

1900.
NEW ZEALAND.

EDUCATION: SCHOOL FOR DEAF-MUTES.

[In continuation of E.-4, 1899.]

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

No. 1.

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

The roll of this school includes, with one or two exceptions, all the known deaf-mutes of school age and of sound intellect in the colony who have been brought under the notice of the Education Department. The method of instruction used at Sumner is the oral method, in favour of which there is a vast predominance of expert opinion. According to it the pupils are taught, by watching the mouth of the speaker, to follow the speech of any person who will take the trouble to articulate properly, and are trained themselves to speak so as to be easily understood by others. The power of understanding and of being understood thus acquired is made the stepping-stone to general education, as in the case of hearing children. If it were generally known that without special education deaf-mute children would grow up with minds almost entirely undeveloped, there would not be the repugnance there occasionally is now on the part of parents to allowing their children to go away from them for a time to the only institution in the colony at which they can receive that special education. The best service that parents or friends of such children can render them is to bring their cases under the notice of the Director at the time of his periodical visits to various parts of the colony, or under the notice of the Department by letter addressed to the Secretary for Education. Payment is not insisted on when parents are unable to contribute towards the cost of educating their deaf-mute children.

During the year 1899, 10 boys and 6 girls left, and 3 boys and 6 girls were admitted; at the end of the year there were 43 children—22 boys and 21 girls—at the institution. One of these was, for special reasons, boarded out in the neighbourhood. During the first half of the year the school was attacked by an epidemic of diphtheria, most of the cases being of a mild type. Fortunately, no fatal case occurred; and the occurrence of the outbreak has been guarded against as far as possible by the removal of its apparent cause. During 1899 the main portion of the institution, which had previously been rented from a private owner, was, with part of the land attached to it, purchased by the Government, which also bought some rising ground to the south-west, adjoining the former property; the whole, which comprises about eighteen acres, forms an excellent site for the permanent institution, and it is proposed to ask Parliament for a vote to enable the work of building to be begun at an early date.

The gross expenditure for the year ended 31st December, 1899, was £3,444 2s. 5d., made up as follows: Salary of Director and teachers, £1,339 2s. 1d.; steward, matron, and servants, £483; rent, 470; housekeeping, £778 17s.; travelling-expenses, £156 9s. 9d.; school material, £10 8s. 5d.; repairs and works, £55 3s. 11d.; clothing, £15 19s. 9d.; medical attendance and medicine, £44 2s. 8d.; water-supply, £21 19s. 6d.; sanitary precautions, £15 14s. 4d.; sundries, £53 5s. Less amount contributed by parents, £199 15s. Net expenditure, £3,244 7s. 5d. Cost of land and buildings purchased, £4,700; portion paid to 31st December, 1899, £2,700..

No. 2.

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR.

SIR,

School for Deaf-mutes, 9th May, 1900.

I have the honour to report that owing to frequent irregularities in the pupils' attendance at school, due to illness and to a change in the teaching-staff, the educational harvest of 1899 was in a few of the classes less bountiful than in former years.

Within a short time from the re-opening of the school, the total number of pupils reached fifty; but, as one of these was for special reasons boarded-out in the neighbourhood, the number of boarders within the institution amounted to forty-nine. With the exception of this boarded-out pupil, who lost his hearing when seven years of age, all are deaf from birth or from very early infancy.

The proportion of absolutely deaf pupils to those with a vestige of hearing-power, enlarged upon in my report of 1893, has undergone but little change.

The area of the colony from which the pupils were drawn is also still as wide as ever. Seventeen pupils came from the Provincial District of Otago, eleven from Canterbury, three from Westland, two from Nelson, seven from Wellington, nine from Auckland, and one from Hawke's Bay.

It was impossible to immediately and judiciously fill the breach in the staff caused by the dismissal of the first-assistant at the beginning of 1899; for no properly-qualified teachers of the deaf on the articulation method are available in these colonies. Under these circumstances the vacancy was filled temporarily by Mr. Henry C. D. van Asch, one of the Director's sons, who from early youth has been familiar with the instruction and treatment of the deaf. The Director was thus enabled to devote part of his time to the initial training of Mr. T. F. Chambers, who has been appointed junior assistant-teacher in the school.

