CENTENNIAL SURVEYS

LETTERS AND ART IN NEW ZEALAND

E. H. McCormick
Few New Zealanders know the literature of their own country as does E. H. McCormick; few are so aware of the types of culture this country has seen, and few so sensitive to the changing currents in our social life. Although he is an unusually perceptive critic of both literature and art, E. H. McCormick has preferred to trace the development of New Zealand letters and art as a social phenomenon rather than as independent departments, linked only by a tenuous thread to the national life. His exceedingly stimulating account of what men and women have written in New Zealand and the social attitudes revealed by their writings is a type of study that has not previously been attempted on the same scale in this country. In spite of his specialised purpose, Mr McCormick has made a very comprehensive survey of both letters and art, and his continuous criticism of books and pictures from the seventeenth century to the twentieth fills a conspicuous gap in our literature. This book will help its readers to understand New Zealand as well as to appreciate what New Zealanders have painted or written.

A full list of the series of New Zealand Centennial Surveys will be found on the back of this jacket.
To Maxwell

With best wishes for Christmas and 1941

from the several Stonehouses (including Robert M.)
NEW ZEALAND CENTENNIAL SURVEYS
X. LETTERS & ART IN NEW ZEALAND
LETTERS AND ART IN NEW ZEALAND
To
E.M. & M.M.
While I have attempted some evaluation of New Zealand letters and art in the following essay, my chief aim has been to bring out their relation to social changes in the years since European discovery. To do this I have drawn on sources, of whatever kind, which seemed useful for my purpose. Both the restricted scope of the essay and its brevity have necessitated a drastic selection of material, but I hope the selection will not appear arbitrary; it was not meant to be. The terms used in the discussion of graphic art (for other branches have had to be ignored) are a 'literary' observer's, not those of an artist or critic of art; for this reason the sections on art may best be regarded as pendants to the larger literary undertaking. Since pictures are primarily meant to be looked at, I regret that it has not been possible, within the limitations of the present series, to provide more illustrations. How-
ever, most of the pictures referred to are in public collections, and some readers will have seen (or may still see) the Centennial Exhibition of New Zealand Art which ranges more widely than was possible in this essay.

Acknowledgements are gratefully made to the staffs of libraries, art galleries, and museums, to Miss E. J. Janes of Wellington, to those critics (three in particular) who have read the essay in manuscript, and to the one without whose initial impetus and unfailing solicitude there would have been no series of Centennial Surveys. In a properly ordered world their names and the names of that other legion who have helped to make this book would be on the title page—if one sufficiently large could be contrived.

E. H. MCCORMICK

WELLINGTON
October 1940
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Katherine Mansfield

Reproduced by courtesy of the artist, Anne Estelle Rice.

Savage of New Zealand

From an engraving of the original by Piron, artist of the d'Entrecasteaux expedition, published in the atlas to Labillardiére's *Relation du Voyage à la Recherche de La Pérouse* (1800).

Etinou

Reproduced from a coloured plate in the atlas to Duperrey's *Voyage autour du Monde* (1826). The artists of the expedition were Lejeune and Chazal.

Mount Egmont

From the original water-colour by Charles Heaphy in the Alexander Turnbull Library.

Taranaki

From a colour print of the original by Christopher Perkins, published in *Art in New Zealand*, September 1931, and reproduced here by permission of Mr H. H. Tombs, Wellington.

Traders Bartering

From J. A. Gilfillan's original pencil sketch in the Hocken Library, Dunedin.
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Interior of a Native Village
From a lithograph of the oil painting by J. A. Gilfillan.

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Milford Sound
Reproduced from John Buchanan's water-colour in the Hocken Library, Dunedin.

Milford Sound
From the water-colour by John Gully, reproduced by permission of the Trustees of the Dunedin Art Gallery.

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Irises
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LETTERS AND ART IN NEW ZEALAND
To claim for themselves an ancient pedigree is a vanity common alike to new families and to new countries. So it is that the modern New Zealander, seeking his spiritual and cultural origins, looks back beyond the year 1840 to that uncertain but distant time when these islands were first settled by Polynesian voyagers. In a country still raw from pioneering it reassures him to think that there stretch behind him, not a meagre hundred years, but centuries during which a gifted people composed poems and speeches, recited their ancient traditions and genealogies, invented their folk-tales, and expressed themselves in varied forms of art. From contemplating this first and longest age of New Zealand art and letters he derives the feeling—perhaps the illusion—that he belongs to a country with an age-long tradition. His imagination kindles as he reflects that here in the slow course of years evolved a language and a culture which have not yet wholly given way before the advance of an alien civilisation.
And even the history of that alien civilisation in New Zealand is of a respectable antiquity. For nearly two centuries before the official date of its birth New Zealand existed as a fragment, though a remote fragment, of the European world; and, what is important here, the records in books and pictures of those two centuries form, with the remains of Maori civilisation, a portion of the New Zealander’s heritage.

From Tasman’s unadorned narrative, it is still possible to recapture something of the feelings of the first Europeans who saw what he described as ‘part of the great Staten Landt’, adding with Dutch caution, ‘though this is not certain’. A bare phrase here and there—‘a fine good land’, ‘high steep cliffs, resembling steeples or sails’—reveals tempered admiration. But the strongest and most permanent emotion roused by that brief visit is shown in the repeated references to the ‘outrageous and detestable crime’, which may have preserved New Zealand’s primitive isolation for more than a century. As if New Zealand were to be dogged by that unfortunate deed, the first view of the country and the people to be published in Europe was the beautifully engraved version of the incident in Valentyn’s compilation (1726) with a companion piece showing giant-like Maoris strutting defiantly on the cliffs of the Three Kings islands.

So for a time New Zealand was known to a few European scholars and geographers as a part of the great southern continent, inhabited by people of large
stature and murderous habits. Then came Cook to present a more accurate but not less interesting picture to the eighteenth-century world. The many descriptions of New Zealand in the literature that grew up round Cook’s three voyages are of interest not only in themselves but because in writing of the country and its ‘Indian’ inhabitants the eighteenth century described itself. It is typical of that social age that one of the immediate results of the first voyage was a ‘Scheme’, devised by Alexander Dalrymple and Benjamin Franklin, ‘to convey the Conveniences of Life, Domestic Animals, Corn, Iron, etc., to New Zealand’ (1771). Motives of profit doubtless had something to do with inspiring that quaint enterprise, but equally powerful was a genuine desire to improve the lot of those unfortunates who lacked the amenities of civilised life. For rather similar reasons the praise of New Zealand scenery in the narratives is nearly always qualified by the reflection that civilisation is lacking. Parkinson, for example, in his Journal (1773), after commenting on the ‘romantic’ appearance of the land, with ‘mountains piled on mountains to an amazing height’ adds, ‘but they seem to be uninhabited.’ George Forster (1777) writes critically: ‘No meadows and lawns are to be met with’ and remarks elsewhere: ‘We looked upon the country at that time, as one of the most beautiful which nature unassisted by art could produce.’

The continual recurrence of the word ‘romantic’
in these narratives reminds us, however, that the age of reason was now in its decline. The lineaments of the noble savage are already discernible in Parkinson's 'Tatued head' which illustrates the Account (1773) of Hawkesworth, while the same artist's 'View of an arched rock', described as 'very romantic', is a reminder of the contemporary English craze for ruins. In the work of later artists and in some of the unofficial narratives of the third voyage romanticism is seen in fuller flood. William Hodges and James Webber, artists of the second and third voyages, saw the Pacific islanders (though not so noticeably the Maoris) as gods and heroes reincarnated, children of Rousseau's primeval paradise. Men of feeling of a different kind were Rickman, the author of a surreptitious Journal (1781), and his American plagiarist, Ledyard. Rickman devotes much space to the recital of a love affair between a young sailor and a Maori girl, wistfully closing his narrative with: 'Love like this is only to be found in the regions of romance.' Ledyard's experience of the Maoris led him to observe that 'They are susceptible of the tender passions, and their women of communicating as well as receiving the most ardent love.'

Cook himself was a son of the eighteenth century, untouched by the softer influences of the new age, unless by its humanitarian sentiment. He remarks dryly on the 'tender passion': 'During our stay in the Sound I observed that this second visit made to the
country, had not mended the morals of the natives of either sex.' He was above all things a man of science and it is well to remember that the expeditions were primarily scientific in their aims. The official accounts, except Hawkesworth's, show few signs of literary artifice, but these quarto volumes with their finely engraved plates contain a profusion of ethnological and other scientific material; they stand as a monument to the enlightenment of both Cook and his age.

Close in the wake of the English navigators came the French, who were to contribute munificently to the records, pictorial and written, of early New Zealand. It was a misfortune that the first French work published on the country should be concerned with an affray even bloodier and apparently more treacherous than the murder of Tasman's men in the previous century. The *Nouveau Voyage à la Mer du Sud* (1783) recounts the slaughter of Marion and his crew—on a voyage charitably promoted to take back to Tahiti a native whom Bougainville had brought to Europe as a human curiosity. To read this book is to realise how bitter was the debate between the followers of Rousseau and the supporters of the old order in France. This was a test case. Here was primitive man living in perfect surroundings, untouched by civilisation. Was he as virtuous as philosophers said? At first it appeared so. The French voyagers seemed to have discovered the most kindly and humane, the most hospitable people on earth. Had
they left soon after their arrival, reflects the author, Crozet, philosophers given to the praise of primitive man would have been overjoyed to see their bookish theorisings confirmed by first-hand accounts. As the massacre proved, primitive man was treacherous, bloodthirsty, cruel. After relating the details of that mysterious incident, Crozet cannot resist gloating over the discomfiture of the philosophes who, knowing nothing of primitive people, idealised them at the expense of those whom they were pleased to call 'artificial' merely 'because education has improved their minds!'

Thus early New Zealand formed a debating ground for that conflict of ideas which, a few years later, was to culminate in the French Revolution. In certain portions of the book too, especially where the hand of its editor, the Abbé Rochon, is noticeable, there is a clear expression of the revolutionary principles of equality and fraternity, contrasting with the reactionary sentiments expressed by Crozet. On the statement that they took possession of the 'island of New Zealand' in the name of the King, he comments: 'We forget that the land where these savages live belongs to them quite as much as our own land to us.' Elsewhere he reckons up the benefits conferred by the voyages, 'so much glorified by Europeans', concluding that the few useful animals, the few seeds left by travellers were but poor compensation for the crimes, always avenged by fresh crimes, for the evil done to
the natives, and for the contagion so widely spread amongst them.

Happily this gloomy, indeed tragic, opening chapter did not set the tone for the record of later French explorations. The visits of d’Entrecasteaux (1793) and Duperrey (1824), though too brief to be of much consequence, at least showed the Maoris to be a kindlier, more dignified people than appeared from Crozet. Through the eyes of Piron, artist of the d’Entrecasteaux expedition, for example, they are seen as heroic beings straight from the canvas of David, while the artists who accompanied Duperrey brought the Maoris down from Olympus to give them the bearing and features of their own nation —strikingly evident in ‘Etinou’, the portrait of a Maori woman endowed with all the chic of the fashionable Parisienne. ‘Etinou’ is, incidentally, only one in the gallery of Gallicised Maoris, for the French navigators, even more than the English, were apt to view primitive peoples through a haze of theory or of national preconceptions.

Duperrey’s visit has a further importance, for it first brought to New Zealand Dumont d’Urville, whose two major expeditions were comparable in their scope with Cook’s. (The published accounts of the voyages surpass Cook’s in their range and in the sumptuousness of their production.) Dumont d’Urville was that rarest of men, the perfect blend of the scholar and the man of action with a liberal
allowance of poetry—good poetry—in his composition. Not the least of his recommendations was his admiration for New Zealand and his interest in its past; indeed he must have been the first European to conceive such a thing as a New Zealand tradition. In the *Voyage de la Corvette l’Astrolabe* (1830-5) he describes the joyful expectation with which the expedition saw before them the wild coast and towering mountains of New Zealand. Here (to paraphrase him slightly), each man felt, as he proudly followed in the path of Tasman, of Cook, of Marion, was a theatre worthy of his researches. And d’Urville’s imagination reached back far beyond historic, or even human times; in an eloquent passage he describes his feelings as he walked through the New Zealand forest at midday, when even the sound of birds was stilled: ‘Passing through these mournful solitudes, one might think oneself transported to that age when Nature, having brought forth the beings of the vegetable kingdom, still awaited the decrees of the eternal power to bring to life the animal kind.’ A page later, in typical nineteenth-century manner, he is peering into a future when flourishing cities will stand on coasts now deserted or peopled only by isolated pas; when ships of every size will plough through now-silent waters; when the academicians of New Zealand will question, or at least laboriously discuss, the narratives of the earliest navigators.

Dumont d’Urville brought to the study of New
PIRON

SAVAGE OF NEW ZEALAND (1793)

LEJEUNE AND CHAZ

ETINOU (1824)
Zealand not only his powers as an imaginative writer and his European ‘sense of the past’ but also gifts as an historian and man of science. Under his editorship was published a collection of the ‘Chronicles of New Zealand’—a comprehensive source-book—compiled, as he explains, for the benefit of ‘those who choose to study the human race in the childhood of civilisation.’ His own attitude towards those ‘children’, as might be expected, was tolerant and sympathetic, and in the account of his last expedition, the *Voyage au Pole Sud* (1842-54), he notes with sorrow that the native virtues he had admired on his earlier visits were lost; in the neighbourhood of the whaling-stations at least a nation of independent warriors had been reduced to a motley tribe of mendicants, clothed in rags. The last of the navigators thus bore witness to changes, some good, many evil, for which he and his predecessors had involuntarily opened the way. With the break-up of the ancient Maori way of life Dumont d’Urville saw the close of one phase in our history and, in May 1840, as he sailed from the Bay of Islands, he left behind him a New Zealand now part of the British Empire and finally committed to a new experiment in civilisation.

*  
The seventy years or so that separate Cook’s first visit from the final expedition of d’Urville saw the gradual infiltration of Europeans following on the
navigators. In the narratives of later voyages there is frequent mention of these forerunners of settlement—whalers, traders, missionaries, and others less reputable—but they possess a small literature of their own which bridges the gap between discovery and active colonisation.

There is a uniformity in the contents of these successive Narratives and Journals such as one finds in the mid-Victorian literature of Darkest Africa, or in the South Seas travel-books of more recent times. Most authors supplied a liberal portion of sensation; it might be an authentic description of a cannibal feast, or a verbatim account, drawn from the chief actors, of the Boyd massacre, or a blood-curdling narrative of murder. A description of tattooing, the process and the result, is generally given, and invariably a picture of the quaint ceremonies of greeting and farewell. Houses, habits and morals, implements, canoes, dress—all are recorded with varying degrees of accuracy, while the more venturesome authors enter into the speculative regions of religion and mythology. A résumé of New Zealand history is often supplied and a vocabulary of the Language of the New Zealanders rendered with all the eccentricity of writers capable of such barbarities of transliteration as ‘Narpooes’ and ‘E. O. Ke-Angha’. Finally comes a survey of the potential wealth of the country and opinions, always favourable, about its suitability for European colonisation.
In their approach to this common material the authors showed great differences, as might be expected from the widely differing motives that drew men to this wild and distant country. The modest and sketchy *Account* (1807) of John Savage and Captain Cruise’s *Journal* (1823) were both results of timber-gathering expeditions from New South Wales, and neither is very far removed from the day-to-day journal of conscientious officialdom. Savage, agreeably surprised on his arrival that a race of known cannibals betrayed ‘no symptom of savage ferocity’, decided on closer acquaintance that these ‘Indians’ were ‘of a very superior order, both in point of personal appearance and intellectual endowments’ —a conclusion supported by his closer study of ‘Moyhanger’, a native taken by him to England to be exhibited in Courts and drawing-rooms as a natural curiosity. In the years that elapsed between Savage and Cruise the Maoris had become only too familiar as a source of labour for visiting ships and as partners in a more degrading commerce. Cruise’s *Journal* has at least the merit of literalness; there is a chapter on the relations between Europeans and Maoris compressed into an entry like this: ‘The biscuit had been a part of their ration for many months, but in consequence of the incalculable quantity of vermin contained in it, had become perfectly useless, except as an article of barter with the natives....’
More interesting and sympathetic is the *Narrative* (1817) of J. L. Nicholas who accompanied Samuel Marsden on his first visit to New Zealand in 1814. When reading Nicholas we are again transported to a world of eighteenth-century ideas and modes of expression. With leisurely magniloquence he unfolds the story of that memorable visit, interspersing his narrative with moral reflections and philosophisings like those which adorn the pages of Hawkesworth and Forster. In spite of his own religious orthodoxy, in spite of the *Boyd* massacre and atrocities enacted before his eyes, Nicholas was still inclined to wonder whether the 'wayward philosopher of Geneva' might not, after all, be right in his opinion that 'the best and kindest affections of the human heart are found only in the man who has neither been born amidst the luxuries, nor educated in the refinements of civilized society.' But that momentary feeling was brushed aside, and Nicholas left New Zealand convinced that the genius of these 'children of genuine sensibility' would be brought out only when they were introduced to the pursuits of 'culture and civilization'.

Except for his occasional dallyings with Rousseauist heresies, Nicholas was in every respect a fitting chronicler of Samuel Marsden, and until the missionary’s scattered writings and manuscripts were collected by Dr J. R. Elder more than a century later, the *Narrative* was the most accessible account of Marsden’s first journey. Marsden too was rooted in the
eighteenth century and, while he expressed himself in more homely fashion than Nicholas, his writings, like his religious views, bear the unmistakable imprint of the age of good sense. When he writes of the Maoris: ‘Their temporal situation must be improved by agriculture and the simple arts in order to lay a permanent foundation for the introduction of Christianity’, we are reminded of Benjamin Franklin and the ‘Scheme for conveying the Conveniences of Life to New Zealand’.

The evangelist of early New Zealand was clearly a man of sound common sense and business acumen; the 580 pages of his *Letters and Journals* (1932) make it equally clear that he was a writer of more than ordinary distinction. There is no conscious striving for literary effect—such artifices would have been scorned by Marsden as instruments of the Prince of Darkness—but the earnest, simple narrative, relieved here and there by a metaphor of scriptural beauty and aptness, is as dramatic and effective as the most skilfully contrived work of literary art. Every stage of the drama is here—the early resolution to free the Maoris from their ‘cruel spiritual bondage’; the obstacles and delays so numerous and persistent that they would have deterred a less resolute man; the ultimate establishment of the mission despite the fact that no clergyman would venture to a country where ‘he could anticipate nothing less than to be killed and eaten by the natives’; the heart-breaking lapses of the
missionaries themselves; then, at length, in salvaged souls and cultivated fields, certain evidence that the enterprise had not been in vain. If there is such a thing as a prose epic, New Zealand literature possesses one in *The Letters and Journals of Samuel Marsden*.

It is a comment on the contradictions and antagonisms in the small European community of pre-colonial New Zealand that the man who stands next to Marsden in the hierarchy of writers (though far below him) presents the least favourable view of the missionaries. In his *Narrative of a Nine Months' Residence* (1832) Augustus Earle never misses a chance of castigating ‘these pious men’, as he terms them, whether for their grudging charity and lack of hospitality, or their self-righteousness, or, worst of crimes, for their obscuring the ‘finest human forms’ under clumsy European clothing. For Earle was an artist and viewed the Maoris rather as subjects for sketch and painting than as souls to be retrieved from the dominion of Satan. He describes the beauty of their naked forms, the picturesque disposition of their forces as they landed from their war-canoes or greeted a visiting party, and their respect for the fine arts, shown in the honour paid to the expert tattooer, ‘Aranghie’—the ‘Sir Thomas Lawrence of the New Zealanders’. Earle, like French artists before him, saw the Maoris as beings of an earlier heroic age—a conception that is beautifully conveyed in his painting, ‘The Wounded Chief Honghi and His Family’, now
in the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington. ‘To me,’ he wrote of the scene, ‘it almost seemed to realize some of the passages of Homer.’ Yet he was no romantic, and having no theoretical axe to grind, he saw not only the heroic side of the people, but also the brutality, the license, and the insecurity of that stage intermediate between the truly primitive and the civilised. Earle was a tolerant, kindly man, blessed with imagination and a sense of fun—qualities that went into the writing of the least pretentious and most delightful book on early New Zealand.

It is easy to imagine the guffaw with which Joel Samuel Polack would have greeted the suggestion that Hongi in any way resembled the heroes of the Odyssey. With all the assurance of ‘the man who knows’, Polack would have dismissed Earle as a mere tourist, a mayfly, while he, J. S. Polack, with six years’ experience behind him—then would have followed a flood of lively reminiscences, filled with hair-raising anecdotes, execrable puns, and malapropisms. He is a picturesque and astonishingly versatile figure, this early New Zealand storekeeper-trader-artist-author, with all the blustering self-confidence that was, he implies, needed for the hazardous pursuit of commerce in the thirties. His two-volume New Zealand: Being a Narrative of Travels and Adventures (1838) is a cyclopaedia of New Zealand up to that date, culled from the most varied sources, written and oral. It recounts the history of New Zealand, beginning with the European
discovery of the Pacific; it describes Polack's own personal experiences among the Maoris; it minutely defines and explains the habits of that people—'the most determined sarcophagi in existence'; it relates the grievances of early European traders; finally it implores, cajoles, and commands Great Britain to colonise these islands. Great Britain was to respond, but with considerable reluctance, and after spending some years abroad Polack returned to New Zealand in the early forties doubtless confirmed in the opinion that largely by his efforts New Zealand had been made safe for settlement—and trade.
Colonial Beginnings

SO MUCH for the remote ancestors of the New Zealand writer and artist—the Maori poet and carver, emerging dimly from antique times; the Europeans of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries, now elevated to a stature almost legendary; the saints and sages and swashbucklers who dared to visit and even settle a New Zealand notorious as the Alsatia of the Pacific. It is true that these men, through their works, have a continuous vitality, that their heirs are those who trouble to seek them out in galleries, libraries, and museums. Yet the fact is that modern New Zealand derives in the direct line not from the culture of the primitive Maori, nor from the spacious civilisation of the eighteenth century, nor from the discordant elements of pre-colonisation days, but from an age not yet distant enough to be glamorous. Our immediate origins go back only one hundred years to early Victorian times.

To the prosperous Englishman of the forties and early fifties, however, it might well have seemed that
no colony — unless perhaps Virginia — had been
founded in a more auspicious age. Britain had now
settled down after Waterloo to thirty years and more
of peace and security. She had freed her slaves, she
had enfranchised her own people—or all that could,
with safety, be enfranchised. And as proof that virtue
brings its reward even in worldly things, her pros-
perity had increased to an amazing degree. Britain,
now the world’s manufactory, poured out goods,
men, money, ships into every quarter of the world
—and with them her language, her theories of
government, her religious ideas, her humanitarianism.

Nor, in spite of her Continental critics with their
‘nation of shopkeepers’ gibe, was early Victorian
Britain lacking in culture. True, the Romantic
writers were dead, or silent, or—witness the aged
Thomas Campbell with his ‘Song’ for the New
Zealand emigrants:

'Steer, helmsman, till you steer our way,
By stars beyond the line;
We go to found a realm, one day,
Like England’s self to shine.'

—feebly echoing the tunes of their youth. But a new
generation of writers had grown up; and, as an
emigrant to the Canterbury settlement in the early
fifties packed up his collection of contemporary
classics, he would find it difficult not to exceed the
space that could reasonably be set aside for luxuries
like books.
Such a man would almost certainly pack into his trunks a collection of verse, for in early Victorian England the profession of poetry was honourable and even on occasions lucrative. There would be, first, the works of Mr Tennyson—Poems, The Princess, and just off the press, In Memoriam, a work that would be pondered over in private during the voyage, read aloud in the family circle, and later memorised in parts and transcribed into the reader’s album. Mr and Mrs Browning would be included, Mrs Browning for even stronger reasons than her husband, for was she not the author of ‘The Cry of the Children’ and the Sonnets from the Portuguese? A discriminating man might bring with him The Strayed Reveller by ‘A’ (said to be Matthew Arnold, son of the headmaster of Rugby), or a copy of The Germ, the paper of some affected young men who called themselves the ‘Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood’ and preached startling new doctrines of art and poetry. A university man might very well have decided to bring with him a copy of Clough’s Bothie of Tober-Na-Vuolich with its playful references to such a visionary emigrant as himself:

‘They are married and gone to New Zealand.
Five hundred pounds in pocket, with books, and two or three pictures,
Tool-box, plough, and the rest, they rounded the Sphere to New Zealand.
There he hewed, and dug; subdued the earth and his spirit;’

Or he might place in some odd corner a slight volume,
Venice, by Alfred Domett, now well established as a settler in New Zealand.

When it came to selecting works of prose the emigrant’s problem would have been one of infinite difficulty. In spite of their bulk, he would be reluctant to leave behind any of the novels of Charles Dickens, who, since emigration was now in the air, in winding up *David Copperfield* had just despatched the Micawber family to the antipodes. Then there was *Vanity Fair*, Thackeray’s masterpiece, completed at last only to be overshadowed by that startling novel, *Jane Eyre*—the work, it now appeared, not of a man, but of a female writer, Charlotte Brontë. If *Jane Eyre* were barred from the family circle, what inexhaustible supplies of fireside reading there were in the works of Captain Marryat, of Bulwer, of Lever, and of Charles Kingsley! And with the thought of long winter nights in the colony, the emigrant would select *Peter Simple*, *The Last of the Barons*, *Charles O’Malley*, *Alton Locke*, and many three-volume favourites.

Equally essential to the library both of the educated settler and of the ambitious mechanic would be a bulky section of serious and improving works. There would be the *Critical and Historical Essays* of Macaulay, indispensable on any early Victorian bookshelf, and, in contrast with Macaulay’s complacent rhetoric, the *Chartism* and *Past and Present* of Carlyle. More than likely John Stuart Mill’s *Political Economy* would find its way into the luggage of many settlers who left
after 1848, and it is not inconceivable that some radical emigrant took with him the Communist Manifesto. (For the age of prosperity and expansion saw the creation of a vast proletariat; it produced not only ‘God’s in His Heaven’, but ‘The Song of the Shirt’.) Finally—if the emigrant’s trunk were not already full to bursting—a few works of religion would have been included; it was not until later that the impact of Darwinism was felt, but the Tractarian controversy raged bitterly and many copies of Tracts for the Times must have been imported to early New Zealand and, in particular, to the Puseyite Canterbury settlement.

These were a few of the seeds of New Zealand culture that might have been brought out by such a settler as James Edward FitzGerald; FitzGerald, indeed, the friend and correspondent of Ruskin, of Charles Kingsley, of Gladstone, and of other eminent Victorians, may be taken as a representative of the men of talent who, bringing with them the ideas and ideals of the Victorian age, did so much to shape the life of early New Zealand and, to some extent, its later development. As Under-Secretary at the British Museum he had seen the rebuilding of that monument to Victorian enlightenment, and he may have discussed with Panizzi plans for its crowning-piece, the great domed reading-room. He would have seen the Palace of Westminster as it slowly took shape, perhaps giving rise in his mind to the Canterbury provincial buildings, later to be built in modest emulation.
With mingled feelings on the point of embarkation, he would have read, or heard, the 'Poetical Offering' of Martin Tupper, who, looking with seer's eye on a dubious future, had been reassured by the departure of the Canterbury pilgrims:

'Even should Britain's decay be down-written
In the dread doom-book that no man may search,
Still shall an Oxford, a London, a Britain,
Gladden the South with a Home and a Church.'

A poet himself, FitzGerald had made his own contribution to the nascent literature of New Zealand in the 'Night-watch Song of the Charlotte Jane'. Here, in his invocation to 'the fathers of our line', is a sample:

'Though their tombs may not receive us,
Far o'er the ocean blue,
Their spirits ne'er shall leave us,
In the land we are going to.'

To this accomplishment he added those of amateur artist, and his painting, 'The Lady Nugent on the High Seas', reproduced in Charlotte Godley's Letters from Early New Zealand (1936), stands out among the few examples of New Zealand emigrant art.

This one man, in fact, illustrates the contradictions, the virtues, the strength, and some of the weaknesses of New Zealand's founders. He had thrown up a congenial post and the certainty of worldly advancement to pursue an ideal to the other side of the world. Genuinely believing that a new and better society might be created, he had urged the legislators of
Canterbury to remember their freedom from ‘the principles, the sentiments, and the traditions’ of Britain, only to be reproached in later years by Sir George Grey for ‘striving to transport the old world in portions to the new’. In political assemblies noted for their oratory he won fame as a speaker—fluent, eloquent, though to the modern taste sometimes over-rhetorical. He led a busy life as an administrator and civil servant, yet he found time for the writing of prose articles that are journalism only because the colony provided facilities for little else. As versifier and painter his qualities are best seen if the ‘Night-watch Song’ is placed beside the *Lady Nugent* sketch. The poem, despite a certain poignancy and the interest it has acquired from old associations, is now irrevocably dated, its sentiments long since outmoded. With the sketch it is very different. The simple, bold lines of the sailing ship, the foreground of swelling sea with the horizon beyond—how fresh to-day, how infinitely more eloquent than the ‘far o’er the ocean blue’ of the poem!

