Grim Grand Manan

BY HOLMAN DAY

YES, even in those days, years since the Addison Treaty was signed to the dissection of two nations, the Maine Yankee walks out to the peak of West Quoddy Head—centermost noble of the axis of our Land of the Free—points for thin nose in the direction of the wind-blown cliffs of Grand Manan, and allows "that the island ought to belong to us." If it did belong to us, Yankee acquisitiveness could stand on the cliffs of the main and gaze out over several leagues of tossing sea at bare, brown, towering precipices, and boast that the United States had thrust its independency home into the waters of the King to the extent of an island twenty-one miles long and six miles broad. That boast, it is to be feared, would be about the extent of the interest any Yankee would take in Grand Manan. Ask the life-long citizens of Eastport or Lubec—Yankee communities less than twenty miles from the island—if they have ever been on Grand Manan, and almost to a man they confess they have not.

Grand Manan turns toward the main a broad and forbidding back of lofty cliffs. The great shoulders of North Head are lunched in early fashion. The cores, the reaches from the sea, the valleys, the patches of arable land, face the ocean and invite the mariner. For the Yankee on the main only the bluff, brown back—like the shoulders of a milen old man under a sea-tanned coat.

That old story about the manner in which the American commissioners were fooled at the time of the Addison Treaty persists on the eastern border; it has settled into something like grave fact. You are told that some liquid and well-aged stimulant was employed to mellow the confabulations between the commissioners and insure the amenities of international discourse; that the
Yukon commissioners were taken out in boats and assured that the waters of the St. Croix River were discharged to the west and north of Campbell Island and of Grand Manan, and the racing tide in the narrows at Lubec was exhibited as the rushing waters of the river. But

that tide is merely the discharge from the reaches on the American side. Not a part of water comes that far to the west from the admitted boundary, St. Croix. Therefore New Brunswick won the fair barony of Campbell and the full feudal faultless of Grand Manan. 

Huge gobs set in the jaws of the Bay of Fundy, grit by galloping tides, hedged by the almost eternal turbulence of the sea, induced by rampant waves and boisterous winds, Grand Manan seems off the coast serenely indifferent to policies, boundaries of nations, or ambitions of rulers.

"We could have a little better form of government out here, I suppose," confided the trader, who boasted that he had stock everything "a sheet of fly-paper to a clog of thunder." A long time ago we sort of used to run affairs ourselves. But we are not incorporated, St. Andrews, over on the main, runs our business for us now. That's the same—and I suppose you might call Grand Manan a borough of the town of St. Andrews."

He continued in that tone of resignation which is characteristic of Manan. "We send over representatives—we call them councilors. They tell St. Andrews what we want, and sometimes we get what we want, and sometimes we don't. Just now we don't see to be getting what we need. We need bridges and sidewalks. Probably everybody will come around all right in the end—but it's slow work. Our taxes go over to St. Andrews, and then come back to us in appropriations. All records of every sort are over there. Well, it draws trade to St. Andrews." 

During all the years Grand Manan has been blissfully unconscious of being governed—and to all intents and purposes it never has been governed. It doesn't need to be governed. There are about three thousand inhabitants. There are no paupers, no criminals, no police.
men who tell on the sea bring back from the east stretches of water under the vaulted sky.

We surged in from the sea, past Swallow-tail Light. The British Jack on the headland was obscured against the clouds by the wind, as hard and still as the crip flag of a ter-soldier encampment. The wind does blow at Grand Manan.

“It's a venturous trip at any time,” said the skipper of the motor-packet.

“If it doesn't blow when you're coming out here, it's sure to blow when you're going back, and that's why the tourists haven't spoiled Grand Manan with their summer and winter notions.”

The winds of Grand Manan refuse to be satisfied by any promoters of summer colonies. There is, first of all, the joyous wind from the northwest, tingling even when the sunshine of August is melted into it. That wind beats freely up against the looming brown cliffs and sends a tide-rip streaming from North Head five miles across to the Wolves—a rip that is operated by a twenty-eight-foot tide sweeping through the jaws of the Bay of Fundy. It is a rip where the waves chase and dodge and double back on themselves with most fantastic erratic dance-building sudden pinacles, sweeping unexpected valleys in the green water—and many a little boat has been trapped by a high-sided comber or engulfed by a leaping crest.

Though the sky be glorious, its arch of pale velvet swept clean by that jovial gale from the north; though the sun may shine and the ocean may flash its glory of silver light, yet there is ever that barrier of the North Head rip to cross if one ever he enter into the placid life of isolated Grand Manan.

