

THE Cities and Towns of Canada

ILLUSTRATED.

XII.

ON THE UPPER OTTAWA.

FROM MATTAWA TO TEMISCAMINGUE—ARRIVAL OF THE HUDSON BAY COMPANY'S FUR FLEET—A LONG JOURNEY IN A BARK CANOE—INCIDENTS OF CAMP LIFE—SURMOUNTING THE RAPIDS—GRAND SCENERY—A PICTURESQUE MEETING—AN EXCITING CANOE RACE—LIFE AT A HUDSON BAY COMPANY'S POST—CROQUET AND ICE CREAM IN THE "WILDS"—A GLIMPSE OF INDIAN LIFE—THE RETURN TRIP.

LAKE TEMISCAMINGUE.

The river above this point, for about ten miles, winds through some beautiful stretches, diversified with islands; mountains of various heights and shapes sometimes running to the water's edge, and in places receding a considerable distance, always forming the background on either shore. Then we entered Lake Temiscamingue, a noble body of water about seventy-five miles long, and ranging from two to four miles wide, except at the H. B. Co.'s post, where it narrows to a few hundred yards for a short distance and then opens out again to the average width. At the foot of the lake, on the Ontario side, Mr. James McLaren, an Ottawa lumberman owning limits in the vicinity, has a fine farm. A few miles above, on the opposite shore, is Mr. Marten's "hotel," or "stopping place," a busy spot in winter, being the point where the road leaves the river for the land, flowing streams rendering the ice above insecure. The establishment, which, by the way, includes a post office, is located on a sandy point, and consists of a long, low log-house, with barns and stables. The Hudson Bay Co. have here a large building for the storage of supplies, brought up in winter and taken to the Temiscamingue post by schooner or canoe when navigation opens. We did not stop at Mr. Marten's, but pushed ahead on the opposite side of the lake; a sharp look-out being kept for the other canoes, which we felt certain of overhauling.

The scenery here became very grand; indeed, awe-inspiring; in place of sloping pine-clad mountains, were bald-faced, rocky heights, towering probably a thousand feet, marked with great clefts, and with summits apparently overhanging and threatening us with destruction. Here and there a little stream would be seen trickling down a narrow gorge, giving life to mosses and ferns, the vivid green tints contrasting strongly with the sombre hues of the rocky strata. Looking at the tremendous cliffs and then at our canoe creeping along in the shadow line, one could not but feel dwarfed and puny. The water to the very edge of the lake is deep; without rocks or reefs. We went along so close to the shore that it could be touched with an outstretched paddle, and a large steamer might have followed the same course. It is a wonder a steamer has not long ago been placed on this lake, as there is money to be made in towing rafts, which at present have to be hauled for miles along shore by means of a windlass, an operation only possible with favourable weather. A good deal of timber comes from about Lake Kippewa, a fine body of water on the Quebec side running parallel with Lake Temiscamingue, and connected with that lake by the River Kippewa at the upper end, and by a smaller outlet called Gordon's Creek, which comes in near the foot of the Long Sault. A Mr. Robert Porteous has undertaken to improve Gordon's Creek, so that timber can be brought out by it instead of by the Kippewa. This would, in certain cases, save towing up Lake Kippewa and down Lake Temiscamingue—a matter of perhaps seventy miles—but it is not yet completed, and it is said that, to render the work successful will require more money than the scheme is worth. Apart from this, it is alleged that Mr. F. C. Smith, one of the pioneer lumbermen in the district, will apply for an injunction to stop further operations, on the ground that it will take so much water that the Kippewa River route, which he has improved and made serviceable at considerable cost, would be rendered useless. Moreover, every season lumbering operations leave the Gordon Creek region further in the rear.

A LEGEND.

A mile or two above Mr. Marten's, there is an exceedingly high cliff called "The Buffalo"—it is the highest rock on the lake, I believe—and on the face of it the voyageurs have managed to make out the profile of an old woman, which is known as the "Kookoomia." The theory is that this stony personage has the controlling power over the winds and waves, and is further inclined to be rather unfriendly to the voyaging fraternity. To propitiate the old lady it is customary to cast offerings at the foot of the rock—generally a small piece of tobacco. Our men followed the custom, but some of them were inclined to be irreverent, and, instead of throwing a piece of tobacco cut from a plug, they threw a quid. I am of the opinion that the old lady did not perceive this insult, or perhaps she regarded it with contempt—at any rate, no unfavourable wind interfered with our progress.

A PICTURESQUE MEETING.

