

1886.
NEW ZEALAND.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY LIBRARY

(REPORT ON).

Laid on the Table by the Hon. Mr. Stout, by leave of the House.

THE COMMITTEE'S REPORT.

6th May, 1886.

THE Joint Library Committee have the honour to report that during the recess they have attended to the Library. It is unnecessary for them to detail what has been done, as the Librarian has furnished a report, which they beg to forward to the Legislative Council and the House of Representatives.

The Committee would earnestly press on the attention of Parliament the need of providing a fire-proof building for the Library. Many of the books are exceedingly valuable, and in the event of an accident it would be difficult to replace them. A plan has been prepared by Mr. Beatson, of the Public Works Department; but, as a special report of the Librarian shows, the building proposed would be inadequate. It would be easy to enlarge it and, at the same time, keep to the main outlines of the plan. This would, however, be a matter for the Public Works Department to attend to, if Parliament sanctioned the erection of a new building. The Committee trust that the Parliament will not be prorogued before some provision has been made for commencing a new library building.

G. RANDALL JOHNSON, *Chairman*.

THE LIBRARIAN'S REPORT.

General Assembly Library, 6th May, 1886.

I HAVE the honour to submit the annual report on the condition of the Parliamentary Library, the work done in it during the recess, and the progress it has made.

Within a few days of the prorogation of the Assembly the Library Committee was convened. Its constitution was novel. For the first time the Joint Library Committee of the session was continued in office during the recess. Members resident in Wellington were, it is true, conjoined with the remanent members of the Joint Committee, and the effect of this was to constitute the Committee apparently as it had been constituted in previous recesses. In reality, in virtue of its being a continuation of the Sessional Committee, it was invested with legislative powers not possessed by any previous Committee. The advantage of a theoretically-continuous administration of the Library throughout the year is not to be overestimated.

The full Committee met just once. It granted the entrée to the Library to fifty-three Parliamentary, Government, and other officers, most of whom had previously enjoyed the privilege; and it nominated an exceptionally strong working sub-committee, which consisted of the Honourables Randall Johnson (the Chairman), Sir W. Fitzherbert, Mr. Hart, and Mr. Mantell; and, from the House of Representatives, the Premier, Dr. Newman, and Mr. Wakefield. By this sub-committee the library was not only governed, but also managed, little having been done by the Chairman, and nothing by the Librarian, without the leave of the Committee having previously been asked or its sanction afterwards obtained.

The Sub-committee held seven meetings. Besides details involved in the ordinary working of the Library, a number of matters of some importance were decided. It was settled that no books or magazines should be sent out of Wellington. Certain days were fixed on which the Library should be closed; but, as these proved to be not coincident with the days on which Parliament Buildings are open, it will be necessary to obtain the consent of the Speaker of the Legislative Council, under whose control the Buildings are, before the agreement becomes efficacious. The question of the propriety of binding all books purchased had been referred by the Joint Committee to the Sub-committee for further consideration; and four temporary rules were adopted: (1.) Books the published price of which was less than 10s. were to be sent in their ordinary cloth binding. (2.) Books the published price of which exceeded 10s. were to be half-bound in the customary morocco. (3.) Novels, and works of a permanent character, though

costing less than 10s., were to be bound as usual. (4.) Certain works costing more than 10s., but likely to be little used, were not to be bound. These rules are only experimental, and the experience of a single session will probably suffice to test the success of the experiment. The saving is certainly considerable, and may be estimated at as much as £60 or £80 a year—a sum with which additional books or second copies might be purchased. One thing will have to be taken into account. It seems that the agents now purchase books in stitched but unbound volumes, and, getting these from the publishers presumably at a reduced rate, are able to offer us a large discount: whether they will continue to allow us the same discount if we order the volumes to be sent in cloth, remains to be seen.

