

1937.

NEW ZEALAND.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY LIBRARY.

REPORT OF THE CHIEF LIBRARIAN FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH, 1937.

Laid on the Table of the House of Representatives by Leave.

To the Chairman, Joint Library Committee.

SIR,—

I have the honour to report on the operations of the General Assembly Library for the year 1936-37.

ACCESSIONS.

During the financial year, taking advantage of the increased book-buying grant, we were able to add to our stock from all sources 4,240 volumes, as compared with 2,826 the preceding year and an average of 2,516 for the previous eleven years. The total number of books accessioned to the end of May was 141,670, but, as I have pointed out in previous reports, this is not to be taken as the stock of the Library at present, since there is an inevitable reduction year by year owing to wear-and-tear and loss from other causes.

The generous increase in the grant from Parliament has enabled us to make purchases during the year under review of books which in the depression period we were quite unable to acquire; to maintain the heavy purchases called for in the field of sociology, history, and official publications; and gradually to make up leeway in the acquisition of technical library books, reference books, and standard texts which in the past have had perforce to be neglected. In our acquisitions we are careful to keep in touch with the Alexander Turnbull Library, the Wellington Public Library, and the library of Victoria University College so as to avoid duplication in the purchase of expensive books of which it is not necessary to have more than one copy in Wellington. The system of interlibrary loan, which is being steadily developed, makes such books reasonably available to any who may require them.

DONATIONS.

The Library has been particularly fortunate this year in the number and quality of the gifts which it has received from a variety of sources. Outstanding amongst these is a fine collection of historical records and commemoration books of the liveried companies of the City of London. Following on my visit to London in 1935, I initiated through the High Commissioner an approach to the whole of the London City Guilds in the hope of securing a full set of their published records. This mission was carried out by the High Commissioner's Office very efficiently, and the invitation was received in a most generous spirit by the city companies. As a result we have been able to display during the last few weeks a unique collection of these interesting volumes, many of them in fine bindings and all in the best condition. A few of the city companies apologized for the absence of old records in terms that sound almost humorous to us who live in a country only discovered to European eyes in 1642 and not inhabited by Europeans until 1800. The Dyers Company, for instance, remarks that "practically all the records of this company were destroyed in the Great Fire of 1666." The Vintners Company says that while it has a great number of records dating back "to immediate post-fire and indeed some earlier" they have never been transcribed. The Scriveners Company has "no records of interest, as they were destroyed in the Great Fire of London," on which occasion also the Fletchers Company lost all their records.

Also following my visit to London we have received as a gift from the directors of the New Zealand Shipping Company the logs of the last few voyages of their vessels which were lost by enemy action in the Great War. Our portrait collection acknowledges as its most interesting acquisition for the year an engraving of Joseph Somes, deputy-Governor of the New Zealand Company and owner of the ship "Tory," which brought the expedition of the New Zealand Company to prepare the way for the colony in Port Nicholson. This is the gift of Sir Thomas Colyer-Fergusson. His Excellency the Governor-General (Lord Galway) presented us with two autographed books by the Duke of Portland, "Memories of Racing," and "The Red Deer of Langwell and Braemore." Mr. T. W. Rhodes, formerly Member of Parliament for Thames, made a valuable addition to our newspaper collection of a number of volumes of the *Coromandel Sun* and *Coromandel News*.