The east wind sweeps in vast seas that dash the cliffs, and the south wind rolls up the sea with arms hopped high with foam; One may not determine when he can land on Grand Manan; one cannot sway to himself, “I will arise and go.” The winds may be putting the scenery of sea by him too rapidly for a summer-resort's nerves and courage.

The tides race, the winds gallop, the lofty schooners and steamers of the Province traffic hurry past Grand Manan. All that haste seems to make the island especially inert, solid, archaic, and non-progressive.

But Grand Manan may deceive, by that aspect. Its first automobile is now frisking along its twelve miles of road! I’ve got one horse wanted to the thing already,” says the livery-stable man. “I can let you that horse and you'll be middling safe, though you'll have to push on the wobbly's pretty hard to get them quick. If you want to go faster, I'll have to take another horse and drive him myself to be on the safe side.”

This was not on a Sunday. No one cannot hire a horse on Grand Manan for Sunday use. One cannot lack or lack of any goods or drinks or papers on Sunday on Grand Manan. The Club and casino were not importuned from Blue Law Connecticut. They came from the Province with the Scotch disposition which has flavored the stock of men on Manan.

Though the island broods itself against the racing tides, the inhabitants do not resist progress of any sort which seems proper to them. A cable brings a telephone from the main. There is an amateur wireless outfit. There are two banks for the savings of the thrifty—and all the islanders are thrifty. Everybody knows the latest news of the world. And when we asked for dinners for four at the tavern the bottom bowlingly replied: “Sure! I got you. Steve!”

“Another hotel has closed,” she said. “It was a larger house than this one, but the folks got old and didn’t want to bother with strangers any more. No, I don’t think the horses will be opened again—not right away. We don’t ever to beat them for the summer much out here. They are too fuzzy and too much trouble. There was a man out here yesterday who said he was an artist from New York or somewhere. But I had to send him along. I met a few of the salesmen who stay the night and go on about their business, and are not around underneath.” The traveling salesmen are mostly from St. John and St. Andrews. The folk of Grand Manan do not care to do much trading with the Yankees, except when the girls take Saturday afternoon and run across to Kinsport for millinery and ribbons.
A few years ago several ambitious gentlemens undertook to exploit Grand Manan land and to attract strangers to the island for the purpose of helping the transportation company and other allied interests. But the islanders generally did not take kindly to the proposed invasion by city folk. In some instances they refused to sell land for cottage sites, and in most cases refused to sell their labor.

First and forever they are fishermen. Their fathers were fishermen. The sting of the salt spray on their cheeks, the check of the bow pulley when the loaded trawl comes singing from the streaming waves, the singing rush up the sea tossed home and the long fish wherever, the flapping full of the cod and halibut and haddock as they are pitchforked, "kin't after kin't," into the bins—the life of the men of Grand Manan is this—of and for the sea!

They are deft workers when the fare has been hauled. Three make a team. The first slits the fish and shoves off the head; the youngest of the gang finds the liver and the sound and discards the rest of the "works"; the last man splits the fish into the familiar fish-shape and slits out the back fin with one swift movement.

The last pinky of the coast is a part of the Manan fleet. She sailed in past the clanging bell buoy just ahead of our little packet. A half-mile from the south-west drove her with more speed than our engine afforded us. But that was her baby day, with wind and tide favoring. All the other men in the fleet have sleep, and each craft has "a kicker," and the fishing-grounds are just fifty minutes' run from Flagg's Cove. If the wind is not fair, the "kicker" props the deep to the grounds, straight into the eye of the breeze. Hand-lines, and trawls for
cod, and nets for herring in their season—the Manan fishermen has all the gear and is off-coast in all weathers, for his craft is sturdy and his heart is stout.

The breakwater—a tongue of wooden bulkhead—shielded our landing, after the sea had tossed us in from the open. A venerable man whose beard snapped in the wind, and whose cane and liberal collar told that he had left fishing to the boys, took our line. They swift swimmers and the business of strangers with prompt accuracy on Manan.

"If anybody ever comes out here to write anything about our island," he remarked, "I hope he won't make up any stories about such things as 'death-cakes' and such foolishness. There was a woman who wrote a story about something that she called a death-cake, and made it out that Grand Manan folk cook up death-cakes the same as folk on the main make wedding-cakes. Don't know where she got that idea—but she had to take it back. Made her eat her own cake, as you might say. Now that I'm off the beat and have time to myself, I've thought of buying a camera and traveling up to the city and snapping town folk right and left. If any of the city freaks said anything to me I'd tell 'em I was looking for picturesque scenes and local color. Then, I suppose, they would have me arrested. We don't have policemen out here," he added, with a sigh.

