

48 Killdeer Cres., Toronto 17, Ont.

July 13, 1962.

Dear Tom:

Our paths are to cross again -- sort of.

As you are aware, The Wings of Night is being made into a TV serial by CBC.

What you probably do not know is that the 6-year-old Charity Haines chosen for the little girl's part is our grandchild. Our daughter, Deirdre Haines, will accompany her daughter to your town in August for the shooting. Presumably you will meet the cast at some time and I thought I should tell you my connection with the little girl. For six years she was my only grand-daughter. (I have 10 grandsons.) But the other day in San Francisco I got a second little girl -- Celia Brezner. Two tips for you.

You can make friends with the child instantly if you call her Sarah. She was christened Charity and I like the name but she does not and made her mother revise the official registration to Sarah Charity. Most of us forget most of the time but her baby brother Ben always calls her Sarah.

Talk about fate ! My life is full of Sarahs. My great-aunt was Sarah; my mother was Sarah, my wife is Sarah and now this beloved child.

Item Two. Sarah Charity is no genius, just learns fast. She learned to read at three, then taught her older brother. She has taken part in school plays and the family learns with pleasure that child stars seldom have adult theatrical careers.

I've given Deirdre your Halifax: Warden of the North as her introduction to Nova Scotia.

Love to Edith from us both,

Bill

Deacon

WILLIAM ARTHUR DEACON

48 KILLDEER CRESCENT

TORONTO 17

TELEPHONE 483-7068

Jan 22, 1965

Dear Tom:

At the end of 1960, the Globe & Mail pensioned me off involuntarily for the crime of being 70. Several publishers offered me contracts for an autobiography; but I turned them down. I'm not an interesting cuss -- have slain no dragons. Only George Nelson asked me what I would write; and I said an informal, opinionated history of Can. Lit. from 1880. He gave me a good contract and I've worked down to 1940 and face the final time-period. It has to be rather sketchy, you know, because all the books of all the best Canadian authors make a large total.

I have your Halifax: Warden of the North (1948) but shall not deal with your Hist. West Nova Scotia Regiment. I know it's valuable but too local for my purposes.

I have and have read (generally have reviewed) all your fiction from The Pied Piper of Dipper Creek (1938) to The Governor's Lady (1959.)

** By the way, please help my memory here. I was immensely taken with your detailed account of Lady Wentworth's voyage to England and, especially, her stage-coach trip from (was it Portsmouth?) to London. Railroads were running when I was a kid in Stanstead, Quebec; and I mourn the gradual passing of the "bull-gines." Now in some subsequent presentation of The Governor's Lady -- maybe radio or t.v. -- this whole overland journey in England of Lady Wentworth was cut right out. I was mad. But, at 75, I can't remember in what version it was cut out. Please tell me because I want to express my anger that such a vivid historical journey was omitted. It can never happen again.

I find it a bit odd that, when we are both under contract to the same publisher, I find it a bit odd that I should have have received no review copy of any of your books since 1959. Has Doubleday published any of yours ?

Just gimme the fax. I don't mind going to the mat with George, who is a personal friend. I imagine the machinery has broken down -- that publicity doesn't yet know that I am a Doubleday author.

Of course we who write and publish books are in a precarious state. The least we can do is tell each other where we stand.

Warm regards,

Bill

All I need is title, date and a word as to nature of contents, such as novel, short stories, history or whatever. Thanks.

Out of thousands of Canadians, who published books in the 80 years, I'm only dealing with 250 plus. Even so, it's pretty condensed. In my opinion the achievement is considerable. More important is rapid progression from some pretty feeble stuff 1880/1900 to highly creditable work, especially after 1920. More so after 1940.

Jan. 25, 1965

Hello Bill:

Delighted to hear from you again, and to know that you are doing a history of Canadian literature -- "opinionated" as you say. I've always liked Van Wyck Brooks' definition:-- "How does a bookman differ from a critic? He differs in that he assumes as given the whole ~~sphere of values~~ sphere of values. The bookman does not judge, nor is he asked to judge. He appreciates, he enjoys, he communicates pleasure. In the world of the bookman, taste is the main affair, enthusiasm, gusto, relish."

