

came by the dozen for the distance of one hundred and seventy-five miles to pay their last respects to their chief. No king or potentate could have a finer tribute at their grave than the tears shed by those hardboiled clansmen.

Nova Scotia needs men like John C. Douglas if they could be persuaded to work and fight for the good of their native province.

Chapter IX

Some In-Fighting

In Pictou County the election had been fought in peaceable gentlemanly fashion between Tory Colonel Cantley and Grit James A. Fraser editor of the Eastern Chronicle. They were personal friends and relatives and the fact that the liquor inspector had been taken out of the district had not leaked out until after election. James A. had been defeated and when that trick had been brought to his attention the next issue of the Eastern Chronicle made all our faces red. James A. Fraser could write.

Several of the bootleggers cleaned up in good style during the "holiday" and they were now ready for a campaign of raids and fines. The council again raised my salary and very foolishly I began to be puffed up.

During my period in office I had got several anonymous letters the import of which was to tell where rum could be found. I had tried several times to catch Clarence MacDermid, had searched his home, found numerous clever "hides", but could not get his rum. At that time he had working for him one Bill Robinson. Robinson's mother was a good old lady belonging to the Salvation Army. Amongst the numerous anonymous letters received was one giving in detail the hiding place in Robinson's home of MacDermid's rum.

It was written from the standpoint of someone who had a spite at MacDermid and seemed genuine. So armed with a search-warrant we ran-sacked the premises. Of course I didn't get any rum and felt heartily ashamed of myself and lost friends by being so stupid as to give heed to a letter of that nature.

Amongst the many institutions of New Glasgow's Front Street where topics of the hour were held under the searchlight of wisdom was Colonel Bob Murray's barber shop. And the greatest talker was Charlie Lorimer, a barber. It had come to my ears that Charlie was doing a lot of tongue-wagging about the Inspector's graft. One day we had to arrest him and he had on his person a bottle of rum. The N.S.T.A. provided a hundred dollar fine for that offence. I didn't want to see him soaked but the idea struck me that as J. Stanley Fraser, an enthusiastic young Tory,

had just opened a law office it would be a good chance to give him his first case.

Stan had a couple of chairs, an old desk and was trying to fix an old typewriter when I walked in. He and I had grown up together and I knew that he had in him a smart streak. He was an offhanded chap a friend to everyone and bright in the knowhow of politics.

“Want to get your first case in court, Stan?”

“Yes, but not to prosecute for you.”

“This is not for me but against me. I’ve got Charlie Lorimer locked up for ‘illegal possession’ and it might not require much legal talent to get him clear. If you could do that, well you would know how the gossip would fly in the barber shop. Your name would be up in lights.”

“O.K. Cliff, what time in court?”

“Ten o’clock. You’ve got twenty minutes to get his story.”

Stan defended Lorimer and got him clear. Soon his fame bounded to the skies. The Tories didn’t have a lawyer with a proper slant on the underworld to chisel in and get their permanent support. Dannie MacLennan, shrewd old fox, soon had Stan in a bright office in a building that he owned on Front Street. Also gleaming oak furniture and a pretty stenographer. So Stan began to go places.

The high and low were always welcome in his office. He threw all his energy into winning cases that could possibly be of any benefit to the Conservative Party. He gathered around him a doubtful clientele that gave him prestige with the bootlegging fraternity as he continued to win cases. The smugglers and the retailers with their friends and families formed a large proportion of the population. Thus Stan’s influence on political trends was considerable.

When Christmas came around he didn’t forget his old friends, for I received a handsome gold watch from him. Yes, he was going up like a rocket. Many years afterwards I found out how he got that watch: he had gone down to Dannie and had persuaded his landlord to give him the price of the watch “as a gift for the Inspector”.

To be liquor Inspector at Christmas was to be an artful dodger. The old hands at police work impressed on me that this was the season of “peace on earth and goodwill towards bootleggers”. So before the holiday season there was very little raiding carried on. Christmas eve was a happy one at the police station. I had four turkeys given me and it was the merriest one at my home that I ever experienced. The wife and children all had a wonderful time. So I thought in my heart, “Great is the mellowing power of rum”.

