

Tales of the Hardy Nova Scotians Who Take the Big "Red" Sea Lobsters

Written for The Western Home Monthly by Bonnycastle Dale

WHILE the rest of Canada is just shaking off the mantle of snow in late February these hardy men of Nova Scotia are getting ready to set out their lobster "pots" or "traps." And each man has from one hundred upwards. They are big heavy crates made of banded rough unplanned branches about an inch through. Divided into three places, where the lobster creeps in, finds the bait in the centre compartment, and "the parlour," where he finds himself imprisoned, all the outer covering is of laths.

When the March gales blow it is hard for the lobsterman, once in this harbour, when all the traps were set out on the first day (several thousand traps), all baited with sculpin or herring, all held down by the big flat stones in the bottom of each, all marked by a floating buoy painted in the colours claimed by each other (a strong line connects buoy and trap). So after months of labour building these thousands of traps, buying the laths which

We have been astounded at just how many lobsters this limited ground would yield. From Lower Point Joli Head to Black Rock, at the western end of Sandy Bay, was about five miles, and the outer edge of the ground they were setting their traps on was three miles out. Then there was the mile wide harbour channel in which they also trapped. It was a common thing for the forty men lobstering there to sell three to four tons of lobsters from a single day's haul, or at times from two days' haul. That

means seven to ten thousand lobsters taken out of that five mile square fishing ground, and this keeps up for fifty days out of the ninety of the open season.

All this day Sunday the rain simply poured down in streams and the wind continued to rise, so that at nightfall there was a heavy sea setting in the long narrow harbour and kicking up quite a bit of windchop. We watched them pick out an extra wet spot for their night's quarters, and then the darkness shut out the wild scene. There is a telephone in the fishing cabin, and it thrummed all the night long with the strong electric current running. Many a time we turned in our bunks during the night and listened to the storm howling in from the open Atlantic, and wondering just how the thousands of lobster traps were weathering it.

Next morning at grey dawn I peeped

out to see if the lambs had lived through the terrible night! Good luck! Both were stifleggedly taking a warm drink from the soaking wet mother. A terrible sea was running.

The waves were so high that they extended right across the mile wide harbour and roared in their might as they passed inland. But not a trap was to be seen along the shore. We ate breakfast, and as soon as the bright sun crept up over the spruce tipped hills and barrens to the east we started off through the woods to the outer beach. Here the sight was magnificent. Huge white-crested rollers were sweeping in from the sea and breaking in mighty masses of foam and spray on the headlands, so we were too busy with our cameras picturing the might of old ocean.

"There's a trap," squealed Laddie above the gale. There came the first in



Laddie, Jr., and a 10 pound lobster.

form the outer side, knitting the entrance nets and bait nets—here they are all set out on the first day of March.

"How many lobsters did you get that day?" asked Laddie.

"Better ask how many traps we saved from the storm which swept up?" said the lobster man. "The under tow swept most of them out to sea and the rest were dashed up broken on the rude shore."

Late on Saturday night all the lobster traps were repaired from the last violent storm, all that could be salvaged, and every one was fishing, every trap was out in from five to twenty-five fathoms. Then all the lobstermen rowed out in their wee punts to their motor boats, and "put putted" off up the harbour to the inner anchorages near the wharf, leaving Laddie and I alone at Herring Rock.

Early Sunday morning we were awakened by a tremendous rainstorm. Looking out I saw a ewe with two newly-born lambs standing in the down-pour. The two pretty wee things were shivering under the torrential rain, the water pouring off them in streams as the mother sheep never offers to help her young, not even when they lie near her at night. The most she ever does is to smell or nudge them. They do not even know enough to cuddle up to her. We watched them lie down near in the sopping turf. All this time the wind was setting in from the sea and a decided swell was arising, making it look bad for the several thousand traps which were set within a five mile radius.

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