

correspondents. Some of the rarer pamphlets are, I fear, absolutely unobtainable. The moral is that the greatest care must be exercised in future to prevent early New Zealand books and publications generally getting into the "missing" list.

I called on the Agent-General, whose personal interest in the Library is evidently as keen as ever, and both Mr. Reeves and the members of his staff were most attentive to my wants.

When in London and also in the provinces I purchased a number of works in various branches of literature. Many of these books have arrived, and will be placed on the tables this session. Some will require rebinding. In nearly every case the prices at which they were bought are very much lower than we should have had to give had they been purchased in the usual way.

Leaving England on the 28th March I arrived in Sydney on the 16th May, missing the regular New Zealand boat by one day. I arrived in Wellington on the 24th May and resumed my duties at the Library the next day, having unavoidably exceeded my leave by four days.

*En route* from Fremantle to Sydney I visited the Legislative Library and Public Library at Adelaide, the Legislative Library and Free Library at Melbourne, and similar institutions in Sydney.

I would now make a few general remarks as to some of my impressions, and as to certain hints which I picked up, and which may, I think, be of interest.

With regard to legislative libraries I must say that in no institution of this kind that I have visited do there exist more facilities and conveniences at the command of members than are possessed by members of the New Zealand Parliament. In more than one legislative library I found that the institution is conducted purely and simply as a reference library, no books being allowed to leave the building. In few of these libraries are novels bought, and it may be taken generally that this library is far in advance of other legislative libraries in the number of modern works in all branches of literature. In certain libraries I have found the newspaper or general reading-room apart from the reference library, and smoking in the rooms is not so generally allowed as it is here. The rules of this library with regard to the supply to members of books—both during the session and during the recess—are more liberally conceived than those of other libraries of a similar character.

With reference to the privileges afforded to the outside public, here again we are more liberal.

Mention has been made in the Press from time to time as to the advisableness of sending boxes of books to country libraries during the recess, and a system of travelling libraries, to be worked in connection with this library, has found supporters. I may say at once that in America and Canada, where travelling libraries were first established, the books are never taken from a legislative library for circulation through the country. Wherever I found the travelling-library system in force, the books were taken from a separate source altogether, and never from a legislative or reference library.

The Dewey system of classification in force in this Library has from time to time been the subject of adverse criticism. When in Canada and the United States I had an opportunity of seeing the Dewey system in force in several libraries. Everywhere I found it well spoken of, and its use is spreading all over America. In England, also, it is coming into more general use. Our modification of this system by placing fiction, biography, and poetry in alphabetical order was commended by several librarians. Similar modification is frequent in America.

In nearly every legislative library I visited I found the staff making complaint of laxness in the observance of rules and of consequent loss of books. Losses occur in all libraries, especially those arranged on the open-access system. The New York public libraries, for instance, lost last year no fewer than 5,400 volumes. And yet these libraries are held up as model institutions! I hope to improve the check system in force here: this will be done next recess. Meanwhile, if members would only observe the rules and refrain from taking out books without entering them, the losses would be so small as to be hardly worth mention.

A few remarks on the subject of catalogues and cataloguing. The time has not yet arrived for the issue of a new catalogue. When it does I feel that my trip and the information I have gathered will assist me very greatly in planning a compact and useful catalogue, the cost of which will be far below that of the catalogue at present in use. For the present the card-catalogue system works well, and the "accession lists" issued annually, being now arranged to show the books in each class, ought to be very useful to members in making selections. In many libraries I visited I found a card-catalogue only, but in a library such as this something more than this is required. The library is increasing at the rate of some 2,500 volumes a year, and in ten years we shall have 25,000 books more than the present 60,000. With 85,000 books in the Library the catalogue must necessarily be somewhat bulky, but my ambition is to devise a scheme by which a really handy catalogue may be issued at something like a reasonable cost.

I was very much interested in the question of how best to deal with the numerous maps which are stored in this Library and the stock of which is constantly increasing in bulk. The result of my inquiries is that I am prepared to draft a comprehensive scheme for dealing with maps, a scheme by which ready reference would be possible. We could not do anything in the matter until next recess.

There are a number of points of interest arising out of my trip with which I have not dealt. I feel, however, that I have already taxed the patience and attention of the Committee. If the Committee, or members individually, desire a report on any special point of library economy upon which I have not touched, I shall be very happy to give it, either verbally, or in writing.

In conclusion, I beg to thank the Government and the Committee for having granted me leave of absence. I travelled about and saw as much as I could of other libraries and library systems during the time and with the limited financial means at my disposal, and I feel convinced that the experience I have gained will in time prove of very practical value to the Library.

I have, &c.,

CHARLES WILSON.

The Chairman, Joint Library Committee, Wellington.

Chief Librarian.

*Approximate Cost of Paper.*—Preparation, not given; printing (1,425 copies), £2 9s. 6d.

By Authority: JOHN MACKAY, Government Printer, Wellington.—1904.

Price 3d.]