all the Australasian colonies, the expenditure on which is included in the amounts given for Destitute Asylums and Benevolent Societies. The expenditure of the Governments of the Australasian colonies in connection with all forms of relief and in aid of hospitals and other charitable institutions, so

far as is shown by the imperfect returns, amounted in 1896 to about £600,000; adding to this the amount of private subscriptions, the poor and the unfortunate have benefited during the year to the extent of over £1,000,000. This sum, though not excessive in proportion to the population, may yet appear large in view of the general wealth of the colonies, which should preclude the necessity of so many seeking assistance; and there is the risk that the charitable institutions may encourage the growth of the pauper element, for while free quarters and free food are so accessible those who are disinclined to work are tempted to live at the public expense.

CRIME.

In all the colonies proceedings against a person accused of an offence may be initiated either by the arrest of the culprit or by summoning him to appear before a magistrate. Serious offences, of course, are rarely dealt with by process of summons; but, on the other hand, it is not uncommon for a person to be apprehended on a very trivial charge, and this circumstance should not be forgotten in dealing with arrests by the police, which are unusually numerous in some of the colonies. Unfortunately, it is not easy to say how far the police of one colony are disposed to treat offenders with such consideration as to proceed against them by summons, and how far those of another colony are content to adopt similar action; for in most of the provinces the records do not draw a distinction between the two classes of cases; and in the table given on page 108, showing the number of persons charged before magistrates in each colony during the year 1896, offenders who were summoned to appear are included with those arrested, except in the case of Victoria, whose criminal statistics seem to deal only with arrests. It is likewise difficult to make a true comparison between the various colonies in the matter of the prevalence of crime, for there are a number of circumstances which must considerably affect the criminal returns and modify their meaning. The first of these, of course, is the question of the strength of the police force and its ability to cope with lawlessness, which must be decided chiefly by the proportion of undetected crime which takes place in the colonies. The policy adopted by the chief of police in regard to trivial breaches of the public peace and other minor offences against good order must also be taken into consideration; and then there are considerable differences between the criminal codes of the colonies, and in the number of local enactments, breaches of which form a large proportion of the minor offences taken before the Courts. Also, when the returns of the lower Courts are laid aside and the convictions in superior Courts taken up, the comparison is affected by the jurisdiction of the magistrates who committed the prisoners. In New South Wales, for example, the jurisdiction of the lower Courts is limited to imprisonment for six months, except in regard to cases brought under one or two Acts of Parliament, such as the Chinese Restriction Act, prosecutions under which are very few;

while in Victoria a large number of persons are every year sentenced in Magistrates' Courts to imprisonment for terms ranging from six months to three years. It is apparent, therefore, that in any comparison drawn between the number of convictions in the superior Courts of New South Wales and of Victoria, the former colony must appear to great disadvantage.

An investigation into the differences between the law of New South Wales and of Victoria in respect to the jurisdiction of magistrates discloses some important results. Under the Victorian Crimes Act of 1890, 54 *Victoriæ* No. 1,079, it is provided by section 67 that Justices may try persons under sixteen years of age for the offence of simple larceny or for any offence punishable as simple larceny no matter what the value of the property in question may be, and persons over sixteen years of age where the property said to have been stolen is not of greater value than £2; and it is further provided by the same section that if upon the hearing of such a charge the Justices shall be of opinion that there are circumstances in the case which render it inexpedient to inflict any punishment, they shall have power to dismiss the charge without proceeding to a conviction. This provision, it is needless to say, is likely to materially reduce the number of convictions for larceny in Victoria. In New South Wales, on the other hand, the law does not give Justices any such power. In every case where the offence is proved they must convict the accused person, although in the case of offenders under the age of sixteen years they may discharge the convicted person on his making restitution, or in other cases deal with him under the First Offenders' Act and suspend the sentence; but in all such cases the conviction is placed on record and is accounted for in the criminal statistics of the colony. Section 69 of the same Victorian Act gives Justices power to deal with any case of simple larceny, or of larceny as a clerk or servant, or of stealing from the person, when the accused pleads guilty, the punishment being imprisonment for any term not exceeding twelve months; while in New South Wales the law does not give Justices the power to deal with such cases when the property alleged to have been stolen exceeds the value of £20. This section must therefore tend to materially reduce the number of cases committed for trial in Victoria for the offences mentioned, although in all such cases the Justices may commit the accused person if they think fit to do so. Furthermore, it is provided by section 370 of the Crimes Act of 1890 that suspected persons who have been convicted of capital or transportable felony elsewhere and are found in Victoria may be arrested and sentenced to imprisonment for three years in the case of a male, and for one year in the case of a female. Such a protective provision is in force in some of the other provinces as well as in Victoria, and its absence in New South Wales has made that colony the chosen refuge of many of the criminals of the other colonies; for there they may lay their plots in peace and enjoy immunity from arrest until the police discover some proof of their complicity in fresh crime or can charge them

with being in possession of property which may reasonably be regarded as having been stolen. It is not, however, only in respect to serious offences that the law of Victoria differs from that of New South Wales, for under the Victorian Police Offences Act of 1890 drunkenness in itself is no crime, and must be allied with disorderly conduct before the person may be punished. These statements all go to show in what important respects the criminal statistics of the colonies must differ from each other; and an investigation as to the state of the criminal law of the various colonies is proceeding, in order to see how far the differences modify the criminal statistics.

