

CANTERBURY.

SIR,—

Christchurch, 30th March, 1878.

I have the honor to submit the report of the Board for the year ending December 31, 1877. The form of the report is determined by circumstances which seem to demand that it shall deal with two periods, having a common termination, but differing in length. The 102nd section of "The Education Act, 1877," requires a report of twelve months' work to the 31st of December, 1877; but as the last report carries on the record to the 31st of March, 1877, it appears desirable, in some respects, to distinguish the operations of the last nine months of the year from those of which an account has been already given.

The personal constitution of the Board has undergone no change during the year, the seat reported as vacant not having been filled, and no fresh vacancy having occurred. Thirty-one meetings have been held in the year, the average attendance of members being 5.1. For the nine months the numbers are,—Meetings, 23; average attendance, 5. The following are the names of the members: John Inglis, Esq. (Chairman), Andrew Duncan, Esq., Thomas Williamson Hall, Esq., William Montgomery, Esq., William Rolleston, Esq., the Hon. Edward William Stafford, Henry John Tancred, Esq., John Norris Tossell, Esq., Henry Richard Webb, Esq.

The Board's expenditure on buildings during the nine months, as shown in the general statement which accompanies this report, has amounted to £22,124 1s. 7d. The distribution of this sum is exhibited in the schedule to the general statement, and the character of the principal work done is set forth in Appendix K. The greater part of this work was projected and prepared for in the period to which the last report relates, and the cost of the whole has been defrayed out of the balance shown in last year's statement. The amount received on Building Account during the nine months was £8,678 18s. 10d., and the Board entered into no engagements during the year which would involve liabilities in excess of the sum in hand; but within that limit works were authorized in the most necessary cases, so that the difference between liabilities and balance in hand on Building Account was reduced from £1,288, at the end of March, to £256 at the end of December. Many reasonable proposals for the formation of new districts, and for increased accommodation to meet the wants of a growing population, were necessarily held in abeyance until last month, when, on the receipt of a new grant from the Government for building purposes, all new claims were considered together, and it was found necessary to make appropriations to the extent of about £14,000, which left in reserve about £11,000, of which a great part has since been voted, and the remainder will probably enable the Board to extend favourable consideration to all urgent demands that may arise before the end of the financial year. It is possible that a survey of all the school buildings, which is now in progress, may bring to light deficiencies of accommodation not otherwise known to the Board; but, as a rule, the Committees keep the Board well informed as to the necessities of their districts.

Nine new districts were constituted during the year—viz., Balcairn, Barr Hill, Claremont, Dunsandel, Malvern South, Otaio, Upper Otaio, Rangitata Island, and Robinson's Bay; and six others (Chertsey, Hunter, Kyle, Makikihi, Seafield, and Totara Valley), the formation of which was delayed through lack of pecuniary means, or of sufficient information, have been proclaimed within the last few weeks. There are two applications now under consideration for the defining of new districts at South Ashburton, and in the neighbourhood of Bealey's Road; and probably during the next few months several similar applications will be made on behalf of residents in the newly-settled parts of the country between the Rakaia and the Ashburton. The returns which have been received from the Committees in the form required by the Education Department do not show that any large groups of children of school age in existing districts are known to be destitute of the means of education, and the schools which have been built are for the most part well adapted to the purpose they are intended to serve, and in good repair.

The expenditure on maintenance of schools, excluding such general charges as inspection and office expenses, was for the nine months £31,687 14s. 5d., distributed as shown in the schedule to the general statement; and for the twelve months (Appendix H) was £42,872 16s. 9d. The actual rate of expenditure for salaries and other allowances to teachers is precisely given in Appendix F, which shows that the staff employed during the month of December was then receiving payment at the following annual rate: Salaries, £33,349 16s. 8d.; rent or lodging money, £1,130; instruction of pupil-teachers, £749; teaching music, £220; bonus for classification, £1,660: total, £37,108 16s. 8d.

The number of the mean roll for the last quarter of the year was 14,096, and the average attendance (working average) 10,736. The average annual cost of instruction, exclusive of incidental and general expenses, was therefore for each child on the mean roll £2 12s. 6d., and £3 9s. for each child in average attendance. In the month of December there were (without reckoning 36 sewing mistresses) 369 teachers engaged, of whom 122 were pupil-teachers, and the average number of children to each teacher was 29.1 in average attendance.

The total expenditure, exclusive of general costs, since 1864, has been as follows:—

Periods.	Buildings.		Maintenance.		Total.	
	£	s. d.	£	s. d.	£	s. d.
1864 to 1876, as at page 81, Report 1877	155,006	9 0	185,042	3 4	340,048	12 4
16th November, 1876, to 31st March, 1877, Report 1877...	7,832	6 10	17,317	12 0	25,149	18 10
31st March to 31st December, 1877, as by this Report ...	22,124	1 7	31,687	14 5	53,811	16 0
Totals	184,962	17 5	234,047	9 9	419,010	7 2

The Appendix H contains a statement of accounts for the whole year, as required by "The Education Act, 1877," and a separate statement (M) of the receipts and expenditure for the year in respect of education reserves. It will be seen that the whole cost of administering these reserves, with a revenue of £8,522 6s., was only £250 13s. 6d., which, however, does not include any charge for