

Through the Lakes to "Jimsag"

A New Brunswick Canoe Trip

By KATE MILES



GRAND LAKE

WE had had various varieties of camping trips. We had sojourned in a camp in the deep woods, on the banks of a stream, reached only with canoes and provided only with such supplies as could be so transported. We had lived in camps, equipped with all the essentials for a life of luxury and ease, and attainable by any sort of water craft or highway vehicle. We had camped for days in tents comfortably established for a permanent stop and provided with a rustic table, seats, and such things which could be manufactured on the spot. But now we were to have an entirely new experience—we were going on a canoe trip which would mean a new camping spot each night, and we must adapt ourselves and our outfit to such conditions. When there is no special reason why one should not take this or that additional article of comfort or pleasure, it is wonderful how the dunnage will accumulate, but when there is every reason why only the bare necessities must be included, it is equally marvellous into what a small portion of the canoes supplies and bedding can be stowed.

We were six—five to start, and one to join us on our way, and we had only two canoes, one a large model chestnut canyas, the other a long low skiff which would glide through the water as easily and rapidly as the lighter looking canoe. Our destination was Gagetown, about 37 miles down the St. John River. We meant to arrive at Gagetown, but not by paddling straight down the main river, no indeed, we were going through "the lakes," where we would travel two miles for every one we gained, and where we could easily spend much more time than we could command.

The Glorious First fell on Saturday. Around that day our trip was planned. We thought we should not leave on Friday lest ill luck attend us, so we planned to go on Thursday, and for Monday morning's boat to bring us home. Accordingly, Wednesday evening found us packed and ready for an early start on the morrow. Thursday morning found us gazing disconsolately on rain coming down in a deluge and a sky which was the same changeless leaden grey from the horizon to mid-heaven. All day we waited, and all day it rained. Only at sunset was there a cessation of the downpour and a faint suggestion of pink sky for a moment ere the sun went down behind a bank of gray. The prospects were not good and the morrow would be Friday, but we displayed our hopeful intentions by sending off our boxes to the appointed meeting place and arranging by telephone to be there as early as possible ourselves in the morning.

Friday morning the sun rose bright and early in company with us, but contrary to our feelings, old Sol retired behind a cloud with no sign of coming back. It was a most unfavorable weather omen, but we were resigned to go. At nine o'clock we were ready to set forth, canoes loaded with perfect adjustment, and although deep in the water, trimmed to the very best advantage.

We were on the Portobello, that commonly considered insignificant little stream which is always so very useful in aiding hunters and canoeists to reach the big waters below. I had never seen the stream at this season, and it was a pleasure to note the old landmarks and to point out our favorite spots to the new members of the party. When we passed the mouth of the Mill Stream we were tempted, it was so lovely up there and we had enjoyed ourselves so thoroughly on its banks. But the Man and Brother Man kept their crafts headed down stream, we were going through the lakes, and having lost a day we must push on if we would be at Upper Jimsag, as we had promised to meet the Business Girl who could not join us before Saturday.

"The Fish House is the usual stopping place for dinner," explained the Man, "I dare say, though, we'll find some other spot that you'll like better, for it can't be particularly fragrant along Fish House beach now."

A strip of land thickly wooded appealed to us, but it was too early to stop.

"That's Oak Point, where the Indians always camp," we were informed. "I asked old Molly Sacohi once why they stopped there and she said, 'Injuns always have camped there, and Injuns always will camp

there.' Molly's husband died there when she was here alone with him, took an overdose of morphine pills for his weak heart, I guess. Poor old Molly, she felt very badly, but wasn't long behind him."

We came into an open country at last where the stream wound back and forth countless times through grass and rushes and lily pads, and where the sun, which had all at once come out with midsummer vigor, had us at its mercy.

"Who said it looked like rain?" murmured the Man satirically, changing his cap for a felt hat. "There's a moose," he observed calmly as he settled to work again, and pointed off to our right, across an expanse of rushes and pads. As would-be sports, the new member and I maintained our equilibrium and didn't upset the canoe in our excitement nor squeal to the Brother Man to get his camera quite loud enough to disturb the huge head and shoulders which were all we could see of the animal. Before we could get near enough for a picture, quietly and slowly, the ungainly creature turned and walked



SUNDAY REST AND QUIET

to the shore, then disappeared amongst the trees.

