

1887.
NEW ZEALAND.

EDUCATION: INSTITUTION FOR DEAF-MUTES.

[In Continuation of E.—4, 1886.]

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

No. 1.

EXTRACT FROM TENTH ANNUAL REPORT of the MINISTER of EDUCATION.

THE number of pupils at the school at Sumner increased during the year from 37 to 41. A slight change has been made in the organisation of the school by the addition of one junior teacher, with the design of setting the Director at liberty to devote more attention to the supervision and training of his subordinates. This change appeared to be necessary in order to obtain the best results that can be produced by the admirable method of instruction pursued in the institution—the articulation method. The Director's report is printed as a separate paper.

The expenditure for 1886 was £3,514 12s. 8d., and the recoveries in the shape of payments made by parents amounted to £385 15s. 10d. The expenditure is accounted for as follows: Salaries, £1,065 13s. 8d.; board of pupils, £1,639 14s. 5d.; rent, £401 5s.; travelling, £172 12s. 10d.; contingencies, £235 6s. 9d.

No. 2.

SIR,—

DIRECTOR'S REPORT.

I have the honour to submit to the department my seventh report of the institution.

The year has been characterized by continued individual and concerted action on the part of the teachers to make the instruction and training of the pupils telling and satisfactory. And the result, as evinced by the behaviour and intelligence of the pupils, may be considered good in nearly all cases, fair only in a few, and excellent in some. In the case of the two or three children in the institution whose mental capacity is much below the average it is impossible to get more than a fair result, but the training should, for all that, not be regarded as of little value to them, for the personal and careful attention which they, with the rest, daily receive has a most humanising effect upon their whole being. Appropriate training sets in vibration the mechanism of such children's torpid minds, strengthens and directs their will, and assuredly saves them from a life-long condition of utter ignorance and melancholy stupor. But for such a process of mental exercise their being trained to perform any kind of bodily labour would be much more difficult, if not altogether hopeless. The teaching of very slow children, in a young institution like ours, has other advantages not to be forgotten. It involves increased care and self-control on the part of young teachers. It affords them special opportunities to test their own teaching-powers, and makes them observant as to individual peculiarities. By having dull mutes in a class the master is forced to try various ways of improving them, and on some occasions, and with distinct advantage to himself, discovers that want of success may be as much the result of his own ignorance or haste as of the tardy and peculiar nature of the child's intellect.

The number of scholars, being forty-three, remains the same as it was last year. Three left, and three fresh ones entered, one of the latter being an ex-pupil teacher from the North Island, who is admitted for the purpose of learning lip-reading. It may deserve a passing notice that this is the fifth case of deafness resulting from illness between the ages of five and sixteen that we have been called upon to train in the art of reading from the lips what others are saying. Can it be that our changeable climate is somewhat severe on the organ of hearing? I, for one, am under this impression, and my belief now is even stronger than it was in 1880, when I first referred to it in my report of the opening of the school.

Recent experience of another kind deserves to be mentioned. When the pupils had to return for this year's study one of the parents desired to keep her daughter back, in obedience to an expressed fancy of the child that she wished to learn dressmaking. Another, the mother of a large family, wished to do likewise, on the plea of having found her daughter "so useful and thoughtful

at home." Happily for the children both parents saw the error of their ways before it was too late. But ideas of this kind ought not to prevail, and, lest parents get to imagine that their children may be kept away for trivial or selfish reasons, it would be well for the department to make it clear, from the very outset, that the State cannot afford to grant a free education unless parents will enter cheerfully into the contract and show their appreciation of the work by sending their children to school with regularity and for an agreed period of time.

The conduct of the pupils has been exemplary throughout the year. Their health also was satisfactory, except in the beginning of August last, when our health-barometer, usually so even, suddenly fell, and in one out of two cases of illness dropped to a point of danger. The services of Dr. Prins, our medical officer, were called in, and, thanks to his skill and prompt attention, the dark aspect of our threatening atmosphere soon changed into the serene again. Our confidence in the condition of the sanitary arrangements of our premises, however, became somewhat shaken, and on instituting a strict examination it was found necessary to overhaul several defective parts, and to expend a percentage of our funds in their repair or renewal.

