

# HORSES OF THE SUN

by Tess Redmond



*In 1965 the Nova Scotia School of the Arts was held in Truro. I gave workshops in Playwriting and, as a result of the publicity, I received a letter from a woman in Cape Breton. She told me that she had been bedridden for many years and was trying to write a novel. Could I help her? A few weeks later I drove up to Cape Breton and with great difficulty found her home, a remote farmhouse in the hills, thirteen miles from the nearest village.*

*For the next two years we corresponded almost daily. I showed her manuscripts to Ernest Buckler, and I am indebted to him for the great help he gave me in the difficult task of editing the mass of material that poured in by mail from this frail woman balanced between life and death.*

*When the time came to find a publisher for her, Ernest Buckler gave her one of his own names--that of Redmond--to use as a pseudonym. I tried for many years to interest a publisher in her collected stories, but failed. Tess Redmond will not see her first published story. She died four years ago.*

*Evelyn Garbary*

You were likely to meet Sean walking along a road, miles from anywhere, or deep in the woods, taking a short cut. He was as much a creature of the woods as a deer, a rabbit or a fox. It wasn't that he had to walk, for in his barn stood the finest pair of horses in the county.

It hadn't been much past sun-up when I saw Sean strolling up the road to the house, swinging his old lantern. I hadn't even fed the children and Jim had left for the woods only a few minutes before. I wasn't pleased. Not because I disliked Sean but because he made me nervous with his everlasting monologues of fights and prizefighters. He knew the date of every fight that had ever been held, the names of the fighters, and could describe the action as though he had been there. The gorier the better. He would chuckle to himself as he rambled. If I invented an excuse to leave the room I'd find on my return that he had gone on with the story even in my absence. It always worked out the same way. I would ask him if there was anything I could do for him, but as always, he would tell me nothing, except that his business was with Jim. Then he'd sit down, (in spite of my hints that he would find Jim just up the road in the woods) and tell me story after story until noon, when Jim would come home for his dinner.

I served dinner and watched Sean strain tea through his mustache. I sighed with

relief when the men had finished and Sean followed Jim outside into the yard. Men always went outside to discuss their business (if only to borrow a rope). Women would go into the bedroom or out to the backhouse to discuss lace for a new dress or the quality of blankets made from this year's wool.

Today, Sean's business was to ask Jim to haul wood for him the next day. He knew Jim was always ready to do a good turn for a neighbour. What he didn't know was that Jim hated having to ask for a payment, and that that old truck cost money; it used a lot of gas and oil. As Jim said to me:

"Why don't Sean save his money and give them horses of his some exercise?"

It had been Runt (no one knew his proper name) who had sold the horses to Sean a few years back. Every year as soon as the snow sloughed off in the spring, Runt took to the road walking. His path was from the mainland to the tip of Cape North. A short man, so slight a strong wind would blow him over, and bald, except for a few grey hairs his gnarled fingers swathed across the dome of his head. His teeth were false and ill-fitting. At mealtimes they clicked, clanked and slid around his mouth as he ate. Everyone along his route knew Runt got meals at meal time, a bed at bedtime. When beds were scarce, he'd sleep on a wooden bench in the kitchen. Once a month at pension time, he'd spend a drunken night--sometimes as

long as a week, in whatever jail was handiest, then sober and broke he'd resume his travels. He talked about nothing but horses. Finding out from here and there who wanted to buy and who wanted to sell. If he knew of a horse for a prospective buyer he'd walk any distance. One day he decided to walk to Sean's around suppertime. He knew that Sean would insist that he remain the night as well. Supper over, they sat before the fire and smoked their pipes.

"Lost the old mare today," Sean said. "She was old. Been looking for her to go, but right now 'er dying ain't so good, with the plowing coming up. Ye don't know of a good sound horse for sale perty reasonable, do ya, Runty?"

"I heerd of a team of chestnuts over on the mainland--man wants to sell both though!" Runt's blue eyes flashed --(if he worked this right he'd get a double sale.)

"No use for two," said Sean. "The little mare's all right."

"It'd be a shame to split these 'ere horses," Runty added, "Take my word for it, if ye'd see them ye'd take 'em both. I could find someone to take yer mare, someone who'd be good to 'er. Any reason why you want to keep 'er? Them chestnuts I'm talking about is zackly the same size, I ain't never seed anything's perty in a long time."

