

1929.
NEW ZEALAND.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY LIBRARY.

REPORT OF THE CHIEF LIBRARIAN FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH, 1929.

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

To the Chairman of the Joint Library Committee.

SIR,—

I have the honour to report on the operations of the General Assembly Library for the year 1928–29.

During the year 2,153 books were added to the collection from all sources, as compared with 2,270 last year, 2,162 in 1926–27, and 1,501 in the preceding year. The number of volumes accessioned to the end of the financial year was 117,296. The book-buying vote having been increased by Parliament last year from £700 to £900, the addition enabled us to do much better during the year both in the purchase of current books and in completing sets which had been allowed to fall into arrears. At the end of the year there was a balance in the bank of £418, but orders already placed and books on the way would absorb a good deal of this, leaving enough to meet accounts coming due until the current year's vote becomes available.

STOCKTAKING.

In spite of the interrupted recess, we were able to complete the stocktaking in the classes of Fiction and Literature, in which it was known that there were many hundreds of books missing. Stock was taken in these classes in 1913, and certain volumes were shown to be missing then, but they remained on the stock and in the catalogues, and were a constant source of trouble and inefficiency. In spite of the short session intervening in December, the staff, by arduous and willing work, was able to complete this intricate and irksome operation and thus to remedy a very unsatisfactory feature of the Library. The stocktaking showed that in Literature 318 volumes which had been accessioned are no longer in the Library, and in Fiction 4,314 are similarly missing. These numbers include not only the books which were missing in 1913 (in Fiction alone 964), but many hundreds which were put on troopships during the war for the benefit of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force and were not expected to be returned. Then, again, the life of a book of fiction in a circulating library is necessarily short, and thus many of those now being written off have been long since legitimately worn out or given away to institutions. I have made it a practice when books are definitely lost, worn out, or discarded from the Library to have them written off the stock and eliminated from the card catalogues, since it is impossible for the staff to work with any efficiency when there are thousands of cards which do not really represent anything. The only card that is now retained is the main card, which indicates what has happened to the book and saves any further trouble about it. As a result of the stocktaking just concluded these 4,632 volumes have been definitely written off and no longer purport to be in the Library. Some idea of the work entailed in this operation, which follows the stocktaking, may be obtained from the fact that the entry of each book must be stamped "Withdrawn" in the accession register, removed from the stock-sheets, and weeded from the card catalogues. The final stage alone meant searching out and removing not less than ten thousand cards.

BINDING.

The vote for binding, amounting last year to £400, has been satisfactorily expended. The small balance shown as unexpended was due to work which was almost completed by the Government Printing Office but not brought to charge within the financial year. Good progress has been made in overhauling the stock of old newspapers and rebinding where required.

SHELVING ACCOMMODATION.

In spite of the shifts that have been made in recent years with a view to providing shelving for the book stock, the stack-rooms and the main reading-room are again becoming inconveniently congested, and I cannot see how we are to accommodate the additional two thousand books each year without a substantial addition to our shelving. I hope that an improvement in financial conditions may make it possible in the near future to extend the shelving and provide more accommodation adjacent to the reading-room.

REFERENCE AND INFORMATION.

In the last few years there has been a very marked increase in the use made of the Library for research and information purposes. Inquiries by Government Departments, business firms, students, and others for information of an economic, historical, statistical, or biographical nature are received every day, and members of Parliament are constantly calling on the staff for inquiries which entail a good deal of research. This is a side of the Library's work which is of great value to members. Professor H. J. Laski, of London University, in a recent paper on "The Present Evolution of the Parliamentary System," says, "It is important in every legislature to establish a small but highly

