

I have not thought it necessary to have the detailed list printed, preferring to avoid the expense until we have exhausted every possible means at the disposition of the staff for the discovery of the missing books. Later on it may be deemed necessary and desirable that the list should be printed. The question of replacing the missing books is one for the consideration of the Committee.

Of the missing books over 33 per cent. belong to fiction. "Fiction" is a class which always suffers most, and occasional losses in the course of years mount up to a considerable total. "Sociology" accounts for over 22 per cent. of the total losses, but it must be remembered that this section is one of the largest in the Library, and includes a variety of subjects of special interest to members.

Of the remaining sections "Literature" and "Voyages and Travels" are affected the most, but in no case will the loss in any section amount to more than from 3 to 5 per cent. of the whole section. Books on New Zealand, especially those dealing with the earlier history of the colony, show, however, a rather serious loss. They are included in the "900" class. Certain educational works required for a university course show a tendency to be wanting when required. It must be remembered that the losses tabulated above are spread over a long period. It is now some eleven years since the compilation of the main catalogue was commenced; and, divided by eleven, the total does not show so alarming a yearly average, especially when it is remembered that many of the works are official publications, used continually in the House, and apt to be easily mislaid or forgotten. The old Library had several exits and entrances, the staff was smaller than it is now, and owing to these and other causes, which have now largely ceased to exist, the chances of books being lost are necessarily much less now than formerly. It is only fair to the Assistant Librarian, who had charge of the Library for so many years, to mention that he states he made repeated representations as to the loss of books. It is a specially cheering sign that the losses of books in the card catalogues—that is, among the books added since the Library was housed in the present commodious premises—are practically nil.

Library records in the Old Country and in America show that there is always a certain proportion of loss in what are called "open access" libraries, such as this, and it is better, I think, to put up with such loss, so long as it is not formidable, than harass members with irksome regulations. At the same time, I wish to point out that if the rules now in force are faithfully observed the probability of losing books should be very small. In the old Library there was often no officer in special charge of the ledgers, and books could not be marked off when they were returned. Books were returned, and not credited, and were taken out again, too often without being entered. When such books were mislaid by the persons taking them there was no means by which they could be traced by the Library staff; in fact, unless the books were asked for the loss would not be noticed until the stocktaking. Under the system I introduced last session, and which is now in force, there is always an officer of the Library in charge of the ledgers night and day, so long as the Library is open, and no books should now go out without being entered. Also, every book returned is marked off directly it is handed in. The responsibility for seeing that the books returned are marked off rests with the persons returning them.

It has been said that there was a possibility of loss occurring through the issue of books during the recess to privilege-holders; but I am in a position to state that the loss in this direction is practically nil. Out of 3,351 books lent during the recent recess I am pleased to say that only seven or eight volumes have not been returned, and six of these are retained by special permission. I do not consider it necessary to radically alter the present system of record under which the books are issued. I may, however, make a few minor changes next recess.

BOOKS ISSUED DURING THE RECESS.

Recess privileges (fiction being excluded) were granted to any respectable person who desired to use the Library for the purpose of study and research, the permission being granted upon the authorisation of the Chairman of the Committee, or upon the recommendation of a member of either branch of the Legislature. The number of persons to whom recess privileges were granted during the year was 219, the total number of volumes issued being, approximately, 3,351, thus giving an average of 15 volumes for each person privileged. During the recess 1,380 volumes were issued to members of Parliament, the gross total of books issued being thus 4,731. In addition to this many journalists, lawyers, and visitors to Wellington have been permitted to search the valuable files of newspapers and official publications. I have also received and answered a large number of letters from persons in various parts of the colony who sought for information, and several inquirers have written expressing themselves very grateful for the trouble taken in answering their queries. I may add that I have not found this addition to my duties unduly onerous.

During the last three months of the recess the Library has been thrown open on Saturday afternoons to holders of recess privileges. The attendance has been fair, and the innovation has caused no inconvenience to the staff; the assistants attending (in turn) on the Saturday being granted a Wednesday half-holiday.

As instructed by you, I supplied the Hon. Mr. Rolleston with recent accession lists, and forwarded to him from time to time the books he selected.

NEW BOOKS.

The number of new books added to the Library by purchase during the period commencing the 1st June, 1901, and ending the 1st July, 1902, was 1,770, which constitutes a record for the Library. In proof of the fact that the Library is kept well up to date in the supply of new books of importance, I may mention that a short time ago there were in one week's issues of the four