SOUTH CANTERBURY.

SIR,— Timaru, May, 1879.

I have the honor to submit the general report of the Board of Education for the eight months of the year ending 31st December, 1878, during which the Board has been in operation.

The Board was created by "The Education Act, 1877," and by the 13th clause of the Act the members were elected in April, 1878. The first meeting of the Board was held on the 30th April. Up to this time the affairs of the district had been administered by the North Canterbury Board, and I would take this opportunity of acknowledging the obligations of our Board to the Chairman and Secretary of the North Canterbury Board for their courtesy in rendering every assistance in starting the work of our office. The following gentlemen were duly elected as the Board, and no change had taken place in its constitution before the end of the year: Herbert Belfield, Esq. (Chairman), Rev. George Barclay, Rev. W. Gillies, Samuel W. Goldsmith, Esq., James Granger, Esq., William B. Howell, Esq., Daniel L. Inwood, Esq., William Postlethwaite, Esq, and Edward H. Tate, Esq. Up to the end of the year fifteen meetings of the Board were held, with an average of 7·8 members present.

BUILDINGS.—The new school districts of Claremont, Hunter, Makikihi, Upper Otaio, and Totara Valley had been proclaimed by the Northern Board, and contracts had been entered into for the erection of school-buildings at Claremont and Hunter, which were completed under our own Board. The Makikihi and Upper Otaio buildings were subsequently contracted for, and the schools were ready for occupation at the end of the year. After considerable inquiry it was decided to divide the Totara Valley District into two districts, and it was accordingly re-proclaimed as the Totara and Opihi. School-buildings in these two districts are in course of erection. The Board has during the year proclaimed the new school districts of Waiho, Waituna Creek, Fairlie Creek, Burke's Pass, North Orari, South Orari, and Wai-iti. No contract for school-buildings in these districts had been let before the end of the year, but the whole of the buildings are now in course of erection. A considerable addition to the Timaru School has been sanctioned by the Northern Board, and the work has since been completed. The rapid development of the South Canterbury District has necessitated large expenditure in new school-buildings and in additions to existing schools, but on account of the insufficiency of the Government grant for buildings many claims have been refused.

MAINTENANCE.—The maintenance account shows a considerable balance, mainly owing to the fact that the Board had to be very careful at the outset in the distribution of its funds, and deferred the consideration of many items of expenditure. As a necessary consequence, many accounts will fall to be met during the current year which would otherwise have appeared in the last year's balance-sheet, and it is expected that the greater portion of the existing balance will be absorbed during the current year. The total number on the roll for the December quarter was 2,666; the working average was 1,877; and the total rate of payment for teachers' salaries was £5,710 per annum, or a little over £3 per head on the average attendance. The whole of the 10s. grant to Committees has been distributed according to a graduated scale, but general dissatisfaction has been expressed at the inadequacy of the grant. The matter has been strongly represented to the department by the Board, but it appears that the vote for education would not admit of any increase for this purpose.

EXAMINATIONS.—Towards the end of the year the department authorized the Board to hold an examination of teachers; and certificates were granted to the following candidates:—Mr. G. Barclay Class III., Division III. Mr. J. Stewart, Class III., Division II. Mr. J. M. Beechy, Class III., Division III. Miss F. Cramond, Class III., Division I. Mr. J. Bellemin, Class III., Division III. The annual examination of pupil-teachers and the examination for scholarships did not take place until the first week in March, 1879.

REGULATIONS.—The Board has prepared regulations for the employment of teachers, for the employment of pupil-teachers, for granting scholarships, and for the payment and disbursement of the incidentals grant to Committees.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES.—The grant for 1878 under the Public Libraries Subsidies Act was not received before the end of the year, but has since been distributed as follows: Government grant, £211 2s. 9d.; expenses of advertising, £4 19s. 6d.; net amount for distribution, £206 3s. 3d. Distribution by Board: Waimate, £59 0s. 10d.; Temuka, £53 19s. 7d.; Geraldine, £45 7s. 2d.; Hilton (Kakahu), £14 13s. 4d.; Winchester, £16 19s. 8d.; Pleasant Point, £9 15s. 10d.; Waitohi Flat, £6 6s. 10d.: total, £206 3s. 3d.

COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE.—Most School Committees have passed resolutions aiming at bringing the compulsory clauses of the Act into force, but have there stopped, owing to the difficulties to be encountered in enforcing the provisions of the Act, and apparently shrinking from the responsibility of incurring the expense attendant on any further action.

SCHOOL BOOKS.—In the absence of any special regulations on the matter, Committees and teachers have been allowed to choose their text-books from the published list sanctioned by the Education Department.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Minister for Education. HERBERT BELFIELD, Chairman.

GENERAL STATEMENT of INCOME and EXPENDITURE for the Year ended 31st December, 1878.

Income.	£	s.	d.
To Grants from Government—General ...	4,998	12	1
" " Buildings ...	6,805	16	11
Net receipts from education reserves ...	925	18	2
Arrears of rates collected	44	10	0
Interest on current account ...	104	14	10
	£12,879	12	0

Expenditure.	£	s.	d.
By Office and Board—			
Office staff (half)	125	0	0
Members of Boards	26	10	6
Departmental contingencies ...	229	9	0
Inspection—Salary (half)	125	0	0
" Travelling expenses ...	32	8	6
Teachers' salaries and allowances ...	3,716	14	7
School Committees, for educational purposes	667	2	4
Buildings—Works, &c.	2,843	14	9
" Plans and supervision ...	185	7	11
Balance in hand	4,928	4	5
	£12,879	12	0