Sean sat staring at the stove, blowing black smoke from his pipe as though his life depended on it. Runt knew he had Sean thinking. Wisely, he too sat silent. Sean got up, knocked the ashes from his pipe, and ran his stubby fingers through his thin grey hair.

"What's he want?"

"Not much. Let me git 'em for you, then you give me an offer. That should be good enough for anyone."

Next morning Runt returned the way he'd come. His feet flew over the road. He knew he'd sell the pair. They had been neglected since being put up for sale, but Runt knew, from long practice, he could paint a picture of them as they would be, after being fed and groomed, that Sean could not resist. The man was selling at a ridiculously low price, and Runt knew he stood to make a killing --in cash. For Sean was known to have cash in plenty.

Ten days later Runt rode into Sean's yard on a chestnut mare, leading a gelding of identical size and colour. He had stopped along the way to brush and clean them as best he could and, although it was still possible to locate their ribs, they'd had good grazing each night and their flanks shone in the sunlight.

Sean lit his pipe. He waited until the tobacco glowed in the bowl before acknowledging their existence. Then,

strolling over towards them, he ran his fingers over the coat of the mare, he let a hand slip down a foreleg, around the fetlock to the hoof, pressing slightly on the muscle at the knee. Without taking his hand from the mare's coat he rounded her hindquarters, examining each leg. Reaching her head, he held her still, and stared into her eyes. His fingers slid down her face until they reached her mouth. Stroking her nose with his left hand he deftly inserted the thumb and forefinger of his right hand into her mouth, forcing it open. He pulled the jaw down and inspected the teeth. Satisfied, he released her mouth. Still stroking her nose, he pressed his right forearm across her throat, and pressed hard against her windpipe for several seconds. The mare did not heave, cough or make a sound. Very gently he released her head and moved over to the gelding, as though afraid they might vanish. The examination over, he pushed his hand deep into his pocket and drew out a roll of bills. He paid Runt what he asked, and standing between the heads of his horses, Sean led them away to the barn.

Runt, bills in hand, took off and, once out of sight, stopped and carefully counted off eleven twenty dollar bills and one five. These he placed in a grimy envelope. Slowly, lovingly, snapping each one as he counted, he took the remaining three twenties, a ten and a five, and thrust them deep into his pocket, and whistling, pattered off toward the vendor.

Last year the precious horses had been in danger of going hungry. The crops had been hailed into the ground before harvest, and Sean's credit with them. But eighty miles away in Sydney, Sean had a brother--a bachelor--who neither smoked nor drank and it was rumoured had money in the bank. He was a carpenter. Sean took the direct route to Sydney, ignoring the roads, preferring to face impenetrable barriers of spruce bush and hardwood undergrowth. By instinct he kept a true course and emerged from the woods within a few miles of the city. He returned as he had gone, on foot and by the same route, arriving at our house, tired, hungry and thirsty, his old lantern in one hand, a maple cane in the other. He bragged about his trip but did not mention the meeting with his brother. Jim pretended not to notice the old man's weariness, but after the meal said: "I'm not doing anything this afternoon, I'll take ye home." Sean got up from the table as if he was going to whirl me into a dance.

"Thanks, Jim," he said, "Could ye be coming fer to take me to town tomorrer? I have to git feed fer the horses fer winter. About eight be all right?" Sean wouldn't even take his horses ten miles to haul their own feed. That had been a year ago. Now Sean wanted help to haul wood.

"Just a few sticks fer the fire," he said.

"I'll be over in the morning," Jim said.

In his anger he forgot to ask where the wood was.

Going into Sean's house was like going into a museum--that is, going into the kitchen--for no outsider had ever penetrated beyond the kitchen. Every inch of the walls was covered with dusty odds and ends. Knick-knacks no other human being would consider keeping. Outdated calendars, hung one upon the other. There were, of course, pictures of prizefighters, from papers and magazines, tacked on the wall, an old snow shoe, a three-cornered piece of broken mirror, a ragged sample of basket weaving. Then there was a faded red ribbon, tied prettily into a rosette, round a badge stating, 'First Prize Award, the best hand-sewn ladies garment.' The two red streamers that hung from the rosette showed signs of being a favourite resting place for the flies that flew hither and thither through the room.

