

Later on in the year the Commissioners memorialised His Excellency the Governor, who was pleased to declare them subject to the provisions of "The Public Bodies' Powers Act, 1887." This Act gives the Commissioners more freedom in the working of the reserves than any previous Act, and will, the Commissioners think, operate beneficially to their administration.

As soon as possible after the Commissioners were brought under "The Public Bodies' Powers Act, 1887," they put up all their unlet reserves for leasing under the provisions of this Act, and at the sales which have just closed they disposed of several sections at good rentals. Many were passed in, but they are chiefly lands of inferior quality, and in many instances very difficult of access. The result of these sales is a further addition to the annual revenue of £163 7s. 6d., representing nineteen country sections, of an aggregate area of 2,378 acres, at an average annual rental of 1s. 2½d. per acre (£142 10s.), and seven town sections of the annual value of £20 17s. 6d., which, although having no reference to the revenue of 1888, increases that of 1889 and subsequent twenty years.

The Commissioners, with the view of giving full publicity to the sales recently held, went to considerable trouble and expense, dealing with the business more after the manner of commercial owners than administrators whose actions are regulated by law and whose duties may be said to be fully performed by complying literally with the letter of the law regulating those actions. The Commissioners have at all times realised the fact that they are placed at a great disadvantage, inasmuch as they have a strong competitor against them, whose lands are more eagerly sought for than the leases of education reserves: they are brought face to face with a very great difficulty when they offer their leases, owing to the strong competition of the Government in offering lands for settlement under the provisions of the Land Act. The Commissioners, notwithstanding, have no reason, under all circumstances, to be dissatisfied with the results, but they attribute these results largely to their efforts in pushing their reserves in the market at more than ordinary trouble and considerably greater expense than the ordinary method would have entailed.

The Commissioners desire me to state that the dispute arising out of the action of the Alfredton Road Board, which in the early part of the year threatened the sale of some valuable reserves, was settled, and the sale averted. Being without funds to meet the expenditure required, the Commissioners made several applications to the Government for temporary assistance in order to satisfy the demands of the Registrar of the Supreme Court without having recourse to illegal expenditure; but, the Government withholding the necessary assistance, the Commissioners were compelled to use the funds belonging to Primary Reserves Account for the payment of the indebtedness and consequent expenses on Secondary Reserves Account. This action was taken much against the inclinations of the Commissioners, and only after every other means adopted had failed. The accounts of the year will fully explain the transaction.

The Commissioners during the past year addressed the Government on the expediency of setting aside lands as endowments for secondary education, and regret that their representation has not met with the response that they think it deserved. They take this opportunity of again representing the matter, and of pointing out that there is what the Commissioners consider ample authority given in the 19th section of "The Education Reserves Act, 1877," for the course which they have suggested, and they again respectfully urge the Government to take the matter into their serious consideration in order that the fund for the maintenance of secondary education, which at present is largely overdrawn, may be immediately augmented and made beneficial to the Trust. The Commissioners think that this is of the highest importance to this district, and hope that their representations may meet with fair and favourable consideration at the hands of the Government, before it becomes too late to provide in the manner suggested from the public estate. A copy of the general statement of receipts and expenditure is appended hereto.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Minister of Education.

J. R. BLAIR, Chairman.

GENERAL STATEMENT of RECEIPTS and EXPENDITURE for the Year ending 31st December, 1888.

*Receipts.*

	Primary Education Reserves.			Secondary Education Reserves.			Total.		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
To Balance on 1st January, 1888 ... ..	203	12	9	36	19	3	240	12	0
Rents of reserves—									
Arrears written off ... ..	66	10	0	...			66	10	0
Arrears of previous years ... ..	433	12	0	15	4	9	448	16	9
Rents of 1887 omitted from Arrears Account ... ..	7	6	6	...			7	6	6
Rents of current year ... ..	526	11	0	24	16	9	551	7	9
Rents of 1889 prepaid ... ..	18	18	3	...			18	18	3
Land-transfer fees refunded ... ..	10	9	4	...			10	9	4
Bank exchange remitted ... ..	0	5	5	0	2	0	0	7	5
Advances from Primary Account ... ..	...			197	0	4	197	0	4
Advances repaid ... ..	36	2	1	...			36	2	1
Total receipts ... ..	1,303	7	4	274	3	1	1,577	10	5