

CANADIAN GENERAL ELECTRIC COMPANY

LIMITED

HEAD OFFICE  TORONTO, ONT

Halifax, N.S. February 20, 1945.

Personal

Mr. Thomas Raddall,
Liverpool,
Nova Scotia.

Dear Mr. Raddall:

I think I should write you to express my appreciation of your last book "Roger Sudden". I did not find it possible to read it until quite recently, when I could do justice to the various parts.

I have always been interested in the history of Louisburg, and wanted to check your storied incidents against the actual second capture, as I understood them to be. This made the reading of the last few chapters, at least to me, very interesting indeed.

You mention the sinking of four boats in Louisburg Harbor to prevent enemy ships from coming in. I got a piece of oak out of one of these boats, finished off the surface and made a thermometer stand about 8 in. high. The salt shows in the rough rear side of this bit of oak, and I mounted it on one of the old French bricks out of the ramparts, finishing off one surface to make it look attractive. In the oak supporting the thermometer I have inserted a copper coin picked up in the ruins, bearing the inscription: Louis XIII Roy de F et de NA 1656". You can realize how your story, at the latter end, tied in with this little souvenir.

A friend sent me a piece of oak taken out of the original lighthouse (LaBougie). You will remember in excavating they came across a lead plate giving the date of the erection of the last French lighthouse. The bit of oak that I got measured about 2 ft. x 8 in., $1\frac{1}{2}$ " thick. I took a small piece out and made a lamp stand, allowing considerable rough wood to be in evidence, and I have it at my bedside. I took another piece out of it and made a penholder and handle for the late Archibald McMechan, who wrote so interestingly of old French days in this province. He seemed to appreciate it. The remainder of the plank I sent to the N.B. Provincial Museum, St. John.

My only regret about all this Louisburg business is that I discovered no photographs of Mary Foy. She certainly had "umph". I am surprised of your personal knowledge of her behaviour. There must be rows in your family when your wife reads of your intimate

acquaintance with such a person as Mary in this book, and another very attractive character of the same kind in "His Majesty's Yankees". Anyway, they are very attractive. To my mind, "Roger Sudden" will make a splendid story for a screen picture. There is lots of punch and variety in it, and I hope you will get a million dollars for the screen rights.

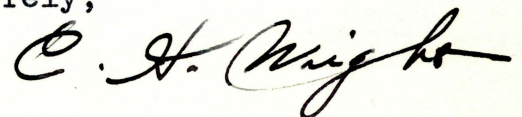
Now concerning the Micmac Indians. In your book you seem to speak of them very respectfully at times, and their predictions of oncoming weather, etc. seem to impress you. I had a friend, now gone to the happy hunting grounds, who had to employ at various times Micmac Indians. His expression to me, upon one occasion, was "Who the hell would ask an Indian his opinion about anything?" The immediate occasion what that of prognosticating the weather.

Another true story. An Indian brave was walking along the station platform. He had imbibed considerable firewater and was smiting his chest as he paraded up and down telling all the world "Me Micmac", "Me Micmac". This got under the skin of an Irish friend of mine who went up to him, gave him a puck in the nose, saying "You're drunk." That ended the orations of the Noble Brave upon that occasion. The superstitions of these various Indian tribes are interesting and seem to correspond with those of other Aborigines on this continent and in other continents. You certainly did justice to their brighter side, in your book. It would have been just too bad if Roger Sudden had tied himself for life to the young Squaw who evidently was very pulchritudinous, particularly when dressed in a negligée, or, as upon one occasion, lacking even the negligée. Anyway, I consider your book one of the best historical novels that I have read, dealing as it does with things in which I have been interested, and I think your final pages are comparable with Dickens' best book "The Tale of Two Cities", when the hero dies upon the scaffold. I have seen Sir John Martin Harvey play that part upon more than one occasion. I have a complete set of Dickens, Temple edition, numbered, semi-limp leather, pocket size. I think the "Tale of Two Cities" is possibly his best book. Dickens knew how to tell an interesting story; you do too, and I think your work shows a great deal of historical study that Dickens did not need to undertake for his writings.

My only reason for writing you is to express my sincere appreciation of your book. I hope that others will follow, before too long.

Mowbray Jones can give you further information concerning my interest in business and other things.

Yours sincerely,



CHW:G

February 22nd, 1945

Personal

Mr. C.H. Wright,
Canadian General Electric Co. Ltd.,
Halifax, N.S.

Dear Mr. Wright,

Thanks for your kind and very interesting letter. I can see that you have read Roger Sudden with care and observation, not to mention appreciation. To an author this is the highest form of flattery. In general the professional book-critics have been kind to my works, but I'm still appalled to realise how few of them really read the books they praise or condemn with such aplomb.

