

Borgald's Point,
Chester Basin,
Nova Scotia.
15th May 1949.

Dear Mr Raddall,

When I visited you in March you were kind enough to say that if there was anything further you could do to assist me you would be glad to do so, a dangerous remark to make I'm afraid as I am taking you at your word !

I am hoping you will be kind enough to tell me what, in your opinion, is wrong with these three efforts of mine. "Sweet Plunder" I thought would suit the American Market but it has been buzzing back and forth from Yankee Magazines with great regularity, likewise from the Toronto Star Weekly. Though at the moment it is languishing with the Redbook Mag, until they stick a rejection slip on it and push it back. "Postscript" I had hopes for on the Canadian market, as it has no American background, but that likewise seems doomed to be stillborn !

"The Secret of Oak Island" I wrote with the idea of it being a children's serial, but although a publisher named Bonnelli of Toronto expressed a very favourable opinion of it and sent it to the States on my behalf, though unbeknown to me, it comes home to roost everytime.

Please forgive my asking this favour of you, but I would appreciate a candid opinion if you have the time to spare;

but please don't bother if you are busy.

My kind regards to Mrs Raddall and once again
my apologies for bothering you,

Yours sincerely,

Ronald H. Kitley

I hope my attention of the Author's Handbook
is't causing you any inconvenience - I find it
most useful.

May I add we would be delighted to see
you & Mrs Raddall anytime you were passing
& felt like visiting The Indians at Boyald's
Point!

June 3rd, 1949

Dear Mr. Kitley,

I return under separate cover the three stories you sent for my perusal; and here is my criticism. Bear in mind that my opinion is merely that of an individual whose tastes and notions have been set entirely by his own experience, and whose judgement of another's work is therefore entirely fallible. I have seen too many good editors err in judgement of a story to sit comfortably in judgement myself.

The Secret of Oak Island.

This story has several glaring faults. In the first place the construction is poor. You have a modern child falling down a shaft into the 17th century. Here he meets a couple of picaresque characters who at once proceed to relate, first in rollicking piratical language, and then in scientific purity, a long yarn of their drop into one of the fantastic worlds of the American "funnies". Thus you have wheels within wheels, all going in different directions and at different speeds. All this would puzzle an adult reader, let alone the children for whom your story is intended. When you are telling a tale to children you must keep children (and their editors) in mind from first to last. No editor of a reputable children's-magazine would pass so many references to the devil and hell, for example. He might be broadminded but the parents of his readers are inclined to be straitlaced where their offspring are concerned. Nor would he consider for long a tale which speaks so frequently of the odour of rotting human flesh, of nightmare trees which slowly devour living men, of weird creatures half-men half-raven which on the other hand devour them very fast, and other matters calculated to scare the kids into fits after Mummy tucks them in for the night. To clear up this tale it seems to me you must either have the boy drop down the shaft into the midst of Captain Kidd's merry crew and go on with a tale of pirates; or he must drop straight into the wonderful city of Atlantis and go on from there. And either way you must cut out ruthlessly all that is merely morbid or gruesome in your otherwise excellent fantasy.

Sweet Plunder

This tale lacks plot. It isn't enough simply to have a pair of lovers separated by war, a vessel creeping in, and the lady creeping out. You need some emotional conflict in the tale. Have the lover stealing ashore in the night to persuade the lady against her Loyalist prejudices, and bring in the complications which could arise from his presence there; or have him carry her off against her will, with the lady won over at last by her own reaction to the struggle -- the once-aboard-the-lugger sort of thing. Watch the dialogue. Eighteenth century idiom, especially in the colonies, was never as stilted as that of Cecelia on page 2, for instance; and I doubt if any seaman ever talked like the captain of your brigantine on page 7. Fenimore Cooper used to put this kind of speech in the mouths of his characters because he wanted to impress the world that his Yankees were ladies and gentlemen no less than the proud and tyrannical British; but the talk of his seamen and backwoodsmen rings false nowadays. As someone said of the so-called "gentlemen-seamen" in King Charles' navy, "alas, the gentlemen were no seamen and the seamen were no gentlemen."

Postscript

This is the best of the three, and I suggest it is because here you are writing of things and scenes out of your own experience. The people are lifelike and the service talk is first rate. There is one jarring note. The

dying Dennison, the object of all the search, is polished off in a single paragraph, and there you have him talking like the dying hero-spy in a third rate melodrama. Also it does not seem credible to me that a British agent working in the remote hills of Yugo-Slavia during the war could have come into possession of a list containing "nearly all the names of the Soviet agents working in the United Kingdom". What would such a list be doing there? If Dennison had worked in Moscow or even Vienna it would sound much better. Your whole story leads up to the death of Dennison, and you should make much more of it -- and end your story there. The postscript is an anti-climax. Cut it out and change the title. Since Dennison's death is the climax of your story you must make it have a real significance, and that significance must be simple and credible. This man had been lost for months or years in the rugged heart of Europe, he had fallen in love with a girl there, the war must have seemed utterly remote for a great part of the time. Why not end the tale on an ironical note by having Dennison confess that for months he had forgotten the war, his duty and everything else, absorbed in his romance with Trudi? Or dying while trying to reveal to Chesney some important secret, without completing it, leaving Chesney (and the reader) to guess what the secret was?

Sincerely,

Mr. Ronald H. Kitley,
Borgald's Point,
Chester Basin, N.S.

Borgald's Point,
Chester Basin,
Nova Scotia,
11th June 1949.

Dear Mr Raddall,

Very many thanks indeed for the return of the manuscripts and for your exceedingly valuable criticism. I am afraid you must have devoted more time to them than I had imagined you would and I must once more apologise to you for bothering you, though I do appreciate your interest and efforts.

I have altered the 'Postscript' story and have buzzed it off to the Saturday Evening Post in the hope that with the amended ending they will publish it ! Albeit it is not dealing with Americans. The others I have not touched yet. Oak Island being still in the hands of Messrs Dutton & Co, who wrote requesting its return as it was sent back to me unread ! But I expect it to come popping along anytime now.

May I congratulate you on receiving the Governor General's Award ? Jolly good show.

Yours sincerely,

Ronald H. Kitley

NPA ~~WITNESSES~~ - HERALD
Jan. 7, 1956

Three Witnesses Testify In Theft

Three Crown witnesses testified in City Police Court Friday against Ronald H. Kitley of Glen Haven, charged with the theft of a quantity of files, scrap books and account books, property of Kitley and Flynn Ltd., Halifax.

The theft is alleged to have taken place between Nov. 1 and Nov. 28.

Peter O'Hearn, Q. C., acted as Crown Prosecutor. F. W. Bissett, Q. C., represented Mr. Kitley. The case was adjourned until Jan. 12 when counsel will argue evidence before Magistrate J. F. McManus.

Value of the articles was not set during yesterday's hearing.

TRURO — Among those who entertained for Mrs. Scott Henderson (Jan Wilson) prior to her marriage were the Misses Jean Ross, Jean Ritcey, Frances Stanfield and Betty MacLeod, who honored her at a coffee party in Halifax and also Miss Patricia Staples of Halifax who entertained at a shower.

Mrs. R. M. Langille was hostess at a coffee party while Mr. and Mrs. Elwyn Carter and Miss Christine Carter held a bridge party in her honor. Miss Joan Banks entertained at a bridal shower.

Visitors at the home of Mr. and Mrs. T. D. Mingo during the holidays were their daughter, Mrs. N. M. H. Blumenkranz, and Dr. Blumenkranz of Ossining, N. Y. and grandson, Dick Sweeney of Montreal.