The coast folk in general are more susceptible to religious emotions than people in the interior. Perhaps the perpetual presence of the vast and melancholy ocean, treading them on its breast, rolling its billows to their doors, influences their minds to sober thoughts. But the men and women of Grand Manan have never been carried into extravagance of religious emotion as have some of their neighbors. They are not the sort that would have joined that pilgrimage of Jonesport fanatics to the Holy Land—that ill-starred expedition which sold all possessions in Main, and journeyed and starved and prayed, and begged its way back home. The Holy-
dances are tattooed and amusements frowned upon.

One touch of picturesqueness Grand Manan has each summer. The Indians of the Passamaquoddy tribe—certain more adventurous spirits of Pleasant Point who disdain basket-work and the everrecurring job of selling currants at Maine summer resorts—paddle their canoes across the fifteen miles of sea, coming from the main, and camp at the foot of the great cliffs during the warm months. They shoot porpoises for the shrie and the oil. The shrie make material for bolts and purses. A few years ago certain crafty redskins of the tribe started a thriving industry on Grand Manan by manufacturing sculp' noses in order to secure the liberal bounty which the State of Maine was allowing at that time. When Massachusetts offered greater inducements in the way of bounties on sculp', the Indians went to that coast and earned several thousands of dollars, having become very expert in making a seal's face out of hide and wood and bone. They are now serving a term in the penitentiary, having found more acute observers on their island in Massachusetts Bay than on the wind-swept north frontage of Manan.

At the mouth of the Kennebec every strong southerly wind sends humps of cancel' coal up on the beach— and just where that coal comes, nobody knows for a man, and the house and engineers have washed in the sand. On Grand Manan the southerlies turn up different sort of spoil. A long stretch of sandy beach often displays bottles of contraband whiskey. Of old a smuggler went ashore, and the corp of that reprehensible craft was whisky packed in crockery crates—a layer of crockery concealing the nefarious goods. Some of these crates were rolled and tossed and rolled again, and the sand was packed over them. The British steamer Hostia went ashore on Old Proprietor Ledge near Grand Manan—and this steamer proved a total loss, and her cargo was of an equally nefarious sort. The broad breast of the ocean was dotted with floating
an unwise fate seems to have re-

solved to provide regularly and liberally
for the hardy fishermen of Massan, with-
out regard to their temperate tastes; and
fishermen who go rocking past Old Pro-
pector Ledge map small coils over into
the sea—a modest tip to remind kind
fate that small favors are always thank-
fedly received.

There has lately been another wreck in
a harbor of Grand Manan. This time the
cargo performed a most peculiar ac-
nie. A schooner with thirteen hundred
bags of salt came sailing from Boston
Town, and sprung leak on the way.
The captain was an incident man, and

putten, and her buttocks were started. She
filled promptly on the next tide, and all
the salt melted and ran away into the
sea, and today only the empty sacks are
in her hold. She has been sold as ab-

lives for four hundred and eighty dollars,
and the disconsolate captain has abandoned
the sea.

There's the old, old story so inextricably

ly told that it is remembered and related
only by the oldest men of the island:
Two sisters who were to be brides on the
same day, as they had been clones to-
gether at school and inseparable from
childhood, went across to the main on
their uncle's packet to buy their wedding
finery. On the return they held their new
hats on fair

laps, so that no

harm could come to
the delicate fabrics

—for each was the
finest hat a Manan
bride had ever worn.
One item of cargo

was a hogshead of

melasses, and this
was trigoned on deck.

When the little

packet rounded har-

bor the two young

sisters of the girl
gave over their task
in the scuttle-hole and
walked to the end of
the wharf to meet
their brides—to be.

Snap of the sail, and
she came about to
make her reach for
the last leg of the

journey! That

wicked tide-rip

which streams in

tossing, swirling,
yoasty current from
every contorted head-
land on the island

caught the craft.

and buffeted her with such a jar that the

hogshead broke from its lashings, was

ripped from its trig, and rushed across

the deck. The wave and the impact of
the weight against the rail overturned

in an instant. The wind sealed those
new hats in over the waves to the spite.
of the dock, and the poor, bedraggled objects were rescued with tears and lamentations and borne by the women to the home of anguish; the sisters were never seen again. Some of the ancient men call the place "Millinery Hill."

