

PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK

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MAKING A CANOE.

THE picture on this page shows how the Indians in the far North-West make their beautiful bark canoes. "For this wild land of broad lakes and rapid rivers and winding creeks," says the Rev. E. R. Young, "the birch-bark canoe is the boat of all others most admirably fitted. It is to the Indian here what the horse is to his more warlike red brother on the great prairies, or what the camel is to those who wander amidst Arabian deserts. It is the frailest of all boats, yet it can be loaded down to the water's edge, and under the skilful guidance of those Indians, who are unquestionably the finest canoe men in the world, it can be made to respond to the sweep of their paddles, so that it seems almost instinct with life and reason. What they can do in it, and with it, appeared to me at times perfectly marvellous. Yet when we remember that for about five months of every year some of the hunters almost live in it, this may not seem so very wonderful. It carries them by day, and in it, or under it, they often sleep by night. At the many portages which have to be made in this land, where the rivers are so full of falls and rapids, one man can easily carry it on his head to the smooth water beyond. In it we have travelled thousands of miles, while going from place to place with the blessed tidings of salvation to these wandering bands scattered over my immense circuit. Down the wild rapids we have rushed for miles together, and then out into great Winnipeg, or other lakes, so far from shore that the distant headlands were scarce visible. Foam-crested waves have often seemed as though about to overwhelm us, and treacherous gales to swamp us, yet my faithful, well-trained canoe men were always equal to every emergency, and by the accuracy of their judgment, and the quickness of their movements, appeared ever to do exactly the right thing at the right moment. As the result, I came at length to feel as much at home in a canoe as anywhere else, and with God's blessing was permitted to make many long trips to those who could not be reached by any other way, except by dog-trains in winter.

Good canoe-makers are not many, and so really good canoes are always in demand.

Fragile and light as this craft may be, there is a great deal of skill and ingenuity required in its construction.

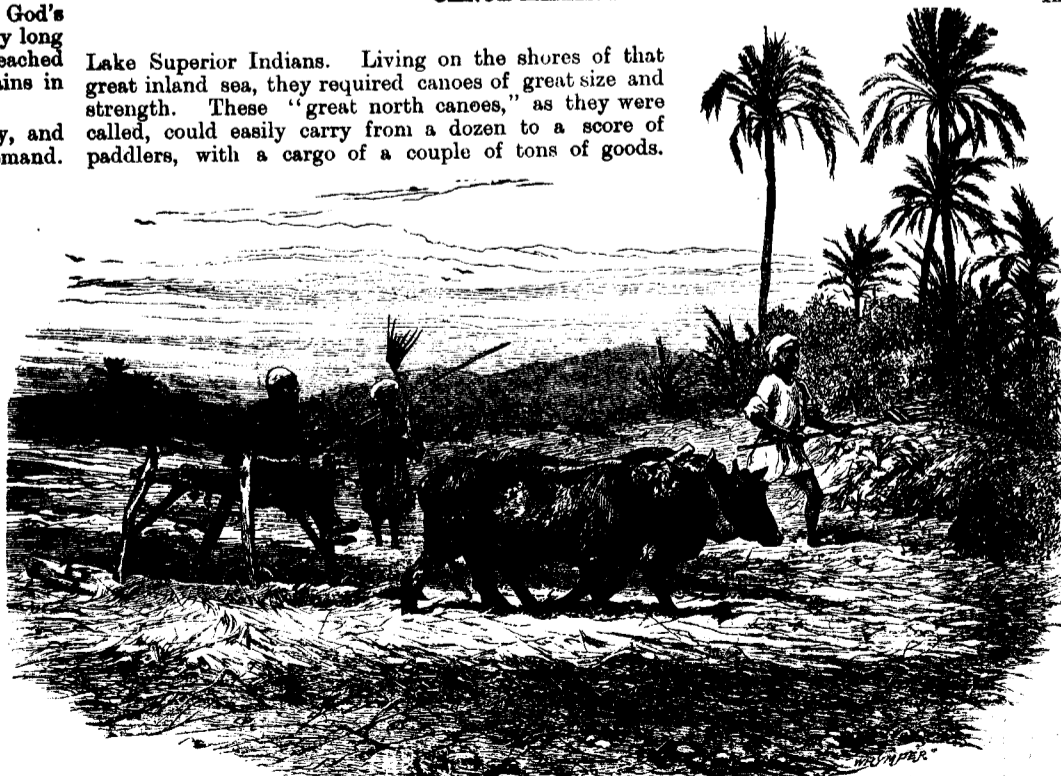
Great care is required in taking the bark from the tree. A long incision is first made longitudinally in the trunk of the tree. Then, from this out, the Indian begins, and with his keen knife gradually peels off the whole of the bark, as high up as his incision went, in one large piece or sheet. And even now that he has safely got it off the tree, the greatest care is necessary in handling it, as it will split or crack very easily. Cedar is preferred for the wood-work, and when it can possibly be obtained, is always used.

Canoes vary in style and size. Each tribe using them has its own patterns, and it was to me an ever interesting sight, to observe how admirably suited to the character of the lakes and rivers were the canoes of each tribe or district. The finest and largest canoes were these formerly made by the



CANOE-MAKING.

Lake Superior Indians. Living on the shores of that great inland sea, they required canoes of great size and strength. These "great north canoes," as they were called, could easily carry from a dozen to a score of paddlers, with a cargo of a couple of tons of goods.



THRESHING IN PALESTINE.

In the old days of the rival fur-traders, these great canoes played a very prominent part. Before steam or even large sailing vessels had penetrated into those northern lakes, these canoes were extensively used. Loaded with the rich furs of those wild forests, they used to come down into the Ottawa, and thence on down that great stream, often even as far as to Montreal.

Sir George Simpson, the energetic but despotic governor of the Hudson's Bay Company for many years, used to travel in one of these birch canoes all the way from Montreal up the Ottawa on through Lake Nipissing into Georgian Bay; from thence into Lake Superior, on to Thunder Bay. From this place, with indomitable pluck, he pushed on back into the interior, through the Lake of the Woods, down the tortuous river Winnipeg into the lake of the same name. Along the whole length of this lake he annually travelled, in spite of the treacherous storms and annoying head winds, to preside over the Council and attend to the business of the wealthiest fur-trading company that ever existed, over which he watched with eagle eye, and in every department of which his distinct personality was felt.

How rapid the changes which are taking place in this world of ours. It seems almost incredible, in these days of mighty steamships going almost everywhere on our great waters, to think that there are hundreds of people still living who distinctly remember when the annual trips of a great governor were made from Montreal to Winnipeg in a birch-bark canoe, manned by Indians.

Of this light Indian craft, Longfellow wrote:

"Give me of your bark, O Birch tree!
Of your yellow bark, O Birch tree!
Growing by the rushing river,
Tall and stately in the valley!
I a light canoe will build me,
Build a swift canoe for sailing.

"Thus the Birch canoe was builded
In the valley, by the river,

In the bosom of the forest;
All the forest's life was in it,
All its mystery and its magic,
All the brightness of the birch tree,
All the toughness of the cedar,
All the larch tree's supple sinews;
And it floated on the river
Like a yellow leaf in autumn,
Like a yellow water-lily."

This cut is a specimen of several illustrating a series of articles on Our Great North Land, by the Rev. E. R. Young, in the *Methuendist Magazine* for 1893-94.

THRESHING IN PALESTINE.

THE accompanying picture shows the rude implement still used for threshing in Palestine. The sharp edge of the rough framework cuts the straw. The grain is then trodden out by the oxen. You will remember the merciful provision of the Mosaic Law, "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn." Sometimes the threshing instrument is even more rude than this. We have seen one which was merely a sled with a bottom of rough stones which served to cut the straw.

The threshing-floor is chosen on some high, smooth-trodden