The main business of the Sub-committee was the selection of books. It was not perfunctory. Three of the meetings consumed two full hours each; the fourth, an hour and a half; and the others, over an hour. The selection was governed by the two principles of comprehension and discrimination. In a parliamentary library the strongest department ought to be that which directly subserves the purposes of legislation; and almost every recent English and American work, with some older works, and a few in French, relating to the science of politics and the art of government, was submitted to the Committee. In other divisions the selection was discriminating. Through the adoption of a standing order which excluded works of fiction in more than one volume, unless the works so excluded are of exceptional interest or importance, we have been able to purchase five novels for the sum which a single one has hitherto cost, and so have strengthened, or at least enlarged, the Library in an indispensable department. The books most desiderated, though not the books most read, are those containing information. In works of this class the Library can hardly be too strong. There is scarcely any subject on which we are not, at one time or another, and from the most diverse quarters, called upon to furnish information. Well equipped and well managed, the Library might become a kind of intelligence-department, to which inquirers from all parts of the colony might resort or apply with a reasonable expectation of finding what they wanted.

The arrangements made by the Agent-General for the purchase and transmission of books continue to be satisfactory. He himself sends us by mail early copies of works of special interest, like the Greville Memoirs, and of works relating to the colony, like "Oceana" and "New Zealand Rulers and Statesmen," and directs that books certain to be wanted shall be sent without waiting for an order from the Library Committee. Messrs. Bell and Bradfute, the Home agents selected by him, execute the orders sent them with promptitude and despatch; and now that certain perversities of lettering, and imperfections arising from the omission of collation before binding, have been corrected, there is not a fault to be found with their fulfilment of the duties entrusted to them. The increasing importance of American literature, particularly that which reflects the political experience and social life of the States, induced the Committee to make the experiment of ordering American-published books from San Francisco through local booksellers, who also procure for us books of native Australian production and Australian reprints of English works.

This is the place to mention that besides the ordinary inter-colonial exchanges, we owe to the British Museum copies of two works of more than ordinary interest, and to the unstinted liberality of the Smithsonian Institution at Washington a large number of publications, some of them of great scientific and practical value. The Library being not yet regarded as a colonial library accessible to the public for two-thirds of the year, we have few private benefactions to record. A donor of last year, Mr. E. S. Dodgson, presented a Biblical Commentary in seven volumes by the eminent German theologian, Dr. Delitzsch, and also an Italian book printed at Glasgow in the middle of last century. For two works on the Constitution and Government of the United States, and a treatise on the English licensing laws, we are indebted to a former distinguished Premier of the colony, Sir W. Fox. And only the other day, Mr. R. A. Macfie, of Dregghorn Castle, Midlothian, Scotland, at one time M.P. for the Leith Burghs, courteously sent us three volumes on copyright and patents published some years ago under his editorship, certain ephemera of which he is the author, and an interesting volume by Professor Lorimer, of Edinburgh, on the constitutionalism of the future.

Altogether, 585 separate publications, or about 650 volumes, were added to the library between July, 1885, and April, 1886. With 200 volumes of official publications and 150 bound volumes of newspapers, the total accessions mount up to about 1,000 volumes for the last nine months.

The outlay for the year on books and periodicals of every description amounted to £741 4s. 9d.; insurances (on the books in the library), to £87 10s.; the supply of local newspapers, and advertisements in them, to £61 6s. 6d.; and the binding of the newspapers, to £51 11s. 6d.: making the total expenditure £941 12s. 9d. The income for the year was £710, including £110 received as fees for private Bills—a sum which was raised by a balance of £842 14s. 3d. remaining from the previous year to £1,552 14s. 3d. At the end of the financial year there was therefore a balance in our favour of £611 1s. 6d. Of this amount, over £200 is forestalled by accounts paid since the close of the financial year, or rendered, or likely to be soon rendered, practically reducing the existing balance to about £400, or, with repayments of imprest for stamps, which have been for simplicity omitted, to about £450.

