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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Strange 'Visions' Prove Interesting

By NEIL A. MATHESON
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"There is a man who walks between the tracks on a slight curve. Be very careful for 'Thou Shalt Not Kill'."

This cryptic message, written in a beautiful hand, was found on the tracks at Georgetown one morning back in 1942, by a train crew that included Alf Egan and several others including Conductor Arthur Coffin, and Tom Irving.

The train crew members talked about the message through most of the day, every time they had a few minutes to think about it. Later that afternoon they learned that a Tignish man, Austin MacDonald, had been killed by a railroad engine at Borden.

When they arrived back in Georgetown that evening they learned that Madeline Hilchey had written the message and laid it on the sill of the baggage car. She had foreseen that someone was to be killed that day somewhere on the railroad – she couldn't tell the location – and had written the warning in hope that this particular train crew would be on the watch for "a man who walks between the tracks on a slight curve".

"I had a vision", she told the trainmen.

Mr. Egan and his fellow trainmen were naturally impressed. They talked about the strange fact that this woman had seen the man killed in her "vision". But George Ryan was not impressed at all, not when he heard the "vision" was seen by Madeline Hilchey.

Vision Told Of Loss Of Simcoe

MR. RYAN who was a conductor in the days I knew him, recalled that Madeline Hilchey, an excellent cook, had kept a boarding house back in 1917. The date Mr. Ryan remembered was an October day.

The boarders were reading The Patriot – most people in Georgetown took it at the time, a home-town man, Reuben MacDonald, was on the staff, he was later editor and publisher.

Suddenly Madeline Hilchey exclaimed: "Isn't that terrible! Captain William Sencebaugh and the Simcoe are lost with all of her crew."

Immediately the rest of the readers turned back to the front page. There was nothing there about the Simcoe being lost. They turned to the inside page used mostly for late news. There was nothing there either.

One of the readers retorted to the landlady "There's nothing in the Patriot about the Simcoe, at least I can't see anything," as the others nodded assent.

Which brought the calm reply from the Hilchey lady, as George Ryan recalled, "It's not in the Patriot tonight, but it will be there tomorrow." And it was there the next day just as the woman had said it would be, Mr. Ryan told Mr. Egan, and the other trainmen to whom he was talking.

City Lady “Saw” Kitchener Drown

MARION MACMILLAN, Charlottetown was a fellow employee at the Patriot office when it was operating from Richmond Street. She tells me a fascinatingly interesting story about her grandmother, Mrs. Hector C. MacMillan – her maiden name was Isabel Fraser, and she came from Wood Islands.

It was back in the days of the First Great War and Mrs. MacMillan was sitting one night looking into the fireplace at her home in Charlottetown. Suddenly she exclaimed “Look, it’s Lord Kitchener, and he’s in the water.” A minute or so later she said “He’s drowning”. That was in June 1914.

Sure enough the wire news next day carried the news that Lord Kitchener was lost at sea.

Kitchener was a Field Marshal at the time and regarded as most important to Britain’s part in the war. He was being sent to Russia at the request of the Tzar. He was to travel from Scapa Flow to Archangel in Russia. He was travelling on the battle cruiser “Hampshire” and it struck a mine and was lost with nearly all aboard.

Mrs. Macmillan had “seen” the sinking and had even identified Lord Kitchener as she peered into the flames in the fireplace.

MARION ALSO tells me that her grandfather had been a carpenter for many years. Later he was an engineer for the provincial department of highways. This meant that he was often away for days at a time.

But his wife would always know when he was about to return, though she never received any message from him. Grandmother Macmillan would get up, often in the middle of the night, to make a cup-of-tea and provide a meal for her returning husband. She always knew when her Hector was to return, I was told.

Rule-Of-The-Road Note Is Wrong

REMEMBER WHEN the rule-of-the-road required Island people to drive to the left when meeting oncoming traffic? I had a bit in this column about it several years ago. Well there are still some people who do not know that has been changed long since.

Wendell MacKay, manager of the Island Development Company loaned me this week a little diary-booklet put out by the Bosch people. Their headquarters is in Stuttgart, Germany but they have many distributors across Canada.

Their tidy little booklet informs the world that “Drive to the right, pass on the left” applies to many countries – they are listed in detail – including Canada. But they warn their readers that it does not apply in Prince Edward Island.

Colorful Character Was Island Born

BRUCE JACKSON, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario is seeking information on Alexander A. McSween who he believes was born in the Charlottetown area back in the 1840’s.

“Mr. McSween trained for the Presbyterian ministry in this Province. . . studied law in St Louis – hung out his shingle in Kansas, moved to Lincoln, New Mexico where he became involved in ranching and mercantile pursuits.

“His claim to fame in the annals of the American west is that he was leader of a faction in one of the most infamous cattle wars of the 1870’s,” Mr. Jackson reports.

That was the Lincoln County War which also involved ranching baron John Chisum, gunman Billy the Kid, lawman Pat Garrett and statesman-author General Lew Wallace.”

Mr. Jackson would appreciate any information he can obtain on this colorful character Alexander A. McSween. If any reader can point the way to some knowledge of this man, I’ll be glad to pass it on to Mr. Jackson who is reservations officer at McMaster University.