

THE ST. LAWRENCE EN FETE.

If our majestic river seems at present somewhat more deserted and destitute of large craft than we should expect the great water highway of this part of our Dominion to be, it is, at least, temporarily gay and alive with small vessels of every description, bright with flag and pennon, making summer holiday among the green mazes of the Thousand Isles. The capabilities for *villeggiatura* of this unique and magnificent play-ground for our people are being, year by year, more and more widely recognized. The longing to get away for a time from the heat and hurry of city life to the tranquil sylvan influences of cool sequestered shades and waving boughs and many sparkling waters, and the

Sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,

is consciously or unconsciously acting more and more strongly in drawing ever-increasing numbers to seek pleasant summer retreats for a few weeks of refreshing rest. Of course it is a comparatively small number who feel the full force of Wordsworth's meaning in our quotation; yet, that the latent feeling acts unconsciously through the complex mass of influences that guide the movements of the unreflecting, there is little reason to doubt. Even to the most frivolous pleasure-seeker there come times and seasons when, in the presence of unspoiled nature, the

Motion and the spirit that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things,

asserts itself to overawe and subdue, at least for a time, the lightest nature. And the great advantage of a "*villeggiatura*"—as the Italians call it—over all mere excursions is, that such ever-varying influences of the day or night have a fair chance to make themselves felt in their full purity and force. How much we lose for example, by hurrying into lighted rooms as soon as the daylight is gone, those know who love to hold communion with the beauty of the night, with its wonderful cloud scenery, its flashing meteors, and calm unchanging stars.

It is, therefore, no slight boon that, in the very heart of a well-settled country—ere long, doubtless, to be thickly peopled—we have such a charming wilderness, set in the grand breathing-space of our broad river, interlaced and subdivided by the rippling waters, and generally so rocky and unarable in its character that Mr. Henry George himself would acquiesce in its being set apart from purely utilitarian uses, as a great pleasure-ground. That it should be kept, as far as possible, as a pleasure-ground for the people, the present writer has always strongly advocated. If all the islands were allowed to become private property, and so monopolised by those able to purchase or lease, and to put up more or less costly permanent abodes, it would be doing a wrong to the fast-growing people of Canada which could hardly be undone, while it would not confer any proportionate benefit on the richer purchasers. Already not a few of the islands in the Canada waters are thus occupied by summer abodes, sometimes tasteful, sometimes very much the reverse, and so long as the greater number are left unspoiled in their native wildness and beauty, we need not grudge the present island dwellers their pleasant homes. But, as the Canadian Government still has so many islands in its own power, let it be chary of parting with them, remembering that they are held in trust for the Canadian people for generations to come. Many a toil-worn breadwinner, who can only spare a few days and a few dollars for his yearly summer out and that of his family, can compass a tent and a bivouac on an island, to whom either a summer residence or a summer hotel would be a utopian dream. Let a certain proportion of the islands, then, be kept intact for this large class of our people, and guarded from rude spoliation or disfigurement by the nearest lighthouse-keeper or other officer appointed for the purpose, and such wise and liberal provision will earn the gratitude of unborn generations.

To the summer tourist who can afford time for a leisurely cruise in steam or sailing yacht among the tortuous windings of the islands, nothing can be more charming than to follow them in and out at will, threading a sudden picturesque bend like that of "Fiddler's Elbow," gliding through a narrow canon-like channel, with lofty, seared crags above, like that at the head of Wells' Island, mooring his boats in some shadowy bay or some still lagoon, almost encompassed by drooping hemlock or light birch or beechen boughs, and studded with the dark, glossy leaves and snowy stars of the water-lily—a nook in which it costs little to imagine that naiads and dryads might bathe and dwell. But the only representatives of the nymphs wear irreproachable summer toilettes and broad hats trimmed with white muslin, as they sit beneath their sun umbrellas "in the stern of the wherry," or under the striped awning of the swift little steam yacht, or oar or paddle in hand helping to propel the slender skiff or

