

When following the MacDonalds from Edmonton to Tête Jaune and down the Fraser, readers are surely exhausted, not emotionally, not from tensions created by the telling of the tale, but physically from reading it, from tripping over the details. Discrimination — selection and rejection — is the essence of art, but little is evident here. No doubt Mr. MacDonald can tell a real knee-slapper of a story, but he does not write one: he ignores such technicalities as conflict, climax and resolution. What is more, unlike Odysseus Archie MacDonald as a character is too good to be true, and like most too-good-to-be-true characters he is often boring. If only he would swear, or sin, just occasionally! When writing about himself MacDonald creates a more immediate interest, but still fails to give form and shape to his hundreds of good stories.

*The Rainbow Chasers* is, therefore, flat — plate-flat. One wonders what Eric Collier or Rich Hobson or Bill Hillen would have done with such material.

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GORDON R. ELLIOTT

*The Columbia is Coming!* by Doris Andersen. Sidney, B.C. Gray's Publishing Ltd. Pp. 205, \$9.95.

In the wake of the Klondike Gold Rush, hundreds of immigrants and settlers came to the British Columbia coast to exploit the stands of virgin timber or to harvest the boundless shoals of fish. Logging camps, canneries and isolated settlements sprang up, particularly on the islands and inlets of the Gulf of Georgia. Social services for these loggers and fishermen were non-existent, due to the isolation and distances involved. This gap was filled by the churches — in the north by the Methodists, and in the south by the Church of England in Canada. The latter's Columbia Coast Mission, whose story is sympathetically told by Doris Andersen, was largely the work of two men, John Antle and Alan Greene, who carried out an itinerant ministry to soul and body, in a variety of tiny ships, up and down the coast for sixty years.

Antle was a seafaring Newfoundlander, who combined nautical skills with a vital concern for the welfare of the scattered inhabitants of this vast coastline. He quickly realized that medical aid was the most urgent requirement, and recruited a series of doctors to accompany him on his missions of mercy. Authoritarian and paternalistic, he nevertheless built up the Columbia Coast Mission into an indispensable part of the British

Columbia scene. "Heal the sick and say unto them, the Kingdom of God is come upon you" became the motto of his life's work. His successor, Alan Greene, who spent a total of forty-eight years with the Mission, was more gregarious and humour-full. Tributes to their timely aid and welcome alleviation of loneliness are scattered throughout the book.

Doris Andersen's approach is necessarily anecdotal. But she does not hide the fact that the Mission was always in trouble. The natural dangers of storms and uncharted seas took a constant toll of the ships; there were never enough funds; the difficulties of reconciling the demands of chaplain, doctor and sea-captain were incessant; crew members came and went with alarming frequency; rival denominations campaigned over the same territory; the appeal of Anglicanism was rarely heeded. By the 1960s, the provision of medical and educational services had vastly improved. The introduction of aircraft made the upkeep of small boats prohibitive. Nevertheless, in the pioneering days of early British Columbia, the Columbia Coast Mission served the remote and often forgotten settlements with devotion and dedication. Doris Andersen's lively portrayal of its supporters, especially Antle and Green, is a deserved tribute.

It is much to be hoped that the projected parallel history, in a similar popular style, of the United Church's maritime ministry in the more northerly waters of British Columbia will soon be brought to conclusion. It is even more to be hoped that some of the recipients of these services could be persuaded to record and reflect on this pioneering effort in the early days of the province's development.

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*Frontier Theatre: A History of Nineteenth-Century Theatrical Entertainment in the Canadian Far West and Alaska*, by Chad Evans. Victoria: Sono Nis Press, 1983. Pp. 366; \$16.95.

There are innumerable local and regional studies of the theatrical history of the United States and Great Britain, but until relatively recently Canada has not been well served in this area. Such studies are now beginning to appear, and *Frontier Theatre* is a welcome and useful addition to their number. It is the first major study of the early (1850-1900) theatre in British Columbia and Alaska, and it succeeds in laying a sound basis for further research into this period, as well as into the subsequent period of theatrical history that ended with the First World War. The