It was in this way and by men like this that the next phase of New Zealand’s history was begun. FitzGerald, Domett, the Wakefields, Grey — as we look back at them over a century or so, it is impossible to withhold our respect, though we sometimes regret the standards and taste, not so much of the men as of their age. We may admire their courage and their high seriousness of purpose, tinged though they seem
in the cold forms of print with the Victorian vice of cant. We may enjoy their prose writings, whether in the journals and letters they wrote with such charm and assiduity, or in their full-dress performances in newspapers, periodicals, books, and even official reports. If our approval of their more ambitious efforts in the Gothic manner must be qualified, we can still look with pleasure on their first unpretentious buildings. With a few exceptions, we can only deplore the badness of their verses, which are, however, redeemed by their sketches and water-colours—though these usually owe less to genius than to a vision unblurred by photography and quickened by fresh surroundings.

When the accounts are cast, our ancestors are seen to have done well by their adopted country. Yet, impatient at the shortness of their lineage and yearning for the fulfilment of a colonial New England, their descendants are sometimes heard to complain unreasonably: ‘Would that they had come a century or two earlier!’
WOULD that they had come a century or two earlier’ to prepare the way in the mid-nineteenth century for a New Zealand Hawthorne and his drama of Calvinist frustration, set, it would be fitting, in the stern hinterland of Otago; for a Melville to interpret mystically that sordid, picturesque, ennobling, barbarous quarter-century of history in the Bay of Islands; for an Emerson to weave his philosophy in the cloisters of Canterbury, or a Thoreau to muse and write—again it would be fitting—on the lake-side at Tutira. . . . The dreams dissolve, and we are left with—what? Nothing remotely comparable with the flowering of New England, it is true, but with an assortment of books, a large collection of sketches, and a vast miscellany of prose and verse that are not discreditable to our ancestors — given the circumstances.

The circumstances—how large and how limiting a part they had in New Zealand’s first two decades as a British colony! Here, in six small settlements, were
gathered together a few thousand people drawn from every quarter of the British Isles and set down, often with scant preparation, in surroundings whose very grandeur held the promise of isolation, physical danger, and hard toil. There were forests to clear, homes to build, farms to break in, exploration and surveying to be undertaken; a native people to be understood and conciliated; constitutions, regulations, laws—all the machinery of men in society—to be fashioned and applied. Then there were painful adjustments to be made by people, some of them deluded seekers after the New Jerusalem, who were forced into a new and utterly uncongenial way of life. Can we wonder that there was no great proliferation of art in these ‘seemal years’? The real question is how so much, relatively, came to be produced.

For there is another side to this picture of struggle and privation. Granted that the ‘six colonies of New Zealand’ were poor and isolated; yet they were in a real sense communities—associations of people welded together into some sort of whole by a common origin, by common aims, and often, it must be admitted, by common grievances. ‘We are,’ opens the manifesto of an early periodical,* ‘a community of brethren, having common objects in view—to reclaim and occupy the waste places of this land, to cultivate the arts and sciences, and the practice and

*Chapman’s New Zealand Monthly Magazine, Literary, Scientific, and Miscellaneous; Auckland, 1862.
extension of the amenities of civilized life.’ In nostalgic moments one wonders whether so clear a statement could have been made in any later period of our history, whether, in fact, Port Nicholson and Nelson and Dunedin in their early years were not, apart from the centres of ancient Maori life, the first and the last genuine communities in New Zealand. What is clear is that the New Zealand of FitzGerald, Domett, Heaphy, Grey, and Fox did provide some of the necessary conditions for the artist and the writer—an interested audience, a sense of direction, and, in a new country and a new people, an inexhaustible theme.

Nor must the liberal rôle of the New Zealand Company be forgotten. The Company, so often reviled by the immigrants and their posterity, was after all instrumental in forming settlements; this much was salvaged from the wreck of the Wakefield scheme, that immigrants were encouraged to gather in groups rather than disperse themselves and so risk the barbarising effects of isolation. It was the Company too that brought here most of the writers and artists, either as settlers or as employees, and provided the materials and indirectly the leisure for the practice of their art. In spite of its errors and sins, for more than a decade and particularly in its early prosperous years, the Company acted as a generous patron of the arts, organising expeditions into the interior, encouraging its servants to record what they saw, publishing the results in handsome books and lavish folios.
For these reasons it is appropriate that a book published under the Company’s auspices and written by a son of Edward Gibbon Wakefield should give the fullest and most illuminating account of the first years of settlement. Edward Jerningham Wakefield saw the foundation of New Zealand from the turning of the first sod. While still a boy of nineteen and attracted, as he says, by the prospects of ‘novelty and adventure’ in the new colony, he had joined the Tory expedition which left England in 1839. He had intended to wait only for the landing of the first settlers, after which he was to embark on one of the returning emigrant ships, but he explains: ‘So interesting did it become to watch the first steps of the infant colony, and so exciting to march among the ranks of its hardy founders, that I was tempted to postpone my return for four years after their arrival.’ The experiences of these four years he set down in *Adventure in New Zealand* (1845).

The book does not belie its title; here is the troubled surface of New Zealand life in the transition period between No Man’s Land and colony described in all its romantic variety. As secretary to his uncle, Colonel William Wakefield, and later as an explorer and negotiator in his own right, Jerningham had unique opportunities for seeing at first hand the events of that exciting and occasionally unfortunate chapter of our history. He met the Cook Strait whalers, with their rigid professional code, their picturesque dress, and
their equally picturesque argot—'grunters' for pigs, 'spuds' for potatoes, 'spreaders' for blankets, 'squeakers' for children; he saw flax-dressers at work and carefully described their elaborate technique; he met missionaries of various persuasions and degrees of piety—one whose manners were 'conciliatory, and essentially those of a gentleman and man of the world', a second bluntly labelled 'land-shark', a third, the saintly Octavius Hadfield, characterised by the profane whalers of Kapiti as 'a missionary, but a gentleman every inch of him'; he saw and described Maoris of every sort and condition from Te Puni, 'a gentleman in every sense of the word' (Wakefield's highest and ever-recurring epithet of praise) to the noisily arrogant Rangihaeata and 'Bloody Jack', clad in 'an old dragoon helmet, and black tail-coat without trousers'.

Wakefield had a novelist's eye for detail, shown when he speaks of the 'bare feet of the Scottish lassies', newly arrived at Port Nicholson, or when he describes the ridiculous ceremony of hoisting the flag over the 'snoring grog-shops' on the beach at Thorndon, while 'two or three people in their night-caps' peeped from their doors and windows. He had too a Victorian novelist's habit of grouping his characters into blacks and whites, villains and heroes, the villains usually being the opponents of the Company, the heroes its friends. And when dilating, sometimes at tedious length, on the squabbles between Government and
Company, he had a novelist’s disregard for fact. But we do not to-day need to go to Wakefield for facts; these have since been recorded by more mature and more objective historians. We can read him for the odd glimpses he provides of the manners and morals of our grandfathers, for his record of fashions in dress and speech long since vanished, for his descriptions of a people and a country still retaining some of their primitive innocence, and for the narrative of journeys and adventures set down with all the youthful gusto which he brought to these experiences.

Gusto is the last word that would be used in describing the *Travels in New Zealand* (1843) of Ernst Dieffenbach, who came with Wakefield as the naturalist and surgeon of the expedition; and indeed similar experiences can rarely have been described by two people of such opposite temperaments and points of view. Wakefield is all animation and colour and youthful prejudice; his book moves with the swiftness of those eager expeditions through the colony. Dieffenbach is sober, rather heavy-handed in narrative, judicial in his views and statements, and possessed of that stability and depth of character which Jerningham so entirely lacked. The difference is well seen in their descriptions of the Cook Strait whalers. Wakefield is the man of sensibility, jotting down his impressions as they crowd upon him—the appearance of the cottages, the laughter of the whalers’ half-caste children, the dignified mien of Dicky Barrett’s wife,
the men at work, calling to his mind Retzsch's grim illustrations to a ballad of Schiller, and less poetical, the 'intolerable' stench of the carcasses on the beach. Dieffenbach also mentions the stench, but passes it off with 'this was disregarded, so great was the interest I felt in the whole process.' He describes the process, adds comments on the morals and racial characteristics of the community, then craves permission to give a short account of 'that interesting and valuable animal—the whale', which he does in exact scientific terms. The one passage is the work of a reporter of genius, the other of a man who was primarily a scientist.

But Dieffenbach was a scientist at a time before science was split into a number of narrow specialisms, and besides recording the exciting natural wonders seen during his travels, he wrote at length and with great understanding of the Maoris, with whom he almost invariably established the most friendly relations. Not being embroiled, like Wakefield, in dubious commercial transactions, he could meet them on common ground and in one passage he deprecates the 'arrogant and ridiculous prejudices which are too frequently characteristic of a European traveller.' He himself was remarkably free from prejudice. Of a tribe met near Tongariro he says: 'they... appeared to be in a very primitive state, which, however, was not, in my opinion, at all to their disadvantage.' Again, in discussing the extermination of native races before the 'civilised' European, he remarks: 'the lion that tears
the deer into pieces is not therefore made of nobler material.' And elsewhere he is quite explicit: 'I am of opinion that man, in his desires, passions, and intellectual faculties, is the same, whatever be the colour of his skin. . . .' To the reader to-day the fragment of Dieffenbach's biography we owe to Hocken has a heightened interest—'Involved in some political movement, he fled [from Germany] to England. . . .'

Without aligning himself with any of the factions of the time, missionary, Company, or Government—he was in fact highly critical of each—Dieffenbach sympathised as a theorist but even more as a man with a native people whose extinction then seemed almost inevitable. He found no comfort in a complacent doctrine of the survival of the fittest, and in an exceedingly wise chapter, 'How to Legislate for the Natives of New Zealand?', he anticipated conclusions we have reached only after bitter and costly experience. Equally perceptive in his own field of the natural sciences, he seems to have been unique in foreseeing the results of bringing alien plants and animals into the colony: 'What a chain of alterations . . . takes place from the introduction of a single animal into a country where it was before unknown!' Such wisdom is rare among colonists, who, if they do not, as Dieffenbach too sweepingly says, devote themselves 'solely to the acquisition of money', are, from necessity and ignorance as much as from greed,
careless of nature's interests and of remote posterity's. It was a misfortune for New Zealand that Dieffenbach did not himself remain as a colonist; after two years he returned to Europe, and his warnings and advice, locked away in two formidable volumes, went unheeded.

A writer of brilliant ability, Wakefield; a man of science of the first rank, Dieffenbach; adding further lustre to the *Tory*’s personnel, the New Zealand Company appointed as draughtsman to the expedition a young artist of rare distinction, Charles Heaphy, who was to extend to New Zealand some of the waning glory of the English landscape school. Draughtsman is a modest term, and we may suppose that nothing more was expected from Heaphy than would be from the official photographer of a modern expedition. He was a conscientious and energetic employee, and from his water-colours in various New Zealand collections (notably the Alexander Turnbull and Hocken libraries) it is possible to trace each successive stage of the Company’s operations from the arrival at Cook Strait and the northern expedition to the exploratory journeys in the South Island. The sketches meet official requirements admirably, indicating topographical details, the nature of vegetation and scenery, the appearance of the natives and their manner of life—everything in fact that an active and intelligent board of directors at the other side of the world might wish to have recorded. But some—most,
indeed—do more than this; they portray experiences of an elusive kind, rarely to be expressed in words—words in fact being the wrong medium, unless they are used by a sensitive poet, and poets, as distinct from versifiers, were few in early New Zealand. Throughout the range of Heaphy’s work you are aware of a man wrestling with the strange contours and colours of a new environment and, moreover, attempting to define the peculiar quality of each part of New Zealand, as he visited it in turn. The magnificent sweep of Cloudy Bay, where sea, hills, and bush unite in one curving harmony; then, in the sub-tropical north, the oily calm of a tidal river overshadowed by dense kauris; and, again in the south, the warm, open Waimea plain, contrasting with the gloom of the upper Buller region which no sunshine can quite dispel—all this was within Heaphy’s compass. Sometimes the work fails, more often than not because his vision is blurred by the softer greens and blues of the English landscape or because he cannot forget the subdued palette of his student days. When he does get away from the conventions of his time, ignoring the requirements of directors and treating a New Zealand subject freely in his own way, the result is a small masterpiece. Such is the beautifully decorative ‘Kakariki, from Ship Cove and Teawaiti’ (1839) and such ‘Mt. Egmont from the southward’, which remains one of the few satisfying
CHARLES HEAPHY: MOUNT EGMONT (c. 1840)

CHRISTOPHER PERKINS: TARANAKI (1931)
paintings of that inspiration—and snare—for New Zealand artists.

Although he was the best, Heaphy was only one of numerous artists in early colonial New Zealand. There was Charles Meryon, who, while stationed at Akaroa in the Rhin during the early forties, made pencil sketches which he later used as the basis of etchings. There were surveyors—Brees, Mein Smith, Kettle, Barnicoat—who were draughtsmen by occupation and often artists by instinct. There were settlers or officials, like Fox, Domett, Edward Shortland, and John Saxton, who illustrated their diaries and reports by water-colours and drawings. Among the educated settlers, at least, it was the exceptional man who did not sketch, and paintings, usually water-colours, survive in large numbers from those pre-camera days. Alive to the value of such work in making New Zealand known and attracting fresh emigrants, in 1845 the Company arranged for the publication of a selection as *Illustrations to 'Adventure in New Zealand'*. This magnificent folio, now a collectors' prize, contains a delightful series of glimpses into the life of the Company settlements. Here is Port Nicholson in 1842—in the foreground a group of Maoris and settlers, the latter in Victorian topper and frock-coat; a few frail buildings at the water's edge; beyond them the immense harbour and stretching to the horizon rugged hills and mountains still covered in bush. Another page unfolds a lively panorama of Nelson,
where settlers busy themselves with axe and saw and theodolite, while women wash the family linen and children eat, picnic fashion, off cabin-trunks. A page or two farther on we find a scene of hunting on the ‘Plain of the Ruamahanga’, romantically conceived and no doubt meant to appeal to the adventure-loving youth of England. Here too is the infant settlement of New Plymouth with its gabled cottages set down incongruously in the face of sublime nature and here the significant little caption, ‘Native Pa now Removed’. To complete the series there are the exquisitely coloured lithographs of New Zealand flora—the titoki, the tawa, the tutu, the rata, and finally the New Zealand flax, here inspiring delicate art but more often in those days commercial ambitions, sadly ill-founded.

For the most part official Company art—or as much as was thought suitable for publication—showed only the robust or romantic sides of colonisation. Not every immigrant, however, set to work with the cheerful zest of the Nelson settlers or found life as exhilarating as the huntsman on the Ruamahanga. There were many sensitive spirits to whom the trials of pioneering and the shock of alien surroundings must have been all but annihilating. One of these was William Swainson, F.R.S.,* who settled at the Hutt in 1841. ‘He was utterly unsuited for life in a young colony’,

*To be distinguished from William Swainson, attorney-general, who also arrived in New Zealand in 1841.
runs a biographical note, and a fine collection of his pencil drawings now in the National Art Gallery, Wellington, invites interpretation in the light of that statement. No other artist, not even Heaphy, suggests so eloquently the splendid, though intimidating, grandeur of the scene which met the first settlers, and few artists have since approached his power of depicting, often with considerable artifice, the combination of strength and grace which characterises the New Zealand bush. In one typical sketch he shows a tree-fern delicately poised in the centre of the picture, the horizontal lines of its foliage contrasting with the vertical bole of a large forest tree, while the slimness of its stem is accentuated by a massive trunk in the foreground. In another a vast tree soars up to infinity, at the base a manikin of a Maori, pointing the eternal moral of man's insignificance before nature—a moral underlined again and again when he introduces English buildings and animals into his sketches. The cottages and the cows appear not only exotic but impudent against their background of native bush and shrub; you feel that man, having cleared his patch of wilderness, is there only on sufferance, and so, surely, must the Swainsons of the forties have felt.

It was only rarely that Swainson turned his pencil to Maori subjects, though he left one impressive sketch of native decay in the 'Outside of the Old
Wakainae Pah' (1842). Fortunately for the completeness of New Zealand pioneer art, in the same year as Swainson a Scottish settler arrived at Wellington, bringing in his luggage two partly filled sketch-books and other materials of his profession—for he had been a teacher of drawing in Glasgow and thus, unlike most pioneer artists, had some claim to professional status. His name was James Alexander Gilfillan and he was to devote himself as carefully to delineating the native people of New Zealand as Swainson did to its native covering.

The sketch-books are of particular interest, for they include examples of Gilfillan's earlier work, when as a young naval officer in the East he sketched a pagoda or a busy scene on a Chinese river, or when, on his return to Scotland, he picked out a castle or a pleasant rural scene, with the intention probably of working them up later on in oils or water-colours. These are accomplished sketches, showing signs of careful draughtsmanship and an eye for the picturesque, but little more. After the arrival in New Zealand, however, the work takes on a new character, gains fresh vitality. Here is an artist for whom new vistas have opened. Impressions are many, time is short (there is no place in the colony for professional artists, and he has taken up a section in the Whanganui district), so in sketch after sketch he strives to give form to this fascinating new life and these fascinating new people. The features of the natives elude him,
and in dozens of sketches he trains himself to see them as Maoris, not merely as darker-skinned Europeans. Probably for the first time in his life he sees unashamed nakedness, and he roughs out a series of nudes, remarkable even in pencil for their sensuous beauty. But above all he is fascinated by the Maori in his social life—as he gossips contentedly in the pa, smoking a pipe, fondling a baby or—as likely as not—a pet pig, or as he sets off in his canoe on a river excursion, or as he indulges in that exciting sport, bargaining his melons and pigs away for the cloth and the tobacco of the pakeha. These sketch-books—now among the chief treasures of the Hocken Library—express as it can be seen nowhere else the care-free security of Maori existence in the few halcyon years when the pakeha was blessed by warring tribes as a bringer of peace and bodily comforts. With growing suspicion of European intentions there was to be a change of heart, of which, ironically and tragically, the Gilfillans were early victims, and most of the sketches were elaborated only after the artist, bereft of wife and four of his children, had sought in Australia refuge from the savagery of New Zealand. But the impression of a kindly, sociable, and at times dignified, people was not effaced, and on at least two occasions during his remaining years as an artist in Australia Gilfillan drew on the material of the sketch-books, once for the 'Interior of a Native Village or Pa in New Zealand',
known to us now only from lithographic reproductions, and again for the ‘Native Council of War’ (1853) which hangs in the gallery of the Hocken Library. With a sense of the drama in homely detail that points forward to Frith and qualities both as artist and as humorist that recall Breughel, Gilfillan has packed into the ‘Interior’ a volume of social history. There, we feel as we look at the lithograph, is the Maori of the forties, still retaining in most of their essentials his ancient way of life and his pagan outlook, while drawing on the new civilisation, very much at random, for baubles and conveniences. The elaborately carved houses, the stockade, the elders in their flowing mats, the flax-plaiters, the native dogs—these exist as they did centuries before; and into this ancient framework, with little incongruity, have been introduced the iron pot, the tomahawk, rakish oddments of European dress, pipes, melons, a draughtsboard, and, as much in evidence as pet and as article of food, the ‘Captain Cooker’. It is a picture of astonishing vitality and astonishing harmony, set down by one who had learned to accept the Maori and the Maori way of life in all their apparent contradictions of old and new, beauty and squalor, barbarity and refinement. ‘The Council of War’ is a more academic piece, still in spite of the ravages of almost ninety years highly impressive. The figures of the natives and their canoes are here dwarfed by their background of trees and sky whose treatment suggests that
J. A. GILFILLAN: TRADERS BARTERING (c. 1846)
Gilfillan had studied the early-nineteenth-century masters. He had, T. W. Downes informs us, met Raeburn, who 'helped him largely in his art work.' Whatever the influences may have been, the sketch-books show plainly enough that he was a trained and sophisticated painter, highly skilled in composition. His 'Traders bartering with the Up-River Natives', with its careful grouping of the figures and its ingenious use of trade-cloth to bind the picture together, would have made a decorative oil painting, while the cleverly designed 'Natives setting out on an expedition' has the necessary elements for a fine mural.

The incompleteness of Gilfillan's work combined with the clear evidence of his talent provokes conjecture. What would have been the ultimate form of these compositions so finely adumbrated in the sketch-books? How would that talent have found expression had it been granted even a few more years to acclimatise itself? The questions are futile. Very different is the case of another artist of the forties, George French Angas, Gilfillan's only possible rival as a painter of the Maoris in early colonial New Zealand. An unattached young man of fortune, Angas had all the opportunities denied to Gilfillan; he relates casually that 'one evening I took it in my head to visit New Zealand', and having the leisure and the means to travel through the North Island he succeeded in amassing innumerable drawings which were in due course transformed into coloured lithographs and
magnificently published in 1847, under royal and aristocratic patronage, as *The New Zealanders*.

In *Savage Life and Scenes* (1847) Angas describes the origin of his visit. A friend had shown him some beautifully ornamented weapons bought from the Maoris, and the young artist, entranced by their exquisite workmanship, went to bed that evening to dream of ‘native “pahs” and stately tattooed chiefs.’ The pas and the stately chiefs, he discovered on his arrival in New Zealand, were indeed fast becoming the substance of dreams, and, moved by the melancholy picture of decay, he resolved ‘to preserve memorials of the skill and ingenuity of a race of savages, who themselves ere long may pass away, and become, like their houses, matters of history. . . .’ It was thus very much in the spirit of the antiquarian that he went about the country, carefully recording tombs, storehouses, ‘colossal tiki’, ornaments, implements, canoes, modes of salutation, ceremonies, dances, and a multitude of the still-surviving ‘stately chiefs’ with their wives, children, and slaves. In search of mementos, human and material, he made long journeys into remote parts of the island, meeting always with the utmost friendliness from the natives. ‘My mission amongst them,’ he explains, ‘was one of peace. I did not covet their land; and my coming from Europe for the purpose of representing their chiefs and their country was considered by them as a compliment.’ The work, so conscientiously done, has earned
...e gratitude of all students of the Maori, and it is perhaps unfair to complain because it does not do more—because his Maoris are wax-works, grotesquely ugly or hopelessly sentimentalised, mere lay figures for the display of woven mats, and not the living people of Gilfillan. The fact is that, scrupulous draughtsman as he was, Angas at his best was an artist of only moderate ability; on every other page of Savage Life and Scenes there is a glimpse of Maori life in all its human complexity, but that is a conception which rarely breaks through into the stiff, carefully composed portraits of The New Zealanders. What warmth and life there are come from a fount of sentiment, unmistakably Victorian. Those cherubic infants, those languishing maidens spring from the same source as the verses which Angas composed on an incident of one of his journeys:

'Beside the dark Waikato's stream,
That mother watched her dying child;
Brooding, as one in fitful dream,
With mingled hopes and fancies wild.'

The era of the noble savage is now virtually ended (though as late as 1852 he appears in Commander R. A. Oliver's Sketches in New Zealand), and Angas has a place in history as the first sentimentaliser of the Maori on a grand scale.

At the same time, or a little later, as the result of more intimate knowledge of the people among officials and missionaries, it was becoming possible to
form a more balanced appreciation of their culture. In 1854 Edward Shortland published the first edition of his misnamed *Traditions and Superstitions of the New Zealanders*, a work that continued the scientific study of the Maoris begun by the navigators, as it anticipated the methods and many of the conclusions of modern anthropology. This book and his less interesting *Southern Districts* (1851) are evidence of a highly cultivated mind which ranged easily and soberly over the whole field of Maori life, analysing, recording, describing, but rarely condemning in the lofty manner of so many nineteenth-century writers. As far as possible, he attempted to meet the natives on their own ground and to place the details he recorded in their living context. ‘I particularly instructed my informant,’ he writes, ‘to tell his tale as if he were relating it to his own people, and to use the same words that he would use if he were relating similar tales to them when assembled in a sacred house.’ As intelligent as he was sympathetic, his keenly analytical mind probed the confusion on which so much prejudice is based. ‘The term savage . . . is very indefinite in actual signification,’ he remarks and goes on to point out that there is ‘as great a distinction between the highest and lowest states of savage condition, as between the highest and lowest states of civilization.’ Shortland’s contemporary, the missionary Richard Taylor, was rather more prone to condemn, and further to indulge in theorisings which would attri-
bute to the Maoris an origin in the lost tribes of Israel. But moralisings and fanciful speculations apart, his *Te Ika a Maui* (1855) revealed an interest in mythology rare among missionaries (native traditions, Shortland noted, were usually dismissed by them as emanating from 'the great enemy of mankind') as well as a genuine understanding of many native institutions. For example, his definition of *tapu* as 'a religious observance, established for political purposes' could scarcely be bettered, and he showed a truer appreciation of its function than did Shortland.

The work of such men would, one might imagine, have swept away for ever crude misconceptions about the Maoris, and throughout the fifties their testimony was powerfully reinforced by the superb collections which Sir George Grey issued to the world. The people who had conceived and perpetuated the contents of the *Mythology and Traditions of the New Zealanders* (1854)* were clearly neither rude barbarians nor, on the other hand, guileless children of nature. The account of the primal parents, Rangi and Papa, the revolt of their children, and the final triumph of their last-born, Tu-matuenga, fierce man, formed a myth of creation lacking neither in sublimity nor in logic—though the logic, it is true, was that of a non-scientific age and a non-European system of thought. Then came the myths of the demi-gods—

*English translations of most of the legends are contained in the frequently republished *Polynesian Mythology.*
Tawhaki, Rupe, Tinirau, Rata, but supreme amongst them Maui, personification of all the admired qualities of a race, a hero whose end, part tragic, part farcical, part obscene, symbolised the story of man’s eternal war with death and man’s eternal defeat: ‘And we have this proverb, “Men make heirs, but death carries them off.” ’ Next were the traditions that kept alive the memory of an ancient homeland and the circumstances of the migration to Aotearoa. Here the Maori historian was not afraid to mingle the elements of low farce and epic in something like their due proportions. It was no Helen who launched the fleet on its journey to Aotearoa, but Toi’, burdened with the fruits of crime, the pet dog he had devoured: ‘the dog howled in the belly of Toi’, “Ow!” . . . Then Toi’ held his mouth as close as ever he could, but the dog still kept on howling in his inside.’ Thus from trivial causes sprang war and strife, until a returning voyager told of the ‘beauty of this country of Aoteara’, and some of the war-weary determined to migrate, bearing with them the noble words of a sage: ‘Depart, and dwell in peace with all, leave war and strife behind you here. Depart, and dwell in peace.’ The canoe voyages, as befitted their importance, were commemorated in a cycle of legends, replete with miraculous incidents and Herculean feats, for the canoe ancestors were still of heroic mould: ‘These men were giants: Tama-tekapua was nine feet high, Rua’ was eleven feet high. There have been no men since that time as tall as those
heroes.' Then came the legends, half fiction, half tradition, with which the nakedness of Aotearoa itself had been clothed—the complicated adventures of Paoa, a kind of Maori Humphrey Clinker, the romantic tale of Hinemoa and Tutanekai, the story of the rival sorcerers, Kiki of the Waikato and Tamure of Kawhia, and others equally entertaining.

Here was the coherent record of a people imaginative, not incurious about the nature of things, and above all endowed with a profound feeling for their own past. It should have gained for them interest and respect, but on his own showing its significance was lost even on Grey himself. In a preface to the collection he elaborately explains that he gathered the traditions to aid him in his official dealings with the Maoris and from the 'same sense of duty' published them for the benefit of others 'whose duty it may be hereafter to deal with the natives....' The mingling of the sublime, the miraculous, and the mundane was evidently not to his taste, and, with the exception of the Hinemoa legend, he dismissed the collection as 'puerile'. He did, however, go so far as to admit that 'the native races who believed in these traditions or superstitions are in no way deficient in intellect....'

Scholarship has had many unconscious benefactors, and we need not reproach Grey for his prejudices since they do not seem to have led to any serious distortion of his material. As far as one with no first-hand knowledge of the Maori language can judge,
his translations are reasonably close to the originals; the language is fairly simple, the construction and idiom are Maori rather than European (for this Grey offers a half apology), while for two of his collections—the Traditions and the Proverbial and Popular Sayings of the Ancestors of the New Zealand Race (1857) — he anticipated the wishes of future scholars by publishing both originals and translations; the third, the Poems, Traditions, and Chants of the Maories (1853), he published only in Maori, wisely perhaps, since the qualities of Maori poetry are such as to defy translation: the splendid hyperboles tend to emerge in English as mere bombast; the imagery, which came naturally to the Maori mind, is uncomfortably reminiscent of a later school of New Zealand poetry; and an elaborate apparatus of foot-notes and verbal explanations is not much help in understanding, mentally and emotionally, the many local and mythological references. Even in the time of Shortland and Grey the subtler kinds of native poetry were little more than relics for the archaeologist.

