



VISITORS TO THE CAMP.

## CAMPING OUT IN BRITISH COLUMBIA.

BY W. J. KERSLAKE FLINTON.

SOME irreverent satirist once remarked that camping out was equivalent to "pigging it in the wood-yard." It is needless to add that the general organisation of this misguided individual was not sufficiently comprehensive to grasp, as it were, the varied delights that appeal so much to the experienced camper. Of course there may be some who cannot understand its fascinations, and therefore would not undergo the ordeal if the chance offered. But so are there those who hear no music in the roar of the ocean, nor see a charm in the western sunset.

As long as there are people who are strangers to the sweet sounds and sights of Nature, and who fail to appreciate any pleasurable emotion from such association, just so long will the world be divided into two sections—on the one hand the people who love the freedom of the camp, and the unfortunate candidates for our commiseration who do not on the other.

Camping has its votaries, in no mean dimensions, in this country, as many of our rivers bear testimony in season, and vacations spent in this fashion form delightful food for discussion at all times.

The climate in British Columbia, in the southern portion of the island and mainland especially, is mild, salubrious, and healthy, and superior to that of the south of England. During several months of the year the rainfall is heavy and long continued, with an

annual average of, say, thirty inches on Vancouver Island, and forty-five in the lower mainland. As a large quantity of the timber in the vicinity of the towns is depleted year by year, this average is being gradually reduced. In this section of the province snow or frost is not often experienced, and vegetation remains green and the flowers bright through the greater part of every winter. Summer makes ample amends for any excess of moisture at other times, and may be said to begin in good earnest about June. For the space of four months the weather remains delightfully fine and hot, without variation whatever. The bush, on all sides, owing to heat and continued drought, becomes ignited, and some discomfort is caused thereby. It is then that the necessity of a change is felt, and the invitations are issued and the camp party made up.

Around the city of Vancouver many excellent sites for camp can be secured. On Greer's Beach, outside the entrance to False Creek, many hundreds encamp during the summer on the level stretch of land just above the water's edge, with a grand sweep of sand at low tide. Others travel further out into English Bay and select a site on the high ground on the south side.

We will now assume that our party is complete and some twenty strong. The boys have fixed on a spot just above the logging camp, with a creek dispensing pure crystal water within a hundred yards of it.

Our goods and chattels have all gone down to the boathouse in the Bay, and we are ready to embark. It will be seen that the party is rich in craft, as we can count no less than six strong Peterboro' or cedar canoes, a dug-out, and a substantial round-bottomed boat. Each of these is in turn despatched with an appointed load across the Bay, and in due course we are all safely located, bag and baggage, at "Camptown," our home for some weeks to come.

No time is lost on arrival, and a selected number of the party with axes and cross-cut saws start in and soon effect a clearance large enough to admit of the dining-tent, twenty-two feet by thirty feet, being run up. Into this we put all our available property, passed up, hand to hand, from the beach below. The tenderfoot finds thus early that his position is by no means a sinecure, and, lacking the experience and finished methods of his brethren, he has, perforce, to submit to much dictation which gives added zest to the proceedings. The ladies of our party, acting up to their reputation as respecters of law and order, are now engaged in a vain and fruitless endeavour to unearth the personal estate of its respective owners, and, as can be understood, the effort calls forth peals of merriment and is generally abandoned at an early stage.

Meanwhile the ring of axes on the brush and standing timber gives evidence of other exertions outside, and before nightfall another big tent is ready, and arrangements made to receive its fair occupants. The beds are of stretched canvas on side poles with the cross supports firmly embedded in the ground, and, all being well secured, we foretell pleasant visitations to the Land of Nod. From the tenderfoot aforesaid, upwards, all have worked like Trojans this day, and the China cook's attempts in the hastily built kitchen in the rearground are thoroughly welcomed, and full justice is

done to them. The men turn in and secure any soft spots available on the heap of stuffs in the dining-tent.

On the following morning we are early astir and the work of clearing is renewed. By breakfast time as many as six fresh tents have been erected, and our canvas colony is assuming fair dimensions. Some of the men, for business and other reasons, then take their departure for town by canoe, and those that are left continue the work of improvement. A quantity of strong fir is cut, brought in, and the framework of the kitchen set up and covered with strip canvas, with cedar shingles on the roof and weather side. The iron stove is reset and we are now at peace concerning that important department. The smiling visage of our heathen *chef* is sufficient warranty that the work is well ordered. Many of the tents are floored with fir planks secured at a trifling cost at the logging camp, or boarded round with cedar shakes, by which not a little extra comfort is gained. The

provisions for the day are despatched from the city stores to the boathouse, and brought over when the canoes return in the evening, so that we enjoy all the luxuries of the town without inconvenience.

