

1889.
NEW ZEALAND.

EDUCATION: INSTITUTION FOR DEAF-MUTES.

[In Continuation of E.-4, 1888.]

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

No. 1.

EXTRACT FROM TWELFTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION.

INSTITUTION FOR DEAF-MUTES.

OF the forty-two pupils under instruction at the end of 1887 there were nine who did not return after the midwinter holidays. Seven of these had received sufficient instruction (on the articulation method) to qualify them for taking part in ordinary conversation, and two were prematurely withdrawn by their parents. Six new pupils were received during the year, and the number in attendance at the end of 1888 was thirty-nine.

The expenditure for the year was £3,210 14s. 5d., accounted for as follows: Salaries, £1,206 16s. 7d.; board of pupils, £1,470 10s. 7d.; rent, £345; travelling, £89 1s. 5d.; sundries, £99 5s. 10d. Towards this cost the parents contributed £329 11s. The expenditure for the current year will be on a lower scale, the Director's salary and the rate of payment for the pupils' board having both been considerably reduced.

No. 2.

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR.

SIR,—

Sumner, 5th June, 1889.

In submitting for your information my report of the School for Deaf-mutes for the year 1888, I have the honour to state that the official duties of the institution's staff have been performed with strict regularity, that the school work was done with care, and that the progress of the pupils, with few exceptions, was marked and satisfactory.

The number of inmates amounted to thirty-nine. There were pupils from all parts of the colony, viz.: nine each from the Provincial Districts of Otago, Canterbury, and Auckland, one from Westland, two from Nelson, six from Wellington, and two from Hawke's Bay, while the one from Adelaide remained.

A detailed analysis of these numbers further shows that, of the twenty-one pupils from the South Island, Orepuki sent 1; Invercargill, 1; Stirling, 2; Greytown, 1; Dunedin, 3; Port Chalmers, 1; Akaroa, 1; Yaldhurst, 1; Kaiapoi, 1; Christchurch and suburbs, 6; Brunner, 1; Reefton, 1; and Waimangaroa, 1.

Of the seventeen pupils from the North Island, the City of Auckland contributed 6; the Thames, 1; Gisborne, 2; Napier, 2; Patea, 1; Marton, 1; Bulls, 1; and Wellington, 3.

Nine pupils left the institution at the close of the year—four with a good, and three with a fairly good, education; whilst two were withdrawn through causes which call for special notice.

Of the seven pupils who stayed with us a sufficient length of time, several are, by education and natural talent, capable of becoming useful members of society. One of them, a boy, whose parents reside in a small town, has since his return home been apprenticed to the tailoring business, with what prospect may be seen from the following extract from his father's letter: "We received your kind letter, making inquiries respecting Alfred. I showed it to his employer, and he said he was getting on well, and had every reason to hope he would make a good tradesman, as he learned things readily. He is a good boy, and generally will do anything I ask him." Two others—both bright boys—are anxious to follow a similar course, but the fact of their being located some distance from a busy centre has hitherto prevented their friends from making arrangements for their learning a trade. From letters received and enclosed it will be seen that their time at home has not been wholly spent in idleness.

Facts like these, however, go far to prove the correctness and wisdom of the practice pursued in the European and American institutions for deaf-mutes—viz., that of backing-up the acquisition of school-learning by some training in a useful trade.

With regard to the two pupils who remained at home after the holidays without having acquired even a fair amount of education, both, as being typical cases which may recur from time to time, demand my special notice:—

No. 1.—J. H., a girl of about fourteen years old, of excellent ability, has been at school two years and ten months. Her progress in speaking and lip-reading, in reading and writing, and in the understanding of simple language was, for the time, remarkable; her aptitude for domestic matters good. In a few years she would have been one of the most advanced and most creditable pupils in the school—in a position to learn millinery or dressmaking easily and readily. As it is, this girl will be kept at home probably for no other purpose than mere domestic drudgery. To say that an intelligent child like this will have no permanent benefit from the short training she has had would be extravagant; on the other hand, the Dutch proverb, “Standing still means going back,” is applicable; and it is evident that to make use in this manner of the provisions of the State’s labour and expenditure is tantamount to abusing a great privilege, because the object of humanising the deaf-mute, for which the institution at Sumner has been established, is thus in a measure defeated.

