

SKETCHES OF

CANADIAN SPORTS AND PASTIMES

DEDICATED BY KIND PERMISSION

TO

Prince Arthur

K.P. & RIFLE BRIGADE.

H.R.H. LIEUTENANT

MOOSE SHOOTING
WILD GOOSE SHOOTING
INDIAN CAMP COASTING
THROUGH THE ICE
RINK AT HALIFAX
SAILING ICE BOAT
FIRST SLEICH DRIVE
SEQUEL TO DITTO



TOBOGGING
BEAR SHOOTING
CURLING ON THE LAKES
DRIVING TO BARRACKS
DRIVING HOME
MEETING A WOOD SLEDGE
TROTTING MATCH
MOOSE CALLING

LIEUTENANT HENRY BUCKTON LAURENCE
4TH THE KINGS OWN ROYAL REGIMENT.

INTRODUCTION.

THE following sketches of Winter Sports and Pastimes taken during my two years' sojourn in Canada and Prince Edward Island, although published under such distinguished patronage, I cannot but feel conscious need much apology for their unworthiness; yet I have the presumption to hope that the originality of most of the scenes may afford some interest to those who have not passed a winter on the other side of the Atlantic, as well as help to awaken pleasant reminiscences in the minds of those who have.

H. B. LAURENCE.

CHESTER CASTLE,

18th June, 1870.

I.

COASTING.

COASTING is a very jolly winter amusement, and needs little description, as the picture will speak for itself. Although any sloping or frozen ground will do, it is better when leading to frozen water, as the impetus given by the rapid descent, sends you flying along on the level ice for a considerable distance.

The sleds used are simply two runners, firmly fastened together at the top by a board which forms the seat, and having a rope attached for the purpose of pulling the coaster after you up the hill when your downward journey is over, and prior to your next descent.

Soft or deep snow will not do for coasting, as the runners sink through, and your progress is thus impeded. A sharp frost after a thaw makes the ground just what is required for this amusement. The first trudge up the slippery hill will soon make you forget the cold.



COASTING IN BRITISH N. AMERICA.

II.

TOBOGGING IN UPPER CANADA.

TOBOGGING (from the Indian word toboggin) is very nearly the same thing as coasting, the exception being that your Toboggin is constructed so as to slide on the surface of the snow, and consequently requires no runners. It is simply a flat board, about six feet long by two, and half an inch in thickness, curled up at one end and fastened by deer thongs. The steering is done, with a short stick in either hand, by the steersman who sits behind.

Those intending to slide down the hill having taken their seats, the Toboggin is gently urged to the edge, when, at first slowly, but in a few seconds at an alarming pace, it flies smoothly and almost noiselessly down the mountain side, almost taking away your breath.



TOBOGGING IN UPPER CANADA.

III.

TOBoggING AT PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND.

THE country at Prince Edward Island is very flat, and consequently affords little facility for Toboggining, a good start being indispensable. This has been remedied on the pretty grounds belonging to Government House by the erection of a steep wooden slide at the top of a slight slope leading to the ice, and which gives sufficient impetus to take you 400 to 500 yards. Toboggin parties in Canada are given much in the same way as croquet parties in England, but, if I might presume to give an opinion, offer far more amusement.



TOBOGGING AT P.E. ISLAND - THE START.

IV.

RINK AT HALIFAX.

THE Rinks of Canada are large and lofty buildings, much frequented as long as the winter lasts, having their floors flooded with about 10 inches of water, which is allowed to freeze for skating purposes. The ice when sufficiently cut up is flooded overnight with about half an inch of water, and long before morning forms a beautifully smooth surface for the next day.

Around the building is a boarded platform raised about a foot from the ice, with seats, stoves, and other comforts, for the lookers-on, as well as for the skaters when disposed to rest. Off the hall are well-warmed dressing-rooms, the walls being covered with little lockers, just large enough for subscribers to deposit their skates. The centre of the Rink is set apart for those able to cut figures, &c., whilst the sides are patronized by the less proficient, who content themselves with whirling round and round in a sort of never-ending procession. A regimental band usually plays twice a week, and greatly adds to the enjoyment.



A CORNER OF THE RINK, HALIFAX, N. S.

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THIS sketch represents "Curling" on one of the Dartmouth Lakes near Halifax, N.S. The game is of course the same as played in Scotland or elsewhere. These Lakes form a chain extending over some 30 or 40 miles, and on a fine day present a very animated appearance, the ice literally swarming with holiday-makers from the neighbouring town of Halifax, and the surrounding villages. A stop is put to the skating and curling when the heavy snow falls, but after a thaw followed by a frost the fun commences "da capo."



