

1892.
NEW ZEALAND.

EDUCATION: INSTITUTION FOR DEAF-MUTES.

[In Continuation of E.—4, 1891.]

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

No. 1.

EXTRACT FROM FIFTEENTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION.

There were 50 pupils in the school at Sumner at the end of the year—8 more than at the beginning. The expenditure was rather less than that of the year 1890, the total amount being £3,618 15s. 6d., and the details as follows: Salaries, £1,175 3s. 8d.; board of pupils, £1,542 17s. 6d.; rent, £605; travelling, £100 14s. 1d.; sundries, £180 11s. 6d. The contributions of parents amounted to £324 1s.

No. 2.

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR.

SIR,—

Institution for Deaf-mutes, Sumner, 20th May, 1892.

I have the honour to report that the educational task of the past year has differed in no sense from that of previous years. Considerable skill, patience, and physical exertion were required in the treatment and instruction of a large batch of newcomers. Forty-nine was the total number of inmates present throughout the year, this number being an increase of seven over last year, and the largest as yet assembled in the institution. Of these forty-nine children, ten entered the school as beginners, two returned after an absence of one year, and one after an absence of three years. Five left the school for good at Christmas time, and one for a year through indifferent health. The proportion of inmates from the South Island to that of the North was as twenty-eight to twenty; and one pupil was present from South Australia. At the end of the year all pupils were, as usual, taken or sent to their respective homes—that is to say, four went to Dunedin, one to Riverton, one to Greenhills, one to Invercargill, one to Lawrence, one to Sterling, one to Mosgiel, one to Portobello, one to Moeraki (twelve belonging to the Provincial District of Otago); one to Hook, two to Timaru, one to Methven, one to Kaiapoi, two to Papanui, one to Riccarton, one to Governor's Bay, one to Heathcote, and six to Christchurch (sixteen belonging to the Provincial District of Canterbury); eight to the City of Wellington, one to Upper Hutt, one to Marton, one to Bull's, two to Wanganui, one to Patea (fourteen belonging to the Provincial District of Wellington); one to Clive, one to Gisborne, one to Thames, and three to the City of Auckland. To house and comfortably maintain such a congregation of deaf-mutes was no light matter. The buildings, hitherto insufficient for the accommodation of all, proved now quite inadequate; and to guard against the evils of overcrowding, immediate steps were taken by hiring an additional cottage. This, however, could be only a temporary measure, and at the end of the year, when the leases of the institution's premises, including the cottages known as the Boys' Home, expired, a better and more permanent measure became needful. Large and, for our purpose, suitable houses are, of course, few and far between at Sumner, and the director's mind was somewhat relieved, therefore, when Mr. Wiggins offered to let the department his private-school premises in addition to the institution proper. By Mr. Wiggins's invitation, these were visited and critically viewed by both the Secretary for Education and myself. We found them much more spacious and better ventilated than when occupied in 1883; provided with two baths; and, what is of special advantage in Sumner, supplied with an ample water-supply in connection with the well at the present institution. As a temporary arrangement, the director unhesitatingly recommended Mr. Wiggins's offer to the favourable consideration of the Minister of Education. The advantages of the present arrangement are already manifest, for, in addition to the comfort of more freedom for the boys in the institution proper, the girls also experience the benefit of residing apart from the boys, under one roof with the director and his family, thus upholding the principle of separating the two sexes out of school, as originally laid down.

Teaching in the class-rooms has been carried on with the same vigour as in the past. Its results vary with the mental capacity of the pupils. In some instances outsiders describe them as excellent, or, as some put it, wonderful; but the director, knowing how easily the uninitiated are carried away by mere sound or voice, cannot, with his greater experience, fully indorse such flattering opinions; in fact, in several cases he might feel inclined to reverse the visitors' verdict. Professionally speaking, the progress on the whole, that of the mentally-weak excepted, may be best described as creditable.

