

ESCAPES.

There were thirteen escapes during the year, and, with one exception, all were recaptured. This number is not higher than the average.

The extensive liberty allowed as a matter of reclamative policy at the camps and farms actually affords greater facilities for escapes, and, as many prisoners are creatures of impulse, it is recognized that in odd cases advantage will be taken of the freedom permitted, but, on the other hand, a measure of trust engenders self-respect, and experience shows the taking of a certain amount of risk is justified. It necessarily follows, however, that when individuals violate that trust they should be dealt with in a salutary manner by the Courts, as escapes occasion considerable inconvenience to the authorities as well as anxiety to settlers in the district concerned.

PUNISHMENTS AND INFRACTIONS OF DISCIPLINE.

Capital Punishment.—One execution took place during the year.

Flogging.—One flogging only was carried out as part of the sentence of the Court imposed upon a prisoner for an offence of a sexual nature.

Corporal Punishment.—In no case was corporal punishment administered upon any refractory prisoner for any breach of the Prisons Regulations, nor was it necessary to have recourse to any form of mechanical restraint in any of our institutions.

In last year's report reference was made to the reduction in the number of infractions of penal discipline since the adoption of more humanitarian methods of treatment of prisoners. This satisfactory condition of affairs has been maintained during the past year.

It is generally accepted to-day that harsh punitive measures too often failed in their purpose because of their severity. They engendered resentment and hostility to authority. Without discipline it is obvious that there would be disorder, but it should be maintained in a humane and constructive manner. In an institution a small incident can readily become magnified into a matter of great consequence unless the situation is dealt with by persons of understanding and experience. Each prisoner must be treated and understood individually. Some suffer from delusions of persecution, and often view with suspicion and distrust those who are really out to help them. Some adopt a truculent attitude, which in some cases may be a nervous reaction, and in others a misguided manifestation of character. Others indulge in self-pity, and attempt to rationalize their conduct. They develop excuse theories, and often feel more sinned against than sinning. But all require careful handling, and call for the exercise of tact and understanding on the part of the staff to secure an adjustment to prison conditions and the maintenance of a proper standard of discipline. A prisoner must be made to realize that he must first discipline himself by learning to adapt himself to the institutional regimen before he can hope to conform to the more exacting standards in civil life. It is fundamental that he should appreciate that an offence against society involves deprivation of liberty and the denial of certain privileges that law-abiding men enjoy.

The regular visits of Visiting Justices, Visiting Committees, Official Visitors, and the Inspector of Prisons have contributed materially in maintaining contentment and discipline. The reports received show that these authorities take a keen interest in the proper care and welfare of the inmates, they hear complaints, and make frequent inspections of all equipment, clothing, and rationing arrangements.

Although, as stated above, the standard of discipline generally was good during the year under review, subsequently, on the 25th April, at Mount Eden, an unusual incident occurred in the form of combined insubordination on the part of a group of prisoners. Ever since the "Dartmoor incident" certain imitative agitators have been endeavouring to foment insurrection, and latterly this refractory element deluded a number of prisoners into thinking that mass action and defiance of authority would be condoned.

Advantage was taken of the skeleton staff on Anzac Day, when several prisoners refused to bath and shave, and others refused to distribute clean clothing. This was merely a gesture or "try on" of combined insubordination. To ensure that the prisoners would be supplied with the customary issue of clean clothing, arrangements were made for this to be done by the staff. The prisoners later refused to return to their cells at the customary hour. As a precautionary measure the aid of Police reinforcements was sought, but they were kept in the background and the trouble was quickly taken in hand. Immediately afterwards the prisoners realized the grave impropriety of concerted insubordinate conduct, and all concerned were dealt with by the Visiting Justice, Mr. F. K. Hunt, S.M. Since then, it is satisfactory to note, everything has been working smoothly.

An immediate official inquiry was held by the Inspector of Prisons, Mr. D. A. Mackintosh. The substance of Mr. Mackintosh's report was identical with that of Mr. du Pareq, K.C. (then Recorder at Bristol, now Mr. Justice du Pareq), who made the official inquiry into the Dartmoor episode—viz., "That the prisoners had no substantial grievance, and that such grievance as they had would not have led to any disorder unless a few of the dangerous prisoners, partly by their own power of leadership and partly by intimidating, had played on the feelings and fears of others."

An editorial in the *London Times* referring to the Dartmoor incident stated: "A reading of the report makes the ill-considered clamour for a public inquiry look as foolish as it deserves." A precisely similar situation in this regard existed in connection with the trouble at Mount Eden.