

methods. Our prisoners of better education are seldom criminals who have of set purpose employed their higher accomplishments in the commission of crime, in the manner of the professional criminal, but are mainly persons debased by drink, men who have made themselves "the beggar's companion and the constable's trouble." With us the main interest lies in prisoners with a very low standard of education. The facilities for learning to read and write in all British possessions argues—in the case, at any rate, of persons under middle age who cannot—that at the school age they must have played truant or been abnormally backward, or were neglected by their parents and others. When the school age had passed there was a significant lack of ambition in not attempting to overcome the handicap. Where any neglected person attempts to remedy his inability to read and write by so much as learning to read only, the implied initiative and perseverance immediately places him on a higher plane of citizenship. One naturally looks for a disproportionate number of illiterates among prisoners as compared with the free population. The actual number of prisoners classified according to education will be found in the table referred to, the significance of which will be greater when rearranged as hereunder:—

Percentage Proportion of Distinct-convicted Persons calculated on the Prison Population compared with the Percentage Proportion of Free Persons aged 15 Years and over calculated on the Free Population of the same Age, showing those with a Very Low Standard of Education, those who Cannot Read, and those who Can Read but Cannot Write.

—		Degree of Education.	Prisoners: Per Cent. of Prison Population.	Free Persons aged 15 Years and over: Per Cent. of Free Population aged 15 Years and over.		
Males .. ..	..	Cannot read ..	4.20 {	1.42 {		
	..	Low standard ..			3.60	0.95
	..	Can read only ..			0.60	0.47
Females .. ..	..	Cannot read ..	3.78 {	1.81 {		
	..	Low standard ..			3.36	1.07
	..	Can read only ..			0.42	0.74
Both sexes ..	..	Cannot read ..	4.17 {	1.52 {		
	..	Low standard ..			3.58	0.95
	..	Can read only ..			0.59	0.56

Thus placed the figures speak for themselves. Special attention should be directed to the relative differences between the absolutely illiterate and those who can read but have not learnt to write.

In the prisons there are not yet adequate facilities for the education of prisoners in school subjects, but something is being done. The actual number of prisoners for whom such instruction is indicated is comparatively few, and as these have been sentenced for varying periods for various offences, which to a large extent precludes their being grouped into classes in any one prison, difficulties were placed in the way of appointing an officer exclusively for this work. When any illiterate prisoner has expressed a desire to learn writing or simple arithmetic, arrangements have been made for him to work in his cell, and submit his exercises to an officer who has undertaken the supervision. Arrangements have also been made by supplying books and other facilities for some prisoners to pursue a higher branch of study. At Invercargill, where a number of ill-educated youths is collected, there have been for some time regular evening classes.

The general health of the prisoners has been satisfactory. A few who were on the sick-list for long periods (three at Auckland were ill for an average of 324 days), and a number who suffered for recurrent complaints (at Napier one prisoner was ill on eleven distinct occasions), combined to magnify the returns. Altogether 242 prisoners were ill on 353 occasions, any occasion incapacitating the patient for more than forty-eight hours, however insignificant the malady, being included.

The sick, so estimated, were 4.04 per cent. of the total (after deducting transfers from one prison to another) of all persons in custody during the year.

In Table A the total of the column dealing with the greatest number ill at any one time is given as 47. It must be understood that there were never so many ill on a given date, but the figure is the aggregate of the maximum return from each prison. The daily average of all prisoners sick was under 12. Twenty-nine prisoners were sent to the general hospital for treatment.

Six deaths occurred in prison, as against 8 in the previous year—4 at Auckland and 1 each at Wellington and Lyttelton.

The condition of the teeth of prisoners has been under consideration, and in a number of cases, especially of long-sentence prisoners, instructions were issued to have defects remedied.

There were 8 escapes during the year—the same number as in the previous year: Invercargill 2, Wellington 2, and 1 each from Waipa, Gisborne, and Hokitika, and one by jumping off the train when being escorted from Dunedin to Invercargill. In one case the prisoner was not recaptured.

There were 413 prison offences recorded against 252 prisoners, the details of which are given in the appendix.