

Adventures Along Atlantic Beaches

Written for "The Western Home Monthly" by Bonnycastle Dale

ALL along the edges of these harbours lie long tideflats. The "red top" marsh hay is cut and carried on long hand poles, "hay poles," and piled up on "straddles." In the winter the patient oxen cart it home on high hay-racks. All, everything, made differently from the way you prairie men make things, these beasts of burden are yoked on the horns, and they seem to actually push their loads along. They can bring a load of wood through deep snow on short bobs, connected by long chains, about as fast as an average man would walk. Taught to follow their owner, few of them are seen driven. They are such calm, kind, slow, patient things that you grow to like them. I noticed that young oxen soon tire on a long day's work, and make false starts to be on their way home, and drop on the floor of their stalls as soon as they get there. Talking about the marsh hay, it is told how the old-timers used to cut the "red top" and then draw "stakes" made of oak or birch strips) to see how they would divide it. Now each man owns a certain lot. Some odd tales are told about these quiet looking oxen. It is the habit of the owners to let the great beasts run at large in the woods during the days of summer, gathering them in again when needed in the autumn. Thus the oxen are loose for months in the woods, where the bear and moose and deer roam. When a bear "whoofs" all the nearby oxen run together, evidently thinking there is protection in numbers.

One great snuff-colored ox when attacked by a big black Nova Scotia bear put up a good fight—it simply gored and butted the bear up against an oak. Every time the ox braced up the bear seemed to fall upon it and the ox promptly gored it again. There is no record of an ox having finally killed a bear, but they have been seen all running towards one, calling loudly "onee." When one of the men was in a "savannah" looking for his ox, he saw the "critter" come rushing out of the woods with a bear on her back cuffing her for all he was worth. On she came with head down and eyes flashing, bellowing for all she was able straight towards the owner. Now he wanted a "critter." But he just didn't actually need a bear. Luckily he had his old "fire place" gun with him, loaded with enough powder to stop any animal that ranged; on top of that a nice, smooth lead bullet for moose. The bear yapped at the man, and he poked that long weapon close up and fired full into the grinning beast's mouth. At him it came, notwithstanding the mouthful of lead. Up went his clubbed gun, but the big bear fell dead before it reached him.

The bears do a thorough job once they do start. One of the men had a calf and two heifers in the woods. These great strips of fir and spruce and some hardwood run for miles without any but a wood's road crossing them. When the owner went in a ghastly sight met his gaze. The three beasts were dead and torn to ribbons and chewed up. It looked as if many bears had made the attack, as some of the bodies had been carried over windfalls, where it seemed almost impossible for a single bear to drag it. Luckily these cattle killers are getting scarcer in these days of repeating guns and rifles.

One night Laddie put his canoe on a nice grassy bank right beside the sea, all ready for an early morning's start. When he went down there next morning, before daybreak, old "ocean" had sneaked off about a quarter of a mile, and the boy had to drag his big canoe and all the load away out there.

Another day he went in for a swim in the tide channel, and put his clothes on a perfectly dry sandbank, and when he returned he had to swim for all he was worth, as said sandbank was rapidly being covered by the tide. One day he took the cameras and myself across

the harbour to get some pictures, and a bird for dinner. He was in a big, strong heavy skiff this time, and he rowed it into full high tide line and tied it there. When we got back at night a long, long stretch of black sticky mud lay between us and the water, and we had to sit there half the night with a big fire to keep us warm, and never a bite to eat until old "ocean" returned.

We were fishing to-day in the tide channel. "I've got one" came the old familiar cry! "One what?" I asked him.

"I don't know; it's a fish anyway," he called. It was a "tommy-cod," a new one to him.

"Name it and you can have it!" he said as he drew an odd looking fish up. It had fins like a bird, a great mouth, widely opened, great goggle bloodshot yellow eyes and cruel sharp spines. A sculpin—uneatable and ugly.

"Next!" cried Laddie, as he threw his line in the tide. Next was a pretty little sand dab—a flat fish. Then we each caught a fish that looked much like a small mouthed black bass. These were sweet eating "gunners."

Laddie lazily let down his line with a dead tommy-cod on it. Off it started to go.

"Say! I killed that 'tommy' as sure as you're born, and it's swimmin' away."

"Wait until I get in the boat—I see something!" and down clambered the boy, net in hand. Yes, he did see something, for he pulled up a big rock crab on "Mr. Tommy-cod," and half a dozen more in quick order, good eating ones too.

"Anything else you would like, sir!" he asked. "Where's that 'butterfish,' or 'golden shiner' we caught in the brook. Better put it in picture too."

Nature has been so prolific here that the rock crab is not taken for market, although it is a delicious shellfish. You see this is the home of the lobster (it is close season, June to March), and the people will not bother to take these lesser chaps.

"I hear my friends asking, 'Did you get any clams?'" We did.

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