

CHAPTER XII

Holding Our Own

My family was surprised and glad to see me. It was almost midnight when I got home but I called up some of my "stools" and found out some disturbing news. Our system of control had largely been taken over by the forces opposed to Fred Milligan and I saw that I was due for an upset unless I acted quickly. So I took my car and hustled down street, got the "lowdown" and went after the bootleggers and got two convictions before two o'clock A.M. I also got a hot tip that a load of beer was to be delivered from the freightshed next morning. So again getting into my car after shutting my garage doors as a blind I secured a good hiding place in Grant's lumberyard opposite the freightshed.

Sure enough when the doors rolled open Charlie Forbes with his chestnut horse and sloven backed in and loaded seven barrels of beer. As soon as he was well on his way I jumped him. Oh, it was a grand feeling to know that my luck still held! These surprise raids made quite a stir around town and the newspapers were full of it. Nothing could compare with the old strategy of "audacity, audacity and more audacity". The control of the local Trade, as far as I wanted it was safe.

It was great to feel the thrill of being healthy again. Police work aplenty came my way from the lawyers. The use of my car made money for me, more money than I ever dreamed was to be had in chasing crime. Cash was plentiful and as I had learned to talk the same language as the lawyers we would discuss the merits of different cases and they put several good things my way.

As for the liquor prosecution, I had turned it into a licence system. The town fathers were pleased to get the revenue so we slipped along quite smoothly. There were few incidents worthy of recording that summer but two still stand out in my memory.

A local bootlegger tipped me that an outside smuggler from Moncton, N.B., was to take in two carloads of rum and whiskey. Concealing my car in a woodroad branching off the main highway, Sergeant Langille and I waited until a coupe answering the description given me rolled along. Then we set chase. A foolish stunt and the joke was on me for coming around a turn he passed another car and in attempting to get around the obstructing car I got ditched and smashed my carwheel. Later I was told that the car I was chasing was loaded with stone, it being the "blind", the car with the rum following and cutting off went to Stellarton. This fiasco got into the newspapers with the result that I got the "raspberry" from the wise guys along the Front Street. I resolved that never again would I chase a rum caravan.

Another event of that summer that stands out was a picnic, three carloads of our friends with visitors from the States, had one fine Sunday afternoon in July at Cape George lighthouse.

About two miles offshore was a rumrunning schooner, her spars gleaming in the hot summer sun. Cape George is a high noble promintery with the light on top of a cliff about five hundred [feet] above the sea. As we got out of the car, who did I see coming around the lighthouse but a wellknown smuggler with fieldglasses and a flag under his arm. He actually got sick when he saw me and laid himself down in the shadow of the light until we had our lunch and had gone. I wasn't chasing smugglers that day but was having fun with my family and friends.

On the south side of the Cape a road is cut out of the cliff and winds down to Balantyne's Cove where there is a wharf, store and a few houses. [At] that time the road was a rough wheeltrack, steep and dangerous. Legend has it that the Queen of smugglers would go down that road at night in her big Buick without lights. Balantyne's Cove was an ideal spot to land rum.

The storekeeper was a Mr. MacEachern whom I had been told was as learned in Highland lore as a dominee from Aberdeen. He was in his store that day his face flushed and tongue thick with the Gaelic and good smuggled Scotch as he dispensed bits of history or battle murder and sudden death by loch and darkened glen. Amongst our company was Sam Campbell, wellknown baker and business man of New Glasgow.

I got MacEachern talking about the exploits of Bonnie Prince Charlie. Said he to me, "An' what might your name be?"

"MacGregor, a good Highland name". It was the name of one of my grandmothers.

"Oog, 'twas bonnie fighters were the MacGregors, They were oot with Prince Charlie. And' what might this gentleman's name be", turning to Sam Campbell.

"Campbell, another good Scotch name".

The storekeeper's face swelled up as though it would burst. "Get all oot o' my store. The Deil the Campbell will drink in my store this day. Betrayed the MacDonalds at Glencoe an' ye were na' oot wi' the Prince. So get oot". Strange that battles two centuries old should becloud a picnic thousands of miles away.

That year slipped pleasantly away with few spectacular raids. The provincial election was held with the Conservatives going back with a greatly reduced majority. This loss can be attributed to stupidity on the part of politicians. Their appointed officials not being used to the reins of power made some terrible blunders. The Liberals were elated and were coming out bleating their smug assumption that the power and the glory in Nova Scotia belonged to them.

That autumn I bought a lot of land and went ahead to build a modern bungalow to occupy my time and use up any spare cash. The countrywide craze playing the stockmarket was in full swing. Three bucket shops were opened on Front Street and did a land office business. Even if I was a chestnut joke to the "wise guys" it seemed safer to have real estate than a stock certificate.

At that time there was a joint operated on MacDonald street by a frowsy lady and numerous complaints had come to the police about workers on the Guysboro railroad being rolled when being in there with some girl. Sergeant Langille, being a clean man, didn't like to pull a raid there for the danger of catching syphilis could not be overlooked. Search as we might we could not find her "hide". One day in Westville I saw one of the girls that frequented her dive and feeling that I might get some information, I asked if she wanted a drive to town. She said she did. I put the questions to her, pointed out that it would be to her advantage to tell me where her frowsy-headed matron kept her rum. She came through with the information that it was hid on a shelf underneath the kitchen table. It was so simple that we never thought of looking there.

One paynight in December we raided the dive and found three bottles of rum. The case was brought to court, she fought it but was convicted. She told me she would have to go to jail, no fooling. She started to get her clothes together when I said, "Anne, I don't feel like putting you in jail Christmas eve, so I'll give you three days to find the cash".

That Christmas many a nice present came my way but none made me feel that I was still a human being more than a dainty expensive silk muffler from the frowsy lady, with a card, "Thanks for letting me stay out over Xmas". However three days after Christmas when she had sobered up I took her to the County jail.

The year 1928 ended with the best financial returns from rum that I had ever earned for the Town. Over ten thousand dollars from fines. The city fathers were well pleased.