

Summer in the Free-Grant Land.

Parry Sound and Muskoka districts have been called the Highlands of Ontario, and the paradise of the summer tourist and sportsman. It is a steady climb northward and upward, over the Toronto and North Bay section of the Grand Trunk Railway, about 800 feet above the level of Lake Ontario, to the rock-ribbed and forest-coated hills of the Magnetawan River country. [Note.—Originally spelled with an "a" after the "g"—Maganetawan.—Ed.] A land it is of rarified and bracing air, better than any patent tonic, a country in which rocks and boulders are ambushed behind the universal green of hemlock and spruce and birch and cedar and other forest trees more common in the woods of Old Ontario. Dustless and comparatively smokeless, the immeasurable expanse of green is be-ribboned with sinuous streams, haunted by trout in waters amber-dyed by the decaying vegetation and tan-bark of the woods, and begemmed with beautiful lakes. After the lumberman, trees seem to spring up naturally everywhere, except on a few curious, low "beaver meadows" of "blue-joint" and "cut-throat" grass, through which rivulets wander to the larger streams and lakes.

Into the valleys of this country have been washed the fertility of those everlasting ridges, and the farmers were yet haying near the middle of August; barley was yellowing, but oats and spring wheat, of which a good many excellent fields are seen, were still mostly green. White Fife is the favorite variety of wheat, yields as high as 42 bushels per acre being reported. The roads are narrow, many of them winding unfenced through the forests, and the corduroy road is yet in evidence. Everywhere and always one hears the somata of the cowbell. The herds are usually small, and devoted to home dairying for the most part. Some hand separators are used, but generally the cream is raised in deep-setting cans, suspended in wood-encased springs of pure cold water, which are found near almost every home. A good few housewives are trying their hands at incubator chick-hatching. Sheep do well on these grass-coated hills and valleys, and as a farm stock are fairly well holding their own, but thousands more may yet be reared to advantage. On some farms harvesting is still done with the grain cradle.

The wealth of this country has been its timber, but from an agricultural standpoint it is in one sense the bane of it. While people count on making money out of lumbering or sawmilling, farming will not progress. Hay and oats, to carry horses and a limited number of other live stock through the winter, are staple crops. The arable land, which is very fertile, might be made much more productive by more generous manuring and better culture. As the tall timber disappears it is succeeded by lower growths of bush. The red raspberry seems everywhere indigenous. Thousands of quarts of luscious fruit have this season fallen to waste upon the ground. Blueberries appear in more infrequent patches, both on marshy and high land. On the latter they are renewed by burning over occasionally. Six miles out of Magnetawan village there are hundreds of acres of bushes literally loaded with this mild-flavored, wholesome blue fruit. A couple of pails full were picked in a few hours on a plot the size of a small house, without any apparent lessening of the supply.

When the timber is gone much of the country is too rocky to be suited to agriculture, but should be reforested by the Government. Around the lakes it is pre-eminently a tourists' country. The Ontario Government has permanently set apart a large area north-east of Burk's Falls as the Algonquin National Park. Though the pine is mostly gone, there is still a wealth of other timber here, but unless near navigable water, more railways are needed to make it profitable to handle in many cases. To the farmer, better railway service would be a boon, making farm produce, tan-bark, etc., more salable. They are patiently waiting, but some have gone to more promising fields, as an occasional abandoned homestead indicates. They welcome the idea that via Georgian Bay points, such as Depot Harbor and French River, Parry Sound may yet be on the great highway for the products of the Canadian West en route to the seaboard. Years ago Parry Sound and Muskoka were designated the "free grant" districts (pine and minerals reserved), single men getting 100 acres of arable land, and heads of families 200 acres in a block, on condition of clearing five acres per year for three years, building a house, and remaining so many months yearly on the allotment. "Old-timers" can entertain the tourist or hunter with many tales of timber-stripping, "queer" free grant deals, and "tough" affidavits made by adventurous sharks. Free-grant land is still available to some extent in Parry Sound, through the Crown Lands agents, but at present "New Ontario," lying away further north, is attracting the pioneer and the speculator, while the resources of Parry Sound remain slightly latent, awaiting the touch of additional and better transportation facilities.

Meanwhile the summer-tourist and autumn-hunter business grows apace. The Magnetawan River, from Burk's Falls westward to Byng Inlet on Georgian Bay, is a marvellous stream. An Indian name, its significance appears to depend upon the fancy of the "oldest

inhabitant" with whom you happen to be talking. One says "big channel," another "smooth flowing," and a third "swift flowing." You take your choice, according to where you are. Of its character one can judge when, as the bird flies from Burk's Falls to Lake Cecebe (wild duck), the distance is less than nine miles, but by the steamboats, "Wenoh" (first born) or Wanita, it is about 23 miles; a dark and tortuous stream, often less than 100 feet wide, but about 20 in depth, fringed with heavy-foliaged trees, and beating its way back and forth between two long rocky ridges, keeping the traveller in a state of perpetual surprise. Every tree and bush and snag is mirrored in minutest detail on its surface, motionless as death until broken by ripples from the prow.