We still have plenty to occupy our time during the first week, as, after all is made snug above, a breakwater and shelter for the fleet must be constructed, steps leading to the beach cut and railed, and last, but not least, hammocks slung in quiet, peaceful nooks for the benefit of the weary. In the end a substantial fir railing is run round the cliff, rustic and other seats are set up, and our township is complete. Having by now thoroughly and conscientiously earned a respite from labour, both manual and physical, we disport ourselves as fancy dictates.

Our position is one of exceeding beauty. Fifty feet below, the waters of the Bay are flashing and pulsing in the summer sunlight. On the extreme left is the open stretch of the Gulf of Georgia, and fronting us and to our right is the coast range of mountains,



PREPARING AFTERNOON TEA.

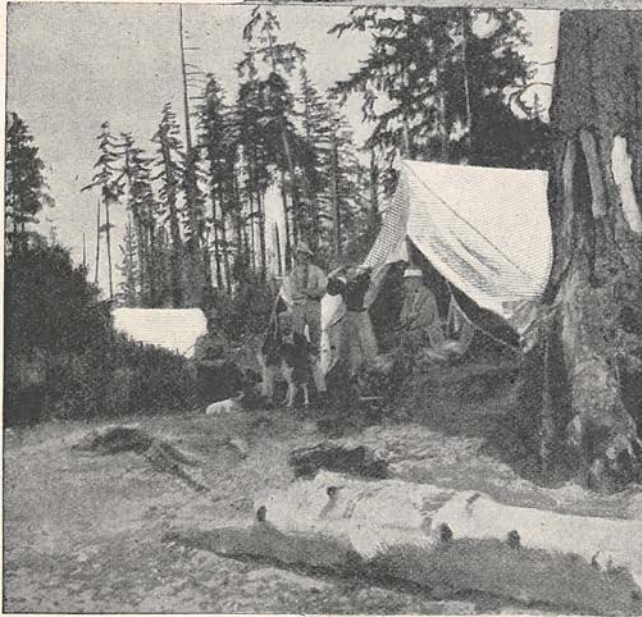
rearing themselves thousands of feet into the clear, cloudless sky, and serving as a natural and impressive background to the western limits of the city as seen above the rising ground.

To turn our attention to camp customs and entertainments, one great benefit derived is that our little colony completely ignores fashion in the matter



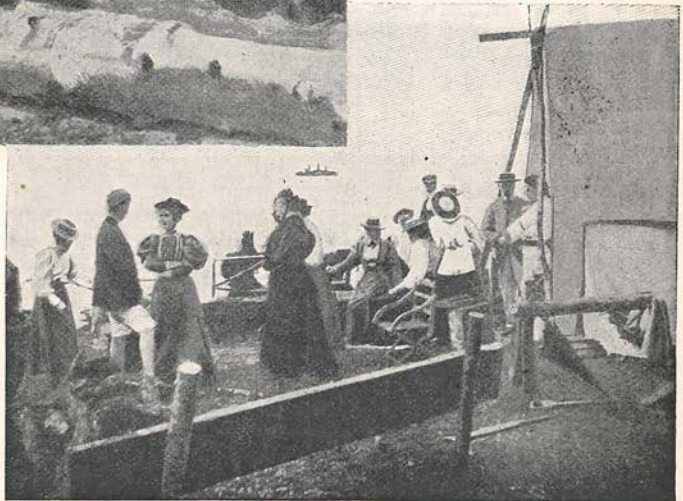
ROUND THE MIDNIGHT FIRE.

on the still waters, or, armed with deep-sea tackle and the wriggling bait, proceed to the best of their ability to invade the fish life below. Big hauls of whiting are made, frequently to the number of 400 to 500 in a couple of hours, and if an assortment



AFTER THE DAY'S WORK IS DONE.

of dress, and each member appears in what he or she at the moment considers the most rational attire. Life is now one cycle of pleasure. After the morning meal people sort themselves out, and little groups make their departure this way or that. Some take canoes and either paddle idly about



VISITORS.

of lemon soles, flounders, black cod, tommy cod, and bull-heads (this latter the terror of the whiting enthusiast) are added, the thanks of the community are promptly bestowed. By the way, nobody really seems keenly partial to the delicacies of the bag, for, as far as our observation goes, the fish seldom arrive at the pan. Yet the blessings circulate, nevertheless. Our China boy tried it once, and once only. With a slight swell on he began to rock from side to side of the canoe in most dangerous fashion, lost the little colour he ever possessed, and remarked faintly, "Too muchee fishee." His meaning was clearly interpreted, and he was humanely landed, a sadder and a wiser man.

