

1886.
NEW ZEALAND.

EDUCATION: INSTITUTION FOR DEAF-MUTES.

[In Continuation of E.-4, 1885.]

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

No. 1.

EXTRACT FROM NINTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION.

THE advantages of this school are gradually becoming better known, and there is a corresponding increase in the number of pupils; the number at the end of the year was 37. As has been often stated, the principle and method of instruction are based upon the fact that the deaf are very rarely dumb; the want of speech being the result not of defect in the organs of speech, but of want of hearing. The children are taught to speak with the mouth, and to perceive the articulate speech of their neighbours by observing the movements of the lips. There can be no doubt as to the great ability and energy of the Director, Mr. Van Asch, or as to the high value of the educational methods employed by him. He has three assistants.

The lease of the premises occupied by the girls of the institution having recently expired, a lease has been taken of the property known as Sumner College. The accommodation is sufficient for the Director and his family, who formerly occupied a separate house, and for all the pupils except the older boys. These latter, with two masters, still reside in a separate cottage.

The expenditure of the school for the year 1885 was £3,189 11s., made up as follows: Salaries, £971 13s. 3d.; payment to the Director for board of pupils at £40 a year each, £1,703 5s. 4d.; rent, £340; travelling expenses, £79 19s. 8d.; contingencies, £94 12s. 9d. Many of the parents are quite unable to contribute to their children's maintenance at the school, and many others can pay only a part of the regulation fee, which is £40 a year. The recoveries from parents amounted to £344 7s. 6d. in the year. There are probably few who would grudge the expenditure of public money upon this specially interesting form of benevolence.

No. 2.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT.

SIR,—

Sumner, May, 1886.

In accordance with annual usage I have the honour to lay before you, for your consideration, my report of the institution for the year 1885–86.

A retrospective glance over the brief history of the school for deaf-mutes brings into view two prominent facts: (1) The prevalence of acute deafness over all parts of the colony; and (2) the comparatively rapid rate at which the young mutes are gathering round us for relief.

There is documentary evidence to show that the institution opened with ten pupils at the beginning in 1880, that there was an increase of eleven new ones in 1881, of four in 1882, of eight in 1883, of five in 1884, and of six in 1885.

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By some these figures are taken as proof that we have already collected in the institution the majority of the *bona fide* deaf-and-dumb children in New Zealand; but such an inference is, I think, prematurely drawn; for this year's contingent of fresh arrivals—being ten, with another to enter shortly—is on a par with the highest of any of former years, and seems to indicate that, although the number of those availing themselves of the advantages of the school is comparatively great, it may still be expected to grow as time causes the existence and nature of the school to be more widely known, or as several preventive causes, which now tend to keep several of these unfortunate children away, cease to operate.

The additional ten pupils are four boys and six girls, namely, two children from Westland—a district hitherto unrepresented in our community—three from Auckland, and five from Canterbury; and, dividing the total number of forty-three pupils now in the institution according to the provincial districts whence they come, we find that Otago contributes twelve; Canterbury, thirteen; Westland, two; Wellington, five; Hawke's Bay, one; and Auckland, nine. The remaining pupil has her friends in South Australia.

Of the three pupils who left us this year two remained at home in July last, and one at Christmas. The eldest was a girl of twenty. She belongs to Canterbury. For five years she had been educated in England on the manual or signing system. But, having spoken a few words in infancy, she had ever since evinced a strong desire to learn to speak again, and was brought to us through the instrumentality of a cultivated lady from Christchurch. The two years this girl passed in the institution were, it appears, well spent, for the father, a shoemaker by trade, in writing to express his gratitude, remarks: "She can talk very plain, but the greatest benefit she has derived is fitting her more for society, which before she avoided. Although the time was short that she was with you, it will prove a blessing for the rest of her life." I have been an eye-witness of the usefulness of this pupil in her own home.

The next is a lad of sixteen. He came to us at the opening of the school, a quiet boy, struck stone-deaf by fever at the age of six or seven, and still in possession of a remnant of speech. In my humble opinion this youth has benefited by the training and instruction to the fullest extent. The decay in his speech has been arrested, and he is now chatty and companionable; his mind is fairly well stored with useful information, and by practice he has attained to a remarkable degree of excellence in lip-reading. The father employs him in his business as blacksmith and shopkeeper, and shares my own opinion that the education the boy has received has, in a great measure, reduced and alleviated the extent and burden of his affliction.

The pupil who remained at home after the Christmas vacation is from Auckland. Her age was over fifteen when she entered. She was naturally bright, but wholly ignorant of a written word even. Considering the drawback her case presented from entering the school so late, which circumstance also affects her clearness in articulation, speech, and lip-reading, the system pursued has awakened her intelligence and to a very great extent enlarged her understanding. During the three years she remained in the institution she learned to express her wants and pleasures in simple language. She was made to understand the advertisements and short reports of accidents and similar occurrences in the newspaper; she received a fair idea of time and money, was trained in plain sewing, and, having a good physique, acquired a ready as well as an intelligent use of our treadle sewing-machine. Her parents have made arrangements for her to learn dressmaking, an employment for which she seems well fitted. May it prove the means of her gaining a livelihood.

