

His Excellency, and engaged in conversation on the powers and duties of the Governor as the representative of the Queen, on law-making, the war in Cuba, and on other topics of the day. Unmistakable evidence was thus given of the pupils' familiarity with conversational language; of their appreciation of the daily newspaper; and, above all, of their *capacity* to absorb information of every kind. Many and unreserved were His Excellency's expressions of encouragement to the workers of the school.

As a further proof of the general intelligence of the pupils of this class, I close this report by quoting the *précis* of a conversation held with and amongst them on the day following the animated election for the mayoralty of Sumner. A pupil, on being charged in a jocular way with neglect of duty because he had not voted, said, "I have no vote because I am not twenty-one." A second, being asked also to explain, remarked, "I have no vote because I do not pay rates." On receiving the explanation that they would all have a vote at the general election after being twenty-one, one of the two girls in the class immediately observed, "I would like to be without a Government." The teacher, astonished: "Why?" "Because there would be no taxes to pay." The second girl, seeing these remarks on her classmate's lips, at once observed, "If there was no Government people would break the laws." A lad added, "People would commit murder." Another lad, "People would steal; people would commit forgery." Notes of this conversation were taken immediately after it. They are quite accurate, and afford good evidence of the mental status of the class.

I have, &c.,

G. VAN ASCH.

The Hon. the Minister of Education.

No. 3.

REPORT OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER.

SIR,—

Christchurch, 9th June, 1899.

I have the honour to submit the following report on the Deaf-mute Institute at Sumner, for the year 1898:—

The number of pupils was fifty, being twenty-one girls and twenty-nine boys. On the whole, their health has been fairly good throughout the year.

The only accidents were an elbow dislocated by a fall, and a finger crushed in a door: both healed satisfactorily. Three slight cases of German measles occurred in July. In October a good many pupils suffered from disorders of the digestive organs, which I traced to the contamination of the water-tanks. These have been cleaned out, and to prevent a recurrence of this trouble I had a short piece of 1-inch pipe fitted with a tap, and fixed underneath the bottom of each tank.

The only other ailments worth mentioning were certain affections due to a constitutional tendency to tuberculosis. Twelve pupils, or about one-quarter of the total number, showed evidences of this kind of ill-health. Deaf-mute children are especially liable to tubercular affections, partly from the same defect as produced their deafness, and partly from the imperfect chest development resulting from their muteness. These tubercular affections assume a variety of forms, too numerous to mention, but the following have been observed at Sumner Deaf-mute Institute during 1898: Skin eruptions; inflamed and thickened eyelids; ear discharges; enlarged tonsils; adenoids; swollen glands in the neck and abdomen; frequent bronchial catarrh, with tendency to pleurisy. These cases have generally exhibited a feeble circulation, with cold hands and feet.

My first attention has been directed to improve the nutrition of these children, by substituting plenty of pure milk for the weak tea previously given; by largely increasing the allowance of butter; and by giving a cup of hot cocoa at bedtime, to break the long interval previously existing between the evening meal at 5 p.m. and the morning meal at 7.45 a.m. In certain cases cod-liver oil and other strengthening medicines are used. Every child is weighed on the first day of every month, and any who fail to show a reasonable increase in weight are specially examined and dealt with. It is significant that most of the children lose weight during their holidays at their own homes, but regain it soon after returning to school. A troublesome difficulty hitherto has been that no convenient method has yet been found for pasteurising milk in large quantities with the means at our disposal, but I expect soon to overcome this. I have examined the cows supplying the milk used, and found the usual proportion of tubercular cows among them, as well as the insanitary conditions of milking common to most small dairies; and these evils will probably continue until a code of rules is published, to which every dairy must conform which tenders for the supply of any Government institution. It is of no use condemning any particular dairy until the unfortunate dairymen are told what rules they are expected to comply with. Such rules have been published by the Victorian Government.

Professor Jonathan Hutchinson, of London, one of the most eminent authorities in the world, states: "Probably there are few practicable dietetic changes which would be more beneficial to our population in reference to scrofula (tuberculosis) than a large increase in the consumption of butter and other animal fats." Such children should be brought up in the country, and as much as possible in the sun and in the open air. Care should be taken to protect them against chills. Woollen underclothing from head to foot should be constantly worn. Sea-bathing and sea-side air have been found highly beneficial. The prevention of over-crowding, and the proper ventilation of sleeping- and class-rooms should be carefully watched. A sheltered locality should be selected for residence, with a mild, uniform climate, and a dry soil. Not only is a hilly district greatly preferable to a flat district for residence, but also the regular exercise of hill climbing, besides drill and gymnastics, is recognised to be the most effective means of expanding and