

✓ Ansd. Jan. 9/46

392 South Street
Hampox
December 26-1945

Dear Tom:

While Helene struggles to clear up the mess that the children, the cat, and the dog put into Chris' mess, I want to write and thank you, not only for "remembering" us with a card, but for the pleasure we have had from Jamboree. Most of the stories we had read before, but the collection gives more than a repetition of separate pleasures. Once again, you have put Nova Scotia into a book. You may wreck our home with arguments over your merits as a novelist and a story-teller; but what of that? - it's all in a good cause. Personally, I'm all for the novels, though in general I don't like novels, especially historical ones: bogged down in twenty pages of G.B. Hancock's book on Halifax (the word "jealous" was not so bad) and am struggling

along with Oliver Willis. Of course there
is a personal interest in your work,
since you say about Nova Scotia the
things that I feel and can't express;
but it's not personal or local prejudice
that makes me rejoice that you are
able to show to "foreigners" something
of the character and value - of
this hard-bitten, somewhat hearted neck
of the woods that is appreciated to
be full, I think, only by those
who come ^{to it} from outside and
choose to make it their own.
You are the spokesman for us all
- seeing more than the rest of
us, and saying for us what we
dimly see but cannot say for
ourselves. I wish you had
known MacMechan - not as
a professor: you needed
nothing from colleges, but
as another immigrant who
made the Bluesoes his

own. He lacked some creative gift, & his style verged on the precious, but he knew his ships and sailors, and set out only in a bookish way (though some of his excursions had their amusing side, as I can testify from having been on them.) I have often pictured you and Archie as you might have spent an evening reading anecdotes.

Which reminds me of one I have been saving for you. No one vouches for it, but it is handed on for what it's worth around Frostfish Cove & French Village Harbour. Some of our good neighbours observe the Seventh Day, and in this & other matters tend to be precise about dates and figures as given with the authority of the Scriptures.

One of them, Willy Tommy, of the local sept of the Bontilies clan, had a father and an uncle who reached the prescribed age of three score years and ten, without seeming to realize what the Lord expected of them. Willy Tommy and the boys set up a gallows, ~~but~~ but the neighbours stepped in.

For some time I have meant to say that our Library is at your disposal. Books can be mailed to you (if we have them) and in case of difficulty I can always take personal responsibility for a special loan. The inter-library service may be helpful, for we can find & borrow books through the Library of Congress and its associates. Don't hesitate to ask, if we can help. With best wishes for the New Year yours sincerely
 Lindsay Bennett

P.S. I hope you don't mind the familiar form of salutation. You are always "Tom Rabbit" in our house. For those who don't like my given name (I don't myself, mind) I would preferably be Ben.

(COPY)

Letter to Professor C.L.Bennet, Dalhousie. Jan.4,1948

Dear Ben,

I'm so glad you found the tales enjoyable on re-reading them -- always the acid test. You will note the difference in approach between the tales contributed to Blackwood's and those to American magazines. The Americans abhor "atmosphere" and worship "plot", hence the writer in the American market must work in his atmosphere and characterization adroitly with a minimum of words, giving all possible space to his plot.

English editors, especially Blackwood's, permit -- indeed encourage -- a more leisurely approach to the action of a tale. The difference between the two is the difference between a destroyer and a square-rigged sailing ship. With the destroyer you are left in no doubt from start to finish about the machinery of propulsion, for your vehicle is simply a sleek hull enclosing the engine -- it is practically all engine.

On the other hand your sailing ship has greater beam, it is more bluff in the bow, and there rises from it a large and tenuous structure of spars, ropes and fabric, each fragile, each giving its bit of strength and beauty to the whole, each placed with care to catch its bit of the invisible force which moves the thing along.

Each method has its own strength and beauty, properly done, and I found it refreshing and interesting to turn from one to the other while striving always for those qualities. Of course my tales are a compromise between the extremes -- the American editors permitted me a good deal more characterization and atmosphere than they customarily allow -- and in my Blackwood tales I never lost sight of my prime object, which was to tell a story.

However in the "Larrabee" saga I took advantage of Blackwood's greater latitude to introduce a good deal of 18th century minutiae, not merely for the sake of atmosphere but for the ulterior purpose of giving trans-Atlantic readers a picture of Nova Scotia in colonial days. Thus in one sense the "Larrabee" tales are really a series of historical tracts.

Cheero !

JAR

May 6th, 1946

Dear Ben,

You may remember some time ago when you and I were talking about Archie MacMechan and his work. As you know, most of Archie's books have been out of print for some time. Now his (and my) Canadian publishers, McClelland & Stewart, have decided to bring out a volume of selected work, and after consultation with Mrs. MacMechan have asked me to make the selection and write a foreword.

