

THE Cities and Towns of Canada

ILLUSTRATED.

XII.

ON THE UPPER OTTAWA.

FROM MATTAWA TO TEMISCAMINGUE—ARRIVAL OF THE HUDSON BAY COMPANY'S FUR FLEET—A LONG JOURNEY IN A BARK CANOE—INCIDENTS OF CAMP LIFE—SURMOUNTING THE RAPIDS—GRAND SCENERY—A PICTURESCUE MEETING—AN EXCITING CANOE RACE—LIFE AT A HUDSON BAY COMPANY'S POST—CROQUET AND ICE CREAM IN THE "WILDS"—A GLIMPSE OF INDIAN LIFE—THE RETURN TRIP.

The timber had all passed and Mattawa was settling down into a half sleepy state, preparatory to breaking up when the fall should once more bring back the shantymen and trade. I waited the arrival of the Hudson Bay Company's canoes with the season's furs from a wide section of the country. I had met some weeks before, at Pembroke, Mr. Colin Rankin, one of the prominent officers of the Company, who kindly invited me to extend my tour to his headquarters on Lake Temiscamingue. It was just such a trip as I had long desired, the country through which I should pass being known to but few besides the Hudson Bay people, a few missionary priests and the lumbermen. So I looked forward to the day of embarkation with great pleasure, and often scanned the river for the expected fleet—for, Temiscamingue being far out of the range of the telegraph or daily post, the time of arrival was greatly a matter of conjecture. Two or three days had passed pleasantly when about ten o'clock on a fine bright morning some one with a quick eye discovered the long, many paddled canoes turning the bend in the river. I was quietly "paddling my own canoe" up the Mattawa and had just felt the pull of a fine black bass on my trolling line when a villager came running along the bank shouting that the canoes were in sight. I quickly gained shore and running up the ridge on which the Hudson Bay Company's post is situated, beheld as pretty a sight as I ever remember. The scenery I have before attempted to describe—a beautiful, quiet stretch of water between verdure clad mountains, and apparently land-locked. Down this sped four of the largest birch bark canoes afloat—every paddle dipping into the placid water at the self same instant, the dusky voyageurs bending manfully to their work with the regularity of clockwork; in the bow and stern of each graceful craft a statuesque figure wielding a great paddle majestically and steering her as straight as ever arrow flew. The sharp bows cut through the water without causing a ripple, but the rapidly-plied paddles left a wake like a steam-boat.

A BUSY SCENE.

When within a quarter of a mile of shore a musical voice struck up one of the old French songs which fit so well to the thud and splash of the paddle. The four crews gave the chorus as one man—not yelling at the top of their voice, but softly and musically; then the quaint air again and the chorus, louder this time as the canoes entered the pretty bay where the landing would be made. In a minute, while the dreamy spell which the novelty, the beauty and the music had put upon me, yet lasted, the four canoes were resting on the soft sand and the crews were rapidly carrying the neatly-packed bundles of furs ashore. There was no fuss or noise; greetings were quietly but warmly exchanged; the men seemed pleased that the journey had been accomplished, but there was very little talking. The contents of each canoe were piled separately, and when all were landed the packs were carried up to one of the store-houses where they were checked off the list or bill of lading. There were between twenty and thirty thousand skins in all—from silver fox to muskrat—all sorts and all sizes—bear, lynx, wolf, beaver, otter, mink, martin, &c., &c. They were packed in bundles of a size and weight handy for carrying across those portages where the patch of water would not warrant the risk of running the canoes fully laden. With the aid of a "tump-line" a man would carry three of the packs. A tump-line, I may explain, is a contrivance to enable a person to carry a considerable weight on the back. It is a band of leather about three inches wide and a foot long, with thin lines of the same material at each end. The band is put round the forehead and the lines are attached to whatever is to be carried. In the case of packs, the bottom one would be tied and the rest piled on and held in position by the hands. An ordinary man will carry great weights with the aid of one of these contrivances, and a really strong man will almost rival Sampson. I am afraid to relate the stories I heard respecting feats of strength, lest my readers should be led to doubt my veracity.

"PAPA" GARSON.

