

had in his possession some rum and a quantity of beer in readiness to liven up the boys. It would probably have led to a lot of fights later on.

The dancing platform was outdoors; that night boats arrived with a great crowd. The fiddler scraped away, dancers hooted and yelled, lovers sauntered amongst the shrubs and rocks as a big full moon came up out of the ocean throwing a gossamer veil of mystery over the whole scene. Towards eleven o'clock there being no signs of trouble, Tom took the bootlegger in his car to have him locked up in Canso, then we carefully felt our way back to the main road. It was an unusual and weird experience made laughable next morning when the trial was held before an old magistrate, stone deaf, who used a huge ear trumpet when listening to the evidence.

CHAPTER VII

A Touch of Glamour

One day when I was scouting around in my car I caught sight of my old friend A.J. Bannerman tripping along in his usual sprightly manner. I called to him but he had a worried air and I had to call again . . . asking him to "jump in and and tell me your troubles while we drive over Fraser's Mountain". There is a grand view from the top of this Cobequid hill where Prince Edward Island, Pictou Island and all those green patches of land that are scattered in Merigomish Harbour seem to lie at one's feet. Like the psalmist of old I have always felt that to the hills will I lift mine eyes from whence shall come mine aid.

A.J. told me of a falling lumber market, of stagnation in the overseas trade. "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away", said A.J. "But from all accounts in the newspapers and common gossip you are getting into a position of affluence through rum. I told you long ago that rum was one of our great industries and laid the foundation of many a Nova Scotia fortune."

"Not much affluence about it, A.J. I've got a tough hide and have learned by past experience how to fight with my wits and what's more important I've got friends. Without them one can't get far in this game. And I've got to thank you for your cheery advice. It helped to get my feet on the road to some of the good things of life."

It's seldom one hear's thanks for advice and we appreciate it. By the way, did you try to catch the Queen yet?"

"No I haven't. She doesn't retail any smuggled goods locally and I'm not going out of my way looking for trouble. I can find plenty on my own doorstep".

“There is a queer yarn going the rounds down the Gulf shore. The Queen was having a cargo landed from the mother-ship with her fleet of cars being loaded. She happened to see one of the men throw a case of scotch into the bushes for his future use so she made a pass at him and laid him out for two hours. The Queen was in breeches and she is hefty — must have been quite a sight. If I was in your shoes I would cultivate the friendship of such a romantic character.”

“Nothing doing, A.J. I’ve never met her but to see her driving in her car she seems too bold. As I said before I am not looking for trouble.”

A few days after meeting A.J. I was in the Deputy Stipendary’s office awaiting his return to have some papers signed. A court was being held over some relative of the Queen’s and she was attending, no doubt furnishing the legal talent for it was lawyer Vernon, famous criminal lawyer of Truro who was defending.

She saw me standing in the office and walked right in. The Queen of the smugglers was in her early forties, a big handsome woman with well developed bosom and hips accentuated by a neatly tailored suit. She walked with an air of abounding vitality and the sleek strength of a tiger. What a woman she was and what variety of life she had seen. Nurse, horsewoman, part-time movie actress and now back to the land of her birth to rule a crew of smugglers. In the meantime in her travels she had acquired a husband whom she also ruled.

“Hello Cliff, we are all in the same game so it is just as well to get acquainted when we are not enemies”, and she whisked her famous smile in my direction. I was somewhat taken back at this cheery greeting. But it has been my good fortune in life to have known some attractive women and the best way to keep out of entanglements is to treat them decent whether they be high, low, good or bad.

“It is a pleasure to meet you under circumstances when we are not at dagger’s point. Your ancestors and my ancestors have been in this country for over one hundred years and we find that to stay in Nova Scotia we have to go into the rum business though at different angles.”

“Right you are, Cliff. Let me close the door”, and her dainty foot slammed it shut. “We’ll talk this thing over. Vernon is getting paid plenty to look after the case. One of my fore-fathers was Barney MacGee, — that’s where Barney’s river got it’s name. We’ve had our roots in this soil for more than a century. Do you suppose I could get to first base in this country? Not on your life. I had to go to the States to get anywhere, then had to come home to look after my old father and mother. And was I going to stand around and see someone else make all the dough out of this smuggling racket? Not a chance. I was born to live and live I will.”

“It can well be understood how a woman of your vibrant vitality

could never be satisfied with the humdrum. Still you are taking a great chance. The Federal Government is going to crack down on this smuggling racket sooner or later and it wouldn't be nice for you to be caught. If I ever find occasion to have to do my duty, I'll go through with it."

"Oh, I'm taking that chance. We are paying plenty in high places to keep things running smooth. Meantime we are getting all the thrills that anyone could wish."

I wanted to see the talk come to a close for the town gossips who hung around the courthouse would have something to roll under their tongues telling how the Queen and the Inspector were closetted alone in the Magistrate's office. But she was hard to stop and I was glad to see the old Deputy put in his appearance. That was the only occasion during my four years term as Inspector that I ever had a long talk with the Queen but I always got a cheery, "High, Cliff", from her when we chanced to meet.

Deputy Stipendary Magistrate A.M. Fraser was an interesting character. Life had somehow defeated him judging by the world's standards. He had been town clerk but had lost that position by being made the goat for schemes of deeper crooks. The authorities had given him an old office and had him appointed Deputy Stipendary where he could make a few dollars on legal cases that were tried before him.

I liked to sidle into his old office and get him to talk about his youth. He had been a surveyor as a young man and had gone to the States to make a living. He had gone South to assist in building a railroad in Texas. He had a gang of slaves under him and had to often use the whip. When the Civil War broke out he had escaped to the North and, posing as an American citizen had voted for Abraham Lincoln. His hobby was pen scrollwork and he did a fine job for a man of eighty-seven.