

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

been presented but not paid, amount to £115 more. Were these discharged, the expenditure would have reached £900, and the debit balance would be £120. It should be stated, however, that two Treasury vouchers for £112 stood over from last year, and were paid out of this year's income. This deduction being made, the expenditure proper to the year would be (in round numbers) £790, as against an income of £780. The difference of less than £10 represents the excess of expenditure over income. It is due, and much more than that small sum is due, to a rather lavish outlay on the purchase of the Wellington newspapers. Of all three of these a larger number than had been usual was for the convenience of members taken in, and the occurrence of two Parliamentary sessions in the same year made the expenditure on this head mount up to nearly £80.

The occasional donations have been fairly numerous, and as the colonial character of the Library for about two-thirds of every year gets to be known will doubtless become, as in other central libraries, an important source of accessions. One windfall hardly comes within the year, but may be noted. The centralization of the administration of Crown lands has led to the transfer of over fifty Imperial Parliamentary Papers, most of them of older date than those already in the Library, from the Crown Lands Office at Christchurch. The Smithsonian Institution continues regularly to transmit valuable publications which could hardly have seen the light but for its agency. Donations from the British Museum, and (other than Blue Books) from the Imperial Government have for some time altogether ceased. The cause of the cessation has been discovered on inquiry. In a circular despatch dated the 19th June, 1883, Lord Derby engaged that all English Official Publications should be regularly transmitted to colonies which, on their part, undertook to transmit copies of all their Official Publications to the British Museum. The offer of the British Government was "accepted with much satisfaction" by the then Premier, Sir F. Whitaker, who undertook that "in future, copies of all New Zealand Government Official Publications will be punctually forwarded to the Librarian of the British Museum, commencing with the publications of the present year" (1883). The complete non-fulfilment of this undertaking, which adds a touch of irony to the pledge of punctuality, naturally led to the non-fulfilment of the engagement into which the Home Government was willing to enter. The consequence has been that, while the valuable series issued under the direction of the Master of the Rolls, and the important Calendars of State Papers, with prefaces by the greatest historical scholars of the day, have been scattered broadcast, not a single copy of them has come to New Zealand. The Agent-General was some months ago requested to make application for the two series named, and he has not failed to do so; but the most effectual means of obtaining them, and the best security for regularly receiving them in future, will be for the Colonial Government to make good its share in the agreement. The British Museum, which has also been expressly applied to, will then too, no doubt, be less reluctant to transmit publications that have a peculiar value for a library which fulfils many of the functions of a National Library.

Here, and not later, should fitting acknowledgment be made of the services of one whom his eminent ability, his diversified experience and literary gifts, have made the *doyen* of the Agents-General. It is fortunate for the Library that for some years past it has had Sir Francis Dillon Bell for its representative in England. Until he took over the direction of its Home agency it had little else than a succession of adverse experiences. Now the arrangements for the despatch of books, magazines, and newspapers are all that can be desired, and where an influential application has been needed the Agent-General's interposition was invariably successful.

The great cost of binding the large number of colonial newspapers hitherto bound, and the disproportionate space they occupy, have often engaged the attention of the Committee. In the second session of last year the list was carefully revised, and twenty-four journals out of sixty-seven were selected for binding. These will in future be, as until the last three or four years they were, bound at the Government Printing Office. There, too, are regularly bound all of the periodicals of which bound volumes are not sent from England, together with a quantity of miscellaneous matter received in paper covers. So much it seems needful to state, the total cost of the Library to the Colony not being represented by the expenditure given in the balance-sheet.

The proper housing of so large a collection—30,000 volumes, all told—has been a yearly increasing embarrassment. Not only has anything approaching a scientific classification of books on the shelves become impossible, but space enough for the placing of them in almost any order has for some time been lacking. A sixth room liberally granted by the Speakers—in a somewhat out-of-the-way part of the Buildings, it is true—will for a year or two postpone the necessity for still more extensive accommodation. To it will be removed the United States and Canadian official publications now in the smaller Reference Room, and to the latter, then to become the most attractive room in the Library, the larger illustrated and other works now in the Central Room. The problem, however, is only postponed, not solved. Libraries, which necessarily cannot stand still, are always crying out for more space; and Parliamentary Libraries, with their bulky official volumes and bound newspapers, are even more exacting than other libraries. It is to be hoped that a return of prosperity will make a durable building a possibility of the near future.

During the last short Recess forty-five visitors were granted admission to the Library—twenty-six as ordinary Readers, and nineteen as Students with the privilege of taking away books; if to these are added the admissions from June to October, 1887, the numbers would be found to be quite up to the average of the last two or three years. In one respect they rise above it. The number of outsiders to whom books have lately been issued has been greater than for years past. The fact may seem to need explanation. During the Recess of 1885–86, and some previous Recesses, the following resolution was in force: "That Students may, at the discretion of the Chairman of the Library Committee, be allowed to refer to any special works in a special room set apart for that purpose." By the Hon. Mr. Randall Johnson, the elected Recess Chairman, this resolution was liberally construed to mean that books might be taken out by individuals so favoured. The Hon. Mr. Mantell, who acted as Chairman for almost half of the long Recess, interpreted the rule literally,