The history of the Maori people had now been placed on record, and as the colony’s first two crowded decades drew to their close, New Zealand was to rise to the dignity of a full-length history in two volumes based on sources that included ‘ninety volumes, two hundred pamphlets, and nearly a hundredweight of parliamentary papers’. The hero of this feat of documentary digestion was a military
surgeon, Arthur S. Thomson, who spent eleven years in New Zealand attached to the 58th Regiment and on his return to England published *The Story of New Zealand: Past and Present—Savage and Civilized* (1859). Equipped as he was with the urbanity and learning of a Dumont d’Urville, the scientific thoroughness of a Shortland, the liveliness of a Wakefield, and unparalleled industry, no man could have been better qualified than Thomson to survey the accumulation of writings on New Zealand and to weave the scattered strands into a connected whole. The *Story* is comprehensive, progressing by logical stages from a description of the natural environment and the history and customs of the natives to a full account of European discovery and settlement. Based though it is on a multitude of sources, it is no formless compilation; every section bears upon it the impress of an independent mind—even the chapter on natural history, which is enlivened by references to the ‘sentimental settlers’ who ‘designate New Zealand the Britain of the southern hemisphere’ and by sensitive descriptions of the native forest that are the nearest prose equivalents to the work of Heaphy and Swainson. In the history of the post-Waitangi years, besides steering a way through the complex events of politics, native affairs, and government, he found space to record fascinating trifles of social history. Each settlement, he notes, acquired its distinguishing epithet: ‘thus there was an Auckland cove, a Wellington
swell, a Nelson snob, a Taranaki exquisite, an Otago cockney, and a Canterbury pilgrim.’ Acutely aware of marked colonial tendencies, he observed: ‘children reared in the colony possessed little grace and no refinement’, and in a more familiar passage: ‘Ditchers are more esteemed than poets, and those sciences alone are thought worth attention which confer immediate benefit.’ But critical as he was of the present, Thomson did not deny himself the Pisgah sight which was already established as a convention of New Zealand writing; in the ultimate union of the two New Zealand peoples he saw the realisation of Gibbon’s ‘once visionary hope’, that ‘the Hume of the Southern Hemisphere’ would ‘spring from among the cannibal races of New Zealand.’

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Thus New Zealand’s first historian, invoking the names of European literature and addressing an audience beyond the confines of ‘England’s remotest colony’—the phrase is his. And indeed the direction as well as the manner of the invocation were habitual with the writers of those years. Those who wrote books did so not for the benefit of their fellow-colonists, but for a public at ‘Home’—whether officials of the Colonial Office, or common readers, in search of information spiced with adventure, or scholars, or the vague but important class of ‘intending emigrants’. But besides these books published in
England for an English audience, there was a literature (more accurately a mass of printed matter) which, if not indigenous, was produced for consumption in the colony itself. There were the newspapers, ground forth in the colony’s earliest days—in its pre-natal days, in fact, and on one occasion with the aid of a mangle—the newspapers, with their violent political quarrels and their rich invective. Then, demanding more serious admiration, there were the brief-lived quarterlies and magazines, founded in home-sick emulation of the Edinburgh and Blackwood’s to debate solemnly the issues of the day. Last, there was colonial verse, finding a home in advertising sheets, in meagre pamphlets, even on occasions in official gazettes. This begrimèd exotic, imprinted nevertheless with thoughts and feelings seen nowhere else, is worth a more than casual glance.

For, in spite of Thomson’s epigram—‘Ditchers are more esteemed than poets’—the art of versification was by no means neglected in early colonial New Zealand. On the contrary the antipodean soil was to prove as congenial to the Victorian habit of poeticising as to those imported weeds which alarmed the settlers by their monstrous growth. Many of the newspapers made a regular and prominent feature of their ‘Poets’ Corner’, while some even employed or patronised an official versifier, who turned out topical verses on suitable occasions, and in the intervals supplied the pioneer demand for sentiment on such themes as ‘The

The more official kinds of verse were generally concerned with social activities—anniversary celebrations, funerals, ceremonies at the opening of public buildings, and the less solemn gatherings that went under the generic name of ‘social’. In the Nelson settlement a public hall was opened, and to mark this point in the community’s history a ‘Poetical Address’ was composed and recited by the poet himself at the ceremony:

‘Our hall is up. Its outside walls are plain—
But plain men built them.’

At a social a poet-entertainer would often sing his original verses, and, like the popular comedian of a past age, call on the audience to join in the chorus. Hocken remarks of the acknowledged laureate of the Otago settlement: ‘Barr was a general favourite. . . . At a gathering he was pretty sure to come down and sing one or two of his new compositions for the good of the company.’ A rather similar figure, though itinerant in his habits, was C. J. Martin, whose verses were collected under the title of Martin’s Locals. These ‘locals’, as their name suggests, were rough verses improvised for a special occasion, exploiting the resources of colonial slang, and introducing more or less recondite allusions to local celebrities and events. At their best they show a facility in rhyming and a
zest in the manipulation of words that are evidence of some intellectual alertness. But they were written for the moment and essentially for a local audience; for us they have lost their point; the pioneer idiom (‘top-sawyer’, ‘fleece’, ‘new-chum’) has been long superseded; they are survivals from an age rougher but more vigorous than our own.

The talent of the improvisator lay in his ability to detect and express some passing phase of life in the settlement or to mimic a prominent settler and exaggerate his idiosyncrasies. Equally effective for this purpose was the art of caricature which also flourished in the lively social atmosphere of the early settlements. Examples of this work may be found in a dozen or so colonial versions of Punch, but the earliest and best caricatures are those by James Brown of Otago, now in the Hocken Library. These sketches present a fascinating picture of life in the Scottish settlement. The arrival of the first settlers, the farcical progress of an election, jokes and scandals of early Dunedin, portraits, lively but irreverent, of local nabobs—all these have been placed on record by one who for a tiny settlement held a place that is now occupied in a far wider and more troubled sphere by Brown’s fellow-townsman, David Low.

The key to many early caricatures, as well as to the ‘locals’, is now lost, but even so it is possible to realise how effective an outlet they were for the colonists’ feelings about their lives and themselves. Like the
celebrators of anniversaries and public occasions, versifiers and caricaturists were fostering and expressing what may be called the ‘sense of community’—a feeling of cohesion among individuals, a consciousness of similar origins and ambitions.

In the work of William Golder, a Scottish settler in the Hutt valley, this function becomes explicit. One of his rambling prefaces expresses the hope that his verses may ‘endear our adopted country the more to the bosom of the bona fide settler; as such in days of yore, has often induced a people to take a firmer hold of their country . . . in making them the more connected as a people’. A poetaster of large ambitions and unequalled verbosity, for twenty years Golder issued to the ‘settlers and gentry’ of Port Nicholson a series of verse collections and narrative poems, epic in their scope and proportions, that ranged from *The New Zealand Minstrelsy* in 1851 (‘a tribute to the early settlers of our Colony’) to *The Philosophy of Love* in 1871. Of his various pamphlets, with their faint type, their elaborately worded title-pages, and amateurish format, only one, *The Pigeons’ Parliament* (1854), has to-day any but a derisory interest. Intended as a satire in the traditional manner, *The Pigeons’ Parliament* gives a pungent record of colonial life as it appeared to one of ‘the industrious poor’ (to use Golder’s own phrase) with that itch for self-improvement not uncommon in his class and his time. We note the rough and often shrewdly drawn portraits of prominent colonists,
while the details of some obscure incident dramatically spring to life, as in these exhilarating lines describing a threat of native invasion:

‘And sweating sawyers leave the saw,
And shoulder arms to enforce the law;
Hoping the job might never cease,—
“Long live the wars! a fig for peace!”
So long’s no skirmish happens here
But fing’ring pay and keeping cheer.’

But an extract, since it draws attention to the obvious imperfections of the separate parts, does less than justice to this rough ballad. It is, indeed, in the real sense a popular ballad with all the qualities of its kind—vigour, broad humour, crudeness of versification and expression, topical and local appeal, and, by virtue of its spontaneity, a total effect that obscures the glaring defects of its parts. (And Golder carried on the ballad-monger’s tradition by canvassing personally for subscribers, hawking his books about for sale, and in the case of a later book, printing it himself.)

This doggerel epic has, above all, a vitality that one expects and so rarely finds in the literature of a ‘new country’ (outworn and misleading phrase), a vitality that is expressed in occasional rhythms, in the ideas original to the point of absurdity, in the lively words and images that Golder’s fancy throws upon the page.

To contrast with the formless exuberance of Golder’s work, there are the neat verses of John Barr of Craigielea, collected in his Poems and Songs,
Descriptive and Satirical which was published in Edinburgh in 1861 with the help of a group of patrons. Barr too was a Scot, but more wisely than the bard of Port Nicholson he seldom ventured beyond the limits prescribed by his own vernacular and its verse tradition. This was his main source of strength, and it was an advantage that the Otago settlement in its earlier years sufficiently resembled a Scottish community for a genuine continuation of the vernacular tradition to be possible; it was small, comparatively shut off from the rest of New Zealand, and dominated by Scottish settlers whose patriotic and religious fervour had, through exile, become the more intense. Here was a microcosm of Scottish society clinging tenaciously to old customs and speech which were, nevertheless, changing under the pressure of New Zealand conditions. The contrast between the traditional ways on one hand and the abhorrent colonial tendencies on the other gave ample scope for the social satirist, and it was as such that Barr, like the caricaturist Brown, excelled.

A recurrent object of his criticism is the colonial preoccupation with money and material things to the detriment of the soul and the mind. And true to a common vernacular convention, the embodiment of a particular vice is very often a woman. The close of a piece of invective aimed at an avaricious shrew illustrates this as well as a frequent device of his verse, the
expansion of an English expression by a more vivid and concrete phrase in dialect:

‘There are some folks get wealth, and it brings them a curse,
For they worship a God that’s wrapped up in a purse:
You’re a perfect skinflint, and a puir scant-the-bowl;
O woman! be wise, and think mair of your soul.’

Often he makes his effect by means of simple irony, as when a Scottish Polonia advises her son on the choice of a wife:

‘Get ane can drub through dub and mire,
Wi’ muckle buits and tacket;

And Jock, my man, when ye have weans,
Ne’er fash wi’ education;
But pack them off to herd the kye,
Or to some shepherd’s station.’

His language was well adapted to describe pioneer activities and had power to assimilate the common terms of the settler’s vocabulary. Lines like the following have an almost muscular quality, a suggestion of tension and effort that admirably represents the movements described:

‘For either I’m mawin’, or thrashin’, or sawin’,
Or grubbin’ the hills wi’ the ferns covered fairly.
Grub away, tug away, toil till you’re weary,
Haul oot the toot roots and everything near ye.’

It was clearly enough a modest talent which saw the light in Otago’s first years. Yet it may not be altogether fanciful to see in Barr’s small success the
potentialities of some more considerable achievement. If the isolation of Otago had been preserved, if Barr had been not the first and last but the father of a line of vernacular poets, would a local culture have taken root in the south? The question is unanswerable, for Barr’s small book might well have arrived in Otago with a shipload of prospectors attracted by the discovery of gold. Overnight the narrow, intense life of the small Scottish community was transformed, the possibility of independent growth denied. Barr founded no tradition, and when his medium was used by later poets, at its best it could be only a literary importation, mellifluous, quaint, but sterile, as in Jessie Mackay:

‘The hand is to the plough an’ the e’e is to the trail;
The river-boatie dances wi’ her heid to the gale’.

Nor were the other settlements exempt from similar change. Whether from gold discoveries, or Maori wars, or some other concomitant of ‘progress’, during the next two decades any signs of regional or local development were decisively checked. New Englands were not founded in the mid-nineteenth century, and by the end of the next period Otago was to have produced not successors to the rustic John Barr but the ominous figure of Julius Vogel.
Opening Up

If a person and a turning-point were needed to mark a new phase in New Zealand history, they might be found in Samuel Butler and in January 1860, the date of his arrival in Canterbury. Here was a young man who, like FitzGerald, had graduated from Cambridge, painted and versified and wrote, and sought in 'England's remotest colony' escape from the irksome restraints of the old world. But by 1860 the era of the 'pilgrims' was ended. Men no longer came to New Zealand burdened with grandiose theories or self-dedicated to the building of ideal states. A new spirit was abroad, a spirit that is described — and revealed—in A First Year in Canterbury Settlement (1863). 'New Zealand,' wrote Butler, 'seems far better adapted to develop and maintain in health the physical than the intellectual nature. The fact is, people here are busy making money; that is the inducement which led them to come in the first instance, and they show their sense by devoting their energies to the work.'

The fact is, it might be added, that though so
exceptional a colonist, Butler was in some respects a representative of the new men who were to rise to wealth and influence in the next few decades. With its accounts of the systematic search for unoccupied lands, its shrewd calculation of ways and means, its intense preoccupation with profit and investment, *A First Year* shows clearly enough that Butler was not uncomfortably at odds with this money-getting society. True, as he often testifies, the pursuit of wealth went on in a setting where the end might well be forgotten in the magnificence of the scene. ‘The mountains were pale as ghosts’; ‘the scenery is quite equal in grandeur to that of Switzerland’; ‘I was struck almost breathless by the wonderful mountain that burst on my sight’—the letters are studded with phrases like these, though to the last one Butler adds: ‘A mountain here is only beautiful if it has good grass on it. . . . If it is good for sheep, it is beautiful, magnificent, and all the rest; if not, it is not worth looking at.’

‘Good for sheep’—this was the final criterion. Yet, indifferent to their sublime surroundings as they might appear, New Zealand men and New Zealand society had qualities that Butler in his search for emancipation could only approve—the freedom from ‘much nonsense in the old country’, the comparative lack of conventionalism and formality, the absence of sectarianism, and the ‘healthy, sensible tone in conversation’. ‘But,’ he concluded, in a tone of mild criticism,
'it does not do to speak about John Sebastian Bach's
Fugues, or pre-Raphaelite pictures.'

It is a pleasant and not uncritical picture of life in
Canterbury and one which, with modifications,
would have fitted the greater part of the colony
between the sixties and the nineties. During these
years the North Island, bush-covered and inter-
mittently harassed by Maori wars, lost its ascendancy
to the South where, through the agency of gold and
an expanding pastoral industry, settlement was pushed
back from the coastal nuclei formed in the first two
decades to the mountainous limits of the interior.
New Zealand's centre of gravity shifted outwards; its
social life, concentrated to a far smaller extent in the
original settlements, now spread out amongst farms
and sheep stations, goldfields and sawmills, and for
briefer intervals amongst militia posts and military
camps. With this change came a corresponding
change in the people themselves. The Company
settlers, the 'old identity', found themselves swamped
by men of a different type, a 'new iniquity' hetero-
genously composed of squatters, shearers, gold-
miners, volunteers, and professional soldiers.

Campaigns are not recorded by an army on the
march; the most that soldiers can be expected to
contribute are materials for the historian—the plan of
battle, the official despatch, the personal letter hastily
scrawled between engagements. This 'opening up'
period of New Zealand history, even its more pacific
aspects, bore some resemblance to a military campaign, and its prose literature is best described as source material for an historian. The letters of a settler were gathered and published by parents or friends; a soldier or a squatter kept a diary which in the leisure of English retirement was refurbished for publication; a vicar’s wife, a governess, a school-teacher, a housewife, impelled by those strange motives which lie behind the writing of fiction, poured out her heart by candle-light and, through some freak of chance, found a publisher. These, in the main, were the circumstances, in which New Zealand experience for a generation was set on record. It is not surprising that the results, with few exceptions, are fragmentary, unsatisfying, often boring. Where is the colour of that life, where the humour, where the tussle between man and man and the struggle with nature? we ask, as we trudge through dreary (and often inaccurate) réchauffés of New Zealand history, accounts of the moa, pointless anecdotes, fatuous ‘adventures’. The probability is, we conclude, that the fitting transcript of that period never reached the printing press. It may have passed with the cycles of yarns that circulated amongst the restless army of ‘travelling labour’. It may have been dissipated in the warmth of camp fires or in the shearers’ quarters on summer evenings. It may have been locked in minds unschooled and inarticulate.

Of published literature the largest and perhaps the
most interesting group is that of the novels and memoirs which have as their background the farming industry, the most stable feature of this troubled landscape. The majority of such books are cut to a relatively constant pattern, conforming to that of most settlers’ lives—emigration, settlement, experiences in remote country districts, material success or failure—a formula elastic enough to include a number of distinct types and a diversity of experience. Pride of place must be given to the feminine and domestic type, and not merely on grounds of chronology, for, as Lady Barker noted, ‘a lady’s influence’ in the colony was ‘very great’. ‘She represents refinement and culture . . . and her footsteps on a new soil such as this should be marked by a trail of light.’

It was an admonition already well heeded by New Zealand’s first lady novelist, Mrs J. E. Aylmer, in concocting Distant Homes or The Graham Family in New Zealand (1862), though here the light was subdued to the dull glow of Victorian piety and domestic sentiment. Not that Distant Homes is lacking in incident; on the contrary, from the very day that the Graham family touch the barbarous shores of the colony they are plunged into a maelstrom of adventure. With as fine a disregard for fact as was shown by her probable exemplar, the author of The Swiss Family Robinson, Mrs Aylmer exposes her characters to the perils of ‘the volcano of Mount Egmont’ (‘“the old mountain never gives us warning in vain”’, quoth a worthy salt),
and after their arrival in Canterbury, to the delicious terrors of a Maori insurrection. By the joint heroism of Captain Graham and his wife, the insurrection is quelled, and having absorbed a Hollywood-serial portion of adventures and a hand-book on New Zealand besides (all in the space of 199 pages) we leave the Graham family with the fervent hope that 'peace and good-will may reign through the length and breadth of our precious colony of New Zealand.'

The work of Lady Barker, set in the same locality, may also be described as domestic; though with a difference. Wisely she restricted herself to the range of colonial life that she knew, the often trivial but never uninteresting experiences of an Englishwoman (more exactly an English gentlewoman), confronted by an entirely new order of society and by the multitudinous duties of a squatter’s wife. She is best known by Station Life in New Zealand (1870) and Station Amusements in New Zealand (1873), books which more than any others of the period are exempt from the charges of dullness and banality. Together they give the most complete and satisfying picture of that ample life on the plains and foothills of Canterbury before the squatocracy had hardened into a caste and the tending of sheep into a highly organised industry. The innocent pleasures are there, and the calamities, such as the loss of a child or that overwhelming disaster, the great snow-storm of 1867, while the domestic worries, usually centred in the
servants’ quarters, are described with feminine particularity. The weather, inevitably in the conditions of that life, becomes a major character whose moods and whims from week to week are minutely recorded, and the settings are sketched with the limpid spontaneity of a writer who rarely, if ever, perpetrates a cliché. It is, of course, the pastoral scene surveyed from the topmost social pinnacle; but her viewpoint is aristocratic rather than snobbish, and though aware of the gulf between a ‘lady’ and a cockatoo’s wife, she had learned enough from colonial ways to write in her second book of ‘the class whom we foolishly speak of as the lower orders’.

Into these two books she packed the chief impressions of some five years in New Zealand; the residue, with careful husbandry, she converted into sketches, semi-fictional in form, which are scattered through a number of collections. Written ostensibly for children and concealed by such titles as Stories About (1871), A Christmas Cake (1871), and Boys (1875), they are nevertheless surprisingly mature in theme and treatment. ‘Christmas Day in New Zealand’, one of the four quarters of her Christmas Cake, is indeed the best recorded example of a shepherd’s yarn. In transposition some crudities of speech and incident have doubtless been ironed out, but enough remains to evoke the rich, smoke-filled atmosphere of the shepherds’ concourse assembled for the purpose of ‘capping yarns’. Some enterprising publisher will one
day re-issue these sketches to give them the modest fame they deserve.

A third and contrasting version of the domestic formula is to be found in two novels published in 1874, *A Strange Friendship* and *Over the Hills and Far Away*, by Mrs C. Evans. They are the wish-fulfilments of an English gentlewoman in exile, and their mood is one of pensive nostalgia. Her romantically conceived families (all gentlefolk), clearly the colonial progeny of Charlotte Brontë’s Lucys and Rochesters, are conveyed to New Zealand where, with few pioneering preliminaries, they establish themselves in country-houses. There they exchange books and periodicals —the heroes their *Cornhills* and *Edinburghs*, the heroines *Middlemarch, Idylls of the King, Lady Adelaide’s Oath*—speculate about the social position and origin of their neighbours (‘I wonder who the Ainsleighs are, and what part of England they come from’), discuss endlessly ‘friends at home’ and ‘people and places where we had grown up together’, and indulge in elegant pastimes that are quite unlike the simple picnics and concerts the author professes to describe. Driven by the demands of fantastic plots,* they are weighed down by domestic secrets, suffer agonies of frustration through self-imposed vows of silence, to find relief in the interminable writing up of diaries.

*These would seem to owe more to *Lady Adelaide’s Oath* than to *Middlemarch*, though the flood episode of *The Mill on the Floss* clearly inspired the climax of *A Strange Friendship*. 
There are occasional tributes to the scenery of New Zealand, but the colonial background is usually left vague where it does not intrude as something alien or even malign. When a colonial is introduced it is as a bucolic foil to the god-like principal characters, though one minor figure is described with approval as ‘one of the upper class of New Zealand working men’. The heroine of *A Strange Friendship* ultimately marries a titled husband who confers on her the supreme felicity of repatriation to the ‘home-country’, where she reigns as the mistress of Curtis Knowle, his ancestral home. So was realised the dream of a homesick gentlewoman.

The masculine novel (a class shading imperceptibly into the pioneer memoir) is an even more artless narrative, tracing a single colonist’s life and adventures which are eked out very often by the usual accounts of New Zealand’s history, flora, fauna, and ‘future prospects’. A writer will announce his intention of giving ‘the general reader some knowledge of New Zealand, of its short history, of its last wars, and of the character of that most interesting race, the Maori, in the popular form of the novel.’ And, in his casual way, he picks up the threads of the narrative with ‘I may as well state here’, or ‘At this point it is necessary to overhaul a bit’. Superimposed on the socially conditioned plot of emigration and settlement there is in the more ambitious examples the mechanical plot of the nineteenth-century novel—an affair of
crime, of mystery uncovered in a final chapter, of preposterous coincidence. W.M.B., a representative author of this school, has retired to his native York. 'In the course of an eventful and active life, during a long residence at the Antipodes', he explains in 'My Preface', 'it had often been my lot or necessity to turn my hand to very many occupations and callings . . . and since my return to England, finding myself with "nothing to do", I determined to add that of an author to the number.' The result, published in 1874 as The Narrative of Edward Crewe or Life in New Zealand, is a thinly disguised autobiography in which the author strings together his experiences as a colonist, inserting many curious observations on the antipodes and on life in general. After a boyhood in York and an education at Rugby, he decides to emigrate, admitting with candour his disinclination and mental incapacity for any of the professions. He lands at Auckland, is by turns trader, bush-whacker, saw-miller, land-speculator, until finally he strikes it rich as a gold-miner and returns with his wealth to England. Into the roomy receptacle provided by this narrative the writer stuffs all manner of oddments whose nature and variety can be gauged by a few page-headings—Drunken Bay, Buying a Wife, Pig Hunting, 'Always a Gentleman', St. Thomas Aquinas (described as 'the greatest intellectual swell in the Church some 600 years ago . . . a man of the right sort'), No Sunday in the Bush, How to Rub Fire.
The book is as raw and ill-assorted as this inventory; with its gusto, its profusion of crude ideas and cruder anecdotes, its loose colloquialisms, it suggests the yarning assemblage of the shearing-shed or miners’ camp, and from this fact derives its virtue. It is a document, both to entertain and to instruct, transcribing faithfully and uncritically the surface agitation of the unformed society to which the author himself had temporarily belonged.

There is a notable difference in Scottish versions of the emigrant-pioneer novel exemplified by Alexander Bathgate’s *Waitaruna* (1881) and by the two novels of Dugald Ferguson—*Bush Life* (1893) and *Mates* (1911)—which, though falling outside the strict chronological limits of the period, belong spiritually to the same epoch. In these novels, set principally in Otago, the pioneer hero’s life is unfolded against the same background, but its disorder and excesses are condemned both openly in the author’s running commentary and by implication in the fate he metes out to his characters, good and bad. Thus Gilbert Langton, the industrious cadet of *Waitaruna*, rises to the position of station-manager, while his foil, Arthur Leslie, succumbs to colonial influences, marries a bar-maid, and is left drinking himself to death as the landlord of an unsavoury public-house in the diggings. In Dugald Ferguson’s work the same retributive justice falls on those who, through frailty or wilfulness, diverge from the strait Presbyterian path. It is no coincidence that
these books attained to a certain local popularity at a time when the life they portrayed was receding romantically into the past while their standards of conduct were the accepted ones among the rural bourgeoísie of post-pioneer years.

Ferguson’s work also illustrates, in a marked form, stylistic features common to the novels. In spite of his out-of-door man’s disregard for construction and niceties of form and expression, he rises to a certain inflated elaborateness when a situation is considered important and in need of some more dignified attire than the ordinary plain narrative. Similarly conversation alternates between the vigorous idiom of colonial speech: ‘‘She carefully mentioned all the young ladies that had got spliced, and all the others who had their chaps prospectively hooked, all the married dames who had lately got kids, and all the old dames who had kicked or were likely to kick the bucket,’” and melodramatic bombast in the emotional scenes: ‘‘What have you to complain of, then?” [Asks the villain of the girl he has betrayed.] “Of nothing, if I only had the mind of the brute that perishes; of nothing, if I had not been reared in affluence and love; of nothing, if my mind had not been educated to more fully appreciate the advantages I have for ever forfeited; of nothing. . . .”’

A feature corresponding to the widely found emigrant-pioneer plot, and the product of similar social conditions and history, is the set of ‘stock
characters’, a few figures who appear throughout the novels with a remarkable uniformity. First there is the newly arrived immigrant, the ‘new chum’, whose ‘verdancy’ (to cite a recurrent example of pioneer wit) is the butt of the seasoned colonial. ‘To be a new chum,’ remarks Edward Crewe, ‘is not agreeable . . . . people speak to you in a pitying and patronising manner, smiling at your real or inferred simplicity in colonial life, and altogether “sitting upon you” with much frequency and persistence.’ More useful for the novelist’s purpose (since most people in the first few decades had been new chums) was the ‘remittance man’. Some novelists use him for farcical or satirical purposes, contrasting his English accent and genteel manners (the façade of moral and physical weakness) with the solid virtues of the hard-working colonial. Usually, however, he is a more formidable character, villainous or heroic, in whom a writer found it convenient to centre the mystery of the novel. He arrives in the colony under a cloud, meets there, by an impossible series of coincidences, old friends or enemies, and ultimately clears himself of some unfounded charge; or, alternatively, he involves himself more deeply in crime, to pay the penalty in the final chapter. The minor stock figures are similarly localised characters of lesser Victorian fiction and melodrama: farcical Irishmen, dark-haired sirens, and two products more distinctive of the colonial soil—the incompetent and independent servant, who is the
centre of male attention, and the misanthropic recluse, the 'hatter' in mining argot. Beside such figures of cardboard a character is occasionally inserted of more vital interest, some person created from immediate personal observation. While these figures hold the stage, the writer forgets his story, genuine humour seeps in, and themes of local interest are introduced. For example, in the formless bulk of Clara Cheeseman's *A Rolling Stone* (1886), a minor figure, Langridge, disentangles himself from the plot to take on local form and colour: 'there were his children; he was ambitious for them, not for himself. If it were somewhat too late in his day for the cultivation of the habits and manners of polite society, and decidedly too late for an amendment of his education, there was yet time to make his son the equal of those whom the father had always reverently considered as being of a nature superior to his own, and whom he usually spoke of as the "upper classes".'

But these are tiny and infrequent oases in a desert of facts, anecdotes, pointless descriptions, absurd melodramatic contortions. With the exception of Lady Barker's sketches, there is only one imaginative work which handles the rural life of this period with any approach to insight. Published in 1891, *Philosopher Dick* by George Chamier does in fact express an era, as it sums up the whole class of pioneer fiction and memoirs. But it is no neglected masterpiece. In its main outlines and in many of its details it resembles
most other pioneer novels: it has as its central character the conventional Englishman who has emigrated to New Zealand; it traverses the usual range of rough experience and contains the usual assortment of stock characters; it is even more amateurishly contrived than many of its kind, being lamely pieced together by diaries, letters, and long interpolated confessions in the manner of Smollett; its prose is loose and formless, cluttered with clichés and redundancies. What distinguishes it from the rest is the writer's critical and occasionally sardonic point of view, his ampler scale of treatment, and his approach to serious themes barely recognised by his predecessors.

Richard Raleigh, the 'philosopher' of the title (and, one may infer, a partly autobiographic creation) is a FitzGerald of fiction, a young idealist who has migrated from the old world—'a world made up of trivialities, bustle, greed, sensuality, and emptiness'—hoping to find in a new country the conditions for a life of freedom and contemplation. Equipped with a library, a flute, and materials for painting (since he shared the interests of the young Samuel Butler), he arrives at the men's quarters of Marino station. Here diverse types and nationalities are gathered together to lead a life which, despite its vigour and rough friendliness, is to the civilised mind scarcely above the level of bare existence. Failing to discover in these surroundings the tranquillity and freedom he seeks,
Raleigh withdraws himself still farther into a shepherd's hut on the boundaries of the station.

