

their material. They are necessarily limited, as they deal with "the life and times of John Deighton," to the times more than to the life. They do a good job of dressing the stage. We learn new things about his family background, with its inconclusive evidence that he was born to the bar sinister as well as to the tavern variety. We follow him to sea, to the goldfields of the Forty-niners in California, to the helm of the Fraser River stern-wheeler portaging the panhandlers to sandbars where wealth glinted delusively, and at last to the Deighton saloon in New Westminster and the celebrated hegira to Burrard Inlet with his Indian woman, his cur, his barrel of whisky and his indestructible loquacity.

The story is fully told and well researched, yet requires only 48 pages. We learn more about Jack's character from his photo than we do from his correspondence, which falls well short of Voltaire's. His grave in New Westminster is unmarked, we are told, and we know only too well why: we have not learned to care about John Deighton. He is a distant ancestor who died less than a century ago.

Plainly what our burly, black-bearded anti-hero needs is not so much a history as a legend. Nothing less can save him. Now that we have a framework of facts of his life, we wait for the hand of fiction to weave the apprehensible image, something we can grasp as we do King Alfred's clinkered cakes and Paul Revere's midnight gallop.

The substance is there in sufficient amount, as Raymond Hull and Olga Ruskin have taken laudable pains to show. Jack's fate now lies with the Muse.

ERIC NICOL

John Jessop: Gold Seeker and Educator, by F. Henry Johnson. Vancouver: Mitchell Press Limited, 1971. Pp. 181. \$6.50.

This biography of British Columbia's first provincial superintendent of education is the culmination of Henry Johnson's efforts to trace the history of schooling in the Pacific province. It follows numerous articles and an earlier monograph, *A History of Public Education in British Columbia*. Why a biography of the relatively unknown John Jessop? Johnson suggests a number of reasons that "compelled" him to bring to life "one of the ghosts of history." There was the desire to place on record Jessop's brief (1872-1878) tenure as superintendent and to assess his impact on subsequent educational developments. Secondly, Johnson sought to establish Jessop's major role in the earlier decade of the 1860's "in establishing the

free, non-sectarian school system of British Columbia." In addition, Johnson felt impelled "to clothe those spectral bones with flesh," to paint a complete picture of Jessop," like so many of our early pioneers . . . a man of several dimensions." Finally, Professor Johnson hoped that an account of the shaping of the school system would provide "a contribution to the social history of the province and of the country." This work must be evaluated on the extent to which it fulfills these stated purposes.

The reader is left in no doubt as to Jessop's substantial influence on British Columbia schools during his years as provincial superintendent. We are given a detailed picture of Jessop designing legislation, administering a growing system almost single-handedly, planning the curriculum, providing schools and teachers for the scattered communities of the province, and visiting and inspecting those early schools by paddle-steamer, canoe, and on horseback. Jessop's problems and concerns were similar in many respects to those of his counterparts in other provinces — inadequate financing, poorly qualified teachers, and irregular pupil attendance. British Columbia differences from other provinces are also revealed — the lack of publicly supported Roman Catholic separate schools, the desire to segregate high school pupils by sex, and the absence of local school taxes.

Throughout Jessop's career runs the influence of Egerton Ryerson, superintendent of education in Upper Canada and Ontario from 1844 to 1876. This is a favourite theme of Johnson's, first detailed in an earlier issue of this journal. ("The Ryersonian Influence on the Public School System of British Columbia," *BC Studies*, No. 10, Summer 1971, pp. 26-34.) The Jessop-Ryerson links are carefully traced, through Jessop's attendance at the Toronto Normal School and his teaching career in Ontario in the 1850's, and through his correspondence with Ryerson in the 1860's and 1870's. Professor Johnson's research in Ontario libraries and archives, in this regard, has complimented his earlier research in British Columbia repositories. The Ryerson influence is shown in such areas as a strong central authority, use of Ontario textbooks, rigid academic screening for high school entrance and provision of public libraries. Unfortunately, Johnson provides little evaluation of whether Ontario approaches were relevant for nineteenth-century British Columbia.

Johnson's attempt to portray Jessop as the "father" of British Columbia's free, non-sectarian public school system in the 1860's, is less convincing than his portrait of Jessop the administrator in the 1870's. Granted, Jessop was the most important schoolmaster in colonial Victoria during the decade, and he did participate in the educational debates. But

how could an individual possessing relatively little social and political influence possibly play the most crucial role in determining the province's single most important educational decision? Johnson overlooks the importance of other more important individuals — newspaper editors like Amor De Cosmos and John Robson and political figures like Governor Seymour. He also overlooks the social factors that contributed to a non-sectarian approach — the absence of a sizable Roman Catholic community, and the relative weakness of the other churches.

In his portrayal of the "several dimensions" of Jessop's character and life, the author is in the happy position of being able to draw on some rich first-person narratives. Indeed, Johnson's skilful use of Jessop's accounts of his trans-Canada overland trip in 1859, his gold prospecting trips into the Cariboo country in 1860, his unsuccessful political career in 1867, and his tours as school inspector in the 1870's are among the most rewarding sections of the book. Unfortunately, similar accounts are not available for other aspects of Jessop's life. It proved impossible, therefore, for Johnson to paint a full picture of Jessop's activities as an immigration officer and a prominent Methodist layman; nor are we offered much of a glimpse of Jessop's family life.

In dealing with Johnson's attempt to add to the social history of British Columbia, it is necessary to refer to an exaggerated conclusion that is, unfortunately, unsubstantiated. "Few men have had more influence on the thinking, the culture, the attitudes and mores of generations of our young people than those who have designed and established the public school systems." (p. 107) Nowhere does the author assess this influence; nowhere does he deal with the lasting influence of Jessop's contributions to public schooling on the most important individuals — the children. And while we are given a plethora of details on textbooks and departmental examinations, we are given little information on what Jessop and the young provincial society had to say about the fundamental aims of schooling. There is a certain failure, therefore, to relate educational developments to the broader social and cultural developments of the period.

There is reason to be disappointed, then, in Professor Johnson's assessment of Jessop as the founder of British Columbia's non-sectarian approach to public schooling, and in his discussion of Jessop's influence on "generations of our young people." But as a descriptive account of the problems of teaching in Victoria in the 1860's, and of administering a provincial system in the 1870's, this study merits wide readership.