During the year 1896, as far as can be gathered, 141,434 persons were charged before magistrates in Australasia, 106,192 being summarily convicted and 31,669 discharged, while 3,573 were committed. The returns of each of the seven colonies will be found below. It should be explained that in the case of New Zealand and Western Australia each charge is counted as a separate person—a proceeding which, of course, tells against those colonies; while in Victoria the returns only deal with arrested persons, no record being published of the summons cases dealt with in that colony :—

Colony.	Persons charged.	Summarily dealt with.		Committed.
		Discharged.	Convicted.	
New South Wales.....	56,498	9,671	45,493	1,334
Victoria	22,787	7,353	14,759	675
Queensland.....	18,692	3,521	14,681	490
South Australia.....	6,810	1,374	5,234	202
Western Australia ...	13,318	4,619	8,426	273
Tasmania	4,514	994	3,450	70
New Zealand	18,815	4,137	14,149	529
Australasia.....	141,434	31,669	106,192	3,573

Taking the whole of Australasia, rather more than thirty-three persons out of every thousand were charged before magistrates during the year 1896—a figure which compares favourably with the rates for previous years. Only three colonies—Western Australia, New South Wales, and Queensland—exceed the average amount of disorder and crime as disclosed by the police court returns. The very large proportion of adult males to the population of the former colony, and its present industrial conditions, place it, of course, in quite an exceptional position; while in Queensland and New South Wales there are greater floating populations, from the ranks of which a large percentage of offenders is drawn, than in the other colonies which have better records. The province with the least disorder and crime is South Australia, where the persons answering to charges in the lower Courts only form 18·98 per

thousand of the population. Next come Victoria with 19·34 per thousand; New Zealand, with 26·63; and Tasmania, with 27·61; while, as before stated, Western Australia, New South Wales, and Queensland have the highest proportions, namely, 111·36, 43·87, and 40·08 per thousand respectively. In the case of Western Australia, the returns leave little doubt that there has been a large influx of criminals from the eastern colonies. The following table shows the proportion of persons charged before magistrates in each colony during the year; also the percentages of the persons discharged, convicted, and committed to the whole number charged:—

Colony.	Persons charged per 1,000 of population.	Percentages of total persons charged.			
		Discharged.	Convicted.	Summarily dealt with.	Committed.
New South Wales	43·87	17·12	80·52	97·64	2·36
Victoria	19·34	32·27	64·77	97·04	2·96
Queensland	40·08	18·84	78·54	97·38	2·62
South Australia	18·98	20·18	76·86	97·04	2·96
Western Australia	111·36	34·68	63·27	97·95	2·05
Tasmania	27·61	22·02	76·43	98·45	1·55
New Zealand	26·63	21·99	75·20	97·19	2·81
Australasia	33·04	22·39	75·08	97·47	2·53

It will be seen from the above table that out of every hundred persons charged before magistrates in Australasia in 1896, 97·47 were summarily dealt with, 22·39 being discharged and 75·08 convicted, while only 2·53 were committed to higher courts. The colony with the highest percentage of cases summarily disposed of and the smallest proportion of committals was Tasmania; while in Victoria, although the magistrates there have a much wider jurisdiction than in New South Wales and some of the other colonies, the lowest proportion of cases summarily dealt with was shared with South Australia. This was without doubt due to the fact that, as already pointed out, summons cases, which usually cover minor offences, are not included in the criminal statistics of the colony. As a matter of fact, the Victorian returns should show a very high percentage of cases summarily disposed of; for an inspection of the statistics discloses the fact that, owing to this wider jurisdiction, the magistracy of the colony, in 1896, sentenced 8 persons to two years' imprisonment, 156 to periods between one year and two years, and 311 to terms of six months and under one year. Many of these persons, had they been tried in New South Wales, would have been convicted in higher courts. Another important point to be noted is that, next to Western Australia, Victoria has the largest proportion of discharges, and if the theory be dismissed as untenable that the police in that colony are more prone to charge persons on insufficient grounds than in the other colonies, it must be concluded that the magistrates of Victoria

deal more leniently with accused persons than is the case elsewhere ; indeed, it has already been shown that the Crimes Act of 1890 provides for the discharge without conviction of persons found guilty of certain offences. The lowest proportion of discharges is to be found in New South Wales, which also has the highest percentage of summary convictions ; and the figures testify to the stringency with which the criminal laws are administered in the colony.

Of the 141,434 persons brought before magistrates during the year 1896, only 19·2 per cent. were charged with offences which can fairly be classed as criminal, the overwhelming majority being accused of drunkenness and other offences against good order, of lunacy and vagrancy, and of breaches of Acts of Parliament, which have a tendency to multiply to a great extent. For present purposes the accused persons may be divided as in the table given below, offences against the person and against property being regarded as serious crime. Of course, amongst the other offenders are to be found a few charged with grave misdemeanours, but against these may be put trivial assaults, which are included with crimes against the person :—

Colony.	All Offenders.	Serious Offenders.			Minor Offenders.
		Against the Person.	Against Property.	Total.	
New South Wales	56,498	4,195	6,462	10,657	45,841
Victoria	22,787	1,002	2,856	3,858	18,929
Queensland	18,692	1,936	2,141	4,077	14,615
South Australia	6,810	407	800	1,207	5,603
Western Australia	13,318	1,010	1,591	2,601	10,717
Tasmania	4,514	341	844	1,185	3,329
New Zealand	18,815	1,302	2,275	3,577	15,238
Australasia.....	141,434	10,193	16,969	27,162	114,272

