

1896
NEW ZEALAND.

EDUCATION: SCHOOL FOR DEAF-MUTES.

[In Continuation of E.—4, 1895.]

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

No. 1.

EXTRACT FROM NINETEENTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION.

There were 46 pupils in the institution at Sumner at the end of 1894, and the same number at the end of 1895, seven having left and seven entered in the interval. The expenditure in 1895 was £3,025 11s. 3d., and the receipts were £180 4s. 8d. The expenditure is made up of the following items: Professional staff and occasional tuition, £1,117 0s. 4d.; salaries of steward, matron, and wages, £472 12s. 1d.; rent, £470; housekeeping, £669 10s. 7d.; travelling, £100 6s. 5d.; school material, £11 9s. 10d.; repairs, £50 9s. 9d.; clothing (for some needy cases), £16 13s. 9d.; medicine, £13 19s. 4d.; drainage and removal of refuse, £36 14s.; sundries, £66 15s. 2d. The instruction is on the pure oral or articulation method—that is to say, the teachers teach by word of mouth, and the children are not taught to use arbitrary signs, but actually acquire the power of audible speech.

No. 2.

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR.

SIR,—

School for Deaf-mutes, Sumner, 10th March, 1896.

I have the honour to report that, as the years roll on, a steadily-growing feeling of confidence in the value of the educational work of the institution is becoming more and more apparent.

The increased number of pupils now in actual attendance, the anxious inquiries made on behalf of prospective ones, as well as occasional glimpses at the conduct and the life of many of the pupils of former years, furnish proof of this assertion. Forty-six was the total number of scholars receiving instruction in 1895, twenty-four of whom are boys, and the rest—that is, twenty-two—girls.

Weighed in the scale of intellectual capacity, thirty-two of these scholars must be returned as of average and six of superior ability, whilst eight cannot be classified otherwise than of inferior ability. The lack of sound mental power in some of these approaches the verge of imbecility, and frequent repetition therefore becomes in their case an absolute necessity.

That distance has not acted as a deterrent to parents in sending their afflicted ones to our institution is clear from the fact that our pupils hail from the most northern as well as from the most southern parts of the colony. A copy of the school register indicates that from Riverton, in South Otago, and from Upper Waiwera, north of Auckland, there were two pupils each, and two each from Timaru, Geraldine, Papanui, Masterton, Gisborne, and Auckland. There were five pupils from Dunedin, four from Christchurch, four from Wellington, three from Wanganui, and one each from Pembroke, Miller's Flat, Evansdale, Moeraki, Rangiora, Springfield, Kumara, Hokitika, Greymouth, Reefton, Nelson, Bull's, Eketahuna, and Napier.

With regard to the six young learners who entered the institution in February, I have to remark that four went through the introductory task of elementary exercise with ease, and one did so with labour. The sixth barely reached the final stage, so that it is doubtful whether she will be able to keep abreast with the rest of her class during 1896. Both teacher and pupil might be saved much trouble and time if parents of infant deaf-mutes of, say, four, five, and six years of age, bore in mind the following hints: teach your children to walk upright, to run and hop, to throw

and catch a ball, to lace their boots, carry a glass of water, &c. You will do excellent work if you let them blow up a paper-bag or a bladder, and you supply them with a slate and pencil; the former will strengthen their lungs and expand their chest, the latter will practise their eye and hand.

The number of pupils discharged at the end of the year was five. How greatly educational results depend upon the mental capacity of the learner, in a greater measure even with the deaf than with the hearing, is forcibly illustrated by comparing three of these; the same care and attention bestowed upon all produced only meagre results on the two oldest (girls), owing to their third-rate powers, whilst bringing out a specimen of uncommon excellence in the youngest, a lad of barely sixteen. This last, though on the day of his admission perfectly mute and equally ignorant with the girls of all words and languages, is now able to hold intelligent conversation with almost every one. He not only looks with intelligent and inquiring eyes at every object and every human action, but he reads such books as “Treasure Island,” by L. Stevenson, and “Robbery under Arms,” by Rolf Boldrewood, with comparative ease, and has, therefore, accomplished what to the deaf-mute of a public school is the almost Herculean task of realising and appreciating the secrets of our intricate and beautiful language.

