

Fritz on the Sea Shore

A Story for Boys. By Bonnycastle Dale

Photographs by the author

TAKE a lad from the great plains of the Northwest, or even of Ontario or part of Quebec, and turn him loose on this wondrous rugged Pacific Coast and watch his eyes stick out. Now Fritz had never seen the ocean, had never heard the dull deep rhythm of the surf as it beat on the syenite and sandstone rocks, the foundation stones of the mighty ranges that hedged us round about. He soon proved its power to play "Hide and Seek" with his belongings, as he left many of his boyish treasures on the sands at low tide and awoke me in the morning with the complaint that "some one had stolen his fishing rod and landing net and his nice new tackle box." He will never play at raft-building again, as we rescued him a mile out in a very nasty

The fat black and white marked animal scampered off at our approach and I had Fritz dig immediately beside the hole the animal had been working in. It took the lad fifteen minutes, aided by a sharp stick, to dig out an equal number of clams—nine. I snapped Fritz as he worked away beside the disturbed "coons" pile. From the honeycombed appearance of the sands, and the steady squirting of the clams as we walked—they send streams of salt water so high that our boots and trousers bottoms were thoroughly soaked in the first half mile—there were thousands of baskets (fifteen pounds means a basket) on this mile long beach. These big Horseclams are not a choice edible clam, although the Indians and some of the white men eat



The River in the Royal George

tiderip, with his raft only held together by his clinging arms. Now he paddles in such shallow places that he says he has to carry the water ahead and pour it over to get along at all. Forsaking his shore play the lad took the big camera and we started on our pleasant sea-shore studies and adventures.

Skirting a bay whose sandy shores still lay in the shadows of the big fir woods we came upon a raccoon clamming for his early breakfast. He worked just at the edge of the retreating tide, tearing up the soft clay that lay immediately beneath the sand, soft though this Miami clay was it was tightly packed, but the animal's sharp claws soon had a hole dug large enough to work in, out of this with great rapidity he lifted clam after clam, tearing open the ones with the long sucking tube left outside—these were "horseclams," the tube extends up to



Picking up the Clams

the top of the sand when the shellfish is feeding, and is as large as a man's middle finger and about five inches long. The shells that had withdrawn the sucking tube and were tightly closed he nipped with his sharp teeth and rapidly tore them open, swallowing the contents as he anxiously watched the bayshore for a possible enemy.

them. We have watched the "klootchmen"—squaws—bite off the long muscular sucker that extends far outside the shell, there they opened and ate the rather strong tasting inside. We have come across isolated whole families, ones that will not live on a reservation (as they cannot procure liquor there) that live for days on clams alone, without even a bit of bread. They willingly spend every cent for liquor. For as one old time-withered klootchman jabbered at us "Hi-ue-luk-ut-chee, lum si-ah." Which, being interpreted, means—many clams, very little rum.

Another charming cove, surrounded by fir and cedar forest, had in the foreground a great glacial deposited rock far out on the edge of the retreating tide. Working around it were a number of native boys and men, busily raking in the shallow water, catching large edible crabs. Later, we watched them scrape from the face of the rock bushels of mussels. Truly the inhabitants of this beautiful island group have little trouble to secure the most dainty of shellfish—with a common rake for their fishing outfit.

Did you ever go after fishes and catch rats? Well, Fritz and I did. We took a "flutter-tail"—a stern wheeler, I should say, and after some really remarkable steering, especially when they took this big boat through "The Hole In The Wall," a passage through great granite island cliffs, not at any part wider than the boat was long and sinuous as the letter S. These Pacific Coast waters need wizards not wheelmen. I thought at one place they would have to bend the boat to get her around the turn but they managed to do it without having recourse to this heroic means.

At last we approached the old deserted town of Utsalady on Camano Island. Once a prosperous town when the reverberations of the falling forest giants filled the air, now, alas, only ruined mills, empty houses and mosscovered



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