One defect in our arrangements has suggested itself to my mind since the departure of this last pupil. It is desirable to let elderly girl-pupils like these have an opportunity now and again of watching and practising the art of preparing food. No doubt, want of space and convenience in our old premises would have proved great obstacles to such a proceeding in the past, had we attempted it, but in the future we hope, with your permission, to rectify this defect.

Persuaded, as one might be by a perusal of last year's detailed report, of the necessity for increased accommodation in the institution, the influx of so many new-comers this year would have made it now absolutely impossible to carry on the complicated work of boarding and teaching even in the three separate dwellings. It is for this reason a matter for congratulation, I think, that such a timely offer was received by Government from C. L. Wiggins, Esq., of Sumner, to lease his large premises known as "Sumner College," erected by that gentleman about five years ago for the purposes of a private boarding-school.

The practice of crowding large numbers of deaf children under one roof is open to objection from an educational point of view. It was, in this instance, not altogether in accordance with the Director's wishes; but, on account of the many difficulties looming in the distance if no arrangements were promptly made, as well as in consequence of the roominess of the place offered, it was thought politic and judicious to waive particular objections and to conform to the exigencies of the case. The agreement with Mr. Wiggins bears date from the 1st January, 1886, and will remain in force for a period of five years. The rental is at the rate of £360 per annum.

The building, of which we took possession in January, is a two-storey one, and is now doing duty both as Director's residence and as a home for the girls and the small boys. Twelve of the older boys and the two assistant-masters are still occupying Mr. Kay's house.

Besides two good bath-rooms and a well-appointed lavatory, the institution proper contains seventeen bed-chambers, four of which are extra large and serve the purpose of so called dormitories; a spacious dining-room to accommodate fifty or fifty-five persons; four sitting-rooms;

the usual culinary apartments with suitable conveniences; and four well-ventilated schoolrooms. The water-supply, so deficient in our old premises, is ample here, and there is provision for hot as well as cold water. The whole of the grounds, about ten acres in extent, is enclosed by a ring-fence, thus protecting the pupils from the dangers of all road-traffic.

One drawback, I am sorry to say, we have to contend with. It is that part of the grounds is liable to floods in winter, and of this we have already had an unpleasant experience. Better trenches may possibly be cut for the letting-off of the storm-water.

Excellent health has again been enjoyed by the pupils during the past year, not a single instance of a disorder having occurred that may be termed serious. It is plain, in fact, that to many of the older pupils regularity of habits and a well-regulated, liberal diet are the means of building up a strong physique and a sound constitution.

In the matter of payment of fees a little extension of time had to be given to a few of the parents, owing to slackness in trade or the failure of crops, but on the whole there is little cause for complaint in this respect. The sum of £395 6s. 8d. passed through our hands into the Treasury. With the exception of two or three children of small and weak capacity, the progress of all the pupils was satisfactory, and my best thanks are due to Mr. Crofts and the other assistants for their co-operation in the work, and for their willingness to promote the welfare of the pupils in every way.

The Hon. the Minister of Education.

I have, &c.,

G. VAN ASCH.

No. 3.

MEDICAL OFFICER'S REPORT.

SIR,—

Christchurch, May, 1886.

I have the honour to furnish the Government with my annual report upon the deaf-and-dumb asylum at Sumner, and I am pleased to be again in a position to state that the institution continues to be conducted in a very satisfactory manner.

The pupils now number forty-three, namely, twenty-three boys and twenty girls. Throughout the year the health of the inmates has been very good; only a few pupils, who have been brought to my house suffering from some trifling ailments, having been treated by me. It is, therefore, fair to conclude that this important institution has been placed in a very healthy locality.

The Director of the asylum, and his family, together with one lady-assistant, four servants, and thirty-one pupils, occupy the building which was formerly used as a boarding-school by Mr. C. L. Wiggins. In addition to providing accommodation for the persons named, the building has four school-rooms and two bath-rooms. When the contemplated necessary additions to the outhouses are completed—the water-supply being good and ample—the asylum will be a vast improvement upon the old arrangements. The school has also the great advantage of having ten acres of land attached to it.

There is a separate house connected with the institution, which is occupied by one elderly woman, two masters, and twelve of the biggest boys.

Notwithstanding what has been recently done to provide for the comfort of the inmates, I am compelled to call the attention of the Government to the fact that the accommodation is still very limited. Without overcrowding and inconveniencing those at present in the institution, it would be impossible to admit fresh pupils. I therefore respectfully submit that the deaf-and-dumb asylum should be dealt with in a liberal manner, and that no reasonable expense should be spared if it can be shown that the expenditure will tend to make the institution more efficient.

The Director, Matron, and in fact all the officers connected with the institution are deserving of all praise for the manner in which they have carried out their duties, and they are to be congratulated upon the marked success which has attended their efforts.

I have, &c.,

H. H. PRINS,

Medical Officer.

The Hon. the Minister of Education.

[Approximate Cost of Paper.—Preparation, nil; printing (2,850 copies), £3 5s. 8d.]

By Authority: GEORGE DIDSBURY, Government Printer, Wellington.—1886.

