

1903.
NEW ZEALAND.

EDUCATION: SCHOOL FOR DEAF-MUTES.

[In continuation of E.-4, 1902.]

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 Director's report (E.-4.), amongst other remarks of an interesting character, calls attention to the fact, which is not generally understood, that persons of defective intellect cannot be treated in the institution. Training on the articulation method, by which the pupils are taught both to speak and to understand the speech of others, cannot be imparted to any individual who is not in possession of unimpaired mental capacity. Disappointment would be saved in many cases if this cardinal rule could be brought into general recognition.

Another point that deserves public attention is that young persons of abnormally dull hearing, especially if they show signs of losing or ceasing to make use of whatever power of speech they may have acquired, may receive great and lasting benefit from a course of training at the school. It cannot be too strongly impressed upon parents that in the case of the deaf want of speech means want of thought, and consequently want of power to take part in the duties of life.

The new building is approaching completion, and will be ready for the reception of the pupils after the midsummer vacation.

Four boys and 1 girl left the school during the year, and 11 boys and 5 girls were admitted. At the end of the year the number in residence was 35 boys and 25 girls, 7 boys and 4 girls more than at the end of 1901.

The expenditure on the institution for the year 1902 was: Salaries of Director and teachers, £1,506 8s. 1d.; steward, matron, and servants, £537 4s.; rent, £140; housekeeping, £871 16s. 5d.; travelling-expenses (including transit of pupils), £211 0s. 8d.; school material and material for technical instruction, £12 3s. 10d.; general maintenance of buildings and furniture, £30 8s. 11d.; clothing, £13 8s. 8d.; medical attendance and medicine, £40 6s. 3d.; water-supply, £36 2s.; sanitation, £16 17s. 6d.; boarding-out of pupils, £137 2s. 6d.; extension of water-service, installation of fire-alarm system, &c., £226 15s. 1d.; new buildings, £609 12s. 8d.; sundries, £101 3s.: total expenditure, £4,490 9s. 7d. Deducting recoveries, parents' contributions, £225 6s. 3d., the net expenditure was £4,265 3s. 4d. The amount expended in 1901 was £3,097 0s. 11d.

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 £100 10s.; and one was under a private teacher in Auckland, to whom a fee of £20 was paid by the Department.

No. 2.

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR.

SIR,—

School for Deaf-mutes, Sumner, 22nd May, 1903.

I regret having to report that the influx of new children during the year 1902 was unexpectedly large—larger in number and more varied in intensity of affliction than that of any previous year. As many as 10 arrived on reopening the school in February, and although one of these, at the request of the Medical Officer, was sent back, 5 more were admitted in June, thus swelling the number of 46 pupils remaining on the roll to a total of 60—namely, 35 boys and 25 girls.

On former occasions attention has been drawn to the fact that in all institutions for the deaf there are a number of inmates who possess either a vestige or a considerable degree of hearing-power. It has also been pointed out that by adopting a symbol, say 1 A, by which the hearing-power of a normal person may be indicated, and 0 A showing the absence of all hearing-power, all the pupils in a school for the deaf may be graded according to this scale. In 1892, for instance, there were 25 out of 39 pupils in the Sumner school more or less sensitive to sound-vibration. The position of the favoured class falling under $\frac{7}{8}$ A, however (see Report, 1893), remained unoccupied then.

This gap in the scale now no longer exists, for four of the June arrivals fall within the limits, and though practically deaf-mutes—that is, mute in consequence of deafness—they are technically better described as very dull hearers. What such dull hearers really are may be gathered by the general reader by my stating that when these four children were diagnosed they proved to possess enough dormant hearing-power to notice the sharp sounds of an ordinary plain speaker, but not clearly enough to appreciate the delicate vibrations and *nuances* of tone produced by his articulated words. Single vowel-sounds were perceived at a considerable distance and imitated by these children, but the proper use of such letters as t, b, c, k, v, f, n, l, ng, w, d, g, j, ch, sh, as they occur in words, was foreign to them, and if attempted these were mutilated. What little speech these dull hearers had was at best a kind of jargon, for the few short words and easy names they uttered were barely intelligible. One of the four referred to had at one time been sent to the village school, but was soon after sent home and pronounced unfit.

