

A NIGHT AMONG "THE THOUSAND ISLANDS."

A CALM quiet starlit night,—when the blue depths of the bespangled sky seem really measureless, and the slight breeze which steals across the bosom of the spring clad earth, is as soft and fragrant as the breath of an infant,—is lovely, entrancingly lovely, on mountain or plain, in city or hamlet; but never has its enchantment as deeply stirred our hearts, as when, in the hey-day of our youth, we gazed upon it from that verdant spotted sheet of water, which forms the eastern extremity of Ontario. To this well known and often described spot, by us so dearly loved, and affectionately remembered, our thoughts ever return, when some chance circumstance recalls to us the sports of years gone by, when we were as free from restraint or care, as the breeze which rocks the forests of our dear native Canada, and when our empire over the creatures which are ever the prey of man, was as secure, and as ruthlessly, and constantly exerted, as that of the eagle over the leveret, or the wolf over the deer. Now, the cares of manhood fetter us, and if it were not so, we perhaps have lost even the inclination for the miles of stealthy walking, "*still hunting*" the deer; the hours of patient watching for a shot at some grim, gaunt, corn destroying bear, or the mad excitement, and desperate exertion of a snow-shoe race with the leader of the herd, which ten years ago were to us the greatest of all terrestrial enjoyments. Still we have our pleasures, many and great, and we are thankful for them, and one of them is to recall and go over, in imagination, some joyous, bright, breezy, autumnal day, in the mountains of the Ottawa, when the echoes round the still lakes reverberated to the unwonted sound of our double barrel, or some still, dark night, among the Thousand Islands, when the barbs of our deadly spear were tinged with the blood of innumerable denizens of the deep.

On such a night as this, not a breath of wind stirring, a night too in the beginning of June, when the air is soft and balmy, did we, and our dear and steady friend, Charley Stanton, commence our preparations for a fishing excursion among the Thousand Islands. The sun had just set, as we strolled together down to old Stannington's cottage, by the lake side. Gleefully we walked—and never had we better reason for our joyous anticipations of sport, than we had that night. The surface of the lake was as unruffled

and calm as the sky, and no clouds showed us cause to fear that any envious ripple on the water would come to the rescue of the hundreds we had destined to die by our hands that night.

Old Stannington, or as we profanely called him, "Stanny," was sitting near the open door of his "shanty," smoking his darling pipe, and looking with a well pleased countenance, upon the smooth lake and clear sky. The old fellow was (alas! like many of our ancient friends, he *is* no more,) one of those characters, which Cooper would have delighted to paint; and weak as our pen is, he shall have a special introduction. Picture to yourself a tall handsome man, standing about six feet two, and very powerfully built, with a harmonious roundness of figure, without being fat, which we never observed in any one else—his head, partially bald, and his forehead naturally lofty, appearing to extend and rise to the crown of his head, with long iron grey hair hanging down over his shoulders and back—his features fine and regular, his carriage perfectly upright, almost majestic, and with all this a quiet simplicity and dignity of manner, impressing you with the idea of a great man, who was perfectly unconscious of his own greatness,—and you have before your mind's eye, our old steersman Stannington. His dress consisted of a coarse white woollen shirt, open at the throat, a grey jacket, grey trousers, reaching about half way down the leg below the knee, and coarse shoes. Hat, he wore none, and as to cravats and stockings, Stanny disdained them. Taciturn to an extraordinary degree, Stanny never spoke three consecutive words except upon two subjects, sporting and mormonism; and upon these he was loquacious and enthusiastic in the extreme, especially when his "boys," as he called us, were his audience. His disquisitions upon his two hobbies were sometimes exceedingly ridiculous, as in his excitement, on our fishing excursions, the praises of the Prophet sometimes became strangely intermingled with execrations on some vigilant pike, or ridicule of some clumsy sucker, or awkward punt.

By the side of this, our right hand man, smouldered a fire, and over it hung about fifty eels blackened with smoke, which Stanny was curing for his winter's provision.

"Hurrah! for the boat, Stanny," said Charley, "is the pine all in,—prog stowed away?"