"I saw five when I was out here 24th of May," the Man informed us. "It's such a splendid feeding ground for them. They stay here until the frost comes. There are some baby ducks. Want some?"

The only gun in the party was a little repeating pistol, so I need not have felt any uneasiness on account of the ducks, nevertheless, I exclaimed indignantly, "I won't cook them," and the new member said calmly, "Of course we want them."

"Well, I guess it will take someone quicker than any of us to catch them. There's the Fish House off in the distance, but we have to strike a mighty crooked course before we get to it."

We discovered a splendid elm standing by itself on an elevated piece of ground to our right. That looked good to us all, so we landed, and each one

being presented with some article needed for the preparation of lunch as he or she left the canoes, we were soon enjoying soup, bread, cucumbers, tea and cakes, not to mention the comfortable shade and the opportunity of stretching our cramped limbs.

"We'll camp on French Island to-night," announced the Man, emptying the contents of the boiling kettle on the fire, "and as a shower might come up, I'd rather push on and get things in shape and then rest."

Brother Man had found an armchair between two exposed roots of our friendly old elm, and a magazine and pipe were very soothing just at that particular moment. "You don't know the meaning of the word rest," he grumbled as slowly and sorrowfully he ejected himself from his nook.

We looked back regretfully at the shade when we were once more out in the open winding stream, but half an hour's paddle brought us to the Fish House, which distracted our attention from the heat.

"I prefer our lunching place to this," called the Chaperon from the other canoe.

"A good many hundred dollars have been made out of that old place," the Man explained to us. "In high water the boats can leave the gaspereaux on the upper floor where they are salted and left until ready to be shipped. Then they are emptied from the barrels down that sluice into scows and towed to St. John. There they are packed in kegs or small barrels and shipped to the West Indies, where they are ladled out and sold by the quart. They don't resemble fish any more than they do soup then."

We were getting into French Lake, and soon the expanse of water became much greater and islands appeared.

"That is French Island," said the Man, pointing to a densely wooded spot which appeared to us large enough to be the mainland.

French Island! The name had thrilled us so many times, standing as it did for the early days of our country, for French forts and Indian invasions, and for buried treasure. I had pictured it as a small sandy and grassy bit of land which one could cover carefully in part of a day. The idea of minutely searching over this stretch of forest and glade made me laugh at my own ignorance.

"It is generally believed that treasure has been found on the island," affirmed the Man, "and probably there is more of it still there, for the church silver was no doubt all buried on it, but to find it without a chart or key of some sort would be impossible. I spent most of a day once finding an old well in the centre of the island, and while looking for flint arrow heads on the beach another day, I found, instead of arrowheads, quantities of hairpins dropped by lady campers and treasure seekers. Don't run away with the idea that you'll pick up anything of value here, for I've seen forty tents stretched in a row on the lower end of the island. We'll go down there, I guess, and camp."

We got some idea of the size of the island while paddling down the lake. Open spaces at intervals and apple trees in these seemingly cultivated plots,

gave clear evidence that the island had been inhabited. We passed the spot where the fort had stood, at a point commanding a view of Indian Island (so named from its inhabitants), and situated at the narrowest part of the lake so any flotilla which had come up from the big waters could be stopped and any crafts which were on the upper part of the lake, the Portobello, or Little River, which branched from French Lake almost opposite the point where the Portobello flowed into it, could be penned in. Then there was another fish house, and after that the foundation of an old house, and then a rocky beach fringed with bushes and sloping up above it a clear grassy plot set round on two sides with evergreens, and on the third open to the breeze which had sprung fresh and pure from the lake.

"Oh, there, there," we chorused, "let's camp on that lovely hill."

It was an ideal camping spot, and we longed to stay indefinitely. Even the mosquitoes which became somewhat troublesome after daybreak could not mar the charm which this spot had for us. We cooked our two meals on the beach and ate them there, sitting in convenient proximity

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WASHROOM AT THE GAGETOWN CAMP