

Senior Division, Short Fiction

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A Fighting Newfoundlander (an excerpt)

That supper conversation stayed with me for a long time. The Great War and Confederation. I imagined Stephen as Hercules fighting the Hydra. Was Stephen's family still paying the price of his battle? I kept hearing Carol's nails on the mug, sending out Morse code distress messages. During the next few weeks, I noticed that pink, white and green seemed to be everywhere and the spot-lit caribou at The Rooms dominated the downtown skyline even more brightly than usual. I headed to the Archives and looked at digital photographs and official records, researching the meagre files outlining service records for Major Stephen Harris. He was absent in the material I accessed in the Confederation debate. Maybe Carol was wrong in her family stories? But still I wondered when I walked past the new National War Memorial on my daily coffee pilgrimage. Was this Memorial a sacred site? Or a bitter footnote in another country's history? The Fighting Newfoundlander, betrayed perhaps in the end by his fellow citizens who voted to extinguish their country. Phrases echoed in my head. For God and King. Keep the home fires burning. To you, with failing hands we throw. Come near at your peril, Canadian wolf! What was it for? I reflected on whether Stephen grappled with this contradiction and whether he ever found an acceptable narrative to reconcile the two.