

1903.

NEW ZEALAND.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY LIBRARY:

REPORT OF THE CHIEF LIBRARIAN FOR THE YEAR 1902-3.

Laid on the Table by Leave.

The CHIEF LIBRARIAN to the Hon. the CHAIRMAN of the LIBRARY COMMITTEE.

SIR,—

Wellington, 10th July, 1903.

I have the honour to submit to you the following report for the year 1902-3:—

REDUCTION IN THE NUMBER OF MISSING BOOKS.

In my last year's report I stated that the number of missing books reported after the completion of the stocktaking "must not be considered a final estimate." The correctness of this forecast has been verified, for I am pleased to be able to inform you that quite a number of the volumes supposed to have been lost have been and are finding their way back to the shelves.

I would, however, respectfully but most earnestly impress upon honourable members who use the Library the importance of never failing to have the books they take out of the Library properly entered in the day-books. These books are kept both upstairs and downstairs, where members of the staff are always to be found night and day so long as the Library is open. As the delay caused by having a book entered (and thus securing a registration which renders a volume traceable when missing) is only momentary, I sincerely trust that members will scrupulously observe this very necessary safeguard against loss. A book which is duly entered may be temporarily mislaid, it is true, but the chances of permanent loss become greatly diminished. On the other hand, if a volume once leaves the Library unentered in the day-book, the task which may then devolve upon me of ascertaining its whereabouts and securing its safe return may not improbably become one of considerable difficulty, or even impossible of accomplishment.

RECESS PRIVILEGES TO NON-MEMBERS.

The Recess Library Committee followed the course pursued by its predecessor in extending Library privileges to the public, books being lent to such persons as were approved by the Chairman on the recommendation of members of Parliament; also, in the case of Government officials, by heads of Departments. I am glad to say that in no case has the privilege been abused; and so far no complaint has reached me of the condition in which the volumes issued have been returned. As members of the Committee are doubtless aware, works of fiction are not issued to others than members, so that the books lent to privilege-holders have all been of an instructive and educative character. The facilities thus afforded to students and others who would otherwise have had no opportunity of making acquaintance with all that is best in modern literature have, I know, been greatly appreciated. The Library has also been of material service to many who have been allowed to consult valuable works of reference, art books, and other publications which are not allowed to be taken out of the Library. In several instances members of the Supreme Court Bench and of the legal profession have been enabled to find information which was not attainable elsewhere; and, as usual, during the recess I have received and answered letters from all parts of the colony from persons seeking information which was only to be found in the newspaper-files which constitute such a valuable feature of the Library.

Two hundred and eighty persons received permission to borrow books during the recess, the average number of volumes issued being fifteen, which shows a total circulation of 4,250 separate volumes. This does not include the books issued to permanent officers of the House and others, such as the members of the Government House staff, the Judges, &c., who are specially privileged to make use of the Library by vote of the Joint Committee.

The work of attending to the requirements of privilege-holders and persons consulting newspapers and reference works, combined with the task of classifying and cataloguing the exceptionally large number of new books, has made the last recess a very busy time for the Library staff. Eighty-five boxes of books, representing about six hundred volumes, have been sent out to members