

**THE ACADIAN PROSCRIPT:
A HISTORICAL DRAMA IN
FIVE ACTS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649407910

The Acadian Proscript: A Historical Drama in Five Acts by Walter S. Kerr

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

WALTER S. KERR

**THE ACADIAN PROSCRIPT:
A HISTORICAL DRAMA IN
FIVE ACTS**

THE
ACADIAN PROSCRIPT

A HISTORICAL DRAMA

IN FIVE ACTS

WALTER S. KERR



PRESS OF
HARRINGTON - McINNIS COMPANY
OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA

CHARACTERS

AS CONCEIVED IN THE PLAY

GENERAL WINSLOW.

Large, florid, pompous at times, rather illiterate, affable, vain of his attire and vainer of his pedigree and although American born, a loyalist to the end. Much of his speech here is historical and his dramatic action closely follows the written record. His still extant portrait hangs on the walls of the Mass. Historical Society, in whose archives also is to be found "Winslow's Journal," giving in awful detail the primary facts of the unhappy part he took in the horrible Acadian Deportation. He died, I believe, during the American Revolution, a political refugee, forsaken, heart-broken and disgraced. The descendants of "La Tourmente" still hold his name in execration, a fate he does not at all deserve.

ADMIRAL BOSCAWEN.

Small statured, knotty looking but extremely dapper, wry-necked, quick-worded, raven voiced, thin faced, bushy browed, aged looking though young. He is autocratic with inferiors, obsequious to those above him in office and despises American generals and their methods of campaigning. Really a man of splendid ability and successful in his campaigns.

Costume, English admiral of his times.

GENERAL MONCTON.

Tall, lithe, handsome, pale, aristocratic, Voltairish, hawk-eyed, furtively keen, despising the American militia and colonial officers, illy concealing his contempt for military pretension wherever found. Middle aged (45 years).

GOV. CHARLES LAWRENCE.

Huge, bison-shouldered, bull-necked, deep voiced, ready and rough brained—a mightily forceful character. He formerly was a boat painter of obscure origin along the Thames and though inherently dishonest and relentlessly cruel in military methods he was a jolly, good natured man, loving physical sports and dancing. In fact, it was from a too sudden "cooling off" while over-heated from dancing that he contracted an illness from which he died. He alone, without any authority superior to the Nova Scotian council, planned (with the astute Judge Norris, of Massachusetts) the atrocity of the Acadian Expulsion. It speaks much of his military capacity by the fact that the whole intricate campaign of the Acadian Deportation was nearly

THE ACADIAN PROSCRIPT

effected without the almost matchlessly cunning and politically dishonest hierarchy centralized at Quebec knowing anything about it. There is sufficient evidence to show that he divided much of the huge Acadian spoils with political favorites.

MOISE DERNIER.

Small, alert, wiry, swarthy, weaselish in actions, speaking poor French and worse English concurrently with excessive gesticulation and exclamations. Acadian messenger and interpreter between the official French and English officers. He has a hairy appearance, with attire that is bizarre, gay and dirty.

LIEUT. GOV. MASCARENE.

A splendid and handsome personality, engaging in manner, suave, benevolent and always smilingly serene, an official loved by the English and French alike; his administration was honest and liberal and sane. His was the only solution of the Acadian political problem, and had his superiors been as wise and just as he, the infamous suffering of the poor, misguided Acadians could easily have been averted. Costume civil.

MARY NORRIS.

A Hamletish heroine whose character is discovered in the play.

CAPT. MURRAY.

He attended the Acadian death trap at Fort Edward on the Pizaquid (spelled a half dozen ways) now Windsor, Nova Scotia, and his record is only a pen point of history. He was tempestuous but taciturn, a bushy looking, grayish red-faced, large boned Irishman, able and enjoying to an unusual degree the confidence of his American superiors. His one sore spot was the contempt and haughtiness of the English officers and the railery of the regular soldiers as to the valor of the short-termed American militia.

CAPT. HANDIFIELD.

