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Schooner Days DCL (650)
By C. H. J. Snider

Surprise of Two Lives

After thirty years of hard usage at the hands of such experts as the late Sacksy Brooks, the schooner *A. Boody*, of Rochester, built in Toledo, Ohio, in 1863, looked the waterfront parody of her name, *A Bloody Mess*. Sacksy was a competent schooner captain, who could be relied upon to get the most cargo into and the most value out of any vessel unfortunate enough to fall into his hands. He had no sartorial mercy on himself, going around in cowbreakfast hats and ragged overalls stuffed into knee boots, and he had none on the *Boody*, whose original coat of black paint had blistered to a dismal drab by 1894, and whose sails were held together by bands and patches cut from discarded tarpaulins donated by Capt. Jas. McCannel, long the leading master in the CPR's new lake fleet. When we first saw her it was on a Sunday school picnic to Hamilton in the old *White Star*, and she was unloading soft coal (no blacker than her sails or herself) at the foot of James street. She was certainly no incentive to run away from Sunday school and go into the coal trade.

Soon afterwards the sheriff caught up with her. This was at Chatham or Wallaceburg or somewhere inland in Western Ontario. Sackey was out of her and is not to be blamed for her predicament. Lake trade was then dull and it looked as though she would end her few remaining years tied up like an old dog in the pound.

Capt. Frank Jackman was then the master of the Toronto harbor tug bearing his name and he knew very well what to expect from the schooner trade. But he was urged to make a bid upon this slim chance in the lottery of lake life and cannily sent his old crony, Capt. Mike Troy, to spy out the land. Michael was so entranced with the grapes of Eschol that he telegraphed friend Frank, "Send \$600. Have bought her."

This was the first rift within the lute of the beautiful friendship that had existed between Francis and Michael. Capt. Frank knew that the *Boody* had an insurable value of \$15,000 once, but that was thirty years before, and a further expenditure of \$15,000 would not guarantee that the poor old thing would earn interest on even the \$600 down payment. However, he knew Michael had "acted for the best," so he sent the six hundred simoleons and another small sum for groceries, with instructions to "transfer to Canadian registry and bring her down." He would have her overhauled in Toronto, in his spare time.

He had in mind meeting her at Port Colborne with the *Frank Jackman* some time when the harbor towing was slack, and getting her down through the Welland Canal at no cost and towing her over to Toronto for an overhaul through the coming winter when the tug was laid up and he could keep an eye on things. He knew her bottom must be tight or Michael would not have bought her, because he had said that if she needed drydocking he wouldn't have her at any price.

Faithful Michael found a crew of some sort and got the *Boody* out of the creek and into Lake Erie. It often happens that wooden vessels go faster as they get older; their sagging contours take and leave the water more easily. So Capt. Troy had a fine run down Lake Erie, the old hooker showing a surprising turn of speed. Her bows were bluff but her runs and clearance of water at the stern were sweet and clean. There was not too much wind for her old rags of sails and the fast passage left Michael a little over from his grocery cheque, because a week's wages had been saved.

So enthused was he that he felt he could spend the saving on the luxury of a tow down the canal, without waiting for the Frank Jackman. He had a happy picture of his friend Frank getting steam up the next morning or the next because there was a strange vessel in the offing outside Toronto, looking like a customer, and steaming out to pick her up and inquiring if she knew anything of the *Boody* being on her way down, and then the grand payoff would come from himself striding the cabintop the other side of the stowed mainsail: "Sure it's here she is now, Frank, me b'y, and yourself is the proud owner of her."

The picture grew in richness of color as the *Boody* climbed down the (then) twenty-six locks of the Welland Canal, "like a lam' leppin the hurdles," as Michael poetized her progress. It was a lucky passage all through, one day in Lake Erie, one day in the canal, when Frank wouldn't be expecting the call to Port Colborne for a week yet. "Why not — Begorra," said Michael, "I'll do it yit, Frankie, you're due for the surprise of your life. Yer expectin' a decrepit ould omadhaun limp in' on one fut for your money. I'll bring ye the Queen o' Sheba in all her glory, an' ye'll bless the day ye sint Michael Troy to fetch her."

So he put her on the dry dock at Port Dalhousie, salving his conscience with the assurance that Frank would be pleased to have her caulked if she needed it and equally pleased if the docking (at considerable expense) showed that she didn't need it. In consequence he brought her to Toronto painted like a debutante and owing as much in accumulated bills as she had cost in Chatham. Frank was surprised. So was Michael. He was a dear friend. Too dear, Frank thought in his surprise. And fired him.

(Caption)OLD FOOT OF CHURCH STREET where the rejuvenated! A. BOODY, renamed E. A. FULTON, used to lie. The schooner in the picture is not the Fulton, ex-Boody, but the former barquentine D. M. FOSTER. She was lost at Oswego scon after the photograph was taken. At the end of the wharf is the well-known harbor tug Frank Jackman, in her usual berth on the lookout for schooners in the lake wanting to be towed in, or schooners in harbor wanting to be towed out. The signal for "Tug Wanted" was either the ensign to the mainmast head or the fly or windyane "struck" or lowered part way.