Although the house was Sean's, the kitchen was the domain of his foster brother Frank. Sean's parents had taken Frank from an institution as a child, but had never bothered to adopt him legally. Frank was somewhat younger than Sean. A short bow-legged creature whom no one would bother to look at twice once they had recovered from the shock of seeing that all the pores of his skin were stuffed with filth. A long hooked nose, slightly off centre in the wizened face, dark impenetrable eyes under heavy dishevelled eyebrows, made you cringe if in his company for more

than a few minutes. He wore a pair of bibbed overalls, so dirty they might have been those he'd gotten with his full growth some forty years before. The colour of the dark trousers beneath could only be guessed. The well-worn gum-shoes had laces that scarcely reached the tops, because much of their length was taken up with knots.

Today, as for a week past, Frank wore a large patch over most of his right ear. Someone, it could have been Frank's friend, Red Harry, had told Sean's cousin, Anna, who in turn told Jim that Frank made love to his cows and that he'd been trying to kiss one of them when she had turned and hooked him. At the time we laughed, and agreed that the friend was just having a joke. But knowing Frank, we had to admit that there might be a shred of truth in the story. Frank's ear was injured, and by a cow he had admitted himself.

When Jim came to the door Frank was busily wiping a cup with a square of grimy cloth.

"Is Sean in?" Jim asked.

Frank's hands were so black that although he was washing a cup they did not change colour. Frank finished wiping the cup, wadded up the cloth as you would a handkerchief, and stuffed it into the pocket of his overalls. A tail of it flapped against his legs as he moved.

"HELLO, JIM." Frank always talked so slowly that even if he had anything of

interest to say you'd tire of waiting for it.

"COME IN. I'LL GET YE SOME TEA. SEAN JUST STEPPED OUT TO FEED THE HORSES."

"Hello there, Jim," Sean said as he came in. He spoke through toothless gums, the words sounding like notes squeezed out of bagpipes. "When you've had some tea we'd best git started. The wood's scattered all over, may take a while picking up."

Jim declined tea, vowing silently to get this job done so he could go home for his dinner. But Sean's statement about the wood being 'scattered' proved an understatement. Nowhere had it been piled. Jim worked all morning pulling dead trees from the underbrush. Picking up hunks of discarded spruce here, a length of maple there. By noon only half the job was done. There was no way he could dodge Frank's dinner without insult. To make matters worse, he was too hungry to plead loss of appetite. Striving to hide his anger, he strode down to the house for dinner.

Enough potatoes for two families boiled merrily in a big blackened pot on the stove. The stove dominated the room. Beneath the grime and coats of burnt-in grease-splatters, one could detect its original beauty. An intricate maze of nickel curlicues still shone in the corners the flying grease could not reach. Between the range and the cubby-hole pantry was the sole, undersized

window. Against the opposite wall stood a table with a chair at either end. To the right of the table was a doorway to the floor above.

As Jim entered the kitchen Frank was standing before the oven. He stretched an arm up to the warming oven, (like Sean, he was only small), and taking out a frying pan, set it on the stove top. Reaching into his pocket, he pulled out the grimy cloth and wiped the pan before pushing it over the heat. Reaching again into the warming oven he pulled out a filthy cup of dark crumb-spotted dripping. He scooped a finger load of grease into the pan and set the cup back. He then disappeared into the pantry and returned with eggs in a battered old quart dipper that had lost its handle. Rubbing each egg on the leg of his overalls to remove the dung, he broke six into the frying pan. Another visit to the pantry brought out a greasy bowl containing four pieces of left-over herring. Lifting the lid of the pan of eggs, he threw in the herrings and replaced the cover. He then set milk on the table in an old granite pitcher, and surrounded it with three foggy glasses. A big yellow cat, as dirty as its master, jumped onto the table and had her head in the pitcher up to her shoulders before Frank had even loosened his grip on the handle.

"NICE POOSY," said Frank, as he stroked the cat and went back to see to the frying pan. Frank brought the pan from

the stove, wiped each plate with the same grimy cloth and carefully arranged one piece of herring and two eggs on each. Knives and forks (the forks still bearing traces of yesterday's eggs) were carefully dusted with the same cloth. Grabbing a bowl he had obviously used for the breakfast oatmeal, Frank ran a forefinger round the edge and sucked the porridge off. Next he drained the potatoes, which had been cooked in their jackets, and dumped them into the bowl. Dinner was ready.

Nine cats loomed up along the side of the table, and the yellow cat jumped into Frank's lap. All through the meal Frank kept tossing morsels to the cats. They must have eaten half his dinner.