That Christmas day I went up the mountain to see my mother and father who were still alive and take some presents as I had always done.

They were glad to see me. My father was especially eager to hear about the smugglers. But he was solemn on this occasion. The stories carried by the press of the raids and court trials of that prohibition era disturbed him. He was over eighty but could still grasp the significance of events. It was comforting to see that good care was given them by my sister.

"I'm thinking that the devil is abroad in the world seeing whom he may destroy", my father said with great solemnity. "Why do people go into the hateful business of selling rum?"

"From different motives, principally to make a living. Other means of survival are dying out while in the rum game they can get something to eat, have a few of the comforts of life and socialibility."

"And what about the damnation to their souls for living by these unholy means?"

"People don't fuss much nowadays about their souls if they can fill their bellies. The world even in Presbyterian Pictou has thrown away many of the old time principles of right and wrong."

I didn't tell him that his remarks had disturbed my conscience. To my parent's way of thinking, working at the carpenter trade was an honorable way to make a living. Alternately they were happy when newspaper headlines told of a spectacular raid I had been in or dubious at my new life so thrilling and prosperous.

"Of what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul. The Lord hath laid it down in His Book for the children of Israel and for us all from everlasting until everlasting. Except the people repent of their sins and come humbly before Him they shall be destroyed, utterly, all the great cities of the world. He has given to us in North America the best continent on this earth and what has been done with it? Babylon in all its glory and wickedness was not half so great. Except they repent of their sins they shall be destroyed."

To this I could make no answer. My parents belonged to a fading age of faith and another way of life had been forced by circumstances upon [me].

A few weeks later my mother died. Pneumonia had caught her frail body and never again would her children or grandchildren get her warmhearted smile after we had climbed the mountain to the old homestead. I can still see her rocking and knitting as she hummed the old Scotch psalm, —

"The man who once hath found abode
Within the sacred place of God,
Shall with Almighty God abide,
And in his shadow safely hide."

The onrush of Greed speeded up by the invention of the gasoline engine have wiped out her way of life as effectively as Rome had destroyed Carthage.

CHAPTER X

Incidents of the Battlefield

During winter months the Trade was not raided as ruthlessly as had been the case in the summer months. The "wholesalers" had their supplies carefully hidden and found little difficulty in the early morning hours of landing gallon cans of rum to their retailers. However, sometimes at these joints some criminal action would occur that would call for a severe raid.

Sometime in the month of March, 1927, I took part in one of the worst raids of my four years in the Trade. It took place in Westville and was conducted by Tom MacKay. Andrew MacNeil was running a joint above a store on Main Street and the town authorities were stumped to put him out of business because Andrew had a lot of friends and relatives. Matt Richardson, manager of the Drummond colliery was a member of the town council and being a man who would have his own way, wanted to smash Andrew. To make matters worse "Black Tom", Andrew's father and Matt were always at loggerheads in the mine. "Black Tom" was rugged, a man to be reckoned with and he loved to defy his boss. Bill Roy, one of the gamest cops I have ever worked with, had been appointed Inspector as well as being chief-of-police. However the council decided that putting Andrew out of business was asking too much of the chief.

So they called in the aid of Tom McKay. He asked me to go along as it would likely be quite an affair. Sometimes miners will fight against themselves but it is to bad for an outsider to interfere.

Tom thought it advisable for Matt to come along as well as another councillor, Mr. Henderson by name. It was snowing that night and the slush was deep. We hid behind a board fence across the street and could see customers being let in and out through the street door. It was Saturday night, paynight.

If Matt Richardson had had his way that shop would have been blown up. Tom MacKay, having a lot of experience was cautious on a raid. The plan was for the Chief, Tom and I to rush the stairs after some customer got in and the councillors to stay outside and watch affairs. In those days I could be fast on my feet and the chief was one of the best boxers in Nova Scotia. So when the opportunity came we rushed the door but there was a nightlatch on the inside. I didn't hesitate to smash the glass and open it.