

MURRAY BAY, THE BEACH AND THE VILLAGE.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS.

First impressions, they say, are generally the most enduring; and with what a mixture of disgust and loathing was I filled when I first landed on the wharf at Murray Bay. That these feelings did not long continue I feel it my duty to confess, for of all watering-places that I have visited, and they are not a few, none have such an attraction for me as this little Murray Bay.

On first landing I was scrambled for by at least a dozen of *habitant* carters who shrieked *caliche* in my ears till I was high distracted. The hubbub was, however, soon silenced by my choice of a vehicle, when they all left me to look after other prey. All who have visited this place cannot but be struck by the rapid manner in which the native cabbies drive their vehicles. After a rush up and a rush down hill, and a rush along a level road for about a quarter of a mile, I was landed safely at a hotel kept by one Xavier Warren. It was an plain square building with two galleries running round it, and on the whole very well got-up.

THE VILLAGE AND BATHING PLACES.

Murray Bay is a village situated at the mouth of the Murray River, which falls into the St. Lawrence in a beautiful bend of the North Shore, ninety miles below Quebec. It contains about three thousand inhabitants, a great number of whom are of Scotch extraction, as the names McLean, Blackburn, McNichol, Warren, and Hervy will readily testify. These persons have all lost their language, not being able at present to speak a word of English. But they have not lost the general features peculiar to the Scotch, and their descent is marked in every expression of the face. These persons are the descendants of some of the 78th Highlanders who settled here, in 1762, three years after the conquest, under Captain Fraser. Running out on either side from the village are two points or stretches of land between which lies a considerable expanse of water, into which the Murray River discharges itself. This forms the Bay. The points of land are respectively called Cap à l'Aigle and Point au Pic, and are the places patronised by the sea-bathing public. The village itself is not patronised by visitors, as it is situated more upon the banks of the river than upon the borders of the Bay.

HOTEL ACCOMMODATION.

Point au Pic seems to enjoy the preference as a bathing-place among visitors. This is perhaps on account of its being near to the wharf, Cap à l'Aigle being some four miles distant. The latter place is said to be admirably adapted for invalids, but in this respect I think it is inferior to Cacouna. The air at Cap à l'Aigle is a little too cold, while that of Cacouna is more temperate. Point au Pic is well supplied with hotels, of which there are no less than four, and also several private boarding-houses. There are besides a great many private dwellings, some of which are owned by the visitors themselves, and others rented at a small amount from the French inhabitants. All the dwellings were not occupied this season, probably on account of the cold weather that we have had; but last year every house was full, and as I was informed was the busiest season that Murray Bay has ever seen. The falling off this year may be due, therefore, not only to the prevailing cold weather, but also to the usual reaction which follows a busy season.

FISHING AND SHOOTING.

The meals and accommodation at the hotels are everything that can be desired, and from personal experience I would recommend mine host Warren, as one who is ever indefatigable in his efforts to make his guests feel comfortable. As a rule everybody finds some way of passing time to his satisfaction. In the morning the bowling alley at Duberger's is liberally patronised, as well as the billiard table. For these luxuries, however, a fee is exacted which to the economical person is a loss of half the pleasure. For the gentlemen there are special attractions in the way of fishing and shooting. The vicinity of Murray Bay teems with lakes. Every mountain has its little lake, and all these are full of trout of very fair size and weight. Although a great many of these have been regularly and very largely fished during succeeding summers, they still appear to be inexhaustible. Among the number of these lakes may be mentioned Lake Gravel, about thirteen miles distant, four miles of which have to be made on foot; Grand Lake eleven, Little Lake, nine, Long Lake, eighteen, Lake Boily, fourteen. Lake Gravel is the one which is most frequented by fishermen. There is another lake, six miles beyond this, called Lac à Marins, which is the best of all; but it is not very often visited as the road to it from Lake Gravel is of the roughest and most difficult description. The woods between these two lakes are well filled with partridge and are often visited by sporting gentlemen, and Indian large game are also found in the vicinity, such as caribou and bears. Gentlemen frequently drive down from Quebec in winter, to spend a few days in hunting the former, and on such occasions are generally accompanied by Indians who act as guides, or what Mark Twain terms "Fergusons," and also to do the work necessary about the camp. The bears are not very often troubled; but last summer three were shot by different gentlemen, not many miles away from the village. From the descriptions I have had from the Indians of these several expeditions, I must say that they are tame in the extreme. Poor brin attacks no one, on the contrary he flees and hides himself on the first signs of danger. The only excitement or pleasure to be obtained from the sport is the approaching within shooting distance. The Indians say that windy days are the only times at which you can approach them, when the sounds of the elements are greater than those caused by passing through the underbrush. The first of the three bear hunts was undertaken by some English officers who were desirous of taking home to England some token of the many and dangerous hunts in which they had engaged while in the backwoods of Canada. Having procured two Indians from the encampment here and also provided themselves with a canoe and haycart in which to carry it they started off for the Murray River Portage, twenty-two miles distant. Here they dismissed the haycart and encamped in the woods close by. After poking about in the neighbouring hills for several days without discovering any signs of Mr. Bear, they were about to move their quarters when a crackling of branches in the bush accompanied by a sound as of the passage of some heavy body through the thick brush told of the vicinity of game. They had not long to wait. The bear advanced into the more open woods and rearing himself upon his hind legs, raised his head

