

size paper-cutting machines has been procured, which is fitted to work by steam; while about 4 tons 3 cwt. of type have been added to the plant during the year.

I would here beg to observe that the resources of the Department, though largely augmented during the past year, are in many respects unequal to the strain put upon them during the Session. I have before pointed out, and desire again to do so, that so long as orders are received from so many different sources, occasions will arise when, by the simultaneous receipt of extensive orders, the Printing Office will for a time be choked with work. This would occasionally occur even were the plant and premises double their present size. And notwithstanding the exertions made by the Department to meet the requirements of the Government, when such occasions do arise, it is not always possible to comply with those demands with the rapidity and promptitude expected.

BINDING BRANCH.

With a view to reduce the expense of binding, and facilitate the early distribution of Parliamentary Papers, a proposal was made, which met the approval of Government, to organize a small binding staff in connection with the Printing Office. The necessary material and tools having been procured from Melbourne, operations were commenced in this branch in May last, with what results the balance sheet appended to this Report clearly demonstrates. The amount paid in wages from 3rd May to 30th June—barely two months—was £117 18s. 6d., while the value of work done during the same period, computed at the rates paid to the contractor for the same description of work, amounted to £262. A very considerable saving may therefore be anticipated by the establishment of this branch.

STEREOTYPE AND ELECTROTYPE BRANCH.

The operations carried on in this branch have been extended during the past year. Lead moulds having been procured from England, the whole of the leads required in the Printing Office are now being manufactured on the premises. The electrotype dies for the new halfpenny newspaper stamp, which came into operation in January last, were also executed in this branch of the Department. Hitherto the Government have been under the necessity of sending to Melbourne and Sydney for the electrotypes required for stamp-printing purposes, for which a charge of five shillings per die has been made. The 240 halfpenny dies electrotyped and mounted here, represent, according to Melbourne and Sydney prices, a value of £60; while the total cost of their production here did not exceed £15.

STAMP PRINTING BRANCH.

The rapidly increasing demand for postage stamps has rendered the present mode of printing (by the copper-plate process) inadequate to raise the stock above what is barely necessary to meet the requisitions sent in. As the steel plates at present in use are nearly worn out, orders were sent to England about twelve months ago for a set of electrotype plates to replace them. These have been procured from Messrs. De La Rue and Co., and have just arrived in Wellington by the "Lennox Castle." A sufficient stock of the stamps will be printed from these plates for circulation on the 1st of January next. By printing from electrotypes, the rate of production, as compared with copper-plate printing, will be nearly trebled.

LITHOGRAPHIC BRANCH.

A balance sheet for this branch has been prepared, and will be found appended to this Report. The value of work executed during the year amounted to £1,001 16s. 10d.; the expenses (including an outlay of £140 3s. 7d. for additions to plant) to £633 4s. 7d. This branch, therefore, shows a net profit for the year of £368 12s. 3d.

PHOTO-LITHOGRAPHIC BRANCH.

The adoption of the photo-lithographic process in this Colony was first suggested by Dr. Hector, at whose request the Hon. Mr. Vogel, when in England, caused inquiries to be made with the object of obtaining information respecting the cost of the necessary apparatus, the nature of the process, and its adaptability for the reproduction of railway plans, maps, and other drawings.

An order was sent to England for the chemicals and apparatus included in the list appended to the report by Mr. E. Fox on this subject, and steps were taken, immediately upon their arrival, to procure the services of a gentleman possessed of the requisite technical knowledge to fill the office of photo-lithographer. The difficulty of obtaining such an officer was overcome through the kindness of Mr. Noon, the photo-lithographer to the Victorian Government, who offered to select a photographer in Melbourne, and give him a month's instruction in his department before sending him to New Zealand. This, at the request of the Government of this Colony, he accordingly did, and Mr. Deverill, the gentleman selected, arrived here in April last to take charge of the branch. The necessary rooms having been erected on an elevated spot near the Printing Office, operations were commenced in May last by photographing a series of drawings of fossils for the Geological Department. The plans and drawings attached to the Patent Specifications are now being executed, in accordance with a resolution of the House of Representatives. The Public Works Department is also making extensive use of the system in the reproduction of railway plans and sections, &c. Maps which, before its introduction, cost three or four months' labour to execute, can now be photographed and reproduced in as many hours. As this branch of the Department becomes better known, and the advantages of photo-lithography receive the test of experience, the saving in draftsmen's labour which the process is capable of effecting will be satisfactorily demonstrated.

Having now passed in review the various branches connected with the Department I have the honor to manage, I have nothing further to add than the hope that the result of its operations for the past year may be regarded as satisfactory by the Government.

I have, &c.,

GEORGE DIDSBURY,
Government Printer.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary.