4 — Opening Up

If a person and a turning-point were needed to mark a new phase in New Zealand history, they might be found in Samuel Butler and in January 1860, the date of his arrival in Canterbury. Here was a young man who, like FitzGerald, had graduated from Cambridge, painted and versified and wrote, and sought in 'England's remotest colony' escape from the irksome restraints of the old world. But by 1860 the era of the 'pilgrims' was ended. Men no longer came to New Zealand burdened with grandiose theories or self-dedicated to the building of ideal states. A new spirit was abroad, a spirit that is described—and revealed—in A First Year in Canterbury Settlement (1863). 'New Zealand,' wrote Butler, 'seems far better adapted to develop and maintain in health the physical than the intellectual nature. The fact is, people here are busy making money; that is the inducement which led them to come in the first instance, and they show their sense by devoting their energies to the work.'

The fact is, it might be added, that though so exceptional a colonist, Butler was in some respects a representative of the new men who were to rise to wealth and influence in the next few decades. With its accounts of the systematic search for unoccupied lands, its shrewd calculation of ways and means, its intense preoccupation with profit and investment, A First Year shows clearly enough that Butler was not uncomfortably at odds with this money-getting society. True, as he often testifies, the pursuit of wealth went on in a setting where the end might well be forgotten in the magnificence of the scene. 'The mountains were pale as ghosts'; 'the scenery is quite equal in grandeur to that of Switzerland'; 'I was struck almost breathless by the wonderful mountain that burst on my sight'—the letters are studded with phrases like these, though to the last one Butler adds: 'A mountain here is only beautiful if it has good grass on it.... If it is good for sheep, it is beautiful, magnificent, and all the rest; if not, it is not worth looking at.'

'Good for sheep'—this was the final criterion. Yet, indifferent to their sublime surroundings as they might appear, New Zealand men and New Zealand society had qualities that Butler in his search for emancipation could only approve—the freedom from 'much nonsense in the old country', the comparative lack of conventionalism and formality, the absence of sectarianism, and the 'healthy, sensible tone in conversation'. 'But,' he concluded, in a tone of mild criticism, 'it does not do to speak about John Sebastian Bach's Fugues, or pre-Raphaelite pictures.'

It is a pleasant and not uncritical picture of life in Canterbury and one which, with modifications, would have fitted the greater part of the colony between the sixties and the nineties. During these years the North Island, bush-covered and intermittently harassed by Maori wars, lost its ascendancy to the South where, through the agency of gold and an expanding pastoral industry, settlement was pushed back from the coastal nuclei formed in the first two decades to the mountainous limits of the interior. New Zealand's centre of gravity shifted outwards; its social life, concentrated to a far smaller extent in the original settlements, now spread out amongst farms and sheep
stations, goldfields and sawmills, and for briefer intervals amongst militia posts and military camps. With this change came a corresponding change in the people themselves. The Company settlers, the ‘old identity’, found themselves swamped by men of a different type, a ‘new iniquity’ heterogeneously composed of squatters, shearers, gold-miners, volunteers, and professional soldiers.

Campaigns are not recorded by an army on the march; the most that soldiers can be expected to contribute are materials for the historian—the plan of battle, the official despatch, the personal letter hastily scrawled between engagements. This ‘opening up’ period of New Zealand history, even its more pacific aspects, bore some resemblance to a military campaign, and its prose literature is best described as source material for an historian. The letters of a settler were gathered and published by parents or friends; a soldier or a squatter kept a diary which in the leisure of English retirement was refurbished for publication; a vicar’s wife, a governess, a schoolteacher, a housewife, impelled by those strange motives which he behind the writing of fiction, poured out her heart by candle-light and, through some freak of chance, found a publisher. These, in the main, were the circumstances, in which New Zealand experience for a generation was set on record. It is not surprising that the results, with few exceptions, are fragmentary, unsatisfying, often boring. Where is the colour of that life, where the humour, where the struggle with nature? we ask, as we trudge through dreary (and often inaccurate) réchauffés of New Zealand history, accounts of the moa, pointless anecdotes, fatuous ‘adventures’. The probability is, we conclude, that the fitting transcript of that period never reached the printing press. It may have passed with the cycles of yarns that circulated amongst the restless army of ‘travelling labour’. It may have been dissipated in the warmth of camp fires or in the shearsers’ quarters on summer evenings. It may have been locked in minds unschooled and inarticulate.

Of published literature the largest and perhaps the most interesting group is that of the novels and memoirs which have as their background the farming industry, the most stable feature of this troubled landscape. The majority of such books are cut to a relatively constant pattern, conforming to that of most settlers’ lives—emigration, settlement, experiences in remote country districts, material success or failure—a formula elastic enough to include a number of distinct types and a diversity of experience. Pride of place must be given to the feminine and domestic type, and not merely on grounds of chronology, for, as Lady Barker noted, ‘a lady’s influence’ in the colony was Very great’. ‘She represents refinement and culture … and her footsteps on a new soil such as this should be marked by a trail of light.’

It was an admonition already well heeded by New Zealand’s first lady novelist Mrs J. E. Aylmer, in concocting Distant Homes or The Graham Family in New Zealand (1862), though here the light was subdued to the dull glow of Victorian piety and domestic sentiment. Not that Distant Homes is lacking in incident; on the contrary, from the very day that the Graham family touch the barbarous shores of the colony they are plunged into a maelstrom of adventure. With as fine a disregard for fact as was shown by her probable exemplar, the author of The Swiss Family Robinson, Mrs Aylmer exposes her characters to the perils of ‘the volcano of Mount Egmont’ (‘“the old mountain never gives us warning in vain”’, quoth a worthy salt), and after their arrival in Canterbury, to the delicious terrors of a Maori insurrection. By the joint heroism of Captain Graham and his wife, the insurrection is quelled, and having absorbed a Hollywood-serial portion of adventures and a hand-book on New Zealand besides (all in the space of 199 pages) we leave the Graham family with the fervent hope that ‘peace and good-will may reign through the length and breadth of our precious colony of New Zealand.’