This young, ill-dressed and uneasy mannered officer watched the trap at Annapolis Royal, where he was unsuccessful. He is tall, narrow shouldered, hollow-eyed, and brazen at times in his very bashfulness while in the company of superior officers.

JUDGE NORRIS.

This character baffles historical research, but it is known that he had the most intimate relations with some of the highest officials in America. He is represented here as one-eyed, very portly and well groomed, white-faced and bald, sleek, plausibly candid with the cunning of Beelzebub. His detail map to entrap the unsuspecting neutrals on Nova Scotia's Black Friday,—September 5th, 1755, "was the most atrocious snare over which a human tiger ever bent his malignant brain." History is certain and definite in only two of his infamous endeavors, the

A HISTORICAL TRAGEDY

stealing of the Acadian boats and fire arms under the guise of friendship and hospitality, and the corralling of the devil-driven Acadians. His record before and after the summer months of 1755, so far as ascertained,—where born, where he died—is "Mute as a half fused epitaph in a deserted hell!"

ACADIAN CHARACTERISTICS

The Acadians were ambitionless in everything except religion, in that as unreasoning and bigoted as serfs. Ethically unilluminated, spiritually short-visioned, few rose to higher flights than belly ideals. Not to obey a priest was almost unthinkable, to speak ill of the bishop a crime, and an infidel among them was a monster unknown. They bickered much over land lines, for their titles were uncertain, resting in alien lords, whose ownership was not recognized in English law. Excepting the Quakers, no other people that ever lived had less war blood in their arteries, and none other had as little of the half divine discontent in their souls. They loved peace so degenerately that they would not fight for it, and having no land titles patriotism was an emotion unknown.

They were an excrescence of faithless politics, and, prolific as rabbits, they soon became a numerous but denationalized people. It may be said there was no fear so terrible with them as the ecclesiastical lightnings except that of death itself, and an infamous missionary priest like La Loutre—thé Aaron Burr of Nova Scotian French—was stronger than an English battalion. Though the French governors of Louisberg and Quebec were guilty of the most flagrant duplicity and governmental bad faith and dishonesty, there was a similar duplicity, a more ruthless dishonesty and an inexcusable greed throughout the whole latter course of administration of the English governors and their subordinates, excepting Mascarene alone. And the final act of the English in the Acadian Expulsion was a political error that shocked and still shocks the entire civilized world. In truth the moral and political standards of that age were shamefully low, and it should not be doubted at all that the Acadians themselves were as a people far superior in uprightness to the mother country that deserted them in their hours of misfortune or to the English who ambushed and assassinated the unprotected Acadian nation of more than ten thousand souls.

The Acadians had no schools, no books, no beggars, no bastards, no jails, no drunkards and no drones. There was never a pauper among them, and the Gaultiers and the LeBlancs were worth each more than a quarter of a million dollars. Nearly all were so illiterate that they could not read, and the record shows that few could write their names. They were vivacious, good talkers, and loved ballads and songs and simple tales. They were extremely prolific, reasonably industrious, foolishly stub-

THE ACADIAN PROSCRIPT

born, kind-hearted and affectionate, loved bright attire, and had their frolics, their simple sports and holidays. Their religion was cut and dried, and only a few individuals towered above the peasant soul.

They had no sovereign, no titles, no progress, no law, and being neutral in politics, maphroditic in fealty, they inevitably became administrative grist and graft between two irreconcilable and bloody religious creeds.

They had swine, poultry, many horses and large herds of cattle. They raised flax for their linens, sheep for their woolens, and most families had an abundance of sometimes fine furs for protection from the often intensely rigorous winter storms. They had flouring mills, saw mills, blacksmith shops, and many ships that did a considerable coastwise trade. Their principal markets were at Louisberg and Quebec, selling as little to the English as they could. It was not uncommon for some of their vessels to journey to Martinique, and even so far away as France.

