

MUSKOKA.

PAPER I.

BY JOHN B. SPURR.

There is something so romantic in the word Muskoka that it is seldom spoken without imparting to the hearer the conception of a wild and indigent country in which the towering trees of the primeval forest still hold aloof their heads, only to bow to the wield of the woodman's axe as the country becomes cleared. Its chief characteristics are known to everybody. The rock with which its name is so inseparably connected, is deemed sufficient to daunt the most sanguine expectations of the would be adventurer and the descriptions given to the outside world are such that it is now only settled by those who, with a strong arm and a resolute will, are determined by dint of hard work to make a comfortable home for themselves and their families.

The physical features and general aspect of the country at once attract the attention of the visitor and leave him without a doubt as to whether he is there or not, once he has passed the threshold of its pale. He does not ask any one if this really is Muskoka for his eyes would tell him the truth even if he received a negative answer and he is assured with a full conviction that if they ever deceived him before there is no optical illusion now.

The numerous lakes with which this rocky country is interspersed are an attractive addition to the sublimity of the scenery rendering the artist his very ideal of picturesque beauty. The Cedars gracefully spreading out their arms to reach the water, give a rugged outline yet artistic appearance to the scene, while the towering pines above them cast their long shadows into the lake below as if it were a mirror in which they were admiring their own beauty and stateliness.

The artist and naturalist are both lovers of nature; there is then something analogous in their views. The difference may be briefly stated as this, one takes the scene as it presents it-