The work of Lady Barker, set in the same locality, may also be described as domestic; though with a difference. Wisely she restricted herself to the range of colonial life that she knew, the often trivial but never uninteresting experiences of an Englishwoman (more exactly an English gentlewoman), confronted by an entirely new order of society and by the multitudinous duties of a squatter’s wife. She is best known by Station Life in New Zealand (1870) and Station Amusements in New Zealand (1873), books which more than any others of the period are exempt from the charges of dullness and banality. Together they give the most complete and satisfying picture of that ample life on the plains and foothills of Canterbury before the squatocracy had hardened into a caste and the tending of sheep into a highly organised industry. The innocent pleasures are there, and the calamities, such as the loss of a child or that overwhelming disaster, the
great snow-storm of 1867, while the domestic worries, usually centred in the servants' quarters, are described with feminine particularity. The weather, inevitably in the conditions of that life, becomes a major character whose moods and whims from week to week are minutely recorded, and the settings are sketched with the limpid spontaneity of a writer who rarely, if ever, perpetrates a cliche. It is, of course, the pastoral scene surveyed from the topmost social pinnacle; but her viewpoint is aristocratic rather than snobbish, and though aware of the gulf between a 'lady' and a cockatoo's wife, she had learned enough from colonial ways to write in her second book of 'the class whom we foolishly speak of as the lower orders'.

Into these two books she packed the chief impressions of some five years in New Zealand; the residue, with careful husbandry, she converted into sketches, semi-fictional in form, which are scattered through a number of collections. Written ostensibly for children and concealed by such titles as Stories About (1871), A Christmas Cake (1871), and Boys (1875), they are nevertheless surprisingly mature in theme and treatment. 'Christmas Day in New Zealand', one of the four quarters of her Christmas Cake, is indeed the best recorded example of a shepherd's yarn. In transposition some crudities of speech and incident have doubtless been ironed out, but enough remains to evoke the rich, smoke-filled atmosphere of the shepherds' concourse assembled for the purpose of 'capping yarns'. Some enterprising publisher will one day re-issue these sketches to give them the modest fame they deserve.

A third and contrasting version of the domestic formula is to be found in two novels published in 1874, A Strange Friendship and Over the Hills and Far Away, by Mrs C. Evans. They are the wish-fulfilments of an English gentlewoman in exile, and their mood is one of pensive nostalgia. Her romantically conceived families (all gentlefolk), clearly the colonial progeny of Charlotte Brontë's Lucys and Rochesters, are conveyed to New Zealand where, with few pioneering preliminaries, they establish themselves in country-houses. There they exchange books and periodicals—the heroes their Cornhills and Edinburghs, the heroines Middlemarch, Idylls of the King Lady Adelaide's Oath—speculate about the social position and origin of their neighbours ('I wonder who the Ainsleighs are, and what part of England they come from'), discuss endlessly 'friends at home' and 'people and places where we had grown up together', and indulge in elegant pastimes that are quite unlike the simple picnics and concerts the author professes to describe. Driven by the demands of fantastic plots, they are weighed down by domestic secrets, sufferagogies of frustration through self-imposed vows of silence, to find relief in the interminable writing up of diaries.

These would seem to owe more to Lady Adelaide's Oath than to Middlemarch, though the flood episode of The Mill on the Floss clearly inspired the climax of A Strange Friendship.
century novel— an affair of crime, of mystery uncovered in a final chapter, of preposterous coincidence. W.M.B., a representative author of this school, has retired to his native York. 'In the course of an eventful and active life, during a long residence at the Antipodes', he explains in 'My Preface', 'it had often been my lot or necessity to turn my hand to very many occupations and callings … and since my return to England, finding myself with “nothing to do”, I determined to add that of an author to the number.' The result, published in 1874 as *The Narrative of Edward Crewe or Life in New Zealand* is a thinly disguised autobiography in which the author strings together his experiences as a colonist, inserting many curious observations on the antipodes and on life in general. After a boyhood in York and an education at Rugby, he decides to emigrate, admitting with candour his disinclination and mental incapacity for any of the professions. He lands at Auckland, is by turns trader, bush-whacker, saw-miller, land-speculator, until finally he strikes it rich as a gold-miner and returns with his wealth to England. Into the roomy receptacle provided by this narrative the writer stuffs all manner of oddments whose nature and variety can be gauged by a few page-headings—Drunken Bay, Buying a Wife, Pig Hunting, 'Always a Gentleman', St. Thomas Aquinas (described as 'the greatest intellectual swell in the Church some 600 years ago … a man of the right sort'), No Sunday in the Bush, How to Rub Fire.

The book is as raw and ill-assorted as this inventory; with its gusto, its profusion of crude ideas and cruder anecdotes, its loose colloquialisms, it suggests the yarning assemblage of the shearing-shed or miners' camp, and from this fact derives its virtue. It is a document, both to entertain and to instruct, transcribing faithfully and uncritically the surface agitation of the unformed society to which the author himself had temporarily belonged.

There is a notable difference in Scottish versions of the emigrant-pioneer novel exemplified by Alexander Bathgate's *Waitaruna* (1881) and by the two novels of Dugald Ferguson— *Bush Life* (1893) and *Mates* (1911)—which, though falling outside the strict chronological limits of the period, belong spiritually to the same epoch. In these novels, set principally in Otago, the pioneer hero's life is unfolded against the same background, but its disorder and excesses are condemned both openly in the author's running commentary and by implication in the fate he metes out to his characters, good and bad. Thus Gilbert Langton, the industrious cadet of *Waitaruna*, rises to the position of station-manager, while his foil, Arthur Leslie, succumbs to colonial influences, marries a bar-maid, and is left drinking himself to death as the landlord of an unsavoury public-house in the diggings. In Dugald Ferguson's work the same retributive justice falls on those who, through frailty or willfulness, diverge from the strait Presbyterian path. It is no coincidence that these books attained to a certain local popularity at a time when the life they portrayed was receding romantically into the past while their standards of conduct were the accepted ones among the rural bourgeoisie of post-pioneer years.

