

Rambles Through Forest, Lake and River.

No. I.

To get nearer to dear old Mother Nature; to get an impulse from the vernal wood that would carry us through another year and leave impressions that would last us through a lifetime; to ply the paddle on little known lakes in a wilderness visited only by hunters and trappers, and abounding with moose, caribou, deer, beaver and otter; to carry impedimenta over portages traversed by Indians centuries ago, and to guide our frail canoe through rapids and amid boulders on streams in Northern New Brunswick that have delighted voyageurs from time immemorial—these were some of the attractions that brought my companion and myself one bright day in early July to the banks of the Tobique River. Before us lay a wilderness, unknown to us, and known only to the few who had occasionally penetrated it. Behind us lay the bustling, busy world, whose cares were to be laid aside for nearly four weeks for the delights that so few experience. At our side were the trusty guides and the trusty team that were to convey us over a rough road for twenty miles until we reached our first camping ground on the borders of Trouser's Lake,—there to dismiss all "helps" from the outside world in the shape of guides and horses, and depend on our own resources for the hundred miles that lay before us in one of the wildest and most picturesque regions of New Brunswick.

It was a matter of choice to depend upon ourselves instead of taking guides. There is a charm in picking up old portage routes, in threading pathless woods, aided by map and compass, in guiding a canoe amid lakes and through rough streams, known only to those who have enjoyed such a pleasure. And we had the experience of former trips to help us. We had planned this excursion into the wilderness two years before, when from the top of Sagamook mountain that rises from Nictor Lake we had scanned this expanse of forest with its lakes and streams hidden away in its broad bosom. It had been a fascinating pursuit during these two years to study the maps, to pick up all stray bits of information about the unknown wilderness, to dwell upon the days of toil and pleasure before us, the nights that would find us with tents pitched in some woody nook by lake or stream, talking over the adventures and discoveries of the day, discussing the respective merits of lake and brook trout, with such adjuncts as ham, rice, buckwheat cakes—browned to the pitch of perfection—hard tack and coffee, watching the expiring embers of the camp fire, or the moon and stars as they glittered through the leafy woods high above us, lulled

by the stillness of that forest into refreshing slumber, startled ever and anon through the night by the loon, whose wild notes are so in keeping with the utter loneliness of a night in the forest.

But let it not be supposed that we had undertaken this trip into an unknown forest without plenty of past experience to guide us, without comfortable camp equipments and proper clothing, and without a generous supply of good food. To prepare for every event and hazard that may arise is not only prudent—it is absolutely essential to health and safety. To neglect such equipment would be positively dangerous; but to keep it down to the minimum point is just as essential, where everything has to be carried in a light canoe, weighing, as ours did, only sixty pounds, and where every article had to be carried on our backs over portages varying from fifty yards up to two or three miles. That is too much hardship, says the "specially conducted" forest tourist. Yes, but there is an independence about it; there is even a pleasure in carrying across a portage a canoe, Indian fashion, or a load that is so "scientifically" arranged that it brings into play every muscle of your body. With an appetite that demolishes rapidly the provisions, giving a promise of greater lightness to every succeeding load, and a strength and exhilaration gained from exercise and buoyant forest air, portaging may not only be endured—it may become one of the pleasures of vagrant life in the wilderness. It just depends upon how you take to it. If you had a companion such as I had in Prof. Ganong, whose cheery and buoyant disposition and force of will triumphs over every obstacle, whose knowledge of woodcraft and canoeing have been gained by intelligent and patient experience, and whose hard work is seasoned by observation and original comment on every object and experience met with, then the pleasure and novelty of a forest excursion becomes an event in one's life. It is infectious; and one purpose in writing this series of articles is to show the genuine pleasure that may be gained from such excursions, the vigorous health that they give, and the results that may be accomplished from an intelligent exploration of the little known regions of our provinces. Our teachers and college students have not only the prospect of gaining new life and vigor from such trips, but they have it in their power to add something new and of value to the natural history of the provinces. The amateur explorer, provided with a few simple scientific instruments, can do much useful work in exploring little known regions that have not been surveyed. Prof. Ganong has in this way added very much—more than any amateur explorer has done—to the physiography and natural history