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A WEEK IN THE WOODS BEHIND QUEBEC.

"WELL, Harry, what do you say? Will you come? I have everything prepared. My man is to be at the house at five o'clock; it will be a lovely night, and we shall have a right jolly time of it, if you will only come." That was my opening speech to Harry Busk, as I burst into his law office, and flung myself *sans ceremonie* into his comfortable arm-chair, reserved for favored clients, and rather boisterously disturbed the extremely proper air that always hung about everything belonging to Master Harry, until we could get him into the woods, and then he was as rough and careless as a Canadian sportsman should be. For a long time Jack Swivel and myself, Jack Swivel's friend, by name Tom Boon, had been planning a week's fishing of hard roughing it at the back lakes behind Quebec, and had been trying to stir up Harry Busk into coming with us. Saturday night he had half promised, and had, in fact, prepared everything for the start; but Sunday he had said that he thought he couldn't leave his office, to which he was sticking like a leech; and now, on Monday morning, the very day we intended to start, Jack and I were more than half afraid that he would not go with us, and had come to make a last attempt. We were then most agreeably surprised when he quietly replied to my interrogatory.

"Yes, Tom; I think that it will do me good, and set me up for my work, and so I shall go. You start from your place at five, and will pick me up a few minutes after, I suppose?"

"Bravo! for you, old fellow," was the return Jack and I gave him for his resolve. "Till five, then, *adieu*; mind you're ready, for we'll start pretty sharp;" and, in high spirits, Jack and I sauntered off to select a few more flies, and see if rods and guns were all right; for it was the last Monday in July, and, as we did not intend returning until the first Monday in August, we had made up our minds to have a crack at the woodcock in the summer covers, as well as a raid upon the trout and bass.

At five o'clock my man, as I called him, to wit, a farmer from the back settlement of Stoneham, at whose house I usually put up when on any sporting excursion in that direction, was at the door, and a few minutes afterwards we had picked up Harry, and, with nothing forgotten, were en route for the lakes, drawing glowing pictures of the wonderful bags we were going to make. Three hours afterwards we drew up at farmer Wilson's door. His home was a large, comfortable farm-house, rather better and cleaner looking than the ordinary run of houses in that section of the country, very pleasantly situated in a sheltered valley, the greater portion of which had been wrested by his own hands from

the surrounding forest, and was under thorough cultivation. On nearly every side rose up the wooded heights of the Laurentide hills, while through the valley there ran, just a short distance from the house, one of those tempting trout streams which abound in the district, the outlets of the numerous lakes lying in every hollow of the mountains. Within, Mrs. Wilson had prepared for us a bountiful country tea—cream, eggs, strawberries, raspberries, fresh bread, and a host of other good things, for which she modestly apologized; but hoped we would taste something, even if it was not town fare—we showed her if we appreciated it—*some*—for the drive had served to put a wonderfully keen edge on appetites which were never very weak. Harry, however, wished, right or wrong, to cast a fly in the river first, as he was afraid it would be too late afterwards; but Jack and I convinced him that we were hungry—*very*—and that there would still be some fish left in the stream on the morrow, so he aided our attack on the supper; and afterwards, feeling very comfortable, we all three settled round a large fire before the house, and smoked with the burly farmer and his two strapping sons, Andy and my namesake Tom, the pipe of peace—no, I'm wrong, only two of us did so, Jack was making love to the blooming Sarah, our host's eldest lassie, and shamefully impressing her susceptible country heart with his fine town airs. Lying there round the fire we discussed the week's plans; Andy and Tom were both to come with us, as the hay being in, and the oats not yet ripe, they could easily be spared from the farm, and we were to make a grand tour of the fishing grounds about, commencing with the upper waters of the Jacques Cartier, and the rest *de suite*. Then, as we were to start at daybreak, we turned in about half-past nine, and slept the sleep of the dreamless.

At five in the morning we were stirring, at least Jack and myself were, but Harry was not to be found, until, on calling him from the door, he made his appearance, with about a dozen very nice looking brook trout. Evidently he was going in for fishing, as he went in for everything else—from law downwards—with his whole heart and strength. A splendid fellow was Hal, when you could once get him interested in a thing.

