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Schooner Days CCXI (211)
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HALLOWE'EN OFF POINT TRAVERSE

“Come, friends and relations and neighbors, I pray.
*Please give your attention to the words I now say,
Of poor Moses Dulmage I wish to relate How adrift on the waters he met
his sad fate.*”

DIAL backwards fifty-six years.

It is the last night in October —Hallowe'en—and all the witches and warlocks of the lake are out. You can see them, if you fancy, in the flying scud racking across the sky eternally from the westward. You can hear them in the howl of the wind through the rigging, and the rap-rap-rap of the halliards against the mast.

A schooner fleet is sheltering under Point Traverse—“South Bay Point” as it is called in the barley trade. Their cabin lamps and anchor lights prick the early darkness with the likeness of a floating village. This southeasterly prong of Prince Edward County is a favorite halt for schooners waiting for weather. The False Ducks, Timber Island and Point Traverse, at the entrance to the Upper Gap into the Bay of Quinte, give a safe lee, with no port dues. Windbound vessels sometimes lie here weeks on end. When their provisions run out, the farmers team bags of flour and drive cattle down and slaughter on the beach for them—a “strand-hewing,” as the ancient vikings called it.

Tonight, Thursday, Oct. 31st, 1879, ten schooners coal laden for up the lake or grain-filled from the Bay, waiting for milder weather for the slant across to Oswego, have dug their hooks into the clay and gravel off the point. Twenty-two more are lying further up at McDonald's Cove and Indian Point, at the upper end of the Gap. Among the ten under Timber Island are the *Julia*, of Kingston, smart and new; the *Olivia*, of Toronto, ancient and twice rebuilt; the *Fleet Wing* of Windsor; the *Ariadne* of Port Burwell.

Young Moses Dulmage, South Bay lad of sound Prince Edward stock, is one of the *Julia's* crew. These schoolyard in Babylon across the point, where *Miss Annie Wright* used to teach him before she married his brother Tom. He has played in them, fished in them, sailed in them, since ever he can remember. His father, Phil Dulmage, and his fathers before him have farmed in South Bay since the Loyalists came.

When the *Julia* anchored here it was like coming home, for Moses Dulmage. He knows the *Olivia*, too, her next door neighbor. It was his; uncle, David Dulmage, who rowed out to the blazing *Ocean Wave* twenty-six years before, when the *Olivia* rescued some of the perishing passengers. Though she was built in Bronte and hails from Toronto now she is owned by another South Marysburgh farmer, Nelson Hudgins, and manned with South Bay boys 'like himself. They are pretty sure to have a bag full of hickory nuts in her forecandle, and apples from the home orchard.

So, after supper, he braces the *Julia's* Old Man for the use of the yawlboat.

“All right,” says Capt. Tim Hartney, the skipper. “But be sure to be back early. I'm going to get out of here before daylight, if the wind shifts-or lulls.” The *Julia* is bound for Trenton, up

the Bay.

It is only a short jog down this street of anchored vessels. The sixteen-foot yawlboat, floating high with Moses alone in it, blows along across the two hundred yards of black water like a cask. The boy scarcely needs the single oar, which, schooner style, he plies with a rotary motion in the sculling-notch in the sternboard. He rounds to in the shine of the *Olivia's* anchor light, so as not to drift by before he can make his painter fast. The boys on board catch the rope and drop the yawlboat astern. He goes down with them into the forecabin, where the red-bellied stove is blistering the paint on the chain lockers.

Yes, there are hickory nuts. And Prince Edward snows. And russets. And Murney Ackerman has his young brother, Jake, along for a trip. A merry time they have, duckling for them in a draw-bucket, with the hazards of swallowing the pail enhanced by the probability of backing into the red hot stove in the I crowded quarters. They sing the "Gipsy's Warning" and "Sweet Lily Vail," and tell ghost stories of Zack Palmateer's dog, and the Proctor, light, and jokes of life in great cities t like Kingston, Oswego, Toronto and Buffalo; and they pass around all - the home news of Black Creek and Soup Harbor and Babylon and Petticoat Point. Overhead, unheard, the rigging hums and the halliards rap, and the wild wester goes on with its; endless task of blowing itself out. |It is great to be young and strong, with a keen zest for hard work and home news and hickory nuts.

