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## A Trip Down the St. Lawrence

*The Last Great Lake, Then an Eddy of Enchanted Islands, a String of Rapids, and a Broad, Big River to the Sea*

By AUGUSTUS BRIDLE

GEOGRAPHERS say the St. Lawrence begins just where the Great Lakes leave off, at the Thousand Islands. Not so; it begins at Toronto on board one of the big boats that carry every season thousands of tourists who don't live in Canada, as well as thousands who do, down as far as Prescott, where the real excitement of the trip begins to commence. Of course that part of the journey is Lake Ontario, which is not adventurous.

Last summer a traveller to Quebec from Toronto, being bunked up with some unknown party, left his luggage in the state-room and strolled down to the barber shop. Half through a hair-cut, a voice called from the rear:

"Is Number 47 here?"

"Present!" mumbled that personage, unable to see the voice.

"Then a friend of mine and myself would like to ask if you'd mind swapping 47 for a state-room all by yourself."

"Nothing easier. Lug in your luggage."

In the evening he had met the two who had swapped rooms. The elder man, who had effected the deal, said:

"That was very decent of you."

"Not at all. Didn't I get a room all to myself?"

"Yes, but we want to thank you. My young friend and myself prefer to be together. He found he was bunked with a stranger, and he didn't like it. So we're glad to be together."

"Oh? Old friends, I suppose?"

"No. No, we only met since the boat left Toronto."

Which may be taken as one of the cordialities that cause strangers to become friends on the St. Lawrence route, which is as much American as Canadian. In fact, more people from down south seem to travel by that route than people from Toronto or any part of Ontario—until you get to Montreal.

A BRIEF call at a nondescript little city that seems to be the port of Rochester as Avonmouth is of Bristol, and you are off again, to snoozeland and Kingston, which in the grey fogs of the dawn peers stone-walled and frowning from sleep at the busy boat soon to be on the edge of the Thousand Islands. Here the last of the Great Lakes crowds and packs itself into a hurlyburly of land and water that has no equal in America for picturesque variety. People wonder why there should be a thousand islands at the head of the St. Lawrence. The same people might wonder why, on the road from Port Arthur to Winnipeg, the solid rocks gradually peter out to ledges, and the ledges to boulders, and the boulders dwindle into mere dots on the land that in Manitoba becomes the uninterrupted prairie. One formation doesn't give way to another without a struggle. Five great lakes swirling down on the head of the St. Lawrence couldn't be expected to do anything but sluice themselves into every nook and cranny they could find in the effort to get out over the land without being forced by gravitation into a regular channel less than a mile wide. Every day, between April and December, the St. Lawrence is born again in this cribbing and confining of a vast chain of lakes into the bed of a mighty river whose last cosmic protest is felt in the churning delirium of the string of rapids that between Prescott and Montreal keeps hundreds of passengers from going to sleep. The Thousand Islands and the rapids beyond them are the tumultuous and headlong conversion of lakes to the majesty of one of the greatest rivers in the world.

Moment you arrive within the enchanting laby-

rinths of this long maze of islands, you realize that this must be the very place where Archie Pelago was born. If there is any kind of island not mentioned in the Thousand Islands catalogue, it must be one not yet emerged from the sea. They are all here, to larboard and starboard, astern and forward, whizzing past with the easy grace of a kaleidoscope; for when from the hurricane deck of a big lake liner doing best of twenty knots you watch these islands dance, big and little, high and low, inhabited and uninhabited, bushy and bare, rocky and verdure-clad, gardenized and unkempt, castled and cottaged and tented—you are liable to imagine that the last little snifter you may have got below stairs went to your head. It isn't necessary to buy the pictorial catalogue that the boy comes bawling up with at fifty cents

