

BALANCE-SHEET of RECEIPTS and EXPENDITURE in respect of EDUCATION RESERVES for the Year ended 31st December, 1877.

<i>Receipts.</i>			£	s.	d.	<i>Expenditure.</i>			£	s.	d.
Town Lands—To rents collected for year current	...	...	6	12	0	Expenditure ...	...	...	Nil.		
Suburban and Rural Lands—To rents collected for year current	...	...	100	5	0	Balance carried to Education Fund Ac-count	...	...	106	17	0
Total	...	...	£106	17	0	Total	...	...	£106	17	0

A. P. SEYMOUR,
Chairman of the Board.

NELSON.

SIR,—

Education Office, Nelson, 30th March, 1878.

In compliance with the requirements of "The Education Act, 1877," section 102, I have the honor, by direction of the Board, to lay before you a report of the proceedings of the Education Board for the District of Nelson, for the twelve months ending 31st December, 1877. To facilitate reference, the different heads of information have been arranged in the order in which the queries are put in your circular No. 4, dated 25th February, 1878, viz.:—(1.) List of public schools within the Nelson Education District, with teachers' names, &c. (2.) List of the branches of education taught, &c. (3.) Abstract of the expenditure on each school. (4.) Copy of the Board's account of income and expenditure. (5.) Balance-sheet of income and expenditure *re* education reserves. (6.) Alphabetical list of teachers, with memorandum explanatory of the method of issuing certificates to teachers. (7.) List of scholarships held during 1877, with suggestions as to the establishment of scholarships in future, and copy of the last set of examination papers. (8.) (No training college or normal school yet established.) (9.) School inspection. Copy of Inspector's last report, and explanation of the principles on which inspection is conducted. (10.) (a) List of class-books formally authorized by the Board; and (b) list of books which the Board desires the Governor in Council to approve. (11.) List of public libraries. (12.) Information as to existing school accommodation within the Nelson Education District, with a detailed statement of what additional buildings are needed. (13.) Rules for subsidized schools, and rules and by-laws of the Board.

The information given under the several heads above enumerated, whether in the shape of tabulated statements or explanatory memoranda, will, it is hoped, be full enough to enable you to form a clear idea of the circumstances of the Nelson Education District.

The task of economically administering a system of free education in a district where there are hardly any large centres of population, and where a constant pressure is being put upon the Board to open new schools in thinly-peopled neighbourhoods, is not an easy one. And the Board wishes it to be distinctly understood that although, by the exercise of the most rigid economy, it may be able barely to maintain existing schools upon the present capitation allowance, it will be quite out of its power to extend its operations into the remoter parts of the district upon anything like the scale hitherto adopted. For some years to come, it is certain that constant demands will be made upon the Board to open small and therefore relatively costly schools in the narrow and broken valleys where the bulk of the available land within the Nelson District lies. This difficulty has hitherto been met, to a large extent, by the establishment of aided schools, a system that the Board would continue as long and as widely as possible. But the abolition of school fees, upon which such schools formerly depended largely, will now throw upon the Board almost the entire cost of their maintenance.

The want of a training college and a normal school, in some central part of the colony, has told unfavourably on the teaching staff. Very few of our teachers had any special training for their work, or any experience in teaching, when they were first appointed. Some excellent teachers have, doubtless, been formed by long practice in school work, while here and there instances may be met with of those whose natural aptitudes for teaching are so exceptional that they have been able to dispense with any previous training. But, as a rule, the process of trial and error is very costly, and the time wasted by inexperienced teachers in acquiring the rudiments of their business would, if estimated by a mere money value, well repay the cost of a training institution.

TEACHERS' CERTIFICATES.

As the method of issuing certificates to teachers adopted by the Nelson Board differs widely from that prevailing in other education districts, some explanation is necessary to show upon what principle certificates are granted.

Until March 4th, 1875, certificates divided into 1st, 2nd, and 3rd class, and based solely upon the results of an examination, were issued by the Inspector. On that date it was resolved, "That all certificates of competency held by persons not now in the service of the Board be cancelled, and that, in future, special certificates only be issued, terminable when the teacher vacates the position to which he or she is appointed." A Board of Examiners, consisting of four members of the Board, with the Inspector, was also appointed, with power to examine all candidates for schools, and to issue certificates, which, however, must be countersigned by the Inspector.

The mode of procedure is as follows: When a vacancy occurs in a school, applications for a special certificate of fitness for the post to be filled up are forwarded to the Board of Examiners, who, at their option, either examine candidates, or grant special certificates without re-examination to teachers already in the service of the Board, as to whose competency they are satisfied. In granting certificates the Board is guided not merely by the ability to pass a literary examination—an ability that has too often been found coupled with an utter lack of teaching power—but by the aptitude to teach, the tact, the temper, and power of organizing possessed by the candidate, so far as these can be ascertained;