

1900.

NEW ZEALAND.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY LIBRARY.

(REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT-LIBRARIAN FOR THE YEAR 1899-1900.)

Laid on the table by Mr. Guinness, by leave, 20th September, 1900.

SIR,—

I have the honour to submit to you the following report regarding the Library for the year 1899-1900 :—

During the year ending the 31st May, 1900, the Library acquired by purchase 695 volumes, of which 149, costing £80 19s. 3d., were ordered on behalf of the Library by the Agent-General. The usual exchanges from Great Britain, the United States, and the British Colonies were also received, as well as the donations listed in Appendix No. 2. An accession-list for the past year has been printed and circulated amongst members, and the card catalogue will give any further information that may be sought, and will answer any question as to what books on any particular subject have been added to the Library. A complete modern apparatus for a full card catalogue has been imported and will, in the new building, take the place of the present less perfect substitute.

Appendix No. 1 to this report contains a cash balance-sheet for the past financial year. From this it will appear that the expenditure was greater by £111 2s. 11d. than that of the preceding year, which itself was £49 11s. 4d. in excess of the previous year's expenditure; and also that without the private bills, fees, and the balance from the previous year, there would have been a deficit of £245 18s. 6d. About one-third of the annual appropriation is still absorbed in the purchase of periodicals, and yet complaints as to the absence of particular periodicals from the Library are numerous. All which tends to show that, as has been previously pointed out, "to meet adequately the requirements of the Library a larger annual appropriation than that at present allotted is necessary." And the fact of £76 5s. 3d. having been expended on extra assistance, apart from that specially provided for, is due to the growing needs of the Library in the matter of its staff.

During the recess—November, 1898, to May, 1899—thirty-six members not resident in Wellington received between them seventy-eight boxes of books, containing 448 volumes and twenty-seven parts of periodicals. In addition to those enumerated in the sessional list, and the heads of departments, forty-eight persons were admitted to the Library during the recess for the purpose of consulting books of reference.

On the 7th August last year the Joint Library Committee passed a resolution as to steps to be taken for the recovery of specified books which had then been out for an inordinate time. The majority of these books have been returned or paid for. As regards the general treatment of the books, it is of great importance that persons handling books belonging to the Library should cultivate a greater reverence for literature, and realise that carelessness, apparently trivial, is often fatal to the value of books difficult to replace.

The recess has been entirely occupied in the laborious task of preparing the books for removal into the new building, and this task is accomplished, except as regards newspapers, which, owing to lack of room, could not be dealt with; but owing to the non-arrival of the necessary shelving and fittings specified by the Joint Library Committee on the 25th July and 9th October, 1899, the removal has been postponed, and I have had to make an effort to arrange the Library as nearly as possible on the new lines in the old quarters. The law-books put away by order of the Joint Library Committee, 16th September, 1896, are still in packing-cases. In the general preparation 40,482 volumes were handled, each of which had to be dusted inside and outside, classified, entered in the accession-book, supplied with a book-plate duly filled in with the necessary figures, and stamped with its class-number by the binder; and, finally, the whole had to be sorted and arranged on the shelves. Besides the usual staff, eighteen persons, including four binders, were employed on this work. The whole was necessarily carried out under my personal supervision; and it is with pleasure that I testify to the steady industry of all concerned, including the members of the ordinary staff. During the progress of this work, in order to facilitate the intention formulated by the Joint Library Committee, I sorted out 757 works which it appears to me the Library can well spare. These are enumerated in a "Proposed Withdrawal-book," which I have placed at the disposal of the Chairman of the Joint Library Committee.

I would again recommend "that accommodation should be reserved in the new Library for a permanent binder, capable of doing efficiently the lettering, finishing, mending, and small repairs required daily by the Library, and that the Government should be asked to provide accordingly." Full reasons for this appear in my report of last year, and they are more cogent now. Since the beginning of the present year we have had to send 2,767 volumes to the Government Bindery for various work, the bulk of which could have been done on the premises had there been a binder at