

anticipation of the opening of Parliament. Despite the fact that the ordinary privilege-holder can only take out what I may term classic fiction, the number of applicants for reading-privileges was again very large—namely, 514. This, however, is a decrease of 200 as compared with the figures for last year.

It may interest the Committee to know the occupations of the privilege-holders. I have prepared the following list, which speaks for itself: Artists, 4; architects, 2; actuary, 1; agents and sharebrokers, 5; accountants and clerks, 55; bank officers, 8; Civil servants, 142; other Government servants, 18; ministers of religion, 14; chemist, 1; company-managers, 6; domestic duties, 43; doctors, 4; dentist, 1; draftsman, 1; electric linesman, 1; civil and electrical engineers, 3; Education Board officers, 4; hairdressers, 3; insurance officers, 2; journalists, 15; Judges' associate, 1; musician, 1; nurses, 2; naval and military officers, 5; organizing secretaries, 3; plumbers, 2; photographers, 4; other trades, 2; private incomes, 53; solicitors and law-clerks, 21; school-teachers, 29; students, 20; settlers, 10; sign-writer, 1; storeman, 2; salesmen, 2; seaman, 1; typists, 10; theatrical agents, 2; visitors, 2; wholesale and retail merchants, 7.

WHAT THE PRIVILEGE-HOLDERS READ.

Out of the 514 persons granted the recess privileges, 123 made use of the library mainly for reference purposes. Of the remaining 391, who took books out to read at home, 40 persons took out twenty books and over; 42 took ten books and over; 104 took five books and over; 205 fewer than five books. Altogether 3,669 books were issued to privilege-holders during the recess, the following being a rough classification of the character of the works borrowed:—

Biography, autobiography, memoirs, &c.	...	...	...	800
Voyages and travels	...	...	...	634
History	...	...	...	518
Sociology	...	...	...	210
Theology	...	...	...	23
Psychology	...	...	...	18
Philology	...	...	...	7
Pure and applied science	...	...	...	189
Fiction	...	...	...	518
General literature (poetry, essays, and belles lettres)	...	...	...	752

3,669

No current fiction is issued to the ordinary privilege-holders.

ART BOOKS AND THE MONRAD COLLECTION.

The increasing interest which is being manifested throughout the Dominion in art is responsible no doubt for the frequent applications I receive for permission to consult many valuable art publications in the Library. Visitors to Wellington from other parts of the Dominion have been allowed to consult art and other reference-books without a special privilege permit being granted. When, however, the visitor remains in the city for more than a few days, and desires to regularly frequent the institution, application for a formal permit is insisted upon. Whilst referring to art books, I would seize the opportunity of drawing attention to the exceedingly valuable collection of etchings and engravings presented to the Library now many years ago by the late Bishop Monrad. This collection, which is contained in three large portfolios or volumes, includes original etchings by Rembrandt, Albrecht Dürer, Van Ostade, Jan Steen, and other masters of the graver's art. As a practical testimony to the value of this collection, I may mention that four or five Rembrandts, of which the Library possesses (in the collection to which I am referring) exceptionally brilliant proofs, were sold recently in London at prices varying from £25 to £75. I am of opinion that the time has now arrived when this exceedingly valuable collection, superior, I believe, to any other single collection of etchings, mezzotints, and engravings to be found in Australasia, should be carefully classified, and that the choicer examples (the Rembrandts and the Dürers especially) should be mounted on frames or revolving stands, similar to those employed for the purpose of exhibiting prints at the British and South Kensington Museums, and at the National Art Gallery in Sydney, and at the Auckland Art Gallery. I would roughly estimate the cost of providing such stands—say two or three—at about £50; this amount to include the cost of framing the selected etchings in sunk mounts, lettering, &c. I would respectfully suggest that a small sub-committee be set up to consider the suggestions I have made, and to report to the Joint Committee as to the desirability of my project being carried out, and as to the best means of providing for the cost thereof.

LIBRARIES CONFERENCE.

With the permission of the Recess Library Committee, I attended at Easter the Libraries Conference held at Dunedin under the auspices of the Library Committee of the Dunedin City Council. The Conference, which lasted three days, discussed a number of important matters connected with library-management. Several papers were read by librarians and others, my own contribution being a paper entitled "The Selection and Purchase of Books for Public and Semi-public Libraries." The paper was discussed at some length by the delegates, and was ordered to be printed in the official report of the Conference. A paper by Mr. James, Assistant Librarian of this Library, was also read, the subject being "The Dewey System of Classification." At the close of the Conference a committee was set up to arrange for the formation of a "Libraries Association" for the Dominion. The next meeting will be held at Auckland.