To check such abuses, I recommend that in all future cases in which parents wish to avail themselves of the State’s assistance in educating their deaf children a clause be inserted in the agreement binding the parents to leave their children under instruction for as long a period of time as the Minister of Education shall determine.

No. 2.—A little boy of eight year’s old, equally bright and favourably circumstanced. He attended school from the beginning of February, 1888, until Christmas of the same year. The usual course of articulation exercises and writing was gone through, so that at the end of the year the little fellow could, unassisted, clearly speak, properly write, and thoroughly understand such words as “come,” “go out,” “look,” “dinner,” “beef,” “pudding,” “play marbles,” “fire,” “ten,” “who is that?” “on the table,” &c. Imagine my astonishment when on the return of the pupils I was told by the assistant in charge: “F.’s mother could not send him, because the family doctor and the district schoolmaster were of opinion that F. would now learn to speak all right.”

No matter how flattering this dictum might sound, or how serious its import will be to the unfortunate child, one could not keep a serious countenance over such profound ignorance and utter nonsense. The deaf-and-dumb learning to speak in the ordinary way after a year’s training in the first elements of articulation! One might as well expect perpetual motion to proceed from the single stroke of a whip to a top. No, sir, the task of lifting the thick veil of ignorance from the deaf cannot thus be disposed of. If a life-long study of the deaf-and-dumb, and an experience of more than thirty years’ labour amongst them has impressed my mind with any fact, it is this: that by a combination of unceasing care, indomitable perseverance, patient industry, untiring energy under the guidance of skill and experience, *much* may be accomplished by way of *alleviating* the affliction of deaf-mutism, but this *much* is still comparatively little. In spite of all the labour and striving, much has to be left undone—much remains with which the ablest teacher of the deaf is dissatisfied; and I doubt if there be any sphere of human labour in which the earnest worker is so much, so often, and so forcibly reminded of the imperfection of all things human as in that of the teacher of the deaf-and-dumb.

The health of the pupils may be said to have been good throughout the year. One boy from Otago, intellectually, perhaps, the weakest in the school, returned in February with his hand in a dreadful condition. It appears that the lad had during the holidays by some means or other got possession of a piece of dynamite. Possibly under the idea that it was a rocket, he must have lighted the fuse, with the inevitable result that some of his finger-ends were blown away. I mention this to warn parents and foster-parents. Deaf children are meddlesome by nature; they have little fear, and are often ignorant of real danger; the less capable they are intellectually the more they require supervision and watchfulness.

An extraordinary *contra* to this piece of stupidity is presented to us in the person of an old pupil, F. B. by name. This young man, whom I visit occasionally to encourage him in his daily pursuit as a farmer, is an object of admiration to most of his more gifted brethren in the neighbourhood. His capacity for and industry in all kinds of farm-work is really astonishing; and not only is he to his parents a most valuable helpmate, but recently, during a very severe illness of the father, this deaf young man carried on the whole practical business of the farm—in sowing-time, too—including the direction of the men, satisfactorily and with success. Even in the choice and aim of his amusements he is rational, for he has taken to the pastime of rifle-shooting, one out of very few suited to the defect of deafness. Instead of being a source of danger and weakness he is an element of strength, and a credit to the club to which he belongs. How difficult it is, however, for deaf-mutes to share in the rational enjoyments of hearing persons, one incident may be mentioned by way of illustration: When this young man was present at a prize-firing some time ago in another part of New Zealand an objection was raised against his taking part in the chief matches on account of his deafness. The objection, emanating from a brother volunteer of his own district, being held good, prevented B., of course, from sharing the pleasure and excitement of the contest. He returned satisfied with his shooting, for he had gained a few prizes, but disappointed because he had been kept out of the sport of the interprovincial matches. Ever since his thoughts and hopes have been fixed on the membership of the Christchurch Reserve, which, he believes, would entitle him to take part in all matches. He presses me to give him every assistance. When I point out that the authorities may again object to his becoming a member on the ground of his natural infirmity he meets my objection with the pertinent remarks: He saw the lame and the deformed (meaning a cripple and a person with his neck on one side) take part in the prize-shooting at K., why should he, who can move about, and aim so much better, be excluded? This youth’s logic is, perhaps, not so irrational for a deaf-mute, for in times of war and real danger, when a man-of-war might be seen in our harbours, would the people and the authorities reject him as a marksman because he cannot hear? I doubt it.

