

1907.

NEW ZEALAND.

EDUCATION: SCHOOL FOR DEAF-MUTES.

[In continuation of E.-4, 1906.]

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

No. 1.

EXTRACT FROM THE THIRTIETH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION.

It cannot be too often repeated that in this institution the deaf, who would otherwise be speechless, are taught both to speak and to understand (from the motion of the lips) the speech of others, and that they are thereby admitted not only to the benefits of communication with their fellow-men, but even very largely to the conceptions involved in human intercourse. These facts are not always understood or appreciated. Every year deaf children are found who, to a greater or less extent, have passed the age at which their special instruction should have begun, and who consequently fail to attain expertness in oral communication, or more than partial mental development. Through want of knowledge of the institution, through mistaken advice, through misguided affection, or through fear of expense, the parents of these children are responsible for a loss of time that can never be made good.

The following classes of deaf children are admitted to the institution, mental soundness being in all cases a necessity:—

1. Children born deaf, or who have lost their hearing before learning to speak.
2. Children who can hear a little, but are too deaf to be taught in an ordinary school.
3. Children who have lost their hearing after having learned to speak.

The number of pupils in the institution is steadily increasing. At the reopening of the school at the beginning of the year there were 57 pupils—29 boys and 28 girls; 9 boys and 6 girls were admitted during the year, and 1 boy and 1 girl left the school. At the end of the year there were 70 pupils—37 boys and 33 girls. It will soon become necessary to provide more residential accommodation, either by extending the buildings at Sumner or by establishing a branch of the institution in another part of the country.

The ordinary expenditure on the institution for the year 1906 was: Salaries of Director and teachers, £1,593 1s. 1d.; steward, matron, and servants, £726 3s. 3d.; rent, £11 13s. 4d.; house-keeping, £827 17s. 9d.; travelling-expenses (including transit of pupils), £182 4s. 1d.; school material and material for technical instruction, £8 5s. 8d.; general maintenance of buildings and furniture, £207 4s.; clothing, £20 14s. 10d.; medical attendance and medicine, £74 4s. 1d.; water-supply, £51 7s. 6d.; boarding-out of pupils, £164 6s. 4d.; sundries, £141 12s. 4d.: total expenditure, £4,008 14s. 3d. Deducting parents' contributions, £415 2s. 5d., the net expenditure was £3,593 11s. 10d. The amount expended in 1904 was £4,176 1s. 4d. The sum expended during the year upon the new building was £1,976 8s. 11d. In 1905 the amount was £1,325 16s. 3d.

No. 2.

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR.

SIR,—

School for Deaf-mutes, Sumner, 13th April, 1907.

I have the honour to lay before you my report for the year 1906.

After the summer holidays fifty-eight of the preceding year's pupils, of whom thirty were boys and twenty-eight were girls, returned to the school, and eight new pupils (four of each sex) were admitted, making a total of sixty-six at the commencement of the year. In April two boys and one girl,

in June one boy and one girl, in July one boy, and in October one girl were also admitted, thus increasing the number on the roll to seventy-three. The girl admitted in July proved to be not a *bona fide* deaf-mute. It was found that she had normal hearing, and that her inability to speak was due to a mental defect. She was accordingly removed after three months' trial. One boy, who is referred to in the Medical Officer's reports for 1904 and 1905 as being tubercularly affected, had, in June, to be removed to a mental hospital, the disease having affected his brain. It is not, as a rule, desirable to admit new pupils except towards the beginning of a school year. Pupils admitted later cannot usually fall into line with classes already formed, and the work of the teachers is thereby much increased. Exceptions to this rule are—(1.) Children with such a considerable degree of hearing that they may be expected to overtake completely deaf pupils admitted earlier. (2.) Children whose advanced age makes it urgent that their education should be at once begun. (3.) Children who have lost their hearing after having learned speech: the education of this class of children should never be postponed, as it is important to preserve any remnants of speech that they may have. The late-comers admitted in 1906 all fell into one or other of these categories. The case of one of the boys admitted in April deserves special mention, as showing that the ignorance with regard to the functions of the School for Deaf-mutes is not yet entirely dissipated. The boy referred to was kept at home until he was over thirteen years of age, his parents, it is stated, being told by medical men unfamiliar with the results of the oral instruction of the deaf that if he were sent to an institution he would grow up dumb. When sent here he could utter, in a more or less intelligible fashion, perhaps a dozen words. He has made rapid progress in speaking and in general understanding, and has now a vocabulary of several hundred words. I have little doubt that had he been admitted at the proper time he would now be in the highest class at the school. As it is, these six or seven wasted years can never be replaced.

At the end of the year five boys and four girls were removed from the school, two of the latter against the advice of the Director. Unfortunately, only one of these comes under the scope of the compulsory clauses of the Education Act, and steps are being taken to have her readmitted.

Of the seventy-three pupils on the roll, eleven came from the Auckland Provincial District, two from Taranaki, two from Hawke's Bay, twenty from Wellington, two from Nelson, two from Marlborough, one from Westland, eighteen from Canterbury, and fifteen from Otago.

Except for an epidemic of influenza to which, during the last fortnight of the school year, most of the pupils fell victims, the health of the pupils has been unusually good, and there has been little interference with the work of the school on this account. This improvement has been particularly marked in the case of the girls, and may no doubt be set down to their quarters in the new building being hygienically so superior to the inadequate premises formerly occupied by them. Improvements have been effected in the Boys' Home in the direction of increasing the ventilation of the dormitories.