When about ten miles above Mr. Marten's, some keen eyes discerned two objects just turning a point. A field-glass was brought into requisition, and the two objects pronounced two canoes—the third having parted company, being destined for Hunter's Lodge, the H. B. post on Lake Kippewa. We did not see them again for some little time, and then they were lashed together and bore sails, made out of a pair of blankets. Our men plied their paddles with renewed vigor; it was soon seen that we were gaining, and in due time we were alongside. It was a picturesque meeting. The sun was about to disappear behind the mountains, and its rays came straight down the lake, making the waters golden and sharply defining the lines of the canoes. The voyageurs were all swarthy Indians, clad in all manner of quaint costumes, and disposed among the merchandise in various free and easy attitudes. Sitting in the shadow of the sails was a farmer's wife, who had been given a passage up from Maitland. I suppose my fair readers will be astonished to read that a white woman would trust herself alone with Indians, but it may be a greater surprise to know that white women would be much more liable to unkindly treatment among a company of her own race, of a similar class, than among a host of so-called "dusky savages." The quiet politeness and gentle demeanour of the voyageurs were to me fruitful subjects for thought. Their behaviour would put to shame many who boast of their culture and advanced civilization.

A REVERIE.

When we came up to the canoes, the wind, though light, was fair, and the united craft glided along as gracefully as two swans. A few words were exchanged, the result being that the sails were taken in and the canoes unlashd. So we paddled along side by side. I reclined lazily and enjoyed the scene in silence, gazing now at the picturesque boats and now at the grand surroundings—the placid lake, the towering rocks and the hazy, pine-clad mountains, whose summits kissed the fleecy clouds. A sense of dreamy enjoyment came, and I fell to wondering why in ordinary life there is so little of the beautiful and true and so much that is horribly matter-of-fact or outrageously sham. Amid this glorious scenery, feeling so thoroughly "comfortable," I involuntarily shuddered at the thought of having once more to plunge into the life lived in towns and cities, with its humbugs, its hypocrisies, its "cheek," its grovellingness and its selfishness. The announcement by our commodore that we would land at the first convenient and inviting spot and take tea, put an end to my musings—brought me to my senses, I suppose the reader will say—and in a few moments we were on shore, where the rocks afforded natural seats, and, while the kettle boiled and the ham frizzled, a few of us gathered bouquets of wild flowers, which we found to be both pretty and plentiful. We were now about twenty miles from our destination, and would be unable to make the distance before eleven o'clock. The men were asked if they would prefer to paddle on or camp and proceed early next morning. They chose the former course, and, being well refreshed and the evening cool, they paddled at a great rate. The three canoes for a time kept abreast, but gradually the *Rob Roy*, and our craft, the *Peep-o-Day*, drew away from the older *Chief*.

A CANOE RACE.

Almost unconsciously, it seemed, the crews drifted into a race; quicker and quicker went the paddles, the dignified men at the bow and stern took tremendous strokes with their great blades; all had flung off their head-gear, setting free their black hair, which reminded one of the shaggy manes of mountain ponies; the faces were a study, each a picture of firm determination, the gleaming teeth tightly closed, the veins of the forehead distended, the eyes steadily fixed on the rival boat. For half a mile we kept as we started, then, almost imperceptibly, our canoe drew ahead, inch by inch, until we had gained half a length, when the contestants simultaneously slackened speed. When the *Chief* came up, another trial was made, with a similar result. It was a pretty even match, for though the *Rob Roy* was manned by a stronger crew than ours, she carried a heavier cargo, being a larger boat.

The shades of night now began to fall, and the outlines of the mountains grew dim. The light breeze had entirely died away, and the surface of the lake was like a mirror. For some time we paddled on in silence, then a halt was called, and for some ten minutes or so the three canoes rested, while the men enjoyed a smoke. It will have been noticed that, in canoeing, there are three sorts of stoppages—the short stop afloat for a smoke, the short stop on land for a cup of tea, and the long stop on land for a "square meal," or a regular camp. Having finished their "bacca" and taken a draught of the limpid Ottawa water, our long-enduring paddlers once more bent to their task. It was quite dark, and only the sound of the paddles told us that the other canoes were near by. After a time we got abreast again, and a song was started. These canoe songs have an unlimited number of verses, and, as the chorus is usually repeated twice, one lasts a long time. We were treated to quite a number—"La Claire Fontaine," "La Belle Rose," "En Roulant ma Boule," &c., &c. Among others new to me, was one which told how the singer set to work to skin a snipe—a verse being devoted to details of how he began with the head, another dealing with the neck, a third with the breast, and so on—the chorus repeating

these very interesting particulars and sounding the praises of the snipe-skinner. But, childish as the words of these canoe songs mostly are, the air is invariably pretty, and exactly fitted to keep time with the paddles.