Their food was coarse, plentiful and little varied, fruit abundant, some of the best varieties of our apples, as the Jeanneton and the Bellefleur and others originating in the sunny Acadian valleys. After the French occupation of Acadia for one hundred and fifty years little more than three hundred and fifty acres were cleared for farming. They would not chop and hew and burn unless compelled by stern requirement. They did not know how, and they did not want to learn. Nearly all the settlers came from the dyked marsh lands of Rochelle France, where their clumsy shovels had dammed out the "wildest bay in the world"; here again their dykes held back the "crazy Bay of Fundy," sometimes with a tide sixty feet high. They were skillful in fishing, boating and muck farming; they were fair trappers in some parts, poor marksmen everywhere, splendid boatmen, expert human water rats, and they could not invent at all. Their farming tools were of the same crude character as those used in Palestine in early Bible times. Their dwellings were rude, poor and usually thatched with swamp grass, but there were some good houses among them, roofed with "shakes" and shielded with sawed lumber. It is said that there were many whitewashed cottages, surrounded with Old World flowers. A well-built church was the heart of every settlement.

No dark-eyed daughter in those garden fields snatched from the mighty tidal seas might wed till she could weave a pair of linen sheets, and no lover might take the weaver to wife till he could build himself a pair of solid wooden wheels and was rich enough to have a black ox or two for the ungainly pole. The newly wedded pair, sometimes married at fourteen years of age, went to housekeeping with the numerous presents of their relatives and friends. These may have been some poultry, a pair of oars, a cow, a horse, a net, a boat, furs or linen, a casque of rum or wine, and perhaps a spinning wheel, perhaps often a loom. A houseful of children was the result of nearly every wedlock.

A "proscript" was a legal outlaw, proscribed and publicly branded, somewhat as a fugitive slave, against whom a penalty of \$250 was placed by Governor Shirley, the Commander in General of the Colonial forces at the time, because the penalized had given aid to the French invasion across Nova Scotia in 1744-48.

CURTAIN SCENE

RIGHT, Minas Basin leading around Cape Blomidon, red-faced cliff 200 feet high, into Bay of Fundy, (unseen); dim sentinel mountains across the blue waters of the Basin to the E. N. E.

LOWER CENTER, broad, yellow wheat fields and meadows through which are seen dykes covered with willows and ditches with flood gates on them. Cattle and sheep grazing in small meadows; top extends to faintly outlined forest on N.

CENTER AND LEFT, Grand Pre', one long street of low white-washed, log and adz-hewn houses and grass-thatched huts. To left church, mission house, and blacksmith's shop. Ox carts, scythe, pigeon houses, stretched hides on buildings, nets hung on reels, boats, fowls, dogs, oars standing against house, etc.

Summer sunset-burst in red and yellow floods down on the scene from mighty forest bluff on the extreme LEFT. (Acadia, Nova Scotia, 1755. Summer.)



THE
ACADIAN PROSCRIPT

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| HENRI GAUTIER..... | Jules Leblanc, the proscript. |
| MME. LEBLANC..... | Mother. |
| RENI LEBLANC..... | Father. |
| JEAN LEBLANC..... | Henri's sister. |
| RENIE LEBLANC..... | Brother. |
| FATHER LANDRY..... | Priest at Grand Pre'. |
| MOISE DERNIER..... | French courier, interpreter. |
| GENERAL MONCTON..... | English officer. |
| GENERAL WINSLOW..... | American officer. |
| CAPTAIN MURRAY..... | Colonial officer. |
| CAPTAIN HANDFIELD..... | “ “ |
| ADMIRAL BOSCAWEN..... | English Naval Officer. |
| DAVEY..... | Colonial scout, ranger. |
| COLONEL MASCARENE..... | Lieut. Gov. Nova Scotia. |
| GENERAL LAWRENCE..... | Tyrant of Nova Scotia. Governor. |
| JUDGE NORRIS..... | American lawyer in employ of Lawrence. |
| MARY NORRIS..... | Daughter of Judge Norris. (Soldiers, horses, Acadian women, men and children, dogs. Summer of 1755; Acadia, Nova Scotia.) |

R—right of stage.
L—left.
C—center.
F—front.
D—door.
E—Entrance, numbered.