

LUNENBURG COUNTY YARNS

HOT NEWS FROM TANCOOK

In the good old days of the 1930's, before the war, it was the custom of Moirs' Ltd., to ~~sand~~^{send} birthday cakes to every centenarian in Nova Scotia. One year they heard of a Mrs. Rhodenhizer on Tancook, who was shortly expecting to celebrate her 102nd birthday, so the firm prepared a special cake. The Halifax newspapers heard about it and sent down two young reporters to get the story of the old lady and the cake. They went down to Blandford and got a boat and went off to Tancook Island, and had a long interview with the dear old soul. She was hale and hearty and she said so.

" I never been sick ⁱⁿ my life," she announced.

" What ! " cried one of the reporters.

" Well," she said, " not enough to take me offa my feet anyways."

" You mean to say," marvelled the young ~~scribes~~ scribe, " that you're 102 and ^{have} never been bed-ridden in your life ? "

" Bed-ridden ! " cried the old girl. " Ach, yes, t'ousands of times -- an' twice in a dory - but for gossakes don't put that in the paperss ! "

THE OLD RELIABLE

Down in Riverport they were arguing about the new walk leading from the high road in to the church, and Captain Creaser got up and said he was all for crushed rocks. Mrs. Ritcey got up and gave a long argument in favor of asphalt. Finally a prim old girl from the back blocks ~~#####~~, where they use old chimney brick for walks and such-like, got up and announced, " Cap'n Creaser can have his stoness c'ushed if he likes; und Missus Witcey can have her ass felt; but as for me, give me de good old hard red prick eff'ry time ! "

SMALL HARVEST

The schooner had been delayed with hard luck and hard weather on her spring trip, but she had a good fare of fish at last and she was rolling home ~~#####~~ when she sighted a Lunenburg vessel just heading for the Banks on her summer trip. The skipper ran in close to the outcomer and hailed him for the latest news. The other skipper roared back a budget of small talk about barns shingled and somebody in hospital and the new lawyer and all that, and finally, " Oh, yes, und Willy Corkum's voman had 'er baby -- it's a boy."

Willy leaped to the rail, all excitement. " How much did it veigh, skippuh ? "

" Fife pounds."

" Gott ! Iss dat all ? "

" Yes, Villy -- didn't hardly git your bait back, did you ? "

WATER WORKS

Years ago, when the town fathers of Bridgewater were discussing plans for the new ~~#####~~ waterworks, one rather Dutchy councillor listened quite a while and then exploded, " Vat ! Spend all dat money on a little bit of a stream I could pretty near piss acrost ? "

" You're out of order ! " snapped the chairman.

" 'Course I'm out of order ! If I was in order I could piss the whole damn way acrost it ! "

DEAD-EYE AND THE NIGGERS' FINGERS

Captain
(Tale told by Frank Strum)

Years ago there was a character at Mahone who went by the name of Deadeye. He was a seaman, a restless, quarrelsome, slippery sort of fellow, and in a fight some time in his youth he had lost his left eye, hence the name.

Deadeye was up to all sorts of tricks whenever he went, and a good many yarns were spun about him in Mahone. There was a steady trade in salt fish and lumber with the West Indies in those days, and the best of the yarns had to do with Deadeye's adventures down there in Lunenburg County vessels.

One time he was in Turk's Island with a vessel ~~#####~~ loading salt, and the captain, an easy-going, rather stupid man, was looking for someone to paint the hull, ~~in order~~ to have ~~her~~ looking shipshape when he got back to Nova Scotia. Deadeye volunteered to do the work himself, and provide his own paint, all for the sum of \$50. The captain jumped at the offer and congratulated himself on his bargain. He spent most of his time ashore with the salt people, and Deadeye painted the ship. Deadeye began by stealing several gallons of the captain's own white paint, which he diluted with kerosene. This made a fine mixture to the eye on first sight, and very easy to put on -- in fact Deadeye went all round the ship in no time, slapping it on with a whitewash brush. The seamen thought it was a great lark, the captain being a tight-wad, and nothing was said to him. When the job was done it looked very fine and Deadeye got his \$50. The paint job lasted just about long enough for the vessel to get home, and Deadeye got his wages and ~~#####~~ signed off and skipped. But of course every speck of the paint ~~was~~ ^{came} off her in another month.

But the best story about Deadeye is about the time he was in Barbados aboard the Mahone schooner "Edith", Captain Ben Hamm. She was a fine-looking vessel and Cap'n Ben kept her looking mighty trim. In Barbados he had the schooner painted, and Deadeye had no chance to work his tricks, I tell you. Hamm provided the paint and saw that it was put on properly, and Deadeye did most of the work.

