

A History of the University of Canterbury, 1873-1973. By W. J. Gardner, E. T. Beardsley and T. E. Carter. University of Canterbury, Christchurch, 1973. 530 pp. N.Z. price: \$9.75.

THE THREE authors of this centennial history undertook the work when the health of the author originally commissioned broke down towards the end of 1970. Its completion in time for the centenary is a remarkable achievement. The book is divided into three periods, respectively ending in 1918, 1948 and the present year. Within each period the treatment is topical. There is no sign of haste in the writing and scholarly standards are maintained throughout.

If the history of this University is contrasted with that of Otago, the broad background is of course similar but there are many striking contrasts. The Otago University Council controlled nothing but the University and the Museum. The 'Board of Governors' in Canterbury controlled the Christchurch High Schools, the Public Library and the Museum until after the Second World War. Not for nothing were they called 'Governors'. They treated the professors as employees. An Act of 1891 gave the professors representation on the Otago Council, in Canterbury they had to wait for direct representation until 1923. Nothing in Otago quite parallels the dominant influence in the first twenty years in Canterbury of Macmillan Brown and in the interwar period of Hight. There were clashes of personality in Otago, naturally, but they never reached the height which justifies Mr Beardsley in entitling one of his chapters 'Discord in Academe'.

Mr Gardner's early chapters are full and interesting but they do not perhaps contain much new information. If personal experience is a fair basis for criticism, he is perhaps unduly kind to Macmillan Brown (if it is fair to judge a man by his later years) and appears to underrate the encouragement Hight gave to wide reading and research. His chapter on 'Town and Gown' is particularly successful. With rich material from such men as Macmillan Brown, Alpers and H. F. von Haast, he paints a lively, varied and informal picture of the part played by Canterbury College in Christchurch life.

In Mr Beardsley's section it is perhaps the chapter on the controversies of the period that is of prime interest. He is misinformed when he says in his first chapter that Helen Connon Hall was 'the first women students' hall of residents in the country'. It was the first such hall controlled by a university college. But St. Margaret's College, Dunedin, was opened in 1911 and had 67 students in residence in 1918, when Helen Connon Hall was opened. One or two of his judgements are open to question. 'In retrospect', he writes, 'the desire of Canterbury and Otago to retain their [special] schools seems merely selfish.' But given the restricted, one might almost say miserly, finance of University education at that time, surely it was in the national interest that New Zealand should have one national medical school and one national engineering school of good repute than two competitors struggling for the money available. The reviewer would also take issue with the opening sentence of Mr Beardsley's chapter on 'Academic Reform'. 'The colonial preference for the utilitarian and a deep-seated sense of inferiority combined to enthrone examinations, especially external examinations within the University.' The Victorian Age was *par excellence* the age of written examinations. In England they were the ladder by which men stepped up a class. This was less necessary in New Zealand but examinations

were none the less necessary, and most, if not all, the early professors wanted them to be external, as a safeguard against relaxing standards. Local as well as Australian examiners were tried before the decision was made to appoint them in England. What was not necessary was to have an examining university on the model of the University of London and the man mainly responsible for this was Tancred, who is overpraised in this book. He clamped this system so firmly on New Zealand that it took the University three generations to get itself free. Later in this chapter, Mr Beardsley has some interesting pages on Karl Popper, whose 'impact on the academic life of the College', he declares, 'was greater than that of any other person before or since'. His main achievement was 'to force the research door open'. He draws attention also to the stimulus given, especially in the College's relationship to the general community, by a very different personality, James Shelley.

Professor Carter had perhaps the toughest assignment, having a little more than a hundred pages in which to cover twenty-five years of rapid growth in numbers, in buildings and in finance. The delicate task of characterizing living persons — for all four of the Rectors and Vice-Chancellors are still with us — without flattery and with discrimination has been well performed. The epoch-making event of this period has of course been the move to Ilam and its origins and development are clearly explained. The book ends with an epilogue from the eloquent pen of the reigning Vice-Chancellor, Professor Phillips. Then follow appendices of lists of office-holders, staff, Rhodes scholars, etc., notes, a bibliography and a 22-page index. The book is well-produced and the illustrations, mostly of leading figures in the University, past and present, enhance its interest. It may be doubted how many will read this volume from cover to cover, but those who do will find it is well written throughout and has many lighter touches. In short it is a notable addition to New Zealand historical and educational literature.

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Thoroughly a Man of the World: A Biography of Sir David Monro. By Rex E. Wright-St. Clair. Whitcombe & Tombs, Christchurch, 1971. 331 pp. N.Z. price: \$6.50.

William and Mary Rolleston: an Informal Biography. By Rosamond Rolleston. A. H. & A. W. Reed, Wellington, 1971. 150 pp. N.Z. price: \$4.05.

THE ART of biography, at any rate of the scholarly kind, has been too much neglected in New Zealand. Such men as Stafford, Fox, Ballance, Ward and Massey still await their biographer. But some good biographies are now appearing and Dr Wright-St. Clair's life of Monro, though not a work of the first importance, is a welcome addition to the number. Monro's voluminous diaries, travel journals and many surviving letters have given his biographer ample materials to fill out the outlines provided by parliamentary and other public documents.

Monro belonged to a famous medical family. His great-grandfather and grandfather were the founders of the fame of the Edinburgh Medical School