

of general repair and renovation has also been executed in several of the separate rooms or offices in the Buildings. In the course of the present year, after Parliament rises, it is proposed to renovate the Representative chamber, which is getting very dingy, and still further to carry the general brightening-up process of cleaning and distempering, so that all parts of the buildings in general use during the session may be much improved. It is necessary to point out, however, that the very old portion is almost beyond dealing with satisfactorily. Dry-rot, damp, defective ventilation, bad light, and a comprehensive and incurable dinginess are its chief characteristics. It may be interesting to know that, apart altogether from such renovating works as above described, the annual general overhaul, cleaning, rematting, carpet-beating, and relaying, &c., before Parliament, costs, on the average, £200.

Improvements have been made to the electric light engine-house; and the Legislative Council chamber was last session lighted by electricity, Dr. Lemon having lent an auxiliary dynamo and arranged the installation. For the session of 1890 a large new dynamo has been installed, of power more than sufficient to light both chambers.

It was intended to thoroughly overhaul the sanitation of Parliament Buildings during the year, but the large amount of other sanitary work in hand prevented so extensive a work being undertaken until so late in the year that it appeared inadvisable to commence the inevitable upheaval; possibly also operations would hardly have been finished before the meeting of the General Assembly, when honourable members might not have appreciated the attention. The work has therefore been postponed till next recess; but a preliminary survey has been made, and it is arranged then to subject the whole pile to as searching and thorough reorganization in all sanitary matters as Government House, and to include improvements in ventilation. This will probably cost £1,000; but, it is always impossible to make more than very rough estimates for this class of work until the existing conditions of drains, &c., have been actually unearthed. It may be interesting to mention that the whole energies and acumen of the highest sanitary authorities have for many years past been concentrated upon the Houses of Parliament in England, and that, after Commissions, inquiries, and reports without number, these vast piles on the banks of the Thames have at last been brought to a satisfactory condition by the somewhat drastic process of reforming altogether. When it is remembered that a few years ago the improvements then effected were considered perfect it may be gathered how thorough has been the revolution referred to earlier in this report.

General Post-office.—The completion and reoccupation of the General Post-office, Wellington, marked the early part of the year. The restored building, preserving the generally-admired exterior of the original, affords much improved convenience and accommodation for the Postal, Telegraph, and Customs Departments. The works have been well and substantially completed within and without, and the offices have been equipped, furnished, and fitted in plain but neat and serviceable style, with many additional conveniences both for the departmental and public services. The emplacement of the clock in the added tower has been satisfactorily arranged, and the wishes of the Town Council and Harbour Board, as contributors, duly consulted and met. The Davey motor, for the proposed electric light, for which a special chamber was built, has not proved powerful enough to supply the required installation. Negotiations were entered into with the Gulcher Company to light the clock-tower by electricity, but unsuccessfully, as the expense would have been £102 per annum. Sanitation and fire-prevention have been carefully studied in every part of the building. It would be very desirable to establish the rising mains in the interior of the building approved of by the Public Works Department before this office took charge, but the expense of which, estimated at £750, has hitherto prevented action.

The reoccupation of the General Post-office causes the item for rent of temporary Post- and Telegraph-office to disappear from the estimates of the Consolidated Fund, on which the whole of the expense of the restoration has been borne.

Other Works.—Innumerable other works charged upon the Consolidated Fund in connection with the public buildings throughout the colony have been executed during the year, but would take too much time and space to refer to other than thus generally.

Expenditure.—The vote out of the Consolidated Fund for the year was—for public buildings, £33,175; domains, £900; and school-buildings, £25,000. The expenditure on the several votes has been £31,229, £953, and £24,434 respectively, representing a net saving of £2,459. The liabilities at 31st March, 1890, on public buildings and domains, were £3,930 and £46, amounting to a total of £3,976, as compared with £10,462, outstanding liabilities at 31st March, 1889, and £21,107 at 31st March, 1888. The liabilities on school buildings were £1,031. There were no liabilities on Consolidated Fund under this head in previous years.

TABLES AND SCHEDULES.

The following tables and schedules are attached to the report:—

1. Schedule of contracts—Additions, alterations, and larger repairs.
2. Statement showing the charges upon Consolidated Fund since 1883–84 for public buildings.
3. Statement showing the charges upon Loan Fund since 1883–84 for public buildings.
4. Approximate classified list of buildings.

31st March, 1890.

ARTHUR BELL,
Engineer in Charge of Buildings.