This examination into the nature of the offences explains in some measure the comparatively unfavourable position of New South Wales as shown by the previous tables ; for of the 56,498 accused persons in that colony, the minor offenders numbered 45,841, or 81·1 per cent. No doubt the large number of trivial cases in New South Wales is accounted for by the greater strictness of police administration. Victoria actually shows 83·1 per cent. of minor offenders, but in consequence of a difference in the tabulation of the returns its position is not nearly so favourable as it appears to be on the surface. In New South Wales, and, it is to be presumed, in most of the other colonies, a person accused of two or more offences is entered as charged with the most serious in the eyes of the law, while in Victoria he is entered as charged with the first offence committed, any others, however serious, arising out of his capture, being left out of consideration. For

example, if a person is arrested for drunkenness, and he assaults his captors while on the way to the station, he is entered in the returns of New South Wales, as they are here presented, as charged with an offence against the person, and thereby helps to swell the amount of serious crime; but in Victoria he is entered as charged with drunkenness and disorderly conduct, and the charge of assault, on which he may be convicted and sentenced to a term of imprisonment, is not disclosed. This fact must therefore be taken into account in comparing the proportions of the various classes of offenders per thousand of population, which are appended :—

Colony	Per thousand of population.				
	All Offenders.	Serious Offenders.			Minor Offenders.
		Against the Person.	Against Property.	Total.	
New South Wales	43·87	3·26	5·02	8·28	35·59
Victoria	19·34	0·85	2·42	3·27	16·07
Queensland	40·08	4·15	4·59	8·74	31·34
South Australia	18·98	1·13	2·23	3·36	15·62
Western Australia	111·36	8·44	13·31	21·75	89·61
Tasmania	27·61	2·09	5·16	7·25	20·36
New Zealand	26·63	1·84	3·22	5·06	21·57
Australasia.....	33·04	2·38	3·96	6·34	26·70

It will be seen that, relatively to population, the colony with the largest number of serious offenders was Western Australia, which had a proportion of 21·75 per thousand of population. Queensland followed with a proportion of 8·74, while New South Wales and Tasmania occupied third and fourth positions with 8·28 and 7·25 per thousand respectively, the former having the largest proportion of offences against the person, and the latter against property. The rate of New Zealand was 5·06 per thousand, while that of South Australia is set down at 3·36, and Victoria closes the list with 3·27. It would be interesting to compare the crime of the principal colonies on the basis of the number of males of such ages as contribute to the ranks of offenders; but this cannot accurately be done at the present time, in consequence of the changes which have taken place in the composition of the people since the last census. In explanation of the position of Western Australia, it is well known to the police of Victoria and New South Wales—and, indeed, the fact is proved by the records of the prisoners received into Fremantle gaol—that a large number of criminals have left those colonies for the west during the last few years.

About one-third of the minor offenders of Australasia are charged with drunkenness. From the table given below it will be seen that in

all the colonies 47,578 cases of drunkenness were heard during the year 1896, convictions being recorded in 41,649 cases, or 87·5 per cent. of the total number. The colony with the highest number of cases relatively to population was Western Australia, the rate of which was 29·2 per thousand persons, followed by New South Wales with 15·1, Queensland with 13·1, and Victoria with 9·3, while Tasmania was last with a rate of only 4·0 per thousand. The figures for Victoria, however, only refer to apprehensions, information respecting persons summoned to answer a charge of drunkenness not being available, while, as already pointed out, drunkenness in itself is not a crime in that colony, but must be aggravated by disorderly conduct. In the case of Western Australia, it must be remembered that the proportion of adult male population is very high. From the figures showing the number of convictions, it will be seen that the magistrates of that colony and of Victoria take a somewhat lenient view of this offence, and only record convictions in about 65 and 60 per cent. of the cases respectively, while in the other colonies the percentage ranges from 93·3 to 99·4 :—

Colony.	Charges of Drunkenness.	Convictions.		Per 1,000 persons.	
		Total.	Percentage of Charges.	Charges.	Convictions.
New South Wales	19,499	19,385	99·4	15·1	15·0
Victoria	10,960	6,594	60·2	9·3	5·6
Queensland	6,105	6,069	99·4	13·1	13·0
South Australia.....	1,949	1,896	97·3	5·4	5·3
Western Australia	3,491	2,269	65·0	29·2	19·0
Tasmania	658	614	93·3	4·0	3·8
New Zealand.....	4,916	4,822	98·1	7·0	6·8
Australasia	47,578	41,649	87·5	11·1	9·7

But a return showing only the number of cases of drunkenness is not a safe index of the abuse of alcoholic liquors, for a great deal depends on the state of the law and the manner in which it is administered, and it is evident that the maintenance of the law intended to preserve public decency will always be less strict in sparsely-settled country districts than in larger centres of population where the police are comparatively more numerous, if not in proportion to the population, at least in proportion to the area they have under their supervision. The quantity of intoxicants consumed per head is perhaps a safer index of the habits of communities living under like conditions; but comparisons so based should not be pushed to extremes, for, as has often been pointed out, the larger part of the alcohol which enters into consumption is that consumed by the population who are not drunkards. The average quantity of intoxicants used in each colony during 1896 is given below, wines and beer being reduced to their equivalent of proof spirit. The

consumption of the various kinds of intoxicants will be found in the chapter on "Food Supply and Cost of Living":—

