

1900.
NEW ZEALAND.

EDUCATION: SCHOOL FOR DEAF-MUTES.

[In continuation of E.-4, 1899.]

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

No. 1.

EXTRACT FROM THE TWENTY-THIRD ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION.

The roll of this school includes, with one or two exceptions, all the known deaf-mutes of school age and of sound intellect in the colony who have been brought under the notice of the Education Department. The method of instruction used at Sumner is the oral method, in favour of which there is a vast predominance of expert opinion. According to it the pupils are taught, by watching the mouth of the speaker, to follow the speech of any person who will take the trouble to articulate properly, and are trained themselves to speak so as to be easily understood by others. The power of understanding and of being understood thus acquired is made the stepping-stone to general education, as in the case of hearing children. If it were generally known that without special education deaf-mute children would grow up with minds almost entirely undeveloped, there would not be the repugnance there occasionally is now on the part of parents to allowing their children to go away from them for a time to the only institution in the colony at which they can receive that special education. The best service that parents or friends of such children can render them is to bring their cases under the notice of the Director at the time of his periodical visits to various parts of the colony, or under the notice of the Department by letter addressed to the Secretary for Education. Payment is not insisted on when parents are unable to contribute towards the cost of educating their deaf-mute children.

During the year 1899, 10 boys and 6 girls left, and 3 boys and 6 girls were admitted; at the end of the year there were 43 children—22 boys and 21 girls—at the institution. One of these was, for special reasons, boarded out in the neighbourhood. During the first half of the year the school was attacked by an epidemic of diphtheria, most of the cases being of a mild type. Fortunately, no fatal case occurred; and the occurrence of the outbreak has been guarded against as far as possible by the removal of its apparent cause. During 1899 the main portion of the institution, which had previously been rented from a private owner, was, with part of the land attached to it, purchased by the Government, which also bought some rising ground to the south-west, adjoining the former property; the whole, which comprises about eighteen acres, forms an excellent site for the permanent institution, and it is proposed to ask Parliament for a vote to enable the work of building to be begun at an early date.