The books, having been delivered and paid for, have to be catalogued, and in this connection it may be mentioned that a plan for the compilation of the catalogue on somewhat novel lines

was approved of by the Committee, and the annual supplement is now being experimentally printed as thus proposed. Certain indexes to the more recent periodical literature on the subjects of colonies, land, free-trade, &c., together with bibliographies of the considerable Shakespearian literature in the Library, and of the literature relating to New Zealand, which it was intended to incorporate with the Supplemental Catalogue, have been regrettably excluded through the pressure of work at the Government Printing Office.

The distribution of the books was similar to that in previous recesses. Twenty-five members, 43 officials, and 5 students took out 330 magazines and 1,279 books. It is a satisfaction to state that, of the latter, only 623, or less than half, were works of fiction; travels made a bad second with the otherwise respectable figure of 184; biography was popular, with 141; history counted 63; 51 are classifiable as general literature; 42 show that books on government and political economy were in request; 28 belonged to the physical sciences; even such abstruse subjects as philosophy and sociology are represented by 27; 26 were poetry; 25 were connected with the practical and 10 with the fine arts; theology (20) was not neglected; the 17 in philology point to special studies; 10 were classical, and the rest various.

The term "students," it may be explained, is used to describe literary workers, or students of some particular subject, who, by a liberal construction of a resolution passed by the Assembly, were permitted to take out books on the subject of their studies, which, in the cases mentioned, were philology and ethnology, political and social economy, philosophy, and sociology. It will be a lasting distinction of Mr. Johnson's chairmanship that he threw open the Library to the select class most capable of profiting by the use of it, and thus enabled it to become the instructor of those who are themselves the instructors of the community.

Fifty-one persons, as against forty last year and only ten in 1879-80, were granted admission to the Library as visitors, of whom a few were habitués of the place, while most of the others availed themselves of the privilege but intermittently or occasionally. For their benefit, mainly, the Library was kept open on Saturday afternoons till four o'clock. On twenty-two afternoons of which a record was preserved, forty members and officials and forty-four readers attended, yielding an average of rather less than two members and officers to two visitors for each Saturday.

At the October stock-taking 390 books and publications were found to be missing. Of these, 90 were discovered or came in during the recess; a few are known to be still in the hands of members; some have probably never been received by the Library; others have certainly never been published; while, of the 280 that remain unaccounted for, a comparatively small proportion consists of works of any importance, and some of these have been missing for years.

A large amount of binding (chiefly of official publications), some repairing and re-lettering, no little printing, and all necessary stamping, have been done for us by the Government Printer; but the binding of the colonial and other newspapers has had to be executed by private contract, at a cost to the Library funds of about £70, and a good deal of miscellaneous binding and repairing has had to be given to local tradesmen.

Into the routine work of the Library it is unnecessary to enter. During little less than one-half of the recess Mr. Mantell acted as Deputy-Chairman; and from his long conversance with the Library he was able to render it essential services. It is no more than justice to add that the Assistants performed their duties throughout the recess with unflagging zeal and perfect efficiency.

Whether new buildings shall take the place of the present perishable structure is a matter to be determined by the Legislature. But the hope may be expressed that, whatever arrangement may be made, it will not be a makeshift. The proposal to separate the valuable or irreplaceable books and put them by themselves in a fire-proof shell is impracticable, and would not be advisable if it were practicable. A capacious hall, subdivided as may seem desirable, and susceptible of expansion, with rooms attached in which the work of the Library can be carried on, and accommodation for the readers from all parts of the colony who now make use of it, will alone fulfil the idea of an institution which shall be the depository of the archives of the future nation and a centre for the diffusion of culture throughout both Islands.

J. COLLIER, *Librarian*.

[Approximate Cost of Paper.—Preparation, nil; printing (1,350 copies), £2 1s. 3d.]

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never been published; while the last remains in the hands of the author, and is not to be seen by the public.

Whether new opinions regarding the place of women in society are being introduced by the Government. But the Government will not be a frankholder. The Government will not take action upon them by themselves in a free way. It will not take action upon them by themselves in a free way. It will not take action upon them by themselves in a free way.