

wrestling with an untidy and tattered manuscript, was a formidable task which he had to do all alone and only when his primary tasks at Victoria College allowed. Yet he was quite unruffled and always found the time to discuss the problems of others in the Branch. This was his hallmark—he was as interested in people as much as he was interested in good typography or the erudition of Erasmus.

This same sympathy made it easy for him to persuade artists such as George Woods and Mervyn Taylor to accept commissions to illustrate later publications and even to draw new designs for the New Zealand coat of arms. It is one of the misfortunes of book production in this country that the Historical Atlas of New Zealand was never completed or published. Whatever other merits it might have had (and with John as its midwife and foster-parent these would have been substantial) it would undoubtedly have been an exciting publication. The exuberance with which he discussed possible end-papers, whether these should show the legends and monsters that mediaeval cartographers had loved or whether the tools of trade such as rose compasses, backstaffs and astro-labes would be better, gave a hint of the style and gusto of his thinking. But by that time Heenan had retired and the veterans of orthodoxy who succeeded him did not wholly share Heenan's enthusiasm for this form of departmental endeavour.

While the war scattered the original staff in all directions, John held on to a small core of girls and with them produced *Abel Janszoon Tasman & The Discovery of New Zealand* (which included his own essay on Tasman) and *Introduction to New Zealand*. The latter, intended as publicity for Americans, when adorned by Mervyn Taylor and George Woods, and lit throughout by John's editing, was a surprising production for those war-lean years. Other authors who had John's assistance in seeing their manuscripts through the press at every stage were Apirana Ngata, Peter Buck, A. E. Plischke, G. L. Adkin, K. B. Cumberland, and R. S. Duff.

Authors can sometimes be clamorous and a few of them assume that to get their book on to the market one has only to push a master button and the presses will do the rest. They overlook the fact that printers just as much as liberty need the curb of eternal vigilance and that every page can reveal its own aberration. Thus a disciplined imperturbability, of which John seemed to have inexhaustible reserves, is helpful when dealing with some authors and with most printers.

This same refusal to be hassled was very necessary when proposals to establish a co-operative bookshop in Wellington unexpectedly triggered off a quite phrenetic attack from those who said they feared such a bookshop would become too precious. John, as one of the promoters, had to answer the shrilly expressed sneers that co-operative type readers