Colony.	Proof Gallons of Alcohol per head of population.
New South Wales	2·10
Victoria	2·62
Queensland.....	2·69
South Australia.....	2·18
Western Australia	5·37
Tasmania	1·34
New Zealand.....	1·60
Australasia.....	2·29

These figures show the importance which must be attached to police administration when studying the question of drunkenness. The strength of the police force in each of the colonies at the end of 1896 is given below :—

Colony.	Police.			Inhabitants to each Police Officer.	Area to each Constable in Country Districts.
	Metropolitan.	Country.	Total.		
	No.	No.	No.	No.	Sq. miles.
New South Wales	749	1,125	1,874	687	276
Victoria	680	732	1,412	835	120
Queensland.....	163	641	804	580	1,043
South Australia.....	160	209	369	972	4,323*
Western Australia	87	351	438	273	2,780
Tasmania	43	218	261	627	120
New Zealand	54	463	517	1,366	226

* Including Northern Territory.

The record of cases heard before a Court of Magistrates cannot be regarded as altogether a trustworthy indication of the social progress of Australasia, because, as has been pointed out, it includes many kinds of offences which cannot fairly be classed as criminal, and the number of these has a tendency to increase with the increase of local enactments. The committals for trial, taken in conjunction with the convictions for crime in the Superior Courts, may be regarded as much more conclusive on the question of the progress of society or the reverse. In some respects even this evidence is misleading, for, as already shown, in the less populous provinces there are no Courts intermediary between the Magistrates' and the Supreme Courts, so that many offences which in New South Wales, for example, are tried by a jury are in some of the other provinces dealt with by magistrates, and even in Victoria, where there are Courts of General Sessions, magistrates have a much wider jurisdiction

than in New South Wales. But for the purpose of showing the decrease in serious crime in Australasia as a whole the proportion of committals and of convictions in Superior Courts may fairly be taken, and this information is given below. It will be seen that during the thirty-five years from 1861 to 1896 the rate of committals per thousand of population has dropped from 2·2 to 0·8, and of convictions from 1·3 to 0·5 :—

Year.	Per 1,000 of Population.	
	Committals.	Convictions in Superior Courts.
1861	2·2	1·3
1871	1·4	0·8
1881	1·2	0·7
1891	1·1	0·6
1896	0·8	0·5

In noting these facts and comparing the results with those obtained in Great Britain during the same period, it must not be forgotten that some of the provinces of Australasia have been compelled gradually to reform a portion of their original population, and that in the case of colonies such as Victoria and Queensland, not originally peopled in any degree by convicts, the attractions of the gold-fields have drawn within their borders a population by no means free from criminal instincts and antecedents. Viewed in this light, the steady progress made cannot but be regarded as exceedingly satisfactory, and the expectation may not unreasonably be entertained that the same improvement will be continued until the ratio of crime to population will compare favourably with that of any part of the world.

Below will be found the number of convictions in the Superior Courts of each colony, at decennial periods from 1861 to 1891, as well as for the year 1896 :—

Colony.	1861.	1871.	1881.	1891.	1896.
New South Wales	437	628	1,066	964	879
Victoria	846	511	332	729	424
Queensland	24	91	92	232	256
South Australia	62	91	213	90	131
Western Australia	35	65	61	44	177
Tasmania	127	74	51	63	35
New Zealand	100	162	270	276	291
Australasia	1,631	1,622	2,085	2,398	2,193

The following table gives a classification of the offences for which the accused persons were convicted during 1896 ; also the rate of convictions

and of committals per 1,000 of population. It will be seen that the rate of convictions in the Superior Courts of Victoria is 0·36 per thousand; but if the persons who received sentences of over six months' imprisonment at the hands of magistrates were taken into account, the proportion would be as high as that of New South Wales. The colony of Tasmania has an even smaller proportion of convictions in Superior Courts than Victoria, and South Australia is but slightly higher, but in those two provinces, as already pointed out, no intermediate Courts exist:—

Colony.	Convictions in Superior Courts.					Committals per 1,000 of Population.
	Classification of Offences.			All Convictions.	Per 1,000 of Population.	
	Against the Person.	Against Property.	Other.			
New South Wales	181	611	87	879	0·68	1·04
Victoria	88	300	36	424	0·36	0·57
Queensland	68	168	20	256	0·55	1·05
South Australia	11	115	5	131	0·37	0·56
Western Australia.....	66	109	2	177	1·48	2·28
Tasmania	11	22	2	35	0·21	0·43
New Zealand	36	242	13	291	0·41	0·75
Australasia	461	1,567	165	2,193	0·51	0·83

There is no doubt that New South Wales would appear to much greater advantage in a comparison of crime statistics if there existed in that colony any law preventing the entrance of criminals, such as is rigidly enforced in most of the other provinces. In the absence of such a protective measure, the mother colony has become a happy hunting-ground for the desperadoes of Australasia. That there is ground for this assertion is shown by the fact that whereas in New South Wales offenders born in the colony only formed 34 per cent. of the total apprehensions in 1896, in Victoria 45 per cent. of arrested persons were of local birth; while at the census of 1891 the element of the population of local birth was larger in the former than in the latter colony.

