

1882.
NEW ZEALAND.

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY LIBRARY

(REPORT ON).

Laid on the Table by Mr. Speaker with leave of the House.

MEMORANDUM by the Hon. the SPEAKER of the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL upon the GENERAL ASSEMBLY LIBRARY presented to the JOINT LIBRARY COMMITTEE.

THE Joint Library Committee having, at the end of the last Session of Parliament, devolved upon the two Speakers the duty of looking after the Library during the recess, and the Hon. the Speaker of the House of Representatives having requested me to act for him, I have now the honor to report briefly, so that this Library Committee may enter upon its labours with a knowledge of what has been done during the interval of the recess.

In discharge of the duty so entrusted to me I frequently inspected the Library, and consulted with the Librarian as often as the occasion required. I always found the Librarian and his assistants attentive to their work.

I had the accounts audited up to the 31st March, 1882—the end of the Financial Year. The accounts, when examined, were found to be correct, and the auditor's certificate will be placed before the Committee. I may state that, after providing for outstanding liabilities, there will be a nett available balance of about fifty pounds sterling.

The Librarian was reminded from time to time during the recess that it would be desirable to collect the materials ready for a report; and Sir Maurice O'Rorke having expressed his approval that such a report from the Librarian should be prepared, a report to the two Speakers has accordingly been drawn up, which I have now the honor to submit on their behalf to the Joint Library Committee.

WILLIAM FITZHERBERT,
Speaker, Legislative Council.

REPORT.

The LIBRARIAN, General Assembly, to the Hon. the SPEAKERS of both HOUSES of PARLIAMENT.

GENTLEMEN,—

1st May, 1882.

I have the honor to submit to you, in accordance with your instructions, the following report of the work done in the library during the recess, and on its present condition:—

In accordance with the resolution of the Joint Library Committee on the 9th September, 1881, that the Legislative Council Committee-rooms (Nos. 4 and 5) should be annexed to the library, the necessary amount was placed on the supplementary estimates, and the work was put in hand as quickly as possible after the rising of Parliament. It occupied a somewhat longer period than was anticipated, and was not fully completed till the close of November. During this time, in addition to preparing for the binders' hands the various papers and magazines which we receive, after calling in all the books in the usual way, I took careful stock of them, and am happy to be able to report that only a very few were missing.

As soon as the new rooms were ready for occupation I entered at once on the task of rearranging the library. This was, of course, rendered necessary by the removal into these of many thousand volumes from the other rooms. After giving the matter due consideration, I set apart one of the rooms—No. 5—for the Imperial papers, of which we receive between eighty and ninety volumes annually. These, though forming a vast repertory of the latest and best information on almost all questions with which Legislatures are called to deal, have hitherto been practically inaccessible to members, owing to their being kept in a room in a remote part of the buildings which, in consequence of its surroundings, very few ever dared or cared to visit. They can now be readily and comfortably consulted by any who desire to see them. No. 4 has, in like manner, been mainly devoted to American publications, the Canadian sessional papers occupying the south end, and Congressional records, Senate, and Executive documents of the United States, and various other Government publications, the east end. The remaining portion of these rooms has been set apart for serial literature.

I have also removed to these rooms, for the convenience of members, a large number of beautifully-illustrated works which have of late years been kept away in the safe, and of the very existence of which many members were wholly unaware. Those who find a pleasure in the study of the masterpieces of high art will now have an opportunity of examining these quietly and at their leisure.

The dimensions of these two additional rooms, I forgot to mention, are respectively 19 feet by 13 feet, and 23 feet by 13 feet, and they contain shelf-accommodation for over six thousand volumes. That their annexation to the library was not uncalled for is now shown by the fact that even already the cases are almost full.

Of course, as stated already, the removal of so many volumes into these rooms rendered many changes necessary in the redistribution of the books throughout the whole of the other rooms. I had no wish to make any unnecessary alterations, as well to save labour as to consult the convenience of honorable members who have been using the library for years, and who will naturally look for their favourite authors on the shelves they were wont to occupy. I have had a simple plan prepared which shows the distribution of the books at a glance, both on the ground-floor and in the gallery. The whole is divided into sections, indicated by *capital* letters, while the several cases in each section are marked by *small* letters. These marks will be inserted in the next General Catalogue, so that members may be able to tell at once where they can lay their hands on any volume they may wish to consult.

I need only mention here one or two of the salient features in the changes that have been made. The Diaries and Letters have been incorporated with Biography, and so also have the Speeches of eminent men, of which, I may say in passing, our collection is rather scanty. Philosophy also has been removed from among the Arts and Sciences and constituted into an independent section. The Foreign Classics, which were scattered all over the library, I have collected and placed together alongside of the Ancient Classics, and these two, along with their English versions, form a compact section.