Somebody pokes a head into their happy inferno and exclaims: "B-r-r-r! Blowing harder'n ever! Better stay the night, Mose. There's a spare bunk for you any time, you know." It is the *Olivia's* hospitable skipper.

"No," says Moses. "I promised our Old Man I'd be back in time for an early morning start, and I'd better be going now."

"Want someone to go along to help you get back? This wind's coming away powerful strong?"

"Oh, 'taint far. I can manage, thanks."

"Well, mind you keep well up to windward when you're sculling. Your boat's bound to drift a lot." "I'll mind," says Moses, slapping his young muscles. Unless you have been through the mill you cannot savor the pride of the young sailor in his strength and skill. To have doubted himself "man enough" for the yawlboat, single-handed, would have disgraced South Bay and Babylon and broken Moses Dulmage's heart.

"Good-night, fellows," he called, slipping over the rail into the tossing yawlboat, "see you in Oswego, perhaps, next trip."

They hear the heavy creak of the sculling oar in its notch, and the scuffle of the yawlboat breasting the short snapping seas.

"Keep her up! Keep her up!" they cry, waving a lantern for encouragement, for they can see she is drifting.

With his back to the bow young Dulmage flings his whole weight on the sculling oar, and sways his strong young shoulders mightily against the gale. The heavy yawlboat leaps to windward. After fifteen minutes' battling, with the sweat pouring from him, he is alongside the Julia, riding light and high-sided. He runs forward in his boat to toss the painter up over the schooner's rail. The wind blows it back on him.

“Heave me a line, quick!” he pants.

Aboard the *Olivia* they can hear; the wind-borne splash of the rope in the water as his shipmates heave a coil, but before Dalmage can catch it the yawl has drifted away beyond its reach. He runs back to the sternsheets, and gets the oar into the notch again, but before he can bring the boat around she has whirled past the *Olivia*, and past the lines her crew try to throw.

“Catch the *Ariadne* and hang on!” they shout down the wind to him.

He is almost exhausted with his heavy sculling, and the gale, blowing harder than ever, tosses him past that schooner, too.

By this time he is panicked, and cries in a terrible voice, “*Ariadne! Ariadne! Help, help, Ariadne!*”

The *Ariadne* crew have turned in. The captain in the cabin thinks someone is warning that the schooner has broken adrift. He rushes out and pounds on the forecastle. “Rouse out, rouse out, she’s dragging!”

But a glance at the bearings of the other anchor-lights show this cannot be. The chain is grinding steadily in the hawsepipe and she is exactly where she was. But astern is still heard the terrible cry: “*Ariadne! Ariadne! Help, help, Ariadne!*” .

“It’s someone adrift!” says the mate.”

“Get the boat down, quick!” calls the skipper.

The *Ariadne*’s yawlboat hangs on davits across the stern, hoisted up on tackles. In the dark they make a bad job of lowering it. They forget the plug is not in. One tackle fall jams and the other end of the boat drops. The man who jumped in when they first began to lower is almost drowned. Three men follow him down the tackles and find the boat half full of water.

“Come back!” commands the captain, “or I’ll lose you all. There are half a dozen vessels astern of us, and he’s sure to catch one of them.”

He adds this uncomfortably, for still the wild cries for help come, fainter and fainter against the beating wings of the wind. At last they cease. Yet again, and ever afterwards, while the *Ariadne* lives, in the whine of the blocks and the grind of the anchor chain and the sobbing of the water alongside, men will hear that agonized hail.

