

THE 1902 AND 1913 STOCK-TAKINGS: A COMPARISON.

I would draw the attention of the Committee to the comparison made below of the stock-taking commenced in 1902, about a year after I had assumed the position of Chief Librarian, and the stock-taking recently concluded:—

Dewey Classification.				Volumes missing.	
				1902.	1913.
0-099	General works	...	...	7	13
100-199	Philosophy, metaphysics	...	...	6	20
200-299	Religion, mythology, &c.	...	...	15	15
300-399	Sociology	...	...	157	152
400-499	Philology	...	...	14	8
500-599	Natural science	...	...	21	21
600-699	Useful arts	...	...	36	48
700-799	Fine arts, stage, sport, &c.	...	...	15	28
800-899	General literature, poetry, essays, and belles lettres	...	...	77	106
900-909	Class i—General history	...	...	...	...
930-999	Class ii—History by countries	...	...	35	65
910-919	Voyages and travels	...	...	44	63
920-929	Biography, autobiography	...	...	24	55
New Zealand and Polynesian section				...	52
American section				...	40
Fiction				259	354
				710	1,040

Also, not classed amongst the above, 12 newspapers and 71 miscellaneous official publications. Works on New Zealand and Polynesia and the American official publications were not in 1902 classed separately for stock-taking purposes, but were included in various other classes, according to their subject-matter.

EXTENT OF LOSSES.

I desire to point out that in 1902 the number of books in the Library was approximately 45,000; in 1913 the number is 81,000—that is, an increase in the eleven years since I took charge of the Library of 36,000 catalogued books and publications generally.

It will be seen by referring to the comparison given in the above table that the percentage of loss recorded in 1902 was 1·58. In 1913 the percentage was 1·38. The percentage this year is really much less than 1·38, for the loss, when the previous 710 is taken into account, has only been increased by 413—less than 38 books a year. This really means a loss of something less than 1 per cent. during the past eleven years. It must be borne in mind that the whole of the figures in the stock-taking report deal not with the period 1902–13, but with a period of practically twenty-five years.

Of the books and publications reported as missing on the 28th May, 1913, several have now been returned; others are daily arriving from various sources.

It will be noticed that, outside fiction, the heaviest losses have been in sociology, general literature (essays, poetry, belles lettres, &c.), and history.

PROBABLE CAUSES OF LOSSES.

The heavy loss, noticeable also in 1902, in the sociology class is most significant. The use of the sociology-room is during the session strictly confined to members. During the recess no privilege-holder is allowed to enter this room unless in the company of a Library assistant. Yet, outside fiction, the worst loss is of books shelved in this room. This is doubtless accounted for, to some extent at least, by the fact that the books in this room, dealing as they do with subjects such as law, education, finance, land, labour, statistics, and sociology generally, are necessarily in frequent demand. It must be assumed, therefore, that the loss is here chiefly due to persons taking out books without entering them in the Day-books provided for that purpose. The books get taken into the House, into the Committee-rooms, and elsewhere, are overlooked and lost. Once lost, there being no record of their having been taken out, the difficulty of recovering the missing volumes is rendered exceptionally great.

Time after time in my annual reports I have drawn attention to the importance of persons having the use of the Library seeing that the books they take out are duly entered. Circulars to this effect have been issued and notices put up, but that the old evil still exists there is regrettable but unassailable proof in this report.

The case is somewhat but not wholly different with regard to the missing list in the general literature and history classes. These classes are stored in the main reading-room, to which, during the recess, the privilege-holders have access. Here a certain proportion of the loss may be due to the carelessness, or worse, of visitors.

Coming now to the subject of the loss in fiction, it must be noted that far more fiction is demanded by members and has to be purchased than was at one time the case. The value of the ordinary novel is small, and many of the books lost are not worth replacing on the shelves. The loss is here again, so I am convinced, mainly due to books being taken out without being entered. They are taken away to hotels and boardinghouses, and are picked up by unauthorized persons, and all trace of them is lost. I wish to emphasize the fact that no fiction is issued to recess-privilege holders, save to a very limited number of persons on the full-privilege list. As