There have been several changes in the *personnel* of the staff. The late Director, Mr. G. van Asch, after being in charge of the institution since its establishment in 1880, retired on the 31st March, carrying with him the affection and esteem of the pupils and of the members of the staff. He is now enjoying a well-earned rest in England. Mr. van Asch has spent a lifetime in the education of the deaf, and had the honour of introducing the oral system into England as well as into New Zealand. It is a matter of great satisfaction to him that the system, of which he has been such an able exponent, is now being rapidly adopted in English-speaking countries.

Miss van Asch, for over seventeen years a member of the teaching staff, and Mrs. Fisher, who had been in charge of the class of so-called semi-mutes since 1902, also retired during the year. In view of the increase in the number of pupils, and of the loss of the services of these highly experienced teachers, it will be recognised that the remaining members of the staff laboured under exceptional difficulties in maintaining the high standard of educational work formerly attained, and the appointment and training of additional teachers became absolutely necessary. An additional teacher was accordingly appointed in April, and two others were advertised for at the end of the year. To cope with the unprecedented number of deaf children either approaching school age or up till now overlooked it will be necessary to have still more young teachers put into training.

Experience having shown the desirability of commencing the education of deaf-mutes as early as possible, the age for admission has been lowered, and children that are physically robust are now received at about the age of six years. The attention of parents should be drawn to the importance of the intelligent home treatment of expected pupils. It is an easy matter for the relatives of a young deaf-mute to give him some instruction in writing, drawing, &c., and to encourage him in using his voice. He should not be pampered, but should be taught to make himself useful in little ways and to take a lively interest in things connected with the home circle. By these means his dormant mental powers will be awakened and his subsequent progress here greatly facilitated.

By the will of the late Mr. Donald Manson, of Palmerston North, a legacy of £100 was left to the school. I believe that this is the first time in its history that such a bequest has been made to the institution, and I regard the action of the testator as an extremely laudable one. The total amount of similar donations received by the New South Wales institution is at present £34,762 11s. 11d., the interest of which is available for the benefit of that institution.

The Director wishes to thank Messrs. Ashby, Bergh, and Co., of Christchurch, for a donation of £1 ls., which has been expended in the purchase of games for the recreation of the children.

By the kindly direction of the Minister in charge of the New Zealand Exhibition the pupils were granted free admission, and paid several visits to it, from which they derived much pleasure and profit. The proprietors of Wonderland and of the cyclorama also very kindly extended a welcome to our children. The Exhibition was the means of drawing very many of the old pupils to Christchurch, and of giving them an opportunity to revisit their old school. It is gratifying to find that in a very large number of cases the education received here has enabled the boys and girls who have passed through the school to become self-supporting citizens, and a credit to their teachers and to the colony in general.

To quote a few instances : W. T., carpenter, earns £3 a week, has £90 in bank, regular employment ; J. H., coachbuilder, £2 15s. a week, regular employment ; W. H., tailor, £3 15s. a week, regular employment ; E. H., picture-framer, £2 10s. a week, regular employment, £5 bonus, £100 in bank ; N. H., dressmaker, £1 10s. a week, regular employment ; O. L., farm labourer, £1 and found, £263 in bank ; D. N., wool-classer, £3 to £6 a week ; J. N., tailor, £3 10s. a week, regular employment ; R. M., painter and paperhanger, £3 a week, regular employment, £200 in bank, life insured for £200, acre section in Gisborne ; G. B., certificated engineer and draughtsman (wages not stated) ; A. H., pattern-maker, went to England last year and unaided obtained situation at Oxford at top wages.

The thanks of the Director are due to the assistant teachers for the loyal and conscientious manner in which they have carried out their work during the year. The matron and other members of the domestic staff also deserve a word of praise for their efforts in seconding the work of the teachers and in promoting the welfare of the children in their home life.

In conclusion, I wish to draw your attention to the desirability of opening a new school in some other part of the colony. The experience of other countries has proved that it is not in the best interests of the deaf that they should be collected together in large institutions. By having two or more schools a proper scheme of classification could be carried out, the benefits of which would be incalculable. Such a scheme should be based on the hearing-powers and on the mental capacities of the pupils.

I have, &c.,

J. E. STEVENS

The Secretary for Education, Wellington

No. 3.

REPORT OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER.

SIR,—

Christchurch, 20th May, 1907

I have the honour to submit the following report on the Deaf-mute Institute for the year 1906 :—

The health of the pupils has been generally good during the past year. Seven pupils were absent on account of ill health for varying periods, amounting in all to nineteen weeks. This does not include the case of J. Atkinson, who was sent home during the winter quarter as a precautionary measure. The only serious illness was that of H. Hooper, who had a severe attack of pneumonia, involving eight weeks' absence from school. There were also thirty-seven cases of influenza in December, mostly of a mild nature.

The year will be memorable for the opening of the new building, which provides excellent classrooms and dormitories, thus enabling the girls to be removed from their former crowded quarters at Beach Glen.

I recommend the following improvements : (1) A small isolated hospital ward to which doubtful cases of sickness could be immediately removed ; (2) a gymnasium ; (3) the provision of shower-baths for all the pupils, with hot and cold water. Hot shower-baths have been introduced extensively into State schools on the Continent of Europe, and are now being introduced into London Board schools and other State schools in England. Nearly all State schools in Germany are provided with them. The showers are started at 95° Fahr., and the temperature of the water is gradually reduced to 55° Fahr. They have been found to exercise a remarkable effect on the nervous system and the general health of children, who much prefer them to others. Moreover, their use economizes both time and water.

I have, &c.,

W. H. SYMES, M.D., B.Sc.

The Secretary for Education.

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