

THE RIVAL BIBLIOGRAPHERS

JAMES COLLIER AND T. M. HOCKEN

About two and a half years ago, while hastily scanning a 1909 file of the *Evening Post*, I paused to run through a feature article on Dr T. M. Hocken written by the Australian journalist A. G. Stephens. The writer referred to Hocken's 'immense task' in compiling his forthcoming bibliography of the works relating to New Zealand then with the Government Printer. He gave a transcription of the first page of the bibliography and reviewed at length its early contents. An eye-catching new fact in the article was the statement that the Government Printer was publishing the work on the '...enlightened recommendation of Mr Charles Wilson, the librarian of Parliament, who was asked to report on the matter.'¹

The steps whereby the publication of the bibliography in 1909 had become a state responsibility were hitherto unknown and here was the first definite 'trace' of the decision. Unfortunately the records of the General Assembly Library threw no light on this particular commission by Mr Wilson. Charles Wilson (1857-1932), a journalist, Member of Parliament in 1898-99, was appointed Chief Librarian in 1901. He had thrown himself energetically into his new duties, but in background and interest was very much less qualified than the compiler to pass judgement on a work of this kind.

His report if not in the expected place could perhaps be in another. In 1895 an overseas enquiry about a bibliographical matter had been dealt with by the Colonial Secretary's Office² and a decade later the same administration may have acted. This was in fact the case with, for posterity, the rewarding find of a minor dossier on the subject.³ The proposal seems to have originated in an approach by Hocken to John Mackay the Government Printer, in February, 1906 as a result of which Hocken wrote formally to the Hon William Hall-Jones: 'A few evenings ago I had a long conversation with Mr Mackay the Government Printer regarding the publication of some important manuscript written by me... a Bibliography of the Colony. Mr Mackay promised to bring this under your notice & it was very pleasant to me to learn a day or two ago that his interview with you was of a very encouraging kind. Following his suggestion I desire to lay before you fuller particulars, which I think are of an interesting kind.

'Learning some years ago that Mr Collier, the Government Librarian, was preparing a Bibliography of N.Z. literature I called upon him during a visit to Wellington & explained to him what I had already done in the matter. He was greatly pleased & suggested that we might carry out the work conjointly — he doing the pamphlets & I the books. To this I readily assented & with this view he visited Dunedin to inspect my