

THE UNPUBLISHED MANUSCRIPTS OF KATHERINE MANSFIELD

Part VI

TWO MAATA FRAGMENTS

In 1957, when the Mansfield manuscripts from the Murry estate were auctioned at Sotheby's in London, the Alexander Turnbull Library succeeded in purchasing the main bulk of them. One item we missed, however, was a 48 page manuscript called *Maata*. This was apparently the written portion of the novel which Katherine Mansfield embarked on in the winter of 1913. When the papers bought by the Turnbull arrived and were examined they were found to include two pieces about 'Maata' whose relationship to the 48 pages sold elsewhere was unknown. Attempts were made to trace the manuscript—and have been made at intervals ever since. The trail led to a dealer in Chicago who communicated with the private owner. Our offer to exchange photocopies was declined, but recently the owner, communicating through the dealer, agreed to indicate the relationship of our manuscripts with his own if we would send an outline of the content of ours. This was done, some five months ago, but has drawn no reply. Our own two pieces seem substantial enough to warrant inclusion in this series and are here presented.

The Mystery of Maata by P. A. Lawlor (Beltane Book Bureau, Wellington, 1946) gives an account of Mr Lawlor's own meeting with a woman who claimed to be Katherine Mansfield's friend Maata, but there is still some doubt as to whether she was genuine. It will be seen that the story—as much of it as we have here—is ostensibly set in London, but it harks back in feeling, and sometimes in detail, to Wellington. Thus Wigglesworth was a well-known photographer in Wellington who died in 1906 leaving a 'very young-looking' widow. And the two musical brothers are clearly based on the Trowell twins: the description of Maata's feelings about one of them must be fairly straight Mansfield autobiography.

As in earlier pieces in this series there are a few words I have been unable to read. A study of the missing manuscript might someday elucidate them.

Margaret Scott