The punishment of death is very seldom resorted to except in cases of murder, though formerly such was not the case. Thus the number of executions has steadily fallen from 151 during the decade 1841–50 to 66 during the ten years 1881–90. In South Australia the extreme penalty has been most sparingly inflicted, there having been only 10 executions in the twenty-six years which closed with 1896. The following table shows the number of executions in each province during each decade of the 50 years ended 1890, also those which took place in 1891–95 and 1896. Queensland was incorporated with New South Wales until the end of 1859, though Victoria became a separate colony

in 1851. It will be noticed that the returns are defective so far as Western Australia is concerned :—

Colony.	1841-50.	1851-60.	1861-70.	1871-80.	1881-90.	1891-95.	1896.
New South Wales...	68	{ 38	34	27	23	15	1
Queensland.....			14	18	15	16	...
Victoria			47	19	13	12	1
South Australia.....			12	6	2	2	...
Western Australia..	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	6	2
Tasmania	83	32	15	3	5	1	...
New Zealand.....	.....	.....	.....	12	8	1	...
Total	151	124	116	85	66	53	4

The returns relating to the prisons of the colonies are in some cases very incomplete. The prisoners in confinement at any specified time may be divided into those who have been tried and sentenced, those who are awaiting their trial, and debtors. The returns of four of the colonies allow of this distinction being made. The number and classification of prisoners in confinement on the 31st December, 1896, were as follow :—

Colony.	Tried and Sentenced.	Awaiting Trial.	Debtors.	Total.
New South Wales.....	2,216	138	3	2,357
Queensland	568	37	.....	605
South Australia	120*	4	.....	124
New Zealand.....	503	55	2	560
Total	3,407	234	5	3,646

* Including debtors.

The returns of Victoria and Tasmania do not enable the distinction made in the foregoing table to be drawn, but they give the total number of prisoners in confinement on the 31st December, 1896, as 1,238 and 137 respectively, while Western Australia records a daily average of 457. Taking the figure just mentioned to be correct for the end of the year, there was a prison population in Australasia of 5,478, or about 1·27 in every thousand of the population.

SUICIDES.

Suicide would unfortunately appear to be increasing in proportion to population, as well as in actual number of cases, since 1871. It is believed that the actual number of suicides is even larger than is shown in the tables, especially during recent years; for there is a growing

disposition on the part of coroners' juries to attribute to accident what is really the result of an impulse of self-destruction. The following table indicates a portion of the past history and present position of the colonies in this respect:—

Colony.	1861.	1871.	1881.	1891.	1896.	Average 10 years. 1887-96.
New South Wales	45	30	83	119	182	138
Victoria	64	90	102	119	116	128
Queensland	°	8	30	73	70	66
South Australia	13	11	34	31	31	29
Western Australia	1	°	4	6	25	12
Tasmania	7	4	6	9	13	12
New Zealand.....	*	°	42	56	70	61
Australasia { Total	130	143	301	413	507	446
{ Per 100,000 of popu- { lation	13·0	8·4	10·9	10·6	11·8	11·3

* Information not available.

Compared with the total number of deaths and the mean population, suicides in the Australasian colonies during the last ten years (1887-96) show the following proportions per 100,000:—

Colony.	Per 100,000 Deaths.	Per 100,000 Inhabitants.
New South Wales	922	11·8
Victoria	766	11·3
Queensland	1,207	15·9
South Australia	730	8·7
Western Australia.....	1,183	17·5
Tasmania	567	7·7
New Zealand	960	9·4
Australasia	881	11·3

Tasmania, therefore, stands in a more favourable position than any of the other colonies, and is the only colony in which the rate is less than in England, where deaths by suicide average only 8 per 100,000 of population. Compared with the rates of some European countries, however, that of Australasia is small, for during the period 1887-91 the average number of suicides per 100,000 of population was, in Denmark, 25·3; in France, 21·8; in Switzerland, 21·6; Prussia, 19·7; Austria, 15·9; Belgium, 12·2; Sweden, 11·9; Bavaria, 11·8; England, 8·0; Norway, 6·6; Holland, 5·8; Scotland, 5·6; Italy, 5·2; and Ireland, 2·4. It is the general experience that suicide is increasing.

ILLEGITIMACY.

The following figures show the number of births of illegitimate children, and the total number of births, in each of the seven colonies during the years 1871, 1881, 1891, and 1896 :—

Colony.	1871.		1881.		1891.		1896.	
	Illegiti- mates.	Total Births.	Illegiti- mates.	Total Births.	Illegiti- mates.	Total Births.	Illegiti- mates.	Total Births.
New South Wales...	782	20,143	1,263	28,993	2,115	39,458	2,445	36,506
Victoria	747	27,382	1,382	27,145	2,064	38,505	1,812	32,178
Queensland	156	5,205	345	8,220	684	14,715	732	14,017
South Australia	*	7,082	*	10,708	315	10,737	346	10,048
Western Australia...	*	760	*	1,005	*	1,786	156	2,782
Tasmania.....	*	3,053	*	3,918	185	4,971	272	4,603
New Zealand	*	10,592	534	18,732	638	18,273	834	18,612
Australasia	1,685	74,217	3,524	98,721	6,001	128,445	6,597	118,746
Per cent. of births...	3·19	.....	4·24	.....	4·74	.....	5·56	.....

* Information not available.