Ferguson's work also illustrates, in a marked form, stylistic features common to the novels. In spite of his out-of-door man's disregard for construction and niceties of form and expression, he rises to a certain inflated elaborateness when a situation is considered important and in need of some more dignified attire than the ordinary plain narrative. Similarly conversation alternates between the vigorous idiom of colonial speech: "She carefully mentioned all the young ladies that had got spliced, and all the others who had their chaps prospectively hooked, all the married dames who had lately got kids, and all the old dames who had kicked or were likely to kick the bucket." and melodramatic bombast in the emotional scenes: "What have you to complain of, then?" [Asks the villain of the girl he has betrayed.] "Of nothing, if I only had the mind of the brute that perishes; of nothing, if I had not been reared in affluence and love; of nothing, if my mind had not been educated to more fully appreciate the advantages I have for ever forfeited; of nothing…."
'stock' page 71 characters', a few figures who appear throughout the novels with a remarkable uniformity. First there is the newly arrived immigrant, the 'new chum', whose 'verdancy' (to cite a recurrent example of pioneer wit) is the butt of the seasoned colonial. 'To be a new chum,' remarks Edward Crewe, 'is not agreeable.... people speak to you in a pitying and patronising manner, smiling at your real or inferred simplicity in colonial life, and altogether "sitting upon you" with much frequency and persistence.' More useful for the novelist's purpose (since most people in the first few decades had been new chums) was the 'remittance man'. Some novelists use him for farcical or satirical purposes, contrasting his English accent and genteel manners (the facade of moral and physical weakness) with the solid virtues of the hard-working colonial. Usually, however, he is a more formidable character, villainous or heroic, in whom a writer found it convenient to centre the mystery of the novel. He arrives in the colony under a cloud, meets there, by an impossible series of coincidences, old friends or enemies, and ultimately clears himself of some unfounded charge; or, alternatively, he involves himself more deeply in crime, to pay the penalty in the final chapter. The minor stock figures are similarly localised characters of lesser Victorian fiction and melodrama: farcical Irishmen, dark-haired sirens, and two products more distinctive of the colonial soil—the incompetent and independent servant, who is the page 72 centre of male attention, and the misanthropic recluse, the 'hatter' in mining argot. Beside such figures of cardboard a character is occasionally inserted of more vital interest, some person created from immediate personal observation. While these figures hold the stage, the writer forgets his story, genuine humour seeps in, and themes of local interest are introduced. For example, in the formless bulk of Clara Cheeseman's A Rolling Stone (1886), a minor figure, Langridge, disentangles himself from the plot to take on local form and colour: 'there were his children; he was ambitious for them, not for himself. If it were somewhat too late in his day for the cultivation of the habits and manners of polite society, and decidedly too late for an amendment of his education, there was yet time to make his son the equal of those whom the father had always reverently considered as being of a nature superior to his own, and whom he usually spoke of as the "upper classes".' But these are tiny and infrequent oases in a desert of facts, anecdotes, pointless descriptions, absurd melodramatic contortions. With the exception of Lady Barker's sketches, there is only one imaginative work which handles the rural life of this period with any approach to insight. Published in 1891, Philosopher Dick by George Chamier does in fact express an era, as it sums up the whole class of pioneer fiction and memoirs! But it is no neglected masterpiece. In its main outlines and in many of its details it resembles page 73 most other pioneer novels: it has as its central character the conventional Englishman who has emigrated to New Zealand; it traverses the usual range of rough experience and contains the usual assortment of stock characters; it is even more amateurishly contrived than many of its kind, being lamely pieced together by diaries, letters, and long interpolated confessions in the manner of Smollett; its prose is loose and formless, cluttered with cliches and redundancies. What distinguishes it from the rest is the writer's critical and occasionally sardonic point of view, his ampler scale of treatment, and his approach to serious themes barely recognised by his predecessors. Richard Raleigh, the 'philosopher' of the title (and, one may infer, a partly autobiographic creation) is a FitzGerald of fiction, a young idealist who has migrated from the old world—a world made up of trivialities, bustle, greed, sensuality, and emptiness—hoping to find in a new country the conditions for a life of freedom and contemplation. Equipped with a library, a flute, and materials for painting (since he shared the interests of the young Samuel Butler), he arrives at the men's quarters of Marino station. Here diverse types and nationalities are gathered together to lead a life which, despite its vigour and rough friendliness, is to the civilised mind scarcely above the level of bare existence. Failing to discover in these surroundings the tranquillity and freedom he seeks, page 74 Raleigh
withdraws himself still farther into a shepherd's hut on the boundaries of the station.

The sequel, described with a clinical profusion of detail, is of remarkable interest and has a wide application, for if potential Samuel Butlers were rare among the settlers of New Zealand, conditions of isolation with their disintegrating effects on the mind were sufficiently common. He revels for a time in his solitude and independence of the world of affairs, finding satisfaction in 'communion with Nature' and in art. But this mood soon yields to one of melancholy—Raleigh has learned the bitter lesson of personal insufficiency: 'In vain would he strive to rouse himself from this miserable dejection; seek for relaxation in his books, call in aid his philosophy, or fly to his beloved palette.' And as these sources of strength and assurance fail him, he loses touch with his former associations: 'The outside world had lost all interest for him—it had almost ceased to exist to his distempered mind.' And he concludes that he has abandoned civilisation, now endowed with all the attractions of the remote and the discarded, 'To make a fool of myself; to bury myself in the wilderness; to seek for solitude, misery, and privation at the farthest end of the world.'

The situation is convincing, though described at excessive length and with the resources of a third-rate writer when it demands those of a Dostoievsky. But it does provide a slender framework for the book and is responsible for some authentic criticism of the pioneer and for passages of telling satire. Insensibly as the novel progresses, however, the hero-author relaxes the attitude of petulant detachment to become more at one with his surroundings. He expends pages on the minute details of his occupation and environment, analyses the relations between men and men and between men and animals, elaborately records the trivia of social life and gossip: the déraciné has begun to send down roots.

*Philosopher Dick* is a baffling novel, as difficult to characterise and evaluate as the society it describes. The trivial is mixed with the pretentious, the farcical with the serious, obtuseness of thought and feeling meet one on the same page as delicacy and sympathy. In more senses than one it is a pioneer work, an attempt to impose some coherence and shape upon a formless mass of experience. The attempt was undoubtedly too ambitious, it was almost certainly premature, but with little competition Chamier takes his place in the New Zealand literary hierarchy as the most distinguished male novelist of its pastoral epoch.

