

THE LAKE OF THE WOODS.

THE pilgrim who enters Ontario from the west and abides for a time at Rat Portage, the first point of importance that he reaches, is apt to be impressed with the provincialism that seems to pervade the atmosphere, in striking contrast to the cosmopolitan spirit of the west. Not many years since, when the Boundary Question was a vital problem, that freedom which is the characteristic of western communities seemed to run riot in the Disputed Territory; but now that municipal government, with its abundant officialism, has been imposed by the firm and paternal hand of Mr. Mowat, there is but little to distinguish the citizens of Rat Portage from those of any ordinary Ontario town. It is only raised out of the average by the unequalled hideousness of the town itself and the unrivalled beauty of the surrounding district. To one who knew its people well in the time of the boundary troubles, when they were divided into various angry factions, it seems odd to find them now transformed into thoroughly law-abiding and peaceful ratepayers, with a keen interest in the government policy of road improvements. Provincialism is certainly no crime, but, rightly or wrongly, the people of the North-west charge that in Ontario it finds its chosen home. Not a few of them, of perhaps a more malicious turn of mind, say that Toronto is, at the present time, its most refined and cultured exponent.

The future of most of the people of Rat Portage seems to be bound up in the ultimate success of the mining industries of the Lake of the Woods. In every direction, far down the Lake, down the Winnipeg River, and along the line of railroads, mining locations have been taken up by enterprising explorers and investors; and, even to the unpractised eye, the indications are clear that when sufficient capital is forthcoming there will be a rich return. In the meantime, however, all active operations have been effectually checked by the uncertainty amongst locatees as to title to their properties. It is true that the Ontario Legislature has enacted a mining law similar to those prevailing in the western States. But the refusal of the Dominion Government to recognize the title of the Ontario Government to the lands and minerals in the lately disputed Territory, has prevented the latter from issuing patents or mining leases. Pending this state of affairs, outside capital has not come to the assistance of those who are holding mining locations simply by right of discovery. I know a case (by no means an isolated one of its kind) where a location was taken up in 1880 and held since then, through poverty and many hardships, in the vain hope of finally securing a title. We visited the property and found it guarded, in the interests of the original holder, by a graduate of the Black Hills, a practical miner, who showed us the immense veins of quartz that traversed the location. Scarcely a fragment of the ore can be examined that does not show numerous traces of free gold. Several owners have heretofore trusted in the good faith of the Government and invested considerable capital in developing their properties, but at the present time only one shaft is being sunk on the whole lake. In every well-regulated house in Rat Portage there can always be found a collection of specimens from mines in which the head of the household has an interest, and from which "some day" he expects to extract a fortune. It is a great pity that the two contending Governments cannot join in guaranteeing security of title to those who proceed under the provisions of the Ontario Act. The treatment meted out to the settlers in the Rainy River district, some of whom have been settled there for years, is still more shameful.

While loitering about the lake we saw a party of four Winnipeg gentlemen—one of them a well-known Q.C.—embarking just below the first falls on a canoe trip of two hundred miles down the Winnipeg river, through a district almost unexplored and wholly unsettled. Their deeply-laden canoes, guided by two dexterous natives, were well provided with everything, from maple molasses and hard tack to hymn-books and musical instruments. No article, however, of their luxurious outfit seemed to excite half as much solicitude as did the unadorned proportions of a rather bulky keg. Their intended course was down the Winnipeg River to its mouth at Fort Alexander, and thence along the easterly shore of Lake Winnipeg to Selkirk. The last sound we heard, as the canoes were gently borne down the current of the majestic stream, was the shrill note of an Orange party-tune, played by the Q.C. aforesaid, probably in exultation over the defeat of Gladstone, of which we had just heard.

It is singular that the beauty of the Lake of the Woods is not more generally known. But when Winnipeg becomes a great pork, wheat, and cattle centre, with rail communication to Hudson's Bay, and competing lines to the south, its millionaires will make Rat Portage a rival of Minnetonka, and will substitute lakeside villas for the unlovely Indian tepees that now decorate the shores of the lake. This land of lake, rock, and forest will always exercise a fascination over those who dwell upon the level and monotonous prairie, and are confined, in their aquatic exercises, to the waters of the turbulent and muddy Red.

