

The Rockwood Review.

A DAY ON THE ST. LAWRENCE.

Ontario has but few days to be compared with the spring time of the old world, but we have a jump almost at once from a lingering and reluctant winter into an enthusiastic and joyful summer, filled with sunshine, birds and flowers. The few real spring days are golden though, and the last week in May and the first days of June are incomparable. The average man feels that it is good to live, and may perchance realize the fact that Spring Awakening Romance is as near the realization of an idea of heaven as is possible—he may not analyze his sensations, may not grasp the details of the picture, but the general impression is there. To the student of nature the days are full to overflowing, scarcely a turn without its touching revelation of the story of the universe, either in plant, insect, or bird life. In the last week of May the birds are seen and heard at their best, and the majority of the eager ones are busy with their nests and eggs. To the dull eyed plodder a robin is simply a bird, one of a class, a robin's nest is a type of all nests, a thing of sticks or grass and other odds and ends, a robin's egg simply a little thing of blue, and—well just what you would expect an egg to be. What does the average man see in a morning's walk through the fields and woods—birds and trees and flowers in a general way. Ask him what birds and flowers, and he may not be able to tell you one. He has been a student in our public schools, and has learned to be the same as his companions, has arrived as nearly as possible at the "dead level" ideal set up, and has lost the use of his eyes, and a share of the happiness at the disposal of anyone who is willing to grasp it. Come with me for a few minutes, and we shall see what can be found to interest in a short excursion on which birds are to form the subject of investigation. To-day we shall sail down a few miles of the River

St. Lawrence, and see how fares it with the dainty Terns, which at one time nested on many of the rocky isles of the 1,000 island group. It will soon be a matter of history that such was the case, as the summer camper has long ago learned that a flying gull is a pretty mark to shoot at, and has not hesitated to sacrifice the exquisite Terns as a tribute to his deadly skill. Off we go in a skiff heading in the direction of a marsh, where loons and mud hens (Florida Gallinules,) at one time bred freely. As we draw near, up rises a lonely and watchful blue heron, who ever does sentinel duty in the marsh, and gives silent warning that danger is near. The heron is without doubt an exceedingly shy bird, more so even in the far northern lakes than near the haunts of civilization, where he has become in a measure accustomed to the sight of man. Now we see a marsh harrier sweeping over the rushes, now soaring; again sweeping on in restless search for frogs and rodents. What if the fiery King bird and garrulous red-winged black bird chase and chatter at the intruder, they have little to fear for the marsh hawk is one of the most useful of the so called birds of prey. The loons are not here though, the gallinules are not in evidence, and although we hear the grebes noisily laughing an invitation to come and look for their nests, we cannot stay, for it is a long row to Chimney Island, whither we are bound. At a point some two miles further down, our naturalist guide, who apparently has eyes ever in his finger tips, and whose memory for birds and their haunts is a marvellous thing, remembers having seen a yellow-bellied Sapsucker in a poplar tree some years ago. To the observer, that was a thing to be noted, for birds like men become deeply attached to their homes, and even if their nests are rifled of their treasures, will frequently return year after year to the familiar tree or favorite