

SUMMARY of the SCHOOL FUND ACCOUNTS for the Year ending 31st December, 1879.

<i>Receipts.</i>			<i>Expenditure.</i>		
	£	s. d.		£	s. d.
To Balances in Bank and in hand on 1st Jan., 1879.. ..	124	17 10	By Bonuses to teachers out of Board's grants to Committees ..	56	0 0
Receipts from Education Board—			Cleaning (allowances and requisites) ..	84	12 0
Ordinary grants	309	3 5	Fuel	53	1 0
Special grants	50	0 0	Books, maps, stationery, and furniture for general school use ..	102	18 7
Donations, subscriptions, &c., from others than Education Board	16	11 5	Repairs not paid for directly by Board ..	19	6 6
Books	2	1 8	Clerks' salaries, £6 16s. 3d.; office expenses, £2 19s. 3d.	9	15 6
Fees	12	10 11	Prizes	5	5 7
Sales	7	14 9	School fetes or treats	6	11 9
			Reading books or text books supplied free to scholars	0	7 6
			Paper, pens, ink, &c., supplied free to scholars	9	12 0
			Advertising and printing	3	11 3
			Law	3	18 8
			Miscellaneous	25	18 4
			Balances in hand	142	1 4
	<u>£523</u>	<u>0 0</u>		<u>£523</u>	<u>0 0</u>

NELSON.

Sir,—

Nelson, 10th March, 1880.

I have the honour to lay before you a report of the proceedings of the Education Board of the District of Nelson for the year 1879. The Board has met thirteen times during the year, the average number of members present at each meeting being seven. The number of schools at work at the close of 1879 was 57, three new schools having been opened during the year, and one being closed temporarily. Four new schools were also ready to be opened at the beginning of 1880. The number of scholars on the rolls at the end of 1878 was 3,525; at the end of 1879, 3,737. The working average at the same dates was 2,770 and 2,935 respectively.

Although two sums of £5,000 and £6,000 each have been placed at the disposal of the Board during 1878 and 1879, for new buildings and enlargement of existing buildings, a further sum of £4,353 will be required to provide the whole of the district with proper school accommodation. At present several schools, both in town and country school districts, are overcrowded, and although the Board has endeavoured to supply the deficiency of school room by renting buildings intended for other purposes, and ill-adapted for school work, many scholars have been unavoidably excluded during the past year. The Board has also endeavoured, so far as its means would permit, to supply every country school with a teacher's house, as it has been found, especially in the remoter places, that the want of a dwelling-house has practically restricted competition to candidates living near the school. Several country schools, however, are still without houses, and none have been built in the town of Nelson. The school rooms lately completed, though they will be found, it is hoped, neither ill-contrived nor unsightly, have been built on the simplest and cheapest pattern, all superfluous ornamentation having been rigidly excluded from the designs adopted by the Board. Pains have been taken to secure sufficiently lofty walls, good light and ventilation, and a floor space of at least ten square feet for each scholar.

The dearth of competent applicants, or, indeed, of applicants of any kind, for assistant teacherships, or teacherships of country schools, still constitutes one of the most serious difficulties with which the Board has to contend. It is true that no less than 37 candidates have signified their intention to take part in the annual examination of teachers to be held in March, 1880, but 33 of these are already in the service of the Board, and have entered their names with the view of completing their examination, or of obtaining a higher grade of certificate than that which they at present hold. Only four qualified teachers, therefore, assuming that all pass, will be available from this source for the supply of vacancies that sometimes occur at the rate of four in a month. To meet this difficulty the Board has reverted to its former practice, and again issues provisional certificates to candidates who have passed an examination conducted by a Committee of the Board and the Inspector. The papers set, though easier than those given to candidates for Class E at the general examination, are yet found quite hard enough to test the relative literary qualifications of candidates, and to afford a guarantee that no grossly incompetent persons are admitted to teacherships.

In accordance with its traditions for many years, the Board continues to regard very favourably the claims of remote and thinly-peopled districts, and has availed itself of the powers given in section 88 of the Education Act to make an allowance of £4 5s. for every scholar in daily attendance and efficiently taught, even in cases where the numbers are very small. It is obvious, however, that a system which devotes the whole proceeds of the capitation allowance to defraying the cost of teaching only, leaving no margin for expenses of general management, must be limited in its application, and that it can only be regarded as a temporary expedient, to be discontinued as soon as the increased attendance warrants the Board in constituting a new school district, and building or hiring a schoolhouse.

A re-statement of the well-known arguments in favour of the separation of the sexes in primary schools would be out of place in this report. It will suffice to say that, after carefully weighing the considerations on both sides, the Board has adopted a compromise. Separate schools for boys and girls have been opened in such centres of population as admitted of this being done, without largely adding to the total expense of the schools so divided, or without seriously impairing the efficiency of the teaching staff. There are now eight girls' schools within the Nelson district. The Board has reason to believe that in following this course it is largely supported by public opinion in Nelson.

With regard to Public Libraries, the Board can only express its regret that the grant available for