From a distance of eighty years (and even to some contemporary eyes) the Maori wars of the sixties may appear as part of the movement which at the same time spilled men over the hinterland of Otago and Canterbury. The motive of the European protagonists were similar, the end—land—was the same. The difference was in the opponents: in the one island nature, in the other a native people whose suppression was effected only by a struggle as bitter on the domestic and political fronts as on the military. This confused episode in New Zealand history threw up an immense quantity of writing which is chiefly polemical in nature and, fortunately, impermanent in form. The crumbling pages of contemporary newspapers contain grim evidence of the feeling and the prejudice excited by each phase of the conflict. Even the comic journals of the time, particularly those published near the scene of war, are disfigured by cartoons of a savagery which is now scarcely credible. In pamphlet literature there is a juster division of opinion between the advocates of 'the strong hand' and the 'Maoriphiles'; but a case argued in the strident and over-simplified terms of public controversy can appeal to-day only to an occasional scholar.

Hardly less impassioned are the writings of larger size and pretensions. With perhaps three or four exceptions, books on the wars and the Maoris are pamphlets writ large with none of the pamphlet's merciful brevity. Pre-eminent amongst the exceptions is J. E. Gorst's *The Maori King* (1864), an impartial and absorbing account written from first-hand observation by one with an intimate knowledge of the
The unfortunate young Maori king; the light-hearted adventurers like Wiremu Kumete who, 'having planted his crops, and having nothing else in particular to do, marched down to Taranaki', returning from the expedition 'in time to reap his crops'; there is even the Maori bore who 'began a long speech, commencing from the creation of the world, and working slowly on to modern times, while everybody else went to sleep.' It is this perception of diversity, including humour, which makes Gorst so convincing when he is compared with equally sincere though more limited writers. The underlying causes of the wars, as he explains them, were not simple: they arose not from villainy, but from confusion of aims, from lack of understanding on both sides, and among the Europeans from apathy and bewildering alternations of policy. To perceive this when the issues were so confused and the events so close was an achievement which makes Gorst one of the most remarkable men of this period. To express it in a fluent, temperate prose was an even rarer achievement which gives him a lonely eminence amongst those who ventured to peer beneath the surface events of the wars and seek out their causes.

The course of the campaigns themselves, more especially the operations of the colonial troops, can be traced in Lieutenant T. W. Gudgeon's *Reminiscences of the War in New Zealand* (1879), modestly characterised by its author as 'a simple narrative of events, of skirmishes and expeditions grandiloquently called campaigns'. It is the work of an intelligent campaigner, more concerned with the details of sieges and encounters than with the causes underlying them, though when he went outside his self-imposed limits to probe into the origins of the King movement and the Hauhau religion, he is just and most discerning. In contrast with the writings of most non-combatants, the *Reminiscences* show a refreshing absence of rancour. Gudgeon's Maori opponents are simply described as 'the enemy', occasionally with pity as 'the poor wretches', while in giving an account of Te Kooti's escape from the Chatham islands, he ventured to doubt 'whether Europeans would have behaved with greater moderation if placed in similar circumstances.' With no pretensions to 'style' and without resort to the purple patch, he yet gives an adequate impression of the picturesque scene of the campaigns; and, drawing not on art but from a fund of native good sense and good feeling, he inserts touches of warmth or humour or asperity which make the book something more than a 'mere narrative of events'. Though they belonged to opposite camps, it is not unlikely that Gorst and Gudgeon could have met and discussed their points of view without heat and perhaps with agreement as to fundamentals; for, different though they were, the scholarly administrator and the soldier shared virtues rare enough at the time—tolerance, kindliness, and clearheadedness. These were virtues notably absent among those writers of fiction who exploited the sensational incidents and romantic background of the wars. The first novel of this kind, if novel it can be called, was Major B. Stoney's *Taranaki: a Tale of the War* (1861) which claimed on a congested title-page to provide 'a Description of the Province previous to and during the war; also an Account (chiefly taken from the Despatches) of the Principal Contests with the Natives during that eventful period.' This book and its successors bear some resemblance to the class of pioneer-emigrant novels, though far outclassing them in crudity of plot, in deficiency of construction, and in blatant didacticism. The typical hero is an officer from India, the heroine the daughter of a New Zealand settler or merchant. A favourite conclusion is a glimpse of the two established in 'The Hall' in some part of rural England. Meanwhile the reader has again absorbed an epitome of New Zealand history and varied information about Maori customs conveyed in descriptive passages, in footnotes, or in this fashion:

"I have here a decoction of the poroporo (solanum lacincatum), which will heal thy wounds." These words (a mild example of the stilted language common to the novels) are uttered by a Maori witch, for necromancy, and with it cannibalism, usually enters the books in some guise. In this particular sample, *Hine-Ra* (1887), the dark powers are invoked to prophesy the ultimate doom of the Maori...
people. This again is a favourite motif, more bluntly put by the anonymous author of Henry Ancrum (1872) as he looks forward to the time 'when the savage Maori has disappeared—as disappear he must.' Except for the winsome wahine occasionally inserted to give a love interest, the fictional Maori is indeed a savage, to be annihilated in mass and without compunction. In the most spectacular climax the destruction of a party of Hauhaus is compassed by an explosion which at the same time lays bare a reef of gold. Similar constituents, contrived with more sophistication and mingled with borrowings from Poe and Haggard, make up H. B. M. Watson's The Web of the Spider (1892). Worthy of greater respect, though ineffably dreary, are two fictional reconstructions of pre-colonial Maori life published in 1874—George H. Wilson's Ena, or The Ancient Maori and John White's Te Rou; or The Maori at Home. A good deal of scholarship is embalmed in these two novels, particularly in the second, but their effect is to suggest that the primitive Maori spent his necessarily short life in slaughtering and consuming his enemies, and in consulting witch-doctors, with brief interludes of love-making against an ornate scenic background.

There remain the two books of F. E. Maning, The History of the War in the North (1862) and Old New Zealand (1863), which from the time of their publication have grown in esteem until they are now commonly regarded as 'New Zealand classics', doomed, like most classics, to be accepted uncritically more often than examined. They are, however, products of a distinct phase of New Zealand history, coloured no less by its outlook than by the author's highly original personality. As much as The Maori King or—at the opposite pole—Taranaki, they reflect, though more subtly, the tense feelings which prevailed in the opening years of the wars.