After having succeeded in arranging the books, according to my mind, as far as the nature of the accommodation at my disposal would admit, the next thing that demanded my care was the numbering of the books. For some unaccountable reason or other this has hitherto been overlooked, although there is scarcely anything more important in connection with a large library such as ours, or more essential for its proper management, than that every book in it should bear its own number and shelf-mark. Accordingly I had tickets prepared, and have succeeded in labelling over 10,000 volumes. Much greater progress would have been made with this portion of my work, but I was interrupted in the very heat of it by the repairs, &c., which had to be effected in the library, as in all the rest of the building, preparatory to the assembling of Parliament. For over a month the gasfitters and painters were more or less intermittently in the library, so that my work had to be prosecuted in the midst of the greatest difficulty and discomfort. Next recess, however, will I hope see this important task completed.

With the view of possessing, as every public library should possess, a permanent catalogue of the library—a historical register of all the books added to it from time to time—every book has been taken down as soon as marked, and the full particulars in regard to each will be carefully entered in volumes I have had prepared for the purpose, and will be preserved for reference in all future time. Such a catalogue is invaluable in connection with every large library, forming, as it were, a compact history of the growth of the institution from year to year. I have just been able to make a fair start with the work, but it is one of such magnitude, owing to its having been neglected so long, that it will require many months of uninterrupted labour to overtake arrears and get abreast of our present accessions.

Simultaneously with this work, there was another that imperatively called for immediate attention. There were huge piles of American publications, the accumulations of many years, all entered in the catalogue, but lying loosely about in such a way that it was almost impossible to lay hands on any of them that might be wanted. Many of these, like our own Imperial parliamentary papers, are extremely valuable, being full of the latest and most authentic information on a great variety of subjects that demand from time to time the consideration of the American Legislature, and therefore I thought it very desirable—indeed, absolutely necessary—to have them assorted, as far as might be, according to their subjects, with the view of having them bound and placed on our shelves so as to be available in case any one might wish to consult them. This, too, has now in a large measure been accomplished.

I shall deal in the same way with a large collection of pamphlets belonging to the library, which I have not yet had the time to carefully examine.

In consequence of the negligent manner in which our orders were attended to during the whole of the year 1881, the Committee, at its meeting on the 13th July last, resolved to make fresh arrangements, to commence from the 1st January, 1882, for getting our supplies of books, magazines, &c., from England. The agency was offered to W. G. Parsons, Esq., a barrister in London, who has for many years acted as selector of books for the Dunedin Athenæum. On the 3rd October a calogram was received from that gentleman, intimating his willingness to act in the same capacity for us. Accordingly full instructions were sent Home to him as to the nature of the duties he would be expected to discharge, and it is hoped that our requirements will be better attended to and the interests of the library promoted by this new arrangement. It is only fair to Mr. Stock, our late agent, to state that he has, in various letters received during the recess, fully explained the cause of the irregularities complained of last session. He feels very sore on the loss of the agency, and hopes the Committee may reconsider their decision. The correspondence will be laid before the new Joint Committee, and it will rest with it to say what action, if any, it may take in the matter. Meantime our new agent has entered on his duties, and I am every day expecting from him a large consignment of some of the latest and most interesting works published since last session. In accordance with the resolution passed at the last meeting of the Joint Library Committee, I have prepared a list of books every month, which on receiving your approval has been duly transmitted to London by successive mails, so that, besides the large order sent Home by the Committee last September, and which is already to a large extent executed, there are six orders of the value of £25 each in the hands of our new agent and in course of execution.

Besides the change in the agency, it may not be out of place to mention another change intimately connected with it that it was deemed advisable to make during the recess, and that is as to the manner of paying our Home agent. The method hitherto in force has been that on presenting his invoice and bill of lading at the Agent-General's office he received a cheque for the full amount of his invoice, without further inquiry. This appeared somewhat unbusinesslike, and left the Committee very much at the agent's mercy. Mistakes, of course, will occur, and as a matter of fact we found out several errors in some recent invoices. But the Agent-General knew nothing of these, and so the money was paid. I have accordingly made out a contra account against Mr. Stock, and forwarded it

through the Colonial Secretary to the Agent-General, for deduction from the amount of that gentleman's next invoice; and by your direction I wrote to the Colonial Secretary, requesting him to instruct the Agent-General in future only to pay 75 per cent. of the amount of the invoice on its presentation, leaving the balance, or so much as may really be due, to be paid on receipt of a certificate from the Chairman of Library Committee or the Librarian (as the case may be determined) that the goods have been received, examined, and found correct. I have received a reply from the Colonial Secretary informing me that effect has been given to your request, and that payments will in future be made in the way recommended.

