

tion so as to sway the market in their own favour.

In summary, the volume offers a disparate collection of essays united by a common focus on the problem of human mobility, and a common sense of the advantages of concrete historical inquiry over abstract theoretical models. The reader will, however, have to believe strongly in the importance of comparative history, if the succession of jumps in time and space is not to be jarring. To compensate, however, the essentially micro-studies of conditions on the supply side of the markets for indentured or contract labour seem to this reviewer to be very good history indeed.

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*The First World War.* By Keith Robbins. Oxford University Press, 1984. 186 pp., maps. U.K. price: £12.50.

THE aim of the series in which this book appears, OPUS, is to 'provide concise, original, and authoritative introductions to a wide range of subjects in the humanities and sciences'. The books are 'written by experts for the general reader as well as for students'. In Keith Robbins, Professor of History at Glasgow, and author of a book on Sir Edward Grey, OPUS have certainly an expert, but, in including the First World War in their series, the editors may have set him an impossible task. The author, sounding a rather rueful prefatory note, observes that this is not the first book on the war, 'though it is both one of the shortest and one of the most wide-ranging'. He opens up a great many topics, but does not always bring the one in hand to a conclusion before rushing on to the next. Some of the topics are indeed so thorny that he may be glad to extricate himself. But, at least to a reader aware of some of the literature on the topics, it makes for a tantalising inconclusiveness. It is hard to know what it would mean for a reader to whom the book really was an introduction. Elision piled on conciseness would surely make it hard to follow. The occasional flippancy would probably not help. Humour is not necessarily out of place even in the historiography of so grim a subject. But Taylorisms can be irritating, and for the general reader, some of those attempted here would surely be mystifying, if not misleading: they might seem like in-jokes, the tiresome kind of thing the author of a children's pantomime puts in for the adults.

To complain that the book attempts to be too comprehensive, and then to express the wish that it had covered additional ground, may at first seem perverse. Perhaps it is not so: a larger view may facilitate cohesiveness, even conciseness. The author does not succeed in putting the war, in terms of its origins, its course, or its results, in a world context. His opening account of the causes is, not surprisingly, primarily a European one, but it takes too little account of the shift in the world distribution of power of which contemporaries, in Europe and elsewhere, were in fact so aware. His account of the fighting of the war in turn gives too little explanation of American participation. Not surprisingly, Professor Robbins's account of war-aims and peace-feelers indeed says more of Wilson and the 14 Points. In his conclusion he rightly observes: 'it is not easy to draw up a convincing way of measuring the impact of war

and deciding the extent to which it inaugurated, accelerated or determined the fate of structures and movements'. It seems absolutely certain, however, not merely 'arguable', that it hastened the demise of the Habsburg, Romanov, and Ottoman empires. It is clear, too, as Professor Robbins says, that it undermined 'the position of Europe as a whole in the world'. But it also hastened the demise of the British Empire, and the emergence of a world dominated by two super-powers and partitioned among would-be nation states. OPUS's aims might have been well served by placing the First World War more squarely in the international history of the twentieth century.

Readers in Australia and New Zealand will find that Professor Robbins does not fail to mention the vain heroism at Gallipoli, the fact that New Zealand sent 100,000 men overseas, the referenda battles in Australia. Readers concerned with the motives of those involved, or with the motives and the treatment of those who did not wish to be involved, will find references perhaps more peculiarly British or European. Those concerned with the role of the war in making nations of the Dominions will again have to look elsewhere, both in their own histories, and, it is to be hoped, in histories that chronicle the changes in the British Empire and its role in the world. But the author offers interesting reflections on the scientific and technical advances that war expedited; on the relationship between the civil and the military in a range of European countries; and on the impact of the war on the role of women in society and politics.

It might unkindly be said that the hectic pace of the book and its quixotic approach reflect aspects of the war itself. But Professor Robbins can at times attain the measure of its tragic quality too. 'The scale of suffering in the First World War prompts the easy reflection that generals were locked in a war of attrition and lacked the gifts which would enable them to find a way out. . . . More recently it has come to seem as if there was no swift and painless path to success that was only missed by obstinacy and stupidity. . . .'

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*Pleasures of the Flesh — Sex and Drugs in Colonial New Zealand 1840–1915.* By Stevan Eldred-Grigg. A. H. & A. W. Reed, Wellington, 1984. 303 pp. N.Z. price: \$29.95.

THIS IS an ambitious, provocative book. Dr Eldred-Grigg wants to overturn the accepted historical understanding of New Zealand as the deformed product of puritanism triumphant, 'frigid, intolerant, frightened of sexuality and incapable of maturely handling drugs' (his period excludes the Mr Asia and other recent New Zealand emigré enterprises). Eldred-Grigg has scoured — in one sense anyway — police reports and reformers' denunciations and emerged with an impressive spread of inferential information about self-indulgence as expressed in courtship and prostitution, marriage, divorce, masturbation, homosexuality, sexual violence, social purity obsessions and censorship, and addictions linked to alcohol, nicotine, caf-