

THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
LONDON, CANADA



THE LAWSON MEMORIAL LIBRARY

May 21, 1958.

Mr. Thomas H. Raddall,
Doubleday Canada Limited,
105 Bond Street,
Toronto, Ontario.

Dear Tom:

You will have seen by the papers, and I presume heard from your publisher, that you won the Governor-General's Award for Academic Non-Fiction for 1957. As chairman of the Board, I do want to congratulate you.

Mrs. A. S. Keiller, chairman in charge of arrangements, tells me that you are away. I regret that you cannot be present to receive the medal but, since this is an old story for you, you will know what you are missing.

With kindest personal regards,

Yours sincerely,

Handwritten signature of James J. Talman.

James J. Talman, Chairman,
Governor-General's Awards Board.

JJT:BJF

Talman
Dr. James J. Talman
London, Ont.

June 7th, 1958

Dear James,

I reached home last night, after much wandering in Europe, and found in the accumulated mail your very kind note of May twenty-first.

In my schoolboy days I was a sad dunce at everything but history and English composition, I suppose because I gave them my whole interest. Anyhow these two things have given me an avocation and an occupation for a good many years now, and it seemed natural at last to combine them. When Costain asked me to write Volume Two in the series I refused. I was not particularly interested in the latter half of the French regime, and in any case I was up to my eyes in other work. Later on he asked me to do Volume Three, and I accepted, because the period between 1763 and 1850 in Canada has always seemed to me the most interesting and the most significant, and over the years I had read everything that I could get my hands on dealing with that time.

It was a great undertaking, indeed a challenge, for I had long preached to groups of teachers in these parts that history, properly written, could be as fascinating as any fiction, and without the least tampering with the facts. Trevelyan hit the nail on the head exactly when he said, "It is in narrative that modern historical writing is weakest, and to my thinking it is a very serious weakness -- spinal in fact. Some writers seem never to have studied the art of telling a story. There is no flow to their events, which stand like ponds instead of running like streams. Yet history is, in its unchangeable essence, a tale."

With that in mind I felt it not too presumptuous in a novelist to attempt the work. No one has a greater respect for a fact than a serious writer of fiction, for he knows only too well how one can be made to resemble the other, and long training gives him a shrewd eye for what is false or weak or badly stated in the record of the past.

The work took two years, and I gave myself up to it absolutely. By last autumn, when the book was published, I was exhausted, physically and mentally. I began a novel last winter -- fiction is my bread and butter, and you know the financial rewards of history -- but by the end of March I was at the end of my tether. I'd been driving myself mercilessly for years with no ill result, but this time there were ominous signs of a breakdown. Hence the trip to Europe, putting everything out of my mind so completely

over

that when I learned of the G.G.Award it came as a surprise.
You can imagine my pleasure.

The trip abroad has done me much good, I'm refreshed
and happy, keen to be at work again, although from now on
I shall have to give myself more leisure and more sleep
than in the past.

I reached home just too late to attend the presentation
dinner in Montreal, but I asked Leslie Barnard to say a
word for me, and George Nelson to accept the Award on my
behalf.

With every good wish to Mrs. Talman and yourself,

Sincerely,