It will be seen from the above figures that illegitimacy is increasing in Australasia. The highest rate in the seven colonies is found in New South Wales, followed by Victoria, Western Australia, and Queensland. For the ten years 1887-96 the average rate of illegitimacy in each of the provinces was as stated below. In South Australia the proportion of illegitimate births is not quite half that of New South Wales :—

Colony.	Illegitimate Births. Per cent.
New South Wales.....	5·70
Victoria	5·25
Queensland.....	4·75
South Australia.....	2·84
Western Australia	4·90
Tasmania.....	3·39
New Zealand	3·56

The average rate for the whole of Australasia was 4·81 per cent. of the total births. This is much lower than the Scottish rate; but it is higher than the rates for England and Wales, Ireland, and the United Kingdom as a whole—the proportion for the ten years 1887-96 being 4·39 per cent. in England and Wales; 7·59 per cent. in Scotland; 2·47 per cent. in Ireland; and 4·54 per cent. in the United Kingdom. Further, while illegitimacy is increasing in Australasia, it has been steadily diminishing in the United Kingdom for a long number of years. An interesting comparison of illegitimacy in foreign countries

is afforded by the table given below, the rates being based on the number of births during a period of five years :—

Country.	Illegitimate Births per cent.	Country.	Illegitimate Births per cent.
Servia	1·00	Belgium	8·75
Netherlands	3·20	German Empire	9·23
Switzerland	4·63	Denmark	9·43
Roumania	5·75	Wurtemberg	10·03
Finland	6·42	Sweden	10·23
Italy	7·30	Portugal	12·21
Norway	7·33	Saxony	12·45
Prussia	7·81	Bavaria	14·01
France	8·41	Austria	14·67
Hungary	8·61		

With the exception of Denmark, Norway, and Switzerland, illegitimacy is increasing in all the countries included in this table.

DIVORCE.

The question of divorce is one of much interest to Australasia, especially as some of the colonies now offer great facilities for the dissolution of the marriage bond. The general opinion was that such facilities were calculated to increase divorce to an extent that would prove hurtful to public morals; and so far as the experience of New South Wales was concerned, for the first few years after the passing of the Act multiplying the grounds on which divorce could be granted, the fear did not seem to be altogether groundless; for in 1893 the number of decrees *nisi* granted rose to 304, in 1894 it was 369, and in 1895 it was still as high as 302. When, however, it is remembered that advantage would be taken of the change in law to dissolve marriages the bonds of which would have been broken long before under other circumstances, it is evident that there was little ground for the fear that this somewhat alarming increase would continue, and it was, therefore, not surprising to find a decline in 1896, although the fall to 173 decrees is too great to be taken as the actual decrease in divorce. In Victoria, where a somewhat similar law prevails, there was not, immediately after the passing of the Act, the alarming increase in divorces experienced in New South Wales; but while the number of decrees granted in the mother colony is now less than in 1893, 1894, and 1895, in Victoria the divorce rate is largely increasing.

In New South Wales, under the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1873, the chief grounds on which divorce was granted were adultery after marriage on the part of the wife, and adultery with cruelty on the part of the husband. A measure, however, was passed through both Houses of the Legislature in 1892, and came into force in August of that year, which

in the main assimilated the law to that of Victoria. Under this Act and an Amending Act passed in 1893 petitions for divorce can be granted for the following causes, in addition to those already mentioned:—*Husband v. Wife*.—Desertion for not less than three years; habitual drunkenness for a similar period; being imprisoned under sentence for three years or upwards; attempt to murder or inflict grievous bodily harm, or repeated assault on the husband within a year preceding the date of the filing of the petition. *Wife v. Husband*.—Adultery, provided that at the time of the institution of the suit the husband is domiciled in New South Wales; desertion for not less than three years; habitual drunkenness for a similar period; being imprisoned for three years or upwards, or having within five years undergone various sentences amounting in all to not less than three years; attempt to murder or assault with intent to inflict grievous bodily harm, or repeated assault within one year previously. Relief can only be sought on these grounds should the petitioner have been domiciled in the colony for three years or upwards at the time of instituting the suit, and not have resorted to the colony for the purpose of having the marriage dissolved. In Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia, Tasmania, and New Zealand, divorces are granted principally for adultery on the part of the wife, and adultery coupled with desertion for over two years on the part of the husband.

The following table shows the number of decrees of dissolution of marriage and judicial separation granted in each colony, in quinquennial periods since 1871, as far as it is possible to procure the information. Information for an earlier period will be found in previous issues. Divorce was legalised in New South Wales in 1873, and the figures of that colony for 1871–75 only cover a portion of the five years. The totals for all except the last three periods are exclusive of decrees granted in New Zealand:—

Colony.	1871-75.		1876-80.		1881-85.		1886-90.		1891-95.		1896.	
	Divorces.	Judicial Separation.	Divorces.	Judicial Separation.	Divorces.	Judicial Separation.	Divorces.	Judicial Separation.	Divorces.	Judicial Separation.	Divorces.	Judicial Separation.
New South Wales	21	...	87	...	112	6	210	12	1143	57	173	5
Victoria	33	6	41	2	74	8	124	9	441	10	106	2
Queensland	4	1	14	...	5	2	26	3	26	3	3	2
South Australia	22	3	35	2	31	10	23	2	30	2	6	1
Western Australia .....	...	...	1	1	5	...	8	...	9	...	1	...
Tasmania	9	...	9	...	9	...	15	2	21	2	3	...
New Zealand .....	*	...	...	...	...	...	110	5	101	14	36	2
Australasia	89	10	187	5	236	26	516	33	1771	88	328	12

* Information not available.

