

1893.
NEW ZEALAND.

EDUCATION : INSTITUTION FOR DEAF-MUTES.

[In Continuation of E.—4, 1892.]

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

No. 1.

EXTRACT FROM SIXTEENTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION.

The number of pupils at the Sumner school at the end of 1891 was 50; by the end of 1892 it had declined to 46. The expenditure for 1892—£3,447—is less by £172 than that of the preceding year; the contributions made by parents—£493—exceed those of 1891 by £169. A change has been made in the management, in conformity with the recommendation of a Commission, after inquiry held last November. A steward and matron have been appointed, and the housekeeping expenses are directly defrayed by the Education Department; and the arrangement under which, according to the agreement made with him in England, the Director received a capitation payment for the board of the pupils has been cancelled. The items of the expenditure for 1892 are: Salaries, £1,259; board of pupils, £1,520; rent, £399; travelling, £33; Commissions of Inquiry, £75; sundries, £161.

No. 2.

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR.

SIR,—

Institution for Deaf-mutes, Sumner, 18th May, 1893.

I have the honour to report on the institution for the year 1892.

The number of inmates for the first half amounted to forty-six; that for the second to forty-seven—viz., thirty-one boys and sixteen girls. In July two left, leaving forty-four, and three entered, making forty-seven.

The proportion of pupils from the South Island to that of the North Island was as twenty-seven to eighteen, and two attended from Australia.

The localities of the South Island pupils may be indicated thus: Riverton, 1; Greenhills, 1; Invercargill, 1; Pembroke, 1; Lawrence, 1; Mosgiel, 1; Dunedin, 3; Portobello, 1; Moeraki, 1; Hook, 1; Timaru, 3; Geraldine, 2; Methven, 1; Christchurch, 5; Papanui, 2; Heathcote, 1; and Riccarton, 1. Those of the North Island: Thames, 1; Auckland, 3; Gisborne, 1; Napier, 1; Patea, 1; Wanganui, 2; Bull's, 1; Marton, 1; Masterton, 1; Wellington, 6.

A large proportion of the pupils—viz., thirteen—left the school at the end of 1892. Of those who left and had, comparatively speaking, finished their school education, all except one made good or satisfactory progress during the time of their stay; the exception being a girl whose mental powers are weak and whose temperament is peculiar.

The staff of teachers has undergone a change; one resigned of her own accord, and another was requested to retire. The two vacancies have been filled by the appointment of two new assistants. The Director's special thanks are due to Mr. John C. Allan, head assistant master, for his able and willing support given during the past year. The same remark applies to the work of Miss van Asch, whose valuable services to the institution it will be difficult, for a time, to replace.

With regard to the health of the inmates there has been little to complain of; but on the occasion of a boy meeting with an accident we had to remove him to Christchurch, where he was professionally attended to by the medical officer of the institution.

We adhere to the opinion expressed last year as to the advantage of having separate buildings for the girls and boys after school hours.

Our curiosity with regard to Verrier's ear-tube (*audigene*) has not yet been gratified, although steps were taken as early as October last to get possession of the instrument through the good offices of the Agent-General. Let it not be supposed, however, that our knowledge of its probable worth to the school has remained deficient, for the opinions of some of the most prominent experts on the Continent of Europe, who have used it, are in our hands.

In the report, 1891-92, of the Institution for Deaf-mutes at Rotterdam, my friend Mr. Bickers, the Director, referring to the *audigene*, remarks, "Not until November last (1891) could experiments be made with this instrument, and these trials were interrupted by the Christmas, Easter, and midsummer vacations, so that we have not as yet gained sufficient experience to pronounce a definite opinion with regard to its power." This appears to me ominous.

On page 368 of the December number, 1892, of the *Organ der Taubstummen Anstalten in Deutschland*, a report will be found of the discussion held at the Conference of German experts at Nagold re the utility of Verrier's ear-tube. Translated, it reads as follows:—

Before the meeting "experiments were made with Verrier's ear-tube on several pupils of different degrees of deafness. These, however, produced no special or striking effects.

"*Härter*.—Hitherto no better tube has come into my hands. It is a good conductor of sound, or speechwaves (*sprachwellen*), and is, in any case, of use to those who have lost their hearing in later life. I certainly doubt whether it can ever be of any use in the case of the totally deaf.

"*Höller*.—I am greatly interested in seeing this tube, for I have had in use for the last two years an ear-tube of very simple construction. . . . At first it appeared to me as though it were useless: to the scholar the sound seemed to appear very strange, but after a time he got used to it. I obtained the advantage that the hearing of my pupil became more acute.

. . . . Care is necessary in using an ear-tube.

"*Hollenbach*.—An ordinary funnel will render the same service as this complicated ear-tube.

"*Vatter*.—It is beyond question that the inventor aimed at constructing a 'hear-awakener,' not a mere ear-tube. Reports from France show that all hope is not lost. I have been strengthened in my conviction (*überzeugung*), however, that, wherever there is no life, no life can be called into action, even by this ear-tube. We can only sharpen hearing wherever a remnant of hearing is left. But one is easily deceived; even famous aurists are often mistaken in an extraordinary manner."