and declined to allow books to be taken away. With the view of obviating a difference of opinion which had practical inconveniences, the following Resolution was submitted to and passed by the Joint Library Committee: "That literary workers or students of a special subject may, at the discretion of the Chairman, be permitted to take out books on that subject." The rule was so drawn up as to give open legislative sanction to the privileges enjoyed by the limited class of readers to whom (what may be called) a surreptitious use of the Library had for a session or two before been conceded. It was never intended (the subject not having been discussed in Committee) to grant any extension of these privileges. An extension has, however, in practice been made. The term *student*, originally restricted to persons working for ulterior literary objects in a specific line of inquiry, has been understood as applying to matriculates of the University reading with a view to graduation and to graduates reading towards further graduation. To such as these, whom the non-existence of University teaching in Wellington makes almost solely dependent upon books, the opening of the Library has been a real boon. With them no difficulty can arise: the *bond fide* character of their studentship can be readily verified. The difficulty of administering the rule begins with quite another class. Gentlemen, and ladies too, who read books of a better kind than the common, not very unnaturally conceive that the designation *student* applies to them, and claim to be admitted to the Library on that footing. It is for the Joint Committee to determine whether such persons shall be granted the access that they demand. But it cannot be too plainly understood that the rule when drawn up was not intended to apply to this class, which might easily be extended to include readers of almost every kind of books, and so come to embrace the whole of the population to which an Athenæum or a Public Library appeals, and that it could not have been administered otherwise than as it has been without a breach of trust towards the Committee which was induced to pass it only on the understanding that its application would be closely limited.

It had been intended, in both of the previous annual reports, to make some reference to the necessity for enacting a Colonial Copyright Act, but the time did not seem to have come. A request from the Secretary of State for the Colonies, made at the instance of the authorities of the British Museum, is likely to bring the subject within the pale of practical politics. Ten years ago the question was examined in all its bearings by a Royal Commission, and it is understood that the passing of an adequate measure has been delayed only by the block that has arrested nearly all Imperial legislation and reduced the English Statute-book for each year to half its former size. It might not be advisable for this Colony to anticipate a law that would be applicable to the whole Empire, but there is one thing that it can and ought to do. Many pamphlets of very great value for the early history of the Colony have been issued—they were never really published—at local presses, and, except for a stray copy here and there, have disappeared. Pamphlets of similar importance continue to be so issued, in order (but for the vigilance of librarians) to meet the same fate. What is urgently wanted is the enactment of a municipal law providing that at least one copy of every Colonial publication shall be deposited in a central library. That library can be only the Parliamentary Library. The question of a National Library need not be raised. Should the Library of the General Assembly develop or, as is more probable, bifurcate into a National Library, books deposited under a Copyright Act could be transferred to the larger institution.

The Hon. the Chairman, Joint Library Committee.

I have, &c.,

J. COLLIER, *Librarian*.

APPENDIX.—DONATIONS.

ASSOCIATION FOR PROMOTING THE EXTENSION OF THE CONTAGIOUS DISEASES ACTS—

A collection of reports and pamphlets.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER, CROWN LANDS, Christchurch—

Fifty Imperial Parliamentary Papers, 1831-57.

EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY SENATUS—

University Calendar, 1886-87, 1887-88. 2 vols.

FITZHERBERT, Sir W., K.C.M.G.—

Photograph of Members of the Colonial Conference, London, 1887.

GILLIES, Mr. Justice—

Jennings, L. J. Mr. Gladstone: A Study. London, 1887.

MILNE, J., Esq., Auckland—

Farrer, Sir T. Free-trade *versus* Fair-trade. Ed. 3. London, 1887.

MONCKTON, Sir J. B.—

Medal struck in commemoration of the visit of the Colonial and Indian representatives to the City of London, 25th June, 1886.

NATIVE MINISTER, Hon. the—

White, J. Ancient history of the Maori. Vol. I. Wellington, 1887. Four copies.

PYKE, V., Esq., M.H.R.—

Farrer, Sir T. Free-trade *versus* Fair-trade. Ed. 3. London, 1887.

Gowing, R. Richard Cobden.

Other Cobden Club publications.

RICHARDSON, Hon. E.—

Harven, E. de. Nouvelle-Zélande.

Idem. Nouvelle-Zélande au point de vue économique de la Belgique.

Albinus, B. S. Tables of the skeleton and muscles of the human body. Large folio. London, 1749.

ROSS, A. H., Esq., M.H.R.—

Cowen, Joseph. Speeches in 1885.

ROYAL UNIVERSITY OF IRELAND—

University Calendar, 1888, and supplement (examination papers, 1887).

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION—

Miscellaneous collections. 13 vols.

Contributions to knowledge. 3 vols.

Reports. (Two years' donations.)

STOUT, Sir R.—

Harven, E. de. Mission commerciale en Nouvelle-Zélande.

SYDNEY PUBLIC LIBRARY—

Facsimiles of old charts of Australia.

TUCKER, G. A., Esq., Annandale, N.S.W.—

Tucker, G. A. Lunacy in many lands. Sydney, 1887.

[*Approximate Cost of Paper.*—Preparation, nil; printing (1,375 copies), £2 7s.]

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