I have had no book published since The Governor's Lady in 1960.

GL had taken a long effort, with research in New Hampshire, England and Belgium. (I had previously researched the Nova Scotia period in ~~the~~ Wentworths' lives.) After the book finally came out I asked myself the inevitable question "what shall I do next?" and there was no answer. I had now published sixteen books of various kinds and I felt that I should pause and take stock. What did I really want to do? Two things had been nagging at my mind for a long time -- and long put aside because I had to earn a living and these things weren't the kind that enrich publishers or authors. One was the story (call it history) of Sable Island -- the so-called "Graveyard of the Atlantic" -- where as you know I spent a year in my sea-wandering youth. The other was a collection of true stories of men and things connected with Nova Scotia -- all the way from the whole story of the famous mystery ship Mary Celeste (not just the episode of her abandonment off the Azores) to the real story of ~~Kixxyx~~ "Grey Owl", who spent more time amongst the Micmacs than he ever did amongst the Ojibways. (When he enlisted in the Canadian army he was living with Micmacs at Bear River N.S.) This would include the real story of his army career and his wounds -- he was an artful dodger in these as he was in everything else.

So I took off on a wonderful Sabbatical, riding in all directions -- everything from pulling up sunken tombstones in a search for the grave of the first captain of the Mary Celeste, at a place called (believe it or not) Economy, N.S. -- to hunting up Archie Belany's former platoon commander and one of his fellow snipers in the Ypres salient, vintage 1915. (I located these in Montreal and Saskatchewan!)

Meanwhile Doubleday was getting worried because I wasn't working on another novel. At their urging I went to New York for a chat with their top men and with Tom Costain. They wanted me to start another costume novel right away, and Tom suggested one written about the central figure of Frontenac or of Champlain. I said No.

Both Frontenac and Champlain have been written to death, and in any case I preferred to stick to my chosen theme -- people in the Nova Scotia scene, past and present. I thought there might be a novel in the story of Charles and Madame La Tour, and the Double-day men were quite happy about it. So I came home and spent most of a year digging up all I could about the La Tours. But in the end I gave it up. Madame was a magnificent creature, but unfortunately after her death in the hands of Charnisay's men the story was one long anticlimax, because La Tour was just a weak shifter.

Then I spent months revising and bringing up to date my "Halifax, Warden of The North", originally published in 1948. (Doubleday is publishing the new edition this year.) Also I went on gathering material for the collection of true stories.

Then I got the notion for a novel based on Halifax during the Napoleonic wars, when hundreds of French prisoners were kept there in hulks and on Melville Island. I had always been intrigued with the history of the McNabs, of McNab's Island at the harbor mouth. Old Peter McNab bought the island in the early days of Halifax and lived there like a Highland laird, with a little clan of servants and retainers about him. The French prisoners were allowed parole to work in and about Halifax -- everything from pick-and-shovel on the roads to teaching French and dancing in the homes of the gentry. I began to see a plot involving the McNabs with one of the French officer-prisoners. Followed a long job of research, including every detail of the old Melville Island prison, and of the McNab menage. McNab's Island had a stony point sticking out into the main harbor channel, and the Admiral used to hang the bodies of mutineers on gibbets there, within sight of Peter McNab's house -- much to McNab's disgust. So that circumstance gave me the title of the book, "Hangman's Beach."

I'm well into the job and hope to finish it in time for publication this Fall. After that I'll finish the book of true stories -- no title for that yet. After that the Sable Island book, though George Nelson thinks I should do yet another novel after the true story collection. That remains to be seen.

Governor's Lady was not used as a play on radio or TV, so I can't think where you saw or heard Lady Wentworth's journey cut out.

As they say in Newfoundland, "O! drinks an' looks t'ards ye!"

Cheers.

August 2, 1965

Publications Program,
The Centennial Commission,
P.O.Box 1967,
Ottawa, Ontario.

Gentlemen:

With regard to the application of William
Arthur Deacon for a grant to enable him to write A
Popular History of Canadian Literature, 1880-1960, I
enclose a Statement by Referee.

Sincerely,

Publications Program,
The Centennial Commission,
P.O. Box 1967,
Ottawa, Ontario.

