

carefully, with a mind that remains library-orientated, you will descry somewhere in the hurly-burly the figure of Alexander Horsburgh Turnbull, the pattern of Pacific exploration, the glint of gold on a leather binding.

At this point I realize, with alarm and depression, how completely I have let you down. These large generalizations, this trivial self-centred reminiscence, masquerading as a lecture on the library: and now it is too late to pour out a stream of constructive thought, such as should issue from the realities of this contemporary scene, carry you excitedly to the basic demands of commercial and technical information, information retrieval, all the electronic glories of our modern blood and state. I was even wondering how I could work up to another piece of poetry, on the plea that it was written by a librarian. I realize only too well that the historian, however confidently he may talk, has few certainties to offer you. You should have got someone who knew something to address you. – And what about the Cosmos? you may enquire: have I no word of explanation or benediction for, can I retrieve no information about the Cosmos, before I sink into oblivion? Isaac Disraeli does not seem to have examined it. I have dragged it in where I could. If you press me, I explain that I added it to my title just to make you think the lecture might be interesting. We are all part of the Cosmos. The Library is part of the Cosmos. My librarian-poet, preliminary to his declaration of love, thought of a second quatrain:

Knowing how unsure is all my knowledge, doled
To sloven memory and to cheated sense,
And to what majesty of stars I hold
My little candle of experience . . .

Well, all our candles are little ones. Without the Library, should we have anything worth calling a candle at all?

J. C. Beaglehole