I have agreed, although I have a feeling that someone like yourself who knew MacMechan personally would have been a better choice. My own opinion is that MacMechan's true tales of the sea are his best work and the most useful, for he caught the real atmosphere of the days of the wooden ship at a time when it was passing. I enjoy his essays but I feel that much of his earlier work is in a style too precious for modern appreciation. I am coming up to Halifax on May 15th to see Mrs. MacMechan on the subject (she promises that she will not be " too difficult", whatever that means), also to see Don Mackay who is to do the illustrations if I have my way with the publishers. I shall be leaving the city on the 18th (Saturday). I wonder if you could give me an hour sometime between the 15th and 18th in which we could discuss these matters. MacMechan's work is so important that I want to get other opinions, particularly yours, before making a final decision on the work to go into this book.

My best to Helene.

Sincerely,

Forgive this awful typing. I've just returned from a fishing trip into the wilds of the Rossignol region, and swinging an ax and toting a canoe over the portages have stiffened my fingers and made them even clumsier than usual.

D. C. L. Bennet
Dalhousie University

392 South St
Haverhill
Sunday.

Dear Tom:

Believe me and I
will rejoice if you
come to talk about
Archie's writings, or
about anything else.
I'm glad that you are
to do a book for
him — I was afraid
the plan had been
hung up — and
you are in every
way the right man
both for selecting &
for introducing.

I agree with your preferences
 & also about the previous
 quality of much of the
 early stuff. Glad to learn
 that Mrs. Mack. will not
 be "too difficult". That
 means that at least
 she has given up the
 idea of a full
 dress biography & a
 library edition of the
 collected works. She
 has learned in the
 last decade that
 professors as such
 have a limited

appeal and that the publishing
 business is neither completely
 a racket nor completely
 philanthropic. Lorne Pierce of
 the Ryerson Press had something
 in hand just before the
 war, but it was dropped
 & Mrs. M. thought she hadn't
 been dealt quite fairly.
 Actually, Pierce was going to
 do the thing largely as a
 labor of love. I don't
 know just what it
 amounted to. I know
 him well, & his
 assistant even better.
 I shall be

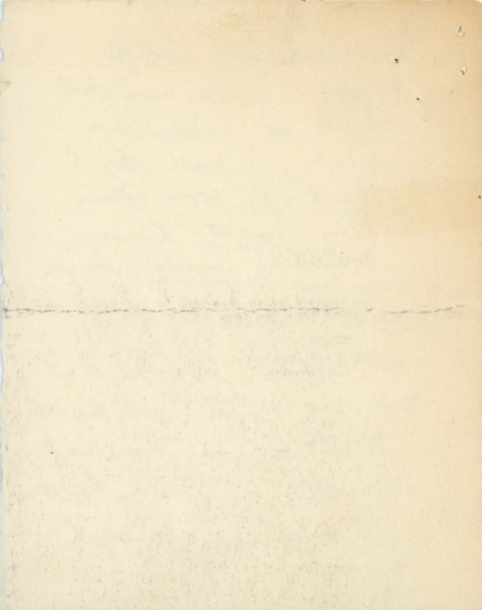
as the ⁴ end of the month.
I might sound them out
if an opportunity offers
and you think it advisable.
When Archie died I made
my own impressions in
the Dalhousie Review, and
later there was an
article by Dr Garnet
Sedgwick of the Univ. of
British Columbia. Pierce
had got some of that sort
of thing together & planned to
use it. I don't imagine
you'll want to judge, but
if you do I imagine
the Review would give
permission for my obit.
& Sedgwick's article

Of course you can have anything in the way of wood or print that I can give you and I imagine that Sedgwick would say the same.

You almost certainly know Sagas of the Sea a small volume in the Kniz Treasures series published by Dent & long used as a school book - grade X I think, and very probably

6
When you were in it.
I'm not some offhand
Whether this was
an original collection,
or a reprint, or
a make-up of
scattered articles; but
it represents best the
sort of thing you seem
to have in mind.
Even the stark
realism smacks
a little of the
lamp, but it's

7
good straight stuff.
However, we can talk
about it when we
meet. I will try to
think of some others
who might have
something useful for you
— Henry Munro might be
one.
~~It is~~ I hope that
you can get Mackay
to do your drawings.
He is just the man.
Yours sincerely
Ben.



