

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. . . .'

NICHOLAS TARLING

University of Auckland

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-

feine and opium. His material makes New Zealand appear a very wild place: heavily masculine, rough, drunken, tobacco-ridden, sexually exploitative and promiscuous, and coarsely resistant to improvers' admonitions and attempts at moral coercion.

Eldred-Grigg's picture might well prove overdrawn. He is heavily dependent upon evidence which frequently turns out in the reference notes to be unsubstantiated allegations from purity crusaders. Occasionally, too, the more bizarre among the inferences he draws from his reports of sexual behaviour come from rather uncritical accounts of such notions in the United States rather than from New Zealand experience. Nonetheless, Eldred-Grigg has assembled material that has never been put together in this way before and I am persuaded that he has decisively altered our ideas about the New Zealand frontier.

His tactic of writing allusively against the grain makes difficulties for his readers. He remarks in passing that at some time towards the end of his period the turbulent frontier settled, apparently fairly suddenly, into the provincial-suburban, orderly, insecurely genteel New Zealand of the 1920s and after. Very importantly, and unlike some other unhappy frontier societies, New Zealand society disarmed. But it is symptomatic that Eldred-Grigg ignores this point. The transition is left unexplained. He rules out some obvious hypotheses. His puritans, excepting perhaps the temperance activists, were ill-organized and politically ineffective in implementing legislation against indecent literature, prostitution, barmaids and other evils. Their ineffectiveness, Eldred-Grigg asserts, derived directly from their cranky, individualistic personalities. They could extort legislation from their fellows in the colonial governments but they rarely overcame their neighbours' apathy or passive resistance.

Yet the change came about. It is a pity that Eldred-Grigg did not explore possible reformist influence in local government, the education system and voluntary associations as means of installing a domestic, secular (active Christian allegiance appears not to have counted for much) moral code. Moreover, the largest single force in the transformation was perhaps the parliamentary enfranchisement of women. The issue is complicated. Alcohol consumption fell in the 1880s before effective legislation was passed, and opium-based narcotics were abandoned fifteen years before prohibitory laws were introduced.

Eldred-Grigg assumes a close knowledge in his readers of eighty years of native historical and belletristic antipathy to New Zealand primness. It was this safe, prosperous, earnestly Imperial community which bred the writers who chafed at its constraints and rebelled, emigrated, or hung on as alienated spirits composing love-hate poems, stories and histories about their homeland. Manifestations of this development are already apparent in Eldred-Grigg's New Zealand and it would have been illuminating to have the intellectuals' fears and hopes set against those of the puritan critics and their libertarian foes.

Pleasures of the Flesh is liberally and aptly illustrated. I hope Dr Eldred-Grigg will write the companion book his argument foreshadows. If he does, I hope he will abandon the infuriating reference system he has used here. The reader is compelled to waste time at the back of the book among shoals of attributed phrases linked loosely to page numbers, the sources of many of them lost in a morass of 'op. cit.', while indignation rises at the frequent discovery of important tables and quotations remaindered from the text.

F. B. SMITH

Australian National University