

During the summer season the Director had the pleasure of receiving in the institution a number of visitors, amongst others the Rev. J. Wilde, M.A., one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools. The principles of the pure-articulation method were explained to him, and our observations were based on results as seen in living examples from different classes in this institution. When a final walk was taken through the schoolrooms Mr. Wilde asked one of the elder pupils of the advanced class, whom he had not seen before, "Show me the globe." Then, again, *vivá voce*, to the boy, "Show me on the globe the way I came from England." This being done the reverend gentleman again observed, *vivá voce*, "But I did not come by the Cape of Good Hope, I came through Canada. Show me the way through Canada." As the pupil repeated the questions and accurately showed him the route here *viá* Canada and San Francisco the reverend School Inspector seemed to leave us, I thought, persuaded that New Zealand cannot be considered to be far behind other countries in the world's noble race of deaf-mute education.

Relatives of scholars and distant friends are often inquiring after the progress of the pupils, and the working of the institution. It is impossible for me to attend to all these inquiries fully. A reprint of a public report of proceedings during a recent visit of the Minister of Education would, I believe, serve a good purpose. I beg leave therefore to enclose copy of such report as part of my annual report of the Institution for Deaf-mutes for the year 1888.

The Hon. the Minister of Education, Wellington.

I have, &c.,
G. VAN ASCH.

Enclosure in No. 2.

[Extract from the *Press*.]

TEACHING THE DUMB TO SPEAK.—AN AFTERNOON AT THE SUMNER INSTITUTE.

YESTERDAY afternoon the Hon. G. Fisher, Minister of Education, paid a visit of inspection to the Sumner Institute for Deaf-and-dumb. Messrs. Loughrey, Jones, and Joyce, M.H.R.'s, accompanied the Minister, and to all the visit proved extremely interesting.

A very pleasant drive brought the party to the institute, where they were received by Mr. Van Asch, the Principal, who at once proceeded to give an exposition of the way in which the work of teaching the deaf-and-dumb is carried on. Very few people realise the magnitude of the task imposed. The teacher is met at the outset with the stupendous difficulty not only that his pupils are completely isolated from the world, but that they are absolutely destitute of ideas. Their minds are like a blank sheet of paper. They have never heard the sound of a human voice; they know the the names of nothing that they see; they do not even know that things have names. The teacher takes them in hand, and by dint of infinite patience, combined with unvarying good temper, he gradually arouses the dormant faculties. In the majority of cases deaf-mutes are mute simply because they are deaf. The organs of voice are all right, but have never been called into action. The ordinary child learns to talk by imitating sounds which it hears. These are unfortunates into whose ears no articulate sound has ever found its way or can ever penetrate. Yet they are taught to talk, and even to follow the conversation of others. They learn to talk by watching the motion of the teacher's lips and feeling the movements of the vocal organs by placing a hand upon his throat. They learn to understand what he is saying by reading the motions of his lips. First they are taught the names of objects which they see—to repeat them after the teacher, to recognise the words as he utters them, and to write them on their slates. Afterwards they are gradually led on from concrete to abstract ideas. It is slow work, albeit extremely interesting, this developing of an utterly dormant intelligence. It takes eight years on an average before a deaf-mute child can be got to read and thoroughly understand a simple book—say, "Grimm's Fairy Tales." Yet so successful is the method, so marvellous are its results, that Mr. Van Asch can tell of pupils in England, who have been able to give the necessary time to attain the highest developments of the system, who can read and appreciate works of philosophy and the highest and most difficult branches of our literature.

The visitors to the Sumner Institute yesterday were first shown some children who were admitted only last February, and consequently in the rudiments of their teaching; and were gradually shown pupils more and more advanced, until those in the highest standard in the school were reached. When we say that these latter were in a fair way of understanding a property-tax assessment form—which was the subject of their lesson that afternoon—we are sure no higher testimony to the capability of the system for enabling one to master the intricacies of life could be desired or imagined. It may seem an odd subject for a lesson, but Mr. Van Asch believes in giving the children a practical knowledge of the business of life, and most people will agree that he has taken a wise view of the position.

It was a pathetic yet withal most interesting sight, and one which afforded much cause for thankfulness, to see the children at their work. The pathetic part was the intense earnestness which they threw into it. There seemed to be an infinite yearning after more enlightenment in those hitherto walled-up existences, and every look and action of the children seemed to express this longing. The happy part of it was to see the complete understanding—the companionship, in fact—existing between the Instructor and the children. Mr. Van Asch infuses plenty of fun into his teachings, and it is easy to see that the children thoroughly appreciate it. Some of the questions put to them might seem absurd to an outsider, but the gradual arousing of a sense of absurdity is one of the best means in the hands of the teacher for instilling accurate and definite ideas in the minds of the children. One boy, whose father is in Melbourne engaged in railway construction, was asked if he was making a railway to New Zealand. He laughed, and said "No." "Why not?" asked Mr. Von Asch. "Too far," said the boy. This, of course, was not a sufficient answer. There would be nothing inherently impossible in constructing such a railway if it were only a question of distance. So he was asked again, and then replied, "The sea." It would not be very difficult to teach such a boy the meaning of "sea" or "railway," but the idea attached to