392 South Street,
Halifax,
June 18, 1946.

Dear Tom,

Thank you for sending a copy of your introduction, which has been done to the King's taste and as only you could do it. I marvel at the way in which you covered every side of Dr MacMechan's character and interests without shifting the emphasis from the sea. It is an honour to be quoted and I am happy to think that you consider anything of mine worth repeating. If you feel that twice on one page is too much of a good thing, please consider yourself free to make the last reference anonymous, or to pass it over to Mrs MacMechan if you keep my name, you might drop the second "Lindsey".

Since you ask for comments, I may perhaps refer to the number of times that you call MacMechan "Archie". I am very glad that you use the name, for it gives the right touch but "Archie" was the name for only one side of him, and on page 3 I feel that "MacMechan" was the author of Ultima Thule, "spirit of MacMechan" might be "spirit of the lover" "Archie's study table" "his study table" and "The Winning of Popular Government" MacMechan at his historical best. I hope you won't think me captious or interfering; Helene and I feel that we may be partly responsible, for like most of his pupils and associates we always call him "Archie", but rather after the fashion of school-children with a nick-name for the teacher, to be used behind his back. Mrs M. always referred to him as "Archie", but might not appreciate a suggestion of undue familiarity from others. That is a small point, and if you happen to agree I am sure that you will find better substitutions than those I have suggested.

Though I have put on my dominie's specs. and taken up my red pencil I can find nothing but the smallest things to mention. I put them for what they are worth. Page 3. paragraph 3 sentence two may possibly suggest an ambiguity, i.e. that "headwaters" is not of scholarly interest. If this is so, dropping the second comma and inserting "and" or "and chiefly" or some such, might help.

On para. one of the same page, at the end, Helene suggests (the woman's touch) that old lace is yellowed rather than yellow.

Going back to the end of the page (sorry for dodging about) I suppose strictly "Sartor Resartus", within double quotes should be in single quotes.

In the last sentence but one, p.6., an especially important place, there is a suggestion of jingle or rhyming pun in "tales in detail" that may jar on some ears.

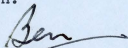
For paragraphing, there are two places where you may intend a division, or where the printer might take it so, that I think might as well or better run straight on. Page 3 beginning "The Life ... " and page 4, beginning "The fore- and -afters... "

Probably you didn't want that sort of thing, and hoped for something on a higher plane; but I am no critic, and them -correcting becomes an occupational disease.

Helene and I both feel that you have drawn a complete and faithful portrait and that you have made it come alive. We are sure that Mrs MacMechan will be pleased and I shall write a and tell her how much we are pleased with the job that you have done. Helene has always been a favourite of hers, and she regards me as no more of an anti-climax than was to be expected; so she will expect our comments. By an odd chance I ran into Dr Sedgwick in Toronto, and he was delighted to learn of your book and its introduction. Others that I met were equally pleased, but no one more than myself or in so many ways, for Archie was so many things to me, and it is comforting to have his work so well commemorated. No one but you could have done it.

Helene joins me in sending best wishes, We hope to see you again soon.

Yours,



P.S. I hope you find my typescript no worse than my hand. ~~xxxxxx~~
I'm not good at the best, but the ribbon jams and I can't see what my two fingers are hitting.

P.P.S MacMechan himself would I think have been most pleased at your pointing out that he was not a Kiplingesque little-Englander. He liked to refer to himself as a "plain Canadian". You hit exactly on an important point that was completely missed by many of the people who thought they knew him well.
~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~.B .

Professor C. L. Bennett
Salmon O., Hfx.

June 21st, 1946

Dear Ben,

Thanks for your comments on the foreword. I assure ^{you} that I didn't catch my "Archie" from you or Helene. I heard it a good deal from Nellie who, as you know, worked in the Dal office and always referred to him by that name; but on top of that wherever I've gone, wherever I met discussing MacMechan and his work, the name was "Archie". It seems to have been his universal sobriquet and I used it with that in mind.

I say "whoever I met". There were some exceptions. One was the poet Kenneth Leslie, who disliked A.M. intensely and made no bones about it. For him Archie was simply "MacMechan". He once wrote a bitter attack on Archie and his "imperialism" in some verse called "Professor John" -- no doubt you've seen it. Leslie at the time was making a great business of his Celtic blood, speaking Gaelic (or what he thought was Gaelic) at the drop of anybody's hat, and talking a good deal of English through his own. He was full of the wrongs of Scotland and Ireland -- particularly Ireland for some reason -- and we waxed rather warm over De Valera. I had been in a cable-ship on the Kerry coast at the height of the "Throuble" in '21 -- the Sinn Feiners had managed in some way to cut the trans-oceanic cable going into Waterville Bay -- and had heard at first hand (from Irishmen) certain details of the Sinn Fein movement and its methods that did not chime with the noble and chivalrous picture being given to the world by the Irish-American press. Kenneth had that picture firmly in his mind and talked like a St. Patrick's Day orator at an A.O.H. dinner. All this in the year of our Lord 1937, mind you. Now I understand he has given over poetry altogether and is conducting some sort of newspaper called "~~Protestant~~ Protestant", published in New York and devoted to violent and sometimes scurrilous attacks upon the Roman Catholic religion in general and the Pope in particular! When I think of his "Dark Rosaleen" phase it makes me laugh, though I feel sorry, too; he had the makings of a poet of some distinction.