Louisburg is a fascinating place. I stayed a week or ten days in the heart of the old fortress, in the dwelling of the museum caretaker. Fine days I spent in exploration not merely of the fortress but of the whole surrounding countryside, hunting up the sites of the old British batteries, roads, camps and landing places in company with Mayor Huntingdon of Louisburg, who has spent a lifetime in study and fieldwork on these matters. All this yielded a mass of material of which, for lack of space, I could use only a part. But all this going over the ground is necessary, especially in historical novels, for its secondary or reflected effect upon the writer's mind and the characters he is producing there.

Foggy days I spent in the museum poring over documents and maps and engravings, and each evening, rain or shine, I made the complete circuit of the ramparts in the dusk, strolling alone and digesting the day's work. Deer are very numerous in the woods about Louisburg and at sunset they creep across the moor for a night's browsing on the ramparts and in the moat. It was a dull walk that did not bring me upon three or four of them, and once I counted fifteen. The site of Louisburg is a bleak and lonely place even in mid-summer, and on an evening of thick sea-fog with the gulls crying and the sea breaking on the shore it can be positively eerie. Sometimes it wouldn't have surprised me very much to meet Roger and Mary in the flesh, or Loppinot, say, or Koap. At any rate I could see them very clearly in the mind, and I tried to put that clarity on paper.

Many of my characters were real people, taken straight from the records. The Chevalier James Johnstone was one, and all the details of his extraordinary career I took from his own memoirs. Madame Ducudrai really kept a cabaret in old Louisburg, and her husband really was a French spy at New York. Real people, too, were Le Louvre, Pere Maillard, Gantier, Jean Baptiste Koap, Mueger, Bulkeley, Loppinot, St. Julhien, to mention a few. Roger himself I created partly from the career of Michael Francklin, who came to Halifax in the early days a penniless English aristocrat and rose rapidly to wealth and influence by the rum trade, the fur trade and finally victualling contracts with the army and navy. Francklin was captured by Indians outside Halifax and spent a year or two as a captive in the forest. It was there that he learned Micmac and worked

cattle as beef to His Majesty's Navy was actually done by Mauger's agents in the years immediately following the Expulsion. Mauger himself was the most successful of the entrepreneurs who flourished in Halifax ~~and~~ the early days. Eventually he retired to England, bought a seat in Parliament and lived the life of a lord. When he died in 1774 he left a fortune of £300,000, all gathered in the West Indian slave trade and in his lucrative enterprises in Nova Scotia.

One or two of my friends complain that "Roger's" opinion of the Acadians was unduly harsh. My answer is that it is much closer to the truth than the generally accepted picture drawn by Longfellow, who never saw the country and drew "Evangeline" largely from imagination. The fact is that I drew "Roger's" Acadians, not from the statements of biased Englishmen, but from French documents of the time, written by officials, army and civil, of the old French regime. Longfellow started a cult, and now there is a whole literature casting a false glamor upon the Acadian story. In "Roger Sudden" I put the blunt truth, just as I put the truth about the original settlers of Halifax, the drinking habits of the English gentry and so on.

The historical novelist must take liberties with history to the extent of introducing fictitious characters into it. Essentially this is a fraud, and he can only redeem himself by making sure that the background is the truth. This can come only from a reverence for history itself.

The Micmac should not be judged by his demoralised descendant. It has been my good fortune to find in Queens County a number of old men, living apart, well versed in the old language and legends. One or two of them had a certain primitive nobility about them which impressed me very much. Of course we know from the records that their forefathers were cruel and treacherous, but surely that was due to their dog-eat-dog environment, and I suspect that a lot of it was due to the cruelty and treachery of the whites. To give you an electrical analogy, the whites and Indians formed the two sides or coils of a transformer. The wire of the Indians was finer drawn and wound in more coils, and the primary actions of the whites induced a higher voltage in the secondary. If the whites were shocked, what else could they expect?

As for ability, one of my Micmac friends, Michael Glode, a descendant of the local chief, was for many years a boss log-driver on the Mersey River. River-drivers are the aristocrats of the logging business, the toughest, the most daring, the most quick-witted of men, and in my experience the "fightin'est". The man they will accept as boss has got to be a better man than they are in all ways. Mike Glode is dead now but the rivermen still speak of him with respect. Of course most Indians are lazy by instinct, and so were their forefathers; but they could and would put forth a terrific energy for a thing they really wanted.

Finally, I'm glad you like my women. I'm in love with them myself. In fact I'm charmed with women anyhow. What fascinating creatures!

Sincerely,