When the packs were safely housed the men were each presented with a new clay pipe and a plug of tobacco. With the exception of one or two all were either full-blooded or half-breed Algonquin Indians. There were in all nearly forty—young men, stalwart middle-aged fellows

and old veterans—one of the latter a Scotchman named Garson, who had been twenty-four years in the Company's service and in that time had visited nearly every part of the vast territory over which their operations extend. Garson is a style of a class of men fast disappearing—one of the old "body-servant" stamp, half-sailor, half-valet; with a profound respect for "the Company" a little less than love for its immediate representative; with the frame of a giant and the nature of a child; equal to any emergency; making self a consideration of secondary importance; as brave as a lion; a simple-hearted, God-fearing soul. Garson had more than once been offered charge of a post, but had respectfully declined, preferring to live his old simple life, looked up to by his fellows, but free from the cares and responsibilities of a "boss." The savings of his life are deposited with the Company—for whom, as I before remarked, he entertains the highest opinions, holding the security to be far superior to the Bank of England. He draws but a trifling amount of his wages—his wants being but few and the service insuring employees' board and lodging. I was surprised one day when the time was asked, to see Garson draw from his fob a magnificent gold watch which could hardly have cost less than \$200. This was the only luxury the old chap allowed himself, I believe. He speaks Indian, French and Gaelic, besides English, and is known among his fellow workers and the Indians as "Papa," and as such looked up to and respected.

The men having enjoyed a smoke and a rest set about different tasks. Some looked after the canoes, turning the huge, but light, craft over and repairing any seam that shewed a crack in the resinous compound which covers the joints. This operation is gone through frequently during a journey where there are rapids requiring the boat to be portaged or carried over. It is not often that a good canoe is wrenched or bruised so as to leak badly, but the Indians believe in taking "a stitch in time." Each canoe carries a supply of "gum" as they call it. When a seam requires "gumming" a piece of the substance is laid on the place and melted by means of a piece of wood on fire but not flaming. This torch is shaped like a Y with the arms elongated and less spreading. The operator holds the crotch over the seam and blows upon the charred wood, producing a glow which speedily softens the gum. In his right hand he holds a little wooden trowel with which he spreads the gum where it is wanted, and finally giving the fire a steady blow the substance assumes a smooth, shining surface and thus a neat joint is obtained. While this was going on, others put up the tents and others again set about cooking pork, making tea and baking bread. The bread is made in a bag and baked in frying pans which are set leaning against a log placed close to the fire. By dark all was quiet about the camps. The men rose at daybreak—I was not there to see them, but they told me so. The day was occupied in covering the packs of furs with waterproof cloth to guard against damage during the trip to the seaboard and across the ocean—all being destined for the London market. Then the miscellaneous supplies—tea, provisions of various kinds, bales of dry-goods, and all sorts of knick-knacks—intended for posts up the river, were sorted out and everything was made ready for an early start next morning. They got off about 7.30, three of them, the fourth in which I was to accompany Mr. Rankin being announced to leave the following day. The way the huge piles of merchandize were stowed away in those canoes was little short of miraculous. To me the load as stacked on shore seemed larger than the canoe, yet to the load there were to be added a crew of nine men! But when the work began the packages and chests of tea disappeared rapidly—poles the length of the canoe being first placed along the bottom to distribute the weight. The merchandize was placed so as to leave small spaces for the paddlers who sat two abreast, level with the gunwale of the canoe. The paddles used in these large canoes are not like the ordinary paddles, but with a blade long and narrow, perhaps not over three and a half inches wide. The men at the bow and stern, however, have huge paddles, with which they can literally lift the canoe whither they want it. The manipulation of these great paddles in the rapids is truly marvellous. The great, whirling surging waves, seemingly bent upon the destruction of the light floating craft, appear to be rendered powerless when the bowsman dips his paddle and merely holds it in a certain position. The canoe which before seemed about to be engulfed in a huge "cellar" or watery recoil, is steadied as if held against a rock, and at the right moment shoots forward by the very edge of the fearful chasm and is borne safely in to the quiet water beyond.

THE LUXURY OF A LARGE CANOE.

