

showing how extremely careless some persons can be with regard to books borrowed from the Library, I may state that on one occasion a member having died a number of Library books were returned by his relatives. There were over twenty books in the parcel, and not one of these books had ever been entered.

Were this Library, like so many British and American libraries, a non-access library—that is, a library where books are asked for from the catalogue and handed out over a counter—I would guarantee that not five books would be missing each year. In a free-access library there must always be a certain proportion of loss. This Library consists of eight separate rooms, not counting the two lobbies and the basement. To have an assistant stationed night and day in each and every one of the Library rooms would necessitate doubling the staff.

When the new Library comes to be built, if it be constructed according to the recommendations made by me some years ago, this system of having a number of separate rooms should not be followed. The present Library was most inconveniently designed so far as provision for proper supervision was concerned. This mistake will not, I hope, be repeated.

Last session special instructions were given to the Library assistants to be most careful in seeing that all books were duly entered. As I have said above, the Day-books are kept upstairs and downstairs, and there can be no excuse for books not being duly entered. When a book is entered and is unfortunately lost there is always a chance of its being traced. But an unentered book may not be missed for some time, and its recovery may then have become almost hopeless.

It is an open question whether many books now recorded as missing may not have gone astray on the occasion of the fire at the Old Parliament Buildings. As may be remembered, when the fire was at its height and threatened to spread to the roof of the Library wing, several thousands of volumes were hurriedly removed from the rooms and temporarily stored elsewhere. It is more than possible that a certain proportion of the loss occurred on this occasion.

FUTURE STOCK-TAKINGS.

I propose for the future to take stock of certain classes of the Library books yearly. By doing this a complete stock-taking will be completed every four years, and such a course will obviate the necessity of employing extra help, and will not interfere with the usual duties of the staff. I propose to divide the Library into four sections: (1) Sociology; (2) parliamentary publications, the main reading-room, which contains history, biography, voyages and travels, and general literature (including classics and foreign literature); (3) the various stack-rooms, containing philosophy, religion, science, and useful arts; and (4) the basement, containing the bound newspapers, &c. One of these divisions being taken each year a general stock-taking will be completed in a four-years period, which in my opinion is sufficient. I trust the Committee will approve of this practical proposal, which has been carefully thought out, which is definite, and which should meet all our requirements.

In conclusion, I wish formally to express my thanks to the staff for having worked so industriously and carefully at the stock-taking, which, as I have said, extended over nearly the whole of the recess. In particular, I desire to mention the names of Messrs. Thomson and McColl, upon whom the bulk of the work was thrown, and who spared neither time nor trouble in carrying out a most exhaustive overhaul.

I am, &c.,

CHARLES WILSON,
Chief Librarian.

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