

for the seven Lodges constituting this District, and forwarded before its formation. As no doubt the matter would be discussed at considerable length during the Session, I will not refer to it further than to point out that almost a sum of £300 should be obtainable, and it was for the consideration of the meeting whether or not it were advisable to incur the expense of a special delegate to the Executive Directory Annual Meeting. I will now call upon the District Secretary to read the report and balance-sheet:—

REPORT OF THE DISTRICT OFFICERS OF THE OTAGO-CANTERBURY DISTRICT OF THE H.A.C.B.S. FOR THE YEAR ENDING JANUARY 24TH, 1878.

In presenting the first yearly report and balance-sheet of the Otago-Canterbury District, your Officers have to congratulate you upon the success which has attended the District since its formation; for, although placed somewhat at a disadvantage by the long-continued illness of our first District Secretary, the late Brother Cantwell, still, as the balance-sheet will show, it has exceeded the most sanguine expectations. It is needless to recapitulate what is already known to you through the half-yearly report, further than to add that Brother Connor, who acted as District Secretary on the death of Brother Cantwell, has filled the office up to the present. Your Officers have to mention with regret the cessation of the Akaroa Branch, the correspondence relative to which will be placed before you. Since it joined the District it had paid neither Funeral nor Incidental Quarterage, and, on being written to, the Secretary stated that he was afraid the Branch would have to be closed, as it had not held one regular meeting since its formation. A conference of the District Officers was summoned to consider the question, and the District Secretary was instructed to make out a claim, and forward it to that Lodge. Acting upon those instructions Brother Connor cast up the expenses of the District up to that time; and, as there were eight Lodges, he apportioned the eighth part to the Akaroa Branch, and by return of mail received a cheque for £8 8s. He then wrote to the Secretary suggesting that the Akaroa Branch should hand over their sashes, in the hope that the cessation would be but temporary, and that it might be re-formed at some future time; but to this a reply was received that the goods had already been disposed of. While recording with deep regret the death of two of our members, as stated in the half-yearly report, it is satisfactory to be able to state that there has been no drain on the Funeral Fund, Brothers Moylan and Cantwell being both Honorary Members. With regard to the balance-sheet, although the expenditure may appear somewhat large, it will be seen that it occurred in the earlier portion of the year, in expenses in connection with the formation of the District, and that in the last half year they have, with the exception of Officers' salaries, been but very trifling. The natural presumption, therefore, is, that the second year will place a considerable sum to the General Fund, not having to meet those outlays incidental to a new organisation. It is unnecessary to inform you that the half-yearly Session occupied four protracted sittings, at which there was a mass of business transacted; since when there have been eight meetings of the District Officers, to deal with matters affecting the interests of the District. Herewith are annexed tabulated statements, compiled from the various returns, which will show the number of unfinancial, re-instated, new members, and also those who have left during the year, but your Officers regret that it is not as complete as it might be, owing to some Branches not furnishing proper returns. Your Officers state with reluctance that by the extreme difficulty experienced by the District Secretary to get Branch Secretaries to comply with the rules of the Society in forwarding properly-filled returns, the labors of the D.S. have been increased ten fold; and not only has such carelessness and neglect caused a deal of unnecessary correspondence, but the item of postage has been most materially increased, to the loss of the District. Your Officers would, therefore, strongly urge upon delegates present the necessity of newly-elected Secretaries making themselves thoroughly conversant with the duties of their offices; that the money from each Branch should be forwarded immediately at the termination of each quarter; and that under no circumstance should it be despatched unaccompanied by the balance-sheet, quarterly return, and pay-slip. If delegates would see that these matters were attended to, by representing to the President of each Branch the inconvenience and extra trouble entailed by such omissions, it would not only be most conducive to the welfare of the District, but it would enable the District Secretary to compile some statistics which would be of interest to every member. We would also suggest that some uniformity should be observed in filling in returns, as scarcely two, even from the same Lodge, correspond. Had

this rule been rigidly adhered to, the annexed tables—having all the returns—would be a correct register of the strength and revenue of the District. Another great drawback to the compilation of statistics is the variety of balance-sheets used in the District, so that when some very interesting data might be obtained were they all alike, it is found impossible to do so, as the figures would only have reference to a portion of the District. Your Officers are, however, happy to say that when the present supply in use is exhausted, the evil will be remedied, as the D.S. wrote to the Executive Directory, and obtained permission for having a large portion of the Branch goods printed in the Colony. Taking a retrospective glance, however, at the year, your Officers must congratulate you on the flourishing financial position of the District. When the last half-year was entered upon there were £23 16s. 9d. to our credit, since when we have the respectable sum of £138 15s. 6d. banked by our Treasurer, being an increase upon the preceding half-year of £114 18s. 9. And here your Officers must draw attention to the delay indulged in by the Executive Directory in forwarding the money in its hands belonging to the District. On reference to the letter book we find that the late D.S. made application as early as the middle of February of last year for a refund of the money to its credit; at a later date his successor made another unsuccessful application, and the Secretary will read copies of letters sent to the Corresponding Secretary and Chief President, Melbourne, on the 10th of December and 9th instant respectively, without eliciting a reply. During the year the Corresponding Secretary, in answer to an appeal for settlement, asked that the various Branches of the Otago-Canterbury District would furnish him with the amounts remitted to Melbourne, as the accounts of his predecessor were in a mixed condition. The D.S. complied with the request, wrote to the different Lodges, but received responses from but four—Invercargill, Christchurch, Lawrence, and Naseby. Some idea of the amount of money retained in Melbourne may be formed, when it is stated that the amount received from those four Lodges represented £116. At the date of compilation of the tables there were 289 members and seven Branches in communion with the District, but your officers cannot refrain from noting the increase of unfinancial members set down in each succeeding quarterly return. This is particularly the case with regard to the Dunedin, Invercargill, and Lawrence Lodges, whose unfinancial number almost one-half its financial members. However, it is satisfactory to learn that the vacancies caused by the defaulters are being filled by new blood, although not in the same ratio. It had been expected that it would have been found necessary to strike a levy toward the Incidental Fund, consequent upon the heavy expenses of a first year, and the neglect of the Executive Directory in remitting the refund; but your Officers are of opinion that it is not necessary to do so, as the assets of the Society will meet its liabilities, even without the refund from Melbourne. Without in any way wishing to dictate to the Annual Meeting the course to be pursued with regard to sending a delegate to Melbourne, your Officers would point out that by so doing a settlement could be more easily obtained of the claim against the Executive Directory, and information got on some matters necessary for the working of the District, which repeated appeals to the Corresponding Secretary has failed to elicit. Your Officers would recommend the advisability of appointing a set day on which the quarter should terminate in all Branches of the District, so that the returns would have degree of uniformity with regard to date. Were such a course pursued it would be a great assistance to the District, and enable him to strictly enforce the penalty for breaches of Rule 52. During the past year much inconvenience was experienced by one Lodge closing its quarter on the 3rd, while perhaps another would not do so until the 13th of the month, the result being an almost impossibility of receiving returns at any specified time. A mass of correspondence has been received and replied to, but your Officers did not think it necessary to bring any forward save those touched on in the report.

The time for which your Officers were elected having now expired, they surrender their trust, sincerely wishing that, as the District gains in age, it will increase in numbers and strength, and have the prosperous career which has been pre-  
saged by the first year of its existence.

Brother YOUNG moved, and the D.V.P. seconded, the reception of the report, the various suggestions therein contained to be a matter for further consideration.

The Secretary then read letters and replies bearing on the subject matter of portions of the report, after which he submitted copies of the following balance-sheet:—