

Agate-Hunting on Bay of Chaleur

By GERTRUDE SPAIDAL



HAVE you never known the witchery of the Bay of Chaleur? Then life still holds in store for you one supreme delight. For whether the brilliant sunlight simmers on its broad bosom, or the mists curl down from the mountains, with their all-enveloping mantle of purple and grey, Chaleur is ever the same—magic incomparable!

Commercially Canada possesses in the Bay of Chaleur perhaps the most magnificent haven on the continent. Over ninety miles long, and from fifteen to twenty miles wide, it stretches inland from the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Its waters are singularly free from rock and other barriers, and thus offer safe navigation for the largest ships. And they come, into its shelter, ships from all over the world—barques, schooners, all kinds and descriptions of sailing vessels, and an occasional tramp steamer—bound for cargoes of fish and wood.

This gives to the Bay and its ports a cosmopolitan touch of the old world very surprising to the casual visitor. Especially is this true of Dalhousie—or Dalhowsie, as they say down there. In the harbor of Dalhousie one hears the soft tongue of Italy and Spain, mingled with the nasal tones of France, and the more guttural speech of Denmark and Sweden, as the sailors sing their chanteys at their work.

We were spending our holidays on the Bay of Chaleur, a mile from Dalhousie, at the historic old "Inch Arran"—a spot redolent with the mem-



A MORNING'S CATCH.

ories of the building of the Intercolonial, of Governors-General, and above all of Sir John A. Macdonald. Twenty years ago the "Inch Arran" was perhaps the most fashionable watering-place in Canada.

But with the building of the C. P. R., and the opening up of other eastern resorts, fickle fortune turned her back on the famous hostelry, and it was closed for the matter of ten or twelve years, to be opened again to the public only last year. It is an immense frame structure of between three and four hundred rooms, with endless corridors, a fifth of a mile of verandas, and quarters for an army of servants. Last summer there were, just fifteen of us tucked away into all this space, and we counted ourselves extremely lucky to have found a spot so beautiful, so comfortable, and so free from the obnoxious "Summer Boarder."

The house stands just a stone's-throw from the Bay, and always we could hear the splash, splash, of the surf upon the beach. The beach of the Bay of Chaleur is made up of minute particles of broken shells and brilliantly colored pebbles. These pebbles range from clearest white through all the shades of pink, crimson, yellow, blue, green, grey, to inky black. Of all shapes and sizes they lie in loose banks, or are pounded by the waves into an exquisite and gorgeous mosaic. They are positively fascinating, these little pebbles, and our pockets were always weighted down with them, but one day came a story that quite spoiled our enjoyment of anything so plebeian as pebbles. A farmer had come into Dalhousie with a gallon measure filled to the brim with lovely translucent agates, picked up across on the Muguasha shore of the Gaspé peninsula. It was on conquest bent that we crept from our warm beds, tip-toed down the long halls, past the closed doors of our sleeping fellow-guests, and stepped out into the chill of early dawn.

Sunrise on the Bay of Chaleur! We waited in the fragrant hush of the August morn for the most perfect day-birth in Canada. Behind us, the little town of Dalhousie nestled, surrounded by the rugged hills of the Metapedia range—dark, distant, sentinel. We stood at the entrance to Dalhousie harbor, and from the distant mountains the swift, deep Restigouche hurried along,

past the sleeping village, past the most northerly point of New Brunswick, to merge its fresh waters into the salt of the Bay at our very feet. Away to the right the white spires of Charlo gleamed across the waters. To the left the picturesque shore of Gaspé peninsula surmounted by the Grand Peak of Tracadie-Gash mountain, thrust a rugged menace out into the Bay. But in front as far as eye could travel stretched an unbroken path of silver grey—bay and ocean—to the very shores of distant Labrador.

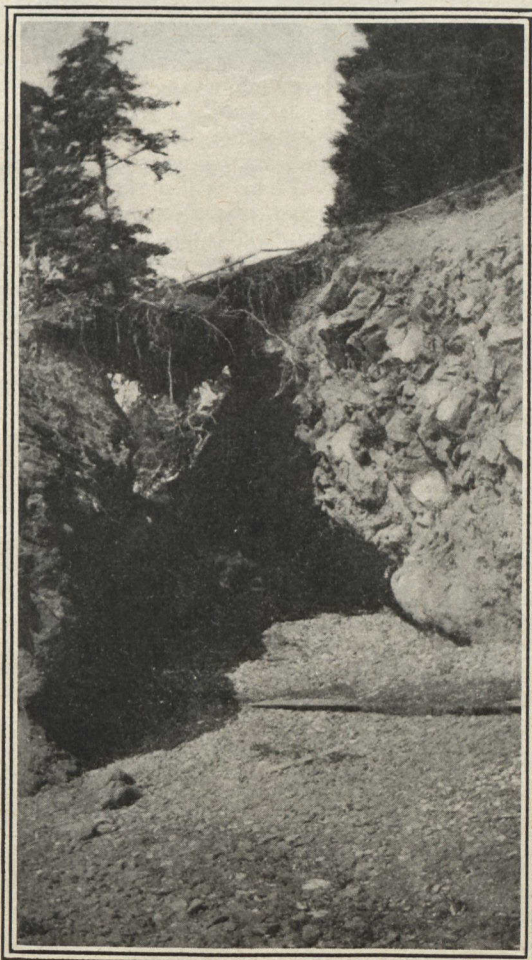
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THE air was superb, bearing the double tang of pine and salt—born of the marriage of forest and sea. It stirred the blood, swept the cob-webs from the brain, and made one feel that all the world was young again. Even the barriers of space seemed lifted, and we seemed able to look far off to where tawny gull-capped Percé forever guards the entrance to the Bay. That little barque, creeping out into the grey of the dawn, might bear none other than the brave heart and adventurous spirits of Jacques Cartier, and his gallant men. A very natural mistake theirs! Supposing themselves to be still in the Northern Atlantic, they pushed their way almost to the end of the Bay. But before they reluctantly left this land-locked, sun-kissed haven—so different from the cold, bleak ocean outside—they gave it their blessing, and its name "Bay of Heat"—Bay of Chaleur. But that was all nearly three hundred years ago, and now the first flush of morning brought us back to the present with a start.

