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Yesterday was when Gabriel Heatter's "There's good news tonight" salutation sounded convincing to New Bern's radio listeners. Can you imagine, in times like these, any news commentator signing on in this manner?

Yesterday was when the town's feminine snuff dippers considered any young gal who smoked cigarettes a creature engulfed in immorality. . . . Yesterday was when the grocer stuck a small Irish potato on the spout of your kerosene can, so you wouldn't spill any of the contents toting it home.

Yesterday was when a fellow who wasn't satisfied with his wife's scrubbing and ironing could patronize one of the two Chinese laundries on Middle street. . . . Like a seed store and a livery stable, laundries operated by almond-eyed migrants from the Orient had an odor all their own.

Speaking of livery stables, one particularly prosperous owner here was accused of not being able to read. It was said, rather unkindly, by village wags that all he did when he picked up a newspaper was look at the pictures.

As the story goes, one day he made the mistake of holding his paper upside down, and that particular morning a photographer prominently displayed on the front page, depicted an ocean liner crossing the Atlantic.

The gent, waiting his turn in a local barber shop, got pretty excited. "I see here," he exclaimed, "where they had a heck of a storm at sea. That wind must have been a rip snorter, 'cause it turned this big boat plumb over."

For our part, we've never felt the inclination to ridicule people who made good in the old days without benefit of a formal education. If tempted to do so, recollection of another story about a man who couldn't read and write would put the brakes on us.

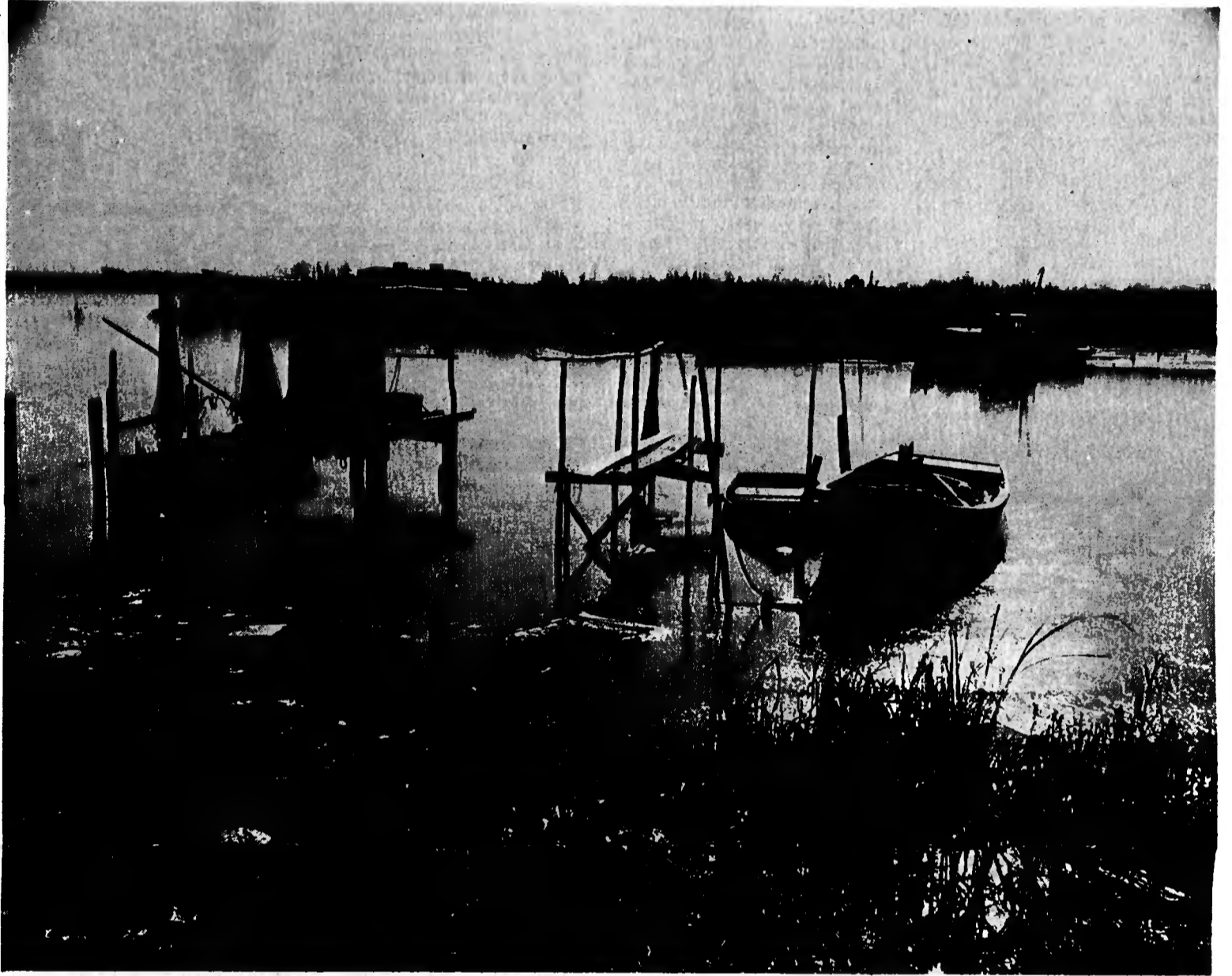
He had a job keeping lots cleaned off in a certain cemetery. He lost the job because he couldn't tell one name from another on the tombstones, and repeatedly tidied up the wrong graves. This didn't set well with those paying the bills.

After he was fired, he remained illiterate but started his own business and eventually became a millionaire. Word got around of this most remarkable man, and one of the radio networks arranged to interview him coast to coast.

Waxing eloquent, the interviewer raved on and on about the accomplishments of the highly successful business executive, ending up with "What in the world would you be doing if you had only learned to read and write?"

"I'll tell you what I'd be doing," the millionaire replied. "I'd still be raking leaves in that cemetery."

Superior Court Judge Dick Bundy of Greenville, who isn't seeking re-election, finds that not having to run for office again has its advantages. With his usual wit, he says, "There are five men I've always wanted to tell where they can go.



In the land of enchanting waters,
On a Tar Heel coastal stream,
Away from one's crowded quarters,
Is spring's best spot to dream.
—Photos by Billy Benners.