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THE LITTLE EMPEROR: Governor Simpson of the Hudson's Bay Company, John S. Galbraith, Macmillan, \$16.95 cloth ISBN 0 7705 1389 1, 232 pp., illus., index, September 1976

This Little Emperor is not Napoleon but Sir George Simpson, a man described by a contemporary as "the toughest looking old fellow I ever saw, built like one of those short square massy pillars one sees in an old country church. He is a fellow whom nothing will kill." Simpson's biographer is John Galbraith, the author of several previous histories on the Hudson's Bay Company. In this book he deals less with the Company and more with the life of its most famous governor.

Sir George's early years are virtually unknown, but Professor Galbraith has delineated four distinct phases of his adult life. During the 1820s Simpson devoted himself, with fanatical singlemindedness, to working his way up the Company hierarchy. In the next decade he consolidated his position at the top while overcoming great personal hardships including illness, the death of a child and worry over the health of his wife. In the 1840s he moved to the international arena negotiating at the highest level with representatives of the United States, Russia and other countries. Finally during the last decade of his life he became increasingly involved in the business life of Canada, particularly railways and shipping.

The author is by no means an unqualified admirer of George Simpson. Galbraith believes that men who concentrate their energies on the pursuit of material success must pay a price in shrivelled humanity and he does not hesitate to point out the seamier side of Simpson's life from his ruthlessness in business to his predilection for womanizing. The text, however, is written with an historian's detachment and no attempt is made to exploit unduly those vices of the rich and powerful which apparently were not very different in the mid 19th century than they are today. Despite his flaws, Simpson was one of the giants of his day and this biography provides numerous insights into the social and business life of Canada during the last century. *Gary Levy*