

sloth. Adolescents are avid readers of biography. These volumes are lively and exciting – a good choice for making younger Canadians aware of the colourful variety of our nation's history.

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Old Tomorrow With Warts and Nose

TERRY CROWLEY

John A. Macdonald, Peter B. Waite. "The Canadians". Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1976. 64 pp. paper. ISBN 0-88902-231-3.

The John A. Macdonald Album, Lena Newman. Tundra Books, 1974. 224 pp. \$14.95 paper. ISBN 0-912766-12-3.

For nearly forty years Sir John A. Macdonald determined Canadian political life. He was not only the country's first Prime Minister after Confederation but also a clever politician, an adroit maneuverer, a quick wit, and a very human flawed individual. His ability to lead people was matched only by his ability to consume prodigious amounts of drink. Despite the personal tragedies that saddened his life from his earliest years, he managed to govern an ungovernable country and carry it into the industrial age.

Peter Waite's short study of Macdonald's life is one of eighty-eight brief biographies published by Fitzhenry and Whiteside in their admirable "The Canadians" series. Waite cannot resist being charmed by Macdonald any more than many of his contemporaries could, but he is too good an historian to hide the man's faults. In one amusing anecdote the author recounts how Macdonald, drunk at the Quebec Conference in 1864, was found rehearsing Hamlet before a mirror, dressed in nightshirt and railway blanket.

Waite's Macdonald is an exemplary family man but a politician with his warts showing. He is the type of person the author himself would have enjoyed as a friend: a man with a sound education, broad

experience, an interest in books (but not necessarily in ideas), and a penchant for engaging conversation over drinks. Unfortunately Waite has struck too closely to political themes, although they are handled masterfully for a book intended for teenage readers. We glean little sense of those two major developments – urbanization and industrialization – that were beginning to transform Canadian life.

Waite does not condescend to his young readers. Macdonald's wife's first delivery "nearly prostrated her" (p. 13); the Macdonald-Cartier government "tried to appropriate \$500 000 in May 1862 to strengthen the Canadian militia" (p. 22); Cartier was a "short, tough, mastiff-like man" (p. 15). Such passages may be difficult for young readers, but they will help expand their vocabularies. The same cannot be said for Waite's tendency to pepper his prose with French phrases that might have been expressed in English. A clean, crisp format with accompanying illustrations and questions in the margins (which cannot be answered from the text) add to the appeal of this succinct and generally well-written study.

With Lena Newman's *The John A. Macdonald Album*, we move from warts to the politician's famous nose. While this is not an album in the strict sense of the word, the book's great appeal stems from its innumerable engravings, cartoons, photographs, and other illustrations, many of them handsomely published for the first time. Here we can see Macdonald portrayed and photographed in a variety of ways, along with many illustrations of nineteenth-century Canadian life. John Diefenbaker's abiding love for Macdonald lore may have stemmed not only from a shared political outlook, but also from a mutual sympathy for someone who was equally the caricaturist's delight.

The John A. Macdonald Album is a profusely illustrated biography which cannot avoid frequent digression into subjects only tangential to Macdonald's life. From her teaching and journalist experiences, Lena Newman has come to believe that "a country's trivia is as important to its history as its Constitution is." (p. 223) The author has produced a treasure-trove of Macdonald memorabilia loosely linked by a biographical narrative that is disjunctive at times. The private individual and family man are given more attention here than in most accounts. We learn not only about Macdonald's preoccupation with his own health and his persistent corns, but even the aftershaves he preferred. The lives of his two wives and two surviving children are also brought into focus. While interesting use is made both of personal letters and Lady Agnes Macdonald's diary, the photographs and life story of daughter Mary, who suffered from hydrocephalus, are particularly touching.

There is more. This volume is a celebration of late nineteenth-century Canada intended for adult and younger reader alike. Asides are devoted to such topics as urban configuration, epidemics, temperance, bookstores, poetry, and even heating habits. Herein lies the book's major failing. So much has been jammed between its covers, both in print and illustration, that it is difficult for the reader to follow the biographical narrative. This is a book to be savoured in small portions on many occasions rather than devoured at one sitting. At its current price, *The John A. Macdonald Album* can be as satisfying an introduction to the life of Macdonald and nineteenth-century Canada as a dish of homemade baked beans can be on a winter's evening.

Terry Crowley has been a member of the History Department at the University of Guelph since 1971.

Games and Politics

S. LESSNER

More, "It happened in Canada", Gordon Johnston. Scholastic-TAB Publications Ltd. c1976. n.p. Paper.

Puzzling Canada, Barbara Thal Hodes. Illustrated by Holly Dymnt. Dundurn Press Limited, c1979. 80 pp. \$5.95 paper. ISBN 0-919670-45-8.

Sandy Mackenzie, why look so glum?, Gordon Henderson. Illustrated by Pic. Deneau and Greenberg Publishers Limited, 1979. n.p. \$6.95 hard.

The Canadian Album, The Canadian Events Game, J.K. Howard. Dundurn Press Ltd. 1979 \$12.95 ea.

Confederation Conference. Dundurn Press Ltd. 1979. \$25.50.

If you are looking for books and games to enliven class discussion or to enhance private reading on Canadian political history . . . limited help is here with this collection of books and games aimed at Junior to High School level. The initial enthusiasm of the reviewer sank as only one of the books really lived up to the task it had set itself.