Gentlemen:

This is the application of William Arthur Deacon of 48 Killdeer Crescent, Toronto 17, for a grant of \$5,000, to enable me to complete a popular history of Canadian Literature from 1880, when Charles G. D. Roberts, then 20 years old, published his first volume of poetry. He was already an M.A. and a professor. This was the great leap out of the terrible mediocrity of previous Canadian writing; and he carried with him his cousin Bliss Carman who remains, possibly our best lyricist. Roberts was also the inventor of the naturalistic animal story, which has unique national connotations: (in our day we have seen an English woman, resident in Africa, bring up a baby lion as a household pet.) Also in my day I have seen the emergence of the Canadian novel, as by Mazo de la Roche.

What I am covering in my book is this 80 years, 1880 to 1960 during which Canada emerged, in a literary way, from zero to such a significant novel by world standards as Fred Bodsworth's *The Atonement of Ashley Morden* (1964). Unfortunately for me, Canadian literature won't stand still. Sometimes I have to mention books published after 1960. But at 75 years of age, I cannot pretend to know at first hand all the Canadian books of the past five years. To me, that is unimportant. I aim to

show progress in Canadian Literature from 1880 to 1960.

It's tremendous.

Naturally, you wish to know who I am; and I refer you to page 272 The Canadian Who's Who, which says in part: Writer, critic, essayist; born Pembroke, Ontario, 1890; son of William Henry D., a lawyer. Educated at Stanstead Quebec; Victoria College, Toronto; University of Manitoba; LL.B., 1918. Called to the Bar in 1918, practised in Winnipeg 1918-22. Contributed to New York Times Book Review from 1920. Became regular contributor to Manitoba Free Press literary supplement from 1921. Appointed literary editor Toronto Saturday Night 1922, planned and launched literary supplement for that paper, 1925. Resigned 1928 and became literary editor of Toronto Mail & Empire, later absorbed to become literary editor of The Globe and Mail. Continued till 1960, when became a free lance writer. Syndicated weekly reviews to a number of leading Canadian dailies 1928-32; member of contributing staff Canadian Home Journal 1927-28; supplied monthly book department to The Passing Show, Montreal 1929-31. Since 1930 has been correspondent for The Argus, Melbourne, Australia; Canadian correspondent for Saturday Review of Literature, New York 1925-33. First Canadian to devote himself wholly to criticism and earn a living at it.

Deputy Administrator of Printing and Publishing Division of Wartime Prices and Trade Board during Second World War 1942-1946.

Chairman of Governor-General's Awards Board 1944-1949

Charter member of Canadian Authors Association 1921; honorary member since 1955; national president 1946-48; honorary president Toronto branch since 1955.

Has published the following books: Pens and Pirates, 1923, (essays;) Peter McArthur, 1924 (biography;) Pot-
cen, 1926 (essays;) The Four Jameses, 1927, (humor;)
Open House, 1931 (symposium of Canadian opinion;)
My Vision of Canada, 1933; The Literary Map of Canada, 1936;
Here Comes The Censor, 1940.

Now under contract to Doubleday Canada Limited for a
selective history of Canadian Literature from 1880- the
book concerned in this application. Writing was brought to
a halt last year by the serious illness of my wife. Medical
authorities have now decided that she will fare better in
her own home if a nurse-housekeeper, skilled in this service,
is installed to take over household management as well as
nursing duties. This will not only free me from personal anx-
iety, but will afford me the time necessary to complete the
writing task. Added costs will be \$2,500. a year over a two
year period, \$5,000. in all.

Roddell

August 3, 1965.

Mr. George E. Nelson,
Doubleday Canada Ltd.,
Toronto, Ontario.

Dear George:

I was glad to fill out the Referee form in connection with Bill Deacon's application to the Centennial Commission, and have mailed it to their address in Ottawa.

I'm just about dotting the last i and crossing the last t in "Hangman's Beach". It is too late for publication this year, but in a week or two I'll send along copies of the typescript to you and to George Shively.

Best wishes to Lily and yourself from E. and me. Any chance of your coming down this way for another autumn visit?