A light breakfast, and we were off; Harry, Jack and myself with our necessities for the week done up in knapsacks, and as large a bag of provisions as we could conveniently carry upon our backs, and our rods in our hands, and Andy and Tom, the one with a light tent, a small bag of provisions, and one of our guns; the other with a large bag, and the remaining gun. And so for four long hours we tramped along, at first singing an occasional chorus song, but subsequently becoming very taciturn. At last the Jacques Cartier's rapid stream appeared in sight; a minute more, and we were upon its banks, where, with very audible sighs of relief, we flung our burdens on the ground, and seized upon the occasion to rest, and bait before setting to work to paddle and pole up to our camping ground. But Andy did not give us long to wait, for he shortly appeared with the canoe from some nook or other, and, putting in the things, asked if we were not ready yet, informing us at the same time that we had some three or four hours work before us, and then a camp to build. So in we got and started, and for two long hours worked the canoe up a stream that seemed to me to be running like a mill-race. At last we came to the foot of a rapid too strong for all our poling, where, after narrowly missing an upset, we were obliged to land, and make a portage.

In case any of my readers, if any I have, should not know what a portage is, I will explain. When, in going up or down streams in a canoe, you come to any fall or rapid too dangerous to pass in your boat, it is usual in Canada to land, divide the canoe load, shoulder the light bark vessel, and so march by land till the difficulty is passed.

We had a portage of about a quarter of a mile to make, and by relieving Andy and Tom, who carried the canoe, of part of their loads, and the additional axe and camp-kettle picked up at the time we got the canoe, we succeeded in getting all to the head of the portage in one journey; then reloading, we proceeded on our way, and about an hour afterwards arrived at what Andy called "the camp," though precious little signs could I see of it, except some half-burnt logs, and wet and dried again ashes. Setting to work, though, we soon gave it a comfortable appearance. The tent, a gable one, was strung between two trees, and a fire lighted, why, it would be hard to tell, for it was a sweltering hot day, and the mosquitoes, the pests that necessitate a fire for the sake of the smoke, earlier in the season, had disappeared, while in the tent was collected a heap of soft leaves and branches of pine trees for a bed. And then preparations were made for regaling the inner man. Harry, the most enthusiastic fisherman of us all, had been down to the river while the camp was under course of construction, and on being hallooed to, made his appearance with about a dozen trout, varying in size from six to nine inches; these were soon prepared for cooking, and followed some primitive flour and water pancakes upon the frying pan. In a short time our meal was ready, coffee with sugar, but no milk; bread, pancakes, and trout—very rough, but we had good sauce for it—appetites gained by our hard morning's work,—while the whole was washed down with a "nip" all round before opening our campaign upon the river. Then, leaving Jack's well-trained cocker, Bang, in charge of the camp, we took our several courses up and down the stream, to try who could make the biggest basket before evening.

Not till the sun had nearly disappeared behind the mountain tops did we return to camp, and then, one by one—wet and weary, and hungry, but with a host of adventures with rock and current, and "whopper trout," to relate—we dropped in. Tom had returned first, and lit a fire, and made preparations for supper. That despatched, we proceeded to turn out our baskets, and count the slain—sixteen dozen and one, all told—pretty evenly divided among the five—Andy and Tom, with much inferior tackle, nearly equalling the rest of us. Jack had the largest, a stunner of five pounds weight, whose hard capture he consumed half the evening relating to us over our pipes and toddy, drank from our tin cups that served for all drinking purposes. Fatigue, however, soon compelled us to turn in, and having piled up the fire, we were soon all in the arms of Morpheus.

Before five we were stirring, and all went down for a refreshing plunge in the river. The morning was lovely—one of those cool glorious ones of mid-summer, which so often precede a broiling day. The woods were all alive with songsters, and the river sparkled gloriously in the morning sun. On returning to camp we set about to prepare for breakfast, and on going for some fish, found, to our annoyance, that a great many of the finest, which had been carelessly left on the ground, had been eaten by some mink or other during the night. Tom appeared rather delighted at this, as he said he would catch it, if it would only come again. The little wretch,