

# SHE DUSTED BUT DID NOT READ THEM

*Alexander Turnbull's Housekeeper Still Lives Among The Books*

WE discovered the other day that the housekeeper at the Turnbull Library, Wellington, is the original housekeeper of Alexander Turnbull himself, and that she has lived among the books for more than 40 years. But the Turnbull Library is almost as full of doors and stairways as it is of books, and it was by passing through one of these doors into an unsuspected living quarter at the back of the library that we found Miss Brouard, the housekeeper.

Books can be weighty things to live with, but Emily Brouard, tiny, white-haired, eager and friendly, has certainly not been oppressed by them. On the contrary, they brought her release from her girlhood burdens, for she was born in the Channel Islands, where her family grew flowers for Covent Garden, and growing flowers in the Channel Islands meant much more than it means in New Zealand.

"We couldn't understand," she told us, "how people could grow flowers without the endless hard work we had to put in at home. Even the watering was hard labour, because we had to pump all the water up by hand. Then it had to be left in barrels in the sun during the day so that it would be warm for the plants in the evening when we watered them. But everything we did over there was hard work. We even had to house the cattle at night."

"But you must have missed the gardens when you came to New Zealand?"

"Yes, but it wasn't a bad miss. I didn't like gardening, and there was no escape from it as long as I was at home."

## She Has Seen Changes

So Miss Brouard has been happy in her New Zealand life. It was in 1902 that she first went to be housekeeper for Mr. Turnbull and his brother, and in those days the old part of Parliament Buildings was Government House. "The Terrace was called Museum Street, because, of course, that was where the

museum stood. The Turnbulls had a whole acre of ground running along the edge of Museum Street, and the drive to the house came up Bowen Street. I can remember that the Governors used to have a little iron gate at the bottom of the grounds leading into Bowen Street—a way out when they wanted to get away unobserved. There was only Queen's Wharf then, and the Wairarapa train used to go right to Te Aro. We called the Thorndon Station the Manawatu Station. What's now the fish mart was the Wairarapa Station. When I came here first the two Turnbull brothers were living together, but one liked company and the other liked books, so after a while they separated.

"Mr. Alex, of course, lived only for his books. He was very reserved, almost a man of silence. Sometimes I've seen him go for days without saying a thing, then he'd have to say something just to break the monotony. Sometimes he

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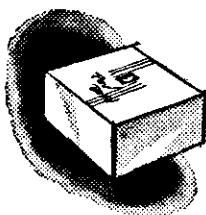
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