Taking the figures given in the foregoing table, and comparing them with the number of marriages celebrated during the same periods, the rates of divorce for the individual colonies, per 10,000 marriages, will be found below. It will be seen that in 1896 the rate for New South Wales was considerably less than that for the five years 1891-95, although, it may be said, it was still higher than in any country of the world except the United States and Switzerland. In Victoria and New Zealand, on the other hand, there was a large increase in the rate in 1896 :—

Colony.	1871-75.	1876-80.	1881-85.	1886-90.	1891-95.	1896.
New South Wales	+23·5	33·6	31·3	54·3	300·6	209·5
Victoria	16·0	16·9	24·4	31·1	119·6	141·6
Queensland	8·0	18·7	6·0	19·0	21·4	17·7
South Australia	33·5	34·6	33·1	24·3	29·9	32·1
Western Australia .....	...	20·5	44·8	53·5	38·6	9·3
Tasmania	27·4	22·0	18·0	35·4	50·8	31·1
New Zealand	*...	*...	*...	63·5	56·9	78·5

* Information not available. † 1874 and 1875 only.

In the subjoined table will be found the actual number of divorces and judicial separations granted during each of the years 1890-96. It will be seen that, taking the colonies as a whole, divorce increased rapidly until 1894, but has diminished during the last two years, owing to the reduction in the number of decrees granted in New South Wales :—

Colony.	1890.		1891.		1892.		1893.		1894.		1895.		1896.	
	Divorces.	Judicial Separation.	Divorces.	Judicial Separation.	Divorces.	Judicial Separation.	Divorces.	Judicial Separation.	Divorces.	Judicial Separation.	Divorces.	Judicial Separation.	Divorces.	Judicial Separation.
New South Wales	55	4	66	7	102	11	304	9	369	18	302	12	173	5
Victoria	40	..	99	..	91	1	85	7	81	2	85	..	106	2
Queensland	8	2	5	1	6	..	5	2	6	..	4	..	3	2
South Australia	2	..	5	..	7	..	8	1	5	1	5	..	6	1
Western Australia	3	..	4	..	1	..	1	..	1	..	2	..	1	..
Tasmania	2	..	3	..	3	..	6	..	5	..	4	1	3	..
New Zealand	21	3	20	3	18	1	25	1	20	4	18	5	36	2
Australasia	131	9	202	11	228	14	434	20	487	25	420	18	323	12
Totals	140		213		242		454		512		438		340	
Number of marriages	27,525		27,663		26,047		24,742		24,798		25,669		28,010	
Divorces and separations per 10,000 marriages....	50·0		77·0		81·8		183·5		206·5		170·6		121·4	

From the appended statement, which sets forth the latest divorce rates of the countries for which accurate statistics are obtainable, it will be seen that there is a larger proportion of marriages dissolved in Australasia than in any other part of the British Empire, but that the rate for these colonies as a whole is largely exceeded by a number of foreign

countries. Of countries where divorce laws are in force, no reliable statistics are available for Denmark, Hungary, Russia, and Spain. In Italy and Portugal divorce is not recognised by law :—

Country.	Divorces per 10,000 Marriages.	Country.	Divorces per 10,000 Marriages.
Canadian Dominion ...	4	Cape Colony	98
United Kingdom	11	Netherlands	103
Norway	16	Germany	165
Austria proper	43	France	180
Greece	50	Roumania	204
Belgium	81	Switzerland	432
Sweden	87	United States	612

INSANITY.

In Australasia, at the end of the year 1896, there were 13,303 insane persons under official cognizance, giving a rate of 30·8 per 10,000 of the population, as compared with 31·4 in England and Wales, and 32·7 in Scotland, so that it will be seen that insanity is slightly greater in Great Britain than in these colonies. An inspection of the table given below, showing the number of insane persons in each colony, and the rate per 10,000 inhabitants, will disclose the fact that the rate of insanity varies greatly in the various provinces of Australasia. In Victoria it is very high, being no less than 35·8 per 10,000; while in New Zealand it is 32·4, and in Queensland, 31 per 10,000 of the population. Western Australia is assigned the very low rate of 13·4; but in reality this only marks the limit of the hospital accommodation in that colony; for, according to the Superintending Medical Officer of the Lunatic Asylum at Fremantle, many applications for the admission of male patients were refused in 1896, owing to lack of accommodation :—

Colony.	Number of Insane.			Insane Persons per 10,000 of Population.
	Males.	Females.	Persons.	
New South Wales.....	2,353	1,488	3,841	29·6
Victoria	2,234	1,970	4,204	35·8
Queensland.....	938	524	1,462	31·0
South Australia.....	540	394	934	25·9
Western Australia	131	54	185	13·4
Tasmania.....	193	169	362	21·8
New Zealand	1,390	925	2,315	32·4
Australasia	7,779	5,524	13,303	30·8