The meal over, Sean had to care for his horses again. He invited Jim to go along. Jim didn't want to take the time, but he was curious to see these legendary horses. As they entered the barn, Sean, bursting with pride, stood aside to let Jim pass. Jim stopped and looked around. He was staggered. A partition from floor to rafters divided the big red barn in two. The walls were limewashed a dazzling white that threw back the rays of the sun. Jim narrowed his eyes against the glare, and walked slowly down the center gutter that was worn smooth by constant shoveling and brushing. On his left, a room-like unit had been boarded off; this was the 'tack' room. On the outside wall were large ten-penny nails driven in slantwise, and on each nail hung pieces

of harness, pliable, neat and new-looking, their brass trappings polished until they shone like gold. The floor was covered with narrow pieces of hardwood that any housewife would cherish in her parlour. There was not a speck of dust to dim the grain. The air was heavy with the smell of linseed oil and leather. Against the partition dividing the barn stood two barrels with fitted lids: one marked 'oats' and the other 'bran.' Beside them a ladder to an almost barren loft. Jim turned and walked back towards Sean who was now standing by the two stalls on the left. There were the horses. They were beautiful! Elegant! Sixteen hands high, their flanks shone like moonlight on mahogany. Above each stall was a sign, professionally painted in black and white, that proclaimed 'Victor' to be the occupant of one, and 'Victoria' of the other. Both horses turned at Sean's voice, bending their heads to be caressed. Jim watched as Sean cooed them a lullabye. So these were the horses that nothing would make Sean put a harness on--that in case of fire he would drag to safety at the risk of his own life. That's what everybody said.

"Tis a palace ye have for 'em here," Jim said. "Looks like a hospital."

"Aye," said Sean. "But winter's coming and I hev to git feed for 'em or they'll be after starving come spring. If ye'd be after coming fer to take me to town tomorrow?--eight be all right?"

Jim shook his head, and left the barn.

The day the news came, it came around noon. Sean was dead. For the past ten years it had been predicted that he would die someplace in the wilderness, but not quite in this way.

Sean and Frank had been celebrating New Year's Eve alone at home, and had barely tasted their second bottle of Canadian Club--on the rare occasions when Sean did splurge, he always bought the best --when the argument began. This was not unusual, and the upshot generally was that one of them walked to town and swore out a warrant for the other's arrest. Since neither would pay the fine, the offender spent a few days at the county jail and returned home chastened for the time being.

"If either of you show up again in this court," the judge had told them not a month ago, "I'm going to send you both to jail."

And now, there'd been another argument, and Sean was waiting for daybreak to start the same old journey. Frustrated by waiting the long night, he grabbed the lantern, with shaking hands and set out for town, thirty miles away.

He got as far as Cousin Anna's, three miles up the road.

"I do feel a mite tired," he told her.

Anna took him in and made him lie down

on the couch to rest a while. After sleeping an hour or so, Sean rose and left. Anna watched him turn toward the town.

It wasn't until the next day, at the wake, that Jim and I got the whole story. When we drove to Anna's yard there was hardly a place to leave the rig. Horses were tied to every post. Inside the house people milled about and the rooms hummed with muted voices. Anna sat in a rocker before the kitchen fire. A gentle, soft-spoken woman with signs of the great beauty she had been twenty years and twelve children ago. She held out her hand to me, so small and frail that you'd think it might break--until you remembered the fences and fences of washing she'd done over the years. Anna took my hand and drew me close, as if I were her own.

It was true, she said, Sean had called at her place, he was staggering, and whiter even than usual. She had never known Sean to let on he felt tired or ill. She had tried to persuade him to stay, but he was so angry, so intent on swearing out a warrant for Frank's arrest that he would not. She watched him go, climbing the hill that was part of a two mile railroad cut. The tracks lay between the cliffs for several miles. At different times several people reported seeing a bright light there. That light was a 'fore-runner.'

"Ye'll see," they said. "Either some-

thing awful's happened down there, or something will. Ye wouldn't ketch me down them tracks after dark for no money."

It was a desolate stretch, with twists and turns hardly a train length apart. More than once the engineer had to stop the train to let a frightened fawn scamper off the tracks to safety in the woods. There had been other animals not so fortunate. At the end of the cut the welcoming valley twisted and turned past farms that dotted the landscape.

Anna stood watching Sean that morning, as he climbed off the tracks and up the side of the cliff. She saw him turn and look back. Anna had stood there with an empty pig bucket in her hand, shading her eyes against the sun. She heard the train chugging along and saw Sean's hand raised in greeting. The engine whistle blew, Anna waved her hand, as she always did, then turned back into the kitchen.

