

1901.
NEW ZEALAND.

EDUCATION: SCHOOL FOR DEAF-MUTES.

[In continuation of E.-4, 1900.]

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

No. 1.

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

This school has continued its valuable work in the education of deaf-mute children on the same lines as heretofore, instruction being given in the pure oral method, by which the deaf are taught to understand ordinary speech and to speak themselves so as to be readily understood by others. The power of language thus acquired is made the means of mental development to an extent which does not appear possible under any system of signs, manual or otherwise. It would be thought that the advantages to be gained by placing those thus afflicted more or less on an equality with their hearing fellow-creatures would be sufficiently obvious to make all parents of such children willing to send them to an institution where they are carefully looked after and educated. Such, however, is not the case; for although the roll of the school includes, with one or two exceptions, all the deaf-mutes of school age and of sound intellect in the colony that have been brought under the notice of the Education Department, yet there are the exceptions already referred to, and many instances are met with from time to time of deaf but naturally intelligent young men or women who have escaped the notice of the Department and have been allowed to grow up without education. If the fact were not so clear it would be difficult to imagine that there should be parents so shortsighted or so selfish as to stand in the way of their children's best interests. Nothing short of compulsion will move these people to send their deaf-mute children to Sumner, and it would probably be to the interest of the State to see that the necessary compulsion was used.

The law in England in regard to the compulsory education of blind and deaf children is worthy of note:—

“It is the duty of every school authority to enforce the law of compulsory attendance in the case of blind children between the ages of five and sixteen, and of deaf children between seven and sixteen (56 and 57 Vict., c. 42, sec. 11). The fact that children may be blind or deaf is not an excuse for parents not providing education for them, and the fact that there may be no suitable public elementary school within a certain distance is not a reasonable excuse for not causing a blind or deaf child to attend school (*ibid.*, sec. 1). School authorities are responsible for the provision of suitable education for such children, but it is not intended that the whole expense shall be borne by the

school authority. The Act provides that the parent of a child shall contribute towards the child's expenses such sum as may be agreed upon between the school authority and the parent. Notwithstanding anything in the Elementary Education Acts, or in the by-laws for the district in which the child is resident, a deaf or blind child must attend school full time until the age of sixteen is reached. Failure to enable blind and deaf children resident in the district of the School Board, for whose elementary education efficient and suitable provision is not otherwise made, to obtain such education constitutes default on the part of the School Board."

At the end of 1899 there were 43 children—22 boys and 21 girls—at the institution. Three boys were admitted in 1900; 1 pupil, a girl, died during the year; there were therefore 25 boys and 20 girls—45 in all—in residence in December, 1900.

The gross expenditure for maintenance during the year ended 31st December, 1900, was £3,158 9s., as against £3,444 2s. 5d. for the previous year. The total was made up as follows: Salaries of Director and teachers, £1,257 9s. 10d.; steward, matron, and servants, £506 8s. 3d.; rent, £155 14s. 7d.; house-keeping, £689 10s. 3d.; travelling-expenses, £203 12s. 4d.; school material, £3 2s. 5d.; repairs and works, £91 12s. 5d.; clothing, £11 8s. 9d.; medical attendance and medicine, £25 8s. 5d.; water-supply, £38 8s.; sanitary precautions, £37 12s.; boarding-out of pupils, £24 7s. 1d.; sundries, £113 14s. 8d. Less amount contributed by parents, £147 18s. 6d. Net expenditure, £3,010 10s. 6d. (The net expenditure in 1899 was £3,244 7s. 5d.) There was also paid to complete the purchase of the new site, £2,233 6s. 3d., making the total cost of land and buildings purchased, £4,933 6s. 3d.

The plans for new buildings are in hand, and it is hoped that it may be possible shortly to begin the work of erection.

No. 2.

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR.

SIR,—

School for Deaf-mutes, 26th April, 1901.

I have the honour to report that the process of teaching our deaf pupils during the year 1900 has in principle differed in no wise from that of former years. The actual work is in many respects only to be compared to the pushing and dragging of a heavy load on an upward grade. A desire to bring the pupils to a somewhat higher level on the hill of common knowledge simply means there is to be no slackening in the grip on the educational machine on the part of the teachers. But determination and continued effort in the right direction work wonders even in a school for deaf-mutes, so that, making due allowance for the peculiar difficulties of the work and the want of long experience on the part of several of the instructors, there is no reason to be otherwise than satisfied with the results of last year's teaching in the class-rooms.