Descriptions of scenery are generally tiresome and always fail to reproduce the beauty of the reality. But a trip of a few hours down the lake, passing from Rat Portage through the unexpected and picturesque Devil's Gap into the varied and ever-changing expanse beyond, would, in its enchanting beauty, prove delightful to the most *blasé* traveller. The scenery along the Rainy River (which flows from Rainy Lake to the Lake of the Woods) is even more picturesque. To understand the prodigality of nature here, one needs to learn that the Lake of the Woods, though but sixty miles in length, has fifteen hundred miles of coast-line, and is dotted with seven thousand islands. This latter statement, though undoubtedly exaggerated, does not seem improbable to the voyager, whose eye almost grows weary in watching the constant and rapid changes in the view about him. Truly, after sojourning here for a space, one can appreciate the force of the last words of a Canadian journalist, whose spirit passed away on its shores: "The beauty of the Lake of the Woods pervades me."

Winnipeg.

JOTTINGS ALONG THE C. P. R.

THE boundary of the Province of British Columbia is formed by the watershed of the main range of the Rockies; it commences at the summit of these mountains as they are approached from Calgary lying at their eastern base. The plan adopted by the Canadian Pacific Railway in order to obtain a passage for their road over the apparently insurmountable natural barrier which intervenes between the North-west Territories and the Pacific Coast is quite obvious to a close observer. It consists in laying the course of the line up the valley of one river towards its source in the mountains, and down the valley of another towards its mouth till the ocean is reached. To illustrate this, I will describe the course of the C. P. R. from the prairie region terminating at Calgary on the eastern base of the Rocky Mountains. It there enters the valley of the Bow River (flowing east from the Rockies), and follows it to the summit of the mountains, or boundary of British Columbia, which it crosses through the celebrated Kicking Horse Pass, then descends the valley of that river on the western slope of the Rocky Mountains till it enters the valley of the Columbia; this it follows for seventeen miles to Donald, where it crosses the Columbia River and runs for thirteen miles along its left bank, to the mouth of the Beaver River; and this it follows to the summit of the Selkirks, where it enters Rogers's Pass and descends the western side of the Selkirk Range by the valley of the Ille-cille-waet to Revelstoke, the second crossing of the Columbia River. The Gold Range of mountains now bars the way, and is surmounted by the valley of the Eagle River, crossed at Eagle Pass, and descended on the west side by way of the Thompson and Fraser Rivers through the Cascade Range to the Pacific Coast.

Donald is the principal town in the mountain region, and owes its importance to the Canadian Pacific Company, which, impressed by its favourable situation, selected it as the end of the mountain and commencement of the coast division of their road. To facilitate their arrangements they have cleared the Columbia Valley, and protected it thoroughly from fire by a judicious cutting of the bush, and have erected large workshops in which all necessary repairs between Donald and Vancouver are to be executed, besides a commodious and artistic station and lunch room and a twelve-stall engine-house. It is anticipated that about two hundred and fifty men will be permanently employed at Donald. The wide, well-gravelled yard, with its numerous tracks and lines of cars, gives the town a very imposing appearance as the eastern and western trains approach it; and the busy sound of the clang of hammer and anvil from the outlying shops indicates the bustle and activity prevailing in the Columbia Valley. The Company, in addition to their other improvements, have put up a large boarding-house for their employés, and also opened an extensive shop, which carries on a thriving business and supplies any wants which the bona-fide tradesmen of Donald cannot minister to. At present, the stock of the two shops is limited to the actual necessities of existence, and these do not cover an extensive scale. Glass, plate, and crockery can be procured; but cooking utensils and tins of all kinds must be supplied by the Company's "store."

Donald boasts a hotel known as "The Selkirk House," a frame building of modest exterior (with which I have no personal acquaintance, my own house being ready and waiting for my advent): it is beautifully situated, facing the whole eastern range of the Rocky Mountains, and forms the beginning of a long line of frame, log, and tent structures (western "shacks"), which stretch away westward down the valley, following the line of the railway, which here runs in a small cutting. About one hundred feet or more of level ground lies between the shacks and the line, filled with an untidy collection of rough stones, timber, and *débris* of all