

No. 6.—SPECIAL SCHOOL FOR BOYS, OTEKAIKE, OAMARU.

REPORT OF THE PRINCIPAL.

Sir,—

Otekaike, 12th May, 1913.

1912.

I beg to submit to you my report on the school for the nine months ending 31st December.

ADMISSIONS AND DISCHARGES.

	Boys.	Girls.
Number of children in the school on 1st April, 1912	67	1
Number of children admitted during period	5	..
Number of boys nominally admitted during period	1	..
Number of girls nominally admitted during period	..	3
Number of boys discharged	1	..
Number of boys and girls in the school on 31st December, 1912 ..	72	4
Ages of boys actually admitted during the period—		
Between seven and sixteen years	4	..
Between sixteen and twenty-one years	1	..
Age of boy (seven years) nominally admitted during period ..	1	..
Ages of girls nominally admitted during period—		
Between seven and sixteen years	..	2
Between sixteen and twenty-one years	..	1
Ages of children on the school roll on 31st December, 1912—		
From five to ten years	11	..
From eleven to sixteen years	38	2
From seventeen to twenty-one years	14	..
Over twenty-one years	9	2
Totals	72	4

Admissions.—During the past nine months only five children have been admitted into residence, as against twenty-five during the previous twelve months. The small number of admissions, however, is accounted for by the fact that our accommodation is overtaxed. It is impossible to find room for another bed. There are, however, many cases awaiting admission, and further accommodation should be provided at once.

Discharges.—Only one case has been discharged during the year. In this instance it was found necessary to transfer this male adult to a mental hospital, as he was found to be very violent and uncontrollable when excited. He had been admitted temporarily for observation, and was about forty years of age.

DEATHS.

We have had no deaths. During the past five years only one child has died. As I pointed out to you last year, the death-rate among the children has been remarkably low.

EXTENSION OF THE PERIOD OF CONTROL.

The Education Amendment Act of 1910 provides for the further detention of feeble-minded or epileptic children after arriving at the age of twenty-one years when through mental or physical defect or otherwise such children are not, in their own or the public interest, considered fit and proper persons to be free from guidance and control. During the past year three boys have been further detained. Since the passing of this Act eight children (seven boys and one girl) have been detained for a further period. In each case, in accordance with the provisions of the Act above mentioned, at the completion of the respective periods of further detention a further and complete inquiry will be made into the mental condition of these children, so that at any time should they be found capable of taking charge of their own lives outside the kindly supervision of an institution they will be set free.

In connection with the question of lifelong segregation of feeble-minded children, the greatest danger to the race lies in the liberating of the higher-grade cases after an expensive training in a school such as our own. According to available statistics the hereditary proportion of feeble-minded cases lies somewhere within the limits of 50 to 75 per cent. of the total number. Inherited feeble-mindedness, then, being so general and persistent, may be looked upon as due to a constitutional anomaly. The same remark applies to the remaining 25 per cent. of the cases, which may be termed "acquired feeble-mindedness," seeing that any pathological condition acquired during the life of an individual and which becomes sufficiently general may easily become a constitutional anomaly, and if permitted will form the starting-point of a line of feeble-minded persons. Whether, then, the high-grade cases, who more nearly approximate to the normal, are diagnosed as belonging to what may be termed the "congenital" or "acquired" sections, the danger of perpetuation of the mentally unfit is much the same. In this age of sentiment we require persons whose business it is to decide the question of further detention of our cases to look at the question not only from the standpoint of the parents—who probably for years have been hoping against hope that at seven, fourteen, or twenty-one years some miraculous change will take place in their boy or girl, and that he or she will suddenly be able to assume all the duties and responsibilities of citizenship which normal persons are supposed to possess—but from the point of view of what is best for the future well-being of the race.