in the air and sniffed about him in all directions. A fairer shot could not have afforded itself, and one of the gentlemen advanced and fired at him. The shot missed, and the gentleman, fearful of pursuit, turned and fled to a neighbouring tree for refuge. The bear, alarmed by the noise of the rifle, was about to run also, when a bullet from the Indian went crashing through his brain and laid him dead upon the ground.

The second hunt was by a civilian, and was in all respects nearly a repetition of the first, as regards its tameness and lack of real manly sport. I pass from fishing and shooting to other subjects, and before doing so I would advise all those who visit Murray Bay to try the former. I feel convinced that they will go away pleased, and not return to their homes with a half stifled anathema upon their lips for those who had persuaded them to try the sport.

PIC-NICS.

Nature has indeed blessed Murray Bay in the number of beautiful spots to which quiet pic-nic parties may carry their lightsome gaiety. Surrounded by the beauty and grandeur of Nature, and with the gifts of civilization spread out upon the grass before them, they can spend a few pleasant and happy hours away from the noise and din of every-day life. There is a sort of awe-inspiring solitude in the American wood. Everything seems to be hushed and still except the rippling brooks and the lively chirrup of the little squirrel. When the forest is thick, not a bird is to be found. The "Iron," the most frequented of these beautiful pic-nic places, is about nine miles distant from the hotel. It is called "Iron" or "Hole" because it is situated in a little valley between high mountains. Down this little valley a considerable stream of water bounds from rock to rock, now spreading out into a thin fine sheet of clear blue water, and now dashing through a narrow channel over an abrupt rock.

"But the stranger still gazes with wondering eye

On the rocks rudely torn, and groves mounted on high;

Still loves on the cliff's dizzy borders to roam,

Where the torrent leaps headlong embosomed in foam."

At the foot of the "Iron" a little pond is formed, where those having a fancy for trout fishing may whip a fly. I was about to use Mr. Walton's name in connection with this little item; but as the newspapers have made pretty free use of it lately, I am inclined to steer clear and give the gentleman's name and ghost a wide berth. Not far from this pond an enterprising and money-loving *habitant* has erected a wooden shed especially for the accommodation of "little parties," and for the use of which he exacts a small fee. I, however, must mention another frequenter of this shed, the wasp. Greatly to my cost do I remember a pic-nic which I attended here. When the cutables were placed upon the table they were set upon by a perfect swarm of these most obnoxious insects. They settled upon veal-pies, hams, tongues, and in fact everything that was put out on the table was black with them. Moreover, they settled on several of the persons sitting round the table. I was one of these, and never shall I forget the pain that horrid insect was the cause of.

But the "Iron" is not the only place to which pleasure parties may resort. There are also the Fraser Falls and the Petit Ruisseau. The former is a very pretty spot, and would well repay the trouble of a visit. The roads which lead to these places are one series of up-and-down hills, and are very disagreeable to drive over, especially on a wet day. The hills are sometimes very high, and at the foot of these the occupants have generally to alight, so as to afford the poor beast in the vehicle every chance of mounting the rude steep slope. These little animals are well used to this work, and display no small amount of pluck in this almost daily work. But the *habitant* has very little mercy on his horse, and will urge him to his topmost speed, even for the pleasure of passing another vehicle which he may overtake. It is not unusual for several *cabiches* to get abreast on the road and race with one another, to the great danger of a collision, throwing out the occupants and probably killing some of them.

BOATING.