CURLING ON THE LAKES, NEAR HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA.

VI.

SAILING ICE BOAT.

THE Sailing Ice Boat consists of a wooden triangular platform, about two inches in thickness, and mounted on two runners. The mast is placed well in front, and the sail is what is commonly called a "leg of mutton sail."

On glib ice a very slight breeze will cause the construction to travel with wonderful rapidity; whilst a strong wind will send it along at the rate of 20 to 30 miles an hour. The boat is steered with a sort of spiked rudder, and will sail within a very few points of the wind.

This amusement, while affording a great amount of fun, is at the same time a dangerous one, for should you run against any inequality on the ice, large enough to cause a momentary check, the sudden shock will create a sensation similar to what would be felt at a collision in a railway carriage, and not unfrequently you are pitched out with considerable violence on the ice.



SAILING ICE BOAT.

VII.

TROTTING MATCH ON THE ICE.

THE Canadians, like their American neighbours are extremely fond of Trotting Matches, and will give almost any price for a horse—no matter how ugly—if he can only do his mile in 2 minutes and 40 seconds. The Canadian horse, as a general rule, is not a fair square trotter, his movement when going slow resembling a shambling, but when doing his best, becoming more regular, no amount of whipping will then make him break; in fact, he can trot considerably faster than he can gallop.

My sketch represents a Trotting Match (or race, as any number may enter) on the ice, usually got up by farmers and horse dealers after a market day. The shouting, yelling, and whip-cracking that takes place during the race is indeed wonderful, as each driver does his best to make his opponent's horse break, involving, if he succeeds, the penalty of having to turn his sleigh once round before rejoining in the race, in a similar manner as we in England have to back the wheel under the same circumstances. The man who has best accustomed his horse to being yelled at without breaking, generally walks in a winner, as the pace of all is much about the same.



TROTTING MATCH ON THE ICE - PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND.

VIII.

R ρ Y A J M A J J J C E B ρ A J.

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND, in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, is entirely surrounded by ice for about five months during the year, and the only means of communication with the rest of the world is by the Mail Boat, which crosses the Northumberland Straits at its narrowest part (about nine miles) between Brulé and Cape Tormentine. So terribly severe is this mode of travelling, that during the whole winter scarcely a passenger will be found to venture across.

The boat is similar to those used by the Royal Humane Society on the ice in our parks in England, only a good deal larger and stronger. It is fitted with oars, boat hooks, &c., plenty of work having to be done in the open water, as at times the ice drifts about, and there is more rowing than pushing. One very severe winter, during the time we were quartered at Prince Edward Island, the boat made several journeys without getting into the water at all, but such instances, I am told, are rare.

Both crew and passengers are fastened to the boat by a long rope round the waist, to help themselves out of the water should they slip in (not an unfrequent occurrence), as well as to pull the boat along. The passenger must work just as hard as any of the crew, although he has to pay pretty heavily for his little amusement.



P. E. ISLAND. "ROYAL MAIL" IN THE WINTER CROSSING GULF OF ST LAWRENCE
BETWEEN BRULE & CAPE TORMENTINE.

IX.

Β Ρ Ι J N .

THERE is only one kind of bear to be found in Canada, viz., the common Brown Bear. It is very plentiful in some parts, and a mortal enemy to farmers, who lose many a stray sheep, owing to Bruin's partiality for mutton. He is not a dangerous animal to meet, as he runs away as soon as he becomes aware of your presence.

Bear's flesh, when in season, is not bad eating, and his skin is in great request for sleigh robes, &c. The 2nd battalion of the 4th regiment have a very tame one brought from Canada, which is sometimes allowed in the mess-room after dinner, and begs for his share of dessert, besides shewing off a few tricks he has been taught by the soldiers with whom he is on the best of terms.



COMMON AMERICAN BROWN BEAR.

PARRYING A FEW FRIENDS TO MESS.

THE jolly natives of Prince Edward Island as a rule dine at 1 p.m., and as they are always ready for another feed at the late hour we from England are accustomed to take our meal, an invitation to dine at Barracks is seldom, if ever, refused on the score of a previous engagement. The sketch shows a load being brought into Barracks to help us to pass the long winter evening.



BRINGING A FEW FRIENDS TO DINE IN BARRACKS.