In July the salmon make their appearance,

logging trail willow grouse are found occasionally, with a few rabbits and wild pigeon to make up the bag. The mink, of the weasel tribe, abounds on the shores, and can be either shot or trapped. Bears have been seen by our own people at the creek, but an organised trip across their tracks failed to discover their whereabouts. Later in the season four fine skins were displayed at the logging camp near by—the result of too much daring on the part of Bruin's family. Berry-gathering is another delight for man and maid. Many kinds are found hereabouts, notably the salmon, cushion, wine, huckle, and blackberry, of which the pot makes no distinction, and the final offering in the shape of camp pudding is a joy to all partakers thereof.

A particularly interesting venture is the camp newspaper Sunday edition, rejoicing in the title of *The Campdown Review*. By this medium, with all the shortcomings of one's dear friends at heart, the opportunity is taken of paying back old scores and of opening the eyes of the general camp public to the fact that things, collectively speaking, are not really all they are supposed to be. Everyone enters into the fun with great gusto and



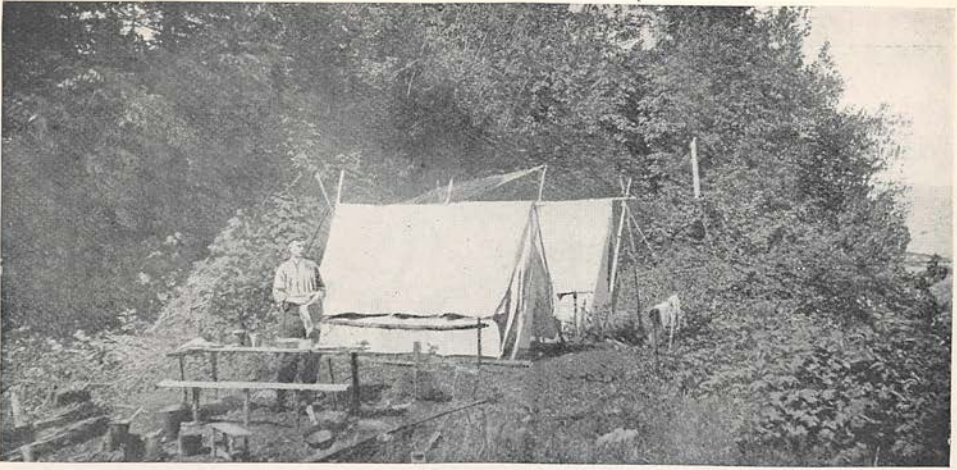
A CAMP BEDROOM.

and at times the whole surface of the water is disturbed and studded with their shining bodies. They give no sport, as in these waters they have never been known to take a fly, and the only variety that can be secured by legitimate means is the Coho, that runs in August and September. With a rod and troll fair numbers can be taken. It is a good fighting fish and its flesh is excellent for the table. The ground smelt, a full-flavoured, succulent body, visits the sandy flats in huge shoals. Any quantity can be got by wading, without the use of a net, and catching them in the hands is great fun.

The woods behind the encampment contain a fair amount of game. A little off the

editorial sanctum is besieged with kindly offers of help. Advertisements of a unique and grotesque order flock in, the latest foreign and home news is freely parodied, and a visitors' list published in full, with various personal remarks appended to each name.

The camp fire lends cheer to the evening amusements. Massive logs have been stacked in the open space in the centre and ignited, and all and sundry are seated on rugs, with back boards erected for greater comfort. Many of our party are capable performers on the mandolin, guitar, or banjo, and the air resounds with their joyful twang. Every variety of coon, comic, coster, and sentimental lay is given in turn, interspersed with choruses



WASHING UP.

that all can attempt. Ah Sing sometimes takes a hand and chants a Chinese Wagnerism as discordant as it is monstrous, which in extent is accurately clocked at fifteen minutes. The poor boy is duly applauded and suitably refreshed as his deserts merit. Coffee is served, and then the party retires.

The red-letter day of the season is regatta day. Challenges are issued to our friends across the Bay to meet us in friendly rivalry both by land and water. A prompt acceptance follows. The events include high and long jumping, climbing the rope, single and double canoe and swimming races, with special contests for the ladies.

As all things, however pleasant, must have termination, so it is with camping. In September the evenings begin to get damp

and chilly, and the sea fogs are apt to make their annual appearance. A date is appointed and the word passed round to strike camp. Tents are lowered, baggage packed, useful lumber hidden in secure places for use in the following year, and the spot so recently fair and well ordered rendered a desolate waste again. Then back to town life once more, after a jolly and healthful sojourn of some ten weeks by the sea. To the dwellers and toilers in the heat-laden city it is an inestimable relief to be able to breathe the fresh sea air and have all the luxuries of the camp within half an hour's journey of the business centre. By this means the majority of the men-folk are able to attend strictly to their vocations without hindrance, and benefit by the changed mode of living.



GENERAL VIEW OF THE CAMP.