

Deaf and Dumb Criminals.

The recent conviction and sentence of the deaf and dumb criminal James Manstead, who for a time terrorised a number of women in the suburbs of Sydney, opens up the interesting question of how the prison authorities deal with such men in the gaols of the State. It transpires that, so far as Manstead is concerned, he can read and write very well, and by means of a slate and pencil the warders are able to give him orders when the occasion requires. Manstead's offence was a very serious one, and his sentence was correspondingly heavy. Consequently he is treated with much more stringent regard to prison discipline than criminals suffering imprisonment for minor offences. Still, he conducts himself very well in gaol. There are, however (writes the Sydney "Evening News"), in one or two of the State gaols deaf and dumb criminals who are not as gifted as Manstead in the matter of education. These men—and women occasionally—can only understand signs in the deaf and dumb language. But even there they can be accommodated by the warders. It is astonishing how gifted some of these poorly-paid and very deserving officers really are. Many of them can speak several languages, besides being gifted with musical ability of a very high order. The average warder would laugh at the idea of his being unable to manage a deaf and dumb prisoner. One of them who was spoken to on the subject said: "Why, when you have to, you can pick up the language in a week—at least sufficient for all we want. But really a nod of the head is sometimes all the order you want. The deaf and dumb prisoner follows the rules just the same as the others, and he knows what he has got to do just as well as the man who can talk, but is not allowed to do so. Generally speaking, however, it is the exception rather than the rule to find much criminality among deaf and dumb people." In the asylums of the State where deaf and dumb patients have unfortunately to be confined occasionally, no difficulty is experienced in communicating with them. Nurses and keepers alike have always been found who take an interest in the cases, learn the deaf and dumb alphabet quickly, and pride themselves upon being able to fill any emergency call as the result of their energetic practice in an abstract study. Patients who have the gift of speech and hearing

practice in an abstract study. Patients who have the gift of speech and hearing are also very fond of practising the deaf and dumb alphabet, and communicating with their afflicted brethren. Some of them become wonderfully proficient in the end. In the gaols of the State criminals are occasionally met who cannot speak English at all. These are mostly Chinamen, but Germans, Frenchmen and Italians often require an interpreter when some instructions have to be given in connection with the regulations governing their respective sentences, and the character of the work they are required to perform. This difficulty is got over in several ways. Very often if it is a German or French convict who re-

quires attention, one of the warders may be able to meet the occasion. If not, some of the other prisoners of the same nationality (who can also speak English) are chosen for the task. Failing a local settlement of the difficulty, the Government interpreter is called in. But as a rule very little trouble is met with in the gaols of the State with regard to foreigners. As far as Chinamen are concerned, a great many of them either cannot or will not speak English, and an interpreter's services very often are necessary. The warders, needless to say, understand very little about the language of Confucius, but they can always find another Chinaman who speaks pidgin English, and who, for some slight concession, will willingly fulfil the role of interpreter when the occasion demands it. As a rule, there is scarcely an emergency that may arise in the gaols of the State that the Prisons Department cannot cope with in some way or other owing to the excellent all-round system devised and carried out by the present Comptroller-General.