

1888.

NEW ZEALAND.

# GENERAL ASSEMBLY LIBRARY

(REPORT ON).

*Laid on the Table by the Hon. T. W. Hislop, with leave of the House.*

## THE LIBRARIAN'S REPORT.

SIR,—

General Assembly Library, 10th May, 1888.

I have the honour to submit to the Joint Library Committee the annual report on the General Assembly Library.

Since the last report was presented two short but eventful sessions have come and gone, and a second recess has now drawn to a close. The former session saw the *coup de grâce* given to the twelve years' agitation for new library buildings; in the latter the Library for the first time felt the effect of the prevalent industrial depression in the retrenchment of periodicals and newspapers that had long been received. The two recesses had the characteristics of their more recent predecessors: the routine work of the Library was done, and not a little besides; heads of departments were granted the full *entrée*; and readers and students were given a limited access. Of the four Committees by which the Library was successively governed the Hon. G. Randall Johnson was Chairman.

The Library funds having been so largely drawn upon by the heavy purchases of last year, the various Committees have exercised a wise abstinence in the ordering of new books. This year's accessions have consequently been not only much less numerous than the previous year's, which were exceptionally numerous, but have fallen considerably below the estimated average of one thousand volumes annually. Nor can it be said that what has been lost in numbers has been gained in importance. The *notabilia* are few. The narrative and critical history of America, executed through the co-operation of a dozen experts, under the direction of the all-accomplished librarian of Harvard, Mr. Justin Winsor, is perhaps the most remarkable. The works of Alexander Hamilton—positively the last copy of a limited edition, which we had almost despaired of procuring—perpetuate the realised schemes and the projects of the organizer of the Federal administration, and may fitly be placed beside the works, purchased eighteen months ago, of the would-be destroyer of that administration, the nullifier Calhoun. A favourable opportunity enabled Dumont d'Urville's narratives of his voyages, with statements of their results by Lesson and other naturalists, and other French works on the Pacific—always a subject of predilection with French writers—to be acquired at small cost. The literature of subjects of momentary interest or accidental importance, like bimetallism and free-trade, has been specially attended to. No fewer than eighty volumes have been during the last two years added to the department of books relating to New Zealand. Gaps in the back volumes of the *Revue des Deux Mondes* and other Reviews have been filled up, but with these and a few other exceptions (such as Burton's classical *Life of David Hume*), the year's purchases have been of current literature, and have not exceeded 860 volumes.

The large number of periodicals taken in, and the extra supply received during the session, have always made a heavy drain on the Library funds, amounting to about £140 a year, or one-fifth of the whole income. A large expenditure in this direction is no doubt easily defensible. The lighter periodicals supply just the kind of reading that can be taken up at odd moments, while the more serious not only provide the chief pabulum on the engrossing topics of the hour, but contain weighty treatises that might not readily have been published in an independent form. It was nevertheless considered that the sum devoted to this purpose might be reduced without impairing the interest or even the attractiveness of this department. Moribund monthlies, monthlies that had lately come into existence rather than to life, weeklies that duplicated other weeklies, certain Australian papers that were a little superfluous, and American dailies that were never looked at, were accordingly removed from the list of standing orders. But all the really important reviews and magazines continue to be received, and in their bound shape form a permanent portion of the Library.

The balance from last year was £60; the annual appropriation was £600; and the fees received on account of Private Bills (which have varied from £65 to £150) amounted to £120: altogether, £780. The actual expenditure has been £715, leaving a credit balance of £65. But an account for over £70 is due to a local firm, and Treasury vouchers for books received, which have