The peculiar hearing boy, who came to us as an outsider, and to whom we have referred in former reports, was, by the end of the year, so far advanced in the art of articulating words and in the knowledge of colloquial language, that the society of deaf-mutes had become more a hindrance than an advantage to him. For this and other reasons he has now been sent to an ordinary village school, where the companionship of other hearing children will no doubt lead to his further development.

Frequent visits have been received in the course of the year from former pupils. There was a difference in the rate of their general progress. Those who passed through a fairly complete course of studies have made greater strides than those who left the school after five or six years' training.

The Law Court case of the 28th May last, in which one of the old pupils as chief witness, and the director of the institution as interpreter, had to appear, is of special interest to us from an educational point of view. With the explanation that only the questions from his Honour the Judge, from the Crown Prosecutor, and from the accused when cross-examining, were put in a clear tone of voice by the interpreter to the deaf witness, that none of the latter's replies needed repetition, or were repeated, I beg leave to quote the reports which appeared in the *Christchurch Press* of 29th May, 1895, and the *Lyttelton Times* of the same date:—

(From the *Christchurch Press* of 29th May, 1895.)

An Interesting Witness.—The prosecutor in one of the cases before the Supreme Court yesterday was a deaf-mute who had been in the institution at Sumner, and who gave his evidence by lip-reading through Mr. van Asch in a most satisfactory and audible manner, putting to shame many witnesses not so afflicted, whom one is accustomed to hear, or, at least, attempt to hear, in the Court. His Honour the Judge, and Mr. Stringer, the Crown Prosecutor, both spoke in terms of commendation of the excellent manner in which the witness gave evidence, testifying as it did to the excellence of the system at the Sumner Institute.

(From the *Lyttelton Times*, May 29th, 1895.)

A Deaf-and-dumb Witness.—The utility of the Sumner Institute for the Deaf-and-dumb was shown in a striking manner during the proceedings in the Supreme Court yesterday. The prosecutor in a “confidence trick” case was a young man, a deaf-mute, who was for some considerable time an inmate of that institution. It is easy to conceive what would be the utterly helpless condition of a person so afflicted without the special training given in the institute. As the result of that training, however, the young man is able to earn his own living as a farm servant, and to make his way about the world without much trouble. It is true that he was swindled by a sharper by means of a “confidence trick,” but it must be admitted that persons in possession of all their faculties have been victimised by exactly the same ruse. Mr. van Asch, director of the institute, acted as interpreter, and the youth gave his evidence in a perfectly distinct voice, straightforwardly, clearly, and intelligently. His Honour Mr. Justice Denniston complimented the witness, and expressed the great pleasure he felt in seeing the admirable results of the training which he had undergone, which had made an intelligent, capable member of the community out of a person who would otherwise have been practically helpless.

I have, &c.,

The Minister of Education, Wellington.

G. VAN ASCH.

No. 3.

MEDICAL OFFICER'S REPORT.

SIR,—

Christchurch, June, 1896.

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

The institution numbers now fifty—twenty-seven boys and twenty-three girls. They have generally enjoyed good health; the exceptions have been a few trifling cases, for which they were brought to my house for advice. One serious accident occurred; the boy was removed to the Christchurch Hospital, and is now very well.

The institution has been clean and in excellent order throughout. The water supply has recently been very inadequate for the requirements of the institution. The high-pressure supply is now within a very reasonable distance of the school. It would be advisable for the department to consider whether the expenses incurred in connecting the same with the school buildings will not be fully compensated by the enhanced safety in case of fire and the utility and comfort to the staff and pupils.

There is no more room to admit any new pupils. I therefore respectfully draw the attention of the Government to their taking into serious consideration the desirableness of erecting a permanent brick or stone building for safety from fires, and more economical working of this very useful institution.

I must express my entire confidence in the untiring care, kindness, and attention bestowed on the pupils by the master and matron, who are cordially assisted by the other members of the staff.

I am, &c.,

The Minister of Education, Wellington.

H. H. PRINS, Medical Officer.

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