The school reopened in February, 1900, with forty-six pupils—a decrease of four from the previous year. A fatal case of typhoid fever, shortly after the reassembling of the school, further reduced this number by one. With this exception the general health of the inmates remained good, so that marks of absence in the register of attendance were few. Of the forty-five pupils in regular attendance during the year, three started at the very bottom in the articulation class, whilst three were sufficiently advanced and old enough to leave the institution for good at the end of the year. A list of the different homes shows that two of the pupils came from Riverton, one from Pembroke, one from Balclutha, two from Lawrence, one from Gorge Creek, one from Green Island, five from Dunedin, one from Waddington, one from Timaru, one from Temuka, one from Geraldine, one from Methven, two from Halswell, one from Bennett's, two from Lyttelton, two from Christchurch, one from Hokitika, one from Kumara, one from Greymouth, two from Foxhill, two from Masterton, one from Foxton, one from Lower Hutt, one from Martinborough, one from Wellington, one from Wairoa, three from Upper Waiwera, one from Onehunga, one from Matahura, and three from Auckland, thus indicating that the proportion of the South Island scholars to that of the North was as thirty to fifteen.

Two young candidates were to have entered as beginners, but they did not put in an appearance. The Director also had the sad experience of having to decline admission to an intelligent grown-up girl of seventeen in consequence of her advanced age. To an expert the position of a parent or relative wilfully neglecting to send an intelligent deaf child to school at a suitable age is not only inexcusable, but altogether inexplicable. Imagine a child deaf, but of sound brain: what does this mean? Such a child is not speechless only. That is the least part of the affliction. It is intellectually near-sighted, and will gradually grow mentally blind. Its faculties for understanding and learning are firmly held in the clutches of deadly silence and dark solitude, and for that reason its whole intellectual existence must remain in the custody of

ignorance, isolation, and misery. The question arises, shall the deaf be allowed to remain in that condition? The State, directed by reason, humanity, and self-interest, says "No"; but the parent, led astray by indifference, ignorance, prejudice, or false love, says "Yes." Can there be any doubt as to the ultimate verdict of an enlightened tribunal? Hear the evidence (translated) of an educated deaf cabinetmaker from California, a native of Holland, educated and trained at the school for deaf-mutes in Rotterdam, where I remember teaching him in 1857 and 1858:—

"DEAR MR. VAN ASCH,—

"Los Angeles, Cal., 10th July, 1898.

It is a great pleasure to me to have received a letter from Mr. Bickers (director) from Rotterdam, enclosing me your address and recommending me to write to you. Do you still remember my name? Yes, I feel sure you do, for you were for some time one of the teachers who taught me. Often I have been thinking of you, and I shall never forget you. I was quite delighted to get your address. I thought you were in London. When you write to me, will you tell me all about your school; for I may tell you that I have been trying to organize a school for deaf-mutes here like the one in Rotterdam, instead of one for speaking on the fingers. We hope to open the school next September, and expect to succeed. Would you kindly post us a few books, elementary lessons for young deaf children? I am convinced that the lessons for teaching the deaf in Holland or under you are more suitable than those in use in America. In the American schools there are no pictures or illustrations as in Rotterdam. If you can spare the time come to America, and you will notice this. When you write me, please do so in English, that I may show it to the members of the School Committee of which I am a member. I feel that English is much easier to me now than Dutch. I have taught myself. I would so much like to see and meet you. I am in America since 1874.

"Your respectful old pupil and friend,

"J. C. R."

In another letter, dated the 4th December, 1898, the same writer informs me that the school referred to has been opened.

A still more encouraging and agreeable subject to report upon is the marked advance in social position and intellectual progress apparent in most of the old pupils who, during the last year or two, have revisited the school. Nearly all refer with pride and pleasure to the fact that they earn an honest livelihood, and that they are not drones, but busy workers in the human hive. Shoemaking, tailoring, blacksmithing, linotyping, jewellery making, carpentry, and cabinetmaking are the occupations of some, whilst others have taken kindly to farming, contracting, and threshing, gold-mining, and working in freezing-works, tanneries, or woollen-factories. The girls find employment in dressmaking, laundry-work, in home duties, or as domestic servants. All this and much more applies to those ex-pupils who, though deaf, were not so from birth or infancy, but who became so only after the age of seven or eight—that is, at an age when they had learned to read and write, and had acquired the use of colloquial language. The educational results obtained in these cases, four of which have passed through the school, are still more favourable. One case is so striking that, as a proof of what is possible under exceptionally favourable circumstances, I must refer to it at greater length, not only for the information of the general public, but as a warning to all institutions where the totally deaf of this description even now are admitted and educated on lines very different from those of the pure oral system.

