

These facts and statistics show the remarkable growth and still increasing progress of the department, which is evidently supplying a great public want, and is now so far advanced that the Government, as I have on former occasions mentioned to the House, have decided to ask Parliament to place it under the conduct of a Board. A Bill to carry this object into effect has been prepared and placed before members.

Before leaving the subject of life insurance, I may offer a few additional figures, showing further the remarkable stimulus given to that form of family provision since the establishment of the Government scheme in 1870. The number of life policies in force in New Zealand that year has been estimated at 2,000, insuring about £1,000,000. Last year there were in force, in round numbers, 24,000 policies, insuring £8,300,000, of which more than one-half is insured in the Government department. This gives an increase for the period of 22,000 policies, and £7,300,000 in the amount assured; or eleven times the number of persons and more than seven times the sum insured in the colony eleven years ago.

FINANCIAL RESULTS OF THE YEAR 1881-82.

The Committee will remember that Parliament finally determined in the session of 1881 that in future the revenue of the year should be the actual receipts paid into the Treasury during the year, and that the year's expenditure should be the actual money paid away during the year, thus obviating the necessity for keeping open the year's accounts, in order that assets might be realized and liabilities paid before a final balance could be struck. The new method was accordingly introduced in the accounts of the year 1881-82; and I venture to hope that the greater simplification of account which has been effected by the change will commend itself to Parliament.

Honorable members will find, on referring to the Financial Statement which I had the honor to make last year, that, excluding the land sales from the Consolidated Fund, there was a deficit on the 31st March, 1881, of £5,667; but that, including the land sales, there was a surplus balance of £26,706 to the credit of the colony upon the actual transactions completed within the year. As I have stated already, the ordinary revenue of the Consolidated Fund for the past year amounted to £3,488,170, and the expenditure to £3,278,820; the ordinary revenue therefore exceeded the expenditure by £209,350; and, deducting from this sum the deficit of the previous year, £5,667, we have a credit balance of £203,683 at the close of the financial year 1881-82 on this division of the account. But though, for reasons which have been frequently stated, it was determined that a separate account should be kept of the land sales, it must be borne in mind that the revenue from that source still remains within the Consolidated Fund, and is liable to meet the charges of the public debt should it ever be necessary to use it at any time for that purpose; but the colony now no longer relies upon land sales in any way as a means of obtaining revenue to meet the ordinary services of the Government, and has thus removed one condition which made sound finance impossible. When, however, we come to consider the whole transactions of the year, it is clear that the proceeds of land sales and their expenditure must appear in the account. We find, then, that the total moneys received and paid into the Public Account during the year, including land sales, was £3,805,233, and the total expenditure, including charges on the land sales, was £3,616,895. The receipts were thus £188,338 in excess of the expenditure; and, adding to this sum the surplus at the close of the year 1880-81, £26,706, we find that we have a credit balance on the 31st March, 1882, of £215,044.

This result is one upon which I hope I may be allowed to congratulate the Committee. It fully bears out the opinion expressed by the Government in 1879, that the grave depression and deficit then existing were temporary and remediable, and shows us that the course then determined upon by Parliament of rigid economy and sufficient taxation has restored the finances of the colony in a remarkably short time to a thoroughly sound condition. We may well, Mr. Hamlin, be proud of belonging to a people and a country which can in such circumstances produce such results as these in a period of two years.