I have now to refer to the additions that have been made to the library during the recess. These have been neither few nor unimportant. From Mr. Stock four cases have been received, containing 874 volumes of general literature, besides seven containing eighty-four volumes of the back numbers of *The Times* from 1844 to 1864; one case from the Home Government with eighty-three volumes of the Imperial Papers of 1880; one case from the Smithsonian Institution, containing some fifty volumes of Senate and Executive documents, along with a number of other Government publications. I am happy also to state that the application made by the Committee last year through the Chairman of the Joint Library Committee (the Hon. the Speaker of the Legislative Council) to Sir George Jessel, Master of the Rolls, for the "Acts of the Scottish Parliament, from 1124 to 1707," has been successful. I have received, through His Excellency the Governor, a communication from Lord Kimberley, Secretary of State for the Colonies, stating that the Lords Commissioners had been pleased to present the General Assembly of New Zealand with a handsomely-bound set of the volumes containing them. Still more recently the Agent-General has informed me, through the Colonial Secretary, that he had received the volumes, and would forward them by the earliest opportunity. The Trustees of the British Museum have sent us three additional volumes of their publications, and the Trustees of the Melbourne Public Library have forwarded a very handsome copy of their new catalogue in two volumes. In addition to these benefactions, I think it only right to mention that Mr. Justice Gillies has presented the library with a copy of a very rare book, "Wade's Travels in New Zealand in 1842"; Mr. Lewis, of the Native Office, with an edition of Homer, 330 years old; Mr. Edwin Stowe, with his little work on Velasquez; and Mr. John Costall, with "The Public Parks and Gardens of the World." I have acknowledged these various donations, and tendered the thanks of the Committee to the several donors. I believe—indeed, I have been expressly told—that if we only had a proper building for the accommodation and safe-keeping of our books we should receive many more such gifts year by year.

Reckoning up all these, and including also our own Government publications and our exchanges from other Governments, I find that not less than 1,300 bound volumes have been added to the library within the past year. This brings the total number of volumes now on our shelves up to something over 21,000; and their value may be estimated at £17,000 at the least.

As usual, a Supplement to the Catalogue has been prepared and printed for the use of honorable members. For convenience, I have incorporated last year's Supplement with it. It has assumed somewhat larger proportions this year than usual, for two reasons: first, because the actual additions to the library have been considerably larger than for some years back; and, secondly, because in taking stock I found a considerable number of books on the shelves that had hitherto never been catalogued.

I now refer to the arrangements with regard to the admission of visitors to the library during the recess. By a resolution passed at the last meeting of the Joint Committee it was decided that, instead of being managed, as in previous years, by a Recess Committee—consisting of the members in and near Wellington—the library should be placed under the care of the Hon. the Speakers of both Houses, with certain discretionary powers as to admission; and, after communicating with each other, they decided that, when the new rooms were completed and the necessary changes consequent thereon made, admissions should be granted to applicants for the privilege, under certain restrictions. The following are the rules drawn up to regulate those admissions:—

"Rules regulating Admission to the General Assembly Library during the Recess."

"1. The library will be open to those who receive the privilege of admission from 3 to 5 p.m. daily, save on Saturdays, when it closes at 4 o'clock.

"2. The only room to be used by them will be the entrance-room.

"3. No books may be taken by students or visitors from the shelves. The Librarian or his assistants will supply them with any they may wish either to consult or take with them.

"4. Any persons taking notes or making extracts must use pencil only.

"By order.

"A. MACGREGOR, Librarian."

This arrangement was found to answer well, and, though a few were still discontented at not being allowed the free run of the library as heretofore, the great majority were perfectly satisfied and even grateful for the privilege allowed them. About one hundred availed themselves of it; and enjoyed the use of the works on our shelves during the recess. It was pleasant to note that the books most in demand were works of travel, biography, and science. I am happy to be able to add that the books were all duly returned, and, except in one solitary instance, which I reported to you, in good order.

I have thus endeavoured to give some account of the work in which we have been engaged during the recess, and the results we have attained. But I cannot close this report without expressing my sense of the obligations under which I lie to my chief assistant, Mr. Smith, without whose aid it would simply have been impossible to undertake all the work that had to be done. Night after night, and quite spontaneously, he sacrificed his rest and his leisure to push on the various works that required to be attended to.

If we have succeeded in putting the library into such order as shall promote the comfort and convenience of honorable members, and secure their approbation, our labours will be more than rewarded.

I have, &c.,

A. MACGREGOR,

Librarian.

