

Robert Todd Lincoln: A Man in His Own Right. By John S. Goff. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1969. Pp. xv, 286. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$7.95.)

Goff's volume is a biography of the eldest and the only surviving child of Abraham and Mary (Todd) Lincoln. Born in Springfield, Illinois, in 1843, his boyhood years were those during which his father rose from a little known lawyer in Illinois to national importance. His parents made every effort to give Robert the education his father had missed. After attending the Springfield schools he was sent to Phillips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire. In 1859 he entered Harvard carrying a note of introduction to the president from Stephen A. Douglas who presented the young man as the son of his friend Abraham Lincoln "with whom I have lately been canvassing the State of Illinois" (p. 24). After graduating in 1864 he spent four months in Harvard Law School but left when he was given an appointment on the staff of General Ulysses S. Grant. In 1868 he married Mary Harlan the daughter of Senator James Harlan of Iowa. Their only son Abraham died at the age of sixteen but two daughters survived him.

After leaving the army Lincoln studied law in Chicago and was admitted to the bar in 1867. He gained profitable clients among railroad and corporate interests, and his name appears as a charter member of the Chicago Bar Association in 1874. His name was often used by Republican politicians, but generally he remained aloof. Under James A. Garfield he served a term as secretary of war uneventful except for the Grant retirement controversy and the perennial case of General Fitz-John Porter. In 1889 he was sent to London by President Benjamin Harrison as minister.

During the twenty years after he returned from England, Lincoln continued his work as counsel for great business interests and in semiseclusion upon which he would permit no intrusion. Among his chief clients was the Pullman Company; and when the founder George M. Pullman died in 1897, Lincoln became its active executive and then its president. In 1911 his health forced him to resign the presidency though he retained the position of chairman of the board of directors. In 1912 he moved to Washington, D. C., where he remained almost unknown until his death in 1926. His father's papers, which John Hay and John G. Nicolay had worked over in the eighties, remained in his possession until near the end of his life when he deposited them in the Library of Congress to be sealed for twenty-one years after his death.

In traditional American materialistic terms Robert Todd Lincoln's life measures up to one of great accomplishment. His life also

records great tragedy. His father was assassinated; his mother was mentally ill for years; his own son died as he approached manhood; and rumors persisted for years that his marriage to Mary Harlan was subject to more than the usual difficulties.

Generally historians have all but ignored Robert in dealing with Abraham Lincoln. Many have found it impossible to reconcile a millionaire lawyer and businessman of decidedly conservative views with his father's humanity in the emancipation of the slaves. Thus arises Goff's claim that only now has Robert Todd Lincoln found a biographer of his own. This reviewer shares the author's doubts that in spite of the chosen title "Robert T. Lincoln could never be clearly and freely a man in his own right" (p. 265).

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The Canadian Frontier, 1534-1760. By W. J. Eccles. *Histories of the American Frontier*. Edited by Ray Allen Billington. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969. Pp. xv, 234. Maps, illustrations, notes, bibliographical notes, index. Paperbound, \$4.95.)

This is a superb history, one written by a historian for historians. It is seldom colorful reading, nor is it exciting; but these are not euphemisms by which a reviewer attempts to avoid damning a book as dull, for it is scarcely that either. Rather, Professor Eccles' work will prove to be heavy going for the less rigorous minded cowboys and Indians set which inhabits the fringes (happily, less frequently each day) of the general field of the history of the North American West. The old heroes are vanquished, the old values are set aside, the dramatic but cosy conclusions of Francis Parkman are successfully challenged, and the reader is left with a story, and with conclusions, which run counter to much that remains stated in textbooks with the certitude of which only such books are capable.

Not that Eccles' conclusions here are new to the historian of Canada, or of New France; for Eccles has stated them before, in his earlier study, just ten years ago, of Louis Count de Frontenac, and more recently in his volume in the Canadian Centenary Series, *Canada under Louis XIV*. Western buffs are unlikely to have read these two books, however, as convincing and important as they were; and it is now, with this concise, closely argued, contribution to Ray Billington's *Histories of the American Frontier* series that Eccles will reach the wider audience. Of the seven books which have appeared to date in this series, this is the only one relating to Canada directly (although Jack Sosin's *Revolutionary Frontier* contains much of Canadian significance), and it is the only one to offer widely significant new con-