Old New Zealand, the more personal of the two books, looks back in apparently unmethodical retrospection to the 'good old times' of the thirties and contains mingled and not easily separable elements of biography and fiction. It belongs, with important differences, to the class of pioneer memoirs, and in a superlative degree has the gusto and colloquial raciness (with a characteristic undertone of nostalgia) which lend charm and readability to the reminiscences of even the roughest literary diamond. Nowhere else in New Zealand literature is there anything to compare in force and humour with the account of Mailing's arrival in New Zealand, or with the description, in the fourth chapter, of a plundering raid, to single out only two brilliant episodes from a possible dozen. As descriptive writer, as ironical commentator, as raconteur, Maning is unexcelled. But a close reading of Old New Zealand discloses the fact that its author, for all his air of casualness, is very far removed from the usual literary amateur of pioneer days. He is in fact the master of an art so skilful and so persuasive that it conceals the true nature of his aims and views. For Maning, it becomes evident, was by no means a simple seeker after truth like Gorst; rather was he acting the part of showman, concerned to paint the high lights and the low lights of savage life from a partisan point of view.

This is one explanation of the disproportionate emphasis he placed on warfare, an important but by no means all-absorbing part of the old order. The charge cannot be brought against the War in the North, where Maning confined himself to a single warlike episode in Maori history; but within the broader limits of Old New Zealand his selection of material is most significant. At least half the book, as a casual inspection of chapter-headings will show, is taken up with descriptions of war or the adjuncts of warfare, and scarcely a page is without some passing reference to it. True, in Mailing's time, mainly through the introduction of the musket, the equilibrium of Maori culture had been disturbed so that warfare had assumed a tragically prominent role. Maning himself is a witness to the fact in some of the wisest and most penetrating sections of the book. But, invoking native authority, he goes much farther and states in a lurid passage that the same state of affairs existed before the coming of the European and the musket: 'Nothing was so valuable or respectable as strength and courage, and to acquire property by war and plunder was more honourable and also more desirable than by labour. Cannibalism was glorious. The island was a pandemonium.' Such a distortion could, even in Mailing's day, have been corrected by reference to the works of Grey and Shortland. A people engaged in a welter of senseless bloodshed could scarcely have preserved the qualities of mind and imagination revealed in Grey's three collections. Even less understanding was shown in Mailing's treatment of other native institutions. In his hands the tapu system was reduced to terms of insane melodrama, the murmuru to low comedy. Indeed the Maori of Old New Zealand is a creature alternating between farce and melodrama.

On the positive side, Maning was at his best in describing those features of Maori life which he could be expected to comprehend and
sympathise with—warfare and its attendant ceremonial, the elaborate processes of trade, the scene and ritual of death. The unmarred excellence of the War in the North, an account of the Flagstaff war, is largely due to its being confined within the limits of such material. The narrative, which is placed in the mouth of a Maori combatant, seems to have gained in precision and picturesqueness from Mailing's knowledge of Maori oratory, while the monologue form gave him an opportunity for ironical comment on Maori bewilderment at the incomprehensible ways of the European and on European misconceptions of the native. As a fighting man the Maori possessed virtues that were well within Mailing's compass, and in the battle scenes his narrative skill was blended with imaginative sympathy to produce an effect that is reminiscent of the best prose translations of Homer. In this book Maning shows an understanding and a power of self-projection notably absent from the greater part of Old New Zealand. The undue praise lavished on the latter can be ascribed to its more blatant qualities, while in its own day part of its appeal lay in the view of the Maori question implied in it. 'The bubble of Maori civilization has burst,' commented Mailing's English sponsor, the Earl of Pembroke. 'The true level of the Maori, intellectually and morally, has become tolerably well known; moreover, his numbers are diminishing year by year.'

Gold-mining, the third disruptive episode of this period, produced the smallest quantity of literature. It was perhaps too brief in its duration and too cataclysmic in its effect to throw up its equivalent of Chamier or Maning, and, in any case, the urban public of New Zealand was not large or distant enough to wish for vicarious experience of the gold-fields. Apart from brief episodes in the works of pastoral novelists like Bathgate or Ferguson, literature of the diggings consists of a few trivial romances and some rough yarns and memoirs set down in old age or stimulated by ambitions for money and fame. The nearest approach to a local Bret Harte was B. L. Farjeon, whose Shadows on the Snow (1865?) is a feeble Outcasts of Poker Flat drowned in sentiment of Dickensian origin. Farjeon left New Zealand to become a writer of popular fiction and the founder of a literary family, and he was succeeded as novelist of the goldfields by Vincent Pyke, author of Wild Will Enderby (1873) and The Adventures of George Washington Pratt (1874). These books, which enjoyed in their day some local popularity that extended to Australia, are simple concoctions of melodrama and knockabout farce moving to the climax of gold discovery and the finale of marriage. The heroes, embodying the miners' standards of right conduct and appearance, are of great physical strength, aggressively independent and uncouth in manner, yet chivalrous in their treatment of women and strict in their adherence to the miner's unwritten code of honour. The quintessence of the type is Pratt, the American backwoodsman who strides exuberantly through the two novels, dispensing rude justice, chewing his quid, and making oracular observations in exaggerated Americanaese. Apart from the crimes of robbery and murder, villainy is chiefly a matter of dissipation beyond the demands of mere good-fellowship or, more serious, the underhand exploitation of another miner's 'strike'.

The writings of Farjeon and Pyke make wearisome reading to-day not so much because they are crude but because they are crude in the wrong way: the miner's idiom is largely ignored, and characters are made to speak either in luscious journalese or in the language of fifth-rate drama; for the humour of the goldfields is substituted a heavy jocosity, expressing itself in such terms as: 'a region, the atmosphere of which is popularly supposed to be excessively sultry'; and over all is spread a thick treacle of sentimentality. A little of the true flavour of gold-mining days survives, however, in certain fugitive books or, more often, pamphlets which can occasionally be met with in the larger New Zealand collections. In particular, Henry Lapham's We Four (1880), the result of an evening spent in capping yarns, bears upon it the marks of authenticity. The yarns are set down in free colloquial English, they are spiced with salty male humour,
and sweetened with that genuine sentiment which grew out of the stresses and privations of life in Otago and Westland. The longest of the four sketches, 'A Member of the Force', is completely adult in its presentation of complex human behaviour and in its avoidance of either sentimentality or cynicism. At a lower level there are W. Davidson's *Stories of New Zealand Life* (1889), with their revelations of the miner's wild extravagance, and Frank Melton's *Luck* (1891) by Thos. Cottle, a redoubtable figure who strewed his pages with homely aphorisms in rugged but forceful language. "As long as a man earns what he wants on the square, and pays his way, we don't care a rap whether he is a member of Parliament, or So-and-so's bullock-driver", remarks one of his characters; and the sentiment would have been cheered to the echo on every claim from Coromandel to Gabriel's Gully.

