

JOHN REECE COLE

It has fallen to me as President of the Friends of the Turnbull Library to write a memorandum on Mr J. R. Cole, lately and prematurely retired from the post of Chief Librarian, a task for which I am ill-equipped, since our association is relatively recent and of regrettably short duration, and for many of the details of his professional career I am dependent on others.

Here, however, are the bare bones of the matter. J. R. Cole received his primary and secondary education in Palmerston North, at the Central School and the Boys' High School, and after war service, attended Auckland University College, from where he obtained his BA and Diploma in Journalism. He was among the first to pass through the newly established New Zealand Library School, obtained his Diploma in 1947 and joined the National Library Service in 1948. Four years later an International Arts Fellowship took him to America to meet American writers and to do literary research, mainly at Princeton University Library. Back in New Zealand he became deputy Chief Librarian to the Alexander Turnbull Library, and ten busy years followed. The collection had grown too big, and in fact too heavy for the existing accommodation and a move had to be made to the Ford building in Courtenay Place to allow Turnbull's original building to be strengthened and renovated; a large part of the stock still remains in the Ford Building.

Together with the re-organisation of the stock went the organisation of the internal administration, to keep pace with the Library's increasing staff. Much of the Library's material is in manuscript, and to make the most interesting of it readily available, the publication of monographs has been furthered as a result of J. R. Cole's interest and work; the Journals of Edward Markham and of Ensign Best have so far appeared, the second shortly after his retirement.

His service as Deputy Librarian was broken by a period of nine months when he was acting Chief Librarian, in the absence of Mr Taylor, and again by two visits to South East Asia, one from 1956 to 1958 when he was UNESCO adviser to the Indonesian Government, and the other more briefly in 1962 under the Colombo Plan, as director of the National Library of Singapore.

In 1963 he succeeded Mr C. R. H. Taylor as Chief Librarian, but unfortunately the promise of the years was not to be fulfilled, for he was involved in a serious motor accident from the effects of which he never fully recovered, and as a result of which he was finally obliged to resign at the end of 1965, to the great distress of his friends and the obvious loss to the library service.

In 1948 he published a collection of his short stories under the title of *It was so late*, and in 1957 *Pompallier, the house and the mission ...* He has also written on library subjects as well as on aspects of New Zealand literature.

N. W.