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THE GANNETS OF BONAVENTURE ISLAND.*

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Of the great Gannet colonies that at one time dotted both east and west coasts of the North Atlantic but few now remain. There are several surviving colonies around the British Isles, notably on the Bass Rock from which the species obtains its specific name, *Sula bassana*, and Iceland still has a rookery or so but in the new world the species is now reduced to two localities, Bird Rock, near the Magdalen Islands, and Bonaventure Island, off the Bay of Chaleur side of the Gaspé Peninsula. The Bird Rock rookery lying out in the middle of the gulf is difficult of access, but Bonaventure Island within three miles of the mainland and the village of Perce is easily reached and is one of the natural wonders of eastern Canada.

Any small scale map shows the great indentation of the Bay of Chaleur in the south shore of the Gulf of St. Lawrence. The land projection separating it from the main body of the gulf is the Gaspé Peninsula and just inside the extreme tip lies the village of Perce with Bonaventure Island just off the coast and forming a partial shelter to its anchorage.

Perce is noted for several reasons. As one of the oldest settlements on the coast, it was the headquarters of an old and important fishing company and hence the supply centre of the surrounding country before the railroad came, reorganizing old systems of distribution. With Mount Saint Anne towering behind it and flanked by the giant walls of the Murailles rising from the sea, it is one of the few spots in eastern America where sea and mountain scenery combine in a single landscape and, whilst the heights are not as overpoweringly impressive as in the mountains of the far west the scene is vigorous and satisfactory to eastern eyes. Just off shore from the village lies Perce Rock a striking monument to geological history. A great

lone rock mass sheer and straight on every hand, some twelve hundred feet long by three hundred high; pointed and highest at the shore end and no more than eighty feet through for the rest of its length, recalling the hull of a great ship that has just left the ways and is taking its initial plunge into the sea. In the centre of the seaward half is the great arch that has given it and the adjoining village its name. Eighty feet from spring to spring and of an equal height, it pierces clear through the rocky mass and frames a view of blue sea and sky beyond.

With these scenic advantages alone Perce should be famous, but adjoining is Bonaventure Island and the bird rookeries on its outer or seaward face. The island itself is roughly circular in outline and about three miles across in its greatest dimension. On part of the main land side the steep shores are broken down to the sea level but everywhere else they are steep unbroken rocky cliffs rising on the seaward face some three hundred feet straight from the sea. Here are the bird rookeries.

Approaching this side from the sea, one is aware that every ledge and shelf is covered with white as though snow had piled in drifts upon them allowing only the overhangs to show dull red between the glistening surfaces. A wind seems to stir the white masses, and they blow off in eddies and clouds of drifting flakes that finally resolve themselves into great white birds that swirl about the cliff faces and circle round the intruder amid a pandemonium of hoarse cries. These are the Gannets, the Solon Geese of older authors, each as large as a goose, pure white with black wing tips and a slight creamy wash on crown and hind neck. The air is filled with their waving wings. They fill it like a swarm of giant midges circling in the sun.

The rocks from which they came come down straight into the sea with white surf breaking at their feet. Here and there in calmer moments good boatsmanship and agility effects a landing on some

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