Lake Cecebe, 1½ miles wide, enfolding a number of islands, is simply a river expansion, and below Magnetawan village and the locks, to overcome a rapid, is another, Lake Ahmic (beaver). Besides a few residents who hospitably entertain, there are on these lakes a number of tourists' resorts and summer houses owned by private parties, but the fashionable crowd who throng portions of the Muskoka Lake region have not arrived. Far from the maddening crowd, serenity is yet the pervading note of the Magnetawan country. There is plenty of boating, bathing and fishing (bass, pickerel, perch, et al.), but the catching is hardly equal to the guide-books. A few people from the Southern States summer here every year. There is on Ahmic Lake a "Camp Kentucky," where black Dinah washes every Monday morning by the lake side, and at even Sambo thrums his old banjo and monotonous "Under de Bamboo Tree" to the weird laugh of the loon overhead. With the characteristic courtesy of "the South," they respect the British flag, under whose folds they dwell in peace secure, though Lake Cecebe had its "flag in-

Letters to a Young Farmer.

Receipt of many letters from young men desiring to engage in farming, asking advice and information as to the best course to pursue in obtaining and managing a farm, has led to the resolve to address a series of open letters to such seekers after counsel, with the hope that the same may be helpful. While the hints given are founded on considerable practical experience, the writer makes no claim to infallibility, and desires that they be adopted only in so far as they fit the circumstances and environment, and meet the approval of the reader after careful consideration. It may be well at the outset to remind our young friends that while farming is undoubtedly the healthiest, and, on the whole, the freest and most independent of vocations, and that while many men having little capital and little of the education of the schools, and being, apparently, not above the average in intelligence, have been fairly successful, and some distinctly successful, in their farming operations and in making money, others having the advantages of a good education, and a farm given, or left to them, free of incumbrance, have failed on equally good land to hold their own, in some instances having fallen hopelessly into debt, and finally lost their farms. Financial failure, it is true, is the fate of some in all lines of business and professional life, and there are vastly fewer instances of this among farmers, in proportion to the number engaged, than in any other occupation, and the possibility of failure is not here referred to as a bogey to be feared, for it is far from the object of these letters to give a place to pessimism in their composition.

Indeed, we believe that in no calling are the encouragements to hopefulness and faith in the future greater than in farming. If given a fair chance in the preparation of a seed-bed, crops grow while the farmer sleeps soundly as the result of healthful employment, his cattle and other live stock, if properly fed during the day, gain in weight or make milk, the equivalent of money, during the silent hours when the shops of business men and mechanics are closed, the forces of nature, the rain and the heat, which have no helpful influence upon other lines of business, but are often hurtful, join hands in generally furthering the financial interests of the industrious and



The First Settler—New Ontario.

cident" this season, when a local paper, "The Arrow," called down in vigorous Anglo Saxon a party who defiantly kept hoisted the Yankee colors above the meteor flag of England. The Sabbath day, it is pleasing to record, is very well observed by people hereabouts, and Christian services by various denominations are regularly held. The rural school buildings are creditable to the community.

Upon leaving Ahmic Lake, the river ceases to be navigable to Georgian Bay, being full of shoals and dangerous rapids. Guides and canoe portages are necessary to make the journey there. Cecebe and Ahmic are lakes of a thousand moods, placid and ruffled, sparkling in the sunlight, reflecting the intense blue of the honest Canadian sky, glowing opalescent under the summer sun, or sinking into molten silver at early evening, then deepening into violet and indigo, and blackness as the night falls.

It Suits the Whole Family.

Enclosed please find \$2.50, being amount of subscription account. We have received your paper regularly, and wish to continue it. The family enjoy it much. ABRAM BACON.

Harriston, Ont.

When Mark Twain was a young and struggling newspaper writer, in San Francisco, a lady of his acquaintance saw him one day with a cigar box under his arm looking in a shop window.

"Mr. Clemens," she said, "I always see you with a cigar box under your arm. I am afraid you are smoking too much."

"It isn't that," said Mark. "I'm moving again."

prudent farmer, with the result that in the average of years he finds himself in a better position, even at the end of a bad season, than he had feared, and, in a favorable season, better than he had hoped. It is only by recognizing that nature favors the farmer that one can account for the considerable degree of success attained by the large proportion of men engaged in this pursuit, who give no study to the principles on which their business is based, and make little attempt at improvement, farming in a haphazard way, with neither bookkeeping nor stocktaking, and a lack of method which in any other business would be likely soon to end in bankruptcy.

A young man who has been brought up on the farm, under the direction of a father or other friend who was a good farmer, and has learned to do well all the various kinds of work required to be done, will need little advice other than to follow the example and teaching of his mentor, in so far as, in his judgment, it fits his circumstances, keeping his mind open to the need of making such changes in his methods as may be required by the changing markets and other demands of the times, for the style of farming that was best for the markets and times of twenty years ago may not be the best for to-day, although the general principles of successful cultivation and rotation of crops may remain substantially the same. The young man desiring to take up farming who has not been brought up to the work, nor learned to do the manual labor required, will do well to engage with a good farmer for at least a year, so as to become familiar with, and, as far as possible, master of the methods of farm work, or he may, if he be in a position to afford it, take a short course or a full course at an agricultural college with advan-