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 *via* 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 Ash 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

“too far” is not so easy to convey. To instil into such minds the precise value of a conjunction is more difficult still, but this is successfully done.

There was no over shyness on the part of the children. They appeared to take great delight in their work, and to be pleased to show visitors what they could do. Mr. Van Asch could not refrain from indulging in a little fun, even at the visitor's expense. He tried to persuade one boy that his father was present, and pointed to a member of the local Press whose paternal aspect is proverbial, and said, “There is your father.” If fatherliness of expression were sufficient the gentleman in question might have been embraced by the whole Institute, but the boy was not to be taken in, and persisted in a smiling but firm refusal to acknowledge any relationship. The incident, of course, was of practical value as showing that the teacher was understood, and that there was nothing parrot-like in the replies given. A little girl who had written some words on her slate was told to take it to Mr. Fisher. She repeated the name readily enough, but was in a difficulty as to the person. “Take it to the gentleman who is bald” said Mr. Van Asch, and the girl, with a bright look round, tripped off with the slate and handed it with an amused smile to Mr. Fisher amid a roar of laughter, in which no one joined more heartily than the Minister himself.

It will be asked, “Do the children learn to speak plainly?” To this the answer is that they can talk so as to be understood even by strangers, and in some cases the articulation is really very good. They have no idea of intonation, and so speak in one key, and there is a strange wistfulness about the sound of the voice that strikes the listener. Some learn to speak much more distinctly than others, and this apart from the relative amount of general intelligence. And the development of ideas is, of course, far more important even than the teaching to talk, although the public are apt to run away with the notion that the latter is the only object of the teacher's work. It may be added that the children were receiving a drawing-lesson from a Christchurch lady when the visitors arrived at the Institute, and they appeared to take great interest in it, and to be shaping well.

There are at present thirty-eight children in the Institute. They are evidently well looked after, and appeared the picture of health. The great drawback to the place is the inconvenience of the buildings, and the want of means of teaching the children industrial occupations. For the latter purpose it would be better to have the Institution nearer town, in proximity to the railway and workshops. There is no doubt, however, that an admirable work is being carried on in giving an intelligent interest in life to those who otherwise would be shut off from all higher enjoyments. It is, in fact, the liberation of an imprisoned spirit which but for such aid would be shut up and isolated more effectually than any captive confined within stone walls.

No. 3.

MEDICAL OFFICER'S REPORT.

SIR,—

Christchurch, May, 1889.

I have the honour to forward the following report on the deaf-and-dumb asylum at Sumner.

The children now number forty. They have all enjoyed, throughout the year, excellent health, and all appear cheerful, contented, and happy. The institution is kept clean and in good order, and all the sanitary arrangements have been properly attended to. The children are making satisfactory progress in their ordinary education. In addition, the girls are taught to make and mend their dresses, to darn, knit stockings, and do other woollen-work. They are also practised in waiting at table, at ironing, and in keeping their bedrooms neat and tidy. They are also encouraged to be orderly and clean in their habits. The elder pupils are taught to draw from models; and one paints flowers from nature. The boys generally do some gardening, fencing, and other healthy outdoor work. When a permanent and well-organized establishment is built for deaf-mutes the Government will have to take into consideration the necessity for training the boys in industrial pursuits. I can, in conclusion, only again reiterate what I have on former occasions said: that the deaf-and-dumb asylum at Sumner is a credit to the colony and to those who have charge of it; and it is with perfect confidence that I can recommend the institution to all parents and guardians who have children requiring the training which it affords.

I have, &c.,

H. H. PRINS, Medical Officer.

The Hon. the Minister of Education, Wellington.

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