In the best of the memoirs, *Up and Down (or, Fifty Years' Colonial Experiences ... being the Life History of Capt. W. J. Barry. Written by Himself ...)* (1879), there is the same vigour and slangy picturesqueness of speech, with the same background of hard-living, robust pleasures, and single-minded pursuit of gold or money. Capt. Barry, like Thos. Cottle, was one of those gargantuan characters appropriate to an age which roasted its bullocks whole and dug out its gold by the shovelful. With the same aplomb with which he turned his hand to every occupation, from butcher to auctioneer, he met the mingled smiles and blows of an erratic fortune, and finally we leave him, battered but indomitable, lecturing to the populace of Great Britain on the advantages of New Zealand as a field for colonisation. The narrative is set down in a breathless, tumultuous style, with no trace of artifice or hint of selection: the account of his second wife's death, for example, takes up about a quarter of the space assigned to the marketing of chilblain ointment to frostbitten gold-miners. If some New Zealand novelist should wish to emulate the author of *Honey in the Horn* that superb re-creation of the Oregon homesteaders, he would find an abundance of raw material to his hand in this highly coloured narrative of a colonial adventurer.

The conditions in which so fantastic a person as Barry could flourish also gave rise to the spectacular career of Julius Vogel, a journalist who was swept like Barry by the gold-rushes from Australia to Otago, and eventually became the premier of New Zealand. More than any other single person, Vogel was responsible for transmitting to the mainstream of New Zealand life what may be called the 'digger spirit'—that mixture of optimism, chivalry, speculative daring, and opportunism which characterised the miner on the fields of Otago and Westland. At the end of his political career, when living in England, Vogel set down a kind of oblique testament of faith in *Anno Domini 2000; or Woman's Destiny* (1889). Here in all their resplendence were the ideals which

"...By H. L. Davis, English edition 1935.,

The book is primarily a fantasy, an elaborate product of the mechanism underlying the dreams of wealth and power, garish residences, and over-dressed women which are occasionally inserted in the gold-miners' yarns. But Vogel's dream is on a far more opulent scale, and it is further enriched by the inclusion of his favourite theories of politics and empire. The novel was written, an epilogue explains, first to show that the recognised dominance of either sex was unnecessary, second to advocate the formation of a unified British Commonwealth, thirdly to suggest the abolition of poverty by raising the standard of living. The novel is placed in the year 2000 when the author's theories have long been in practice. There now exists a great British Commonwealth, led by women (for 'woman has become the guiding, man the executive force of the world'), while want has been abolished in all countries through the intervention of philanthropic capitalists.

Three main strands of thought and sentiment run through this extravaganza, as indeed through the later history of New Zealand. Of the first, imperialism, Vogel was New Zealand's greatest exponent. Yet coupled with his faith in the imperial destiny, a marked feeling of inferiority before the power and prestige of Britain is evident, a feeling which finds an outlet in a form of compensation. Vogel looks...
forward to a time when the colonies will dictate British policy, when the Emperor will marry a New Zealander, when London will be only an historic appendage of the Empire. These two opposing sentiments—affection for the mother country and a desire to be free of her trammels—provide a key to the understanding of literary and social history in the next few decades. Equally significant, appearing as they did on the eve of the nineties, were Vogel's humanitarian views, which were the natural outcome of nineteenth-century liberalism in the forcing conditions of the goldfield and the pioneering settlement. With the dawn of the year 2000 the world has become convinced: 'First. That labour or work of some kind was the only condition of general happiness. Second. That every human being was entitled to a certain proportion of the world's good things. Third. That, as the capacity of machinery and the population of the world increased production, the theory of the need of labour could not be realised unless with a corresponding increase of the wants of mankind.' The remaining characteristics may be grouped under the heading of materialism. The novel abounds in vulgar scenes of wealth and in ostentatious settings, while the prodigality of titled characters is also the outcome of a childish conception of human life and progress. Progress, for Vogel, consisted mainly in the accumulation and limited distribution of wealth and in the perfecting of machinery. The book forms a monument not only to its author but to the 'gilded' years of New Zealand history, a time of optimism and grandiose speculation, when the possibilities of expansion seemed unlimited. Vogel's effervescent 'Progression, progression, always progression, has been the history of the centuries' would have been questioned by few New Zealanders, and the mere word 'future' in contemporary writings can be counted on to release a burst of windy rhetoric.

There remained, however, a few incorruptible spirits who had come to New Zealand in quest not of riches but of the New Jerusalem. A speech of FitzGerald's, made during the years of Vogel's ascendancy, can be regarded as the epitaph of the 'old identity' pushed aside by the 'new iniquity' in its ardour for gold and progress: 'Gentlemen, I conclude this … discourse by entering my humble protest against the sacrifice of public honour and dignity to private wealth and luxury; by entering my protest against the vices of an age which subordinates its love of the beautiful to its worship of wealth … which makes Art the advertisement of riches instead of their crown and glory … whose tastes and whose arts are essentially vain and selfish.'

In the bustling years of 'opening up' it was only to be expected that the arts should suffer some eclipse. As Samuel Butler had remarked, it did 'not do to speak about John Sebastian Bach's Fugues, or pre-Raphaelite pictures' to the 'rowdy-hatted' sheepmen of Canterbury. Even those writers who seem, at this distance of time, to have been wholly at one with their environment were often despaired for pursuing aims which to the practical man were incomprehensible or absurd. Take Dugald Ferguson's advice to the local poet, given in his embittered old age: 'Pray who do you think seriously regards those verses? … Assume, instead of your wonted look of dreamy abstraction, a keen business or even money-grabbing expression. Instead of poetic visions, let your mind be absorbed by plans for the best mode of growing turnips…. Marry some cockatoo's daughter with … cows for her dowry…. Let your stock-yard, knee-deep in dung, be the practical witness of your prosperity…. if you will follow this advice, you may make some headway in the world, besides securing the substantial respect of all around you as a man of shrewd sense, which regard for you at present they certainly have not.'