The particulars briefly stated are: In 1889 the deaf son of an Australian professional gentleman was intrusted to our care, with a view of having him trained in lip-reading, and of giving him as liberal and as thorough a general education as was possible under the circumstances. On examination the lad proved to be too far advanced in the three Rs to be classified and taught with the rest of the deaf in the school. His immediate want, moreover, was practice in lip-reading. The only rational course open to us, therefore, was to train and educate the boy privately, and this was undertaken by one of the Director's daughters. Varied exercises in lip-reading were taken at first, accompanied by lessons in reading, spelling, grammar, arithmetic, geography, and history. The subjects of elementary Latin and French and advanced arithmetic were added later on, whilst during the last two years of his three-and-a-half years' stay at Sumner he received a thorough grounding in Euclid and algebra as well. By the end of 1892, when he left, he was well advanced towards the matriculation examination, which he succeeded in passing nine months after returning home. With the assistance of further private instruction in Melbourne he followed up his science studies at the University of Melbourne, and there took his degree of Bachelor of Science in 1898. The study of assaying seemed most congenial to him, and after having attended a year's course in metallurgy at the Royal School of Mines, South Kensington, London, at the final examinations in November, 1899, he took the first place in theoretical and practical assaying and metallurgy, together with the Bessemer medal (the blue ribbon of the school) and a scholarship. He now fills the post of junior assayer in one of the largest smelting-works in Australasia. It would, of course, be utterly absurd on our part to claim more than a very small share in the training that led to such achievements. But, inasmuch as the foundation for this splendid educational superstructure was laid at Sumner, we may be allowed to rejoice with others over the marked success with which this young man's labours have been crowned. That his experiences in London were not without a spice of humour is plain from his own description. Referring to the other students at the School of Mines, he says, "They did not appear to think I was deaf, but that I was shamming it, and was probably a foreigner in disguise, more especially a German. I did not really succeed in vanquishing their suspicions till the general tour the metallurgists take every year. Then they had to perceive I could not possibly sham deaf for such a length of time when I was in their company all day."

In the early part of the year a party of medical men from different parts of the colony were introduced to us by Dr. Symes, the medical officer to the institution. The Director had pleasure in explaining to them the theory of the pure oral system of education, and in giving them practical

illustrations how its principles are applied in the school at Sumner. The distance of Sumner from an industrial centre is and always has been a drawback to the technical training of the pupils and to their witnessing industrial operations in factories and workshops; but this drawback was in some measure counteracted during the year by availing ourselves on several occasions of the kind invitations received from the secretary of the Christchurch Poultry Show, the Agricultural and Pastoral Association, from the Biograph Company, and the Canterbury Jubilee Exhibition. Their shows and exhibitions were, from an educational point of view, of considerable value and pleasure to the pupils.

The Hon. the Minister of Education.

I have, &c.,

G. VAN ASCH.

No. 3.

REPORT OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER.

SIR,—

Christchurch, 18th July, 1901.

I have the honour to report that the health of the pupils of the Deaf-mute Institute at Sumner has been remarkably good during the year 1900. The only serious case of illness was that of a girl, aged ten, who returned from her home at Akaroa ill with typhoid fever in February, and died at the Christchurch Hospital. The difficulty of promptly filling the vacancies caused by the retirement of attendants, especially female attendants, would, I think, best be met by admitting young probationers and training them. This system is found to answer admirably in hospitals. On the 19th September, 1900, I gave a false alarm of fire unexpectedly during the night. The result was satisfactory, as all the girls were outside their building in three minutes, and all the boys outside their building in five minutes. Various alterations of doors and windows have been made, so that no anxiety need now be felt for the pupils in case of fire at night. An important improvement required is better supervision of the dormitories at night. The present buildings are very unsuitable in that respect, and the arrangements proposed in the new buildings will enable better care to be taken of the pupils at night. I think the good health of the pupils has been largely due to the kind and watchful care of the matron. On the 22nd February a party of six of the visitors attending the Medical Congress in Christchurch paid a special visit to the Institute, and the Director, Mr. Van Asch, kindly showed them his system of teaching. They expressed great admiration at the scientific method adopted, and said that the value of the Institute was not as well known as it ought to be.

I am, Sir, &c.,

W. H. SYMES, M.D., Medical Officer.

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