

No. 2.—SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF, SUMNER.

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR.

SIR,

School for the Deaf, Sumner, 1st May, 1911.

I have the honour to lay before you my report for the year 1910.

The number of pupils who have been under instruction during the year is shown in the following tabulated statement :—

	Boys.	Girls.	Totals.
Pupils of the previous year who returned to school	49	40	89
Admitted at or near the commencement of the year	7	3	10
Admitted later	1	1	2
 Total number on the roll	 57	 44	 101
Left before the end of the school year	2	..	2
Left at the end of the school year	1	8	9
 Pupils expected to return in 1911	 54	 36	 90

Of the 101 pupils, 29 came from the Auckland District, 2 from Taranaki, 4 from Hawke's Bay, 22 from Wellington, 1 from Nelson, 2 from Marlborough, 2 from Westland, 22 from Canterbury, and 17 from Otago.

Owing to the increase in the number of the pupils and to the lack of accommodation at the school, 6 boys and 1 girl were boarded out. In addition to these, 2 boys and 2 girls attended as day pupils, their parents having made private arrangements for their board and lodging in Sumner. The desirability of giving deaf children as much opportunity as possible for associating with hearing persons has been again exemplified by the progress of these boarded-out children and of those children whose parents live near enough to the school for them to go home weekly.

Three of the twelve cases admitted during the year call for special mention. One was that of a mentally deficient boy of eight years and a half, whose hearing was almost normal and whose inability to speak was due to his defective mentality. After six months' trial it was found that, though he had benefited somewhat by physical and kindergarten training, he was unable to take advantage of the ordinary course of instruction. He was accordingly removed. Another case was that of a boy of twelve, who had been attending a public school and had got as far as the Second Standard. His defective hearing had handicapped him considerably, as he was only to a limited extent able to profit by the instruction given. It was expected that the extra amount of individual attention he would be able to receive here, together with training in lip-reading, would be of considerable advantage to him, more especially as there was some likelihood of his deafness increasing. It was gratifying to find that after being six months with us he had acquired sufficient knowledge of lip-reading to enable him to return to the public school, and to continue his education there satisfactorily. The third case was that of a little girl of eleven. An attack of scarlet fever in infancy had left her almost stone-deaf. On account of her being able to hear loud noises and to say one or two words in a more or less intelligible manner her relatives had formed a totally wrong idea of the nature of her affliction, and had been led, as in many similar cases, to believe that she would grow out of it. It was only after she had attended a public school for about four years that the question of her suitability for this school was inquired into. She is now making excellent progress. This case, coming as it does on top of two somewhat similar cases met with in 1908, emphasizes the necessity of the functions of this school being better understood by teachers and by the public generally. If a circular were sent to head teachers asking them to report all cases coming under their notice of defective hearing or speech, it is probable that similar cases would be discovered elsewhere. It may not be out of place to again enumerate the classes of pupils that are received at this school :—

- (1.) Children born deaf or becoming so in infancy or before learning to speak.
- (2.) Children, or in some cases adults, who have lost their hearing after having learned to speak. (In such cases the sooner instruction in lip-reading is commenced the better.)
- (3.) Children who by reason of their defective hearing cannot be efficiently educated at an ordinary public school.

With the exception of the mentally afflicted boy referred to above, good progress was made by the newcomers, all of whom completed the articulation course prescribed for the first year. Taken as a whole, the results of the work for the year may be regarded as extremely satisfactory. In the case of a few children only, of comparatively low mental power, was the rate of progress less than normal. Better results would be obtained in these cases if they could be educated separately. But this, however, will not be possible until our growing population has increased sufficiently to enable us to reap the advantages that can only be obtained by a proper classification system. Meanwhile the progress of the dull pupil will continue to be the best test of the skill and devotion of the teacher, and the extent to which the latter is able to subdue his natural inclination to pass over the unattractive dull pupil in favour of his more brilliant classmate will mark the rank he has attained in his profession.

On account of their approaching marriage, we had the misfortune to lose the valuable services of two members of the teaching staff—viz., Miss A. C. Gemming at the end of May, and Miss H. B. Anthony at the end of the year. The vacancy caused by the retirement of the former was filled in June by the appointment of Miss J. St. M. Waterston.