But this neglect was not wholly due to the soul-lessness of a money-grabbing public; a share of blame must fall on the poets themselves. In the young poet with his look of 'dreamy abstraction' and his 'poetic visions' Ferguson has embodied only too well the conception of the poetic that was current throughout

*From *The Local Poet* included in the undated but certainly late *Poems and Sketches.*
From life's stern battle and its cares set free,
Methought my spirit wandered far away,
And for a time put off mortality
Amid the groves of Helicon to stray:—
I dreamt of heroes of a by-gone day'.

This was the theory of poetry commonly practised during the most strenuous years of New Zealand history and by men who were
themselves actively engaged in the clearing of bush, the subjugation of Maoris, the mining of gold. That poetry might conceivably have
some relation to these activities, that it might even deal with turnips, cockatoos' daughters, and stock-yards did not occur to these
writers, caught as they were in the toils of the Romantic tradition. Consider, for example, Frederick Napier Broome, the gay, energetic,
resourceful F—of Lady Barker's books. When he took up his pen and began to versify it was not to write of the exhilarating life of a
Canterbury squatter, but to indulge in such feeble imitations of the rhythm and imagery of Swinburne as in this exotic from Poems from
New Zealand (1868):

'Being and manifold mother, laid upon life like a dream,
Fleeing to thee from another, a mightier thought and a theme.

Take me to thy beautiful bosom, thy bountiful breast,
Make it bare to the exquisite blossom, suckle me there with the rest.'

Or, again, consider that dusty epic, Ranolf and Amohia (1872), by Alfred Domett, leading spirit of the Nelson settlement, experienced
public servant and politician, the 'passionate, fiery nature, full of suppressed energy, as proud as Lucifer' of Thomas Arnold's memoirs.
Yet how little of this has crept into the interminable cantos of his 'South-Sea Day-Dream', how little in fact of the New Zealand which
Domett himself had known and had helped to build during thirty years of strenuous public life! But, as he suggests in a set of prefatory
verses, Domett as poet was leaving behind the New Zealand of struggling settlements, of sheepfarming, of gold discovery, of political
brawls and native wars; he was ignoring all this to create a New Zealand fit for Romantic poets to dream in:

'From our Life of realities—hard—shallow-hearted,
Has Romance—has all glory idyllic departed—
From the workaday World all the wonderment flown?
Well, but what if there gleamed, in an Age cold as this,
The divinest of Poets' ideal of bliss?
Yea, an Eden could lurk in this Empire of ours'

This Eden, reconstructed with enormous pains from all the available sources, was the New Zealand of pre-colonisation years, a land of
virgin forest populated by Maoris still immune from the influences of European civilisation. But for all his diligent research, for all his
laborious pictures of silica terraces, geysers, primeval forests, and what not, there is no more life in the epic than in Wilson's Ena or White's Te Rou which in substance it so closely resembles. Canto after canto is ground out in the same tedious
measures, description succeeds description with a deadening prolixity, and the poem is finally crushed by the weight of speculation
imposed on the trivial plot. Ranolf and Amohia is the extreme vagary of the Romantic impulse in New Zealand; the pity is that a man of
Domett's intelligence and experience should have directed his literary ambitions into so unprofitable a channel. There can be few New
Zealanders who would not gladly exchange Domett's epic for one brief volume of memoirs written with the unstudied eloquence of his
diaries and correspondence.

The popular versifier of these years was, however, not Broome nor Domett but Bracken, whose writings enjoyed a vogue not since equalled in New Zealand, and whose *Musings in Maoriland*, published in the jubilee year 1890, set the seal upon his reputation as national poet. Tom Bracken was something of a character, a very mild version of Captain Barry. Born in Ireland, he had emigrated as a child to Australia where he was by turn farm-boy, chemist's assistant, station-hand, and shearer. He crossed over to Otago in the late sixties and there found a niche in journalism, an occupation varied by excursions into politics. On one occasion he relieved the monotony of a debate by singing a comic song to the House, and as 'Paddy page 96 Murphy' he acquired fame for his humorous comments on the 'doin's o' Parliment' written in doggerel Irish. This was Tom Bracken, journalist and politician—a very different person from the poet Thomas Bracken. For the moment he began to woo 'the divine maiden—Poesy' (to quote his own phrase) Bracken forgot politics, forgot humour, forgot the world about him, to weave together those doleful platitudes and flowery banalities which make up the greater part of his verse. These lines, taken from a poetical address delivered by him at the opening of the Oamaru Theatre in 1883, illustrate his conception of poesy:

'Welcome, Thalia and Melpomene,  
Unto this fair White City by the sea!  
Behold! Apollo here has found a shrine  
Where his companions—all the Sacred Nine—  
May revel in harmonious glee'  

To do him justice, Bracken rarely sank to the level of such inflated fustian, and at his best he has some of Longfellow's knack of expressing the plain man's thoughts about life and death and love in simple measures and apt phrases. But, except for superficial verbal differences, the ornate bulk of *Musings in Maoriland* might have been produced by any minor versifier in any part of the English-speaking world during the late nineteenth century. And the same is true of the mass of New Zealand verse of this period. One meets with minor felicities of rhythm and phrase, sincere tributes to natural beauty, the worthiest of sentiments. But none of the writers seem to have any vital relationship with the life about them, they rarely experiment with new forms or measures, and even more rarely discard the cliches of Romantic verse to use the language of everyday speech. Occasionally in humorous verse, as in these lines from *Colonial Couplets* (1889) by G. P. Williams and W. P. Reeves, it is recognised that in fifty years New Zealand had developed an idiom of its own, very different from that of English people and English poets:

'Then there's what we call a gully, which of course we take to mean  
Just a small and narrow valley, in which bush is sometimes seen;  
You perchance, were you a new chum, might describe this as a dell  
Bushy gully suits me better, serves my purpose just as well.'  

But even here the attitude is rather equivocal, as if the writers did not altogether approve the ousting of the English term by its rough colonial equivalent. Not for many years were New Zealand writers to use their own language with anything approaching self-assurance.

* The artists of this period are linked with the poets in their pursuit of a comparable ideal of beauty and in their probably unconscious avoidance of the New Zealand of pioneering, gold prospecting, and war.