canoe over the placid waters. The darting steam-yacht, indeed, is seldom quite out of sight or hearing. You encounter it at every turn, frequently with a retinue of light skiffs in train, taking an American fishing party on a day's pic-nic, and, as you see them suddenly dart out from some lonely water alley, you remember that in the most solitary bit of wildest, loneliest nature—as wild and lonely as when the Red man's paddle alone broke the perfectly mirrored reflections—you have only to take a short row to find yourself in the centre of the gaiety, and fashion, and extravagance of an American pleasure resort; for the three main American centres—Clayton, Round Island, and Alexandria Bay—are swarming with summer sojourners and casual tourists. The steamboats plying on the route are daily crowded with passengers; yachts, large and small, are skimming up and down the beautiful channel which divides Wells' Island from the American shore, where both islands and shore are thickly studded with light summer villas in all possible styles, more or less fantastic. As you round the eastern extremity of Wells' Island, after passing the pretty, quiet nook in that part of it called Westminster Park, you pass into a sort of fairy-land succession of semi-Chinese chateaux and boat-houses, abounding in pagodas and bridges, till one could easily fancy oneself in the midst of the scenery of the willow-pattern plate. The trim lawns and flower-beds, the bright little yachts and skiffs, the generally festal air of the whole *coup d'œil*, with the village of Alexandria Bay and the mammoth Thousand Island House in the background, are in striking contrast to the wild solitude of Fiddler's Elbow, but are rather stimulating than refreshing to the seeker after rest. It is, however, a pretty little Arcadia, or would be, if the city sojourners would be content to cultivate a little more Arcadian simplicity, and leave artificial luxury and extravagance behind them in town. But a certain class of humanity is always hopelessly *Philistine*, and has to a great extent lost its capacity for simple and natural pleasures.

The view from the top of the tower of the Thousand Island House is simply magnificent, one which would be glorious anywhere, but in this generally flat region, is doubly appreciated. Down below, stretches the great river, calmly and softly blue, dotted here and there with pine-crested islets, a vista stretching almost as far as Brockville. Looking upward, the eye takes in point after point of wooded shore, group after group of deep green islands, and to the right the richly wooded mass of Wells' Island—some eight or ten miles long. Scarcely less beautiful, though less extensive, is the view from the tower of the pretty Norman hotel at the "Thousand Island Park," of Wells' Island. The "Park" itself is a pleasant summer resort for people who do not object to live a good deal in public. The tents and cottages along the shady margin of "Crystal Bay" look tempting enough from the river, and the opportunities for boating and fishing are unlimited. But the crowds of fashionably dressed visitors that throng the promenade beside the dock and lounge about the hotel piazzas, take away sensibly from the idea of *rusticating*; and privacy there is none. The sojourners, however, seem to take it all with great equanimity, and very possibly the novelty makes up for the inconvenience to those who, unlike our American cousins, have any objection to this description of public life. The semi-religious character of the "Park," so prominent in the beginning of its history, has to a great extent disappeared. Occasional lectures or sermons from eminent American clergymen, with now and then an advertised "attraction" of a quartette from New York choirs, are all that maintain this feature of the place.

Coming up from Wells' Island, by the charming crag-bound strait already noticed, you emerge on a wide bay, called Erl Bay, rather unhappily noted for boating accidents, the western extremity of which is formed by a long, bare hill, at the end of Grindstone Island, one of the largest and most northerly of the American islands, famous for its granite, which is worked for commercial purposes. This is the spot which has, this summer, been chosen for the encampment of the American Canoe Association. Coming upon it in the slanting light of afternoon, it is a pretty sight, the long, undulating hill of a rich, soft, golden tint, the dark green fringe of trees by the river edge, and near, and partially in their shade, the clusters of tents, arranged according to the several clubs, while, in front, drawn up on the beach, lie all the canoes which are not skimming about on the calm or lightly rippled waters. These are mainly of the "Rob Roy" build. Some are made of ordinary painted wood, others of a kind of thin polished "veneer," painted to imitate the orthodox birch-bark. Most, if not all, have provision for putting up two fairy-like sails, which, in a light breeze, carry them on with what seems the very perfection of water locomotion. When a number of these are winging their way over the blue water, like so many huge water-fowl, varied by the blowing white sails of schooner or yacht, or by the swift, straight course of a panting steamer, the river looks *en fête*, indeed.