THE JOURNEY'S END.

Presently a bright light appeared amid the gloom right ahead, then another shone out. "That's Temiscamingue," said our leader. The lights seemed to be in the middle of the lake. The singing was resumed with vigour—to let the folks know we were at hand, and in half an hour or so the canoes were alongside a miniature floating wharf moored to a sandy beach, which appeared to stretch right across the lake.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS.

Having been travelling since three a.m., the reader may be sure I slept sound that night, but curiosity to know what manner of place I had arrived at, caused me to be astir early. The first view of Temiscamingue by daylight caused a feeling of mingled astonishment and delight.

The lights in the middle of the lake and the long sandy beach were quickly explained. The lake at this point narrows from, say, three miles to two hundred yards wide, and almost as suddenly opens out again, leaving a point on which the Hudson Bay Co.'s establishment is located. On the opposite, or Ontario, shore, there is a Roman Catholic mission station. On the H. B. Co.'s side, the first building on the point is a storehouse, supposed to be about one hundred and fifty years old—a respectable relic for Canada;—next comes the general store and office; then above, fronted by a nice croquet lawn and three shade trees, is Mr. Rankin's residence. The next building is a storehouse, and the house to the right of the flag-staff is the clerk's quarters. A short distance further along the beach, but not shown in the engraving, is a range of cottages for the regular employees of the Post, sheds for building and storing canoes, &c. The beach is of fine sand, and slopes gently to the water's edge.

AMONG THE INDIANS.

Here the Indians, visiting the Post to trade, pitch their camps. During my stay there were probably thirty families encamped. Most had good canvas tents; the others lived in square wigwams, made of bark. Every camp had at least a couple of dogs; many had half a dozen. These Indian dogs are very fox-like in their appearance—tawny, sharp-nosed animals, quarrelsome, vicious and stealthy. When they are not fighting, stealing or getting a "licking," or snapping at the legs of strangers, they are asleep by the camp-fire or in the sunshine. Among Indians, as among other races, there are to be found those who are industrious, careful and neat, and those who are lazy, thriftless and untidy. The majority of those I saw were of the former class, and they seemed to be living as comfortably as possible under the circumstances, but there were others who appeared to be dragging out a miserable existence, which the winter season would greatly intensify. It is a queer life these wandering people lead. I saw a man pack his wife and family, dogs, tent, provisions, &c., into a two fathom canoe, push off silently and paddle down the lake. I learned that he was going a journey of about one hundred miles, and would be away for many months, when he would return to the Post with furs. Thus the whole of the Indians camped on the beach would steal away, "saying nothing to nobody." In the solitude of the wilds what a varied experience must be theirs—periods of hunger, cold and wet; fancy the sufferings of the sick, the comfortless condition of the dying. With health, and strength, and sunshine, their mode of life seems at first glance free and easy, with a tinge of the romantic about it—almost inviting, in fact—but when health fails, and inclement weather takes the place of the joyous summer days, the picture becomes terribly matter-of-fact.

Under the H. B. Co. the Indians appear to have fared much better than they would have done had they been left entirely to the advancing wave of white occupation. The Company has always been regarded by the aborigines as in some shape representing the Queen, and as the officers have taken great care to cultivate confidence and respect, there has been insensibly given a tone to the society of the backwoods—so to speak—which would do credit to many a community rejoicing in the possession of all modern institutions. I have mentioned the uniformly excellent behaviour of our canoe men—their quiet demeanour, willingness and indifference to fatigue. I must also bear testimony to the honesty and fidelity of the race generally. As I have said, there are good and bad Indians, but the bad are comparatively few, and they are well known. Given a bad Indian, and the chances are that he has been rendered so by strong drink. No liquor is obtainable at the H. B. Co.'s stores, but now and then traders go through the country and leave a track of misery and degradation behind them.

LIFE AT THE POST.