The sequel, described with a clinical profusion of detail, is of remarkable interest and has a wide application, for if potential Samuel Butlers were rare among the settlers of New Zealand, conditions of isolation with their disintegrating effects on the mind were sufficiently common. He revels for a time in his solitude and independence of the world of affairs, finding satisfaction in 'communion with Nature' and in art. But this mood soon yields to one of melancholy —Raleigh has learned the bitter lesson of personal insufficiency: 'In vain would he strive to rouse himself from this miserable dejection; seek for relaxation in his books, call in aid his philosophy, or fly to his beloved palette.' And as these sources of strength and assurance fail him, he loses touch with his former associations: 'The outside world had lost all interest for him—it had almost ceased to exist to his dis-tempered mind.' And he concludes that he has abandoned civilisation, now endowed with all the attractions of the remote and the discarded, 'To make a fool of myself; to bury myself in the wilderness; to seek for solitude, misery, and privation at the farthest end of the world.'

The situation is convincing, though described at excessive length and with the resources of a third-rate writer when it demands those of a Dostoievsky. But it does provide a slender framework for the book and
is responsible for some authentic criticism of the pioneer and for passages of telling satire. Insensibly as the novel progresses, however, the hero-author relaxes the attitude of petulant detachment to become more at one with his surroundings. He expends pages on the minute details of his occupation and environment, analyses the relations between men and men and between men and animals, elaborately records the *trivia* of social life and gossip: the *déraciné* has begun to send down roots.

*Philosopher Dick* is a baffling novel, as difficult to characterise and evaluate as the society it describes. The trivial is mixed with the pretentious, the farcical with the serious, obtuseness of thought and feeling meet one on the same page as delicacy and sympathy. In more senses than one it is a pioneer work, an attempt to impose some coherence and shape upon a formless mass of experience. The attempt was undoubtedly too ambitious, it was almost certainly premature, but with little competition Chamier takes his place in the New Zealand literary hierarchy as the most distinguished male novelist of its pastoral epoch.

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From a distance of eighty years (and even to some contemporary eyes) the Maori wars of the sixties may appear as part of the movement which at the same time spilled men over the hinterland of Otago and Canterbury. The motive of the European protagonists
were similar, the end — land — was the same. The
difference was in the opponents: in the one island
nature, in the other a native people whose suppression
was effected only by a struggle as bitter on the
domestic and political fronts as on the military. This
confused episode in New Zealand history threw up
an immense quantity of writing which is chiefly
polemical in nature and, fortunately, impermanent in
form. The crumbling pages of contemporary newspa-
papers contain grim evidence of the feeling and the
prejudice excited by each phase of the conflict. Even
the comic journals of the time, particularly those
published near the scene of war, are disfigured by
cartoons of a savagery which is now scarcely credible.
In pamphlet literature there is a juster division of
opinion between the advocates of ‘the strong hand’
and the ‘Maoriphiles’; but a case argued in the strident
and over-simplified terms of public controversy can
appeal to-day only to an occasional scholar.

Hardly less impassioned are the writings of larger
size and pretensions. With perhaps three or four
exceptions, books on the wars and the Maoris are
pamphlets writ large with none of the pamphlet’s
merciful brevity. Pre-eminent amongst the exceptions
is J. E. Gorst’s The Maori King (1864), an impartial and
absorbing account written from first-hand observa-
tion by one with an intimate knowledge of the
Waikato and an appreciation of Maori modes of life
and thought which can be paralleled only in Short-
land. While Gorst’s sympathy with the native cause is clearly and consistently expressed, he never reduces the Maori to a dehumanised symbol of injustice and suffering. ‘The Maori’, in fact, does not appear in Gorst, but Maoris of a diversity that might be expected from any group of human beings. There are the able and incorruptible men like Wiremu Tamihana; the waverers and schemers who clustered about the unfortunate young Maori king; the light-hearted adventurers like Wiremu Kumete who, ‘having planted his crops, and having nothing else in particular to do, marched down to Taranaki’, returning from the expedition ‘in time to reap his crops’; there is even the Maori bore who ‘began a long speech, commencing from the creation of the world, and working slowly on to modern times, while everybody else went to sleep.’ It is this perception of diversity, including humour, which makes Gorst so convincing when he is compared with equally sincere though more limited writers. The underlying causes of the wars, as he explains them, were not simple: they arose not from villainy, but from confusion of aims, from lack of understanding on both sides, and among the Europeans from apathy and bewildering alternations of policy. To perceive this when the issues were so confused and the events so close was an achievement which makes Gorst one of the most remarkable men of this period. To express it in a fluent, temperate prose was an even rarer achievement which gives him
a lonely eminence amongst those who ventured to peer beneath the surface events of the wars and seek out their causes.

The course of the campaigns themselves, more especially the operations of the colonial troops, can be traced in Lieutenant T. W. Gudgeon’s Reminiscences of the War in New Zealand (1879),* modestly characterised by its author as ‘a simple narrative of events, of skirmishes and expeditions grandiloquently called campaigns’. It is the work of an intelligent campaigner, more concerned with the details of sieges and encounters than with the causes underlying them, though when he went outside his self-imposed limits to probe into the origins of the King movement and the Hauhau religion, he is just and most discerning. In contrast with the writings of most non-combatants, the Reminiscences show a refreshing absence of rancour. Gudgeon’s Maori opponents are simply described as ‘the enemy’, occasionally with pity as ‘the poor wretches’, while in giving an account of Te Kooti’s escape from the Chatham islands, he ventured to doubt ‘whether Europeans would have behaved with greater moderation if placed in similar circumstances.’ With no pretensions to ‘style’ and without resort to the purple patch, he yet gives an adequate impression of the picturesque scene of the campaigns; and, drawing not on art but from a fund of native good sense and good feeling, he inserts touches of warmth.

*And in the more comprehensive New Zealand Wars (1922-3) by James Cowan.
or humour or asperity which make the book something more than a ‘mere narrative of events’. Though they belonged to opposite camps, it is not unlikely that Gorst and Gudgeon could have met and discussed their points of view without heat and perhaps with agreement as to fundamentals; for, different though they were, the scholarly administrator and the soldier shared virtues rare enough at the time — tolerance, kindliness, and clearheadedness.

These were virtues notably absent among those writers of fiction who exploited the sensational incidents and romantic background of the wars. The first novel of this kind,* if novel it can be called, was Major B. Stoney’s *Taranaki: a Tale of the War* (1861) which claimed on a congested title-page to provide ‘a Description of the Province previous to and during the war; also an Account (chiefly taken from the Despatches) of the Principal Contests with the Natives during that eventful period.’ This book and its successors bear some resemblance to the class of pioneer-emigrant novels, though far outclassing them in crudity of plot, in deficiency of construction, and in blatant didacticism. The typical hero is an officer from India, the heroine the daughter of a New Zealand settler or merchant. A favourite conclusion is a glimpse of the two established in ‘The Hall’ in some part of rural England. Meanwhile the reader

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*And first New Zealand novel if we except the anonymous *Travels of Hildebrand Bouman* (1778), precursor of the line of Utopian romances set in the unexplored regions of New Zealand.*
has again absorbed an epitome of New Zealand history and varied information about Maori customs conveyed in descriptive passages, in footnotes, or in this fashion:

‘“I have here a decoction of the poroporo (Solanum lacincatum), which will heal thy wounds.”’

These words (a mild example of the stilted language common to the novels) are uttered by a Maori witch, for necromancy, and with it cannibalism, usually enters the books in some guise. In this particular sample, Hine-Ra (1887), the dark powers are invoked to prophesy the ultimate doom of the Maori people. This again is a favourite motif, more bluntly put by the anonymous author of Henry Acrum (1872) as he looks forward to the time ‘when the savage Maori has disappeared—as disappear he must.’ Except for the winsome wahine occasionally inserted to give a love interest, the fictional Maori is indeed a savage, to be annihilated in mass and without compunction. In the most spectacular climax the destruction of a party of Hauhaus is compassed by an explosion which at the same time lays bare a reef of gold. Similar constituents, contrived with more sophistication and mingled with borrowings from Poe and Haggard, make up H. B. M. Watson’s The Web of the Spider (1892). Worthy of greater respect, though ineffably dreary, are two fictional reconstructions of pre-colonial Maori life published in 1874—George H. Wilson’s Ena, or The Ancient Maori and John White’s Te Rou; or The Maori
at Home. A good deal of scholarship is embalmed in these two novels, particularly in the second, but their effect is to suggest that the primitive Maori spent his necessarily short life in slaughtering and consuming his enemies, and in consulting witch-doctors, with brief interludes of love-making against an ornate scenic background.

There remain the two books of F. E. Maning, the History of the War in the North (1862) and Old New Zealand (1863), which from the time of their publication have grown in esteem until they are now commonly regarded as 'New Zealand classics', doomed, like most classics, to be accepted uncritically more often than examined. They are, however, products of a distinct phase of New Zealand history, coloured no less by its outlook than by the author's highly original personality. As much as The Maori King or—at the opposite pole—Taranaki, they reflect, though more subtly, the tense feelings which prevailed in the opening years of the wars.

Old New Zealand, the more personal of the two books, looks back in apparently unmethedical retrospection to the 'good old times' of the thirties and contains mingled and not easily separable elements of biography and fiction. It belongs, with important differences, to the class of pioneer memoirs, and in a superlative degree has the gusto and colloquial raciness (with a characteristic undertone of nostalgia) which lend charm and readability to the reminiscences
of even the roughest literary diamond. Nowhere else in New Zealand literature is there anything to compare in force and humour with the account of Maning’s arrival in New Zealand, or with the description, in the fourth chapter, of a plundering raid, to single out only two brilliant episodes from a possible dozen. As descriptive writer, as ironical commentator, as raconteur, Maning is unexcelled. But a close reading of Old New Zealand discloses the fact that its author, for all his air of casualness, is very far removed from the usual literary amateur of pioneer days. He is in fact the master of an art so skilful and so persuasive that it conceals the true nature of his aims and views. For Maning, it becomes evident, was by no means a simple seeker after truth like Gorst; rather was he acting the part of showman, concerned to paint the high lights and the low lights of savage life from a partisan point of view.

This is one explanation of the disproportionate emphasis he placed on warfare, an important but by no means all-absorbing part of the old order. The charge cannot be brought against the War in the North, where Maning confined himself to a single warlike episode in Maori history; but within the broader limits of Old New Zealand his selection of material is most significant. At least half the book, as a casual inspection of chapter-headings will show, is taken up with descriptions of war or the adjuncts of warfare, and scarcely a page is without some passing
reference to it. True, in Maning's time, mainly through the introduction of the musket, the equilibrium of Maori culture had been disturbed so that warfare had assumed a tragically prominent rôle. Maning himself is a witness to the fact in some of the wisest and most penetrating sections of the book. But, invoking native authority, he goes much farther and states in a lurid passage that the same state of affairs existed before the coming of the European and the musket: 'Nothing was so valuable or respectable as strength and courage, and to acquire property by war and plunder was more honourable and also more desirable than by labour. Cannibalism was glorious. The island was a pandemonium.' Such a distortion could, even in Maning's day, have been corrected by reference to the works of Grey and Shortland. A people engaged in a welter of senseless bloodshed could scarcely have preserved the qualities of mind and imagination revealed in Grey's three collections. Even less understanding was shown in Maning's treatment of other native institutions. In his hands the tapu system was reduced to terms of insane melodrama, the muri to low comedy. Indeed the Maori of Old New Zealand is a creature alternating between farce and melodrama.

On the positive side, Maning was at his best in describing those features of Maori life which he could be expected to comprehend and sympathise with—warfare and its attendant ceremonial, the elaborate
processes of trade, the scene and ritual of death. The unmarred excellence of the *War in the North*, an account of the Flagstaff war, is largely due to its being confined within the limits of such material. The narrative, which is placed in the mouth of a Maori combatant, seems to have gained in precision and picturesqueness from Maning’s knowledge of Maori oratory, while the monologue form gave him an opportunity for ironical comment on Maori bewilderment at the incomprehensible ways of the European and on European misconceptions of the native. As a fighting man the Maori possessed virtues that were well within Maning’s compass, and in the battle scenes his narrative skill was blended with imaginative sympathy to produce an effect that is reminiscent of the best prose translations of Homer. In this book Maning shows an understanding and a power of self-projection notably absent from the greater part of *Old New Zealand*. The undue praise lavished on the latter can be ascribed to its more blatant qualities, while in its own day part of its appeal lay in the view of the Maori question implied in it. ‘The bubble of Maori civilization has burst,’ commented Maning’s English sponsor, the Earl of Pembroke. ‘The true level of the Maori, intellectually and morally, has become tolerably well known; moreover, his numbers are diminishing year by year.’

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Gold-mining, the third disruptive episode of this period, produced the smallest quantity of literature. It was perhaps too brief in its duration and too cataclysmic in its effect to throw up its equivalent of Chamier or Maning, and, in any case, the urban public of New Zealand was not large or distant enough to wish for vicarious experience of the goldfields. Apart from brief episodes in the works of pastoral novelists like Bathgate or Ferguson, literature of the diggings consists of a few trivial romances and some rough yarns and memoirs set down in old age or stimulated by ambitions for money and fame. The nearest approach to a local Bret Harte was B. L. Farjeon, whose _Shadows on the Snow_ (1865?) is a feeble _Outcasts of Poker Flat_ drowned in sentiment of Dickensian origin. Farjeon left New Zealand to become a writer of popular fiction and the founder of a literary family, and he was succeeded as novelist of the goldfields by Vincent Pyke, author of _Wild Will Enderby_ (1873) and _The Adventures of George Washington Pratt_ (1874). These books, which enjoyed in their day some local popularity that extended to Australia, are simple concoctions of melodrama and knockabout farce moving to the climax of gold discovery and the finale of marriage. The heroes, embodying the miners' standards of right conduct and appearance, are of great physical strength, aggressively independent and uncouth in manner, yet chivalrous in their treatment of women and strict in their adherence
to the miner’s unwritten code of honour. The quintessential of the type is Pratt, the American backwoodsman who strides exuberantly through the two novels, dispensing rude justice, chewing his quid, and making oracular observations in exaggerated Americanese. Apart from the crimes of robbery and murder, villainy is chiefly a matter of dissipation beyond the demands of mere good-fellowship or, more serious, the underhand exploitation of another miner’s ‘strike’.

The writings of Farjeon and Pyke make wearisome reading to-day not so much because they are crude but because they are crude in the wrong way: the miner’s idiom is largely ignored, and characters are made to speak either in luscious journalese or in the language of fifth-rate drama; for the humour of the goldfields is substituted a heavy jocosity, expressing itself in such terms as: ‘a region, the atmosphere of which is popularly supposed to be excessively sultry’; and over all is spread a thick treacle of sentimentality. A little of the true flavour of gold-mining days survives, however, in certain fugitive books or, more often, pamphlets which can occasionally be met with in the larger New Zealand collections. In particular, Henry Lapham’s *We Four* (1880), the result of an evening spent in capping yarns, bears upon it the marks of authenticity. The yarns are set down in free colloquial English, they are spiced with salty male humour, and sweetened with that genuine sentiment which grew out of the stresses and privations of life in
Otago and Westland. The longest of the four sketches, ‘A Member of the Force’, is completely adult in its presentation of complex human behaviour and in its avoidance of either sentimentality or cynicism. At a lower level there are W. Davidson’s *Stories of New Zealand Life* (1889), with their revelations of the miner’s wild extravagance, and *Frank Melton’s Luck* (1891) by Thos. Cottle, a redoubtable figure who strewed his pages with homely aphorisms in rugged but forceful language. ‘“As long as a man earns what he wants on the square, and pays his way, we don’t care a rap whether he is a member of Parliament, or So-and-so’s bullock-driver”’, remarks one of his characters; and the sentiment would have been cheered to the echo on every claim from Coromandel to Gabriel’s Gully.

In the best of the memoirs, *Up and Down (or, Fifty Years’ Colonial Experiences . . . being the Life History of Capt. W. J. Barry. Written by Himself. . . .)* (1879), there is the same vigour and slangy picturesqueness of speech, with the same background of hard-living, robust pleasures, and single-minded pursuit of gold or money. Capt. Barry, like Thos. Cottle, was one of those gargantuan characters appropriate to an age which roasted its bullocks whole and dug out its gold by the shovelful. With the same aplomb with which he turned his hand to every occupation, from butcher to auctioneer, he met the mingled smiles and blows of an erratic fortune, and finally we leave him,
battered but indomitable, lecturing to the populace of Great Britain on the advantages of New Zealand as a field for colonisation. The narrative is set down in a breathless, tumultuous style, with no trace of artifice or hint of selection: the account of his second wife’s death, for example, takes up about a quarter of the space assigned to the marketing of chilblain ointment to frostbitten gold-miners. If some New Zealand novelist should wish to emulate the author of *Honey in the Horn*\(^*\), that superb re-creation of the Oregon homesteaders, he would find an abundance of raw material to his hand in this highly coloured narrative of a colonial adventurer.

The conditions in which so fantastic a person as Barry could flourish also gave rise to the spectacular career of Julius Vogel, a journalist who was swept like Barry by the gold-rushes from Australia to Otago, and eventually became the premier of New Zealand. More than any other single person, Vogel was responsible for transmitting to the mainstream of New Zealand life what may be called the ‘digger spirit’—that mixture of optimism, chivalry, speculative daring, and opportunism which characterised the miner on the fields of Otago and Westland. At the end of his political career, when living in England, Vogel set down a kind of oblique testament of faith in *Anno Domini 2000; or Woman’s Destiny* (1889). Here in all their resplendence were the ideals which

\(^*\)By H. L. Davis, English edition 1935.
he had laboured for so long to impose on a generally acquiescent population.

The book is primarily a fantasy, an elaborate product of the mechanism underlying the dreams of wealth and power, garish residences, and over-dressed women which are occasionally inserted in the gold-miners' yarns. But Vogel's dream is on a far more opulent scale, and it is further enriched by the inclusion of his favourite theories of politics and empire. The novel was written, an epilogue explains, first to show that the recognised dominance of either sex was unnecessary, second to advocate the formation of a unified British Commonwealth, thirdly to suggest the abolition of poverty by raising the standard of living. The novel is placed in the year 2000 when the author's theories have long been in practice. There now exists a great British Commonwealth, led by women (for 'woman has become the guiding, man the executive force of the world'), while want has been abolished in all countries through the intervention of philanthropic capitalists.

Three main strands of thought and sentiment run through this extravaganza, as indeed through the later history of New Zealand. Of the first, imperialism, Vogel was New Zealand's greatest exponent. Yet coupled with his faith in the imperial destiny, a marked feeling of inferiority before the power and prestige of Britain is evident, a feeling which finds an outlet in a form of compensation. Vogel looks
forward to a time when the colonies will dictate British policy, when the Emperor will marry a New Zealander, when London will be only an historic appendage of the Empire. These two opposing sentiments—affection for the mother country and a desire to be free of her trammels—provide a key to the understanding of literary and social history in the next few decades. Equally significant, appearing as they did on the eve of the nineties, were Vogel’s humanitarian views, which were the natural outcome of nineteenth-century liberalism in the forcing conditions of the goldfield and the pioneering settlement. With the dawn of the year 2000 the world has become convinced: ‘First. That labour or work of some kind was the only condition of general happiness. Second. That every human being was entitled to a certain proportion of the world’s good things. Third. That, as the capacity of machinery and the population of the world increased production, the theory of the need of labour could not be realised unless with a corresponding increase of the wants of mankind.’ The remaining characteristics may be grouped under the heading of materialism. The novel abounds in vulgar scenes of wealth and in ostentatious settings, while the prodigality of titled characters is also the outcome of a childish conception of human life and progress. Progress, for Vogel, consisted mainly in the accumulation and limited distribution of wealth and in the perfecting of machinery. The book forms a monu-
ment not only to its author but to the ‘gilded’ years of New Zealand history, a time of optimism and grandiose speculation, when the possibilities of expansion seemed unlimited. Vogel’s effervescent ‘Progression, progression, always progression, has been the history of the centuries’ would have been questioned by few New Zealanders, and the mere word ‘future’ in contemporary writings can be counted on to release a burst of windy rhetoric.

There remained, however, a few incorruptible spirits who had come to New Zealand in quest not of riches but of the New Jerusalem. A speech of FitzGerald’s, made during the years of Vogel’s ascendancy, can be regarded as the epitaph of the ‘old identity’ pushed aside by the ‘new iniquity’ in its ardour for gold and progress: ‘Gentlemen, I conclude this . . . discourse by entering my humble protest against the sacrifice of public honour and dignity to private wealth and luxury; by entering my protest against the vices of an age which subordinates its love of the beautiful to its worship of wealth . . . which makes Art the advertisement of riches instead of their crown and glory . . . whose tastes and whose arts are essentially vain and selfish.’

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In the bustling years of ‘opening up’ it was only to be expected that the arts should suffer some eclipse. As Samuel Butler had remarked, it did ‘not do to
speak about John Sebastian Bach’s Fugues, or pre-Raphaelite pictures’ to the ‘rowdy-hatted’ sheepmen of Canterbury. Even those writers who seem, at this distance of time, to have been wholly at one with their environment were often despised for pursuing aims which to the practical man were incomprehensible or absurd. Take Dugald Ferguson’s advice to the local poet, given in his embittered old age: ‘Pray who do you think seriously regards those verses? . . . Assume, instead of your wonted look of dreamy abstraction, a keen business or even money-grabbing expression. Instead of poetic visions, let your mind be absorbed by plans for the best mode of growing turnips. . . . Marry some cockatoo’s daughter with . . . cows for her dowry. . . . Let your stock-yard, knee-deep in dung, be the practical witness of your prosperity. . . . if you will follow this advice, you may make some headway in the world, besides securing the substantial respect of all around you as a man of shrewd sense, which regard for you at present they certainly have not.’*

But this neglect was not wholly due to the soullessness of a money-grabbing public; a share of blame must fall on the poets themselves. In the young poet with his look of ‘dreamy abstraction’ and his ‘poetic visions’ Ferguson has embodied only too well the conception of the poetic that was current throughout

*From The Local Poet included in the undated but certainly late Poems and Sketches.
this period—and long after. It can be illustrated from the *Poems* (1861) of the Canterbury settler C. C. Bowen:

‘From life’s stern battle and its cares set free,
Methought my spirit wandered far away,
And for a time put off mortality
Amid the groves of Helicon to stray:—
I dreamt of heroes of a by-gone day’.

This was the theory of poetry commonly practised during the most strenuous years of New Zealand history and by men who were themselves actively engaged in the clearing of bush, the subjugation of Maoris, the mining of gold. That poetry might conceivably have some relation to these activities, that it might even deal with turnips, cockatoos’ daughters, and stock-yards did not occur to these writers, caught as they were in the toils of the Romantic tradition. Consider, for example, Frederick Napier Broome, the gay, energetic, resourceful F—— of Lady Barker’s books. When he took up his pen and began to versify it was not to write of the exhilarating life of a Canterbury squatter, but to indulge in such feeble imitations of the rhythm and imagery of Swinburne as in this exotic from *Poems from New Zealand* (1868):

‘Being and manifold mother, laid upon life like a dream,
Fleeing to thee from another, a mightier thought and a theme.

Take me to thy beautiful bosom, thy bountiful breast,
Make it bare to the exquisite blossom, suckle me there with the rest.’
Or, again, consider that dusty epic, *Ranolf and Amohia* (1872), by Alfred Domett, leading spirit of the Nelson settlement, experienced public servant and politician, the ‘passionate, fiery nature, full of suppressed energy, as proud as Lucifer’ of Thomas Arnold’s memoirs. Yet how little of this has crept into the interminable cantos of his ‘South-Sea Day-Dream’, how little in fact of the New Zealand which Domett himself had known and had helped to build during thirty years of strenuous public life! But, as he suggests in a set of prefatory verses, Domett as poet was leaving behind the New Zealand of struggling settlements, of sheepfarming, of gold discovery, of political brawls and native wars; he was ignoring all this to create a New Zealand fit for Romantic poets to dream in:

‘From our Life of realities—hard—shallow—hearted,
Has Romance—has all glory idyllic departed—
From the workaday World all the wonderment flown?
Well, but what if there gleamed, in an Age cold as this,
The divinest of Poets’ ideal of bliss?
Yea, an Eden could lurk in this Empire of ours.’

This Eden, reconstructed with enormous pains from all the available sources, was the New Zealand of pre-colonisation years, a land of virgin forest populated by Maoris still immune from the influences of European civilisation. But for all his diligent research, for all his laborious pictures of silica terraces, geysers, primeval forests, and what not, there is no more life
in the epic than in Wilson’s *Ena* or White’s *Te Rou* which in substance it so closely resembles. Canto after canto is ground out in the same tedious measures, description succeeds description with a deadening prolixity, and the poem is finally crushed by the weight of speculation imposed on the trivial plot. *Ranolf and Amohia* is the extreme vagary of the Romantic impulse in New Zealand; the pity is that a man of Domett’s intelligence and experience should have directed his literary ambitions into so unprofitable a channel. There can be few New Zealanders who would not gladly exchange Domett’s epic for one brief volume of memoirs written with the unstudied eloquence of his diaries and correspondence.

The popular versifier of these years was, however, not Broome nor Domett but Bracken, whose writings enjoyed a vogue not since equalled in New Zealand, and whose *Musings in Maoriland*, published in the jubilee year 1890, set the seal upon his reputation as national poet. Tom Bracken was something of a character, a very mild version of Captain Barry. Born in Ireland, he had emigrated as a child to Australia where he was by turn farm-boy, chemist’s assistant, station-hand, and shearer. He crossed over to Otago in the late sixties and there found a niche in journalism, an occupation varied by excursions into politics. On one occasion he relieved the monotony of a debate by singing a comic song to the House, and as ‘Paddy
Murphy' he acquired fame for his humorous comments on the 'doin's o' Parlimint' written in doggerel Irish. This was Tom Bracken, journalist and politician—a very different person from the poet Thomas Bracken. For the moment he began to woo 'the divine maiden—Poésy' (to quote his own phrase) Bracken forgot politics, forgot humour, forgot the world about him, to weave together those doleful platitudes and flowery banalities which make up the greater part of his verse. These lines, taken from a poetical address delivered by him at the opening of the Oamaru Theatre in 1883, illustrate his conception of poesy:

'Welcome, Thalia and Melpomene,
Unto this fair White City by the sea!
Behold! Apollo here has found a shrine
Where his companions—all the Sacred Nine—
May revel in harmonious glee.'

To do him justice, Bracken rarely sank to the level of such inflated fustian, and at his best he has some of Longfellow's knack of expressing the plain man's thoughts about life and death and love in simple measures and apt phrases. But, except for superficial verbal differences, the ornate bulk of Musings in Maoriland might have been produced by any minor versifier in any part of the English-speaking world during the late nineteenth century. And the same is true of the mass of New Zealand verse of this period. One meets with minor felicities of rhythm and phrase, sincere tributes to natural beauty, the worthiest of
sentiments. But none of the writers seem to have any vital relationship with the life about them, they rarely experiment with new forms or measures, and even more rarely discard the clichés of Romantic verse to use the language of everyday speech. Occasionally in humorous verse, as in these lines from Colonial Couplets (1889) by G. P. Williams and W. P. Reeves, it is recognised that in fifty years New Zealand had developed an idiom of its own, very different from that of English people and English poets:

*Then there’s what we call a gully, which of course we take to mean
Just a small and narrow valley, in which bush is sometimes seen;
You perchance, were you a new chum, might describe this as a dell
Bushy gully suits me better, serves my purpose just as well.*

But even here the attitude is rather equivocal, as if the writers did not altogether approve the ousting of the English term by its rough colonial equivalent. Not for many years were New Zealand writers to use their own language with anything approaching self-assurance.

* The artists of this period are linked with the poets in their pursuit of a comparable ideal of beauty and in their probably unconscious avoidance of the New Zealand of pioneering, gold prospecting, and war.
More than the poets, however, the artists constituted a group, working almost exclusively in water-colours and seeking in the New Zealand landscape their common goal of 'the picturesque and the beautiful', to quote one of the number, C. D. Barraud. The acknowledged leader was John Gully who, after farming some years in Taranaki, crossed over to Nelson during the Maori wars and settled down to a long and prolific career dedicated to the painting of New Zealand scenery. Gully's work, though in a different medium, invites comparison with Domett's. Both were painstaking craftsmen, both achieved their effects not by sweeping strokes but by a meticulous piling on of detail, they both drew their inspiration from inanimate nature rather than from men, while Gully's enormous water-colours and Domett's prolix descriptive passages strike one alike as the *tours de force* of an ampler and more leisurely age than our own.

