

himself, and they are, as far as we know, all doing well. So the circle keeps widening.⁷ Ranstead emigrated himself with the early ones in 1900, and one must admire the singleness of purpose, the faith in his new-found Utopia which enabled him to leave behind so much.

For indeed *he* was not one of the British poor. He was a prosperous manufacturer who had not only financial security and a satisfying background of philanthropic achievement to leave behind, but also a group of rare friends. These men, writers for the *Clarion*, were outstanding for the warmth and depth of their friendship no less than for their socialist principles and writing power.⁸ And all their writing was lit up by that particular brand of elegant wit which was characteristic of the end of Victoria's reign. Robert Blatchford, Alexander Thompson, E. F. Fay, Bruce Glasier, J. D. Sutcliffe – these formed the nucleus and their letters to New Zealand over the next forty years are full of personal and historical information as well as of amusement. It was J. D. Sutcliffe who conceived the imaginative and touching idea of asking Ranstead's friends to write him a farewell letter to be delivered to him during the voyage out. The scheme became known as 'Sutcliffe's Ocean Postage' and was contributed to with generosity and enthusiasm. An imaginative idea – not least because it placed on record some of the implications of Ranstead's giant step. What follows is only a selection of excerpts from 'Sutcliffe's Ocean Postage', but enough, perhaps, to catch the flavour. The first letter – from Sutcliffe to the Chief Steward – is given in full.

The Chief Steward, The good ship Wakanui, Royal Albert Dock.

Dear Sir, I am enclosing a number of letters for Mr Wm Ranstead who with his Family is a saloon passenger for New Zealand. These letters are written by his friends & I wish you to be kind enough to place one on his breakfast table every morning. Of course he knows nothing of this & I feel sure you will enter into the spirit of the thing & not say anything about the letters you have in hand. If you deliver the first on Sunday the 19th then I think they will last until the end of the voyage. I shall be further obliged if you will acknowledge receipt on the enclosed addressed postcard. I came to London purposely to see Mr. Ranstead away & to hand you the letters personally but I must return home tomorrow night. Thanks in anticipation, Yours faithfully, J. D. Sutcliffe.

Pride of place must be given to the letter from Bruce Glasier which also is quoted in full. Glasier was editor of the *Labour Leader*, and a writer for the *Clarion*. His wife, Katharine, was also a socialist writer of note.

Dear Ranstead, If it be true, as many ancient philosophers have alleged, that the seat of the soul lies in the digestive region, then I pray that Sutcliffe who is understudying providence in this epistolary purvey has properly predestinated that my letter will reach you after all symptoms of disaffection towards the voyage have ceased in the neighbourhood of your watch-chain. For though I be a reasonably good comforter of the afflicted in body and in spirit, I flatly refuse to dispense valuable human sympathy on a man whose soul is mixed up in an unseemly intestinal tumult with masticated and chymified plenishments of the dinner-table. It is the utmost prodigality of generosity to cast brotherly consolation before a sea-sick man. There is no common sense in the