The fact of a large percentage of weak-minded children being met with amongst deaf-mutes in all parts of the world has led modern science to pay more than ordinary attention to the circumstance. In Denmark and Sweden a law is actually in operation enacting that all newcomers, on entering the institution, shall be examined by the director, so that the weak-minded may be separated from those who possess normal faculties. On page 236, No. 8, *Organ der Taubstummen Anstalten in Deutschland*, edited by Vatter, will be found (translated): "The model institution of the future for deaf-mutes should provide for the separation of the weak-minded deaf-mutes from those who have their normal faculties. The institution in Schleswig, and the one at Wilhelmsdorf, Wurtemberg, already carry out the work of such separation. Other institutions have so far been obliged to postpone it. (Be it remembered that Denmark and Sweden enforce this division by law.) . . ." For shortness' sake, I direct those interested to *Organ* 1879, Nos. 5 and 6, and again to *Organ* 1888, pages 13 to 17. Our pupils, unfortunately, also vary greatly in their intellectual powers. After a twelve months' course of training, 75 per cent. have usually outstripped the rest, not only in their better comprehension of language and greater store of information, but also in their better mode and greater facility of acquiring knowledge. In justice to all, the director was bound, on this account, to divide the total number of pupils at the beginning of the year into nine divisions. By doing this the best interests of the school were studied. Truly one evil arose—namely, that of the ninth division being overplus, for only eight divisions can be attended to by four assistant teachers; but the director overcame this objection by undertaking the teaching of the youngest or articulation class chiefly himself.

The lessons in drawing have again been attended to by Miss Rosa Budden, of Christchurch. Most of the pupils are doing fair work in this branch, some good; but as yet none have shown any preponderating talent. Religious instruction by means of Scripture lessons has this year been taken up as one of the ordinary class subjects. A small book entitled "Scripture Lessons for the Young," by Harvey P. Peet, LL.D., New York, specially written for the instruction of deaf-mutes, is being read and explained. The director followed it for years with marked success with his pupils in England. For simplicity, clearness, and compactness it has not been, as yet, superseded by any other in the English language. I enclose a copy.

The conduct of the inmates has been of an exemplary nature; they are helpful and kind to one another, and none of them seem to tire of the hours of instruction. With eager eyes they watch for fresh knowledge; and to the upper classes, the perusal of the daily newspaper seems to have become a necessity, as well as a treat.

The director still reads with great interest the most scientific publication of the time on the subject of deaf-mute education—the *Organ der Taubstummen Anstalten in Deutschland*, edited by Vatter, and published by Bindernagel, Friedberg. Although a purely technical work, to students of psychology, of the science of language, and to aurists, its articles offer much food for reflection. To experts engaged in the education of the deaf it is an absolute necessity.

In reference to the under-mentioned invention by Monsieur Verrier, it may be explained that amongst the numerous cases of deaf-mutism about 50 per cent. are found to be not absolutely deaf, and probably 25 per cent. are sensitive to loudly-spoken sounds. Of the latter again, a portion would never have remained speechless but for the fact of their being deaf in infancy and childhood, for be it remembered that to acquire speech is a different matter from retaining it. It is a special claim of the articulation method, and it can be proved by practical illustrations in the Sumner institution, that by its means ten per cent. of the pupils learn to appreciate, at a short distance, clearly enunciated language; in other words, articulated words once learned as to their meaning by artificial means are recognised later on through the ordinary channel of hearing. In all such cases the use of an improved ear-tube, as referred to below, may probably be of practical benefit. Such is doubtless the meaning when my friends in Rotterdam refer to the invention of an improved ear-tube in their report of 1890–91 as one worthy of notice; and for the same reason I beg to enclose translation.

Let me conclude by comparing an institution for deaf-mutes to a complicated and expensive piece of machinery. It may be of material the newest, constructed on the most improved principles, but unless the material of such mechanism be sound and flawless, the energetic force of the fuel ample, and the lubricating matter unstinted, the machine will not work well, nor will the manufactured article be good and durable. Your director has seen institutions where some of these conditions were wanting. In a few instances he has seen antiquated methods, in other poor buildings and scanty means; but in no instance was the work more to be deplored than in that where the finest results were within reach, except for the energetic, concentrated, intellectual, heat-giving force of the teachers. Let me hope, in the interests of the poor deaf-mutes of this colony, such may never be the case in New Zealand.

