

*Crossword
Feb 16/58*

68 South Park Street,
Halifax, Nova Scotia,
February 11, 1958

Dear Dr. Raddall:

Please excuse the typewriter - but that is the only possible method of writing if you are to have any introduction to the parcel of papers sent you today. I know that speed with the information now received from Mrs. Medinus is very important.

There went to you today a fat envelope with Mrs. Medinus' gleanings, and thoughts concerning Frances, John, et al. She has carefully followed up references with other interpretations and references in a most workmanshiplike style. She is wonderfully thorough. Then she has attacked a target dear to her heart--Will Bird--for his laxness in writing and has taken up one of his inaccuracies. Although she presents no new information there it is very concisely presented--and what a tale that makes!

Mrs. Medinus has been so sad to think that John Wentworth could acquit himself so well in New Hampshire and continue as he did in Nova Scotia--like a well-wound-up clock running down, and he just petered out pathetically. She blames his wife, first and last, his beautiful cousin, Frances.

Reading the one letter Mrs. M. has been able to unearth of Frances' undisputed authorship you are struck with the assurance that there was a valuable letter writer, and a practiced one. Undoubtedly she must have showered her cousin Rockinghams, other relations and friends, in New England and England with letters, and I am sure that when she was the important lady in Halifax and absent she must have written to friends in the City--despite her scorn of the whole place--since she would have wanted letters back telling of what was happening away from her eye. I wish you had time and a nice fat bank account so you could pursue the matter in the Records Office in London, and in other places there.

The Aldrich book is charming--his writing has some of the grace of your own, that comes from many revisions and much care, in addition to a native gift. Mrs. Medinus wants the book to be returned, if you please, since it is one of a series that she has. The notes are yours to keep with her blessing, and she hopes profoundly that they will serve your purpose in some manner.

It is an exquisite evening. Did you see the coloured aurora last night? Not an unusual sight in the U.K., particularly when you go toward the North. The last I recall here were in August 1939 when the sky was livid with the flaming, dancing colours and our ears cracking with their sound. I was visiting Ruth Starr in Saint John and we used to take our blankets and lie on their beach at their summer place, "Driftwood", on the Saint John River, so we could have the best view. Signs and portends indeed.

I hope that Mrs. Raddall, the children and you are very well, and spending a most interesting winter. I hope that your own Frances is very happy and that your son is making tracks scholastically.

Fran's Father has been so ill--and for far from the first time--and Fran and Jim are virtually living in two houses. The Whitmans live in Yarmouth, 3 miles away, but a long way when there is a frantic telephone call summoning them. Mrs. Whitman won't have anyone in the house with them, except occasionally a nurse, if a relative is not free to go. These days there is no supply available of relatives to "fill in", and it is a big concern and endless worry to Jim and Fran, for Fran cares for the food and Jim for the fuel, and for all the innumerable tasks ~~in~~ in between.

With the kindest of regards to Mrs. Raddall and you, and my every good wish.

I send Mrs. Medinus your book this week so she can see again that she is concerned with someone of sound scholarship and ability. I look forward to a time when she can meet your wife and you - there is but one Mrs. Medinus and you are both happily unique in your own sphere.

Sincerely,

May Reside

Mrs. Medinus has been so sad to think that John Wentworth could account himself so well in New Hampshire and continue as he did in Nova Scotia--like a well-wound-up clock running down, and he just petered out pathetically. She blames his wife, first and last, his beautiful cousin, Frances.

Reading the one letter Mrs. M. has been able to unearth of Frances' undebated authorship you are struck with the assurance that there was a valuable letter writer, and a practiced one. Undoubtedly she must have showered her cousin Rockingham, other relations and friends, in New England and England with letters, and I am sure that when she was the important lady in Halifax and absent she must have written to friends in the City--despite her scorn of the whole place--since she would have wanted letters back telling of what was happening away from her eye. I wish you had time and a nice fat bank account so you could pursue the matter in the Records Office in London, and in other places there.

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Miss Mary Reside,
Halifax, N.S.

March 20, 1959

Dear Miss Reside,

After this long silence you must be wondering if I am dead. The answer is that I have been slaving at my novel for months, oblivious of everything else. It is the only way one can identify oneself with the characters in a tale -- indeed the only way I can write. The great problem of a novelist, it seems to me, is the necessary division of his life between ~~between~~ normal social contacts, which he must have in order to keep his mind fresh on human viewpoints other than his own, and the long monastic seclusions necessary to the writing of his books.

I have just finished the last chapter of "The Governor's Lady" and I hasten to write this note, not merely to show you that I am alive but to thank you again for much help in the early stages of the work. I must write to Mrs. Medinus also, and I wonder if I should return her material to you or send it direct to Chicago. I should like to retain your Wentworth biographies for a time, to answer queries from curious readers after publication -- one always gets them.

My book will shock people who know little of Lady Wentworth and think of her as an exemplary character -- and it's strange how many do, except in Halifax where tales of her antics have survived. Everything I could find about her, not only here but in New Hampshire and in England, confirmed the picture of a beautiful and superficially clever woman, shallow in character, completely selfish and without a moral. Of course one must consider the times in which she lived and the company into which she was thrown when John shipped her to London during the War of the American Revolution. The house of the notorious Paul Wentworth in Soho was the worst possible refuge for a pretty woman of her propensities, especially in the dissolute London society of that time.

