

SESS. II.—1891.

NEW ZEALAND.

EDUCATION: INSTITUTION FOR DEAF-MUTES.

[In Continuation of E.-4, 1890.]

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

No. 1.

EXTRACT FROM FOURTEENTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION.

The number of pupils at the School for Deaf-mutes, at Sumner, at the end of 1890 was 42, the same as at the beginning of the year. The proposed removal of the school to a new site at Riccarton stands indefinitely postponed. The expenditure for the year was £3,633 0s. 3d.; new site, £606 9s.; salaries, £1,151 8s. 9d.; board of pupils, £1,331 5s. 7d.; rent, £345; travelling, £111 5s. 6d.; sundries, £87 11s. 5d. Contributions amounting to £386 16s. 8d. were received from parents.

No. 2.

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR.

SIR,—

May, 1891.

I have the honour to report on the Institution for Deaf-mutes for the year 1890. Nothing of a special character has to be named in our mode of dealing with the technical difficulties of the children's training in the class-rooms; but, as the number of unfortunate children under our care is still on the increase, there being now no less than forty-nine pupils on the roll, the condition of things with regard to looking after their bodily welfare when out of school is changing fast, and will necessitate greater exertions than ever on the part of the responsible persons to keep them in health and happiness.

The attendance of the pupils in the class-rooms was regular, except at the end of the year, when whooping-cough broke out in rather a severe form. Forty-three was the total number of children present in 1890. Their parents' homes were as follows: One in Invercargill, one in Stirling, one in Mosgiel, one in Milburn near Mosgiel, six in Dunedin, one in Green Island, one in Port Chalmers, one in Moeraki, one in Methven, two in Papanui, one in Kaiapoi Island, one in Riccarton, one in Governor's Bay, six in Christchurch, two in Auckland, one in the Thames, one in Gisborne, one in Kihikihi, one in Napier, one in Patea, two in Wanganui, one in Marton, one in Bulls, and seven in Wellington, showing that eighteen inmates belonged to the North and twenty-five to the South Island.

The progress of the pupils was in many cases highly satisfactory, fairly so in others, and hardly so in the case of three or four exceedingly slow children. Two of the pupils, whose education was fairly completed at the close of the year, left the institution with credit to themselves and with the approval of the director. One did not return on account of serious illness in the family; another stayed behind for a year, not having sufficiently recovered from bronchitis; and a third, a lad of sixteen, who could speak but not hear, was removed because his conduct was not considered conducive to the discipline of the school or the *morale* of the rest of the pupils.

The eager desire of the parents to see their unfortunate children home for the holidays was again gratified. The practice of sending the pupils long journeys is, of course, expensive, but it is unavoidable, and serves more than one highly useful purpose. Apart from the necessity of renewing and strengthening afresh the bond of affectionate relationship between the parents and children, there is the potent reason in its favour that, by letting the pupils visit their homes once a year, the best opportunity is afforded to disseminate amongst the parents and the public generally

clearer ideas of the true state of a deaf-mute's mind—of his extraordinary difficulties in gaining a knowledge of human language, whether spoken or written, and therefore of the awful magnitude of the affliction. If parents, as is not uncommon, have an idea that when once their deaf-mute child can use its tongue for articulation it will soon speak more and continue improving in speaking as an ordinary child, it is not surprising if the public at large also reason: Let a deaf-mute once have the power of speech and he will continue to develop of his own accord. But what does such a proposition imply? It assumes either that a hearing child's mental development is based upon the mechanical power of uttering sounds—in other words, that mechanical speech is the cause and not the effect of mental speech or mental development—which, of course, is absurd; or it takes for granted that the mind of a deaf-mute exists under the same conditions and influences as that of the hearing child—that his mind is the same, that it is stored with ideas of all descriptions, and that the deaf-mute is constantly talking inwardly (thinking) about his surroundings, his past and present experiences—in short, that the process of mental activity and mental growth goes on with the deaf-and-dumb in the same way and to the same extent as with the hearing. Would that it were so! For then the affliction were diminished by ninety-five per cent., and our task would be light and short indeed. True it is that deafness is an organic defect, but that is of little moment as compared with the mental affliction; true also that the deaf-mute is not defective in reasoning-power, but not less so that he lacks the ideas and inward words or powers to reason with; true, again, that he has not the health of organ to be affected by the noise of his playmates, but what is that as compared with the disability to appreciate that glorious and intellectual music of the human voice which we call language?

The number of visitors to the institution this year was again large. Though the director is at all times glad to see those who really take an interest in the afflicted, it must be borne in mind that his time is fully occupied with the general as well as with the special or educational work of the institution, and that he has no time for those who merely call to see "the dummies" out of curiosity. The rule hitherto observed—that the institution is at all times open to the relatives of the inmates, to literary men, to members of the medical profession, and to persons bringing letters of introduction from any of the parents—has worked well. On no account can parents or friends be expected to enter the class-rooms. For the convenience of all concerned, however, one of the ordinary sitting-rooms in the institution is utilised to show visitors the progress of the pupils or the *modus operandi* of the method of instruction.

