

CHIEF LIBRARIAN'S SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT.

SIR,—

I have the honour to submit a report of visits paid to and inspections of various libraries during my recent trip to England.

I left Wellington for Vancouver on the 21st November, 1903.

Having three days to spare in Sydney, I inspected the Public Free Library and the Legislative Library in that city.

On my way to Vancouver the vessel called at Brisbane (Queensland) and Victoria (British Columbia). At Brisbane I visited the Legislative Library. The Legislative Library at Victoria (British Columbia) is housed in a superb building, and is in every way admirably equipped and methodically arranged. American methods of classification and cataloguing, very similar to our own, are employed. I noticed both at Brisbane and at Victoria a novel and useful way of arranging maps for ready reference. To this I shall allude in detail at the close of this report. At Vancouver I visited what should, as the city grows in importance, develop into a very fine public library.

Proceeding east by the Canadian Pacific Railway I arrived in due course at Toronto, having spent a few hours *en route* at Winnipeg, the capital of Manitoba, where I visited the Legislative and the Public Libraries. American methods were here again noticeable. At Toronto, where I spent two days, I visited three very fine libraries. The Legislative Library of the Province of Ontario, housed, like that at Victoria, in a noble pile of buildings, is an exceedingly fine collection. I also visited the Public and the University Libraries, seeing much that was of interest and picking up some very useful information.

I had intended to proceed to Ottawa from Toronto and thence to New York by way of Boston. The severity of the weather, however (it was 17° below zero at Winnipeg and 6½° at Toronto), caused a serious dislocation of the railway service in eastern Canada, and I decided, therefore, to proceed to New York by way of Buffalo.

At Buffalo, the Public Library is regarded, so I was informed by several American librarians, as a model institution of its kind, and I took note of several points in its arrangements which should prove useful.

From Buffalo to New York was the next stage of my journey. Unfortunately the train by which I travelled was "snowed up" for some eleven hours at night, and the heating-apparatus of the cars failing to work properly, I laid the foundations of what was to prove a rather serious illness in New York.

I arrived at New York to find the city in the throes of a "blizzard" ("the worst weather for some years"—*New York Herald*), but set to work at once to visit the principal libraries. I inspected the Lenox and Astor Reference Libraries, both splendid collections, and three of the largest lending branches of the New York Public Libraries. I also had an opportunity of seeing the fine library of the Mercantile Association (a subscription library) and two important club libraries. I went as thoroughly as the time at my disposal would allow into such questions as the Dewey decimal system of classification, map-arrangement, and other technicalities of library-management, and took advice from prominent librarians, to whom I presented an open letter of introduction given by the Right Hon. the Premier, on many points upon which I was seeking increased knowledge and useful guidance.

Further and more extended study of New York library methods was, however, suddenly and peremptorily stopped by an attack of pneumonia. A severe cold, caught no doubt *en route* from Buffalo to New York, had grown slowly but steadily worse, and after four days of most congenial and useful work I fell seriously ill, so ill indeed that as my malady (pneumonia) progressed a second doctor and a second nurse had to be called in. A most unpleasant and expensive experience was terminated by my departure from New York, where I had spent about three weeks, in an extremely weak condition. My projected trip to Philadelphia and Washington, in which latter place I wished to inspect the celebrated Library of Congress, had, of course, to be abandoned.

Arrived in England I was fortunate enough to speedily recover my health, and after a brief sojourn with my relations I set to work in London upon a systematic inspection of several important libraries, such spare time as I had at my disposal being devoted to interviewing our agents, Messrs. Sotheran and Co., and to visiting several second-hand book-shops. The libraries I visited in London were as follows: The House of Commons Library, the Guildhall Library, the British Museum, the London Library, two large club libraries, the Kensington, West Ham, and other municipal libraries.

After a second short sojourn with relatives I visited Leeds, Bradford, Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, and Oxford, in each city inspecting the libraries and calling upon second-hand booksellers, from some of whom I made several purchases.

Whilst in London I went into the question of book-supplies. From inquiries made and comparisons instituted I came to the conclusion that we have nothing to gain and might probably suffer some inconvenience by changing our agents. As to prices I consulted two or three English librarians and found (having taken with me duplicates of some of Messrs. Sotheran's invoices) that books had been invoiced to this Library at the same rates as, and in some cases actually at lower rates than, those charged to English libraries. I had an additional advantage in having a friend who is in the book trade, and who gave me information on "trade" and other discounts not usually accessible to an outsider. Messrs. Sotheran were most obliging, and are now giving a special discount off certain "net" books off which in England discount is rarely given, even to libraries. I checked the prices charged for periodicals by Messrs. Street and Sons with the prices quoted in the lists of other firms, and here again I advise no change of agents.

Messrs. Sotheran and Co. treated us very liberally with regard to books which I purchased from dealers in second-hand books at Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Reading, and other places. The firm collected these books for me, making no charge for commission, as is usually done, and defraying the carriage.

Out of the special list of "New Zealand items" which I took Home with me, and a copy of which I left with Messrs. Sotheran and Co., the firm has already shipped some thirty volumes. Others will follow from time to time as the items are picked by the firm or by their provincial