Undoubtedly the most laborious and difficult of all the classes was the articulation class, consisting of eight beginners, because it contained children of widely different capacity, and included one too backward and too old to be admitted otherwise than as an experiment. To handle this uneven batch of raw recruits was a task that required unlimited patience, considerable physical exertion and experience, and great assiduity. Nevertheless, by the end of the year the entire course of graduated exercises in speech, lip-reading, reading and writing, as laid down by the regulations, was passed through with the slow-minded, and much more in the way of sentence-forming with the quicker children, and a word of commendation is due to the assistant-teacher in charge, the successful work proving, moreover, his right to the certificate of proficiency issued to him a few years ago.

The scene at the opposite end of the school presented a picture in decided contrast to all this. Here the pupils were only a few in number, and in their last year of study. They were equally bright intellectually, and almost of the same age. Instead of making a demand upon the physical endurance of the teacher, as in the articulation class, they often led the conversation of their own motion, and went through their school-work in a most cheerful frame of mind. They were so eager after knowledge of every kind that to instruct them in social, historical, political, and commercial topics, as was done, was a comparatively easy and rapid process, and to interchange ideas with them in and out of school hours, and on many questions of the day, was much more of a peculiar charm than of an irksome toil.

Immediately below this advanced class, there was another of eight pupils, not quite so even in mental powers, but fairly intelligent, and equally ready with their eyes to catch up from their teacher's mouth and face all manner of words and expressions when clearly enunciated before them. The Director selected this class as probably the most suitable to give the newly-appointed assistant-teacher a few introductory lessons in the characteristic mode of dealing with deaf-mutes. In order to assist parents also in explaining difficulties, I shall, by way of an illustration, state how one of these difficulties was overcome while the class was reading the slightly altered story entitled "One good brick is worth many poor ones," Southern Cross Readers, No. 1, page 29. Story: "A cat one day met a fox in the wood. Puss knew that the fox is cunning and that he knows a good deal of the ways of the world; so she thought she would speak to him. 'Good-day, Mr. Fox,' she said," &c. Sentence one presented no difficulties. But, after the second sentence had been carefully read aloud by a pupil, he at once halted to inquire the meaning of "the ways of the world"; and this is how the cloud of vagueness was dispersed.

Q. Did you see the fowls outside?—A. Yes, sir. Q. Tell me what the fowls do?—A. Look at the ground, peck with their mouths. (Teacher: Beak). Q. Yes, the fowls look at the ground, and peck. What else have you seen the fowls do?—A. Look about (imitating a hen's peculiar way of looking sometimes). Q. What else? A. Jump on a branch. Q. What else? A. Scratch the soil. (To forcibly illustrate the peculiar way of a hen scratching, the teacher asked the pupil—always *viva voce*, be it understood—to step on the floor and to show him exactly how hens scratch and look for seed and bits of food.) Teacher: Yes, those ways of busily scratching the soil in search of food, of picking up seeds and bits, of looking inquisitively at people, of jumping on a branch or fence, are the habits, are the ways, of fowls. (To make the point clearer still): Q. Does a cow ever scratch the ground and look for food? A. (laughingly) No, Sir. Q. You understand, then, the ways of cows are not like the ways of fowls. Did you see Arthur K. (a small boy) at football yesterday? Did you see him waving his hand and looking angry when Mr. C. caught the football in front of him and kicked it? Very well, that was Arthur's way of showing disapproval. Do all little boys tell me at once, "admit," when they copy from another boy or when they lose a pencil? A. No, Sir. Teacher: Well, they are like people who do not "own" quickly ("admit readily") when they do wrong. Some people tell the truth at once; some people do not. Those are the ways of people. Those are the ways of the world. Now, the fox told the cat (claimed) that he knew much about people; so he said he knew much of the ways of the world.

This mode of treating this and similar difficulties may seem somewhat long, but conversation is a ready means of communication, and, provided the teacher is only able to choose his illustrations from the pupil's own sphere of knowledge, the process is really much shorter and much more interesting than would at first appear. One more example from a lower class, where a lesson on "The Day" was being read and discussed. The following passage was under consideration: "While it is light (day) people are busy (at work, active), but they rest (sleep) during the night—not during the whole night, but during the greater part of it." Knowing that the meaning of the sentence would not be clear to all the pupils, the test of cross-examination was again applied: Q. Is it light now?—A. Yes, sir. Q. Am I at work now?—A. Yes, sir. Q. How do you know?—A. Because you are teaching now. To E.: Cover my hand (putting his hand on the table). E. could not do it; so another pupil, F., covered the teacher's hand partly with hers. Teacher to P.: Cover the whole of my hand. P. did so; but as some of the finger-ends were still visible the teacher asked: Is the whole of my hand covered?—A. No. Then, taking a slate P. covered the hand completely. E. was now required to say: Percy could not cover the whole of your hand with his hand, but he covered the whole of your hand with a slate. The pupils were then given a piece of paper, and asked to cover it partly, to cover it wholly (entirely), to cover the smaller part of it, to cover the greater part of it, &c.

