

I pass over nearly two decades and a further clutch of angelic presences to light on Clyde Taylor, then the Turnbull's Chief Librarian, who went to endless trouble to house the Field-Hodgkins collection and make it available for my use. Not only that but he arranged for the publication of a small exercise in pedantry on the subject of Abel Tasman. His successor, John Reece Cole, performed a similar service some years later in commissioning me to edit the journal of Edward Markham, an exercise that led to more rewarding work on Augustus Earle.

Now, to skip a rather barren period, I come to the biography of Alexander Turnbull. Here benign presences hover thickly and debts are many: to the Turnbull Trustees for commissioning the book and so patiently awaiting its completion; to Graham Bagnall, at once its chief begetter and solicitous midwife; to Clyde Taylor who must now be awarded a double, if not triple, halo for relinquishing his own claims (only for the present, I hope) and generously helping with sources. Next throng seraphim from the library staff: chief among them Miss Margery Walton, so regrettably absent today; Mr. Murray-Oliver, the living link with so much of the Turnbull past and the acutest of my critics; Mrs. Scott and Mrs. Starke of the manuscript room, ever vigilant on the author's behalf and Alexander Turnbull's; Mrs. Paul whose taste and typographical skill are reflected in the book's design and illustrations. Nor must I omit acknowledgements to the distant printers who so faithfully carried out their exacting—and sometimes contradictory—instructions. All these with others mentioned in the preface have contributed to what is, in reality, a common enterprise. So much generosity, so much altruism, so much self-effacement, so many good angels—one is almost compelled to believe in heaven.

The Chief Librarian, Mr. J. E. Traue, concluded the formal proceedings Turnbull died in 1918 at the age of fifty. He had some standing in Wellington as a businessman and a collector, enough to be caricatured in the Free Lance of 1912 by a local versifier:

Alec Turnbull's a bookhunter bold
Who lavishes leisure and gold
On pamphlets terrific
About the Pacific
And books on the Maoris of old

Fifty-six years later he is honoured by a full-scale biography written by Dr Eric McCormick, commissioned and published by the Alexander Turnbull Library Endowment Trust Board with the financial assistance of the Henry Baxter Fleck Memorial Publications Fund, and launched in a State library which bears his name, a major division of the National Library of New Zealand.