Two years there, away from her husband, transformed a small-town flirt into the fashionable libertine who rejoined John in Halifax in 1784 and proceeded to scandalise the town. Naturally I have had to draw on imagination for details, but they chime with the recorded facts and with legends surviving in New Hampshire and Nova Scotia, and I feel I have done her no injustice whatever.

With my gratitude and best wishes,

February 9, 1971

Dear Miss Reside,

Thank you for your very interesting letter.

Miss Hinds wrote to me in 1968, asking about my sources for the New Hampshire part of Fanny's life. She was then writing something for the CBC. I have not heard from her since.

On page 362 of "The Governor's Lady" I pointed out that gossip about her greatly exaggerated her amorous propensities. But that she had plenty of diable au corps there is no doubt. I don't know what Mr. Stayner meant by "spiteful references by jealous people". Dyott, for example, liked her very much.

Back in the New Hampshire days, the hasty wedding ten days after her husband's death, and the birth of a child less than seven months later, are fact^{ly} recorded, not mere gossip. The Massachusetts Gazette & Boston News Letter gave a full account of the wedding (which I used in writing my book), and the baptismal record of Queens Chapel in Portsmouth reveals the birth date of the child. The accounts of the love affair between Fanny and John, while her first husband was slowly dying of consumption, were related to me by Miss Dorothy Vaughan, at that time head of the Portsmouth Public Library and an acknowledged authority on New Hampshire history. When I questioned the feasibility ~~of~~ of Fanny's lamp signals to Governor John (see Pages 80 and 85 of my book) Miss Vaughan drove with me to the site of the Atkinson house, and showed me that one can easily see the bedroom window in the Governor's house, which is still standing.

Fanny was always a flirt, but as far as I could discover she had no serious amour in the New Hampshire days except of course the affair with John. He made a great mistake when, for her safety during the war, he packed her off to London and the house of his kinsman Paul Wentworth. There in Soho, in the company of that shady adventurer, she mingled with the dissolute fashionable society of the time. I made a study of that society as ~~part~~ part of my preparation for the book. From that stay, in that milieu, she came to Halifax, a very different creature from the rather naive little minx of the New Hampshire days. There were spiteful and jealous gossips in Halifax, of course. I don't think Fanny was promiscuous in the sluttish sense of the word. She was a beautiful snob, and therefore choosy.

With my best regards,



**THE
NOVA
SCOTIA
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY**

THE NOVA SCOTIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The next regular meeting of the Society will be held at 8:00 o'clock on Friday evening, February 5th, 1971 at Province House. Barbara Hines, journalist, will read a paper, entitled, "Frances, Lady Wentworth, a Royal Mistress".

R. E. INGLIS
President

GEORGE T. BATES
Secretary.

POST CARD
CARTE POSTALE



Dr. Thomas H. Raddall.
Liverpool.
Nova Scotia.

Apartment 204, Park Playa,
1055 Lecknow Street,
Halifax, Nova Scotia

Dear Dr. Paddell,

To "follow up" my letter of a month ago, February 5, 1971 arrived, & the Historical Society members in fair number gathered to hear what Barbara Huds had to say about Lady Frances/Fanny Beunworth. Barbara had been in Ottawa, & from Montreal telephoned at 3 p.m. to Mrs. Ingrid Tharshewas, storm-stayed. She called Bruce Fergusson, who after many telephone calls found & collected the manuscript. It had not been finally polished or arranged, so the President & the Archivist/Secretary (who read the paper) had their problems.

As expected we learned nothing new — except that Barbara had made a rubbing of Fanny's coffin plate. However

nothing when material gave
support to her title for the paper,
& Mr. Stagner had a fine time
on the subject of people's characters
being torn apart on the basis
of spiteful references by
jealous people. However, Barbara
quoted at length from Dyott's
diaries & Fanny's own letters,
Fanny may have scorned many
people, but she loved animals
& birds.

Mrs. Stagner, Sr., who died at a
great age a few years ago, & had
a monumental vacillate
recall, was brought up by
two ancient aunts who were
contemporary with the West-
worths, & the Halifax of those
often uncomfortable days. The
ancient aunts used to call
Fanny "that dreadful
woman," because they dis-
approved so strongly of her
extravagances for they were
Puritans by upbringing, &

dancing, feasting, & elaborate
 living & dressing was to them
 sinful. You will recall how
 Mrs. Medines & the people at the
 Newberry Library took great
 exception to branding Frances a
 "sinful Becke Sharp". Bruce
 says a lot of work is being done
 & will be done on the period. I
 wish I could afford to do the re-
 search at the Newberry. All I
 can do is struggle with my efforts
 to give Saint Paul's a good card
 in defile. Their records are
 fascinating. It is astonishing how
 brief references could be when
 included in hand written minutes!

I hope that Mrs. Raddall, you,
 the children and grandchildren
 are very well, & having an inter-
 esting winter despite the cold
 weather. We will now know
 all about "old fashioned winters"
 and "healthy cold weather"!

Talked recently to Jim & Fran by

telephone, & they were well. Fran
had operations in October &
November & should feel much
better now. She will before
long be able to be "fitted" for
her second contact lens after
the second successful cataract
removal.

My kindest regards and
best wishes to Mrs. Taddall
and you.

Sincerely,
Dana Reside

February 7, 1971