

he read one of your stories in which a judge appears (my memory may be a bit feeble here) & that he was amused (and pleased) to read some of his own peculiarities or mannerisms into this figure. Is this true? If so, I would be very grate-

672 Stanner Drive  
Peterborough, Ont.  
Feb 20, 69

Dear Mr. Raddall:

I would like to thank you for the story "Sadie Davenport" which appears in your book Footsteps On Old Floors. My father, Judge Archibald,

spoke often of what he referred to as "The Croker Case," and as children we were much intrigued by the dramatic details. Certainly the case was one which delighted my father while he worked on it, & was a pleasure to him to recall. I know he would have been

exceedingly pleased to have you write of it - both because he admired you as a writer & enjoyed meeting you as a person.

He told me once that while holding court in his pool, you came to court once - or more - to watch proceedings. Later on, he said

be written in the future. I cannot remember exactly his comments, — but if a story exists which contains a small piece of my father, I would like to

know of it. We are all aware of the cleavage which exists & no relation to persons living or dead — before fictional worlds; — but any one who writes fiction guesses his characters out of his own experience, symbolically, actually,

Mrs. Alan Wilson  
672 Stannos Drive  
Peterborough, Ont.

February 23, 1969

Dear Mrs. Wilson:

Thank you for your letter. I first met your father in June 1938, in the Liverpool courthouse. He had been appointed recently to the bench, and it was his first visit to Liverpool. I had dropped into the courthouse quite casually (I was on my way to the post office) to make some note of the procedure, which I might want to use at some future time.

As it happened, the defence lawyer rejected many of the jury panel, and the list was exhausted. The sheriff promptly seized on some members of the public, and suddenly I found myself foreman of a jury trying a case of manslaughter. It was a drunken-driving thing, and I was annoyed because it seemed a great waste of my time. I had thrown up my job as an accountant with the local paper mill a few months before, and launched forth as a professional writer, selling short stories to magazines in Britain and the United States. I was also trying to write a novel -- my first attempt.

However, an author's main interest is in people, and the people involved in this humdrum case turned out to be a remarkable lot. I made careful notes of them all, and of the lawyers, the police, the doctors, and of course the judge. I still have these notes. After the session was over I introduced myself to your father, and had a pleasant evening's conversation with him. I was utterly unknown then, of course, but I told him about my new profession, and I think he guessed something of the struggle of a Canadian writer in those times. Anyhow, he told me the story of "Sadie Davenport", and suggested that I might use it for a fiction piece.

However, magazine editors were straight-laced in those days. A famous author like Maugham could get away with "Sadie Thompson", but even he couldn't have got publication for it except for his personal rapport with the editor of Cosmopolitan Magazine, ~~Ray~~ Ray Long. So I put my notes aside.

I wasn't called for jury duty again until June 1951, when (oddly enough) the judge again was a newly appointed man (J.L. Illsley) making his first circuit of the western counties. This time it was a shooting case, having to do with hunters in the woods. Again I made careful notes, and about two years later I began to write a novel called The Wings of Night, which had to do with such a case. Naturally there was a lot of evidence about rifles and bullets, always interesting to people in hunting country like Queens County; and by chance the actual case involved veterans of War One or Two -- the accused, the lawyers for the prosecution and defence, and the majority of the jury.

For the purposes of my novel I needed a judge who was also a war veteran. Mr. Illsley was not. But then I remembered your father and his service as an artillery officer in War One. I went to my files and got out the notes of that trial in 1938. The Wings of Night was published in New York by Doubleday in 1956. In the trial scenes (chapters 33 et seq.) you will find a judge transposed from my notes of 1938, and an exact description of the old Liverpool courthouse and its officials as your father knew them.

As for Sadie Davenport, I never forgot her, either. But I felt it would be a travesty to make a fiction piece of it. In my search for fiction material over the years I had found several stories that were perfectly good just as they happened, and I resolved that some day I would ferret out the missing details and publish them. Hence Footsteps On Old Floors.

I liked your father as a judge and as a man. On the bench he had kindness as well as dignity, and he was alert to every detail as the case passed before him. All judges are supposed to have these qualities; but none in my observation combined them quite so naturally as Mr. Archibald.

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