Gully's work has shown greater power of survival than Domett's partly because Gully was a greater poet—endowed with a more intense and more personal vision. In spite of his apparent aim of photographic naturalism, there is in the best of his paintings (for example 'Lake Te Anau' (1887) in the Dunedin Art Gallery and 'Mount Cook' (1872) in the National Art Gallery, Wellington) an ethereal lightness which completely transforms his subjects. These, we exclaim, are not so much representations of Mount Cook, or Lake Te Anau, or the Waimea plains as glimpses of
some romantic poet’s country of the mind, suffused with the serene colours of a mildly soaring imagination. Like most of his contemporaries (and differing in this respect from many earlier artists), he was not very sensitive to the colours of the New Zealand landscape and employed hazy blues and greens which would have been more appropriate in the old world. This practice, combined with his predilection for subjects on the grandest possible scale—towering mountains, unfathomable lakes, vast plains—lends his work a distinctive charm which is marred only when his pictures are hung in numbers, as in the National Art Gallery and in the Suter Gallery, Nelson. For then it becomes obvious how limited were his resources and how assiduously he repeated the same formula—detailed foreground, carefully disposed trees, and some gigantic natural feature receding into a hazy background. He was not an inventive painter, he was certainly not the local Turner of contemporary reputation, but he did convey the wonder felt by imaginative men before the magnificence of New Zealand, and his gilt-framed pictures in the drawing-rooms of the merchant and the squatter were a constant refutation of the view that mountains were only ‘good for sheep’.

Gully’s best-known contemporaries, in some respects his superiors, were two amateurs, J. C. Richmond and W. M. Hodgkins. Richmond’s favourite subjects were similar to Gully’s (they were
friends and accompanied each other on several sketching trips), but his work is less stereotyped, and he had a keener appreciation of local variations in contour and atmosphere. There is, for example, a striking difference between the Canterbury Museum ‘Ngatapa, Gisborne’ (1869), with its warm, blue east coast haze and tangled east coast bush, and the cold clarity of ‘Mt. Excelsior, Takitimu Range’ (1887) in the Dunedin Gallery. Richmond’s affinities are perhaps with Heaply rather than with Gully, and in his sensitive pencil sketches of the bush he continued the line of another early artist, Swainson. Hodgkins was less concerned with scenic beauties than either Gully or Richmond and showed greater emancipation both in technique and the use of colour. One of the virtues of his work is that it is not painted from some eyrie of the imagination. Hodgkins was not obsessed with size and grandeur, and his mild impressionism was a far more effective means of delineating the New Zealand bush than the method, more common at the time, of painting every leaf and stick. In his best picture (one of the most satisfying pictures of this period) ‘The Southern Alps’ (1885) the foreground of ragged bush is painted in with vigorous strokes, then follow in ever-receding perspective, a river valley and deep purple foothills, underlining the pure line of alps in the remote distance. This water-colour and the delightful ‘Gorse in Bloom’ (1894) hang in the Dunedin Gallery near the work of his more
famous daughter; the resemblances in technique are striking, and the brilliant pupil does not entirely out-shine her father and teacher.

Of the lesser artists who indefatigably scoured the country in search of ‘the picturesque and the beautiful’, the most active were C. D. Barraud, a conscientious but uninspired amateur, and Nicholas Chevalier, a visiting artist whose informal sketches are superior to his set pieces, with their romantic themes and exotic hues. Exotic also are the water-colours of J. C. Hoyte and of the Rev. John Kinder. Hoyte’s ‘Lower Harbour, Otago’ (1876) in the Dunedin Gallery is a New Zealand scene, pruned of its ruggedness, highly formalised, and so transformed to resemble a tranquil English lake and its surroundings. Kinder, who is well represented in the Auckland Gallery, retained in New Zealand the vision of a domesticated English countryside which he transferred, with odd but charming results, to his renderings of the New Zealand landscape.

And yet it is doubtful whether all the labour and exhausting travel and paint expended by these men accomplished anything comparable with a few water-colours by John Buchanan, who in his day aspired only to the humble designation of draughtsman. Before he arrived in Otago in 1849, Buchanan had been a pattern designer in Scotland and an amateur botanist. After the ups and downs of the average Otago colonist (he worked at one stage of course as a
gold prospector) in 1862 he found employment with James Hector as draughtsman-botanist, and during exploratory trips painted the handful of water-colours which now form part of the Hocken collection. Building up his pictures in a series of planes and using a simple range of colours—browns, grey-greens, and pale blues—he dispensed with the prevailing naturalism and placed the chief stress on forms and contours. The result is that his work has an impressiveness and a strength of composition almost unique at the time. ('Charming' and 'carefully arranged' are the epithets appropriate to the best work of his contemporaries.) In his finest water-colour, 'Milford Sound looking N.W. from Freshwater Basin', he suggests as no one else has done the stark, incredible grandeur of that natural prodigy. Except for the gaunt trunk of a dead tree, a gushing torrent, and a few other formal features, detail is absent, and the emphasis of the picture is placed on the superb lines and masses of the mountains, as they rise and fall. By comparison, the Dunedin Gallery 'Milford Sound' (1877) by John Gully, with its microscopically exact foreground and its tiny ship to emphasise the immensity of the mountains, is insipid and obvious. The fact is that Buchanan was free from the nineteenth-century Romantic conventions which so hampered his contemporaries, both the artists and the poets. This freedom was probably not of his own seeking and may have been due to the circumstances of his calling
JOHN BUCHANAN: MILFORD SOUND (c. 1863)

JOHN GULLY: MILFORD SOUND (1877)
and his lack of formal training in the arts; but none the less it enabled him to escape the tyranny of an imported tradition and to achieve a degree of emancipation found only rarely even among later writers and artists.
The Nineties

In the next clearly defined phase of New Zealand’s history, roughly bounded by the nineties, certain marked tendencies may be discerned, arising from a situation that is simply stated. It was now half a century since the beginning of organised colonisation, and pioneering (with some qualifications), gold rushes, Maori wars were receding into the past. In the South Island and older settled parts of the North the population, swelled by the Vogel immigrant and the gold-miner turned settler, was subsiding into comparative stability. By the beginning of the period small farmers and urban workers had displaced the squatters with their satellites as the dominant class, and had elected a government to give legislative expression to their needs and aspirations. Wealth, won from gold and refrigeration, had brought with it increased leisure, and both wealth and leisure were soon to be distributed more evenly by the new code of laws.*

*The year 1891 is memorable for a number of reasons: it saw the Liberals take office, the New Zealand Rugby Union founded, and (more fortuitously) the publication of Burke’s Colonial Gentry.
The easier conditions of life gave rise to what André Siegfried, the acutest observer of the period, was to term ‘snobbism’: in his own words, ‘Wealth came . . . there was general ease; society (in the narrow sense) began to flourish and to show less indifference to hierarchies and honours.’ But, on the other hand, there were stirrings of art and literature, chiefly among a small group of colonial-born men and women, romantically aware of their unique position as the first generation of a new state. ‘We stand in the parting of the ways,’ announced one of the ‘Young New Zealanders’ in 1899. ‘The young scion of New Zealand national life has begun to awake to a knowledge of itself.’ The clarion call was, in fact, a little belated. For by 1899 the force of the movement was largely spent, and the most distinguished member of the new generation, William Pember Reeves, had left for England, thus choosing his ‘way’ which was, generally speaking, to be the way for the next thirty years both in art and in letters.

Reeves’s career touched almost every side of the New Zealand of his day. The son of a well-to-do Canterbury public man, he was a pupil at Christ’s College, and then, following the custom among the more privileged at the time, was sent to Oxford to complete his education. Ill-health soon brought him back to New Zealand, where he took up law, journalism, and politics on the Liberal side. At the age of thirty he entered Parliament, becoming a member of
the first Liberal-Labour Cabinet. As Siegfried was quick to recognise, Reeves was the intellect behind the new legislation. It was he who formulated the code of industrial laws and devised the machinery of arbitration. And in his record as Minister of Education there are signs of a realisation that this work was only a prelude, a necessary adjustment of social and economic conditions before the higher aims of an enlightened democracy were pursued. For Reeves was more than politician and social reformer; he was a man of culture—'a brilliant and easy writer, a talented man of letters, and an occasional poet.' In *State Experiments in Australia and New Zealand* (1902) he gave the new nation a record of its achievements as a social laboratory; in *The Long White Cloud* (1898) he wrote its history with an easy charm that made it accessible to every citizen; in *New Zealand* (1898) he supplied it with a national song, proclaiming in resonant measures pride in its natural setting:

'God girt her about with the surges,
And winds of the masterless deep,'

pride in its democratic and equalitarian principles:

'Though little and latest their nation,
Yet this they have won without sword,
That woman with man shall have station,
The toiler be lord.'

pride in its humanitarianism:

'Where pity worn age shall environ
Where the young start abreast in their race.'
In his 'occasional poetry' (a just description of his minor but historically interesting verses) he also dramatised an issue which constantly recurs in the literature of the nineties. The New Zealander of 'A Colonist in His Garden' has opened a letter from an English friend who describes the mellow beauties of England, with its opportunities for a richer, ampler life, and urges him to leave those

'Isles nigh as empty as their deep,
Where men but talk of gold and sheep

A land without a past; a race
Set in the rut of commonplace.'

Reeves's ideal colonial self refutes these criticisms:

‘“No art?” Who serve an art more great
Than we, rough architects of State
With the old earth at strife?’

and elects to remain in New Zealand. This was the literary decision. In actual fact, Reeves left New Zealand in 1896, 'at once', according to Siegfried, 'found himself very much at his ease in the most cultured circles in London', and established himself there for the rest of his life.

Reeves was the intellectual leader of the new generation; its spiritual representative, the mouthpiece of its troubled adolescent soul, was Jessie Mackay, a native of Canterbury like Reeves. The unassuming preface to The Spirit of the Rangatira, published in 1889 when she was twenty-five years of age, contains the
first clear signs of national self-awareness. 'I am convinced,' she wrote, 'that the heart of young New Zealand, in these days, beats with the free, untrammelled pulsation of enterprise... and, side by side with this aspiration after culture goes the dawning of a national spirit...'. In this collection of ballads and in *The Sitter on the Rail* (1891) it is not always easy to disentangle the national spirit from the expression of Jessie Mackay's own decided views or from the Gaelic romanticism which she drew from her Scottish parentage and a wide range of reading. At any rate, hers is the voice of impetuous youth, burning with indignation at injustice and oppression, full of pity for the weak, scornful of both compromise and clogging common sense—a voice that is raised again, rather more stridently, in the feminist novels of the period. Ranging through history and her own Scottish heritage, she sang the praises of men and women who had lived and died for a cause—Hannibal, Charlotte Corday, Gordon, Henare Tarataoa of Gate Pa, obscure figures of Scottish or Scandinavian legend. Her faith is proclaimed succinctly in 'For Conscience Sake', where the speaker, who has chosen duty rather than love, asserts:

'It was better all as it was;  
That severed our ways should be on earth,  
All for a noble cause.'

With this lofty idealism is combined the humanitarian sentiment of the time, expressed in pity for oppressed
nations or minorities or in gloomy reflections on the inequalities of society and the sufferings of the poor. Most of the poems are about remote themes and people dead and gone. When her vision is focused nearer home and the ‘cause’ is presented in terms of prohibition and women’s rights, the effect is decidedly incongruous, and the verse becomes rough and jangling. She cared for these causes intensely and even passionately, but as poetic material they proved to be intractable. For at heart Jessie Mackay was an inveterate romantic, and, like most of her generation, her allegiance was uneasily divided between the world of her parents and her immediate environment. Mr Alan Mulgan has written: ‘It is significant that her most thrilling experience when she visited the Old World was to stand in the ruins at Tintagel.’ Though later in ‘The Noosing of the Sun-God’ she was to write one of the few successful verse renderings of Maori myth, at this period her Scottish peasants carry greater conviction than her Maoris, and she is more at home in Scandinavian mythology than in Polynesian. Courageous, sincere, high-minded, yet as a poet striving to give voice to a national spirit that was hardly yet in being, Jessie Mackay belongs in a native New Zealand literature to that ‘little gray company before the pioneers’ which was to form the subject of her best-known poem.

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The change which occurred in New Zealand letters with Pember Reeves and Jessie Mackay is even more pronounced in the novels of the nineties. These too mark the advent of colonial-born writers and with them departures from the hitherto dominant plot of emigration and pioneering. The remittance man and other stock figures of pioneer fiction, though they never wholly disappear, occur less monotonously, and themes emerge which indicate a people beginning, tentatively and often clumsily enough, to concern itself with the finer issues of living. Most of the novels, it is worth noting, were written by women; for women remained the chief diffusers of ‘light’, while the pioneer convention of a hard-headed masculinity continued to prevail.

Edith Searle Grossman, the most ambitious of the novelists, was one of those early graduates of the University of New Zealand, whose zeal and sense of apostleship, often combined with considerable erudition, had an appreciable influence on this decade. Her three earliest books were uncompromisingly didactic in tone, avowed weapons in the militant feminist campaign. ‘The following narrative,’ runs a note in the third, ‘is based on a study from the past, before the Woman Movement had raised the condition of women; and it is produced now in view of a strong reactionary tendency towards re-subjection.’ The crudely immature Angela: A Messenger (1890) illustrates, chiefly by implication, the narrow back-
ground of domestic life and Protestant nonconformity from which, as Siegfried noted, the allied feminist and prohibition movements derived their peculiar strength. In Revolt (1893) and its sequel, A Knight of the Holy Ghost (1907), belong to a later and more aggressive stage of the campaign, whose perservid atmosphere may be suggested by a typical passage: 'Ah, those early days of a great movement! who can bring back in later years the same intensity of life, the hope and faith, the enthusiasm we feel in thinking we see the redemption of the world coming visibly and by our hands? . . . To work, to suffer, and to rejoice for some great object—to Hermione this meant happiness.' It is easy to recognise how such a movement took the form of a crusade, and indeed Hermione, the persecuted heroine of these two novels, surrounded by her neophytes and finally driven to a violent death, has all the attributes of a martyr, even of a Messiah.

The feminist movement did not arise without reason, and in the colonial setting of these novels it is possible to trace some of its local origins. Hermione’s husband is a wealthy Australian farmer, popular and ostentatiously generous, but coarsened by an indulgent upbringing and the primitive life on his station—a life which the author describes with horrified fascination. Indeed, except for one tranquil episode in a European setting (devoted in the best feminist manner to prolonged debates on philosophy, religion, and art)
the books contain a succession of horrors. But they are not those of ‘synthetic’ melodrama, where a plot is deliberately manipulated to tantalise an audience. They belong rather to a kind of ‘raw’ melodrama which is based on genuine experience but not assimilated into the reasoned scheme of tragedy. It is evident that the author was a woman of refinement and education. Certainly no desire for notoriety or success based on a spurious ‘frankness’ impelled her to disregard the taboos of an outwardly puritanical society by writing of brutality, drunkenness, and the rest. It was as if the emotional disorders of the pioneer years, occasionally hinted at by a writer like Chamier, had in this generation and in this writer welled up to demand expression. Naturally too she was concerned with social reform, women’s rights, the vote; for these were the obvious remedies which presented themselves to a politically minded age.

The literature of prohibition seldom reaches the moral heights of Mrs Grossman’s feminist novels. In one of Jessie Mackay’s later poems, ‘Vigil’, the movement takes on the dignity of a struggle between forces of good and evil:

‘O my land, do you hear
The pure Presences pray
    For your life, for your soul?
Is it “Yea”; is it “Nay”?’

And Kathleen Inglewood’s novel Patmos (1905) occasionally reflects the same religious exaltation as
well as the rare virtue of humour. But more typical is a spirit of illiberal self-righteousness showing all the narrowness with none of the compensating depth of the traditions represented by *The Pilgrim’s Progress* and *The Scarlet Letter*. The novels are tracts in fictional guise, stuffed with trite moral tags, often taking the form of those gross texts once exported in bulk from America, and their prose is the merest tissue of clichés. If they show any development, it is a steady decline from the vigorous opening years of the cause to the time when it had become a matter of political lobbying and nation-wide propaganda.

*Ko Meri* (1890) by Jessie Weston occupies an intermediate position between the fiction of causes and Anne Glenny Wilson’s two novels of New Zealand ‘polite’ society. Its setting is a comfortable suburb of Auckland, where women occupy themselves in running households, paying calls, painting water-colours, and gossiping, much as they would have done in any English provincial town at about the same time. Yet they are provincials very remote from their centre, London, whither, as the author writes, their thoughts ‘ever gravitate’ as ‘the Mecca of the race’. For them the visit of an English cousin, with his news of relatives ‘at home’, is an event to cause flutterings and heart-burnings and to be celebrated by an endless round of picnics and parties, while the return trip to England is not to be undertaken without lengthy counsels and elaborate preparation. But there are
signs of a local independence. Two figures of mild fun are a headmaster and his wife ‘of course from England, facts which neither he nor his wife were likely to forget, nor allow anyone else to do so’, and, contrasting with them, two New Zealand girls ‘both hypersensitive about disparaging remarks with regard to the Colonies.’

However, the setting of the novel is purely incidental. This suburban group forsgathers not only for social pleasures but, in the manner of the nineties, for the discussion of politics, of social reform, and above all, of religion. Robert Elsmere looms oppressively in the background, and Mr Everard, a broad Churchman, is a figure cut very close to Mrs Humphrey Ward’s pattern. Prevented by doctrinal scruples from taking a parish, he is continually scourged by the thought of social evils and inequalities. He cannot enjoy the fresh beauty of New Zealand, for it serves only to remind him of ‘the thousands in Great Britain pining for fresh air and sunshine, cooped up in dense cities and miserable always.’ Then, among others, there is the half-caste Mary Balmain, sceptical about the conversion of her mother’s people: ‘the form of religion appeals to their fancy; the spirit they are utterly unable to comprehend.’ Intertwined with the theme of religion is one more local in its origin, the problem of the dying Maori and the conviction that the half-caste would inevitably return to his tribe. Mary Balmain, the heroine, is the daughter of an
Englishman and a Maori woman, who had left the child in its infancy to live with her own people. Mary’s guardians have given her a cultured and liberal upbringing which, with her wealth, has qualified her to take a place in Auckland society. She mixes on equal terms with girls of her own age and even wins the hand of a visiting English soldier. But she feels herself to be one of a doomed race and constantly reiterates this belief: ‘the blood of the Maori and the pakeha will not mix. Where the one plants his foot, the other fades into nothingness.’ It needs only a personal disaster, the death of her fiancé, for her to lose her civilised veneer and return to her mother’s tribe. To the entreaties of a friend she replies: ‘The night that has fallen upon my race has fallen upon me, and it is well that I should share the darkness with my own people.’

This conception of the Maoris as a people whose culture and possibly whose life were doomed to extinction was one which prevailed in the nineties. It may have influenced the founders of the Polynesian Society in 1892, and it is certainly implicit in Augustus Hamilton’s monumental *The Art Workmanship of the Maori Race in New Zealand*, the publication of which began in 1896. As a literary theme it attracted many writers besides Jessie Weston. Jessie Mackay touched on it in ‘The Spirit of the Rangatira’, as she did on almost every problem of her time. With the half-caste theme it was used by Harry B. Vogel in *A Maori Maid*
(1898), a first novel far superior to its title and showing a promise that was never fulfilled. It appeared in *Maoriland Stories* (1895) and *Tales of a Dying Race* (1901), those sardonic sketches of the Maoris by A. A. Grace, son of the Taupo missionary. Again it coloured the whole life work of the painter C. F. Goldie, whose many studies of aged Maoris did much to perpetuate this conception in later years when the Maoris were no longer merely ‘noble relics of a noble race’ (to adapt the title of one of his portraits in the Auckland Gallery), but were gaining self-confidence and a new hold on life.

From these troubled waters it is a distance to the polite haven of Anne Glenny Wilson’s two novels—*Alice Lauder* (1893) and *Two Summers* (1900)—which are concerned with the colonial gentry, Siegfried’s ‘snobbistes’. This small group of professional people and landowners, heirs of the squatocracy, is admirably described in the author’s own words: ‘Alicia’s circle and atmosphere had seemed to him hitherto too much and too consciously a copy of the English original; they were much the same as would be met in any small English centre, but tinned, as it were, and of rather provincial flavour at that.’ The description might also be applied to the novels themselves, which are colonial attempts at the comedy of manners. They contain a great deal of cultivated talk about music, politics, society, but the poise is uncertain and highly self-conscious. The pages are spattered with decayed
French words and phrases—noms de guerre, intime, mariage de convenance, affaire de cœur—the insignia of a naive and uneasily assimilated culture. The characters do not exist in the social vacuum traditional in this kind of novel, but constantly break through into the underworld of domestic cares and financial difficulties, or rise to the plane where people love in vain, where parents or children die and are mourned. Or occasionally the writer forgets her English manner and, like any untutored colonial, writes rapturously of the scenery of her country—which she is yet never so indelicte as openly to name. It is a curiously hybrid thing, this colonial monde of the nineties, and its local elements are thrown into relief when its members encounter the English original, as they frequently do in these novels. The comments on the English and their institutions are often adversely critical and pungently expressed. Of the English social poise the author writes: ‘It was the perfect understanding of an English county family of their own desirable situation in life, which gave them their effortless calm of demeanour, undisturbed by fruitless attempts at wit or entertainment’, and of the refinement of their palate: ‘As to the ordinary English mind the penalty of one day’s cold soup is almost more than can be borne.’ These comments are signs of differences and mild antagonisms felt even by the class of New Zealanders who deliberately modelled their lives on the English pattern. For the literature of the nineties,
like its legislation, is marked by a healthy spirit of independence, owing something to the Australian national movement, but more often, as in these novels, of independent origin. The years of abject deference to Europe were still to come.

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The emergence from pioneering conditions is nowhere more evident than in the public recognition of art during the late eighties and early nineties. In the southern provinces, peacefully enjoying the prosperity brought by gold and refrigeration, formal teaching in public art schools had begun long before, as early as 1870 in Otago and eleven years later in Canterbury. The seventies and eighties had also seen art societies formed in the main centres. But towards the nineties there is perceptible a more concerted attempt to provide the amenities which had, to a great extent, been neglected in the previous fifty years. The Auckland Art Gallery, built to house Sir George Grey's collection, was opened in 1888. Two years later the city had its local school of art. In Wellington the School of Design enrolled its first pupil in 1886, the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts was formed in 1889, and a gallery built in 1892. The art societies and schools of art in Canterbury and Otago were older foundations, but their first galleries belong to the same period—Canterbury's to 1889 and Otago's to 1890.
At the close of its first half-century, New Zealand was at least equipped with the institutions of art. The problem now was to fill the galleries and to train New Zealand-born students. The older artists, even had they been capable of meeting these needs, were dead or nearing the end of their careers, and clearly the pride of a new state would not be satisfied solely by the importation of art from abroad. A new stimulus was wanted. By a remarkable coincidence this came in the year 1890 with the arrival from Europe of two professional artists, Petrus Van der Velden and James McLachlan Nairn.

Van der Velden, the more forceful personality of the two, came to New Zealand in his maturity, at the age of fifty-four, after a varied and moderately successful career as lithographer and artist in his native Holland. He settled in Christchurch, and for the first time New Zealand had experience not only of the Bohemian artist but of the man for whom art was life itself. The strenuous discipline of craftsmanship which he preached to his pupils he himself practised. In preparation for painting the ‘Waterfall in the Otira Gorge’ (1891), now in the Dunedin Gallery, he spent six months at the gorge and made scores of studies in pencil, charcoal, water-colours, and oils. He never again equalled this impressive (even overpowering) canvas, with its superb effects of light and shade and gushing water. Much of his New Zealand work seems to have suffered through the deterioration of its
pigments, some of his pictures are melodramatic potboilers, and others, such as the National Gallery ‘Rock Study at Sumner’, can be dismissed by all but professional artists as mere technical exercises. In fact, with the exception of the Dunedin ‘Otira Gorge’ and a smaller study of the same subject in the National Gallery, his New Zealand work does not approach in quality the pleasing examples of his early painting in the Robert McDougall Art Gallery and elsewhere in Christchurch. When he came to New Zealand he was perhaps too old and too set in his ways to make great direct contributions to its art; but this very fact of age and experience, combined with his passionate and infectious enthusiasm, qualified him to act as the mentor of young artists. More than any other single person he made Christchurch the art centre of New Zealand, and he established a tradition of landscape painting and portraiture which has been continued by such Canterbury artists as Sydney L. Thompson, A. Elizabeth and Cecil F. Kelly, and Archibald F. Nicoll.

It was chiefly through Nairn that impressionism came to New Zealand. A member of the Glasgow School, he emigrated at the age of thirty-one and settled down in Wellington as instructor in art at the School of Design. His was a more placid temperament than Van der Velden’s, reflecting itself in the even competence of his work. If he never rose to the heights of the ‘Otira Gorge’, on the other hand he
JAMES NAIRN: HUTT RIVER (1892)
did not perpetrate anything as bad as the lowering, bilious landscapes of Van der Velden's weaker moods. Nairn was more concerned with reproducing effects of atmosphere and sunlight than with landscapes as such, and the influence of the impressionists and their associates (notably Corot) is normally more evident in his paintings than that of the New Zealand scenes which formed their nominal subjects. Even the figures he introduced into his favourite rural idylls were more nearly related to a European peasantry than to colonial farm-labourers. In these respects he changed little during the fourteen years between his arrival in New Zealand and his death. The National Gallery's 'A Summer Idyll' (1903), for instance, was conceived in exactly the same spirit as the McDougall Gallery's 'Hoeing the Crop' which belongs to his first years in the colony. His only work (at least in public galleries) with something like a native complexion is 'Changing Pastures' (1899) in the National Gallery, though here the dry clarity of the atmosphere and the gaunt, tattered trees seem to suggest the Australian landscape rather than our own.

Thus it is less as interpreters of New Zealand than as teachers that both Van der Velden and Nairn are important in the history of New Zealand art. With their arrival ended the phase of amateurs expressing themselves chiefly in water-colour and pencil sketch. From the nineties onwards New Zealand art becomes more varied, more sophisticated, more in touch with
movements abroad. This was, of course, due to social conditions rather than to the efforts of two individuals; the same development would have occurred without Van der Velden and Nairn. What they did was to hasten that development and to direct the untrained enthusiasm of young students into channels more profitable than it might otherwise have taken.

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The painters of the first New Zealand-born generation were perhaps more fortunate than the writers. A training in the elements of art is more easily imparted and acquired than instruction in the writing of prose and verse; and in any case no counterparts of Van der Velden and Nairn appeared on the New Zealand literary scene. Young writers were forced to work out their own salvation—in what manner and against what handicaps may be judged by a glance at The New Zealand Illustrated Magazine. This was founded in 1899 by a group of university graduates and public men in response to an ‘often expressed desire amongst patriotic literary men and general readers to have a Magazine with a distinctive New Zealand colouring, one which will have for its aims the encouragement of the best Literary and Artistic Talent which we have in our midst. . . .’

There is a melancholy interest in the early numbers of the Illustrated, with its eager theorisings about a national culture. New Zealand had come to the
parting of the ways’, so ran a manifesto in the first number. The self-consciousness of the nation had already asserted itself in ‘the political sphere’, but as yet its ‘literary instinct’ had been content to express itself through the forms of the old world. Still, the conditions for a literary renascence seemed ‘peculiarly favourable’. New Zealand’s pre-eminent natural beauty was there ‘to train unconsciously eye and mind to a perception of the beautiful’. Her insular position favoured the development of a national type and ‘that artistic creativeness which is the outcome of a strongly-impressed character.’ She had a past ‘not without its dangers and its honourable triumphs’. She had been continuously in contact with a remote stage of human development. Two things were required before a New Zealand literature would burst into flower: a public educated to the possibilities of a New Zealand literature and a medium in which the creators of that literature could exercise their powers. These needs were to be met by the New Zealand Illustrated.

It will be seen that the Illustrated took a serious view of its obligations, and despite the garishness of its cover and the general tastelessness of its format, the first volume makes a commendable showing. The chief defects are an academic heaviness in the articles and a flaccid sentimentality in the illustrations and verse. But the magazine soon lowered the exalted tone of its opening issues and degenerated into a
popular review crammed with short stories, articles, and snippets, selected—if they were selected—on principles of indulgent catholicity. If this were the wine of a new literature, one can only remark, it was being poured into oddly assorted bottles, many of them of doubtful quality. The only contributions of permanent value were articles on anthropology and history; and it is significant that of the many young writers represented in the Illustrated few except the anthropologists, the economists, and the historians (among them James Hight, Elsdon Best, Guy H. Scholesfield, James Cowan, and Johannes C. Andersen) were later to find a permanent niche in New Zealand letters. New Zealand had a good deal to offer such writers, but little for aspiring poets and novelists.

