

1911.
NEW ZEALAND.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY LIBRARY.

REPORT OF THE CHIEF LIBRARIAN FOR THE YEAR 1910-11.

Laid on the Table by Leave of the House.

The CHIEF LIBRARIAN to the CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT LIBRARY COMMITTEE.

SIR,—

I have the honour to submit herewith the following report for the year 1910-11.

RECESS LIBRARY COMMITTEE.

This Committee, under the Chairmanship of W. Fraser, Esq., M.P., held four meetings during the recess. Lists of books suggested for order were brought forward by the Chief Librarian and duly considered. Detailed reference to the books added during the year is made below, under the heading "Additions to the Library."

RECESS PRIVILEGES.

In no previous "Library year" has the number of recess-privilege holders been so great. The total number for the year was 799, and the number of books issued to non-members was no less than 10,429. I desire to emphasize the fact that the additional amount of work entailed upon the Library staff by such an extensive application of the recess-privilege system prevents, to a large extent, that care and attention which should be given to the real Library work during the recess. The expression "real Library work" may seem to call for explanation. The Library is primarily and essentially a Library for the use of and benefit of Parliament, and it is of the highest possible importance that every other consideration should be subordinated to the above fact.

Amongst the several matters which should receive attention during the recess are the detailed indexing of Bills and pamphlets; the systematic and careful revision of certain classes of books most in use during the session, with a view to the replacement of missing copies or numbers of periodicals; the keeping up to date of the supplementary catalogue cards, by the employment of which reference to the books upon every phase of any particular subject is rendered rapid and easy; the preparation of short but useful bibliographies on subjects likely to be of special interest to members during the session; the periodical overhauling of each section, so as to insure the mending and rebinding of volumes which have fallen into disrepair; the transference of volumes not in common use to the stack-rooms, and thence, in turn, to the basement. The list of things which ought to be done could be extended to some length. Few members have, I fear, any adequate idea of the amount of time involved in the correct performance of the merely technical, the "hack" work of a Library such as this. Comparison with the work done at the ordinary free public libraries is useless—the circumstances are completely different. I feel it my duty to point out that the abnormal proportions to which the recess-privilege list has now attained are such as to seriously interfere with and militate against the conduct of the Library as a parliamentary Library. The existing system, unless amended, threatens to seriously affect the value of the institution to those for whose use it is primarily intended—namely, Parliament itself. A careful analysis of the classes of books issued shows that 15 to 20 per cent. of the volumes are fiction. No current fiction is issued, no new novels, but only such classic fiction as the works of Scott, Thackeray, Dickens, Dumas, Balzac, Lever, Trollope, George Eliot, Marryat, the Brontës, and a few other writers. It is, I think, an open question whether any fiction at all should be issued to recess-privilege holders. The works of all the authors named can be obtained from other libraries in Wellington, and were fiction of any kind tabooed to the recess-privilege holders the result would be a sensible diminution of the clerical work involved in the registering, ledgering, "carding," and other work connected with its circulation. Quite a number of persons to whom the recess privilege has been granted have never taken out a single book in any other than the