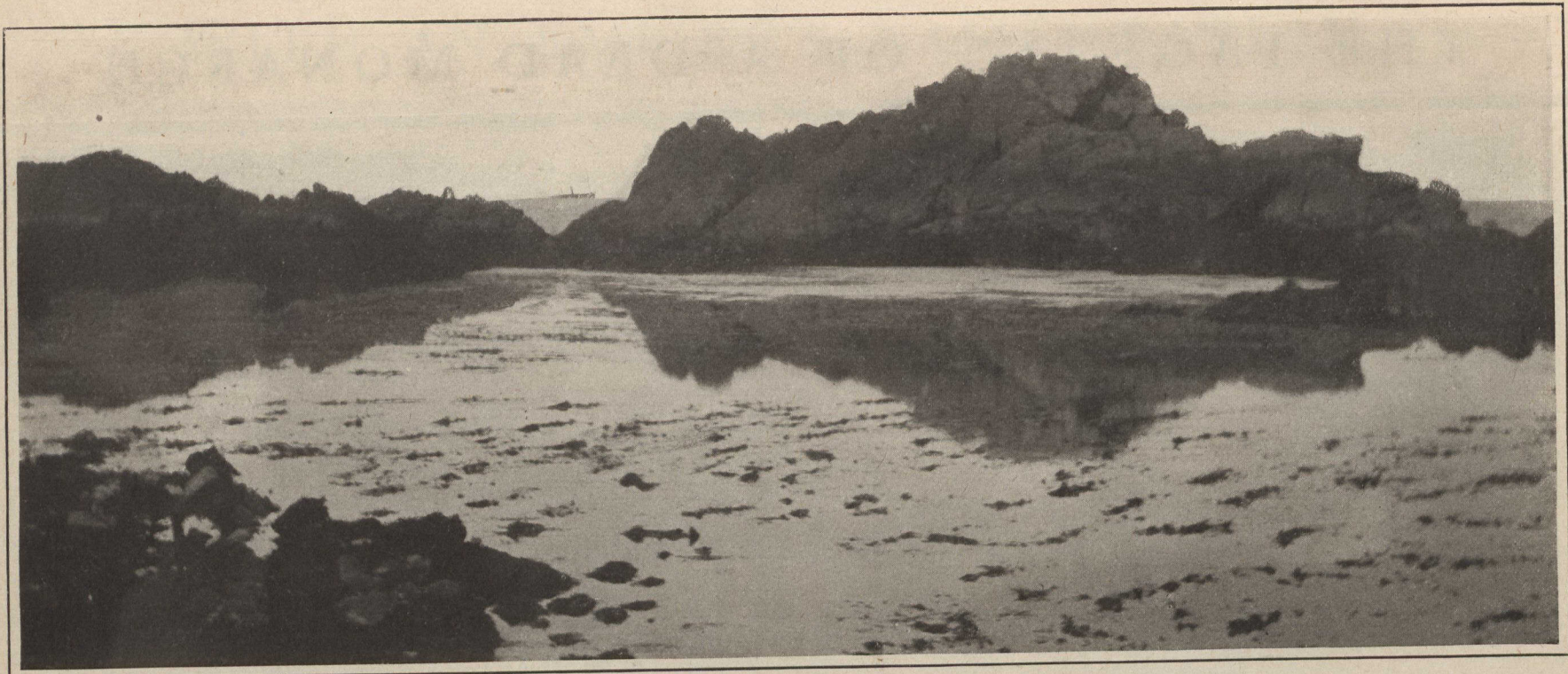




Low Tide on the British Columbia Coast—The Naturalist's Opportunity.

NATURALISING ON THE PACIFIC

By BONNYCASTLE DALE.

How to be a Lotos-Eater on the Fringes of a Busy Land.

I WAS speaking with Francis Ker-mode, British Columbia's Curator; and I had just told him that I would leave that night on the steamer Tees—going afield for three months along the East and West coasts of the big Vancouver Island.

"To-night, on the Tees?" he said, "Lucky man! You will have with you Professor John Macoun of Ottawa, the dean of the naturalists of Canada, the man that went across the prairies ahead of the survey of the C.P.R., the man that has taken our flora all over Canada and has classified it. In his party is a taxidermist from the British Museum—C. H. Young, now in our Geological Museum at Ottawa—and William Spreadborough, a man that has been at the nests of nearly all the birds of Canada. You will most certainly be in excellent company."