There have been changes and additions in the staff. The lady assistant, for two years with us at Beach Glen, has been obliged to relinquish her position owing to failing health. Having regard to the present number of pupils and greater requirements of teaching power in the immediate future the Education Department and the Director were at one as to the urgent need for training two more young teachers. A notification of our wants was accordingly made through the Press. Several of the likely candidates were interviewed, and two were selected. But I fear our choice has been unfortunate, for only one seems to acquire a taste for the work. The other, not wishing to continue beyond the probationary period of six months, has resigned, and I am now in communication with youths whose names are supplied to me from the Education Department in Wellington. I am not familiar with the system of filling vacancies in the Civil Service as regulated by law in New Zealand just now, but I hope, in the interest of the Institution for Deaf Mutes, that we may not meet with the "square man for the round hole" here.

The usual summer vacation was held at Christmas, and was spent by the pupils at their own homes. An interchange of ideas with their brothers and sisters is a mutual advantage, and a statement of their experiences at school always proves of great interest to the parents.

A slight variation has taken place in the number of scholars intrusted to our care from particular parts of the colony. Of the total, one pupil comes from South Australia, twenty-four are sent from the South Island, and eighteen from the North Island. And, again, of these forty-two New Zealand children, twelve belong to the Provincial District of Otago, ten to Canterbury, one to Westland, one to Nelson, ten to Auckland, two to Hawke's Bay, and six to Wellington.

The Director took occasion to interview several of the pupils' parents during the summer holidays. All he saw were well satisfied with their children's appearance and progress. In the case of a few older pupils the parents made inquiries if their children could learn drawing. Some practice in this art would no doubt be useful to girls learning dressmaking, and also to boys learning a trade. But there are two difficulties in the way. The want of railway or other convenient communication with Christchurch is one, and the uncertainty whether the authorities of our School of Arts could be prevailed upon to let our non-paying pupils attend gratis is another. Possibly the latter and graver of these two difficulties may not exist, and in that case the other may probably be surmounted.

Dating the financial year of the institution from the same date as that of the financial year of the colony, viz., from the 1st April, 1886, to the 31st March, 1887, I have entered in my cash-book £386 9s. 2d. as the sum refunded to us by the parents towards the year's expenditure of the institution.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Minister of Education.

G. VAN ASCH.

No. 3.

REPORT OF MEDICAL OFFICER.

SIR,—

Christchurch, April, 1887.

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

The inmates of the institution now number 43—namely, 20 girls and 23 boys; they occupy three buildings, all of which are kept very orderly and clean. During the past year the main building has undergone many repairs: drainage and sanitary matters especially have received a great deal of attention; but further expenditure will be necessary before the drainage-system is completely satisfactory. In order to make the plan as perfect as possible the assistance of the Sumner Town Board and the neighbouring landowners will have to be enlisted.

During the year the pupils generally have enjoyed good health, with the exception of a boy and girl, who both suffered from serious illness. The girl was removed to her home, while it was found necessary to engage the services of an experienced and well-qualified nurse to attend upon the boy. Neither has since returned to the institution.

I have pleasure in reporting that the pupils are showing satisfactory signs of progress. This is especially the case as regards the older pupils, whose rapid progress amply demonstrates the efficacy of the system of instruction pursued. It is to be hoped that all parents and guardians who have deaf-mutes under their charge will not fail to take advantage of this admirable institution, and so do what they can to brighten the lives of the unfortunates committed to their care.

The Director and Matron continue to give their unremitting care and attention to the discharge of their important duties; and they are, I am happy to add, ably assisted by the other members of the staff.

I have, &c.,

The Minister of Education, Wellington.

H. H. PRINS, Medical Officer.

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