

ALEXANDER TURNBULL: HIS LIFE HIS CIRCLE HIS COLLECTIONS

A biography launched

The dedicated, conscientious and impartially judicial labours of Dr E. H. McCormick for some five years culminated in the launching of the biography at the end of July. It was a comment on the accepted physical inadequacies of the Exhibition area in the Free Lance building as well as on the great interest in the event that two functions were necessary to place the biography firmly in the hands of Friends and first-line readers. The initial gathering, that of the Friends of the Turnbull Library, was in the early evening of Monday 29 July and the second, at the invitation of the body responsible for commissioning and publishing the book, the Alexander Turnbull Library Endowment Trust, was at the same time in the evening of the 30th.

Dr McCormick was present at both functions to receive thanks and congratulations, official and private. Professor D. F. McKenzie as President of the Friends conveyed his enthusiastic appreciation to which Dr McCormick appropriately replied, before submitting to the ordeal of signing copies for an impressive queue of purchasers. At the second evening, Sir Alister McIntosh as Chairman of Trustees introduced the Minister of Education, the Hon. P. A. Amos, who formally congratulated the author and the Library. Dr McCormick's second piquant and individual speech of acknowledgment within 25 hours was followed by an address from the Chief Librarian, Mr. Traue, who by placing the biography and the heritage of its subject in a wider context, made an almost impassioned but effective plea for continuing and essential support from benefactors of today and tomorrow.

Nothing in print dates more rapidly than a commemorative speech—even Lincoln at Gettysburg has been cut down to size by modern commentators—but we have a duty to place on record the remarks of the Minister and the Chief Librarian as typical of the feelings of many at the functions. Our tape recorder again proved its fallibility but Dr McCormick has kindly resurrected his acknowledgments on the second occasion. We are grateful particularly for the biographical overtones; somewhat less muted and uninhibited in the original version and its subsequent private gloss. The Editor, too, would like to take this belated opportunity as the book's partial instigator and often harrassed consultant, to express his profound satisfaction and pleasure at every aspect of the work and its production. It is as difficult for him to express adequately his gratitude to Dr McCormick publicly as it has been privately in the two years since the text was completed.