I ran up to Chester the other day and had a chat with Mrs. MacMechan, who is staying with the Holloways there. She and they were delighted with the foreword and are very eager to see the book. I'm taking the foreword with me to Toronto next week. Frankly I don't see how McClelland and Stewart can get the book out before the spring of '47 and they may not attempt it before the autumn of '47. The period of gestation in the publishing business is rapidly approaching that of the human species, what with paper quotas and difficulties in the printing, binding and so on.

I am making some corrections in the foreword script along the lines you suggest. Thanks again.

Sincerely,

LLR

392 South St
Haitax.
January 1 - 1947.

Dear Tom / From Christmas &
New Year I have broken
the sedium of paper-
marking by reading or
re-reading the stories
in The Wedding Gift etc.

Not merely by contrast,
they pleased me very
much, in some ways
more than any of your
books including even
"Yankees". You have
always had a
special gift for
the short story,
and Old Port & Co.

3
which you may take
as being as much
a tribute to your
charm as a
recognition of
your art.

Best wishes for
1948 and
another book soon

Yours sincerely
Gen

2
Laurabee give unity
& continuity as well
as the firm substructure
of history.

I have just
written to Mrs Madhekar
to say again that
you are the one
person who comes
forth & adequately
keeps Archib's memory
green by bringing
out a selection
of his stories. I
think she is very
happy about it.

Ans'd
Jan 5/49

392 South St -
Halifax, N.S.
January 1 - 1949

Dear Tom

I have managed
to finish "Halifax -
Warden of the North" in
spite of raids by other
members of the family
on the two copies we
had in the house; and
I want to tell you
how much I have
enjoyed it. You have
given us good history
and a good story
- as good in my
opinion as the stories

2

in your novels. I am
no historian, either by
claiming or by temperament,
but it seems to me
that in giving speed
& compression you
have never lost
proportion or misplaced
emphasis. All accounts
that I have heard have
agreed with my own.

It was encouraging
to have you put in

3

a word for retaining
the Citadel Hill as it
has been. Something
must be done to
prevent weather &
wear from breaking
it down. But to
lay it out in shrubbery,
or to put it to
commercial use as
one city father suggests,
would seem to be
bad taste & the
pinnacle of blasphemy.

P.S. Your acknowledgment of access to the library does us too much honour. It is always yours to command. C.F.B.

4.

I was interested yesterday to see that the opening of Brunswick St to Spring Garden by way of Hastings has given a new and interesting glimpse of the Town Clock, adding to the character of the town, rather than detracting from it.

All the best for '48

Yours sincerely
Ben



DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY
HALIFAX, N. S.

March 10-1949.

Dear Tom,

Here is a copy of the "citation" as promised. I believe that it is to be printed in the next issue of the Dalhousie Alumni News. Mrs Mackenzie asked for a copy, which I am sending, and she also expressed a desire to read your address, so I took it on myself to send her the carbon that you left with me, asking her to mail it to you when she had read it.

I continue to be in awe of your wisdom in adding you to our list of graduates, and of the way in which you justified our

choice by your address. There was
a very pleasant editorial in this
morning's Chronicle-Herald which you will
have seen.

We were sorry not to be
able to get off the day at
Don Mackay's, but after making
a brief address in the evening
I seemed to have no voice
left, so Helene put me to bed.
I had been hanging on to a
WD for two days, hoping that
I would be able to make
your introduction. Believe me
it was a great honor to have
been given this privilege.

Yours sincerely
Ben

Dr. C. L. Bennett
11 Shaw Crescent,
Armsdale, N.Y.

May 13, 1966

Dear Ben:

Shortly after my return from that pleasant visit to Halifax I had a note from Dr. Varma saying that he was coming to Liverpool for a talk with me, and that as he had no car he would come by train and stay at a hotel. Naturally I replied suggesting a week-end at my home, and he came and stayed overnight with us last Saturday-Sunday.