What has been said of the Illustrated applies, in greater or less degree, to all the literature of the nineties and the adjacent years—to the work of Arthur H. Adams, once the hope and later the disappointment of New Zealand letters, to the confident rhymes of young university students, to the verses of those who wrote in the shadow of Jessie Mackay. In all the work of the ‘Young New Zealanders’, with the exception of Reeves’s prose writings, there are signs of prematurity, as of people urgently striving to say something but without adequate means of self-expression. The writers were enthusiastic, often deeply in earnest, but they lacked poise and self-discipline. Moreover, they did not know enough. They theorised in terms of a
local, indigenous culture when expanding communications were abolishing, or at least modifying, that conception. They were too apt to assume that the beauty of their surroundings would, spontaneously and without effort on their part, be reflected in their prose and verse. Their minds were immature, their work provincial in its form and outlook. The fact was they lived in a society still inchoate. Unlike their fathers, they had not enjoyed the advantages of an upbringing in the old world, with its more stable traditions. The advantages of New Zealand were as yet of a different kind and not immediately helpful to young writers. So the literary movement petered out in frustration and indifference, and not until the nineteen-thirties was the clamour of nationalism again heard. For the next three decades literary New Zealand, like political and economic New Zealand, aspired only to be the most devoted offspring of the mother country, the least indistinguishable from her in form and outlook. Throughout this period the legislation of the nineties grew in esteem, while the parallel literary movement was forgotten, or remembered only in the figures of Pember Reeves and Jessie Mackay.
IN 1910 Edith Searle Grossman published her last novel, *The Heart of the Bush*. As its title suggests, it was a simple-seeming romance, placid in tone, restricted in setting, almost banal in plot—different in every way from the writer’s earlier novels, with their nervous, sometimes hysterical, manner and violent situations. *The Heart of the Bush* reflects the calm temper of the years which succeeded the troubled nineties, and, possibly without the author’s intention, it supplied a parable for those three expansive decades.

The heroine of the romance, Adelaide Borlase, is a New Zealander who, after being educated in England, returns to her father’s home in the back country of Canterbury. In the first part of the novel, ‘Between Two Hemispheres’, the heroine is shown attempting to adapt her acquired English self to colonial ways and surroundings. ‘I feel that I am transmigrating and am a compound of two beings’ she says, and once the first mood of exhilaration is past, she finds the farm and all about it ‘vulgar,
jarring, lowest middle-class’. For relief she escapes to a neighbouring sheep station, where things are done in the English manner, where the men ‘dress for dinner’, and an appropriate decorum is observed. ‘It isn’t very wicked to be impulsive, is it?’ enquires Adelaide of one of this household. ‘It’s un-English,” said Evelyn, with soft condemnation, stifling like a pillow.’

The conflict finally resolves itself into a choice between two men: a New Zealand-born farmer (‘His patriotism was local and narrow, but it was intense. He loved these mountains and these valleys as the Celt and the Gael love their misty islands and craggy hills.’), and an English nephew of the station-owner, sharply caricatured: ‘He could not imagine any form of bliss for people who had no hope of ever getting to London.’ This choice also involves one between the restricted lot of a small-farmer’s wife and ease in the English microcosm of the wealthy, with periodic visits to England itself. Adelaide finally chooses the New Zealander. But the novel does not end here; a further conflict has yet to be resolved. Her husband wishes to give Adelaide the wealth and luxury she has sacrificed in marrying him, and equipped with brains and energy, he soon attains influence as the force behind a refrigeration plant and a dairy factory. Preoccupied with these affairs, he neglects his wife, but at length the two see the situation in its true perspective, and the man returns
to that unambitious life of small-farming to which he is suited by inclination and temperament: 'Here he had been born, and here, if it had not been for his wife, he would have been content to do his life-work, and to die, and be buried.'

It is tempting to read this romance as a deliberate parable for the times. But whether or not it was conceived with didactic intention, The Heart of the Bush is of interest in showing the kind of themes which attracted a thoughtful woman who in her earlier novels had already discussed simpler problems. In some degree these had been settled, and more intricate questions—occasionally voiced in the nineties—were becoming insistent as the years went on. What were to be the standards of the New Zealand people as they took possession of the comfortable dominion built by their own efforts and those of two pioneer generations? Would prosperity be used merely to acquire more prosperity and material fripperies, or would it supply the conditions for a more civilised manner of life than had hitherto been possible? It was the ancient choice between God and Mammon, or, substituting local symbols, between Fitzgerald and Vogel. Closely related was a second question: Were the New Zealanders to continue in meek subservience to the standards of the old world, or should they essay the more difficult course of shaping their own life as a people?

Complex issues are perceived and dealt with more
easily by novelists than by societies; and it is the constant, never-resolved interplay of these opposed principles that lends interest to what would otherwise be the most depressing period of New Zealand history. It would be broadly true to say that New Zealand made a choice directly contrary to the one Mrs Grossman imposed on her protagonists—that its people elected to pursue the phantom of prosperity and the vain ideal of ‘more English than England’ rather than accommodate themselves to their own surroundings. Such a conclusion would receive some support from the writings of those who visited New Zealand in the wake of Siegfried. It is a conclusion fully documented in the ablest survey of the period, the last chapter of *New Zealand in the Making*, published in 1930, when the era of prosperity was drawing to its close, and written by J. B. Condliffe, himself a New Zealander. It is a conclusion which must, however, be modified, not so much in the light of a number of small exceptions (important though these are), but because each of New Zealand’s ‘two hemispheres’ was in this period to provide the conditions for the flowering of a major talent. Katherine Mansfield found herself only by escaping to England from the suffocating materialism of New Zealand. In the heart of that same New Zealand, actively engaged in its main industry, Guthrie-Smith wrote *Tutira*.

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One of the results of New Zealand’s origins in the steamship age was that within fifty years of its foundation the voyage ‘Home’ had become an established institution. It was accepted as such in the nineties, and by 1907 it bulked so large that the most considerable novelist of the pre-1914 years, William Satchell, made an overseas steamer the setting of a novel, *The Elixir of Life*. The passengers, who are returning to New Zealand by the Cape route, form a fairly typical group. There are a New Zealand cabinet minister, a young physician who has gone abroad to gain experience, tourists in search of scenery or health, emigrants crowded into the steerage quarters, and ‘colonists returning home from the long-anticipated European tour’. Had the voyage been made in the opposite direction, the list would almost certainly have included one writer or more, for from the time of B. L. Farjeon and Fergus Hume there had been a steady export of New Zealand talent which reached its greatest dimensions in the years after 1918.

The situation behind this drift to Europe was a complex one. There were cogent economic reasons why writers with ambitions beyond journalism should seek publishing facilities and a wider audience lacking in New Zealand; only in the recent past has the local publication of novels been at all common, and a London imprint still has far greater value in terms of cash and recognition. Again, writers sought in the old world more sympathetic and stimulating
surroundings than those of New Zealand. They migrated to London for the same reasons that Americans of the ‘lost generation’ migrated to Paris. Added to these were reasons the more powerful because they were intangible—reasons arising from the circumstances of New Zealand’s foundation and from its status as a colony. In the first years of its history the conception of New Zealand as a ‘Brighter Britain’ had taken shape, and already in the seventies Anthony Trollope characterised the New Zealander as ‘among John Bulls . . . the most John Bullish’. This imperial sentiment, fostered by successive political leaders and further strengthened during the Boer war and the war of 1914, culminated in the nineteen-twenties, when it found permanent expression in Alan Mulgan’s *Home* (1927). To a reader unfamiliar with the New Zealand idiom, ‘Home’ might have been thought to refer to the writer’s native country, since he had been born in New Zealand and had there grown to maturity. Such a misapprehension would have been quickly dispelled by a glance at the first chapter, where the word is defined at considerable length. The author mentions the powerful associations that gathered round it and describes the literary diet of his youth and manhood, concluding: ‘The trend of all this literature read desultorily and with no purpose, was to fix my thoughts ever on England. Nor do I suggest that my experience was unique or even exceptional.’
No New Zealander who grew up in the years centred in the war of 1914 would challenge the essential accuracy of this statement or its wide applicability. Education, reading, prevailing sentiment, economic interest—all turned the New Zealand writer’s thoughts and ambitions towards England; and, given the opportunity, it was to England he migrated. ‘To London. The Dream and the Fulfilment’, so ran the dedication to a novel of this period. A few of New Zealand’s literary émigrés were to learn in the conditions of exile a new understanding of their country. But the greater number quickly discarded all traces of their colonial origin, merged themselves in the English literary world, and devoted their talents to the cultivation of some current literary fashion or to the glorification of those circles of English life which they had come to regard as enshrining the social absolute. Lacking well-defined standards and equipped with physical energy and sufficient if limited education, some of these writers were well qualified to succeed in journalism and the underworld of English letters, but neither their country’s literature nor the world’s has been greatly enriched by their self-imposed exile. With only two notable exceptions, the single ticket to England (as distinguished from the return passage) has proved itself the entrance to a blind alley. It was, however, in the old world that New Zealand’s greatest imaginative writer found the conditions she needed for self-expression.
'New Zealand is in my very bones’, Katherine Mansfield once wrote, and the remark has a deeper meaning than she herself may have realised. Born in Wellington in 1888, she was of the second colonial generation, the member of a family whose story (given in a detailed biography by Ruth E. Mantz and J. Middleton Murry) epitomises that of British New Zealand. Forced to emigrate by a trade depression, her grandfather, Arthur Beauchamp, landed in New Zealand in the forties with a capital that consisted chiefly of New Zealand Company land-orders, the gift of an aunt. These proved to be worthless, and Beauchamp soon left for the Australian goldfields. His later career seems to have been adventurous and varied enough, but, from a worldly point of view, unsuccessful; he returned to New Zealand, started business as an auctioneer (attracting customers by ‘witticism and pun’), took up with gusto the early-colonial sport of politics, and was at different times store-keeper, saw-miller, and government valuer. Like so many of his generation, Arthur Beauchamp was a ‘character’—vigorouss, enterprising, blessed with the pioneer gift for rhyming and the power to recite Byron ‘for a solid hour and a half’—but erratic and unstable. It was left for his colonial-born son, the father of Katherine Mansfield and the Stanley Burnell of her sketches, to establish himself in the country and achieve the material success which allowed him to confer on his daughters the advantages
of an English education. Thus the Beauchamps passed through the successive stages of New Zealand social history—from pioneering to a prosperity which made possible an ampler way of life, modelled on that of England.

After three years at a London school, Katherine Mansfield returned to New Zealand in 1906, but not, according to expectations, as a ‘finished’ young lady ready for the social round of New Zealand’s capital. She came back unwillingly, and her adolescent years in New Zealand were dominated by the desire to flee from the provincialism of Wellington, ‘Philistia itself’, and return to London; ‘London—it is Life’ she wrote in one of her impassioned diaries, echoing a thousand young New Zealand writers. Finally, in 1909, she did return to England, from which point it is possible to trace from her published works the development of a talent that was to find its perfect material in the experiences of those early New Zealand years.

Her first published collection, *In a German Pension* (1911), a series of sketches set in Bavaria, is immature work, crude in more than a technical sense, but interesting in its anticipation of themes and types which reappear in her later sketches. The book illustrates for the first time that intense interest in foreign scenes and people* which is a marked but

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*The same kind of interest shows itself in occasional paintings by Frances Hodgkins. ‘My Landlady’ in the Auckland Gallery would illustrate perfectly some of the character sketches in Katherine Mansfield’s *Letters and Journal.*
not always successful feature of her work; she was here, as she remained even in so accomplished a story as ‘Je ne Parle pas Français’, very much the colonial on tour, with a keen eye for the picturesque or the sordid in the life of ‘those foreigners’, and with a habit of judging them by the rigid standards of her own upbringing. Some of her foreign pictures are, however, unforgettable, and where there is a lack of sympathy, as in this book, it is partly due to the ill-health which usually brought her to the Continent.

Contrasting with the slight sketches of pension life and the immature attempts at satire, there are two stories of greater substance, ‘A Birthday’ and ‘The-Child-Who-Was-Tired’. The former, in spite of a camouflage of German names, is clearly an early attempt to handle the characters and scenes of ‘Prelude’ and the other New Zealand stories. Stanley Burnell appears, under the label of ‘Andreas Binzer’, invoking ‘the government’ in characteristic New Zealand terms, and moving against a background that is undisguised and unmistakable. The picture of Binzer peering with disgust into a ‘gully’, filled with empty tins and fennel, and, as a result, composing ‘a letter to the paper’, is one that fits with ease into the New Zealand landscape, though scarcely into the Bavarian. The grandmother, the wife, the servant-girl are lightly but recognisably sketched, and we are introduced to the close intimacy of the New Zealand home, with its emotional cross-currents and small
antagonisms. The main theme—the conflict between sensitive wife and domineering husband, so much more subtly handled in ‘At the Bay’—is one that links Katherine Mansfield with the novelists of the nineties and may, in part, be derived from their pioneer or near-pioneer background.

‘The-Child-Who-Was-Tired’, like the later ‘Life of Ma Parker’ and ‘Miss Brill’, may also owe something to a colonial or, rather, democratic sympathy with the under-dog; an observant and sensitive child could not live through the humanitarian nineties without breathing in some of its prevailing sentiment. What is certain, however, is that the story provides the earliest evidence of Katherine Mansfield’s knowledge of Tchekov. Interpreted by Miss Mantz as ‘a symbol of her experience of life’, ‘her first effort to translate that experience into the form of art’, ‘The-Child-Who-Was-Tired’ is, in fact, a version of Tchekov’s story, ‘Sleepy’. She did not again attempt so close an imitation of Tchekov, but through his example she was helped to a solution of her problems as a writer and as an individual.

The work of the next eight years of experiment, posthumously collected in *Something Childish* (1924), begins with a group of New Zealand stories which seem to have occupied her during the years between 1910 and 1912. Three of them, ‘The Woman at the Store’, ‘Millie’, and ‘Ole Underwood’ are nearer approaches to what is usually expected from the
colonial author than anything else she wrote. The settings are usually in the backblocks, the types portrayed are uncouth and red-blooded, and the plots are appropriately melodramatic. The men, like the ‘strong’ characters of many sensitive women authors (Robin Hyde provided several examples), are uncompromisingly male, the women are quite as absurdly simplified, while both sexes speak and think in a bucolic dialect that only an educated person could have conceived. This was a part of New Zealand that she was ill equipped to treat, and wisely she abandoned it to more informed writers. It is in the two remaining stories of this group, ‘New Dresses’ and ‘The Little Girl’, that she is seen approaching her true métier, the sketch of childhood and adolescence based on her own memories; these are, in fact, the main links between ‘A Birthday’ and ‘Prelude’. In technique, in the handling of material, they mark a decided advance on the earlier work, and there is a related development in the range of her sympathies and in her knowledge of human beings: Andreas Binzer, that caricature of the domineering, egotistical male, begins to take on human form, frail though not villainous, as Stanley Burnell; the wife and the grandmother are no longer depressed drudges, but the more plausible managers and diplomats of a middle-class home. Compared with her later work, the two stories are slighter and more mechanical, while the traits of self-idealisation and self-pity
(assuming that Kezia and Helen are childhood portraits of the author) are far more prominent. The remaining stories of the volume (except ‘Carnation’ and two which were written after the publication in 1920 of Bliss) range through the Continent and the various strata of English suburbia and call for little comment: they are usually entertaining, occasionally forced, and (to adapt the editor’s curious note), few would have been reprinted had the author lived.

The next published work, Prelude (1918), in which she turned again to the scene of her childhood, shows an immense advance on anything previously attempted and the perfection of a form derived in the first place from Tchekov but now finally adapted to her own needs. Behind this return are certain facts of biography that help to explain the special quality of her later stories. ‘The war had come as a profound spiritual shock to her,’ wrote J. Middleton Murry in the introduction to her Journal (1927). ‘For a long period the chaos into which her thoughts and ideals and purposes had been flung remained unresolved. Then slowly her mind began to turn back towards her early childhood as a life which had existed apart from, and uncontaminated by, the mechanical civilization which had produced the war.’

New Zealand, the idealised New Zealand of her childhood, became a refuge into which she withdrew from surroundings that, with sickness of mind and body, became more and more distasteful. With ‘a
kind of possession’, an almost religious self-dedication that distinguishes her later New Zealand stories from those written before the war, she set about re-creating in minute detail the scenes and figures of her life in Wellington. Perhaps only one of her contemporaries or a member of her family can appreciate fully the exactitude of her descriptions and the superb way in which she recalled a Wellington in the awkward stage of transition from small town to city. Its buildings, its social gatherings, its proverbial wind, its smells and sounds and personages, even its special brand of snobbery (coming oddly from the creator of Ma Parker) are evoked with a wonderful fidelity. Over all is cast the rose-coloured haze of nostalgic recollection. The settings are frequently described at dawn or dusk or bathed in moonlight, and pervading the stories is a certain languorous serenity, intensified by the leisurely movement of the descriptive passages. In keeping with the settings are the incidents—for plots, in the accepted sense, are rare. These incidents belong chiefly to the world of children, where a night voyage, a seaside holiday, the removal of a household are portentous events. And when we examine it closely, the world of adults is little more complex or disturbing. The problems are never more serious than those of a tranquil household, the feelings rarely more intense than Beryl’s vague discontents or Linda’s recoil from her ‘Newfoundland dog’. Even in ‘The Garden Party’, where tragedy intrudes, it is tragedy,
intense but not very profound, as seen through the eyes of a young girl, bewildered by the ‘diversity of life’ and the necessity of fitting in everything, ‘Death included’, as Katherine Mansfield herself explained.

It was in handling this narrow range of experience during the last phase before her death in 1923 that Katherine Mansfield’s genius finally flowered. In the dozen or so New Zealand stories of these years she wrought, as Arthur Sewell* has finely said, ‘a new texture out of English words’, ‘she communicated a quality of emotional experience found nowhere else in literature’. She also realised the ambition, expressed in her Journal, of making ‘her undiscovered country leap into the eyes of the Old World’. New Zealanders are apt to regard this as the beginning and end of Katherine Mansfield’s achievement, when, in fact, the fame she won for herself and her country is the least important and perhaps the least permanent part of her contribution. She is primarily important to New Zealanders because she interpreted accurately and beautifully a segment of New Zealand life and a part of the New Zealand landscape. And to New Zealand writers she stands as an example of the self-dedication and the never-ending struggle towards personal integrity without which literature, in the highest sense, is impossible.

*In Katherine Mansfield: A Critical Essay (1936), one of the subllest pieces of criticism yet written in New Zealand, though erring towards idolatry.
Some of the disadvantages of New Zealand’s native hemisphere in this period may be illustrated from the work of two women writers who employed the same medium as Katherine Mansfield and who, at least in potentialities, were not immeasurably inferior to the author of *In a German Pension*. Alice T. Webb, the less sophisticated of the two, does not seem to have moved far beyond the confines of the rural and small-town life which she describes in a handful of sketches, *Miss Peter’s Special* (1926), and while the limitations of such an environment are apparent in the book, they have provided the right conditions for the expression of a slender though admirable talent. The writer’s materials are the scenes, manners, social recreations, and figures of a peaceful community, described with humour but without sentimentality. The writer herself is too much a part of that life to sentimentalise it, and yet she is sufficiently ‘emerged’ to penetrate it accurately and sometimes profoundly. B. E. Baughan, the second of these two foils, is a writer of wider interests and experience, capable of commenting: ‘Art comes at all times scantily to the back-blocks; and with what hope can Literature appeal to brains exhausted already by the exhaustion of the body? While, on the other hand, what have we in the place of these to exercise our higher faculties, and so give us, in addition to material existence, life?’ This quotation from a book of rural sketches, *Brown Bread from a Colonial Oven* (1912), indicates both the writer’s
strength and her weakness. The collection lacks those unpremeditated qualities which have passed into Miss Webb’s sketches, and there is a tendency to idyllicise and to moralise rather than to interpret. But Brown Bread also shows, as does Miss Baughan’s verse, evidence of a mind uniquely aware at this time of significant New Zealand themes and of related technical problems. She experiments in ‘Grandmother Speaks’ with the colloquial sketch (a form later to be used more successfully by Frank Sargeson), she treats the situation of the déraciné with sympathetic understanding, and draws an interesting if slightly sentimental portrait of a ‘civilised’ Maori. But the book remains, like Miss Peter’s Special, a series of exercises never followed up by more mature work; and this is the chief point of the comparison with Katherine Mansfield: that these two women, living and writing in New Zealand, were without the stimulus, the critical guidance, and the material advantages which enabled the callow apprentice of In a German Pension to develop into the author of Prelude. Along with many other first and last publications belonging to this period, these two books are evidence of the lack in New Zealand of all but the minimum conditions necessary for the creation of literature.

To persist as a writer in the face of discouragement or, worse, indifference required the unusual strength of character and tenacity of purpose of William Satchell, the only important novelist of the years
immediately before 1914. In his best novel, *The Toll of the Bush* (1905), and to a smaller extent in *The Land of the Lost* (1902) Satchell reveals himself as a very minor Thomas Hardy—his Wessex the north of Auckland, his people the settlers and wanderers of that district, urged on by a destiny resembling Thomas Hardy’s ‘President of the Immortals’, though less inexorably tragic in its dispensations. ‘The order of things is not changed in deference to human desire’, says Mrs Gird in *The Toll of the Bush*. ‘In the end we have to make up our minds to the inevitable.’ Like Hardy, Satchell was hampered by adherence to the conventions of nineteenth-century fiction, with its lining-up of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ characters and its reliance on coincidence, undelivered letters, and similar expedients, while his extensive use of the remittance man motif points back to a type of New Zealand novel which seemed to have died out in the nineties.

Satchell’s strength is not in his plots nor, for the most part, in his principal characters, but in his varied and authentically drawn minor personages and in his power of conveying the atmosphere of what is at once the most tropical and the most desolate part of New Zealand. For perhaps the first time in New Zealand fiction a setting is not described as for an outside audience or smeared on in daubs of local colour, but subtly informs the book, influencing the nature of the protagonists and their actions. Pervading
the two novels is a sense of vast natural forces which lends dignity to the efforts of man and at the same time places them in their perspective. It is one of Satchell’s achievements that he suggests this background while he does justice to the complex and sometimes very commonplace human scene. The heroes and the villains are drawn much according to an established formula, but there are many intermediate types, ranging from Andersen, the drunken weakling of _The Toll of the Bush_, to Hamilton, the mellow if occasionally irascible doctor in _The Land of the Lost_. In the interstices of the novels are packed many fragments of backblocks life, the product, like the minor characters, of a shrewd eye and a quick heart.

The wider setting of the next novel, _The Elixir of Life_ (1907), gave less scope for Satchell’s talents. Then, after an interval of seven years, came his best-known work, _The Greenstone Door_ (1914), a carefully written historical novel set in the period between the eighteen-thirties and the close of the Maori wars. Satchell had obviously gone to great pains to reconstruct the life of this time, and both his descriptions of ancient Maori customs and his portraits of historical figures (including one, highly idealised, of Sir George Grey), can be read with interest and some profit. As a novel, however, the book fails. Too much is described and explained, not enough presented through the interplay of characters and the development of action. The characters themselves are too wooden to carry much
conviction, the plot is more improbable and melodramatic than usual, and the Maoris do not rise far above the level of those in the novels of Wilson and White. Satchell is not successful in the presentation of Maoris even in his earlier work, where they are usually introduced to provide comic relief. Indeed, the only imaginative writer of this period who did anything like justice to the Maoris was William Baucke. In a collection of sketches, Where the White Man Treads (1905) he sets down, in rapid exuberant prose, sketches of Maoris met casually on expeditions, legends gathered at the hearth-side, debates, gossip, penetrating character studies, comparisons between the old Maori and his degenerate successors. To all this he adds his own incisive commentary and settles moral issues with all the expedition and finality of a backblocks philosopher. Elsewhere, with only rare exceptions, the Maori emerged in crude outline as an inferior version of Fenimore Cooper’s Red Indian or as a peg on which to hang some mildly salacious sermon on the half-caste problem. New Zealand society at this time was unable to focus itself; much less could it define and express its attitude towards a native race; and outside the work of anthropologists and the records of the Polynesian Society it was usually the fate of the Maoris to be exploited or sentimentalised.

Satchell’s work came to an abrupt close with the outbreak of war, but in the early post-war years the
north of Auckland again formed the scene of a group of novels by a writer of some distinction, Jane Mander. *The Story of a New Zealand River* (1920) and its successors are not so much a continuation of Satchell’s early work as a treatment of the same life on gumfields and in timber settlements from a feminine point of view which brought with it interests and preoccupations linking Jane Mander with Edith Searle Grossman and, more tenuously, with Katherine Mansfield. The first novel (probably, as the title suggests, written in the shadow of Olive Schreiner’s *Story of an African Farm*), has as its principal theme the gradual development of an Englishwoman who marries a colonial and makes her home in an isolated settlement in the Kaipara district. The delicately nurtured Alice Roland (who, as her daughter Asia remarks, ‘loves everything that comes from England’) is ill-equipped for such a life, and her situation is not improved by the complete lack of sympathy between herself and her able but uncouth husband, ‘the boss’. She finds relief and guidance from three sources: from her neighbour, Mrs Brayton, who has established a corner of England in the wilds of Kaipara; more dangerously, from her husband’s foreman, an English remittance man doctor; and from Asia, who represents the emancipated generation brought up in colonial surroundings and with the benefit of George Bernard Shaw’s teachings. Finally
a solution and a happy ending are found (a little crudely) in the boss's heroic death.

The defects of the book are an excessive emotionalism, which sometimes brings it down to the level of a novelette, and the occasional falsity of the plot. Superior in these respects is *Allen Adair* (1925) in which the situation is more convincing because it is more banal and at the same time more serious. The central figure of this novel is the son of middle-class parents, who, thinking to establish him in life, determine, in spite of his opposition, to send him to Oxford: 'A son at Oxford. Quite exciting. And they were much annoyed when Allen shrank from the prospect. . . . Not want to go to Oxford!' The Oxford experiment fails, and Allen finds himself only when he returns to New Zealand and, to his family's chagrin, settles down as a storekeeper on the gumfields. The struggle between middle-class ambition and his own desire for a life of placid mediocrity reaches a more acute stage when his city-born wife, a devoted mother and an efficient housekeeper but vain and thoroughly material in her outlook, urges him to return to the city. There is no 'happy ending' to this book which closes on the more plausible note of stalemate and partial compromise.

Besides the interest they have in the exploration of the problems of pre-war and post-war society, Jane Mander's novels have what may be termed a 'documentary' value. Each one is built up round some
occupation or industry: the scene of the *New Zealand River* is a timber-milling settlement; the heroine of *The Passionate Puritan* (1922) is a country school-teacher; small-town journalism and politics form the background of *The Strange Attraction* (1923), store-keeping and gum-digging of *Allen Adair*. In thus bringing New Zealand fiction into closer touch with the social environment she not only made a positive contribution but cleared the way for several writers of the nineteen-thirties. Credit is also due to her for introducing a freer and healthier tone into New Zealand letters. As Jean Devanny was to do in a more lurid way, Jane Mander broke many of the taboos which had been too studiously observed by New Zealand writers, though not by New Zealand society. For her temerity she was the object of hostile criticism which, it is said, ended her career as a New Zealand novelist. This was the more regrettable because in all four of her New Zealand novels, and particularly in the first and the last, there are clear signs of that ‘something fresh and sturdy’ which, in the course of a rather grudging review, Katherine Mansfield discerned ‘under all the false wrappings’ of the *New Zealand River*.

Again the stress falls, as so often in this period, on the limitations of the New Zealand environment. But while imaginative writers were succumbing to indifference or to hostile criticism, a distinctive literature, the work of New Zealand-born writers and
chiefly historical and anthropological in substance, was assuming impressive proportions. In the nineties, it has already been seen, there was evidence of a growing interest in New Zealand’s past, stimulated, in some degree, by colonial and provincial jubilees. A further incentive was the realisation that both Maoris and Europeans of the older generation were dying out and with them oral records of the past. The foundations of a local scholarship owed little to the University of New Zealand, but were due chiefly to the efforts of disinterested men, usually self-trained and often hampered by lack of means and the most elementary facilities for research. It is a scholarship which inevitably reflects these circumstances: it sometimes leans too heavily on the oral reminiscence and may, on occasion, exasperate through its blithe disregard of source and reference; on the other hand, it has the colour and concreteness gained from direct contact with repositories of history, while it shows the zest of work undertaken not for gain nor as academic labour but from deep-rooted, even passionate, interest in the past. It is impossible to review here the voluminous writings of S. Percy Smith, Elsdon Best, T. Lindsay Buick, and their associates and successors, but the interests of this group, as well as scientific interests of much earlier origin, were to unite in one work of the period, Tūīra (1921).*

*A second edition was published in 1926 and a third was in the press when the author died in 1940.
Tutira was entitled ‘The Story of a New Zealand Sheep Station’. Such is the originality of its conception, such the nature of its implications, that it forms, in little, ‘The Story of New Zealand’.

In the light of theorisings about a ‘native’ culture it is a little curious to reflect on the circumstances in which appeared New Zealand’s most distinctive work of literature up to that time. Contrary to the assumptions of prophets in the nineties, Tutira owed nothing to a deliberately national movement; its author worked in virtual isolation, and although he was clearly not independent of contemporary influences, they reached him, as it were, ‘subcutaneously’. Nor was Tutira an ‘imaginative’ work, enriched though it is by qualities which both poets and novelists might well envy. Finally, its author was not, in the strictest sense, a New Zealander—thereby, perhaps, escaping the worst effects of a ‘mother fixation’ which seemed to assume its most virulent form in native-born New Zealanders. H. Guthrie-Smith was born in Scotland, received his formal education at Rugby, and came to New Zealand in the early eighties. After gaining some experience as a cadet in Canterbury, he took up a derelict sheep run in northern Hawke’s Bay. This run, Tutira, remained his home for the rest of his long life and formed the subject of his first and greatest book.