There she was, white and shining from stem to stern, the prettiest thing in Barbados. Then along came the darky stevedores. But let me describe the situation a bit first. We always called the place Barbados because that is the name of the island, but the name of the port is Bridgetown. It is only a small harbor and the "Edith" was anchored ~~out in the middle of it somewhere~~ ^{at} the head of the harbor ~~on~~ ⁱⁿ a kind of river or creek, where the harbor lighters and barges were moored every night. There was a ship unloading coal in the harbor, and every evening the coal barges ~~#####~~ ^{came} ~~#####~~ ^{slowly} along on their way to the creek for the night. The darky stevedores had sweeps for rowing the barges ~~along~~ ^{to}, but that was pretty heavy work, and they preferred to pull them ~~along~~ ^{as} much as possible by catching hold of the sides of moored vessels in the ~~#####~~ ^{fairway}.

And so it was that towards sundown on the day Deadeye and another seaman finished painting the "Edith", along came a slow string of coal lighters, with ~~the~~ ^{the} darkies drawing them along the vessels' sides. Deadeye and his mate were sitting on the ~~hatch~~ ^{deck} when the first lighter passed along the side. "Edith" sat fairly low, like all the schooners in the harbor, so ~~that~~ ^{that} the stevedores could just hook their fingers over her bulwark nicely as they drew their barge along. That was the spectacle which greeted Deadeye, ~~as~~ ^{as} he sat admiring ~~that~~ ^{the} new white paint -- a succession of black hands pawing along the rail and leaving the print of their passage in black coal stains.

Deadeye didn't say a word. He ran to the galley and got the cook's meat chopper. The paint on the rail ~~was~~ ^{spilled} spoiled completely, it would have to be done again anyhow, so he didn't try to stop the other stevedores, or holler at them, or anything like that. He just squatted down inside the rail amidships, and when each ~~black~~ ^{black} hand flapped into sight he chopped the fingers ~~off~~ ^{off}. There would be a ~~no~~ ^{no} ~~#####~~ ^{howl} and a jabber, but off course the lighter was still moving along under its own

Called the "Canach" = Carriage

~~slow~~ way, and by the time it drew past, ^{the Edith} there was another light^{er} approaching and another set of black hands flapping along the rail towards Deadeye and his chopper.

That night there was a hell of a row in Bridgetown. The police came off to the "Edith" reporting sixteen niggers short of fingers; some had just lost one or two on one hand, some had lost fingers on both hands. Captain Ben Hamm had been ashore but he knew it must be one of Deadeye's tricks and sure enough Deadeye 'fessed up. The police took him to jail and he served quite a long stretch in there or in some other prison in the islands. Nobody ever knew what he did with the fingers, ^{if he did anything at all}

Bluenose and Thebaud

(Tale told by Francois Willis of the CBC, who was on board the schooner Bluenose during several of her races for the Fishermen's Cup in the 1950's.)

Stocky Angus Walters, skipper of the Bluenose, had sailed his famous schooner to Gloucester, Mass., to defend the Cup, and was lying at a Gloucester wharf awaiting the appearance of the new American challenger, the Gertrude L. Thebaud. The Americans had designed and built Thebaud especially for the race, and had qualified her by sending her out to the Banks on a fishing voyage. She had the usual lines and in general the usual design of spars and rigging of the big Bank schooners; but there was plenty of Gloucester and Boston money behind her, she had a huge spread of canvas, and everything about her was the best that money could buy. She looked like a yacht as she came gliding in to the wharf with all her fine new canvas noised to catch the faint harbor air. There was dead silence as she drew ~~alongside~~ *into the wharf* by the Bluenose. Skipper Ben Pine stood at Thebaud's helm with a cocky grin on his wise old face. Angus Walters stood with a foot on his bulwark regarding this beautiful apparition, especially those fine white sails. At last his famous mast-head voice broke the silence.

~~XXXX~~ "Well, well !" (in the thickest of "Dutch" accents.) "I guess dere ain't a haw in Boston got a sheet left to sleep on !"

THE CLUMSY ONE

(Tale told by Philip Bachman)

Skipper Rinehardt happened to see his old friend Charlie Feltzen on the street in Lunenburg one day, and he drew him aside, looking mighty solemn.

"Sharlie, I'm sorry I got some-ding to tell you and it ain't good. Your boy Joe hass got my daughter Gertie in the family vay."

Charlie dashed his big right fist into his left palm. "What? Dat clumsy young buggah! Broke an oar yes'day' ~~XX~~ !"