

## From Rum Runner to "Patrol Boat 4"

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**I**N A HOWLING north-east snow storm, late in November, 1932, the trim speedy R.C.M.P. cruiser *Patrol 4* entered the harbour of Halifax to go into winter quarters after a tiresome, tedious, but withal, successful summer combating rum-running in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. After the storm had abated, many seeing her lying, snugly secured, may have thought "What lucky beggars to have such soft jobs on a nice ship". But those "who go down to the sea in ships" know that the skeletons aboard vessels are almost as numerous as those found in many of the cupboards of those who "Go down to see who is on the ships". Hence this tale.

In the year 1924, a hotel was being operated on Grand Island, just opposite the City of Buffalo, on the Niagara River. This hotel went by the attractive name of "The Stumble Inn". To most people it may have appeared above suspicion, but not to the American Coast Guards who were laying careful plans, knowing that two speedy boats, the "Stumble Inn 1" and the "Stumble Inn 2", were carrying contraband liquor from the Canadian side and landing it at the door of "The Stumble Inn" for redistribution elsewhere. At a critical moment a raid was carried out with the result that much illicit liquor and the "Stumble Inn 2" were seized. Her sister ship, the "Stumble Inn 1", however, escaped, dumped her cargo in the Niagara River and quietly anchored under the Canadian shore. Observed by Canadian authorities, she was given sufficient time to enter at Customs and, on her failure to do so, she was seized and in due course, forfeited to the Crown.

The rum-runners were doing a rushing business at this time in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and along the Nova Scotia coast, and the Preventive Service was severely handicapped through lack of sufficient men and boats to cope with the traffic. The "Stumble Inn 1", having a reputed speed of 27 knots and wonderful equipment, it was decided to place her in commission, so, forthwith, the writer, with a skeleton crew of six men, was despatched to commission the vessel and bring her to her base at North Sydney, N.S.

It was a proud and happy crew that made preparations to take possession of the latest and most superior addition to our fleet; and it was with light hearts that we embarked for Bridgeburg, Ontario, where we confidently expected to step aboard this paragon of ships, fit her out with the necessary stores and sail away.

Alas! Even today I am unable to describe my feelings upon first seeing her: and this unfavourable impression was in nowise improved after a proper inspection. The hull was filthy and uncared for, windows were broken, guard rails torn away, there was neither mast nor flagpole, and on deck reposed a tent, fully set up, where six "Mounties" lived day and night, to guard against the threats of the previous owners that they would sink her rather than see her a Coast Guard Cutter. Below decks the berths had been demolished, tables and all fittings destroyed, the engines had been taken apart and fittings scattered piecemeal. For a space I gazed about me and contemplated the havoc, then, turning to the wharf, I saw the "Mounties" cooking a meal "Indian fashion", as though miles away from civilization,