

## SOUTH CANTERBURY.

SIR,—

Education Office, Timaru, 1st March, 1909.

In accordance with the provisions of section 174 of "The Education Act, 1908," I have the honour to submit the annual report of the Education Board of the District of South Canterbury for the year ending 31st December, 1908.

**THE BOARD.**—At the beginning of the year the Board was composed of the following members: Messrs. G. W. Armitage, W. M. Hamilton, C. S. Howard, John Jackson, George Lyall, John Maze, J. S. Rutherford, Thomas Sherratt, and the Rev. G. Barclay. In accordance with the provisions of "The Education Act Amendment Act, 1905," it was decided by lot that Messrs. Lyall, Howard, and Armitage should retire during the year, and all three were re-elected. During the year the Board lost by death its oldest and most distinguished member, the Rev. G. Barclay. Mr. Barclay was a member of the Board for about twenty-seven years, and always took the keenest interest in its business. The vacancy caused by Mr. Barclay's death was filled by the election of Mr. William Lindsay, of Studholme. In August Mr. Jackson was re-elected Chairman. The Board held thirteen meetings during the year, the average attendance of members being 7.9.

**THE SCHOOLS.**—There were seventy-six schools in operation at the end of the year—the same number as for 1907. During the year a new school was erected at Cannington, and it was decided to re-establish the Waitohi Upper School. These two schools were opened early in 1909.

**TEACHERS.**—At the end of the year there were 162 teachers employed in the Board's schools—sixty males and 102 females, 137 adults and twenty-five pupil-teachers. Of the adult teachers, thirteen were uncertificated, a decrease of five when compared with the previous year. During the year two Acts were passed by Parliament with the object of bettering the position of the primary-school teacher—the Education Amendment Act, which increased the salaries of most of our teachers, besides increasing the staff of many of the schools, and the Public Service Classification and Superannuation Amendment Act, which extended to teachers the same privileges as were given to other branches of the Government service. The former Act also amended the system of appointment of teachers, the chief improvement on the former system being the giving to Boards definite power to transfer teachers from school to school. The Superannuation Act is of special benefit to those teachers who have a past record of long and faithful service, and whose retiring allowance under the previous Act was so small that it did not make adequate provision for teachers after retirement. The new Act materially increases the retiring allowance in most cases.

**SCHOLARSHIPS.**—The annual scholarship examinations took place in December, the number of candidates being—for Junior Scholarships, 44; for Senior Scholarships, 30. Seven Junior and six Senior Scholarships, of an annual value of £156, were awarded, and the Junior National Scholarships were won by two boys.

**PHYSICAL DRILL.**—The Inspectors' report that physical instruction receives full attention at the hands of the teachers of all the larger schools, some of whom devote much of their spare time ungrudgingly to the training of their pupils in a great variety of exercises calculated to develop their bodies and improve their health. In most of the smaller schools the teachers make a faithful effort to give due prominence to this part of their work.

The roll-number at the end of the year shows an increase of 103 over that of the previous year, and the yearly average attendance (4,656) shows an increase of 150. The average attendance, which has been increasing for five or six years, has now exceeded the previous highest for the district, which was for 1896. The average attendance expressed as a percentage of the mean of the average weekly roll-number for the four quarters was 87.03, showing a decrease of 0.8 for the year. This fact shows a considerable decline in the regularity of attendance, and no effort should be spared to recover the lost ground.

**BUILDINGS.**—The most important works in connection with school buildings during the year have been the completion of new brick schools at Geraldine and Pleasant Point. The sums expended on these works have been, approximately, £2,000 and £2,500 respectively. The latter includes £275 cost of a new site of 6 acres, and about £250 removal of old school to provide rooms for work in science and technical subjects. These school buildings are now among the best in the district, and should cost the Board very little in upkeep for some time. During the year the Board received a grant of £600 for a new infant-room for Timaru South. This grant was supplemented by the Board, and a room 50 ft. by 25 ft., divided by a patent folding partition with the necessary porch accommodation, was erected at a cost of about £750. The grant, which was obtained only after a great deal of pressure and repeated application, was not received any too soon, for already the building, which was made to accommodate 120, is occupied by about 150 infants. The year 1908 was also marked by the erection of substantial additions to the Timaru Technical School, at a cost of about £3,500. It is hoped that the new structure will afford proper accommodation for the various trade, art, commercial, and domestic instruction classes. The building has been arranged to provide also for new Board offices. The Board has for over twenty-five years been housed in the post-office building, but the recent increase in postal business requires more space for the various postal departments, so that the Board has been "crowded out," and has had to provide its own offices.

The Board has adopted a new method of effecting repairs and painting its buildings. Hitherto nearly all works have been done by contract under the supervision of the Board's architect; but the results of the contract system have been so unsatisfactory, and the difficulty in getting small jobs done has been so great, that the Board has decided to follow the example of other Boards by employing its own workmen—carpenters and painters. The new system is on its trial, and the results will be watched with interest.

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The Hon. the Minister of Education, Wellington.

JOHN JACKSON, Chairman.