The Hon. W. P. Reeves, Minister of Education, Wellington.

I have, &c.,

G. VAN ASCH.

Enclosure in No. 2.

On page 20 of the report for 1891 of the Institution for Deaf-mutes, Rotterdam, mention is made of an invention by the Abbé Verrier, of Paris, claiming to be of service in the oral instruction of deaf-mutes. The reporter, A. Symons, Esq., secretary and honorary aurist to the institution,

being pressed by many parents of deaf pupils for information on the point, addressed the following communication to the editor of the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, an almost literal translation of which is: "Many will remember the sensation produced in 1879 by the American invention of an instrument called 'The Audiphone,' said to be capable not only of making the deaf hear sounds more easily, but also of making them understand spoken words. The editor of the *Courant* was good enough to publish my full report in the issues of the 23rd April and 28th July, 1880, of the experiments tried on the pupils of this institution under my guidance as aurist. These reports were, later on, republished in the report of our Institution for Deaf-mutes, 1879-80. The results of these experiments were not favourable. Although I must own to have become acquainted with a few cases of sufferers from ear-diseases in which the instrument was of some use, for deaf-mutes it seemed to be of no use. Now we have to deal with another invention, possibly one of a more reliable nature. The Abbé Verrier, of Paris, has taken out a patent for a new invention, consisting, as far as we can ascertain, of a peculiarly-constructed ear-tube, by means of which, it is claimed, deaf-mutes can learn to more or less appreciate sounds. The inventor has permitted the teaching-staff of the Girls' Deaf-mute Institution, of Bourg La Reine, near Paris, to use this instrument. O. Claveau, Esq., Honorary Inspector-General of Charitable Institutions in France, first mentions it in the June number of the *Revue Française de l'Éducation des Sourds-muets* of this year; and M. Beranger, teacher at the Institution for Deaf-mutes in Paris, confirms and supplements these communications in the next numbers for July and August. Let it suffice for the present to call attention to this invention. It need hardly be mentioned that this invention has created the most lively interest on the part of our esteemed director (Mr. Isaac Bickers), of the other instructors, and of myself, who have spent the greater part of my life in the furtherance of deaf-mute instruction, and that common efforts were made to obtain further information in the matter. The adjunct-director of the institution, Mr. A. F. Fehmers, chose Paris for his holiday trip, and strenuously exerted himself in making further investigations. Having had a conference with the above-named M. Beranger, he visited the institution at Bourg La Reine, making himself acquainted with the progress of a dozen pupils (this being one-third of the number in the school), and at the same time getting an opportunity of a cursory examination of the instrument in question. In his opinion, there are some reasons to hope that its use may possibly be of some advantage in the oral instruction of deaf-mutes, without leading to any change in the application of the articulation method as followed by us. The instrument itself—which we are, of course, anxious to possess at an early date—is, however, not yet obtainable; in fact, it may be months before we can get it. Not until then can we begin to experiment for ourselves. The result will be made public in due time. May it be favourable."

No 3.

REPORT OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER.

SIR,—

Christchurch, May, 1892.

I have the honour to forward the following report on the Deaf-and-Dumb Asylum at Sumner:—

The pupils now number forty-six—viz., thirty-one boys and fifteen girls. The pupils, with the exception of slight ailments, for which they were brought to my house, have enjoyed very good health. The two establishments, with the out-buildings and grounds, have been kept clean and in good order. The present arrangements, besides securing the proper division of the boys and girls, afford better supervision, and much-desired increased accommodation in every respect, with the exception of the laundry, which is reported to be too small for the number in the institution.

The director, with Mrs. Van Asch and the other officials, continue their great interest in the institution and the pupils.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Minister of Education, Wellington.

H. H. PRINS, Medical Officer.

Approximate Cost of Paper.—Preparation (not given), printing (1,600 copies), £2 3s.

By Authority: GEORGE DIDSBUY, Government Printer, Wellington.—1892.

Price, 3d.]