Next morning at breakfast I met the Messrs. Young and Spreadborough, also a highly amusing West Coast man, a good chap, no doubt, when sober. He found out the party of naturalists and gravely insisted that he would join them and "do the stuffin'," as he was the best "taxidmist" on the coast. Mr. Young, however, did not lose his position.

He and Mr. Spreadborough were men in the prime of life and I looked all round for an old and, I feared, rather decrepit man; as I learned the leader was seventy-three years of age. I found him when I went on deck. The Tees, a good sea boat notwithstanding, was gracefully rolling up and down the big Pacific swells, a regular water-teeter game. I saw a white-bearded man walking quickly along the heaving planks. He joined Young and Spreadborough and I was introduced to Mr. Macoun. The one thought in my heart was, "I hope I will be as active and full of vim at seventy."

Along the Strait of Juan de Fuca our boat rolled. If Vancouver came along again he would see no difference in the scene; all nature is untouched as it was in 1792—yes, or as it was in the days of good Queen Elizabeth, when Sir Francis Drake visited the island in his memorable voyage. A trio of lighthouses now help the mariner along this iron-bound coast. Great reefs, protruding points, a giant surf, all tell the tale of needed watchfulness. We were fortunate in the weather, the big, swift-rolling swells were unruffled by any wind, and the details of the shore line were clear and distinct under the blue skies.

On the Sea Bird Rocks, perched like some mighty white bird, sat the wreck of the Sequal, high and dry. Our hearts are saddened and our voices lowered as we think of that great storm last Christmas time, when this broken-backed hulk, then a bounding thing of life and beauty, dashed on the reef, running free. Her impact was tremendous;



Professor John Macoun (centre), and Messrs. Young and Spreadborough displaying the results of a day's work along the Pacific Coast.



Gathering Specimens at Low Tide.

and, unfortunately, there was time for the captain's wife and child to run on deck before the masts fell, crushing their lives out. Alas, this tragedy of the sea was being enacted while we sat comfortably before our roaring hearth fires—fires fed by the flotsam and jetsam of this wreck-dotted coast.

Now we enter beautiful Barkley Sound with its hundreds of islands. We stop at the cable station at Banfield, the one nerve that connects civilisation's great system with the joys and sorrows of this still western world. And now we sail far inland, up a wondrous rift in the hills, a natural canal several hundred feet deep, with mountains rising wooded from the water's edge. Four hours we steam along this marvellously picturesque arm of the sea; then Alberni is reached, a town of much enterprise that hopes to be the terminal city where transcontinental railways shall meet ships from the Orient and the Antipodes.

Next morning we find that we have passed out into the open sea again, and we run through a most tragic looking set of reefs and needles and islands—finally making a harbour in the lovely inlet of Ucuelet. We passed a well-grouped Indian village, drew up to the landing and here I bade good-bye—for a time only—to our Ottawa field party. I did my shore work at the next harbour, Clayoquot—a great wide sand-spit and an island-filled inlet. Then I hastened back toward Ucuelet that I might see and learn from a man with a lifetime experience in my chosen field.

Back toward Ucuelet sped the Tees. A giant swell was running and a sou'-easter was kicking up a wave on top of this. The sea was green and white and all the land was grey. At supper there were many vacant seats, but—and here is a sympathetic note for our poor, down-trodden workingman. At the table was a school teacher, an inspector of schools, a lawyer, a young banker, two storekeepers, a zealous father in charge of a Romish mission among the Indians, three prospectors, five timber cruisers and one representative Union workman—a bricklayer. And this poor downtrodden workingman, a poor man that never expended a cent to fit him for his position, while most men at the table had spent thousands of dollars and years of their lives to attain their present position—this poor workingman was earning more actual wage return than any man at the table.

Look at my hosts gathered over their specimens on the porch of the house at Ucuelet, so kindly loaned to the expedition by Mr. Sutton. Professor Macoun holds in his hands a lamina of saccharina, a ribbon of the sea tangle, one of the olive-brown seaweeds. Mr. Young and Mr. Spreadborough—he of the beard—have just arrived from the low tide line with a tub half filled with sea water containing