Moses Dulmage did not catch any one of the six schooners lying astern, although his boat bumped the quarter of the outermost, as the gale whirled it along.

On Sunday morning Smith, the lighthouse keeper on Stony Point, on the south side of the lake, thirty miles across from Point Traverse, saw a schooner’s yawlboat on the beach south of the light. She was covered with ice. Face downward on the thwarts, with his legs lashed to the seat by the boat’s painter, was the bruised and frozen body of a young man. His hands were cut and bloodstained, as though he had pounded them to keep them from freezing. Five rods away, in the ice-fringed surf, washed his steering oar, glazed and icicled.

Moses Dulmage had steered all the way across Lake Ontario that; wild night, only to perish under the rays of the lighthouse which was his last hope. He had been on the beach since Friday morning, the keeper; judged, but had not been seen because concealed by ice and a pile of rocks.

Smith was a humane man. He did not know who this stranger was, or whence he came. He thought he might be the sole evidence of a wreck in this long series of westerly gales. He drove with the body to Henderson Harbor, old Hungry Bay, and there saw that it had Christian burial.

The square-nosed schooner *Sea Bird*, three-hundred ton burden and scow built, came pushing into Oswego with lumber from Trenton for J. K. Post and Co., as soon as gales let up. Her master was John Walters, of South Bay—"Captain John Walters, a kind-hearted friend" as the ballad says. The *Sea Bird* had been lying in McDonald's Cove during the gales, and Capt. Walters had spoken the *Julia*, and knew her yawlboat was missing. He had also heard from the *Olivia*, of Moses Dalmage being blown out of the anchorage. When in Oswego, he was told of the find at Stony Point. He drove there, saw the lightkeeper, and felt sure he knew the victim. He drove to Henderson Harbor and the newly made grave opened; and so friendly hands from South 3 brought Moses Dulmage's body back to the *Sea Bird*.

Sixty or seventy sail of vessels accumulated in Oswego in the prolonged westerlies. Now that the gales had ended they put forth in one great armada, close-hauled on the port tack. The wind was still down the lake, but mild. The *Sea Bird* led the procession, her colors at half mast, Moses Dulmage's body in its coffin on her deck. Behind her, their burgees and ensigns also half-masted, whether Red Dusters or Stars and Stripes, marched the whole windbound fleet.

The long port tack brought them all up to Point Traverse. Solemnly, slowly, the *Sea Bird* passed the little lighthouse where a red lantern watched over the anchorage by night. On she steered into South Bay, for the wharf at Black Creek. Schooner after schooner parted company with her there. Those bound up the lake came in stays and stood out again on the starboard tack; those bound for the Bay of Quinte eased sheets for the Gap. Every vessel, as she parted company, dipped her ensign and burgee in silent salute, then hoisted them masthead high, honoring the homecoming of the young sailor who would never sail more.

"*Ariadne! Ariadne! Help, help, Ariadne!*" That cry, Moses Dalmage's last, echoed through the *Ariadne's* rigging of dark nights for seven years; until, as though magnetized, she too drove in on Stony Point, on the night of Nov, 29th, 1886, and beat into slaves, drown in her captain and male and half her crew.

Moses Dulmage rests well in the little cemetery at South Bay. His fate is still recalled in Prince Edward County by the ballad of which the opening verse is quoted at the beginning of this story. It has many stanzas. They were composed by Mrs. Thomas Dulmage, his sister-in-law.

M. P. Rose, druggist, of 653 Dupont street, mentioned to The Telegram recently that his mother, Mrs. E. C. Rose, used to sing the' ballad to him, forty years ago. He hummed the sweet old tune. Mrs. Rose is now living in Toronto, at 41 Herbert avenue. She was a school-mate of Moses Dulmage in the little school in Babylon, when he was one of the "big boys" and she wore pigtailed. Mrs. Rose, now seventy-one, still writes the clear neat hand taught in old Prince Edward County sixty years ago.