The sun had opened one lazy eye above the horizon. With long arms of wind he brushed away from his ruddy face the mists of sleep. He sent an audacious wink to grim old Tracadie-Gash, still muffled to the chin in white cloud sheets. Peak after peak gave back a morning greeting, and soon a fairy carpet of crimson and cloth-o-gold covered all the Bay. The sky glowed and deepened in a thousand exquisite tints, and before our eyes had come again God's miracle of Dawn.

A shrill whistle sent us scrambling down the steep bank to the beach below. It was Ar'tur, our habitant boatman—a person so overpoweringly big that one would as soon think of asking Niagara Falls to wait for one! We hurried along the beach, past brown seaweed, bleached driftwood, and amethyst jellyfish, all stranded high and dry by the tide, climbed breathlessly in the dory, and were off.

Although it was now bright morning there was little life stirring on the Bay. Just above us a white-winged gull poised, dived, and re-



NATURAL BRIDGE, BAY OF CHALEUR.



LIGHTHOUSE POINT—ENTRANCE TO DALHOUSIE HARBOR.

appeared in a moment with a good sized cod in her talons, which she carried, struggling, to her hungry babies in their nest on the lonely Gaspé cliffs. "A breakfast of fish, my dears!"

Out in the deeper waters a school of porpoise seemed playing a gigantic game of leap-frog, their backs gleaming white above the green-blue of the Bay. They also had breakfasted on the fish of Chaleur, and were now homeward bound for the ocean. Between fishermen, porpoise and seagulls, the fish in the Bay of Chaleur have not—if one may be permitted—the life of a dog! And yet the supply seems practically exhaustless.

We rowed along, quietly, drinking the fine air in deep quaffs. At Lighthouse Point we passed a schooner laden with lumber for Australia—six months there and six months back. The sailors were busy with the rigging as we pulled by into the treacherous waters beyond. Here the Restigouche rushed down to meet the tide rushing up, and the sudden squalls from the Gaspé cliffs added their menacing touch to the turmoil. We sat a



COUNTRY ROAD, NEAR DALHOUSIE.

little tighter on our seats and Ar'tur bent his broad back and rippled his biceps in a reassuring pull on the oars. The distance lessened perceptibly.

"See," said Ar'tur, pointing to the rugged Gaspé shore now within our vision—"see dat leetle house up dere on de hill? Dat's my huncle's—my mudder's brudder."

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HIGH above us, a little frame cabin perched on a terrifying angle of the cliff. At one side was a little clearing, but all around a flood of pines threatened to engulf it. As we gazed up, a man appeared on the edge of the clearing, leading a team of horses that drew a stone-boat loaded with hay—no wheeled vehicle could have withstood that grade! They crawled like flies across the dizzy slope. That moment the door was flung open, a woman stepped out into the light, and the shrill sound of a dinner, or rather breakfast, horn startled all the sleeping echoes.

"Dat's my aunt," informed Ar'tur. "Dey want me to leeve up dere all de tam. But not for me, dat. It's a clam, clam, clam all de tam!"

"But why—by all that's reasonable—doesn't your uncle try farming on the level shores across the bay?" we queried.

Ar'tur's eyebrows and shoulders went high. "My huncle he own fine farm on Charlo, but he marry one Muguasha girl—des Muguasha shore—and she fret, fret all de tam for de hills; so my huncle, he come here, and build un leetle cabine"—and Ar'tur finished with an eloquent gesture.

We strained our eyes up at the slender figure standing so high above us. Are you happy in your eerie home, now you have your heart's desire, strange creature of strange longings called woman?

We left the little home behind, and pulling round the bold promontory, found our treasure shore before us. In appearance it looked just like the other shores around, rough, pebbly, with the surf breaking over it in blue-green spray. But here—as ever—appearances were deceitful.

And did we find any agates? Oh, yes! A fine box full of clear sparkling beauties. But we also found that the agate does not reveal herself to the casual observer. To find an agate, down