

ROD AND GUN IN CANADA

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A TRIP TO MATACHUAN.

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(Continued from the December Issue.)

This part of the Montreal River is simply beautiful, white waterlilies, and yellow, grow in great profusion along the shore, and in the grass fringed bays.

Boiled hills arise beyond the level valley of the river, at times approaching the very banks, at others receding into the distance, so as to become invisible from the river.

As we paddled along, little Harry became restless, as children will, and to keep him quiet his father told him to watch for partridges on the trees, while his mother assured him that if he would only stop his tears he would certainly see a marten come out of the bush.

I thought how all humanity is akin, all doing the same kind of things, modified alone by the conditions that surround them.

Meechell pointed out to me a beaver house built in the bank of the river. In fact, he showed me two.

He assured me that these bank beavers were not idle bachelors, but that they lived a most respectable life in pairs; raising a family every year, as all good beavers should. I noticed that these beavers had certainly not been idle, for they had cut many good-sized trees, and had evidently commenced to lay in their winter stock of provisions.

I noticed, and indeed it is now a well-known fact, that all the tamarac has died or is dying.

I asked Meechell if he could explain the reason why.

He told me that some four or five years ago a late frost cut the trees when they were first out in leaf. Any other tree but a tamarac could stand this, and live; but a tamarac could not, hence the phenomenon. I have suggested this theory to lumbermen, but by them it has not always been accepted as valid. They say that some worm has done this, a worm that bores into the wood, commencing at the topmost branches.

I am inclined to favor Meechell's theory, and to believe that the lumbermen are accepting the effect for the cause. Of one thing, I feel convinced, namely, that the cause is a climatic one. Be what it may, the fact remains that we have lost our tamarac, a loss that will take over a hundred years to make good.

At the Odush-koon-i-gam we went ashore to eat. Boy cut a rod, and went off to fish. I followed him, and we sought for frogs, but finding none, we made use of a mussel, from off which Boy had crushed the shell. I let him do the fishing, while I hunted better bait. As I wandered further on, I saw a monster bass leisurely swimming along the shore, evidently on

the feed. Back I rushed to Boy, who had missed a fish, and was vainly trying to induce the fish to bite again.

I had him collect some mussels, and kept an eye open for a frog as we walked back to where I saw the bass.

It was there, and hardly had my bait touched the water when it made a rush for it. I struck too soon, and though slightly turning it, I missed it.

At the same time, Noowi rushed up, having secured a diminutive frog. Quickly I popped him on to the hook, and this time I thought I had my fish, but alas, after playing it a few seconds, it got away. Then was I filled with grief and rage. In vain I dangled the lacerated remains of the frog in the water. It heeded not, and, as a forlorn hope, I bade Boy strip the shell from off another mussel. This I threw far out into the deep water, and then, oh joy, the line began to tighten. Once more I struck my fish, and this time I had it. I felt it in my very bones. Boy wanted to grasp the line and haul in by main strength. Luckily, I caught on to what he was at, and stopped him, for he would have smashed my frail hook like a pipe stem.

Long we fought, I and the bass. I had no landing net, nor gaff. My only chance was to tire him out, and then slide him up the gently sloping bank. This I succeeded in doing, so that Boy could rush in between the water and the bass, which he did, throwing up the monster high and dry. He was a happy boy. He danced and shouted. I felt like doing the same thing myself, so I couldn't blame the boy, for it was a beauty. I know that there is no use talking weights of fish without the truth compelling scales, but I have caught many bass which I have weighed, and I certainly would put this fish at six pounds. It was the largest bass that I have ever seen. One may say that, when cooked, it nearly made a meal for the whole party.

After eating, into the canoes again. The sun was very hot. We had eaten a good meal, and, as the Indians said, "we were lazy to paddle," but the canoes pushed steadily on. I must confess that this part of the river was uninteresting. That is, after we left the lakes, and wended our way up the narrow, tortuous river. Not a bad showing from an agricultural point of view, but tedious to the tourist. At the rapid, which is at the foot of Round Lake, we eat again, but the sun was still high, so we pushed on.

When we turned the point into Round Lake, the wind was fine, so we hoisted sail, and rested our weary arms.

There is something very attractive in canoe sailing. The motion is so essentially a gliding one; so restful and conducive to sleep. The gentle wash of the water adds to the soporific effect.