

equipped skiffs darting to and fro, the parties of visitors in stylish New York toilets lounging on the wide piazzas or just setting out on some water excursion. The view from the tower of the "Thousand Island House" is a magnificent one, commanding the whole channel of the river, east and west, for some twenty miles, with the large wooded mass of Well's Island in the foreground, the tower of Westminster Park rising above the trees, while below, the wide, blue river, studded with islands, stretches away towards Brockville, and above, the eye follows the narrow, winding channel, crowded with islands in most picturesque grouping, which lies between Well's Island and the mainland of the State of New York, stretching a rugged surface, partially wooded, for miles away in the background,—a little river, with its rushes and water lilies, winding out close by. Looking, or sailing up the "American Channel," as this part of the river is called, one feels as if the populating business were a little overdone! The eye grows tired of one trim, gaily painted villa after another, and it is quite a refreshing contrast to glide round into our quiet Canadian waters, where the solitary Lorn glides in unmolested dignity amid islands whose tangled shades are still as unspoiled by man as when, two hundred years ago, De Frontenac and La Salle made a state progress through their many windings with their retinue of canoes and *bateaux*. It may well be hoped that Government will reserve a reasonable proportion of the islands to be kept in their primitive wildness,—a bit of pure nature, in which eyes grown weary of city streets may find occasional rest and refreshment. The camper's tent among the trees does not spoil the sylvan picture,—rather gives it an added interest; and if campers are careful—as they ought to be—not to injure the beauty amid which they pitch their tents, it is well that they should have some free space wherein to wander and sojourn at will.

The American Canoe Association has, for two or three summers past, fixed its annual camp at Grindstone Island, on a bare, round-shouldered, tawny hill conspicuous from a long distance round, by the contrast it makes with the general green or purple tones of the islands. Though it has a slight fringe of trees along the water's edge, it seems rather a bare site for an encampment,—the attraction to the canoers being in the wide bay which spreads out between it and Well's Island, affording a spacious basin for aquatic exercises. It is a pretty sight just now to see the clusters of white tents, each local society camped by itself, usually with a central marquee to serve as a sitting-room,—the lady members of the association (for there are lady members) having their own little separate encampment among some shady trees alone, and hundreds of canoes, American and Canadian,—“Rob Roy,” “Indian,” and “Rice Lake,”—lie, drawn up side by side, or are lightly gliding over the wide blue bay, propelled by their owner's paddle or by two fairy-like sails, at bow and stern, carried by most of the canoes. Many of the little craft are beautifully finished in fine, varnished wood, and as they skim over the bay they seem to be the very perfection of a pleasure boat. One day of the camp is devoted to races, in which the canoers have an opportunity of exhibiting their nautical skill with great effect, the whole usually winding up with a grand illumination,—when all the little camps are brilliantly lighted up, and a long procession of lighted canoes, some of them forming fantastic figures of animals, winds and twists about like a fiery serpent over the dark water; while a huge bonfire, fireworks, and the lights of steamboats and steam launches add to the brilliant and Venetian effect of the whole. This is enhanced by the lively strains of band music, and some splendid rowing songs which come with very striking effect from the men in the canoes. This festivity ends the friendly tournament with its pleasant holiday and healthful exercise. After it, the campers fold up their tents like the Arabs, and silently steal away in their canoes,—some of them “paddling their own canoes” home. This “Meet” has now become a regular event of the season among the islands.

The “Canoe Camp” is only about five miles from Gananoque, which makes as good a point as any for seeing the islands, which are very numerous and picturesquely grouped. One of the finest views in the immediate vicinity is, however, a good deal spoiled by what looks very much like a small barn moored at the edge of one of the prettiest islands,—which obtrudes itself unpleasantly as a jarring feature from almost every point near the village. It would be a good idea to have an inspector appointed by Government, whose duty it should be to prevent such positively disfiguring additions to these beautiful islands. With this exception, however, the evidences of human habitation among these islands are not unpleasantly obtrusive, most of the houses being embowered in foliage through which you only catch glimpses of them here and there. “Doradale” and “Camp Iroquois” are the names of two of the prettiest island abodes, and “Ferncliff” is a charming retreat, on the mainland, with a fine view and picturesque ravine. “Tremont Park,” on a long, wooded island opposite Gananoque, is a collection of pretty summer cottages

scattered along the shore under the trees, presenting an inviting look of coolness and quiet. Several professors of Queen's and Victoria Universities have their summer homes among these islands, and a “Club House” for students of the latter is being erected. Many pleasant, family reunions take place among these sylvan retreats. One patriarchal family of twenty, a mother with her sons, daughters, and grandchildren, have had a little camp of their own for some happy weeks, enjoyed by both old and young.