After some preliminary conversation he came to his point, or rather two points. (A) That Dalhousie would like to acquire my manuscripts, all letters and papers referring to my life and works, my literary award medals, and so forth. (B) That he, Varma, wished to write a book about my life and works, beginning next autumn. This, he said, would ~~involve~~ involve a number of visits here for ~~consultation~~ consultation, and he would like me to lend him all letters, news clippings, book reviews and other matters in my possession which referred to his subject.

With regard to (A) I replied that I had made provision in my will for all such matters to go to The Nova Scotia Archives after my death. If Dalhousie wishes to have them I can change the clause, although as the Archives building is on the campus my papers would be readily available there.

On (B) I said I was flattered but I would have to think it over.

I found Varma personally charming and very erudite; but I couldn't help wondering why a man whose specialty is the Gothic romance in England in the eighteenth century should wish to write a book about a living writer in Canada, especially one whose work has a distinct matter-of-fact basis, with nothing Gothic about it.

In conversation he told me something of his own career, especially his years at Cairo and Damascus, his admiration of Masser, and so forth. He showed a strong bias against the Jews in discussing Middle Eastern matters, and on this side of the water he informed me that all the apartment houses in Halifax are owned by Jews, and that the entire money capital of Canada itself is controlled by seven Jews. When I protested that he was utterly wrong, he smiled and politely changed the subject.

A man subject to such errors of judgement doesn't seem the sort of person I'd like to have as a biographer and critic. However he insisted that I visit him for a week-end when he returns to Halifax in September, and I felt I couldn't refuse.

Please give me your view of all this, which is of course in strict confidence.

Sincerely,

DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY
HALIFAX, N. S.

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

11 Shaw Crescent
Armdale, N. S.
May 19, 1966

Dear Tom:

Your letter was waiting when we returned from a three weeks' visit to our girls in England. Briefly, I understand your feelings, and agree that it is better to make no immediate commitments.

Varma is a good man in his field. Bevan has told me that he is working hard because he appreciates being in a place (unlike India or the Near East) where there is scope for scholarship. Wheeler ~~says~~ ^{said} that he is lazy and dilatory and starts things that other people have to help him finish. Some people are put off by his effusive manner. There is no question that it is a bit much at times, but it is partly racial and partly based on a sense of gratitude and perhaps of insecurity. It's not all window-dressing.

He gave the initial push to the lecture series and produced some flowery introductions, but others did most of the work. I'm not sure what would be meant by "Dalhousie" wants your papers; Bevan has not mentioned it to me as I'm sure he would if it had gone through him. It would be a good thing for Dalhousie, but there are good reasons for the Archives. (If they once get in there, we'll never get them out.)

About the book on your life and works, I'd say that someone longer resident in Canada with a knowledge of history and background would be better. On the other hand, the first prerequisite for a book is someone with the time, energy, and desire to write it. The information on Arabs, Jews, and Canadian capitalists is new to me. (I work chiefly at home, and see little of my colleagues except for Bevan and Parks.) In general, I would agree with your misgivings concerning his enthusiasms and prejudices. He leaves for England about the end of this week and goes on to India, for family reasons, in August; so that there is time for consideration.

I doubt whether I can get anything more specific. However, Bevan talks freely to me about our colleagues, and if he has anything under either head, I feel sure that he will want to discuss it. I have seen Varma only to nod to for some time. Anything of interest or assistance that may turn up I shall pass on.

Yours sincerely, *Bev.*

n I shall say nothing, of course, about having heard from you.

(from Dr. G. L. "Ben" Bennet,
former head of the English
Dept., Dalhousie U.)

11 Shaw Crescent
Aurora, N.S.
October 8, 1969

Dear Tom,
Helene and I
were very much pleased,
as were all your
friends here, when
you received a
well-merited doctorate
from Saint Mary's. I
am only sorry that
I was not able
to hear your address,

less frequently and
 more carefully than
 I did. I keep one
 class, and for want
 of some one better
 I continue to put out
 the Dalhousie Review.
 Now that the spate of
 "centennial" books is
 over, I get fewer
 books for review, especially
 in your field, but
 I keep my eyes open
 for something that

but having heard
 others I know that
 it would be memorable
 for both content and
 style.

One way or another,
 we get news of you
 at intervals and
 gather that you
 are still going
 strong, as a relative
 youngster, I move

4.

would interest you.
And if you have
anything in that
line that you would
like to do for us,
of course I'd be
interested.

All good wishes,
and again our
warm congratulations

Yours. Sincerely

Ben