

1902.
NEW ZEALAND.

EDUCATION: SCHOOL FOR DEAF-MUTES.

[In continuation of E.-4, 1901.]

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

No. 1.

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

THE inclusion in the School Attendance Act of last session of provisions dealing with blind and deaf children marks an important step in the education of these unfortunate members of the community. Hitherto many parents, either through carelessness or wilfully, have neglected to send such children to the institutions maintained for their special instruction; but now the Minister of Education has the power to enforce attendance, due provision being made for a contribution by parents towards the cost of maintenance or for free admission where parents are not in a position to contribute. The immediate consequence is an unusual increase in the number of candidates for admission to the Summer School for Deaf-mutes, a fact which renders all the more urgent the need for new buildings. It is accordingly a matter for satisfaction that the plans have been completed, and a contract has been let for the erection of a portion of the buildings. In the design it has been arranged that the dormitories shall be on the ground floor, although raised somewhat above the level of the ground; this, together with special contrivances, will, it is hoped, take away even the remotest danger to life in case of fire. The class-rooms will be on the first floor, and, although such an arrangement may possess a few slight disadvantages, the arrangement has the great advantage that it will enable the rooms in which instruction is given to be extremely well lighted, always an important point in teaching children on the purely oral system.

As regards the adoption of that system, it is a matter for congratulation that this colony from the first adopted the oral method of teaching, in which children are taught to converse by watching the lips of others. In America, where manual and mixed methods were at first largely in vogue, they are being

rapidly discarded in favour of oral instruction, and New Zealand has accordingly been saved the expense and inconvenience of changing from inferior systems of deaf-mute education to that which is now almost universally admitted to be the best.

Those called (improperly) semi-mutes, who possess in some degree the sense of hearing and have to a slight extent the power of articulation, need special treatment; such cases appear to be most successfully dealt with when they are boarded out with hearing people in the neighbourhood of the institution, and are taught in special classes. There are also some pupils that hitherto have escaped notice, and are now too old to live among children or to receive instruction with them. Where it is still possible to do something to relieve their affliction, and to educate them, these cases may be admitted; but such individuals also should be boarded out, and should be taught in special classes. It does not, however, appear fair that the cost of maintenance, apart from that of instruction, should be borne by the Education Department. If their friends cannot afford to maintain them, their maintenance at the institution is really a relief to the rates, and in cases where, say, the inmate is over twenty-one the cost should presumably be borne by the Charitable Aid Boards.

Three boys and 3 girls left the school during the year (4 after the close of the school year), and 6 boys and 4 girls were admitted. At the end of the year the number in residence was 28 boys and 21 girls, 3 boys and 1 girl more than at the end of 1900.

The expenditure on the institution for the year 1901 was,—Salaries of Director and teachers, £1,384 14s. 3d.; steward, matron, and servants, £529 0s. 10d.; rent, £178 6s. 3d.; housekeeping, £681 2s. 11d.; travelling-expenses, £116 10s. 3d.; school material, £51 4s. 1d.; repairs and works, £42 4s. 9d.; clothing, £13 8s. 3d.; medical attendance and medicine, £31 2s. 9d.; water-supply, £30 8s.; sanitation, £20 1s.; boarding-out of pupils, £104 3s. 8d.; for the preparation of plans of the new buildings, £61 2s. 8d.; extension of water-service, £79 8s. 7d.; sundries, £50 17s. 1d.: total expenditure, £3,267 2s. 8d. Deducting recoveries, £170 1s. 9d. (parents' contributions), the net expenditure was £3,097 0s. 11d. The amount expended in 1900, was £5,243 16s. 9d., of which £2,233 16s. 9d. was paid to complete the purchase of the new site.

Two deaf-mute children who, from having received partial training on the manual or sign system, were ineligible for admission to our own institution were maintained in the Victorian School for the Deaf, at a cost of £30 18s. 6d.; and one was under a private teacher in Auckland, to whom a fee of £26 was paid by the Department.

No. 2.

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR.

SIR,—

Institution for Deaf-mutes, Sumner, 17th April, 1902.

I have the honour to report that the progress of the pupils during the year 1901 was on a par with that of former years, and was satisfactory throughout the school, save in the case of one young beginner, whose vocal organization is defective and whose constitution is physically weak.

The gathering of scholars outnumbered that of all previous years, amounting as it did to fifty-one during the first and to fifty-two during the latter half of the year. To this total the South Island contributed thirty-five and the North Island eighteen. Two pupils came from Riverton, one from Invercargill, one from Gore, one from Balclutha, one from Pembroke, one from Roxburgh, one from Lawrence, one from Green Island, seven from Dunedin and suburbs, one from Warrington, one from Timaru, one from Temuka, one from Methven, one from Geraldine, two from Halswell, one from Bennett's, three from Christchurch, two from Lyttelton, one from Sumner, one from Hokitika, one from Kumara, one from Greymouth, two from Foxhill, two from Wellington, one from Martinborough, one from Masterton, two from Lower Hutt, one from Foxton, one from Hastings, one from Wairoa, one from Stratford, one from New Plymouth, one from Onehunga, two from Auckland, one from Wairangi, two from Upper Waiwera, one from Puhoi.