The illumination of the islands and river residences about Gananoque is now an annual spectacle, a pleasant way of celebrating its civic holiday. Where there are so many striking points of view, it is easy, by means of Chinese lanterns and coloured lamps, to make an endless variety of beautiful effects, and the *coup-d'œil* of clustered lights outlining the rocky islands and headlands, and marking some of the larger buildings of the village, was exceedingly fine on the occasion of the late illumination. Yet, after all that art can do, Nature, with her calm, silent dignity, can always infinitely surpass it, and when the glare and glitter of the lights had died away, and the late moon arose on the scene, we felt that no artificial illumination can be half so beautiful as that wonderful one, so often repeated, “without money and without price,” which turns the rippled river into a sheet of rippled silver, and bathes, in an unearthly and idealising glory, every weather-beaten rock and rugged pine and bit of bosky woodland with its mysterious depths and contrasts of light and shade. And this wonderful revelation of beauty, too, every sojourner among the islands can have freely, for nearly half of every month. After all blessed consolation to the impecunious—the best things of life are those which we receive “without money and without price.”

FIRE-FLY.

A SUMMER IN THE MANITOULINS.—I.

THERE were two of us, Mac and I. We had a few summer weeks to spend out of town, and at last the time had come when we were to decide where. Of course we had fairly earned this vacation, and had been long looking forward with high anticipations to the pleasures it would bring us.

Where should we go? With all deference to Hamlet, this, and not “that,” was the question. We hadn't money enough to go to Saratoga or the sea-coast or to Europe, and we didn't want to go there anyway. For vacation life in these cases seemed to us to be very often not so much recreation, as a continuation in another sphere of the fashions and follies of the city. But we wished to avoid all that, and in truth to recreate ourselves with the freshness and unconventionality of nature.

We remembered that Grimsby and the Thousand Isles and Muskoka are less aristocratic than the resorts previously mentioned. But these have been subjected in a greater or less degree to “improving” influences, and are becoming more and more populous. And one feels sometimes like getting away from all improvements and all crowds, and starting life anew as it were, in primitive conditions.

Meantime the great question was undecided. Mac was becoming uneasy, and something had to be done. Just then a friend suggested a trip among the Manitoulin Islands. We were assured that we should find the scenery on the route both fresh and beautiful. So the matter was settled, and when the *Pacific* steamed out of the sleepy harbour of the ancient town of Collingwood we went with her.

The *Pacific* and the *Atlantic* are the regular mail boats for all the northern ports of Lake Huron. Each of them makes the round trip to Sault Ste. Marie every week, and they frequently run down to Mackinaw Island from the Sault with excursion parties. But as Mac and I had several weeks to spare, we decided not to take the trip continuously, but to drop off for a few days at such points on the route as promised to be of interest to us. And so we had prevailed on the steamboat agent in Toronto to mark our round trip tickets “good to stop over” at such places.

After calling at Meaford and Owen Sound, we reached Wiarton at midnight. This little town is situated on the Bruce Peninsula, and is the most northerly point of the Grand Trunk system of railways.

It was a magnificent night. The full yellow harvest moon had but risen over the bay. A stream of glory seemed to have sprung up from some enchanted fountain in those mysterious regions far away under the moon, and it glowed and sparkled with a calm celestial richness as it flowed across the bay towards us. The delicate haze that elsewhere rested on the water formed the banks of this magical stream, and we felt that if we were only to sail out upon it, it would surely drift us away to the beauty and delight of Hesperian lands and the Fortunate Islands.

On the west side of the bay, and almost over our heads, great limestone cliffs, resplendent in the moonlight, towered far above the masts of the vessel. A dark fringe of bushes overhung the cliffs, and through their topmost branches glimmered the silent stars of the Great Dipper.