Cheers,

Tom

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10/11/71

WILLIAM ARTHUR DEACON

48 KILLDEER CRESCENT

TORONTO 17

TELEPHONE 483-7068

Aug., 7, 1965

Dear Tom:

Thank you very much for your kind note to George Nelson disclosing that you had filled out the Referee form in my favor. The Government sets great store by these statements because they avoid civil servants using their own judgments.

I fear my stuff will be in before I have read Hangman's Beach. I don't think it matters because you will have a hard time beating The Governor's Lady. You will have a hard time beating that one. I mention 16 of your titles.

My title is The Rise of Canadian Literature. I start with Roberts's first book of poems in 1880; and I'm supposed to stop at 1960; but of course I don't. What the Hell? If something very good, and that I happen to know about, was published later why not mention it? Anyway, that's what I'm doing.

I'll never forget your kindness in standing beside me on a cruise of Halifax harbour. What I do for ^{forget?} is 60% of the things you pointed out and explained. Is there a local tourist market for a 50¢ pamphlet on Things to See on the Halifax Waterfront? I can't recall half the things you told me; but it was all so fascinating I'd gladly buy that lecture in printed form.

Regards to your wife,

Bill

It was my grand-daughter, Charity Haines, who played the little girl in your novel that was filmed in situ. I recall she was too good a swimmer for the part.

WILLIAM ARTHUR DEACON

48 KILLDEER CRESCENT

TORONTO 17

TELEPHONE 483-7088

Oct. 16, 1965

Dear Tom:

My apologies to you for (a) not acknowledging your most helpful letter of January 25th nor (b) your kindness in August in becoming one of my referees. George forwarded a copy to me. Of your letter to him about it. Also I'm looking forward to Hangman's Beach this fall because I haven't read a new Canadian book in a long time. Nor any other new book.

When I retired George kept at me to write my autobiography, which I refused because my life has been uninteresting. . . except that I got a thrill out of seeing all you new Can. authors come on to supply me with fascinating reading. I enjoyed seeing Can. lit. grow in power as well as in quantity. That was my happy life. I wasn't sure I could do it -- but I ought to be doing something and, God knows, I was no good for anything else. So I weakened and signed.

I've written a lot but it is a very slow business. I hadn't realized how much I had forgotten of what I had read. A fellow reads a lot in 40 years when that is his business. To give you an idea of the scope, this year Literary History of Canada was published. Written by 15 professors who, between them, filled 945 extra large pages; and the thing sells for \$18. I suppose it will be good for class-room use. Mine will be nothing like that -- more sketchy, concentrating on high lights both as to authors mentioned and individual books. When I began with the first book of G.G.D.Roberts in 1880, I had no conception of what I'd be faced with in dealing with authors who published between 1945 and 1965.

Now at age 75 my memory isn't what it was. Fortunately most of your books are on my shelves at home; and I'm looking forward to

Hangman's Beach this fall. It will be a great relief to read a new book for a change; and of course I'm sold on you anyway. As reviewer, I've always been sold on you anyway and you, as author, probably had my reviews and understand how highly I regard you. But all I have room for is a summary. I'll see that Hangman's Beach gets in; but History of the West Nova Scotia Regiment (1948) may not be mentioned. I think it would effective to begin with Halifax: Warden of the North (1948.)

Happily, as I say, copies of most of your books - not all - are on a special shelf in my study; and there is not much point in mentioning those out of print. I think I'll ask Ethel Blais here.

I was tremendously pleased when you brought Mrs. Raddall to the Toronto ^y Convention. I'm just an hon. mem. now. Nobody is ^d leader than an ex-president. But I'm grateful to you. As to Can. Lit., you brought the Maritimes into Confederation.

I'll never forget the trip from Bedford Basin, across Halifax to the south. I could not remember half the history you told me in that hour; but I did get a lasting impression. Especially of your courtesy. I had a hell of a time getting aboard, from ship to ship. I wanted to get down and crawl on my hands and knees. Somebody kindly gave me a hand.

Well, Tom, you as writer and I as reviewer have played our parts. You will go on but I'm on my last lap. I'm trying now to sum up; but it doesn't really matter whether I do. Canadian authorship is accepted and each of us has played our parts. I think it was worth doing.

Warm regards,

Bill