The health of the inmates was excellent during the first and colder part of the year. After the winter some of the children began to complain of lassitude, and later in the spring the majority of them were attacked by whooping-cough. This malady had been known to exist amongst many of the Summer visitors' children, so the outbreak was probably due to contagion; but the feeling of weakness could not be explained except as resulting from the heated and overcrowded state of one of the dormitories, and from the heat in the two smallest school-rooms. As the number of new pupils in the beginning of 1891 was known to be larger than in any previous year, the director was compelled to bring the evils resulting from overheated dormitories, &c., under the notice of the department, and it was agreed that the only and readiest solution of the difficulty would be for the director to vacate the greatest number of his private apartments for the use of the new-comers, and for him to make temporary arrangements elsewhere. One of the several difficulties to be faced has thus been set aside. Those of want of efficient drainage, of an occasionally short water-supply, and of insufficient schoolroom accommodation, still remain. The number of class-rooms is four, and teaching by more than one teacher in the same room is impossible. To partly remedy this evil the director has taken his own class in one of the ordinary rooms vacant during school-hours. This will answer for a time; but there is one serious objection to it: it is, that the director cannot so easily influence, control, criticize, and encourage the work of his assistants. A former Minister of Education very correctly laid great stress upon this part of the director's duties, and for this reason it is incumbent on me to call attention to this objection.

The *pros* and *cons* of the present premises and of Sumner as a locality for a permanent institution for deaf-mutes were fully reviewed last year in my evidence before the parliamentary Commission on public petitions. These need not be pointed out again. No doubt the local interests of this beautiful seaside resort, and the attractiveness of Sumner as a place of residence for both pupils and the staff, are considerations in favour of permanently remaining in this charming spot, but, I take it, neither the one nor the other can have the slightest weight when the choice of site for a permanent institution has to be made, and when the real requirements and the true interests of the unfortunate and misunderstood deaf-mutes ought to be the only and all-important points to direct and determine such a choice. By rigid attention to the cleanliness of the surroundings, a systematic and very frequent disposal of house-slops, &c., an additional storage of water and provision for increased schoolroom accommodation, the present premises may still for years to a great extent answer the requirements of a temporary institution. Whether an outlay on improvements added to the annual rental of these temporary premises will compare favourably or otherwise with the cost of the erection of a permanent and in every way suitable building is, of course, a question for the Government of the colony to decide. In my humble opinion, next to the question of educating and humanising our deaf-mutes, the one of equipping them with some practical knowledge of a suitable handicraft, so as to give them a chance in "the struggle for life," ought to be of first and foremost importance; and no institution for the deaf can be considered complete without due provision for this very essential point having been made.

In conclusion, I beg to make special mention of the valuable services rendered to the inmates of this institution, both in and out of the school, by Mr. John Allen; and I also desire to make it publicly known that the director is at all times prepared to gratuitously give parents with defective or backward children the benefit of his experience.

The Hon. the Minister of Education.

I have, &c.,

G. VAN ASCH.

No. 3.

REPORT OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER.

SIR,—

Christchurch, May, 1891.

I have the honour to submit the following report on the Deaf-and-Dumb Asylum at Sumner :—

The pupils number forty-nine—fifteen girls and thirty-four boys—distributed as follows : In the main building, fifteen girls and sixteen boys ; at the boys' home, seventeen ; at Mr. Van Asch's house, one boy. The buildings have been kept clean and orderly. With the exception of whooping-cough, one case of bronchitis, and other trifling ailments, for which I prescribed at my house, they have enjoyed good health. The pupils are progressing very satisfactorily in their education.

I have respectfully to draw the attention of the department to their taking into serious consideration the necessity of erecting a permanent brick or stone building for safety from fires, and providing accommodation for better supervision and more economical working of this very useful institution. At present they occupy three separate buildings, some distance apart from one another. They are so crowded that fresh pupils cannot be admitted. The dining-room and dormitories are small and crowded. The class-rooms are small and insufficient, both for the number and for the classification comprised in the method of teaching the deaf-mutes in use at the institution. In fact, the present buildings are now ill-adapted for the proper management, efficient supervision, economical working, sanitary arrangements, and health of the officers and pupils.

In conclusion, I must express my entire confidence in the untiring care, attention, and kindness bestowed on the pupils by the director and Mrs. Van Asch, who are cordially assisted by the other members of the staff.

I have, &c.,

H. H. PRINS,
Medical Officer.

The Minister of Education, Wellington.

[Approximate Cost of Paper.—Preparation, not given ; printing, (1,600 copies), £1 13s.]

By Authority : GEORGE DIDSBUKY, Government Printer, Wellington.—1891.

Price 3d.]

