

Gananoque, Ont.,  
Box 262,  
Nov. 25, 1953.

Mr. Thomas Raddall,  
Liverpool,  
Nova Scotia.

Dear Mr. Raddall:

A year ago last summer, when I was in London, England, Mr. Charles Blackwood lent me a book of your short stories. Although I was sailing next day, and the book had to be returned in the morning, I finished most of the stories that night and enjoyed them very much. Since returning to Canada, I have read Roger Sudden, and this is my favourite of your work. I seldom read every word of a modern book of fiction, but I assure you I missed none of Roger Sudden. It is one of the few books of modern Canadian fiction which made me really enthusiastic. I'm getting a copy for a Christmas gift for my brother.

Please don't be afraid that I am now going to ask you to read a ninety-thousand word novel, for I'm not. However, for certain reasons, I am going to ask for a little advice, and if you are too busy to give it, and don't answer, I shall understand, and it will be quite all right. My reason for writing you, aside from the fact of my very sincere admiration for your work, is that, as far as I know, you are the only Canadian author connected with Blackwood's.

Before I left London, Mr. Blackwood agreed to read the first four chapters of a novel which I happened to have with me, and which

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I gave him the day I sailed for home. Later I heard from the Edinburgh firm. They said the chapters had been forwarded to them from London, and that they had enjoyed them sufficiently to make them want to read the rest of the book. The only obstacle was that the rest of the book was non-existent; not only that, but I hadn't a copy of the first four chapters. I told them of my plight, and they had a copy made in the office and sent to me, saying that they hoped to be able to undertake publication. It took me a year to complete the book, which has an historical background. I sent it to Edinburgh last summer, and they acknowledged receipt of the manuscript on July 31st. The rest is silence. They have had it nearly four months. I don't know enough about the ways of publishers to know whether I should write and ask them for a decision or not. Could you tell me if they are in the habit of taking their time in the editorial offices of this firm, or do you think they have just forgotten about it? Four months seems a long time to wait.

My apologies for taking your time, and my hopes that you will continue writing such splendid books. My sister, by the way--Evelyn Purvis Earle--is the author of "Leeds the Lovely", a little book on our county, published by the Ryerson Press, and she too has been much interested in your books.

Even a line of advice would be greatly appreciated. It is puzzling to know what to do.

Yours sincerely,

*Kathleen Earle.*

December 4th, 1953

Dear Miss Earle,

Blackwood's is a fine old firm and in a way I owe them everything, for it was George William Blackwood who first saw virtue in my work and opened to me the pages of his magazine. Much later on, when I attempted a novel, I sent Blackwood's the first draft, and had precisely your experience. There was a silence of months. Finally there came a polite and kindly letter of rejection.

Still later an American publisher (Doubleday) became interested in my work and made a contract with me for an historical novel about Nova Scotia during the American Revolution. This was "His Majesty's Yankees", which was published in New York and Toronto in 1942. The London firm of Hurst and Blackett were keen to publish it in Britain and they approached my London agent with a contract on generous terms. Out of loyalty I told the agent that Blackwood must have first choice, even if the terms were not as good.

After considerable delay Blackwood accepted -- on lower terms -- and they published it, after still more delay, in December 1944. At the same time they informed me that owing to the stringencies of their paper quota they were publishing an edition of no more than 1500 copies. Obviously they did not consider the book worth more than that. My agent was outraged, pointing out that Hurst and Blackett had been prepared to put out a much larger edition. I was indignant myself, for my living depends entirely on my writing. I wrote to Blackwood expressing my dissatisfaction and asking them to relinquish British publishing rights after their own edition was sold. They informed me, this time promptly, that they were allotting paper for a further 1500 copies. And actually they printed and sold altogether more than 3600.

However, after all this, I felt that I had discharged my moral obligation to Blackwood, and thenceforth I did not interfere with my London agent. Hurst and Blackett (and their parent company, Hutchinson's) have had the British publishing rights in all my novels since.

I mention all this because one's own experience is all one can offer really in the way of advice. In fairness to Blackwood it's important to remember that all this took place under the abnormal conditions of wartime, and that

ten years have gone by. Direction of the firm then was in the hands of two elderly gentlemen, one of whom (George Blackwood) died during the war. The other, his brother John, told me that he was simply holding the reins until the war's end, when a much younger member of the family could leave the service and take over. Things at 45 George Street may be very different now.

However four months is an unconscionable time to hold an author's manuscript, even in Britain, where publishers are not inclined to be prompt. A month should be enough, even for the most leisurely reading staff to make a report. There is this possibility: Blackwood's have all the caution of the Scots, and it is possible that since your book is historical (and presumably Canadian) they have asked someone in Canada to check the basis. Even so, there is no excuse for taking so long.

If I were you I should write to Blackwood asking for their decision. You need not fear offending them, or any publisher for that matter, because if they are really interested in your book they will take it, and if they are not, they won't, and what you say in your letter won't make a scrap of difference one way or the other. The main thing is to have confidence in your work, and to feel that if not one publisher, then another will see its value.

With every good wish,

Sincerely,

Miss Kathleen Earle

Gananoque, Ont.,

Box 262,

Dec. 29, 1953.

Mr. Thomas Raddall,  
Liverpool,  
Nova Scotia.

Dear Mr. Raddall:

I want to thank you very sincerely for your extremely helpful and interesting letter. It was good of you to take the time.

I acted on your advice at once and wrote to Blackwood's asking for a decision. They replied very promptly, saying that Lostwood Lodge had been accepted and would be published in the fall of 1954. They offered 7½% on the first 2000, 10% up to 5000, and 12½% thereafter. I hope there's a "thereafter"! I don't suppose this is very good, but I feel I should be thankful to be published at all. As the book is an historical novel--it has a Canadian background--they had been busy checking, but said they would like it published with only one or two small alterations.

This is quite bewildering to me, for, with the exception of Mr. Arthur Bourinot, who has been unfailingly kind and encouraging, and the editor of the Canadian Home Journal, who once published a very inferior poem of mine, my work has been snubbed right and left by almost every Canadian editor. In fact, I don't think any other writer in Canada has collected so many rejection slips.

I tried to get Roger Sudden in a Kingston book shop, but they didn't have it in stock. They did have Tidefall, and were enthusiastic about it,

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so I got that instead to send to my brother. I am getting a copy of my own, and looking forward to reading it. I hope I shall enjoy it as much as I did Roger Sudden, which is still my favourite among your books.

Thank you again for your kindness in writing, which I shall not soon forget. May you have a happy and prosperous New Year!

Yours sincerely,

Kathleen Carl.