The three canoes went off silently and were soon lost to sight round the bend in the river. We did not start till two p.m. next day. Our canoe was a beautiful new craft, not quite so large as the "Rob Roy" which had gone ahead, but a noble boat, riding the waters like a swan and capable of carrying an immense load. During the journey I was allowed to choose a name for the new craft and, having by this time learned something of the early rising habits of the voyageurs, I selected "Peep o' Day," or in the soft Algonquin tongue, "Peetauban." We were twelve souls all told, and though we had a goodly cargo of merchandize we could have taken on three or four more persons—indeed it seemed to me as though a canoe is never really

loaded until there is absolutely no room to stick in another man or pile up any more bales. We fared luxuriously. There is something about travelling in a large canoe which makes it superior as regards comfort to any other form of water conveyance. Sitting in a row boat, even though it be the most exquisitely finished skiff, speedily becomes dreadfully irksome and there is no chance to change one's position. Even on a steamer the situation is but a little better; one has either to sit on a stiff seat, stand, or recline in a close state-room and lose all that is worth seeing along the route. But in a large canoe you ride in regal style, the seat being so arranged that you can either sit as if in a sofa-stall, or loll luxuriously as if riding in the nobbiest of "Broughams." There is ample room to stretch your limbs—how often one longs for this when riding in "Palace Coaches" behind the "iron horse!"—and there is a nice soft backing which permits you to recline at any angle you please. To this is to be added the peculiar motion of the canoe—different to any othersort of progress—steadily onward, but with a regular rise and fall as if the light craft were possessed of life and was eager to press forward yet faster. The sound of the paddles digging into the water, followed instantly by the dull thud caused by the shafts being brought sharply against the gunwale, exercises a soothing influence upon the mind and sets one humming impromptu airs to which the regular splash and beat keeps time.

"ALL ABOARD!"

Saying "au revoir" to our good friends at the Mattawa Post we pushed off; the Union Jack floating in the stern sheets of our gallant craft and our worthy commodore singing in his best style "En roulant ma boule," the crew giving the chorus with a will, at the same time putting the canoe along in lively fashion. It was a lovely day, bright and breezy, the darkest glens of the forest were lit up and the little birds sang as if for very joy. So we skipped gaily over the wavelets; Mattawa with all its white houses and great boulders seemed to sink into the waters, and at last we turned the bend and could hear the roar of the first rapid. This is called

THE DEMICHARGE.

because it is usual to lighten or half unload canoes at this point. We were landed and the men towed the canoe up, two being in the boat and the rest manning a long line which they hauled along shore, sometimes wading up to their middle. A novice would think it impossible to take a boat up some of the places, but the voyageurs never back down; if at a particularly tough chute, they will sometimes rest making the line fast to a tree, and the men in the canoe holding her steady with poles, then, after a brief breathing spell, they will literally walk her up the foaming current through narrow gorges, post-jagged rocks and all without grazing the bark in the slightest degree. A short paddle brought us to another rapid called "The Cave," which was overcome without discharging cargo. About four miles further on we were confronted by

L'ESRABLES RAPIDS.

the roughest on the route where everything, freight and cargo, had to be portaged. This was done very quickly—three men easily carried the canoe, turned bottom upwards, and the invaluable "tump-lines" made short work of the numerous packages. It looked very funny to see the huge boat moving slowly through the bushes—the men carrying it being invisible—and suggested to my mind some antediluvian animal groping for the river. Here we had our first meal and keenly I enjoyed it, the fresh air and excitement doubtless helping my appetite. Our repast consisted of rashers of bacon, fried crut, bread and butter and excellent tea. Our cloth was spread under the shade of a friendly tree and wild roses mingled their fragrance with the aroma evolved from the steaming pot of choice Bohea. The men had finished their meal and once more packed the cargo in the canoe ere we had got through our dessert, which consisted of wild raspberries and blueberries picked among the rocks close by. There was every temptation to linger awhile, indeed the same may be said of all the rapids, for they are characterized by a wild grandeur which is very fascinating. The L'Esrables portage is very greatly improved by private enterprise, and next year travellers will find the narrow path replaced by a good waggon road and teams ready to transport freight across. A pleasant paddle through a deep water stretch between mountains was our experience. It was very enjoyable to recline at one's ease, gently swayed by the regular pulsation, as it were, of the canoe, and lulled by the splash of the paddles, meanwhile being carried past scenery of the most beautiful description. The sun was low and the placid waters reflected the delicate tracery of the trees in all their luxuriant depth of colour, making the shore look delightfully where all had been as burnished gold before. Then the sound of falling water was heard, and ahead, to our right, appeared a pretty little cascade, the picturesque finale of a stream whose course we could trace by the deflection in the mountains from which it came. Then a most peculiar picture presented itself—the river seemed fenced across, but what looked like a fence proved to be the handrail of a floating bridge constructed at considerable cost by Mr. E. B. Eddy of match-making (sulphureous, not matrimonial) fame. The winter road from Mattawa crosses at this point into Lower Canada,

but the ice is always bad on account of the mountain rapids being a short distance above, hence the bridge, which is built in sections, joined with chains and pulled across by means of a windlass. During the time the rafts and logs are running it is stretched out along shore. A toll of twenty-five cents per vehicle is charged. In the vicinity of the bridge—that is to say away back of the mountains is Snake Lake where Mr. Eddy has timber limits. The Mountain Rapids have nothing remarkable about them, except that on the Ontario side of the river there is a very high mountain, from which the rapids take their name. The next stage in our journey was the entrance into what is termed