The stations of the H. B. Co. are variously termed Posts or Forts, but there are only two stations deserving the latter name—viz., Fort Garry and Stone Fort, in the Red River territory. The station at Temiscamingue is simply enclosed by an ordinary fence, while bolts and bars on the houses are never thought of. I dare say the reader will imagine that life at Temiscamingue would be a very dull affair. I found it exactly the reverse, and shall ever remember my sojourn there with unalloyed pleasure. In

the first place, the situation is charming, and, secondly, the hospitality enjoyed at the Post could not be outdone. Mr. Rankin is pre-eminently the man for the place he occupies. Quick and far-seeing as a business man, of a determined will, and a disposition not good to thwart, he unbends in a moment and enters into the lighter business of life—in other words, sports and pastimes—with a zest characteristic of youth. In the wilds, threading the forest, or navigating some turbulent stream, he is at home, and his skill, courage, strict integrity and uniform good spirits have won for him the respect and esteem of the aborigines. He speaks their language, sings the songs they love and knows their habits and customs. Mrs. Rankin is a most worthy consort. Born and brought up in one of the foremost towns of Ontario, she cheerfully accompanied her husband to the backwoods, and, like him, she has shown an adaptability to the situation which is truly marvellous. Young in years, but old in housewifely wisdom, she has endeared herself to the employees and visiting Indians by countless kindly acts. Just before I left she was doing what she could to lighten the grief of a squaw who had lost her infant child.

The days passed pleasantly. I found the two clerks, Messrs. Cummings and Simpson, jolly good fellows, always ready to do their best to provide entertainment when released from the store. In the morning we went for a swim; during the day there was fishing, canoeing, a saunter through the woods or up the hills; a book under a shady tree, the Indians making canoes; a visit to the opposite shore and a talk with the priest. In the evening we usually played croquet on the lawn fronting the house. "A croquet lawn in the backwoods!" I fancy I hear some fair reader exclaim. Yes, dear friend, and between the games ice-cream would be handed round. How is that for "life in the wilds!" Perhaps some may have thought that the ladies at Temiscamingue don a dress à la Pocahontas. On the contrary, Mrs. and Miss Rankin might have been set down in St. James street, Montreal, and if they attracted any special attention it would have been on account of the good taste shown in their attire and the grace with which it was worn. Oh! no, there is no needless "roughing it" at Temiscamingue. Whatever drawbacks the isolated situation may have are counterbalanced by a skilful and ingenious use of the means at command. A single illustration will exemplify my meaning. Every window of the house was fitted with a mosquito bar. Consequently we could at all times have the windows open, yet were not annoyed by insect pests. Now, how many country houses within the bounds of civilization (i.e., railways and telegraph poles) can the reader remember as having these simple but important appliances? I question if he can name one; yet it is not because mosquitos are not plentiful anywhere a few miles outside any of our towns or cities. What is the result? One has either to close the windows and be almost suffocated with heat, or open them and find that the lamp has attracted swarms of blood-thirsty flies.

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC MISSION.

is dedicated to St. Claude. There are two priests, Father Pian and Father Laverlochere, the latter the founder of the Hudson Bay Mission. Through exposure and hardships experienced in his early days, Father Laverlochere is prematurely an old man, and suffers greatly from rheumatism. Father Pian is all activity. With his own hands he is building a new church. He has been twice to Hudson's Bay. The farm work, &c., appertaining to the Mission, is performed by four labouring Brothers.

Near by reside three Sisters of the Order of Grey Nuns of Ottawa. They look after the sick, and teach the Indian children.

THE TEMISCAMINGUE DISTRICT.

over which Mr. Rankin has charge, embraces the following Posts: Grand Lac; Hunter's Lodge, on Lake Kippewa; the Barrier, on Kakepongay Lake; Temagamingue, on the lake of the same name, and Abitibi, a Post beyond the height of land, about four days' travel from Temiscamingue. His duties require him to visit all these places periodically and superintend the transactions of the several officers. Having been with the Company since 1849, first at Mattawa, then St. Maurice, next at the King's Post, below Quebec; afterwards on Lake Superior, then at Simcoe—he may be truly said to be well posted. He is very popular with the younger officers, and not very long ago was the recipient of a very handsome piece of plate in token of their esteem. I may mention that the officers of the District have formed an association for the purchasing of books, and by this means they have gathered quite a nice library—one of the rooms at Temiscamingue being set apart for its accommodation.

THE RETURN TRIP.

The time for setting out upon the return trip came along all too quickly. I could hardly believe that eight days had slipped away since I set foot on the little wharf. Our party this time consisted of two canoe loads. Mr. Rankin and Mr. Farr (the latter then in charge of Hunter's Lodge) were bound for Kippewa Lake via Mr. Marten's portage. Mr. Rankin was then to canoe down the Desert River into the Gatineau and so to Ottawa. Good-bye having been said, we pushed off and were soon speeding down the lake. It was blowing pretty fresh, and when we had gone about twenty miles a regular hurricane came on. We were near shore, and, as rain threatened, the order was given to land. This was soon accomplished, and our men quickly