

The imaginative reconstruction of events, the development of personalities, the expansion of historical context, the clarification of meaning and the tying of all this into a strong narrative are achieved in a simple, straightforward style. She simply tells fascinating stories.

And what out of these books is for children? Essentially, everything. All are readable by and, in varying degrees, entertaining for children. They would all contribute to a Canadian child's sense of his country's traditions.

<sup>1</sup> Nowlan, Michael, *Canadian Myths and Legends*, (Series title: *Themes in Canadian Literature*), Macmillan, Toronto, 1977, p. 1.

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## Worth Its Weight

WILLIAM GODDARD

*Macdonald His Life and World*, P. B. Waite. McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1975. 224 pp. \$12.95 cloth.

"Dear Charlie," Macdonald wrote to one of his young cabinet ministers who wanted something unreasonable, "skin your own skunks." Undoubtedly Professor Waite should have taken this criticism to McGraw-Hill when they told him to limit his knowledge and talents to 45,000 words. This is the chief crime that has been perpetrated on the unsuspecting reader, and as far as I am concerned, it is a heinous one.

The scope of this work is indeed enterprising. Within a short two hundred pages, we are given not only an entertaining and enlightening social and political history of Canada between 1840 and 1891, but also, a remarkably shrewd and perceptive portrait of Canada's first prime minister. Each and every chapter offers new and exotic tidbits for the hungry reader, ranging from samples of Lampman's poetry to the state of Chief Justice Wallbridge's teeth (an unusual patronage problem), to coal mining in the Maritimes, to the history of our "Bluenoses", to bootlegging in the North-West Territories, to ranching in Southern Alberta, to the problems of child labour in the 1880's, to the temperance issue, to the French-Canada mentality, to government

salaries, to the cost of good hotel accommodation, to the demimonde societies, even to the business of undertaking in Canada. And, should this sampling of minor topics from Professor Waite's pot-pourri not impress you, then note that major topics such as Confederation itself, the Pacific Scandal, the Riel Rebellion and the construction of the CPR are handled in some depth. Furthermore, all stages of Macdonald's personal life and political career are examined, if not in great detail, at least with great selectivity of detail so that a truly sympathetic portrait of that great man emerges. Moreover, in addition to this central portrait which acts as the main unifying force in the book, we are given sketches of many of the important leaders of Canadian society in these formative years—Tupper, MacKenzie, Cartier, Tilley, Blake, Laurier, Allan, Langevin, Brown, Bengough, to name a few.

The range of material covered, and the pace which must be maintained to handle it, may create some problems for the unwary reader. Professor Waite does not dally and he does not always keep to a strict chronological pattern. He jumps back and forth occasionally in time when handling some topics. Also, his effort to say the most in the shortest space sometimes results in topic switches which could annoy the interested reader, who might like to learn more about the particular aspect of Canadian life being discussed. Furthermore, pictures and newspaper articles (such as the one concerning DArcy McGee in pages 68-69), are sometimes put in to fill knowledge gaps, but find little narrative followup in the ensuing chapter. This can distract a reader who takes the time to read everything. Either more careful editing or more writing space would have solved this problem. Professor Waite obviously feels the need to touch upon these topics and his judgement seems sound.

His style reflects his engaging personality. He chooses delightful anecdotes from Macdonald's life or from the lives of other Canadians of the period. He slips his primary source quotations in naturally, so that the flow is enhanced, along with the credibility of his work. With the exception of some sophisticated diction ("ameliorate", "feckless", "moribund", and the like) his language is geared to the general reading public. His scholarship is seen in his frequent use of primary source quotations, knowledgeable footnotes and extensive bibliography. Not only does a reader enjoy Professor Waite's narrative with its easy flow, but he is continually impressed by the author's learned insights. One feels that the writer is not simply trying to re-do books he or others may have written previously, but to add in scale to a number of historical topics. This passage alone shows the author's clear, and forceful style:

Macdonald was no prophet or real reformer. Prophets and reformers have to fight long battles against things as they are,

against the dead weight and inertia that institutions and human beings can summon up to resist change. Macdonald, it is fair to say, never really had persistence of that kind. He believed, sincerely, that new ways would not change things fundamentally. Laws should be improved, and changes made to correct palpable abuses; injustice ought not to be done. But so much that was trumpeted as being vitally necessary was largely unnecessary. Macdonald could never fight for something that looked visionary. His energies refused to be summoned for anything his mind told him was ephemeral. (pp. 60-62).