The school lost six pupils at the end of the year—one, a promising young boy, through a fatal bicycle accident while at home for the summer vacation, and five left with adequate training. A seventh pupil, a girl of fourteen, was kept back from 29th July, either to work at home or for reasons not disclosed to the Director and therefore without his consent.

Ten pupils entered in 1901 as beginners, eight on reassembling in February and two after the short interval at midwinter. The practice of admitting pupils at all times of the year is, however, to be deprecated, for a late-comer in an elementary class of deaf-mutes is a serious handicap to the teacher in charge. As an additional recruit he cannot fall in with the suitable drill of the rest of the pupils, and is therefore a very great hindrance to their progress also. What he requires is individual care and personal attention, and all the time and energy bestowed on him as a single individual is, strictly speaking, at the expense of the rest of his class-mates, usually seven or eight in number. The only condition under which this strict rule may be relaxed is when deaf-mute applicants fall under the head of (improperly) so-called semi-mutes—*i.e.*, such as can readily hear and fairly imitate a few short words if distinctly uttered at a short distance behind them. Children of this description improve rapidly under technical treatment, and are therefore not a drag on a class for any length of time. Exceptional treatment may also be shown in this respect to deaf children above seven, or to much older young people whose deafness is of recent date and who already possess a certain vocabulary of colloquial language. Prompt measures are necessary in their case in order to effectually counteract the strangling influence of the halter of isolation. But the fact that asylums or boarding-in establishments are not suitable homes for all such must not be forgotten. They ought to receive practice in lip-reading and suitable instruction, but away from the society of deaf-mutes wherever possible, and they should be boarded out amongst hearing people. One example of this class of deaf children was received under our care early in February. The boy referred to could neither read nor write, had little knowledge of numbers, but he could still articulate words, though indistinctly and in a low tone. His remarkable progress in speaking and in his general school-work by the end of the year, as well as the improvement in his spirits, I attribute largely to our precaution in teaching him individually and in keeping him in the society of hearing people.

In consequence of the increase in numbers, and also with a view to future requirements, the training of another young teacher was deemed advisable. A young man was appointed, and entered upon his duties on 29th July.

The growth in numbers made us also feel the want of another class-room, a want arising from the fact that silence and freedom from commotion are essential to the detection of imperfections in the tone and articulation of the pupils. Appropriating one of the rooms in the domestic part of the house for a few hours daily was the readiest way of getting relief, and though distasteful to the teachers and the scholars it was a matter in which the Director had no choice.

During the summer vacation a number of present and future candidates in all parts of the colony were examined by the Director. A large percentage of them turned out to be mentally defective; a few had to be rejected on account of advanced age. One little fellow, though designated by medical testimony as an imbecile, on careful examination proved to be of perfectly sound mind. Opportunities offered by these visits were naturally seized to verbally advise parents with regard to the most beneficial mode of treating their infant deaf children.

For the guidances of others it may be remarked that the condition of some infant deaf-mutes might be considerably improved if they were kept less confined within their homes. A deaf child of four, five, or six years of age ought to be at play as much as possible in the open air. He ought to be looking at milking, at gardening, at operations in the workshop, in the kitchen, in the wash-house, &c. He should be allowed to pull a flower, feed the fowls, handle a duster or a brush, bring tools, wash his face and hands—in short, he ought to be treated as an ordinary child of sense; for, be it remembered, instead of getting knowledge through hearing other people talk, sing, or read, his only source of acquiring a smattering of information is by watching and imitating the sensible actions of others.

The beneficial influence of sensible treatment of old pupils in the home circle was noted by the Director on several occasions. Where relatives missed no opportunity of conversing with them on all topics, encouraging them to take a lively interest in their environment, old pupils showed great improvement both in lip-reading and in general understanding. This improvement was particularly marked in the case of ex-pupils who have the advantage of brothers and sisters interchanging ideas with them. The reverse is unfortunately true in a few cases, where parents seem to imagine that the education of deaf children ceases with their school career.

A few words of advice in connection herewith may perhaps be not out of place. Let a deaf person's friends speak to him or her on all subjects connected with home life, the condition of stock, clothing, the weather, the price and quality of articles purchased, &c., and, what is more important still, let them encourage the deaf to ask questions and to express opinions. For example: Have you been outside? Is it fine? How is the road? Shall we take an umbrella? Where is the key of ———? Who bought that knife—spade? How much is it? What time will you return? Did you see Tom? Will he come to see us? When is the steamer coming in? What time do you expect me? &c. Let the parents also see that the ex-pupil is supplied with easy books that will interest him. Old school readers, such as Second, Third, and Fourth Royal Readers and sequels to same, will be found in every way suitable. The use of the daily newspapers, especially columns relating to accidents, fires, locals, cable news, and shipping is also to be recommended.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Minister of Education.

G. VAN ASCH.

REPORT OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER.

SIR,—

Christchurch, 21st July, 1902.

I have the honour to report that there has been no sickness worth mentioning in this school during the past year. One boy was sent home a few weeks after admission on account of a chronic complaint from which he had suffered for years. The splendid building which is about to be erected will relieve the institution of various defects and dangers to health connected with the old building, which is greatly overcrowded. The good health which the pupils have enjoyed has been largely due to the care and skill of the matron.

I have, &c.,

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

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