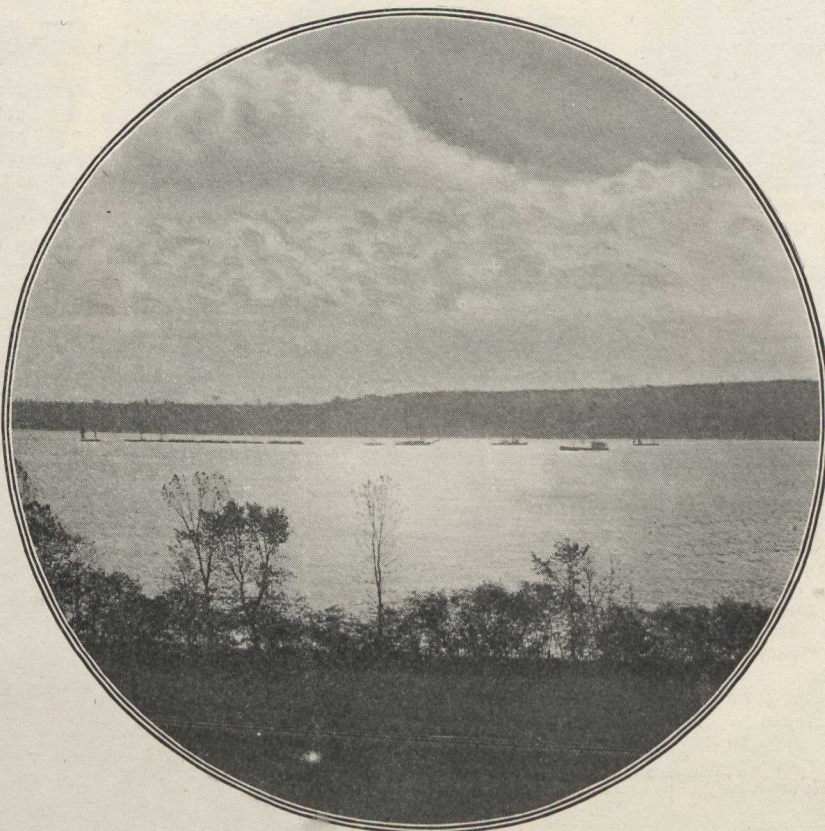
goes; but there should be always the probability of wild people, of gnomes and cobolds and elves and giants—and the navigation company should employ a man whose special business it is to stand on the bridge with a musical megaphone and spiel off, not the names of the plutocrats who have bought up the islands in the name of various flags, but the legends of the improbable that make the passenger forget that money has anything to do with the Thousand Islands.

Middle of a delirious afternoon you swing into Alexandra Bay, which for twenty minutes at the dock is a dialogue duel between the garrulous porters of two enormous hotels each clamouring:

"This way to the Heavenly House—"

"This way to the Miracle House—"

Most of the people who go to either one or the other are Americans; and most of those who get aboard for the trip down to the rapids are the same. By noon the boat wheedles her magnificent way through the last of the islands into the unencumbered St. Lawrence. The first stage of the river drama is over. The second is about to begin; and the scene changes at Prescott, where the passengers step off the big liner and go aboard one of the chute-the-chute crafts that daily go up and down the lower part of the upper St. Lawrence between Prescott and Montreal.



A river, which combines the majesty of the Mississippi, the picturesque glamour of the Hudson and the idyllic charm of a woodland brook.

apiece. These islands can't be catalogued. It takes hours to get through them; and if you take a notion to count a dizzy thousand, you may very well do it, and then be sure you haven't kept tab on half the lot.

THE book informs you that most of the castles are owned by wealthy Americans—who evidently have as much good taste as money, for they have always improved on the original. But it's ridiculous that no imaginative scribe has ever undertaken either to collect or to invent legends about these islands. It's not enough that rich Canadians and Americans have built castles and cottages on them and combed and cultivated the rocky, bald-headed and tree-clad slopes into paradises of pastoral beauty; or that summer-resorters should stick up tents and tepees, and idyllic canoesters should thread in and out by the light of the moon to the swish of the soft, soothing paddle and the murmur of love-haunted voices. That's all very well as far as it

on to his new summer suit. Hence—language and much laughter. Now comes a rain and you are held up by the mist. On again. The sun struggles out. It is welcome. Nobody wants to hang up this side of Lachine until morning. And Lachine to be worth while must be seen in its full blaze of diabolical adventure.

We are late; but there is still a good hour of clear light. All the passengers are now on top deck. All the field-glasses are up. Everybody cranes to forward. A few pretend to be nervous! and they may be permitted. There is something about Lachine, the last of the trio of great rapids, that can't be got in either the Cedar or the Long Sault. You begin to feel it the moment the power goes off below. You feel it more as you get past the edge of a foaming, fuming unrest of wicked water that looks to be inhabited by devil-fishes and sharks and deep-sea monsters of destruction. The pilot is aboard. Oh

(Concluded on page 23.)