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More than the poets, however, the artists constituted a group, working almost exclusively in water-colours and seeking in the New
Zealand landscape their common goal of ‘the picturesque and the beautiful’, to quote one of the number, C. D. Barraud. The acknowledged leader was John Gully who, after farming some years in Taranaki, crossed over to Nelson during the Maori wars and settled down to a long and prolific career dedicated to the painting of New Zealand scenery. Gully’s work, though in a different medium, invites comparison with Domett’s. Both were painstaking craftsmen, both achieved their effects not by sweeping strokes but by a meticulous piling on of detail, they both drew their inspiration from inanimate nature rather than from men, while Gully’s enormous watercolours and Domett’s prolix descriptive passages strike one alike as the tours deforce of an ampler and more leisurely age than our own.

Gully’s work has shown greater power of survival than Domett’s partly because Gully was a greater poet—endowed with a more intense and more personal vision. In spite of his apparent aim of photographic naturalism, there is in the best of his paintings (for example ‘Lake Te Anau’ (1887) in the Dunedin Art Gallery and ‘Mount Cook’ (1872) in the National Art Gallery, Wellington) an ethereal lightness which completely transforms his subjects. These, we exclaim, are not so much representations of Mount Cook, or Lake Te Anau, or the Waimea plains as glimpses of some romantic poet’s country of the mind, suffused with the serene colours of a mildly soaring imagination. Like most of his contemporaries (and differing in this respect from many earlier artists), he was not very sensitive to the colours of the New Zealand landscape and employed hazy blues and greens which would have been more appropriate in the old world. This practice, combined with his predilection for subjects on the grandest possible scale—towering mountains, unfathomable lakes, vast plains—lends his work a distinctive charm which is marred only when his pictures are hung in numbers, as in the National Art Gallery and in the Suter Gallery, Nelson. For then it becomes obvious how limited were his resources and how assiduously he repeated the same formula—detailed foreground, carefully disposed trees, and some gigantic natural feature receding into a hazy background. He was not an inventive painter, he was certainly not the local Turner of contemporary reputation, but he did convey the wonder felt by imaginative men before the magnificence of New Zealand, and his gilt-framed pictures in the drawing-rooms of the merchant and the squatter were a constant refutation of the view that mountains were only ‘good for sheep’.

Gully’s best-known contemporaries, in some respects his superiors, were two amateurs J. C. Richmond and W. M. Hodgkins.

Richmond’s favourite subjects were similar to Gully’s (they were friends and accompanied each other on several sketching trips), but his work is less stereotyped, and he had a keener appreciation of local variations in contour and atmosphere. There is, for example, a striking difference between the Canterbury Museum ‘Ngatapa, Gisborne’ (1869), with its warm, blue east coast haze and tangled east coast bush, and the cold clarity of ‘Mt. Excelsior, Takitimu Range’ (1887) in the Dunedin Gallery. Richmond’s affinities are perhaps with Heaphy rather than with Gully, and in his sensitive pencil sketches of the bush he continued the line of another early artist, Swainson. Hodgkins was less concerned with scenic beauties than either Gully or Richmond and showed greater emancipation both in technique and the use of colour. One of the virtues of his work is that it is not painted from some eyrie of the imagination. Hodgkins was not obsessed with size and grandeur, and his mild impressionism was a far more effective means of delineating the New Zealand bush than the method, more common at the time, of painting every leaf and stick. In his best picture (one of the most satisfying pictures of this period) ‘The Southern Alps’ (1885) the foreground of ragged bush is painted in with vigorous strokes, then follow in ever-receding perspective, a river valley and deep purple foothills, underlining the pure line of alps in the remote distance. This water-colour and the delightful ‘Gorse in Bloom’ (1894) hang in the Dunedin Gallery near the work of his more famous daughter; the resemblances in technique are striking, and the brilliant pupil does not entirely outshine her father and teacher.

Of the lesser artists who indefatigably scoured the country in search of ‘the picturesque and the beautiful’, the most active were C. D. Barraud, a conscientious but uninspired amateur, and Nicholas Chevalier, a visiting artist whose informal sketches are superior to his set pieces, with their romantic themes and exotic hues. Exotic also are the water-colours of J. C. Hoyte and of the Rev. John Kinder. Hoyte’s ‘Lower Harbour, Otago’ (1876) in the Dunedin Gallery is a New Zealand scene, pruned of its ruggedness, highly formalised, and so transformed to resemble a tranquil English lake and its surroundings. Kinder, who is well represented in the Auckland Gallery, retained in New Zealand the vision of a domesticated English countryside which he transferred, with odd but charming results, to his renderings of the New Zealand landscape.
And yet it is doubtful whether all the labour and exhausting travel and paint expended by these men accomplished anything comparable with a few water-colours by John Buchanan, who in his day aspired only to the humble designation of draughtsman. Before he arrived in Otago in 1849, Buchanan had been a pattern designer in Scotland and an amateur botanist. After the ups and downs of the average Otago colonist (he worked at one stage of course as a gold prospector) in 1862 he found employment with James Hector as draughtsman-botanist, and during exploratory trips painted the handful of water-colours which now form part of the Hocken collection. Building up his pictures in a series of planes and using a simple range of colours—browns, grey-greens, and pale blues—he dispensed with the prevailing naturalism and placed the chief stress on forms and contours. The result is that his work has an impressiveness and a strength of composition almost unique at the time. ('Charming' and 'carefully arranged' are the epithets appropriate to the best work of his contemporaries.) In his finest water-colour, 'Milford Sound looking N.W. from Freshwater Basin', he suggests as no one else has done the stark, incredible grandeur of that natural prodigy. Except for the gaunt trunk of a dead tree, a gushing torrent, and a few other formal features, detail is absent, and the emphasis of the picture is placed on the superb lines and masses of the mountains, as they rise and fall. By comparison, the Dunedin Gallery 'Milford Sound' (1877) by John Gully, with its microscopically exact foreground and its tiny ship to emphasise the immensity of the mountains, is insipid and obvious. The fact is that Buchanan was free from the nineteenth-century Romantic conventions which so hampered his contemporaries, both the artists and the poets. This freedom was probably not of his own seeking and may have been due to the circumstances of his calling.

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**John Buchanan:** Milford Sound (c. 1863)

**John Gully:** Milford Sound (1877)
and his lack of formal training in the arts; but none the less it enabled him to escape the tyranny of an imported tradition and to achieve a degree of emancipation found only rarely even among later writers and artists.

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