

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

and when his father, who was not a man of the same stature, retired from the chair of anatomy in 1846, it had been in the family for 126 years. Monro himself graduated in medicine and for two years gave lectures in anatomy to the art students of Edinburgh. But in 1841, for some reason which remains unknown, he decided to become a land purchaser in Nelson and emigrate to New Zealand. His medical knowledge continued to be called upon but for the rest of his career his main interests were the land and public life. He was a cultivated man. Mrs Greenwood, wife of a friend and medical colleague, noted his 'very fine voice, great taste, good knowledge of the guitar'. There was much that he missed in New Zealand, especially in the early years: 'for the man who cares anything about literature and the fine arts it presents nothing but a blank', he wrote. He often spoke of leaving the country after he had made a few thousand pounds; but he never did, even on a visit. The main reason presumably was the attraction of public life. He was too much of the unbending conservative for colonial politics. He declined office in the mixed executive of 1854. He was defeated by J. P. Robinson, a turner who had become a sawmiller, for the superintendency of Nelson in 1857, when Stafford had given it up, and was too proud to stand again. But he found his true vocation when he was chosen speaker of the House of Representatives in 1861 and held the office for ten years. His dignity and strength of character made him generally acceptable. Dr Wright-St. Clair rates as his outstanding achievement the complete revision of standing orders of the House. Unfortunately the defeat of the Fox ministry by his casting vote in 1862 was held against him by Fox so bitterly that when he retired from office at the end of the 1870 parliament Fox, who was then back in power, allowed him to go without a word of thanks for his services. Moreover, when Munro was returned for Motueka in the ensuing general election by the casting vote of the returning officer, Fox packed the committee to which the defeated candidate's petition was referred and Monro was unseated.

Dr Wright-St. Clair has not attempted any new interpretation of the early and provincial period to which Monro belonged, but he has painted a convincing portrait of the man, with much interesting detail, personal, social and political, and the book is easy to read. There is an undetected printer's error on p. 191: '8 million loan' should read '3 million loan'. It is a pity that Dr Wright-St. Clair admits the American usage 'protesting' for 'protesting against'. But on the whole he is to be congratulated on a biography which would bring credit to a professional scholar.

Mrs Ormond Wilson (Rosamond Rolleston) calls her book an informal biography. She eschews footnotes, though an annotated copy identifying the sources used is available in the Turnbull Library. She does not alter much the picture of William Rolleston's character and public life given by Downie Stewart in his biography, published in 1940, but the domestic background gives the man a new dimension. The new material she has used enables her to paint a delightful picture of her grandmother Mary Rolleston, who lived on until the year in which Downie Stewart's book appeared. Husband and wife were both strong characters, both intensely interested in politics, though more often than not differing in their political views. Mary was fourteen years younger than her husband and was only twenty-three when he became Superintendent of Canterbury. The impact of this beautiful and lively young woman on the social life of Christchurch may be imagined. She revelled in it, as she did in Wellington life when William became

Minister of Lands in the Hall Ministry of 1879 and the Rollestons moved house. She was bored with the farm to which William had to retire on losing office in 1884. Nevertheless she coped bravely with the straitened circumstances brought by loss of office and economic depression, reared nine children, sustained her husband in his declining years and (to quote the publisher's blurb) 'in her long widowhood . . . regained and relished her place as a *grande dame* of Christchurch society'. Mrs Wilson has done well to rescue this remarkable woman from oblivion. Two slips may be noted. Rolleston could not have been invited to 'join the Provincial Council' in 1865, for it was wholly elective: it was the Provincial Executive he joined. It was as an ordinary member of the House of Representatives, not of 'the Central Government', that he received an honorarium of £250 a year (p. 73). But these are minor peccadillos. Mrs Wilson's very readable and often entertaining book should appeal to all who are interested in New Zealand's social and political history.

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