



LAKE ST. CHARLES, NEAR QUEBEC.

LAKE ST. CHARLES AT EVENTIDE.



NE of the daintiest bits of scenery, north of Quebec, is that afforded by the sheet of water known to tourists and anglers as Lake St. Charles.

It consists of two lakes, about four miles in extent, and communicating with one another by a diminutive, lily-haunted passage, called the narrows, adjoining a stretch of meadow known as Campbell's Point, whilst an indenture of some acres in the rocky, wood-clad shore, furnishes the famous bay, styled Echo Bay, on account of the unfailing repercussion of sounds, when uttered in this elfish spot; whilst another shrinkage in the green fields, skirting the lake, in the vicinity of the Vernet rustic hostelry, rejoices in the French appellation of *anse aux Courtes Bottes*, why or wherefore is yet an unsolved mystery to the frequenters of this attractive lake-land.

Until the Quebec and Lake St. John Railway had unlocked the portals of our northern wilderness and brought to our doors the elysium of a hundred new lakes, Lake St. Charles and Lake Beauport had enjoyed the exclusive privilege of attracting tourists and pleasure-seekers from Quebec, on account of the splendid sport their crystal waters afforded to the disciples of old Isaac, as well as for the healthiness of the site and the invigorating effect of their mountain air.

Under manifold aspects have I seen Lake St. Charles. I love it as one loves an old and familiar friend; I have crossed it on snowshoes, amid winter, when its icy bosom sparkled like a vast expanse of molten silver and the moon beams dreamily lingered on the virgin snow.

I have communed with the fairy lake when the "change of the leaf" invested its verdant, silent banks with tints of surpassing beauty,—scarlet, pink, orange, mauve, green, maroon, borrowed from the overhanging hardwoods of maple, silver birch, beech, oak, fir, hemlock. Let me try and recall a blissful night—in June—long, long ago, when youth's halo gilded the future and when my footstep was as light and elastic as that of the woodland cariboo, browsing under the leafy dome of the adjacent forest. I recall a joyous quad of Quebec barristers being asked to dine with a re-

spected *confrere*, the late Judge Charles Gates Holt, at his pretty Swiss chalet, which overlooks the lake, at its outlet. It was my privilege to form one of the party. After beguiling a social hour, under his hospitable roof, we were asked to try our skill, at sunset, with fly and rod, on the speckled beauties who haunt the cool retreat, in the waters of the upper lake. The legendary guide and forester, old Gabriel, and his assistant, were accordingly enlisted, and soon two canoes, linked together by thongs and stout poles, as a greater security against accidents, were rapidly nearing Echo Bay. The heat of the day had been great, and we were told not to count on a rise until close to sunset. An hour's brisk paddling brought us opposite to William Darling Campbell's cosy cottage, which we saluted with a rousing cheer; our friend, seated on his verandah, returned the greeting by giving us on his violin, "*La Claire Fontaine*." On went our Argo in quest of the golden fleece. We entered Echo Bay. The fates, or rather the heat of the day, was against us; the finny tribe frisked and jumped, ahead of us, in rear, all around our craft, but could scarcely be tempted to bite. "*Sacrebleu!*" ejaculated Gabriel, in his broken English, "never did me see the like; *mais*, wait a bit, *mes bons messieurs, de la ville*. Wait for me to put on a more bright *mouche*—fly, you call it."

We were in the act of bidding adieu to Echo Bay when Gabriel, turning over the quid in his left cheek, said: "L'Echo! L'Echo! before we leave we must have L'Echo if we don't get the fish," and suiting the word to the action, he yelled to the pitch of his voice "Josette!" and forthwith from the dark, deep, distant mountain peaks came back to us and to the old trapper, the name of his respected old spouse. This roused us; one and all we raised a shout—in which might be heard the words, "Cartier" and "Macdonald," and on the brisk night wind, were returned the honoured names of our two cherished statesmen then guiding the ship of state; we woke the mountain echos with ever so many other names.

Retracing our course, we hugged the shore, nearly opposite to the Campbell Cottage, to see the effect of a bright fly on the fish that might be lurking in the cool water of the

numerous springs which empty in the narrows. The last gleam of sunset was gilding the cloud-capped hills to the west; the canoe was allowed to drift quietly on, when lo! and behold, there was a splash, followed by a wide, increasing circle in the eddy and a magnificent trout was safely landed on board. Two other sprightly fellows followed and were secured. Time was stealing on us; we paddled leisurely, listening in the stillness of the evening, to the measured cadence of the paddles rising and falling in the liquid element, when suddenly a sweet, girlish song burst on the night air, followed by the distant jingle of a cow-bell. "Hark! hark! what Naiad have we awoke in this elfish spot!" ejaculated the youngest of our party, a romantic, youthful barrister, on the eve of committing matrimony. "Hark!" and we could faintly catch the following:

"Last May a braw wooer came down the lang glen,
And saer by his love he did deave me.
I said there was naething I hated like men,
The deuce gae we'm to believe me, believe me,
The deuce gae we'm to believe me."

T'was our friend's C——'s highland lassie, descending the hill to the lake, with her milk pail, to milk the farm cows, humming a Scotch song. A rift in the hills let in at this moment a departing ray of Old Sol, and again a pleasant sound came forth from the woods.

This time t'was a stave of weird bird music—loud and clear—probably the evening hymn of a feathered chorister, to the Creator, "Sweet! Sweet! Canada! Canada." "Thanks, little friend, your shrill clarion speaks truly anent our dear country." I had just delivered this trite remark when a hermit thrush, the Orpheus of our woods in June, pealed forth from an umbrageous pine its liquid, fluted, metallic trills. Then came from a deep fir grove, in an upland, the unmistakable call of a blue jay, followed by the note of a rain fowl—old Gabriel called it a *pivart*; to ornithologists it is well known as the golden winged woodpecker.

"Listen to that fellow; no sign yet of rain," I said, "but look out for to-morrow."

"Fiddlest cks!" exclaimed one of our legal friends, "I do not believe in birds as augurs and do not care for any except when served up roasted or broiled."

"Let us have," I persisted, "more of that divine, unsophisticated, bird orchestra. You have just heard the white-throated sparrow warbling, 'Sweet, Sweet, Canada!'