

SESS. II.—1897.
NEW ZEALAND.

EDUCATION: SCHOOL FOR DEAF-MUTES.

[In continuation of E.—4, 1896.]

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

No. 1.

EXTRACT FROM TWENTIETH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION.

THE number of pupils at the end of 1896 was 48—26 boys and 22 girls. The expenditure for the year was as follows: Professional staff and occasional tuition, £1,055 5s. 10d.; steward, matron, and servants, £476 9s. 6d.; house-keeping, £715 8s. 11d.; rent, £470; school and workshop material, £14 15s.; medical attendance and medicines, £26 2s. 2d.; drainage, and removal of refuse, £39 14s. 8d.; repairs and other work on buildings and premises, £69 8s. 10d.; travelling, £73 13s. 4d.; sundries, £52 18s. 6d. The total expenditure was £2,993 16s. 9d., and the recoveries—fees for maintenance, &c.—£281 6s. 6d.

No. 2.

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR.

SIR,—

School for Deaf-mutes, Sumner, 15th May, 1897.

I have the honour to report that the number of pupils in 1896 exceeded that of the previous year by four, and amounted to a total of fifty. It was the largest as yet recorded in the institution's books. Even this figure does not include all the inmates whose names have been on the roll at one time. Fifty-one is that number; but the trial given to one deaf boy of low mental capacity during the first month of the school year conclusively proved that even the ablest of mentally defective children are not fit subjects to be admitted into a school for deaf-mutes. The boy referred to was accordingly sent back to his friends, and so cannot be included as an inmate of the institution.

The proportion of boys to girls was as twenty-seven to twenty-three; and from eight families sixteen deaf-mute children came to us in twos, and one other family sent us three.

Admitted as beginners were five boys and two girls. In addition to these, one boy and one girl re-entered the school after an absence of one and three years respectively. Riverton, Pembroke, Miller's Flat, George Creek, Anderson's Bay, Dunedin, Warrington, Moeraki, Timaru, Geraldine, Springfield, Rangiora, Papanui, Halswell, Richmond, Christchurch, Hokitika, Greymouth, Kumara, Reefton, Seddonville, and Foxhill are returned as the homes of the thirty-three Southern pupils; Wellington, Masterton, Eketahuna, Wanganui, Napier, Gisborne, Wairoa, Waiwera, and Auckland as those of the Northern pupils. Compared with the census returns of last April, these figures show a decided preponderance in favour of the South Island. Whether this means that several of the deaf-mutes in the Provincial Districts of Auckland, Taranaki, and Hawke's Bay are still allowed to grow up in ignorance and uncared for, there is no positive proof, but the finger of probability, at any rate, points in that direction.

Owing to severe colds and other slight ailments, also to heavy rains and local floods during the winter time, there have been fluctuations in the attendance. In July a death took place from heart disease; and in September, by order of the medical adviser, one of the most advanced pupils was sent home as severely suffering from the same complaint. Excluding these two cases, there were seven pupils who left the institution at the end of the year: four with the approval of the Director and three without it.

The test applied by the Director in judging whether a child ought to leave or stay is: (1) Ability to use and understand simple language, as applied to the common concerns of life; and (2) age. The rule that no pupil over eighteen ought to remain in the institution explains itself. There is a disposition on the part of some unthinking parents, however to question the right of the Director to