The health of the inmates was on the whole hardly satisfactory. Two boys fell seriously ill in March. One of them was removed home when convalescent, and in consequence of his attack did not return to the school. The schooling of seventeen other inmates was materially hindered owing to an outbreak of diphtheria. As no adequate provision exists in the institution for the careful treatment and nursing of sick children, all the cases as they occurred were, by the medical adviser's orders, sent to the Christchurch Hospital, where, thanks to the up-to-date treatment of the medical staff, and to good nursing, the patients quickly recovered.

My last and sorrowful duty in this report is to refer to the loss of the Rev. William James Habens, B.A., the late Inspector of this school. He was connected with the school from the very beginning, and watched its growth with a very deep and enlightened interest, so that no one in the colony had a clearer and fuller knowledge of its internal working. To him there seemed to be a kind of fascination about our work; and as it appeared to be his very nature to interest himself in individual cases, his memory and his name will long live in the minds of past and present pupils, and not least in that of your obedient servant,—

The Hon. the Minister of Education, Wellington.

G. VAN ASCH.

No. 3.

REPORT OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER.

SIR,—

Christchurch, 15th June, 1900.

I have the honour to submit the following report on the Deaf-mute Institute at Sumner for the year 1899:—

The past year has seen the worst outbreak of illness in the history of the school. Diphtheria commenced in April with three cases, which were at once removed to the Christchurch Hospital, and were followed by ten in May, three in June, one in July, one in August, and four in September. The early cases were generally severe, but the later cases were very mild. There were also nine cases of tonsillitis, two of ulcerated throat, two of gastritis, two very severe cases of pleurisy and pleuro-pneumonia, and a number of minor cases due to the same cause. No deaths occurred, but fifteen cases were sent to the Hospital, and a considerable amount of antitoxin had to be used to arrest the endemic. The cause of the illness was quickly traced to the faulty construction of an improvised schoolroom, which was not part of the main building. It was originally a passage connecting two main buildings; and, owing to the increasing number of pupils, and the necessity for more schoolrooms, it had been enlarged and utilised as a temporary expedient. It covered some hollow ground, and, having no rain-shoots, the heavy rain in April filled the hollow under the floor with a great quantity of water. On taking up the floor a very bad smell was noticed, and, on

examining the lavatory drain, which runs under this floor, we found it rusted through and leaking, so that the waste water from the lavatory had been accumulating under the floor. All the wood-work was decayed, and covered with white fungus. Both the design and the material of the drains were as bad as they could be. All this has now been remedied: fifty-nine loads of clean sand have been filled into the hollow ground, and covered with a strong layer of asphalt. The floor has been raised 18 in., and the schoolroom is comparatively wholesome, except that the woodwork is tainted, and, being old, it is impossible to disinfect it completely. We have purified it as well as we could. Neither the main building nor the large schoolroom are in a sanitary condition. They both stand on piles, and in both the ground underneath is generally from 8 in. to 9 in. lower than the ground outside. A concrete foundation, well ventilated, would make both buildings healthier and warmer, and last much longer. I have gone into some details, in order to show the advisability of building the new school on the higher ground as soon as possible. The only other cases worth mentioning were two dislocations of the shoulder from falls, which I reduced without further trouble.

The following is a classification of all the principal cases of illness during the year 1899:—

	March.	April.	May.	June.	July.	August.	Septem-ber.	Octo-ber.	Novem-ber.	Decem-ber.
Diphtheria	3	10	3	1	1	4	...	...	...
Tonsillitis	4	...	1	1	1	...	2	...	...
Ulcerated throat	2	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Gastritis	2	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Rubeola	1	...	...
Abscess	1	...	...	...	...	...
Otitis	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Pleurisy	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Pleuro-pneumonia	1
Anæmia	1	1
Adenoids	1
Dislocation	1	1	...

I have, &c.,
W. H. SYMES, M.D.

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