There seems to be no reasonable doubt that insanity is increasing, both in Great Britain and in Australasia. In England and Wales the rate has steadily grown from 18·67 per 10,000 inhabitants in 1859 to 23·93 in 1869, 27·54 in 1879, 29·65 in 1889, and 31·38 in 1896; while in Scotland a similar increase has been experienced, the rate having been 19·8 in 1859, 25·2 in 1879, 29·5 in 1889, and 32·7 in 1895. The greater part of this increase is no doubt rightly attributed to an improvement in the administration of the Commissioners in Lunacy, by which a more accurate knowledge of the number of cases existent in the country has been gained; but the steady growth of the rate in recent years, when statistical information has been brought to a high pitch of perfection, plainly points to the fact that the advance of civilization, with the increasing strain to which the struggle for existence is subjecting body and mind, has one of its results in the growth of mental disease. In all the colonies of Australasia, with the sole exception of Tasmania, there is seen the same state of affairs as the insanity returns of Great Britain disclose, although the conditions of life press much more lightly on the individual here. No doubt the trade depression experienced in these colonies during the last few years has been the cause of the increase in insanity. The returns for New South Wales show that between 1877 and 1890 there was no growth in the rate, which fluctuated between 27·9 and 29·0 per 10,000 of the population, but that since 1891 there has been a steady and uninterrupted growth. The experience of the various colonies of the group is fairly presented in the following table, in which the two five-yearly periods 1887-91 and 1892-96 are compared with the year 1896. For Western Australia the returns for some of the earlier years are not available at the present time:—

Colony.	Rate of Insanity per 10,000 of Population.		
	1887-91.	1892-96.	1896.
New South Wales	27·4	28·6	29·6
Victoria	33·4	34·8	35·8
Queensland	26·4	30·0	31·0
South Australia	25·0	25·5	25·9
Western Australia .....	.....	.....	13·4
Tasmania	24·7	22·9	21·8
New Zealand	28·5	31·1	32·4
Australasia	29·0	30·5	30·8

Thus, the only colony where the rate is diminishing is Tasmania. In England and Wales it is found that the increase has taken place amongst what are termed the "pauper" class; that is, those whose relatives are not in a position to support them after they lose their reason. One

remarkable difference between the two countries in the matter of insanity is that in Great Britain the larger proportion of insanity is found amongst women ; and in the Australasian colonies, amongst men. In England and Wales the rate of insanity for males is only 29·51 per 10,000 as compared with 33·15 per 10,000 females ; but this difference is being slowly reduced. On the other hand, in all the Australasian colonies is the rate higher for men than for women. In New South Wales the rate for males is 33·8 per 10,000, as compared with 24·7 for females ; in Queensland the rates are 35·4 for males and 25·2 for females ; and in New Zealand, 36·9 for males and 27·4 for females. The smallest difference between the sexes is found in those colonies where the male population follow in greater proportion what may be termed the more settled pursuits. In Tasmania the excess of the male rate over that for females is only 0·2 per 10,000 ; and in Victoria, 3·8.

Dealing with the causes of insanity in England and Wales, taking those cases to which causes have been assigned, hereditary influence has been traced in 21·1 per cent. of the insane males ; intemperance in drink as the cause of insanity in 20·9 per cent. ; adverse circumstances, mental anxiety, worry, and overwork, in 13·6 per cent. ; and domestic trouble, including loss of relatives and friends, in 4·3 per cent. ; or, in all, 59·9 per cent. of the cases of insanity amongst males due to these causes. In New South Wales, which may be taken as typical of Australasia, the causes mentioned have only been responsible for 37·4 per cent. of the cases of insanity amongst men to which causes have been assigned, namely, hereditary influence ascertained, 7·1 per cent. ; intemperance in drink, 17·9 per cent. ; adverse circumstances, mental anxiety, worry, and overwork, 10·7 per cent. ; and domestic trouble, 1·7 per cent. Amongst the females, hereditary influence has been ascertained in 25·6 per cent. of the cases in England and Wales, and only 10·9 per cent. in New South Wales ; intemperance in drink, 8·1 per cent. in England and Wales, and 6·2 in New South Wales ; adverse circumstances, mental anxiety, worry, and overwork, 10·4 per cent. in England and Wales, and 6 per cent. in New South Wales ; domestic trouble, 9·2 per cent. in England and Wales, and 7·6 per cent. in New South Wales. These differences are what might be expected ; and the small proportion of cases in the colony set down to hereditary influence is without doubt simply due to the difficulty of obtaining knowledge of the family history of a large proportion of the population of Australasia.

A fruitful cause of insanity amongst women are pregnancy, parturition and the puerperal state, lactation, uterine and ovarian disorders, puberty, and change of life. Taking these together, it is found that they form a proportion of, 15·4 per cent. in England and Wales, and 18·5 per cent. in New South Wales. It would be premature to attempt to assign reasons for the difference between the two countries until the statistical inquiries are more developed ; but the life led by many mothers in the solitudes of the bush has a great tendency to produce morbidity, and the explanation of the higher proportion alluded to

may be traceable to this cause. There is a danger in forcing statistical comparisons too far, which these figures illustrate; for, although the percentage of insane women whose disease can be traced to pregnancy and the natural processes of generation is higher in Australia than in England, yet the actual proportion of the whole female population is lower, being 4·57 compared with 5·16 per 1,000.

For the purpose of comparison with the figures given above for Australasia and Great Britain, the rates of insanity per 10,000 of population, mostly based on the latest census returns, are appended for some of the principal countries :—

Country.	Rate of Insanity per 10,000 of Population.	Country.	Rate of Insanity per 10,000 of Population.
Ireland	45·1	Canada.....	27·4
Norway	39·0	Germany	22·8
Sweden	34·1	Austria.....	21·7
United States	32·3	Hungary	16·1