

SURGEON OBSERVED

Shipboard diaries of early voyages to New Zealand are not rare. The Turnbull Library Manuscripts Section has a number of them. On those apparently interminable and usually miserable journeys the keeping of a diary was a natural response to the strangeness and endlessness of it all. The more educated passengers, usually, were the ones who kept diaries, and such an activity on the part of an ordinary, everyday emigrant was likely to be seen by his fellows as a pretentiousness in need of swift excision. On the *Lady Nugent*, 1840-1, poor Joseph Greenwood was not one of the "Gentlemen Passengers" and although he had paid his fare he associated mainly with the assisted emigrants. He had been keeping his book for only ten days when 'At breakfast they requested to know if I would allow my *Journal* (I suppose they meant Log) to be heard; I objected, when Mr [name omitted] told me if I brought it on the Table again he would take & throw it overboard, I am almost inclined to try him, but shall write in my Cabin for the present.' Greenwood seems to have taken about ten weeks to decide to make use of the thick vellum-bound notebook he brought with him, but having begun, and weathered some hostility over it, he kept it up.

On the whole it was just another shipboard diary, not particularly well-written or detailed or perceptive. It was only when, late last year, the Library bought the diary of George Hilliard, Surgeon Superintendent on that same voyage, that Greenwood's acquired an extra dimension. Here is a situation where we can really eavesdrop, where we can be smug in reading one diary in the light of inside information gleaned from the other.

Hilliard's prose is more literate, lyrical, and expansive than Greenwood's, which consists largely of flat statements having, nevertheless, the strength of economy in them. Hilliard was self-consciously the responsible surgeon and the perceptive observer of his fellow mortals and of the wonders of nature. His diary begins on the day the ship left London and ends on arrival at Wellington: the conscientious 'shipboard journal' he was required, as Surgeon Superintendent, to keep. Greenwood's begins ten weeks out and continues until the pages run out some six years later: a casual commentary on whatever was making up his life. We are able, then, to have a look at Hilliard before Greenwood joins the company.

Wielding several kinds of authority—he read Sunday services and burial services, stopped rations and indulgences, harangued emigrants and put them in solitary confinement, instructed the Captain as to his nautical course in view of dwindling rations—Hilliard was propped up by a rough and ready class-consciousness which can't have eased his relations with the emigrants. On Sunday 1 November he 'read the morning Service in the Cuddy to the Captain officers & Passengers, & one of Mr Bradley's