Another misfortune hanging over these dull hearers, and, indeed, over all deaf children, and demanding our attention is the serious mischief wrought by sympathizing friends and by antiquated family practitioners in holding out false hopes to naturally anxious parents with regard to their children's ultimate recovery from deafness, and in offering them cheap and silly advice against paying prompt attention to their education. But enough to show that the very fact of these dull hearers having a slight natural advantage over their less fortunate fellow-sufferers is in reality often a source of great danger to them. What, it may be asked, is there, then, to guide wavering parents with children of this description? Are they to continue giving ear to foolish advisers, to keep on wavering and hoping, and thus injure the mental life and physical condition of their suffering offspring? Common-sense and modern science alike protest. Both direct all interested to go and watch the proceedings at a modern school for the deaf, where these dull hearers, in a separate class, or in company with others less *mentally* dumb, are taught in accordance with approved principles as interpreted by experienced teachers; where their organs of speech are patiently and daily exercised; where, with the use of improved ear-tubes and without them, they are trained to clearly speak out the vowel-sounds and to listen to their own voices; where they are taught to properly articulate the letters unknown to them, to combine in speech letters and vowels into words and sentences; where they are practised to employ these in ordinary language for the purposes of having intellectual intercourse within themselves and with their fellow-men; and where they are trained to read, from the various movements of the facial muscles, the distinctly spoken language of nearly every patient speaker. That my remarks are not extravagant but to the point I know from my own experience, extending over well-nigh half a century. Doubters may test their worth by referring to the writings of such eminent teachers as Hill and Vatter, in Germany; Bickers, in Holland; others in Italy; and by consulting such a publication as “*Die Taubstummheit auf Grund Ohrenärztlicher Beobachtungen*” (Deaf-mutism as observed from an Aurist's Point of View), by Dr. Bezold, professor in the University of Munich; published by J. F. Bergmann, Wiesbaden, 1902.

For the first time in the history of the school has its magnetic influence been felt in every province of the colony. Eighteen pupils were present from Otago, 13 from Canterbury, 3 from Westland, 2 from Nelson, and 1 from Marlborough; 9 from Wellington, 4 from Taranaki, 2 from Hawkes Bay, and 8 from Auckland: giving a return of 37 pupils from the South and of 23 from the North Island.

Six girls and two boys were sufficiently advanced in their general education at the end of the year to return to their respective homes. Several of the girls have since taken up dressmaking as a means of gaining a living, and one is assisting her father, who is a widower, in his household. The boys, it appears, experienced greater difficulty in securing places to learn a trade. Master mechanics were evidently frightened at having to pay the regulation wage of 5s. a week as well as being obliged to teach a boy his trade in spite of his affliction. At any rate, as stated in a letter of thanks and appreciation that I recently received, it was this having to pay wages from the beginning of his employment that was understood by the widowed mother of one of the boys to be the great objection to his being employed.

The progress of the inmates varied with their natural ability. That of several was excellent, of the majority good, of a few hardly satisfactory, while that of one, slightly imbecile, only admitted on trial, was practically nil. The opportunity of testing the mental powers of this boy has served a useful purpose, however. It has enlightened the younger members of the teaching-staff and convinced them that a school for deaf-mutes cannot at the same time be an asylum or harbour for deaf imbeciles, however slightly affected.

Only in one instance has delicate health seriously interfered with the regular school attendance of a pupil.

The provision of a compulsory clause in "The School Attendance Act, 1901," whereby parents may be compelled to send their deaf-mute children to a school for deaf-mutes will be welcomed by all competent judges as a wise and humane measure.

There are plain signs of late of a further increase in the number of scholars next year. With this growth of the institution's work the peculiarities and drawbacks of an internate or asylum as against the advantages of an externate or day-school will become more pronounced. The difficulties, therefore, of the Director and his teaching-staff in promoting the use of speech amongst the pupils will equally increase. To minimise this evil a regulation that all the members of the domestic staff, as well as the teachers, should speak *viva voce* to the inmates where and whenever their duties bring them into personal contact ought to receive official recognition. The Director should likewise have the privilege and power to request, at convenient times, the attendance in the class-room of any domestic in the establishment.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Minister of Education, Wellington.

G. VAN ASCH.

No. 3.

REPORT OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER.

SIR,—

Christchurch, 30th June, 1903.

I have the honour to report that the pupils of the Deaf-mute Institute have generally enjoyed good health during the past year; but early in December whooping-cough appeared in the school, attacking five of the pupils. I therefore recommended the Director to commence the Christmas holidays a fortnight earlier than usual, the effect of which was that no more cases occurred.

The want of a hospital building separate from the school is urgently felt, for the isolation of infectious cases. I submit a plan of what I think is required; and I may say that the Director, Mr. van Asch, has approved of the plan, and says that when the building is not required for illness he can make good use of it for additional teaching-rooms. There is, however, a special purpose which such a hospital would serve, in addition to providing for ordinary infectious diseases, such as diphtheria and scarlatina, or measles. We have always got a small number of pupils with a tendency to tuberculosis, of whom some—at present three—are sufficiently affected to make them dangerous to other pupils if sleeping in the same room. These three pupils are now sleeping in a separate cottage by themselves; and an instance occurred of the necessity for this arrangement, from the cottage attendant becoming infected, though she is now cured. The proposed hospital will afford a convenient pair of dormitories for the tubercular pupils, who can be removed temporarily in the event of an outbreak of infectious disease.

I have, &c.,

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

The Secretary for Education, Wellington.

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