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THE less said about this sketch the better, particularly as it appears to have happened to our guests dining in Barracks. The hour, however, is somewhat later, and they are now trying to get home. A box sleigh (simply a box filled with straw on runners) has been provided, and a fall of snow having since taken place, the road to the gate has disappeared. No wonder then that the "Jehu" of their party manages to shoot his cargo into the deep snow, as, suddenly discovering that the Barracks' gate is locked, he endeavours to pull up with a jerk the steed he had so lately been urging to his utmost.



SENDING THEM HOME.

XII.

WOOD-SLED MEETING A TANDEM IN A NARROW ROAD.

THE roads in some parts of the country are very narrow, and after a heavy fall of snow two sleighs meeting have little chance of passing each other without a good deal of trouble.

On a market-day one sometimes meets a string of wood sleds returning home, the drivers having sold their wood, and drank a fair share of the proceeds, turn anything but obliging, on these occasions if you do not speedily shew that you are doing your best to make room for them by driving into the deep snow, they clear a passage for themselves by charging past, when you are pretty sure to come off second best, there being nothing to break about a wood sled, while your slightly made tandem sleigh offers a very poor resistance. This little amusement is a great delight to the Canadian "rough."



TANDEM MEETING A WOOD SLEDGE IN A NARROW ROAD.

G ρ J N G ρ ρ W N H J J J.

THE British officer in Canada generally manages to sport a sleigh by some means or other, and weeks before the snow covers the ground sufficiently deep to take advantage of this amusement he has provided himself with horse, sleigh, bells, robes, &c., &c., all of which are of course quite new. He then waits with impatience for his first drive, and a suitable day having at length arrived, the horse is buckled to, a fair friend is asked to take part in the trial trip, and off they start for the first run.

The roads at the commencement are level, and the snow in the vicinity not having had time to get beaten down and slippery, all goes well, and he flatters himself how very unnecessary were the friendly warnings of his more experienced brother officers as to the "traces being too long, the breeching not short enough," and sundry other hints as to how to go down hill, turn a corner, &c. "Why," says he, "I don't see a bit of difference between driving a sleigh and a dogcart, except that this is jollier, and, if anything, less chance of an upset."

But alas! the roads are not all level. He draws nigh a hill, which is safely topped, and the descent commenced. The road is now beautifully slippery, and, somehow or other, both horse and sleigh appear to be travelling "crab fashion," the sleigh, if anything, rather in advance. This surely cannot be the orthodox way of going down hill! "Drive into the deep snow on the side of the road," suggests the fair Canadian. All is right again for the moment, and the descent is prosecuted; the horse now appears to be trying his best to seat himself in the driver's lap, certainly using the dashboard instead of the breeching, and our friend at last begins to think that perhaps it is a trifle too long: the horse by this time has quite made up his mind on the subject, as, giving a couple of playful kicks, he sends the dashboard flying. One more kick, and the sleigh is empty, as shewn in the next sketch.



THE FIRST SLEIGH DRIVE, GOING DOWN HILL.

XIV.

G O N E A W A Y.

THE Trap somehow or other still continues to tickle the horse, and kicking being of no avail, running away from the annoyance is next tried, apparently with better success, as robes, cushions, furs, foot-muffs, &c., are scattered to the winds, to be picked up at leisure by the late occupants of the sleigh, and left "till called for" at the nearest farm house, whilst they quietly stroll home doing their best to look as if nothing had happened.

The truant horse and wreck of sleigh is generally brought into Barracks the next morning, a pretty shrewd guess having been made by the finder that it belongs to some of the "officer gents."



GONE AWAY.

W J L P G P P S F S H P P T J N G.

THE shores of Prince Edward Island, deeply indented with bays and arms of the sea, are much frequented in the spring and winter by flocks of wild geese of various species, on their annual migrations.

The accompanying sketch represents a scene during the winter season, which is the best time for shooting them. The hunter builds himself a shelter from the keen winds with a few slabs of ice, which he cuts with an axe from the frozen surface of the bay. The hole thus formed, which he enlarges as much as possible by breaking the ice all round, is taken advantage of by the geese, who pitch in it to seek for food and dabble their plumage. The hunter, lying concealed in his ice hut on a few young spruce boughs, has now an opportunity of getting a shot. His gun (loaded with a large charge of powder and several slugs) he stealthily raises and fires, when the geese rise noisily in the air, but one hard hit, and with damaged wing, staggers, and the Indian running out presently catches the falling bird and wrings its neck.

The Indians of Prince Edward Island, who are a remnant of the Mic Mac tribe, which formerly extended throughout Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, will remain out on the ice from daylight till dusk, waiting their chance for a shot, and exposed to a temperature of sometimes 15 below zero.

