

1882.

NEW ZEALAND.

EDUCATION : DEAF-AND-DUMB INSTITUTION.

[In continuation of E.—8, 1881.]

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

No. 1.—DIRECTOR'S REPORT.

SIR,—

Sumner, 1st May, 1882.

I have the honour to report that the educational work of the Institution for the past year has been carried on with great care and steadiness, and that its result on the majority of pupils is of a very satisfactory character.

The number of inmates has now reached a total of 24, made up from the following parts of New Zealand : From Otago, 8 ; from Canterbury, 8 ; from Auckland, 4 ; from Hawke's Bay, 1 ; and from Wellington, 2. There is also 1 pupil from Melbourne. Of these 13 are boys and 11 are girls ; 21 are possessed of healthy faculties, whilst 3 bear evidence of slight mental weakness.

The principle of assembling the boys and girls for the day and separating them to their particular homes for the evening and the night works exceedingly well, and has many important advantages.

From the considerable disparity in the pupil's attainments, owing to many of them having entered at different times, special attention had to be paid to the classification of the school. The total number is now divided into five, and, for some studies, into six divisions. I am aware this severe mode of subdividing is somewhat exact and time-robbing, but were any other adopted it would be to the disadvantage of the whole of the pupils, and greatly retard the progress of both the dullest and the quickest.

It is on this account, as well as in consequence of the increased number, that I beg to call your attention to the necessity there is for securing for the Institution the help of one male assistant teacher. As will be seen from the subjoined report of the deliberations of the great assembly of experts, held at Milan in the autumn of 1880, all professional men, whether of the French or of the German school, are in perfect accord as to the importance of having no more than ten pupils for one master to instruct. And as the case now stands with us there are three divisions for one master, whereas no more than two ought to be under his charge.

The pupils' visit home during the Christmas holidays afforded the parents an opportunity of judging of their children's appearance and progress, and, in the case of the most advanced scholars, it had the additional advantage of enabling them on their journey to lay by a fresh store of information relative to many social and commercial matters, beside facilitating their now being instructed in the geography of New Zealand. By learning the geography of this colony I do not mean that the deaf child should be taught how to enumerate and point out on the map the names of the rivers, capes, sounds, mountain peaks, &c., &c., but rather that he should be assisted in systematising what he himself has seen of the country's surface and the people's doings ; that he should be so instructed as to be thoroughly clear what rivers, seas, plains, mountains, bush, harbours, railways, towns, villages, breakwaters, offices, steamboats, and telegraphs are, and to be able to give several examples from his own knowledge where they are, and their use, so that it is safe to teach him, by induction, the idea of others which he has not seen.

On several occasions I have observed that the parents of pupils (and others) would be still more successful in exchanging ideas with their children if they bore in mind : (1.) That the speaker need not bend down his head close to the mute's face, as though he expected him to hear his words, but should retain his ordinary upright posture. (2.) That the speaker's lips should be turned not from, but towards the light, with the child in his front, and that he should enunciate his words slowly and clearly. (3.) That he may encourage and interest the deaf one by asking him simple questions on the common objects which surround him ; for example, in every household there are numerous articles of furniture, of dress ; in the garden and in the farm are tools, implements, animals, &c. By asking the child at the tea table, we will say, "Is the teapot hot?" "Where is the bread?" "Has the teapot a handle?" "A spout?" "Is the teapot made of wood?" "What is the teapot made of?" "Is there coffee in the teapot?" "Do you like