SEVEN LEAGUE LAKE.

a pleasantly diversified stretch of unbroken water about eighteen miles long—the seven leagues being the paddle measurement of the old voyageurs. Many delightful bits of scenery delight the lover of the picturesque as he journeys through this part of the Ottawa.

MOSQUITOS.

The approach of night caused our leader to look out for a suitable spot for camping and, a clear, grassy bank being spied, we were soon ashore and in a brief space of time there was a good fire blazing and the tents pitched. We ate our evening meal seated as closely as possible to the fire—for the mosquitos seemed particularly desirous of making our acquaintance. The smoke held them pretty well in check, and indeed we were not greatly troubled by them at any time during our journey—the season seems to have been a bad one for flies—for which Providence be thanked, for I was told that when the "flies"—under which head are lumped mosquitos, blackflies and sandflies—are really in a healthy condition, life in these parts is hardly worth having. I would strongly advise everyone who proposes to travel during May, June and July, not only in the "wilds," but in the rural districts generally, to provide himself with a mosquito net for use at night. They can be made very cheaply and will fold into a very small compass. The best shape is oblong, about six feet long, three feet wide and three feet deep, with tape hooks at the four corners so that the net can be suspended with strings. I remember many a sleepless night passed in hotels at fashionable summer resorts when I would have given almost anything for one of these excellent contrivances.

AN EARLY START.

We all slept well and were roused just as the stars were beginning to fade. "That's morning, Garson!" said our chief, enquiringly scanning the sky. "Yes, sir," answered the veteran. It was about three o'clock. While the canoe was being made ready we took a cup of tea—intending to breakfast later—and in a few moments we were afloat and quickly speeding over the placid water. Though in the middle of June the air was quite chilly till the sun rose, but about ten o'clock we were fairly scorched. The advantages of an early start were very plain. Before we began to feel the heat we had made splendid headway and could well afford to take it easy until the temperature moderated, but the voyageurs seemed to be heat-proof and paddled on with a steady stroke as though they formed a single piece of machinery and were set to work at a certain rate of speed. We breakfasted beneath the shade of some overhanging tress by the river-side. The canoe was moored broadside on by means of two saplings tied to the cross-bars and held on shore by a pile of rocks. In this way it rides easily and is kept from chafing. Two fires were blazing—the men cooking for themselves and Garson attending to our wants—the aroma of broiled ham was soon sniffed and within ten minutes after landing we were enjoying a first-rate meal. The rapidity with which these meals in the wilds were prepared and the quietness which characterized the whole proceeding struck me as most remarkable. I venture to say that with a company of any other nationality there would be noise and clatter, one calling for this and another for that, ending, perhaps, in a series of disputes or a downright quarrel. But with the Indians and old voyageurs quietness and regularity are, apparently, cardinal virtues and common characteristics. Throughout the whole trip I never heard an angry word or noticed an angry look—all worked harmoniously and cheerfully.

THE LONG SAULT RAPIDS.

Having satisfied our appetite, we once more embarked, the fires being carefully extinguished—a precaution never forgotten—and headed for the Long Sault Rapids, passing, on the Ontario side, the mouth of the Jocko River where Mr. E. B. Eddy has a large farm. Running almost parallel with Seven League Lake, and at this point distant only a few miles is, Lake Baucheau where Messrs. Eddy and Bryson own large timber limits. The Long Sault Rapids cover about six miles, the river being somewhat serpentine. The men paddled up a considerable distance, taking advantage of the eddies and striking into the current at a terrific rate. It was wonderful to see how they gained the mastery over the swift-flowing waters. To me it seemed at first as though the light craft would be carried away down stream the moment it felt the force of the rapids, but the men knew their strength, and though it was tough work, causing the perspiration to start in great beads, they forced the canoe up inch by inch till comparatively quiet