As originally planned, Tutira was to have described only the natural history of the run. Later, to the great good fortune of his readers, Guthrie-Smith extended
its scope to include ‘chapters on physiography, native life, pioneer work, and surface alterations’. Thus Tutira goes far beyond White’s *Natural History of Selborne* and traces the history of a fragment of New Zealand from the hypothetical era of its immersion in the sea until the time when it was occupied and precariously subdued by European man. Most of the book is taken up with that relatively brief moment of time since the arrival of man, but the early chapters, with their account of the geology, physical features, climate, and general configuration of the Tutira area, are interesting in themselves and intimately connected with what follows. As the author remarks of two intimidating pages of tabulated returns: ‘These details of rainfall have been given not merely as meteorological data of an impersonal sort; the climate of Tutira has deeply affected the fortunes of the station. . . . excessive rainfall has been the bane of the place, retarding its development by years.’ To which is attached one of Guthrie-Smith’s characteristic footnotes, compressing in a couple of sentences the ethos of the New Zealand farming community: ‘One observer whose case I recall was requested by neighbours to cease to forward his returns. “Science may be right enough, perhaps, in the proper place,” they declared, “but he was ruining the district and hampering settlement with his blessed rainfalls.”’

The Maori section, corresponding to White’s *Antiquities*, reconstructs the period of native occupation
with the patience, the assiduous attention to
detail, and the comprehending imagination that
characterise the book. Though he would not have
claimed to be more than an amateur of anthropology,
Guthrie-Smith made positive contributions both to
anthropological technique and, in a smaller way, to
Maori lore. His narrowly local method was the
perfect one for the study of a people who, in their
primitive state, were not a nation but a number of
tribes and sub-tribes confined, for the most part, to
limited areas. No other writer, except Elsdon Best,
brings out so well and so concretely the organic
nature of Maori culture—the close connection
between locality, occupation, climate on the one
hand and tradition, poem, and folk-tale on the other.

When man enters for the second time, the longest
and most interesting part of the book begins, the
account of the acclimatisation of Europeans on
Tutira—European man and the birds, animals,
insects, plants that followed in his wake or preceded
him. Man, the author explains in his preface, is to be
treated as ‘a beast of the field’: ‘The early failure of
homo sapiens on Tutira, his ultimate acclimatisation,
has been noted, as far as may be, in terms of the
weasel or the rabbit.’ The qualification is necessary,
for the adaptation of man proves to be a long and
complex process; it involves the acquisition of busi-
ness experience, the ability to handle a tribe of Maori
landlords, and sufficient shrewdness to circumvent
sinister loan-sharks in the town near by; more important, it means the attainment of an intimate knowledge of the run—its soil, its climate, its bearing capacity, its suitability for this or that breed of sheep. Guthrie-Smith comments on the failure of the first owners: 'The truth is, that from the beginning these pioneers were doomed—they were predestined—to failure. Conditions in the interior were in those days quite unknown; knowledge of local conditions—the most important knowledge of all—had to be purchased.'

In his descriptions of the New Zealand bush the author has already shown himself to be something of a poet. Signs of the latent novelist now appear. Despite the professed aim of studying *homo sapiens* in terms of the weasel or the rabbit, the story of early failures and ultimate success on Tutira is told with humour, understanding, and imagination. For example, Guthrie-Smith sees behind the rough jottings of a farm diary a picture of 'smoky huts lit by candles guttering in the draughts, the writer, with hard hands and broken nails, rising from time to time to turn the frizzling chops, to prong the simmering joint, or to pile fresh embers on the lid of the camp oven.' The same power of discerning the manifold associations which surround an object is again seen when Guthrie-Smith turns to consider the aliens of Tutira, the plants and animals brought to the station deliberately or by chance. A clump of mint on the
site of a deserted pa, an aged grove of peaches, a patch of ryegrass—these and other ‘children of the church’ are traced back (here with the addition of an anecdote, there with a vividly described scene) to the Bay of Islands, whence they were dispensed by missionaries, neophytes, and scholars. The progress of the blackberry, ‘that fatal and pernicious plant’, is reconstructed as a master-detective might some ramifying conspiracy. And so, with the method and the emotions appropriate to each, Guthrie-Smith treats the many aliens with which man in his wisdom and his ignorance has planted a hitherto virgin tract.

When European settlement of New Zealand was beginning on a large scale, Dieffenbach had reflected: ‘What a chain of alterations . . . takes place from the introduction of a single animal into a country where it was before unknown!’ It was New Zealand’s good fortune that one of her later colonists was superbly equipped to observe and record this basic phenomenon—basic because it is, in essence, the phenomenon of colonisation itself. For some forty years Guthrie-Smith noted the results of each fresh impact on his chosen area and the gradual, never-completed process of adaptation which followed. As he well knew, it was a process to which man was subject no less than the rest of nature, and Guthrie-Smith no less than other men. Not the least interesting theme of Tutira is the transformation of the young Scot who originally took up land hoping that it would ‘provide after
a few seasons easy enlargement of . . . minds and fortunes, endless rivers, moors, and forests in Scotland.’ The change of outlook is made explicit in Guthrie-Smith’s tribute to ‘his dear adopted land’ on the last page of Tutira; it is implicit in the whole book. The exile had become a New Zealander — a New Zealander in accord, as few have been, with his country in all its diversity of land and water, plant-life and animal-life, nature and man.

In the course of time Tutira did provide some enlargement of fortune, a considerable part of which Guthrie-Smith devoted to a more extensive study of nature (particularly bird life) than was possible within the confines of Tutira. The results of these excursions to many districts of New Zealand and to some of its outlying islands were published in a series of books which closed in 1936 with Sorrows and Joys of a New Zealand Naturalist. Though they cannot compare with Tutira in breadth of scope and originality of conception, these pleasantly discursive volumes add not only to the knowledge of New Zealand nature but to the portrait of Guthrie-Smith. Increasingly with the years he indulged a reflective bent—part serious, part dryly humorous—already manifest in Tutira, but expressed in fuller terms in the masterly opening chapters of the Sorrows and Joys. There he looked back, as a naturalist, on the history of New Zealand from the time when, in ‘the landing of Cook, nay in the momentary glimpse by Tasman of that “large high lieing land” ’, 
came ‘the seeds of death’ to this country. Reproaching himself for his share in the ‘ravishment of the Dominion’ he concludes: ‘Only that it is impossible for any individual to withstand the stream of tendency, to divaricate from lines aeons ago laid down must be the writer’s partial exoneration.’ So Guthrie-Smith called the shades of determinism to his aid. Seeking some further atonement for its crimes, European civilisation in New Zealand might point to a few of its finer products, among them the works of Guthrie-Smith himself.

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The basic cleavage in New Zealand life during these years shows itself again both in painting and in poetry. As early as 1886 pupils of the Dunedin School of Art had left for London ‘to complete their studies’, and at the beginning of the nineties, reported a writer in the New Zealand Illustrated, three New Zealanders were among the students at Julian’s Academy in Paris. For the next forty years pupils from the local schools of art continued to go overseas in a steady stream, to which the war of 1914-18 added a small tributary. Usually, after gaining experience abroad, the artists returned, and New Zealand art during this period was dominated by a group of men and women who had studied in the art centres and galleries of Europe. Occasionally a painter, like Sydney L. Thompson, divided his allegiance between the two hemispheres,
while a few, of whom the most notable are Frances Hodgkins and David Low, established themselves permanently abroad.

Returning with improved technical equipment and the *cachet* of Paris or London or Edinburgh, the artists found conditions more hospitable and at the same time perhaps more restrictive than those which had existed in any earlier phase of New Zealand history. Teaching provided a modest but assured living for some, and patronage came from galleries, now attracting occasional endowments, from an increasing class of ‘art lovers’, and from those men of substance who wished to adorn their homes and to perpetuate their families within the limits of accepted taste. The years between 1900 and 1930 are, in New Zealand art, the period of the studio and its two characteristic products, the portrait and the still life.

Portrait-painting in New Zealand, no less than portrait-painting elsewhere, has its peculiar dangers and limitations; many of the canvases hanging on the walls of New Zealand homes and galleries cannot be regarded as more than tributes to civic virtue or expressions of domestic affection and very human personal vanities. In spite of the restrictions imposed by public and private commissions there is, however, a residuum of portraits which, through their revelation of character and their more formal qualities, justify the continuance of portraiture in an age of photography. One may cite, for instance, the work
of two Christchurch artists, A. Elizabeth Kelly and Archibald F. Nicoll. The more mature portraits which have brought Mrs Kelly recognition beyond New Zealand are not in public collections, where she is represented as the portrayer of youth. The National Gallery’s ‘May’ and ‘Youth’ in the McDougall Gallery are incarnations, in another less complex medium, of the eager young womanhood so often found in Katherine Mansfield. On the other hand, ‘Lady Stout’ and ‘G. Harper, Esq.’, in Wellington and Christchurch respectively, suggest that Nicoll is at his best in treating old age. These two contrasting studies, handled with penetration and great technical skill, go beyond the mere individuals to suggest, as good portraits often do, the circumstances and the people who have helped to shape those individuals.

Standing outside the category of commissioned work are a few paintings by A. H. O’Keeffe, most of C. F. Goldie’s extensive œuvre, and H. Linley Richardson’s studies of the Maori as he was. The finest of O’Keeffe’s paintings in public galleries is ‘The Defence Minister’s Telegram’ (1921) in Dunedin, an impressive piece of work, poignantly recording one aspect of the war as it touched New Zealand. Goldie’s portraits, highly accomplished, almost photographically exact, now have a slightly archaeological flavour to a generation which has seen the Maoris turn from sad retrospection to a vigorous reconstruction of their present. Some conception of the new
C. F. GOLDIE: THE WIDOW (1912)

FRANCES HODGKINS
MAORI WOMAN AND CHILD (1901)
resurgent Maori is conveyed in the work of Walter Wright, in D. K. Richmond’s ‘The Idlers’ (1905), now hanging in the Timaru Library, and most strikingly in the National Gallery’s ‘Maori Woman and Child’ (1900) by Frances Hodgkins. The two Maoris in this water-colour—the mother, with her expression of warm friendliness, the baby, with its liquid Polynesian eyes, peeping from the folds of a garish blanket—are representatives of a people very much alive and as cheerfully confident as were Gilfillan’s Maoris half a century before.

One of the results of overseas training, a rise in the level of purely technical competence, is seen in the still-life work of such painters as D. K. Richmond and M. O. Stoddart. The lustrous zinnias of Miss Richmond and Miss Stoddart’s roses have become part of the tradition of New Zealand painting, as representative of the taste and achievement of their time as Gully’s landscapes are of his. To make a broad generalisation, less true of Miss Richmond than of Miss Stoddart and most of her contemporaries, painters at this time selected a narrow range of subjects to which they returned in painting after painting. They were less catholic than their immediate predecessors, selected rather less ambitious subjects, and concentrated on solving technical problems raised within the chosen bounds. This applies to landscape as well as to still life and portraiture. Thus Nicoll, as a landscape painter, is associated with
autumnal settings in which haystacks usually have a prominent place, Nugent Welch with scenes of cliff and sea and an amplitude of sky, Sydney Thompson with the life on farms and quay-sides, conveying an aroma of Concarneau and Brittany even when the locality is New Zealand.

In the most distinctively New Zealand work of the period, the numerous paintings of mountain scenes, a similar contraction in scope and a similar stress on craftsmanship are noticeable. Artists rarely attempted the comprehensive panoramas of an earlier day, preferring to treat the selected scene at close quarters, each artist in his own manner. A. E. Baxter’s ‘Mount Eliott and Jervois Glacier’ (McDougall Gallery) and Cecil F. Kelly’s ‘Mount Cook’ (National Gallery) both show vigorous handling and a cleanness of line. But no other artist succeeded so well in painting New Zealand mountain and bush as Alfred W. Walsh, who, alone among the leading artists of these years, had no experience abroad. Like Buchanan before him, he was by training a draughtsman, and by assiduous study of nature, with perhaps some help from the work of W. M. Hodgkins, he achieved over the New Zealand landscape a mastery which is only imperfectly shown by the McDougall Gallery’s ‘In the Otira’—for the best work of this truly indigenous painter is in private hands. The achievement of Walsh raises a question fundamental in a consideration of this period. It may be doubted whether the stimulus
of Paris or a training at the Slade were indispensable prerequisites to a career in New Zealand art. Sometimes, it is evident, they led to a confusion of aims and an evaporation of self-confidence such as Henry James observed in Americans who had crossed the Atlantic to learn from the old masters. Both human nature and art are full of complexities, and there can be no one answer to this question, no all-embracing generalisation; but the example of Walsh does make it possible to say that a talent such as his, drawing its strength from familiar surroundings, could reach maturity in New Zealand, and would, almost certainly, have suffered fatally by transplantation.

The same general problem is raised by the poetry of these years, though more indirectly and in a more acute form. Few New Zealand poets were in a position to embark on the voyage 'Home', still fewer emigrated permanently, but all—or nearly all—were in one degree or another spiritual exiles. Not infrequently they indulged in nostalgic dreams of the old world. They found it more natural to use the traditional language of English poets than the very different idiom of their own country. The swallow and the nightingale came to their minds almost as readily as the fantail and the tui—and the tui was sometimes no more than a nightingale in New Zealand garb. Physically they remained in New Zealand; as poets they dwelt twelve thousand miles away. The reasons for the poetic malaise of the
nineteen-hundreds and nineteen-twenties are not far to seek. As the most delicately constituted members of the community, poets were more sensitive than others to the dominant emotion of their time, an emotion that was strengthened by their almost complete dependence on English literature. For the dangers inherent in New Zealand’s colonial status were most noticeable in the very period when the country became a Dominion and acquired an indeterminate measure of nationhood. That the Bowens and Dometts should read and write as Englishmen was natural, indeed inevitable; though they had set up homes in the antipodes they were, after all, still Englishmen. For New Zealanders, sometimes of the second colonial generation, to visit in their literary excursions solely a region of scenes, images, and ideas not merely foreign to them but, in some respects, contrary to the facts of their experience — this was different and more dangerous. The most serious effect was not, however, the occasional confusion of seasons in the minds of young readers but the creation of an abstract, idealised, often sentimentalised ‘literary’ world, remote from both poles of reality, the English writer’s and the colonial reader’s. This was the imaginative world of all but a few of New Zealand’s versifiers and poets in the years under review.

It was symptomatic of the times that poetry tended, after the nineties, to become increasingly ‘private’.
The work of Jessie Mackay and Pember Reeves had its limitations, but much of it did at least spring from interests shared by all New Zealanders. Their successors, quite comprehensibly, found little to inspire them in the spectacle of New Zealand’s increasing prosperity. So they turned either to the trite exaltation of natural beauty or inward to the examination of feelings which, in the absence of literary distinction, could have little more than a personal reference. Thus New Zealand poetry retired into the isolation it had known in the years of ‘opening up’. But the robust self-assurance of Domett and his fellow-writers had vanished. The poetic flood now dried up to a thin trickle of lyric verse, sonnets, triolets indicative of a final stage in the exhaustion of the Romantic tradition. When an external influence made itself felt, it was in the pre-war years the degenerate classicism of trans-Tasman Bohemians and later the work of Rupert Brooke, not without its virtues in expressing a phase of early-Georgian England, but wholly disastrous to its colonial imitators.

That the poets were wholly sincere and wholly disinterested there can be no question. The returns from their labour were too meagre for any other conclusion to be possible. It is also quite clear that this view of the poetic landscape is true only in its general outlines; apt turns of phrase, flashes of wit and imagination, a few wholly satisfying poems modify the picture of unrelieved mediocrity. And even in the
pre-war years, notably in two collections of verse by B. E. Baughan, there are signs of fresh life and experiment. The use in *Reuben* (1903) of a colloquial ballad form, borrowed from Australia, showed a desire to break with the prevailing conventions, and in *Shingle Short* (1908) Miss Baughan came to grips with local material in several interesting experiments. The title-piece is a lengthy rhymed monologue, written in a hybrid dialect of New Zealand rural slang and literary Australianese, and placed in the mouth of a half-wit:

‘Thank God for this ungodly rain!  
Paddock’s a puddle, creek’s in flood,  
Road’s like a river mix’d up rich—  
Pea-soup, treacle, pudd’n an’ sich—  
Reggular marmalade o’ mud.’

It is obvious that this is too deliberately colloquial, too consciously masculine, and sustained through some thirty pages and combined with pseudo-philosophical trimmings, it becomes extremely monotonous. It is, however, of great interest as an early attempt at stylisation in terms of New Zealand rural idiom and domestic imagery. The same originality is shown in several other poems of the collection and even where the form is traditional a shoot of new life may be seen breaking through the old integument. Something similar might be said of Whitman’s early work, and Whitmanesque (though not derivatively so) is the closing invocation of ‘Maui’s Fish’.
'Alive! Yea, Te Ika—
Of the Bone of the Past, of the Blood of the Present,
Here, at the end of the earth, in the first of the Future,
Thou standest, courageous and youthful, a country to come!'

This frontal attack on the special problems of New Zealand verse cannot be paralleled among native New Zealanders—for Miss Baughan, like Guthrie-Smith, had the advantages of birth and education in Great Britain. England was to her a reality, not a dominating abstraction, and her boldness stands in marked contrast with the conservatism of the two New Zealand-born successors of Reeves and Jessie Mackay.

The affinity between Reeves and Alan Mulgan is shown in their strikingly similar 'The Passing of the Forest' and 'Dead Timber', more indirectly in the younger writer's occasional handling of genuinely apprehended local themes. For example, 'Soldier Settlement' is inspired by a social conscience more in evidence in the nineties than in the easy-going years that followed:

'Haggard he looks about his world—
The leaning shack, the broken fence,
The little flag of green unfurled
Before the forest's walled defence'.

The theme of these verses, like that of Golden Wedding (1932), a pleasant descriptive poem in rhymed couplets, is indigenous enough, but in both cases one feels that the form is not well chosen and, moreover, not thoroughly acclimatised. A pervading unsureness
of touch and lapses into self-conscious magniloquence betray the writer's loose control of his medium and, perhaps, his inhibiting sense of the prestige of English literature.

Eileen Duggan, the poetical heir of Jessie Mackay and the most promising talent to appear in the immediate post-war years, seems also to have suffered from a feeling of New Zealand's insignificance and remoteness. 'New Zealand Art' in Poems (1937) begins:

'We are the wheat self-sown
Beyond the hem of the paddock,
Banned by wind from the furrows,
Lonely of root and head'.

In her Poems (1921) she struck a more confident note than this; the New Zealand of her 'Two Lands' was

'a restless, daring child
That thirsts to drink up life and scale the stars;
Her parted lips and wondering eyelids chide
The world's gnarled wisdom and its mystery.'

Several poems in this first collection gave some justification for Jessie Mackay's hope (typically self-effacing) that Eileen Duggan and Robin Hyde might between them 'lay the foundation of a New Zealand literature.' The sensitive young poet revealed in the collection did, in fact, share a great deal in common with Jessie Mackay—a hatred of tyranny, sympathy with the weak and the oppressed, and devout religious feelings that corresponded to the more diffused humanitarianism of Jessie Mackay. Ireland and Irish
legend had the place in her work held by the Scottish element in Jessie Mackay’s, while an interesting use was made, often in a religious context, of New Zealand words and imagery.

Eileen Duggan’s later work has shown continuous development, though in some respects the early promise has scarcely been fulfilled. With a loss in vigour, there has been a progressive refinement of sensibility, seen in the felicity of

‘The tussocks were brittling from dew into frost.’

or

‘The great Pacific salt so steeps our air
That noon-tide burns it to a driftwood blue.’

But her sensibility is one that is expressed more often in single lines and phrases than throughout whole poems, and she is sometimes unable to discriminate between the apt image and the forced conceit. Like some of the New Zealand birds, about which she has written with such charm, she has a lyrical gift capable of short flights and, on occasion, falling abruptly from the note of music to the unintended discord.

As a ‘national’ poet in the sense probably intended by Jessie Mackay, Eileen Duggan has gone farther than any other writer of recent times in drawing on Maori words and mythology and the personages and events of New Zealand history. This element of her work is most fully developed in New Zealand Poems (1940) which opens with a ‘Centenary Ode’, essaying the difficult task of celebrating New Zealand’s history
from the time of Kupe. There is scholarship in the ode and a profound, almost mystic feeling for New Zealand, expressed more eloquently elsewhere in the volume in ‘The Charting’. The conclusion, however, is inescapable: Eileen Duggan’s work is not a beginning but a refined and beautiful close to a long chapter in the history of New Zealand writing. In her own delicate fashion and adding her own unique contribution, she has summed up the achievement of a line of New Zealand poets. New Zealand Poems fitly consummates the desire for a ‘national literature’ seen in Jessie Mackay and even before her. As a possible point of departure for the future it cannot, however, compare with several other publications of New Zealand’s centennial year.
The phrase 'coming of age' has perhaps been linked too loosely in the New Zealand mind with the accomplishment of a century's history. Not that the two are unrelated. That three or even four successive European generations have grown up in this country is one reason for its relative degree of maturity in the year 1940. But to the historian of the future it may seem of equal moment that the final decade of the first century began with a depression. New Zealand had experienced other slumps and economic crises but none so far-reaching in its effects as that which brought to an end the era of prosperity extending, with only brief intermissions, from the nineties. The 'Great Depression' disorganised New Zealand's economy and the social edifice based on that economy; it led to political changes more radical than those of the nineties; it effected a reorientation in outlook of major importance to New Zealand's literature and not without some influence on its art. The precise link between cause and effect is not always
easily discerned; but it can be said with certainty that a continuation of the comfortable pre-depression conditions could not have led to the New Zealand of 1940 with its signs, few but positive, of adult nationhood.

One of the first hints of a new impulse in New Zealand letters was the publication early in 1932 of *Phoenix* by a group of Auckland students and their sympathisers. Not since the nineties had there been such healthy evidence of intellectual and spiritual unrest among New Zealand youth; and, speaking generally, the writers of *Phoenix* were more confident, better informed, and far more critical than their predecessors of the former generation. Their confidence, it is true, often took the form of cocksureness, and they were prone to the solemn theorisings and pontifical evaluations which are so often the marks of youthful enterprise. But in the circumstances of New Zealand at the time these in themselves were encouraging signs, and implicit in the undertaking was a conviction that things of the mind and spirit were worth considering, worth writing about, indeed worth suffering for. *Phoenix* was a challenge to New Zealand complacency and to the supremacy of material standards. More than this, it was a challenge to the attitude of timid provincialism which had characterised New Zealand writing in the earlier years of the century. 'Are we poor, that we should beg or steal? . . . let us work with our hands and
the sweat of our low brows until we have our own wealth to scatter.’ So urged one contributor, and the same note is often repeated. Even London, now associated with economic thraldom, had lost some of its old glamour: ‘Let us in New Zealand not lament too much that we are away from the centre of things, from the squabbles and bickerings and literary cabals.’

Though the files of *Phoenix* contain some vigorous prose-writing, a little good verse, and a few excellent reviews, it is more important as a beginning than for its actual achievement. It encouraged a spirit of self-reliant experiment among the young. It formed a rallying-point for writers who had little hope of publication elsewhere. It did something to establish Auckland as the centre of New Zealand writing. Finally, and not least important, it revealed an interest in typography rare in New Zealand up to that time. That *Phoenix* was no mere flash in the pan is proved by what happened in the years that followed. Its views on the need for a fresh orientation in New Zealand letters were taken up and developed, explicitly in an essay* by A. R. D. Fairburn, which might be regarded as the unofficial manifesto of the younger writers, by implication in the work of the writers themselves. For when *Phoenix* died most of the group found other means of self-expression. Some became regular contributors to the Christchurch journal *Tomorrow*, first published in 1934. Some wrote

occasionally for the quarterly *Art in New Zealand*, which had been founded in 1928 and, despite great difficulties, continued publication throughout the lean depression years. To these resources were added those of two presses—the Unicorn Press, which rose from the ashes of *Phoenix*, and the Caxton Press of Christchurch. These presses, and particularly the second, had an important part in the literary history of the nineteen-thirties. Besides the function they served in bringing out work beyond the range of established publishers, they were partly instrumental in raising New Zealand’s low standards of book-production. In this decade it became possible to produce New Zealand books whose format was no longer a reproach to their country of origin, and though a London imprint still retained some of its advantages, one of the barriers to local publication—and therefore to local writing—was removed. It was owing to the existence of these two presses (and also to reasons more fundamental and more difficult to explain) that the two most widely divergent cities in New Zealand became its cultural centres. Auckland with its larger, more cosmopolitan population, its freedom from strong traditional shackles, and its closer touch with America maintained the leadership it had assumed with the publication of *Phoenix*. The junior partner was Christchurch, still retaining in its isolation a hold on the traditions implanted there by the Canterbury pilgrims.
It was John A. Lee, an Aucklander by adoption, who first introduced to fiction an urban proletariat which had existed for most of New Zealand's history, though seldom recognised by its writers. On its publication in 1934 *Children of the Poor* enjoyed a succès de scandale that placed undue emphasis on questions of little relevance to criticism and obscured the book's genuine merit. Whether it was a good novel or a bad novel by literary standards was the one question that, for the most part, remained unasked and unanswered. It is, in fact, a question not altogether easy to determine. *Children of the Poor* contained too much unassimilated descriptive matter and too many passages of raw propaganda for it to be classed in the first rank even amongst New Zealand works of fiction. In these respects it marked a decline and a return to the period before Jane Mander. Neither Dunedin nor New Zealand itself was taken for granted, but had to be explained, presumably for the convenience of readers beyond New Zealand. A moral that was already obvious had to be underlined as Mrs Grossman at her most didactic might have underlined it. On the other hand, the novel explored tracts of New Zealand experience never touched before, and, in the absence of any local precedent, some technical faults were perhaps inevitable. And the faults of style and construction only mar *Children of the Poor*; they do not outweigh its merits. In this one novel John A. Lee portrayed the childhood of
New Zealand's submerged class as Katherine Mansfield had portrayed the children of the wealthy living in the same period. The record is harsher than Katherine Mansfield's, of its very nature less alluring than her delicate sketches, and the tone of wistful nostalgia so characteristic of her is replaced by one of passion, made strident on occasions by the biting recollection of injustice and crude want. *Children of the Poor* is more than a social document; its best episodes have an imaginative quality that makes it all the more regrettable that elsewhere the Upton Sinclair in John A. Lee gets the upper hand of the Mark Twain.

In the later thirties a more delicate approach was made to the scene of *Children of the Poor* by the poet and novelist, C. R. Allen. *A Poor Scholar* (1936) and *The Hedge-Sparrow* (1937) filled out the picture of Dunedin, while subtly conveying the moral that a child of the poor might, in the conditions of New Zealand democracy, rise to eminence as scholar and politician. At the same time Robin Hyde, in her first 'Starkie' novel, began to explore the lower social depths more in the spirit of John A. Lee. It is a measure of Robin Hyde's daring and of her complexity that she, the frail poet of *The Desolate Star*, should have attempted to set on record the fantastic career of 'Killer' Stark. The contrast between the poet and the author of *Passport to Hell* is, however, only one that is met with in this most bewildering and most
versatile of New Zealand writers. Now she was a writer of fantasy, now a chronicler of life at its rawest; one book was written in the flashy jargon of cheap journalism, the next maintained a good workmanlike level with only occasional lapses into poetic prose or glib reportage. She was claimed by both the rival groups of New Zealand writers and contributed to the journals of both (for though the ‘literary cabals’ of London might be scorned New Zealand was not slow in developing its own). She knew her country with an intimacy and an understanding that few have equalled, but she was drawn by an irresistible compulsion to Europe where she was to meet her death.

Although it was only when the warring elements reached some state of equipoise that Robin Hyde produced her best work, both in prose and in poetry, after *Journalesse* (1934) she wrote nothing wholly bad. *Passport to Hell* (1936) and its sequel, *Nor the Years Condemn* (1938), are impressive works of fiction, and wonder at her temerity in tackling the subject competes with admiration at her success in reconstructing the life of Douglas Stark, and through his life the shifting panorama of New Zealand in this century — the New Zealand that exchanged the uncouth simplicity of pre-war years for Cairo and Flanders, that came back to the riotous interlude of ‘boom and bust’, that knew the years of depression, the excitement of the 1935 election, and the shadow
of another war. The broad outlines of the picture are filled in with minutely detailed strokes, so that some curious book-worm a century hence will be able to dredge from the two novels particulars of changes in fashion, the ritual of prisons and two-up schools, the language of desultory yarning in *estaminets* and bars. Her power to evoke scenes and incidents of which she could have had no direct experience was prodigious, though sometimes the self-imposed restrictions became irksome and she fell back on reporting or introduced some highly intelligent commentator of a poetic cast of mind, like Sister Collins who wanders rather improbably through *Nor the Years Condemn*. Had she written nothing more than these two 'Starkie' novels Robin Hyde would have gone far towards satisfying the wistful aspiration quoted in *Phoenix*: 'We are hungry for the words that shall show us these islands and ourselves; that shall give us a home in thought.'

