

presented, and a case of books costing £46 has been received: were both accounts discharged there would now be a deficit of over £50. This negative result is due in part to an unusually large outlay on the purchase of books. In a total expenditure of £1,285 no less than £930 was devoted to the purchase of books, their binding and freight. It may be frankly admitted that the amount, if not disproportionate, is in itself excessive. It would be not only inexpedient but impossible to expend an equal or approximate sum every year. A number of considerations may be urged in defence. (1.) Though the Library is deeply indebted to the successive Selection Committees and to particular members of them—Sir Maurice O'Rorke and the Hon. Dr. Menzies during the session, and Dr. Newman during the recess—for their vigilance in noting the issue of new books and their self-rewarding labour in procuring them for the Library, yet there has at no time been any *systematic* selection. While it may be safely asserted that few libraries are disfigured by a smaller proportion of ephemeral or inferior literature, it is not denied that deficiencies neither few nor inconsiderable were to be met with in almost every department. During the last eighteen months it has been attempted to fill up these gaps, and an inspection of the two last-issued Annual Supplements will show to how large an extent the purchases of the last year have been of books published in previous years. No small amount of the extra expenditure may thus be accounted for. (2.) In not a few cases series were incomplete: these have been completed. (3.) Books and single volumes which have been missing so long that they might be considered lost have been replaced. (4.) Six or eight sets costing from £4 or £5 to (three of them) over £20 bulk considerably in the total outlay. (5.) The additions to Philology and the Greek and Latin Classics cost £60. (6.) Books in Art and Engineering, though fewer, were costly. The amount of the *current* literature, however, has not been proportionately increased: the error committed—if error there has been—consists in having, with perhaps pardonable zeal, concentrated into eighteen months an activity in the supplementing of deficiencies which might well have been spread over at least twice that space.

The virtual deficit is, however, really due to one item of extraordinary expenditure. Until quite lately the binding of the colonial and intercolonial newspapers has been executed at the Government Printing Office. This year and last, owing to want of room in that building, it has been done by private contract, at a cost of nearly £100 for the two years, the whole of which, as it happens, has been added to the expenditure of a single—the last—financial year. The outlay is not in itself to be regretted. No part of the literature of a young country will ultimately have more value than its newspapers. They record the rise of settlements, the growth of townships, the progress of colonization, the incidents of public and the manners of private life. Taken all together they are such a mirror of the activity of the whole community in its length and breadth as historians of ancient and even of modern nations have desired in vain. Future histories will, by the help of those records, be written of these young republics which will make all past histories of old countries seem meagre and superficial. They are therefore a priceless part of the Library possessions, and may well claim the apparently exorbitant share of space they now occupy. But the cost of binding will not, it is to be hoped, figure in more than another Library budget, if in that. This charge deducted, the apparent credit balance would have been £160, and the actual £50.

The bulk of the books received has been supplied, as during the three previous years, by Messrs. Bell and Bradfute, of Edinburgh, who take extraordinary pains to fulfil, and who despatch with promptitude, the orders sent to them; the Library can never have been so well served. The Agent-General, under whose instructions they act, gives prompt and precise attention to all requests, and is indefatigable in the service of the Library. Large numbers of books have been procured from the United States through the agency of Messrs. Lyon and Blair. A few have been obtained from Melbourne, while others have been locally purchased.

The year has been unusually fertile in donations. Eighty or ninety volumes of Imperial and Colonial Parliamentary Papers—some of them duplicates, others old colonial publications of great value—were presented by the sons and the daughter-in-law of the late Mr. Justice Chapman. The Swedenborg Society liberally sent fifty volumes of the works of Swedenborg, books relating to Swedenborg, and books issued by the society. The Smithsonian Institution of Washington not only transmitted the publications of the year, but also, at request, presented a number of their earlier publications which had not previously been forwarded. Other donors presented single volumes.

Books were issued to twenty-three locally-resident Members, to three Members resident within short distances of Wellington, who personally returned the volumes which they personally took out, to sixty-one officers connected with Parliament Buildings and the General Government, and to eleven literary workers or students of specified subjects. Sixty-four readers, as against fifty-one last year and forty the year before, used for purposes of consultation the entrance-room, which, through the enforcement of more stringent regulations, was converted from a club-room for the accommodation of loungers into a place of serious reading and not seldom of genuine study.

Owing to the unusual number of accessions during the year the routine work of the Library has been unusually exacting. Yet it is agreeable to report that the Assistants, who work longer hours in session than any of the Parliamentary departments and longer hours in the recess than any Government department, attended regularly and performed their duties efficiently throughout the year.

In the session of 1875 Sir George Grey concluded an eloquent appeal by moving, "That, in the opinion of this House, it is absolutely necessary that suitable buildings should forthwith be erected for the accommodation and safe-keeping of the valuable library of the General Assembly;" and effect was given to the motion by placing £5,000 on the estimates for that purpose. That was not the first step, nor was it the last, by a very long way, which the Legislature took in this direction. Committee after Committee rained requests and remonstrances upon Ministry after Ministry. A Royal Commission reported; the Speakers waited on the Government; architects prepared plans. A sum of £10,000, in the session of 1882, was voted for a partial reconstruction of Parliament Buildings in which a new library was to be included: Parliament Buildings were