In the kitchen, Old Don, her father-in-law, sat in the rocker before the fire, his eyes half closed, but watching every move and hearing every word.

"That's funny," he said. "Did ye hear the train stop?" Before Anna could reply, the whistle blew again--long urgent blasts, not the ones she was used to. Something must be wrong. Grabbing her jacket she flew outside, jabbing her arms into the armholes as she went,

and leaving the door open behind her. Walking as fast as she could, but still feeling she wasn't moving fast enough, she started to run.

Up ahead the train had stopped. The crew had gathered in a group, staring at something on the track. Out of breath, Anna stopped. Only the brakeman facing her noticed she was there.

"Mrs. Cameron, ye'd best not come any farther. There's been an accident."

Anna looked from one to the other. Then following their eyes, she saw Sean's hat lying on its side, between the tracks. She could see the soiled sweatband, the crown crushed and inside out. A little off to the side, laced to the top, and standing side by side, stood Sean's gumshoes. A little further up the line she could see a stockinged foot and leg, and further along, another. Anna felt the blood leave her head. She looked at the men, but they were taking no notice of her. They were looking at something else. Something lying there between the tracks, a few feet ahead of the engine. At first it looked like a bunch of ragged clothing, splashed with red paint--but the paint was moving, and the spot growing larger. The shapeless heap lay still. Anna remembered Sean, as she had last seen him waving to the train from the top of the cliff.

"Ye'd best go back, Anna. Don't look no more."

Anna shook her head. Her eyes followed the track. At the mouth of the cutting lay another object, commanding in its silence. Steadily, Anna walked towards it--the men followed her. There it lay, as though made of wax, its base cut evenly, smoothly, cleanly across. Not one spot of blood was to be seen. It was the first time Anna had seen that much of Sean's neck. The still, white face with its arrogantly pointed mustache, thick eyebrows, and thin sensitive nose, were all too familiar. Mottled, grey-streaked hair, released from the confinement of the old hat, fell across his forehead in long spider-like threads. Anna didn't faint, call out or show any emotion. She was still staring when the men came up behind her.

Anna's story was nearly ended. "There wasn't much in 'is pockets," she said. "Cept of course that old aspirin box with 'is gum in it."

"Quit the old pipe two months ago," I had heard Sean say. "Chew gum now."

"He had a key-ring with God knows what on it," Anna went on. "Some bills fer feed fer the horses an' that old watch he carried around with 'im all the time--it was smashed flat. They went through four shirts and three pairs of pants before they found that pocket book used to make such a loud snap when he'd close it hard. Found it in the pair next his skin. I guess the men was glad when it was all over. We thought he had

money, but there was only three dollars and twenty-three cents on him. If he'd got money, it was hid somewheres."

So the old watch was gone. Sean had been proud of that watch, even though he couldn't tell the time. It was a cumbersome thing on a heavy chain. Everyone had seen it at least once. No one could resist asking Sean the time, just to see him pull out his watch and turn it so its face could be seen.

"I didn't think it was that late," he'd say.

Sean was only waked the one night. There were no relations to come from away and no one close to him except Frank. And Frank had never wasted any affection on Sean.

The funeral was much larger than anyone expected. Rigs arrived from at least ten miles away and from all directions. Long slow processions converging on the little church.

After gentle and finally firm persuasion, Frank was brought along. He had been drinking. Learning how little money there was in Sean's pocket book, he'd gone home and out to the barn. He climbed into the loft and forked down hay for the horses until the mounds reached almost to the ceiling. Without a glance at the animals, and forgetting to water them, he went straight to the harness room. He pulled down halters, collars, girths and spangled trappings

from their nails. When he found what he was looking for he stepped over the pieces he had dropped and went out the door.

Frank felt he'd been fooled. He had searched everywhere for Sean's money. All right, then, he'd get money anyway, in spite of Sean. Carrigan would pay twenty-five dollars for this single harness with the shiny trimming and it was only a quarter of a mile to Carrigan's.

It was at Joe Mac's they found Frank, just before the funeral. They held him down, and in spite of threats and curses, shaved him. But when Frank managed to free himself and swish the shaving cream off his face, they didn't insist he wash his hands. One man each side of him, bolster fashion, they got him to the step of the church, then left him to shift for himself. Another pall-bearer was chosen in his place.