The sketch is taken from a height considerably above the level of the sea, and the goose, which always flies high, is beginning to fall.



EB

WILD GOOSE SHOOTING.

J N P J A N C A M P.

THE Indians call their home in the woods "A Camp," although it may consist of but one hut. In parts at all frequented for sporting purposes a camp will be found ready made, as your temporary shelter is always left untouched for the next comer, with the exception of the canvas covering, which of course you take away with you. Should you go to an untried part of the country, your camp-keeper will soon erect a secure shelter against the piercing cold, and keen winds.

A few young pine trees, shorn of their branches and cut the same length, are piled together, thin ends meeting, the thick ones pointed and stuck in the ground, enclosing a space of about ten feet in diameter. A long pliant sapling is then procured, made into a hoop, and introduced inside the pile. This is raised until it touches the poles all round, when it is securely bound, and a strong bar of wood—generally Indian pear—fastened across to hang the chain or hook for your kettle. This bar should be about five feet from the ground. The skeleton of your house is now complete, and nothing remains but to wrap the canvas round the outside, leaving a small aperture at the top to form a chimney. Three sides of an oblong square are next described with logs in the inside of the hut to form a clear space for the fire. The fourth side is the doorway, and the space between the logs and the wall is filled with young spruce branches, and covered with blankets to form couches. Should you come unprovided with the canvas-wrap mentioned, the Indians soon find a substitute by peeling the bark off birch trees, and fastening it outside your hut with pointed pieces of wood or tin tacks.

The camp-keeper always remains in camp, keeping guard, cutting wood, preparing meals, besides generally managing to catch a fish or two for your supper. Tea is almost the only beverage in the woods on account of its portability.



INDIAN CAMP & KEEPER.



MOOSE TRACKING.

XVIII.

M ρ ρ ϑ Ε ϑ Α Ι Ι Ν Γ.

THIS mode of enticing the bull moose within shot is done in the rutting season. The Indian, who accompanies the sportsman, rolls a piece of birch-bark in the shape of a cone, and, using it as a trumpet, imitates the cow moose to such perfection, that he will draw the country for miles should there be a bull in the vicinity. This is done always on a moonlight night, and in the months of September or October.

The Indian, with his companion, stations himself in the open plain, but close to the forest, and soon gets an answer to his call if there is a moose within a couple of miles. This he repeats at intervals of about five minutes, when a crashing through the woods in the distance is heard, as the huge brute tears his way through the forest, and presently he is seen on the border of the wood. The Indian now gives a few very suppressed grunts, and the moose slowly and suspiciously draws near, and the sportsman gets his chance of a shot.

This is, however, rather poor sport; at times you sit out the whole night without getting any answer to the calls, not being permitted to make the slightest noise, and even denied the comfort of a pipe—not at all a bad thing on a Canadian winter's night.



MOOSE CALLING.

OFF THE TRACKS.

THE tracks on the ice, which are considered safe for travelling with heavy loads, are marked out with young spruce or fir trees stuck in the ice at intervals of about 50 yards. This is done by the country people frequenting them at the commencement of the winter; air-holes, and other unsafe parts caused by different currents, are also marked by them with large clumps of young trees to warn the traveller. A track that has been used for a day or two without any fall of snow having taken place is easy enough to follow, even in the dark, as your horse will not leave it; but after a fall, heavy enough to cover up the road, the trees are found of great use.

Occasionally a short cut is tried, or you may lose the track owing to fog or other causes, when the best thing to be done is to get out and walk till you find it again, as a ducking on a cold winter's night is well worth avoiding when a little trouble will do so. Although you but rarely get right through the ice, you very often break the upper crust which forms after a thaw, and get into a foot or so of water, quite sufficient to cause alarm, as the horse plunges and splashes in his endeavours to regain a firm footing.

When a horse really breaks through the ice, the first thing to be done when you have saved your own skin and cut away the sleigh, is to run a slip knot round his neck with a piece of rope or the reins, and nearly choke him, as this has the effect of stopping his struggles, besides making him float well out of the water. You next get his feet on the ice, and if there are two of you, by the aid of the traces (or ropes, should you happen to have any with you,) he can generally be got out; but it is a most troublesome proceeding, and not always crowned with success. The Canadians do not think much of it, and are always provided with the necessary ropes, &c. After the ice breaks up in the spring, numbers of dead bodies are annually washed on to the beach. The sketch represents a ducking at night.



OFF THE TRACKS.