Once a fisherman who was skirting the cliffs of the north shore in his sleep glanced hardly up at the broken surface and suddenly felt his canoe depart. More than a score of brown, bald heads from which pigtailed dependents were bunched at the dark opening of a cave. Many faces peered down at him with slanting eyes. The group was as silent as a congregation of ghosts. They were Chinsamen, their hands folded in their broad sleeves, their countenances impassive, waiting with stoical the motions of the men who had agreed to smuggle them into the States, and who were now trying to elude the customs officers and take up again the cargo which they had temporarily jettisoned on the bleak shore of Grand Manan. The fisherman missed his own business—a trait of the island—and the next day the temporary cliff-dwellers were gone.

There was a trader of Grand Manan who decided that if he could own and captain his own packet and sell to market, and disburse at headquarters for his goods each trip, he would clear a sum worth the extra effort. So he bought his schooner and hired a "murse," for his first voyage to Boston. A "murse," in coastingo, be it understood, is a skipper who knows all about craft and goes along as pilot and instructor. So, after he had cleared land nicely, the
"nurse" gave the steers his first lesson in steering, told him to head so and so, to keep the sails drawing, and then went below to play "pich pula" with the foremost man—for the wind was steady and all was fast. The new owner obeyed instructions as he remembered them. He kept the sails drawing, and had no eyes for anything else. After a time he noticed that the schooner seemed to be making better time of it than she had when he had been easing the breeze on a port tack. The wind boomed in her sails and quivered with little whirlies; she rode on an even keel, and the waters raced under her counter.

The name of cards was close and interesting, and therefore the "nurse" was as intent on his own affairs below as the trader was above. When at last the real skipper abandoned cards and came on deck he helped his astonishing.

"We've been making great time, Cap," stated the proud owner at the wheel. "I have keep still so as to surprise you. I'm making the best of this fair wind."

"Fair wind!" squawked the "nurse."

"You have let her ease off! And you have been to work and sailed close around Grand Manan back to where you started from this morning?"

And that was a sail of forty miles and more, up one side and down the other.

The owner peered under the bellying sail and saw his store and his house. The rays of the setting sun illuminated them, as the rays of the rising sun had lighted the scene when he departed that day.

"Anchor her," he said, giving over the wheel. And he removed the "nurse" for a captain and took his own value and his chart to show in the dinghy. He earned the reputation of being the only man who ever lived on Grand Manan and looked congenial instinct in the sailing of a boat.

There are only two other men on the island who have been compelled to endure any greater solitude. Off to the southwestward one day they picked up a huge lump of something which was oily to the touch, which had queer markings in it, and greenish streaks. They had read something somewhere about ambergris, and decided that they would never be obliged to pull trawls any more. The stuff was soap-grace which had escaped from a LaFarge factory. And the men who found it are known as "Ambergis One" and "Ambergis Two."

The story of Club-foot John is one to be told when the winter fires are aglow and the snow is tossed in great handfuls against the pane. Then, above the clang of the bell at the harbor entrance, there is a note which does not seem to be from the throat of the successful wind. There is imagination among the silent folk of Grand Manan.

"Grandy's seedling: 'Miles of chimney Are sent straight from the burning Jane. Bring she can, and as able a thing As ever cuffed about for the winds to sing.

But the swiftest is under the Devil's thumb Where the skipper takes sights through a rag of men.

With a soundless wind she threaded her way Up ships hot bed for Pondy Bay. And the mate he knewed, and the crew they knewed.

She was hanging too much of a canvas load.

But still he told 'em to crank her up Her drunken skipper, old Club-foot John, They smelt the wind and they beeged, did they.

He'd anchor in soundings till break of day. But a lag of roan walked that quarter deck.

And a log of log don't fear no wreck. So down she went with every man, Battened to Alvarez on Grand Manan. A dozen fires on his black old soul, And widlers and ropes and bells to tell. You show him plains when a storm is on. Barking and waving, old Club-foot John, Staring in his windlass there. Where the snow whirls thick in the offshore air.

Clearing an endless anchor chain Into the peak of the stormy zone. That's a duty left to Club-foot John, Though he is long since dead and gone: He is now to tell us he bed be can There's a duty due to our follow-man.

Better he kind and better he square And remember that run is the Devil's way. Set for the man who forgets that he Needs all his wife when he fights the sea."
Painting by W. A. Dwiggins

Description by "Gris Great Hues"

THE HARBOR'S RESTLE AMONG SOFT TINTED HILLS