

A GLANCE FROM THE ART ROOM

The fascinating questions posed by both newly acquired paintings and sketches and their juxtaposition with existing art room mysteries provides Mrs Janet Paul as Art Librarian with the substance of half-a-dozen *Record* articles in as many months. Alas, until she is given time to explore step by step these tantalising relationships they will not be exposed. In default of more substantial fare we present a typical day's wayside jottings.

One of the delights of working at the Alexander Turnbull Library is the happy accident, the unexpected discovery, the joyful glimpse through shifting arches of small truths, to an unexpected facet of a known place or character.

The work of the Art Librarian sometimes seems like that of a bug in the yeast. The real ingredients are all there. The catalogue may give unexpected conjunctions; a request for accurate paintings to illustrate a book on mountaineering may mean that a not-before-opened box or sketchbook is searched. This happened today. A slight, faded blue water-colour, delicately lining distant peaks and the swirling arcs of a glacier, signed 'W.S.G.' moved the visiting mountaineer. It is the first painting ever made from the slopes of Mount Cook. Its title is 'Head of Tasman Glacier from a height of 8500 ft. on Mt. Cook'. It is signed 'W.S.G.': the artist, the Rev. William Spotswood Green who, with Boss & Kaufmann, made the first ascent in 1882.

The other was a group of three sketchbooks, bound in a slip-case with letters in gold, 'G. Duppa. Sketchbooks'. Inside was a note indicating that four sketches were by William Fox. But, on opening, it was clear that the same pencil had been used on subsequent pages. Fox loved to put cows in his watercolours, whether they were in 'Horowhenua' or on 'Capitol Hill, Washington'. In these sketchbooks he draws great beefy bow-legged bulls (George Duppa imported breeding cattle); catches the dipping gesture of a duck; the mild face or outrageously upholstered back view of two heavily-fleeced sheep. He draws a pair of drooping-legged hacks, and typically 'Fox' trees; the action of two bulls in horned battle; or carefully and expressively the face of a tattooed Maori so that one sees a man of character. On one double-spread William Fox shows an almost Edward Lear humour—a heavy, thoughtful bull head down (labelled in Fox's hand with 'An attacking position') is faced by a receding line of frock-coated and top-hatted men. Under the first, standing with open umbrella, spike towards the charge, Fox has written 'A Defensive Position!!' under the second, 'a Fugitive Position', and under the undignified scramble at the far side 'a decadent Position'. If further proof is needed that the sketch is not the work of the money-making farmer, George Duppa, a small signature—WFX—is visible.