Had Frank found Sean's money? Some said Sean kept his money in that old seaman's chest of his--he had been seen buying a padlock for it. And didn't he keep the key on the little table beside his bed? Frank had told everyone all about this chest. How he used to help himself when Sean was out of the house. And when Sean padlocked it, he simply took off the hinges and was in business again.

"Heard it was Sean's money paid for that last spree him and Red Harry was

on," the talk went. "Sean couldn't make out how much he had, being he couldn't count. But Frank had gone too far and after that he quit using the chest. A.J. said how he'd seen Sean at the Co-op buying a copper pot, he'd made sure it had a tight lid--and paying \$3.50 for it!"

"Well, no dish like that ever comed into the house!" Sean's closest neighbour said, shaking his head. "He musta bought it for something else. He knowed copper wouldn't rust, or git ruint like tin if it was buried."

Red Harry was working on this too. Sean, he reasoned, would have the most of his five years pension money. Maybe not in that pot, but somewhere. Sean spent little money on anything but feed for his horses and tobacco, and he'd quit tobacco. A hundred pound bag of flour a year, the same of oatmeal, a little salt, sugar, tea and salt fish (only four dollars a hundred on the wharf), so there had to be money somewhere.

Red Harry watched Frank throw a handful of earth on the coffin and leave the graveyard. With everyone so busy it was easy for Red to edge his way through the crowd and follow him. The young ones were dabbing their eyes; the frosty ones, loudly and piously trying to make themselves conspicuous to their Maker, were more in mourning for themselves than for Sean. Red made it to the store just behind Frank. He sat outside in his old relic of a car for a few minutes,

then sauntered into the shop too.

Frank was dry, shaking dry, and the drier he got the stronger the trench-taste on his tongue. The forty cents change he had was soon in the merchant's cash drawer and Frank, with a little bottle of flavouring in his hand, went out the door, gulped its contents, and flung the bottle into the bushes. Lounging against the building, Red Harry was apparently concerned only with the cigarette he was rolling.

"Well, well, Frank," he said. "Sorry fer yer trouble." He nodded towards the bushes. "Did that fix ye up?"

"Hello, Red. It's too sick I am to get a cure outta one drink. Ye wouldn't have the price of a bottle on ye, would yer?"

"Better'n that!" Red Harry said, and reaching into his shirt brought out a bottle, nearly full of rum.

"Mebbe this'll help." He paused. "And when ye get that money of Sean's . . . ."

"Sean didn't have no money when he was found. He had it, though, lots of it." (Any sum over ten dollars was lots to Frank.) "Must 'ave put it aside."

"Here, Frank." Red offered the bottle again. "Can't work on one leg." He watched Frank pull the rum down a good inch in the bottle--"Have ye looked for it any place?"

"Not yet," said Frank. "I will though, I will."

"Ye've got it coming, keeping house for that old Bottuck all them years," said Red. "I'll help, if ye want. Want I should help?"

"Yeh, you help, Red. When we get it, we'll have the best drink ye ever saw. Will we go now, Red?"

No one saw them leave town. Three days they were missing--three days they searched. They moved every potato in the hole under the kitchen floor. Opened every drawer. Looked under every bed and shook out their covers. They searched the attic. They found everything but the money. Even Red Harry was losing his enthusiasm. He was thinking of the two bottles of rum he'd wasted on Frank. They tried under the eaves, and dug their way through old papers that went back to 1700--but found nothing. And that ghostly sound that haunted the house . . . was it Sean laughing at them? Or was it Sean mourning at the fate of his horses?

Time passed, the scandal mongers snooped for fresh news. All fall and winter no one thought of the horses. But when spring came, time for plowing and cultivating, the news went around--the horses had been seen up the Settlement Road. Frank must have sold them on a Sunday when the whole parish was at church--in one of the thaws when no one was needed to stay at

home to keep the fire.

"It was the young feller at old Tom Beaton's saw them first," Laughie told the men hired to pick stones off the road after the grader. "The man that bought 'em had 'em hitched to the plow in the new field he's breaking up . . . So hard the devil himself wouldn't plow it. He wasn't sparing 'em any. Ye could 'ear 'im hollering up to Cape North."

"Someone should report 'im--treating horses like that," said one of the men.

"Good enough for 'em," said another. "Didn't they live like kings when they was Sean's? Time they did some'un some good."

"Mebbe," said Laughie. "But young Beaton said their mouths was all bleeding an' their forelegs and their chests was all splattered with blood."

