

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

(*In belated resumption of series commenced March 1968—Record Vol. 1 No. 3*).

Annie R. Butler's *Glimpses of Maori Land* (1886) is scarcely a title of middle-ranking significance in the New Zealand rare book world, either in content or scarcity. For decades the regular sequence of copies at Bethune & Co's auctions did little more than escape the ultimate scorn of 'two bob' prices, and hovering at about the 6/- or 7/- mark for many years recently reached into double figures. At the June 1973 sale the book received a double accolade, firstly in attaining a new inflationary level of eleven dollars and also a few words of muttered approval from a particularly discriminating observer beside me.

Impelled by this searchlight flash I shook the dust from my own copy to reconsider its status. Perhaps after all it deserved better of posterity. The book is simply an account of a visit to New Zealand in '188-' of a few months' duration by the author and a married couple, the author's sister and brother-in-law who was 'a tired clergyman from one of our great Midland towns.' Its tone is indicated by the name of the publisher, the Religious Tract Society, while Hocken's bald annotation, 'Visit amongst the missionaries and natives in the Wellington, Napier, and Auckland districts' holds out little more promise. The religious pre-occupations of the party certainly dominate the text and at first glance diminish its appeal to the prevalent scepticism of the mid-20th century. Nevertheless, more persistent dipping revealed the often quite shrewd observation and comment which enlivens the narrative. Social custom and data such as the cost of basic items, servants' wages, clothes and schooling are facts of present-day concern.

Almost as a reward for a more just appraisal I realised for the first time the significance of a pencil note at the foot of page 1 on my copy which revealed the identity of the visiting clergyman:- 'Rev'd George Tonge—Vicar of Christ Ch. Sparkbrook Birmingham' who is simply 'G' in the text. With the encouragement of this clue came a wish to get behind Miss Butler's coyness, not merely about the year of their visit, but, consistently with her wish to conceal, the name of the ship itself. At last, by page 52 fairly close reading gave the name as *Eporem*, a form repeated later, itself unknown, and after a moment's reflection a possible anagram. If, however, the name is read backwards we recognise immediately a well-known sailing vessel of the 1870s, the *Merope*. There was no reason to doubt Miss Butler's statement that they arrived in July and that invaluable research aid Brett's *White Wings* confirmed that the *Merope* did, in fact, reach Wellington on 16 July 1880 having left England in April¹ while the passenger list published a few days in ad-