*Check to Your King* (1936) and *Wednesday's Children* (1937) are an illuminating pair. The latter is fantasy without ballast and is a disaster. *Check to Your King* is Robin Hyde's most satisfying book, mainly because fantasy had here a solid basis in fact, and imagination was curbed by the discipline of historical research. The two elements are brilliantly blended in this portrait of the eccentric Baron de Thierry, a figure after Robin Hyde's own heart. The book is not flawless—Robin Hyde was no Nathaniel Hawthorne
and here and there she digressed into irrelevant bypaths or inserted passages that would have been more appropriate in a guide-book or in a *chronique scandaleuse* of New Zealand’s founders. (She never grew out of the precocious child’s desire to shock; it constitutes part of her charm as a writer—but it can also become exceedingly tiresome.) In spite of such flaws, the past comes to life as it rarely does in the work of professional historians and as it has done in no other New Zealand historical novel.

The last and most personal novel was *The Godwits Fly* (1938). Published in the year before her death, it is not only, in some degree, an autobiography of Robin Hyde but also the story of the generation which passed its childhood in the war years and experienced the disturbing influences that were the war’s aftermath. An entirely new stratum of experience is here uncovered—not the two extremes shown by John A. Lee and Katherine Mansfield—but childhood and youth in an intermediate class more typical of New Zealand. The essential struggle in this class—between the desire to rise in the social scale and the contrary impulse to merge itself with the class below—is portrayed with understanding and humour through the figures of Augusta and John Hannay. There is also another not unrelated issue suggested by the godwits of the title. These symbolise the New Zealanders, ‘brought up on bluebells and primroses and daffodils and robins in the snow’, who ‘must
make the long migration, under a compulsion they hardly understand; or else be dissatisfied all their lives long.' The theme is not worked out to the point of resolution in this novel, but an article* written in the course of Robin Hyde's own long migration makes it clear that she had reached a stage of equilibrium between paralysing subjection to the prestige of England and strident nationalism. 'Remember us for this, if for nothing else,' she wrote, 'in our generation, and of our own initiative, we loved England still, but we ceased to be “for ever England”. We became, for as long as we have a country, New Zealand.'

Whether this sense of integration would have expressed itself in Robin Hyde's work cannot now be known, for her last book, Dragon Rampant (1939), dealt with a struggle very remote from that of growing nationalism in New Zealand. Two recent works of fiction do, however, bear out the truth of her last affirmation. Man Alone (1939) by John Mulgan and A Man and his Wife (1940) by Frank Sargeson show a self-assured poise rarely found in New Zealand writing since the last century. Written in very different circumstances, they are both the work of men who are New Zealanders, who accept the New Zealand scene not as something to be apologised for or explained but as a place and a people to be interpreted with sympathetic detachment. Both writers have drawn on material similar to that used by

*Published in T'ien Hsia Monthly, August 1938.
John A. Lee and Robin Hyde, but they have brought to it technical resources and a fastidious self-criticism unknown to their predecessors. They have learned that a point does not lose by under-statement and that an author is not less in control when he is himself off the stage. (Frank Sargeson’s ‘I’ is a technical device rather than an intrusion of his own personality.) In the light of suggestions made by A. R. D. Fairburn and of marked recent tendencies, it is interesting to note that both have learned—and mastered—a great deal from the best American fiction of recent years.

To say that Man Alone is the best constructed New Zealand novel yet to appear is to go beyond a question of mere technique. The formlessness of most New Zealand fiction implies not only technical inefficiency in its writers but an uncertainty of aim which in turn has some relation to conditions in the society about them. With a detachment gained by living in England and an insight unclouded by the expatriate’s nostalgia, John Mulgan has discerned a pattern in the events of the last twenty-five years. He has seen that the easy-going post-war New Zealand was moulded into something different—something older and more sober—under the pressure of economic collapse and approaching war. His choice of theme and protagonists is too significant to be mistaken; and in the introduction and the close of the novel he has suggested the wider framework within which the New Zealand development has taken place. It is a
mark of John Mulgan’s skill as a novelist that this broad social theme is not imposed upon the novel, but arises imperceptibly from the telling in clear-cut, idiomatic prose of a highly dramatic story.

A Man and his Wife marks the highest point of a noticeable tendency amongst recent writers—the increasing use of a distinctive New Zealand idiom which is different from the popular speech of the Australian or the Englishman or the American, though it contains elements derived from each of these sources. It is reasonably accurate to say that before the nineteen-thirties only occasional novelists and writers of light verse drew anything from the idiom of the New Zealand farmer and town-worker, and an excessive desire to preserve the ‘purity of English speech’ was as typical of New Zealand authors as of New Zealand pedagogues. Satchell’s dialogue is colourless, differing little from that of the conventional English novel, Jane Mander shows a slight advance, Guthrie-Smith makes apt use of sheepfarming terms, though the staple prose of Tutira is that of a man steeped in English literature and drawing on it for image and illustration. (It is only this which qualifies the indigenous character of the book.) A sensitiveness to local nuances shows itself in John A. Lee, grows stronger in the ‘Starkie’ novels of Robin Hyde, pervades Man Alone, and in Frank Sargeson’s sketches expresses itself in an attempt to mould the language and the rhythm of everyday New Zealand
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speech—the speech of the street, the government office, the hotel bar, the middle-class household—into a literary form quite new in this country.

The immense effort of combined technical and imaginative exploration is sometimes visible in the slightness of a sketch and more rarely in the improbability of a dénouement. But this collection makes more clear what was already evident in the earlier Conversation with my Uncle (1936): that Frank Sargeson has not experimented for the sake of experimentation, but in order to convey a view of things and people which is at once personal and representative. Usually it is the view of those underdogs who are the central figures of the longer sketches, though Frank Sargeson shows himself to be a sympathetic interpreter of childhood and, in ‘Three Men’, of young womanhood (a young womanhood very remote from Katherine Mansfield’s but more typical and quite as interesting). It is a view of life that is entirely unromantic, that is superficially tough, but coloured by a curious twisted humour and a sense of pity, half-furtive and barely articulate. Despite their kinship with American analogues, there is in Frank Sargeson’s Kens, Toms, and Neds and in their outlook something that is deeply rooted in this country. Its origins may be imperfectly seen in the letters of labouring immigrants of the forties and in goldfields literature, though it has rarely reached the printed page. None the less, modified by each turn of events in the past
century, it has had a continuous history, passing from each generation to the next, largely by way of popular speech. Thus, paradoxical as it may seem, Frank Sargeson is traditional to a greater degree than any other New Zealand writer of to-day; he is the exponent of a local tradition that has hitherto been inarticulate. That he will continue the work he has begun and that others, working in their own way, are likely to enrich this tradition are two signs of hope in the New Zealand of 1940.

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The response of novelists to the changing conditions of the past ten years may be paralleled in the work of the more enterprising writers of verse. With some reluctance, they have abandoned their isolation to give New Zealand verse a social content lacking since the nineties, and with this a vigour and an intellectual distinction hitherto unknown. Inevitably, the dislodgement of the Muse has been accompanied by some noise, and on occasions the New Zealand poetic scene has had more in common with an arena than with the ‘divinest of Poets’ ideal of bliss’, to hark back to Domett. This has been all to the good, for New Zealand verse has suffered much from complacency and the absence of positive criticism. More important than the disputes of opposed factions, if less entertaining, has been a noticeable development in the writers themselves, as they have modified their conception of
the poetic through the stress of the contemporary world. This tendency is apparent even in Eileen Duggan and Robin Hyde (as poet), who are associated with the more conservative group of writers. In her later work Eileen Duggan tentatively handles themes drawn from the daily life of farms and sawmills, while there is a note of poignant anxiety in what she has written under the oppressive shadow of war. Robin Hyde’s *Persephone in Winter* (1937), as compared with her two earlier collections, shows similar preoccupations. She is still the maker of diaphanous embroideries woven chiefly from nature and literature, but to these highly allusive poems are added pungent social epigrams, a poem on the Abyssinian war, and one in which her fancy plays on

‘grey slum cottages, chipped bowls
Of life set out for starveling’s crust and sup.’

Walter D’Arcy Cresswell is too individual and too eccentric a figure to be worked without strain into any pattern of social development. There is, nevertheless, a marked difference between *The Poet’s Progress* (1930) and *Present Without Leave* (1939)—a difference not unrelated to his experiences in the depression years, retold in the later chronicle. *The Poet’s Progress* had an undeniable charm which was due partly to its archaic style, partly to the interest in any narrative of vagrancy, partly to the strange mingling of egotism and humility in the writer’s personality. The same
elements are to be found in Present Without Leave, but they have been transformed by greater maturity and, it is reasonable to suggest, by the author’s protracted sojourn in ‘that Antipodean Hades of darkness’ to which he belongs by birth. The mannered prose has now been shaped into a medium responsive to the writer’s more complex demands; vagrancy no longer describes his manner of living, since it proceeds from a deliberate rejection of standards which are, in the modern world, incompatible with a serious pursuit of the arts; the egotism too remains, but combined with an unsuspected power of self-criticism and, in spite of some extravagance, with a deep, intuitive knowledge of New Zealand.

It is significant that one touches on D’Arcy Cresswell’s prose before his verse, which falls short of his own high estimate. Lyttelton Harbour (1936), it is true, cannot be disregarded: it has a nice turn of invective, a rotundity of phrase, and, when the poet muses on the fabled Greece of his imagination, a fine serenity. But the archaisms are an insuperable obstruction, and, on the evidence of his published work, it seems that D’Arcy Cresswell has been less successful as a poet than as a prose-writer in coming to terms with his models and his own particular talent. Perhaps he himself takes his poetry less seriously than he sometimes professes, for in Present Without Leave he avers that ‘the first symptoms of a native poetry are to be found’ in From a Garden in the Antipodes (1929) by
Evelyn Hayes. It seems very much beside the point to apply the word ‘native’ to these cultivated poems, so manifestly written, as the title implies, in the spirit of the English expatriate. There is in this collection wit, scholarship, and a power to translate into words subtle nuances of feeling and vision, but little sense of belonging to any part of New Zealand beyond the plot of ground commemorated by the poems. That sense does, however, pervade some of the finest work in two later collections—for example, ‘The Long Harbour’ of *Time and Place* (1936), where the past is beautifully interwoven with meditations on the present, or again in the close of ‘Spring on the Plain’ in *Day and Night* (1939):

*‘There is no more richness, no riper consummation
Of terrene fate than this conjunction with earth-form’.*

The work in these two collections does not always maintain the standard of accomplishment seen in the ‘garden’ poems. Evelyn Hayes has progressed beyond occasional verse to a kind of poetry where perfection is more difficult to achieve, and some of her poems break down under the weight of feeling and scholarship. But she has written nothing that does not bear upon it the marks of a distinguished and sensitive mind, and she has shown New Zealand that the work of a woman poet can be refined without sacrifice of strength or complexity.

Except for an allusion worked into the texture of
one of her most subtle poems, ‘Picnic’, the work of Evelyn Hayes has been unaffected by contemporary events; as the title page of Day and Night suggests, it ends in 1934, before a ‘new immediacy of menace’ had made itself felt. The phrase is quoted from the Selected Poems (1940) of J. R. Hervey, a writer whose development has been symptomatic of the times. If one takes as a starting-point the apparently early ‘From The Poet’ (‘He’s pledged to wonder and to fantasy’), he seems to have passed from facile Romanticism to the bare suppleness of his later poems. The stress of economic uncertainty and of war has given his work a new seriousness of content and a new rhythmic strength, seen at their best in ‘War Refugee’ and ‘Parachute Fatality’. The manner is not so well sustained in ‘Salute to Youth’, where a slight theme is elaborated to inordinate length and a note of false modernity intrudes. This poem, however, shows the writer’s large generosity of mind which, combined with his technical enterprise, may result in work even more impressive than ‘War Refugee’ and ‘Parachute Fatality’.

Up to a certain point, the published work of J. C. Beaglehole as a poet has followed a similar line of development. His early verse is the product of that phase of lyrical nature-worship through which most New Zealanders must pass, though here and there it is given some distinction by a vein of fancy or a turn of phrase. He had already progressed beyond this,
when he published in 1934 ‘Meditation on Historic Change’, a long personal statement, reflecting, in its opening sections, the sense of bankruptcy which afflicted many sensitive people in the early nineteen-thirties. The poem is serious and moving, but it suffers from wordiness and a piling up of parallel images, and it falls between two stools: while its erudition would deter most readers, it is not sufficiently recondite to satisfy those whose taste for erudition has been formed on T. S. Eliot. In this, and in other shorter poems on present-day society, there is lacking that tension which would be needed to convey feelings of desolation or disgust. His most satisfying work up to the present has been Words for Music (1938) and other poems, still uncollected, in which he records the sensations and fancies of the scholar and man of culture. Here the fluidity of phrase and image is appropriate, while the poems give some measure of the interests which have done so much, in so many ways, to enrich the life of contemporary New Zealand.

The work of J. C. Beaglehole forms a kind of bridge between the more traditional modes of New Zealand verse and the experimental work which began to appear about the time Phoenix flickered on the literary horizon. Of the group of young versifiers who then challenged the established deities some have left New Zealand, others have lapsed into silence, and it has been left to four writers—A. R. D. Fairburn,
R. A. K. Mason, Allen Curnow, and Denis Glover—to continue the work so valiantly begun in the early depression years. That they have gone on writing and experimenting is in itself proof that they had something more to say than the crop of rebellious poetasters which appears with each generation of university students. And the saying of it has not been easy. Two of them have had to curb a habit of mellifluous rumination which won them acclaim as ‘promising poets’ in the nineteen-twenties, and each has made some material sacrifice to follow his vocation. The writing of poetry has been for them not the random activity of inspired moments but a serious and exacting occupation. (This is less true of Denis Glover, most of whose work is written with a careless exuberance which has its own charm.) They have brought critical intelligence to bear on their writing, and they have broken down barriers that divided New Zealand verse from some of the most vital interests of the New Zealand people. This, of course, means little in itself, and a good deal of Caxton Press verse has little more importance than the ammunition fired by a sniping party. But a residue—passages in A. R. D. Fairburn’s *Dominion*, some of the shorter poems by Allen Curnow and R. A. K. Mason, with a handful of Denis Glover’s good-humoured lampoons—has added considerably, in variety and accomplishment, to New Zealand verse.

Where this group has failed is in their inability, in
their more serious work, to come to terms with their social environment, as Frank Sargeson, with no apparent loss of integrity, has come to terms with his. This failure is particularly noticeable in the two most ambitious poetical works of the decade, *Dominion* (1938) by A. R. D. Fairburn* and *Not in Narrow Seas* (1939) by Allen Curnow. These poems appear to have been written in an unyielding spirit of antagonism (sometimes of petulance), which, healthy as it may be in the work of the very young, denotes in the more mature some failure to develop. This is not to deny a large measure of truth in these two versions of the New Zealand scene or the poetry in *Dominion*. The criticism is of the distortion that results, in works of such scope, by applying theories without modifying them to meet the conditions of this country; it is as if the corpse of New Zealand had been stretched on a Procrustean rack of doctrine. This defect is related to an undiscriminating devotion to the younger English poets, whose influence is deplorably evident in Denis Glover’s facile tributes to the proletariat and in R. A. K. Mason’s *Squire Speaks* (1938). In spite of their ability, it is evident that these poets have themselves suffered from the social disunity of which they have written. This is regrettable, for any future New Zealand poetry may have probably lies in the direction they have pointed.

*This poem is very ably discussed in M. H. Holcroft’s *Deepening Stream* (1940), an important essay which appears too late to be considered in this survey.*
For obvious reasons the painters have not responded so readily as the writers to the changing conditions of the past decade, and when they have responded with greatest facility the results have not been impressive. Indeed, it is salutary to reflect that the greatest individual achievement of recent New Zealand art has been the work of T. A. McCormack. If this artist’s water-colours proclaim any social lessons they do so only indirectly; they imply that there are values beyond those of the world of business and politics and that an artist may best serve the community by upholding those values in his work and, not less uncompromisingly, in his life. Since T. A. McCormack, like most contemporary artists, does not date his work, it is unsafe to dogmatise about his development, but he seems to have progressed from the simplicity of ‘Afternoon Light’ to the greater complexity of ‘Across the Straits’ which hangs near it in the National Gallery. Both pictures reveal an exquisite sense of colour, but the lapse of time appears to have given him greater subtlety and mastery over a highly personal technique which are displayed to perfection in his flower studies and still lifes. The National Gallery’s ‘Lemones’, and ‘Chinese Pottery’ in the Auckland collection, are sufficient replies to unduly simple theories about the social
function of art or its place in the growth of nationalism in a young country.

A different attitude from the one implied in T. A. McCormack’s work was adopted by Christopher Perkins, an English artist who came to New Zealand in 1929 and for a few years ruffled the calm of art circles with theories which he vigorously expounded and expressed not less vigorously in a prolific output of paintings and drawings, none of which, unfortunately, are to be found in public collections. As far as one may judge from reproductions* of his work, he was most successful when his theories were lost sight of, as they were in his best New Zealand painting, ‘Silverstream Brickworks’ (1930), or in his drawings of Maoris and labourers or in the biting sketches he made of New Zealand urban life. (In an interesting though somewhat uncritical article P. W. Robertson mentions that Perkins envisaged New Zealand as ‘a temperate version of Gauguin’s Tahiti’ only to find it ‘a strip of Victorian England’; disillusion may therefore have sharpened the edge of his caricature.) The originality and vigour of his more ambitious paintings —‘Activity on the Wharf’ (1931) and ‘Taranaki’ (1931)—do not atone for the oppressive obviousness of a formula, while ‘Taranaki’ is further marred by an eclecticism which has been the bane of the more enterprising painting of recent years. Few would question the superiority of Heaphy’s less sophisticated

*In the Christopher Perkins number of Art in New Zealand, September 1931.
version of the same subject painted some ninety years earlier.* A point had been reached, however, when most New Zealand artists had lost the freshness of vision which Heaphy brought to the treatment of New Zealand landscape, and Christopher Perkins exerted an invigorating influence by pointing out new bearings which young artists might take up, though with perhaps more caution than their mentor.

The less traditional painting of the past ten years has fluctuated between the two tendencies represented by McCormack and Perkins, with a meeting-point in the work of John Weeks. Weeks's virtuosity as a colourist and his compelling strength as a draughtsman are well exemplified by two contrasting examples of his work—the first a still life, 'Fruit and Flowers' in the National Gallery, the other 'Industry' in the Auckland Gallery. The still life is a complex pattern of objects welded into a unity by the artist's masterly sense of form and a bold but unerring use of colour. The same qualities have gone to the making of 'Industry' in which a contemporary subject has been handled with sufficient verisimilitude to satisfy the literal-minded but at the same time moulded by the will of the artist into a composition of arresting vigour and superb richness of colour.

Of the younger artists it is not possible to speak with any authority, partly because the conservatism inherent in the guardians of art collections permits

*See illustration facing page 34.
only an infrequent and cursory inspection of their work, partly for the related reason that their mature work is still in the future. Perhaps the most promising talent is to be found in those artists who have begun to interpret the New Zealand landscape with vision and technique refreshed by study of the post-impressionists. The colour prints which have come into the country in recent years have had a marked influence — with intoxicating results among the devotees of Gauguin and Van Gogh, more profitably among those who, like Rita Cook and M. T. Woollaston, have submitted to the discipline of Cézanne. A current of new ideas has also entered with teachers from abroad, notably R. N. Field, W. H. Allen, and J. D. Charlton Edgar, who have themselves produced interesting work in several mediums. There have been some praiseworthy attempts to make art the vehicle of social ideas and to bring it into closer touch with the urban environment, but with no marked success. Such work usually fails because the ideas embodied are too superficial and too transitory to justify a treatment in the permanent medium of oils, and both ideas and technique often appear to be imperfectly assimilated from some external source.

It is unlikely that a healthier social art will be possible until the gap between the New Zealand artist and the New Zealand community is narrower than at present. For that reason the appearance of the
state as a patron of art may prove to be significant. New Zealand is not yet a Medici Florence nor even a New Deal America, but the building in the worst depression years of the state-subsidised National Art Gallery and Dominion Museum was a challenge to the primacy of economic considerations at a time when they were most insistent. Government patronage of artists has more recently marked the celebration of New Zealand’s Centennial, with very notable results in a group of murals by F. H. Coventry, a New Zealand artist who brought a refined decorative talent, widened by experience overseas, to the interpretation of four stages in New Zealand history. These murals open up great possibilities in the field of public art, and, for the benefit of New Zealand artists and the New Zealand public alike, one hopes that they will soon be permanently displayed. Finally, it was under government auspices that the Centennial Exhibition of New Zealand Art was organised and sent throughout the country, to smaller centres as well as to the four main cities. In this way New Zealanders have been able to see in its most concrete form the embodiment of their European past. What effect this will have on the mind and imagination of New Zealand is a question to which the next century will supply an answer.

The next century will supply answers to a number of questions—the thought comes insistently as the year 1940 approaches its end. At this point it would
be interesting to speculate on the future, interesting—but futile. Futile, because a year that has seen encouraging signs of growth in New Zealand has also been a year of war. Whether in the next hundred years New Zealand will add anything great and distinctive to the tradition of European civilisation will not be decided wholly in New Zealand nor wholly by New Zealanders. When European civilisation itself is threatened one turns for a kind of illumination not to the literature of New Zealand but to a mature European mind:

‘between two worlds, one dead,  
The other powerless to be born’.
A Note on Sources

LITERATURE

THE SOURCES for the study of New Zealand literature are contained in the special New Zealand collections to be found in the libraries of the four chief cities and of a few smaller centres. Wellington and Dunedin are especially fortunate in possessing notable collections. The Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, contains the most complete and the most accessible range of New Zealand sources, while the General Assembly Library, the library of deposit under the New Zealand Copyright Act, is particularly rich in the more fugitive material. Many rare items are to be found in the Hocken Library, Dunedin, but this is less easily consulted than the Robert McNab Collection in the Dunedin Public Library. The Grey Collection in the Auckland Public Library contains interesting manuscripts, many of them official in character. Growing collections in other urban and provincial centres and in the libraries of university colleges show an increasing interest in New Zealand's past, while some are evidence that the public-spirited example set by Turnbull, Grey, Hocken, and McNab has been followed by later collectors. The pressing need now
is for a union catalogue that would make these resources more easily available to students.

In the absence of such a catalogue, the chief bibliographical aid is T. M. Hocken's invaluable *Bibliography of the Literature relating to New Zealand* (Wellington, 1909), which lists publications in chronological order and also contains much historical, biographical, and critical information. Hocken's oracular judgments are a delight to read. For example, C. C. Bowen's *Poems* are summed up in the phrase 'of considerable aspiration', while two of G. B. Lancaster's early novels are dismissed in identical terms: 'A coarsely told story—locality, New Zealand.' One is left wondering whether he was the simplest or the most penetrating of critics. Hocken confesses his failure to list completely the 'yearly heavy burden' of verse, and in this respect he is supplemented by Percival Serle's *Bibliography of Australasian Poetry and Verse* (Melbourne, 1925), a work of enormous diligence but lacking the personal charm of Hocken's classic. A useful bibliography of fiction is appended to E. M. Smith's *History of New Zealand Fiction* (Dunedin, 1939). Since 1934 the General Assembly Library, Wellington, has issued annually a *Select List* of publications copyright in New Zealand. Katherine Mansfield's work has received the rare distinction of a separate bibliography—*The Critical Bibliography of Katherine Mansfield* (London, 1931) by Ruth Elvish Mantz. This work of patient scholarship also reprints examples of Katherine Mansfield's earlier sketches.
Note on Sources

Anthologies incidentally serve a bibliographical purpose and are convenient indices to the taste prevailing at different periods and among different circles. The best verse anthology is *New Zealand Verse* (London, 1906) edited by W. F. Alexander and A. E. Currie. The collection is well chosen, well arranged, and is preceded by a modest and interesting introduction. A revised edition, lacking the introduction, was published as *A Treasury of New Zealand Verse* (Christchurch, 1926). *Kowhai Gold* (London, 1930) represents the work of the post-war years but scarcely substantiates the claims made by its editor, Quentin Pope. An annual publication, *New Zealand Best Poems* (Wellington, 1932–), chosen by C. A. Marris, is drawn from too restricted a range of verse fully to justify its title. As much for their sociological interest as for the intrinsic worth of their contents, readers are referred to two anthologies of university verse, *The Old Clay Patch* (1st ed., Wellington, 1910; 2nd ed., Wellington, 1920), edited by F. A. de la Mare and S. Eichelbaum, and *College Rhymes* (Christchurch, 1923), edited by O. T. J. Alpers and others. Two collections of imaginative prose have been published in the past decade—*New Zealand Short Stories* (London, 1930), edited by O. N. Gillespie, and the more restricted *Tales by New Zealanders* (London, 1938) edited by C. R. Allen.

Critical writing on New Zealand literature is small in bulk and almost invariably poor in quality. For example, in the half-page or so assigned to New Zealand in the *Cambridge History of English Literature* the only writers
mentioned are Domett and Bracken, and the limitations of space do not prevent the writer perpetrating several gross errors of fact. A gesture towards art and literature is made by most authors of the more comprehensive histories and descriptive books, but the results are deficient either in first-hand knowledge or in critical discernment. The chief exception is Appendix I to W. P. Reeves's *The Long White Cloud* (3rd ed., London, 1924), the best short outline of New Zealand literature, though heavily weighted on the side of politics and economics. Reeves was apparently not in sympathy with eighteenth-century modes of expression, and he rarely committed himself about poets and novelists. With the publication of E. M. Smith's *History of New Zealand Fiction* (Dunedin, 1939) a beginning has been made with the literary-sociological criticism of New Zealand literature, an approach for which there appears to be great scope. All future students of New Zealand literature will be indebted, as is the present writer, to G. H. Scholefield's *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* (2 vols., Wellington, 1940), where may be found short biographies of writers not living at the time of publication, together with a list of their principal works.

The reviewing of New Zealand books has always been unsatisfactory, partly through the absence of any accepted standards, partly through the related lack of journals in which such standards could be defined and maintained. In the periodicals brought out in the early years of the colony, notably in the *Southern Monthly Magazine* (Auck-
land, 1863–6), New Zealand writing was stringently criticised, but these and all later enterprises of the same kind have been too short-lived to have any appreciable influence. The work of reviewing has fallen chiefly on the newspapers, where New Zealand books have to compete for space with other interests and with the work of overseas writers. Critical articles of some merit appear sporadically in the literary columns of the metropolitan newspapers, and reviews of a consistently high standard are to be found in three South Island newspapers — the Christchurch Press, which has continuously maintained a tradition of serious reviewing, the Otago Daily Times, and the Southland Times.

ART

Possibly because historical interest has outweighed the aesthetic merit in the work of many early artists, most of their water-colours and sketches must be sought out in the New Zealand collections mentioned above and in museums and early colonists’ collections. Examples of work dating from the sixties onwards may be seen in public art galleries. The most representative collection is in the National Art Gallery, Wellington, which alone surpasses the well-rounded collection of the Dunedin Art Gallery. Both the Robert McDougall Gallery, Christchurch, and the Auckland Art Gallery contain numerous works by local artists, but they do not appear to have ranged far in selecting their examples of New Zealand art. Of the
smaller galleries the Sarjeant Gallery, Wanganui, and the Napier Gallery are, as yet, more notable as examples of architecture than as repositories of art, while the Suter Gallery, Nelson, may be singled out for its extensive collection of Gully's work.

Literary sources are few. For some details I am indebted to E. W. Calverley's unpublished thesis, *History of Art and Art Education in New Zealand*, a very painstaking account of pre-colonial and early colonial art and of the development of art societies and institutions. The main printed source is *Art in New Zealand* (Wellington, 1928-), published by its founder, H. H. Tombs. The twelve volumes of this quarterly with their many illustrations now constitute a most valuable record of New Zealand art, contemporary and past. For the National Centennial Exhibition of New Zealand Art there was published a special *Catalogue* (Wellington, 1940), containing an interesting introductory essay by A. H. McLintock, concise biographical notes on New Zealand artists, and a selection of reproductions. For reproductions of New Zealand art, particularly work of the earlier periods, readers are referred to the series of pictorial surveys, *Making New Zealand* (Wellington, 1939-40).
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*
Descended on one side from Canterbury immigrants of the fifties and on the other from immigrants of the Vogel boom period, E. H. McCormick was born in Taihape, of which town his father was one of the first settlers. Educated at the Taihape District High School, Wellington College, and Victoria University College, he was awarded a postgraduate scholarship which took him to Clare College, Cambridge. A schoolteacher before he went abroad, on his return he took up librarianship and held the posts of Acting City Librarian, Dunedin, and Hocken Librarian before being in 1936 appointed assistant to the Dominion Archivist. In 1937 he became Secretary to the National Historical Committee and, two years later, editor of Centennial Publications. While in England Mr McCormick discovered he was a New Zealander, a fact that is plain from his intense interest in New Zealand literature and society.
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