

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.

We went up the stairs on the bound, just in time to see Andrew throw a can of rum out through the window. There was a washtub on the floor full of beer on ice. I threw myself on top of it as Black Tom tried to pick it up to heave it outside. He made a pass at me but the chief caught him by the arm and neck. Andrew's wife grabbed the kettle of hot water from the stove but Tom yelled for them to stop or be arrested for starting a riot. It was hot while it lasted but we got the beer. The rum that had been thrown out through the window had been grabbed by a young chap. Matt Richardson caught him and he was fined one hundred dollars for illegal possession.

That Trial in Westville was a big one. The courthouse was packed. The magistrate had just been appointed by the Tories and as Westville was a Tory town it made things hard for him. I've forgotten how it ended as it was adjourned and dragged on. Anyhow, Matt Richardson got disgusted with prohibition enforcement and didn't go on any more raids.

Black Tom or Andrew and I still have a great laugh over that fight when we meet.

One of the worst dives in New Glasgow was run by Mrs. Billie N.. Her husband was a war casualty and was capable of anything while drunk. Delores was her name. A mite of a woman savage and cruel. Her obscene and profane tongue was feared by friend and foe and she was smart at selling rum and hard to catch. Many, many times had she cut her hands on broken rum bottles as she smashed them in the sink while we hammered down her doors. Her sink, like that of all retail bootleggers, had no trap to catch the rum. She hated cops and cheerfully told us so in her lurid language.

A girl of sixteen belonging to honest hardworking parents had got into the habit of frequenting this dive. They had tried all their powers of persuasion to prevent her but still she would go. Her father had gone to J.W.H. Sutherland, editor of the Evening News, with his plea to have something done. Mr. Sutherland was a progressive citizen, a square-shooter and a good Tory. On several occasions he had steered my course into smooth-running channels. He told me that he would "lay off" for a couple of days to see what I could do to clean up the situation. So a special raid was planned. A raid that came within an ace of being my last.

We carried it out in an early hour of a Sunday morning in March. The house was built above the railroad embankment and was open on all sides. Four of us crawled over the embankment, listening for sounds that would denote carelessness as Delores opened the door to new customers. A thick heavy fog had rolled in before we wormed ourselves into position behind the rude shelter built around the business entrance. I cautioned the boys to protect the sink and rum pitcher and to spare no one come what may.

As two half-drunken customers were admitted we rushed the joint. I

made for the sink and so did Delores. The rum was in a pint bottle that she grabbed to smash. By good luck I grabbed her wrist and caught the bottle with my other hand. I had not seen her husband pick up a beer bottle and slip up behind me. He swung but the blow was deflected by officer Langille catching him around the neck. As it was the bottle hit the back of my head, had I not been wearing a heavy winter cap I would not be hammering out these lines today. Some customers started to put up a fight but were thrown in a corner. Officer McCann got hold of the broken neck of the beer bottle and it makes a nasty weapon at any time.

Delores was fined in court. The Evening News played up the trial and the dangers officers met in the town dives. Privately I told Delores that she must stay put of business for three months or we would "camp on her doorstep" and put her out of business. This "camp on your doorstep" was a sentence that no bootlegger wanted.

"How the flameing H--- do you expect me to get enough to eat for three months if I can't sell rum" asked Delores.

"I don't know and I don't care. You've gone to far having girls around your joint. From now on it's do as we say or else...."

She burned the air with colorful oaths but I had a thick hide in those days. I knew that she would still sell rum for she liked depraved companionship. Also, I knew that she had bought her house from one of the town councillors with time payments.