At the very least, we are gaining sound interpretive historical analysis. Moreover, this informed work definitely fills a gap in its overview handling of the period of Canada's early years. The Canadian collage depicted in this book stands as testimony to the vigour of early Canadian life. The photographs, over one hundred in black and white, and twenty coloured plates, add more charm and beauty and authenticity to this book and can be enjoyed by all ages. The range here is truly exciting—from pictures of Macdonald's birthplace and various homes he lived in, and portraits and pictures of members of his immediate family, to early railroad engines, sidewheelers, ice cutting on the St. Lawrence in the 1870's, Red River Carts on a Prairie Road, delegates to the Charlottetown Conference, Fathers of Confederation, the Red River Expedition of 1870, famous paintings of the period by Kane, Watson, Harris and Raphael, immigrants and settlers, cartoons from *Grip*, political and industrial advertising posters, photographs of Western native encampments and forts, huge railway trestles, ships, and finally, pictures of the state funeral of Sir John A. Macdonald himself. The book is worth purchasing for the pictures alone. The tone of sympathetic and understanding treatment of Canada and its peoples which is reflected in Professor Waite's narrative is amply supported by this wealth of visual material. Furthermore, the print is large and easy to read. The quality binding and cover help to convince a prospective buyer that the cost is reasonable for what is offered.

There remain but two questions. How can this book be used and who should purchase it? To the first question there are several possible answers. Secondary school children, especially seniors, would find this an excellent resource book for both Canadian Studies credit work and grade 13 history. Undoubtedly university students studying Canadian history would appreciate this as a good overview book for the period, an introduction to a number of more detailed, and more limited areas of specialized work. But this is not the main audience, nor the only way to use this book. It is a superb reference book to show students how historians work and how primary source evidence shapes texts. It might be used to encourage students to collect primary source data for

local history projects. It most certainly is a good book for the general reading public who want first rate overviews of historical periods for home libraries. It is especially valuable for Canadians who want to appreciate Canada's early years.

P.B. Waite's book, *Macdonald His Life and World*, gives weight to its period. It deserves your full consideration for purchase.

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## Joy and Rediscovered Values: A Pioneer Woman of Labrador

SANDRA ESCHÉ

*Woman of Labrador*, Elizabeth Goudie. Peter Martin Associates Limited, 1973. Paperback edition, 1975. 166 pp. \$4.95 paper.

I expected to be bored by *Woman of Labrador*. "You can't judge a book by . . ." the saying goes, but I disagree; you usually can, and the cover of this book holds all the promise of a government report. I was mistaken.

*Woman of Labrador* is the life account, the autobiography of Elizabeth Goudie; born 1902 in Mud Lake, Labrador; trapper's wife; mother of eight. The bare facts are not nearly bare enough; the life she describes is as elemental as the rocky terrain of Labrador. Her recollections are detailed and vivid, her story related in a factual, understated way which gives it power.

Having had four years of schooling, Elizabeth Goudie started work at 14. In four years she had saved enough money to buy a washboard when she married. From that point it is a story of moving each year in search of a trapping ground that would, at the very least, provide flour for bread through the winter. A move in Labrador meant long treks into the wilderness, building a log cabin in one month under the threat of the impending winter, covering the infants well and protecting them by a smoking fire from the killer flies and mosquitoes. Barely moved in, it would be time for her husband, Jim Goudie, to go inland; he