I have entered into fuller particulars concerning this instrument than was needed perhaps, not because my faith in its efficacy has grown stronger, but more to show the great anxiety there is in the minds of all concerned in the education and welfare of the deaf to detect, preserve, and sharpen any remnant of hearing these unfortunate children may have the good fortune to be still possessed of.

That the number of the non-totally deaf in every school for deaf-mutes amounts to a larger percentage than one would at first suppose, is a surprising fact that deserves to be more widely known. Let me ventilate this subject a little more by representing the power of hearing, say, by the letter A, the degree of hearing-power in a person of normal condition by the unit 1A, and the absolute want of all hearing-power by the formula 0A. It will be clear that a scale of all intermediate stages of deafness may now be drawn, and that only experience in testing is required to relegate each case in a school to its proper place on such a scale.

In the Sumner school, for example, where there are forty-one pupils, the scale would appear thus: 0A, fourteen pupils; $\frac{1}{4}$ A, two pupils; $\frac{2}{4}$ A, four pupils; $\frac{3}{4}$ A, six pupils; $\frac{4}{4}$ A, five pupils; $\frac{5}{4}$ A, five pupils; $\frac{6}{4}$ A, three pupils; $\frac{7}{4}$ A, not represented (children with average intellect belonging to this class would not remain dumb); 1A, two hearing pupils with defective speech. The feature exhibited here, that no less than twenty-five out of thirty-nine deaf-mutes are not absolutely deaf, is a striking one.

The large percentage of *partially* deaf children on this scale is not peculiar to New Zealand, but will, with slight variations, be found in most deaf-mute schools in countries with a damp or variable climate; and such remarks as are made below with regard to the scale will apply generally:—

1. Deaf children falling under Class $\frac{6}{4}$ A, though hearing slightly, are *bonâ fide* deaf-mutes, and enter an institution as such—that is, without either oral or mental speech.

2. Such deaf children need expert treatment just as much as those in Class 0A and upwards.

3. After a few years' proper tuition by means of the pure oral method, knowledge and practice enable these pupils to understand through the ear at a yard's distance a good deal of such language, spoken behind them, as they have previously acquired artificially by speech and lip-reading.

4. Language *strange in meaning* to pupils under Class $\frac{6}{4}$ A, but clearly uttered at the same distance behind them, can neither be recognised nor repeated.

5. It is clear, then, that the previous knowledge of a word or sentence contributes more to its successful recognition than does the slight power to hear the sound; that with even the most favoured of uneducated deaf-mutes there can be no question of their having in the slightest degree any notion of language or any idea of silent, inward, mental speech, and that to the deaf and dumb all language, as used in speech or in writing, has to be taught and retaught again and again.

6. For the want of this mental speech or inward language every effort of mental energy in untaught deaf-mutes is fettered and shackled, is crude, and the process of thinking is carried on more by the power of imagination than by any other faculty of the mind.

7. No wonder, then, that the following resolution of the German Teachers' Conference at Nagold, on the 18th May, 1892, was unanimously adopted without discussion: "To induce, encourage, cultivate—literally, to build up in the soul (*hinein zu bilden*)—the thinking of deaf-mutes

in spoken language, should, above all, be the aim of all object-teaching, and free conversation in the widest sense."

8. That deaf children in Classes 0 A and $\frac{1}{8}$ A utter their words in a monotone is not in consequence of defective teaching but owing to their utter want of hearing. Their monotonous articulation may be faultless, though not readily understood by strangers.

9. That deaf-mutes of the Classes $\frac{2}{8}$ A, $\frac{3}{8}$ A, speak more plainly than the rest, is as much due to the less lifeless condition of their auditory-nerve system as to the careful teaching and training of the master.

10. Intelligent criticism of the teacher's work, with regard to the difference in the articulate or mechanical speech of pupils under Classes 0 A and $\frac{1}{8}$ A, &c., and those under Classes $\frac{2}{8}$ A and $\frac{3}{8}$ A, is only possible when the critic is an honest expert. In other cases it is best to bear in mind Pope's observation, "A little learning is a dangerous thing."

The Hon. the Minister of Education.

I have, &c.,

G. VAN ASCH.

No. 3.

REPORT OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER.

SIR,—

Christchurch, May, 1893.

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

The two places occupied by the officers and inmates are kept clean. The inmates have generally enjoyed good health; those with trifling ailments were brought to my house. It is my duty, however, to report that the main drain runs under one of the schoolrooms, and so to the creek. I would respectfully advise the Government to have this altered,* thus obviating the very objectionable necessity of having the children taught in a room with a drain underneath them. The officers are doing all in their power to make the children contented and happy.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Minister of Education, Wellington.

H. H. PRINS.

[* NOTE.—The alteration is being made.—SEC. EDUCATION.]

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