I have been so often asked whether there was any boating in Murray Bay, that I must say a few words on this subject before going any further. Boating of course depends upon the possession of both water and boats; without the one the other is useless. In Murray Bay there is plenty of water, but boats are very scarce; in fact there are no row boats of any description. Canoes may be obtained from the Indians in consideration of a reasonable sum of money, but it is not every one who would care about getting into a bark canoe. They are so cranky that in unskilful hands they would probably turn bottom upwards and throw their passengers out into the water. Last summer two young sports hired a canoe from Michel, one of the Indians of the encampment, for the purpose of taking a small turn about the wharf just about the time of the arrival of the Canadian Navigation Company's steamer. Having stepped into the canoe they took their seats upon the bottom and paddled about seemingly much pleased. They, however, thought that it would lend greater *clat* to their fun if they stood up as they had frequently seen the Indians do. One managed to get on his feet safely and then steadied himself with his hands on each side of the canoe, but the other when attempting to do the same lost his balance and, falling out, upset the canoe. After floundering about in the water for a short time they caught hold of the canoe and supported themselves on it till assistance arrived, when they were taken to shore wetter, if not much wiser, young men.

The only boats which may be hired are what are called pilot boats—big, clumsy tubs. They possess one virtue, if virtue it might be called, and that is they are safe. They are very seldom used except by excursion parties, who may be going to Kamouraska or Petit Ruisseau. This year some of the *habitants* have a yacht which seems to run very nicely; but still it is not much in use. Ladies, I find, do not care about venturing out in sail boats without the comfort, consolation, and protection which is afforded to them by those of the stronger sex, and these latter are exceedingly scarce in Murray Bay. There are not over a dozen of gentlemen in the whole place, and of ladies you might count them by the score.

BATHING.

Bathing may be said to be the most common of amusements, as it is at all sea-side resorts. Murray Bay has a most beautiful beach, stretching from the point almost to the village. I have found, however, that the water in the bay is not so salt as that round the point by the wharf. This is due to

the presence of the fresh water from the Murray River; but I have found again that the water of the bay is much warmer. When the tide is full and the water has covered the previously naked beach, the whole shore is literally alive with the forms of bathers clad in all sorts of bathing garments, whose colours are as many as those of Joseph's coat, while the woods resound their merry peals of laughter. The fantastic motions of some of the ladies while bathing are most curious and sometimes even laughable. Every person has their own way of wetting themselves; but frequently a number of bathers collect together and form a ring, and dancing up and down in the water splash both themselves and their neighbours with the water in splendid style. The bath being over and the costume changed, the bathers either direct their steps homeward or take their seats upon the rocks which are scattered over the shore, where they either engage in conversation or bury themselves in the classical literature of the day. The gentlemen, during all this time, are supposed to be also going through their ablutions on another part of the shore, usually that part which cannot, by any possible means, be taken up by the ladies. It is generally a rough and rocky spot, and situated close to deep water. It is strictly forbidden, under pain of incurring the displeasure of the ladies, to approach their consecrated bathing ground, and any gentleman who would dare to invade such territory would be considered impious, and, unless a very great favourite, be promptly excommunicated from social village-ship.

It is greatly to be regretted that the ladies and gentlemen do not bathe together upon the same beach, as is the custom at the fashionable watering-places of the States. If such were the case, ladies would stand a good chance of learning to swim, an accomplishment in which every person should become a proficient. If all would learn to swim, how many valuable lives would be saved instead of the number that are annually lost, even within a short distance of shore or assistance.

SOCIAL INTERCOURSE.

In one point above all others does Murray Bay surpass all other watering-places—sociality. There is no stiff formality present here, such as you see at Cacouna. There is less fashionable dressing too. In Cacouna a person might stay at the hotel and know just as many people at the end of a month as when he first arrived. I do not mean to say, it must be remembered, that introductions to strangers are not exceedingly desirable as a guard as to whose acquaintance you are making, but when a person is well known both by name and in society, surely there can be no harm in speaking to him without an introduction. There are some people who may roll up their eyes and hold their breath at the bare thought of such a state of things. Well, to them I would say go, by all means, to Cacouna; but to others, and I am sure they are in the majority, I would say, if you really wish to enjoy a pleasant summer retreat, go to Murray Bay. There is something so beautiful in the wild scenery of the mountains. To describe it would be an impossibility. Comparisons diminish it, and figures of speech only confuse the mind. The words "grand," "awful," "sublime," have been frequently employed to describe scenery so far inferior to that which here meets your eye in any direction, that they would be rejected as weak and expressionless were there any others that could be employed.

SCENERY.

To see the mountains here to advantage you must gaze upon them during the brilliant sunsets, or when Nature has put on her angriest aspect. When the lightning plays along their summits, and the thunder, increased in power by a thousand echoes, grumbles over the sky. As far as the eye can reach the mountains are to be seen, topping one over the other in strange disorder.

"The hills, the everlasting hills,
How peerlessly they rise,
Like earth's gigantic sentinels
Discoursing in the skies."

Who can possibly describe a sunset as it appears over the Laurentian Range of Mountains on the north shore of the St. Lawrence? I have never in the course of my travels met anything that can, in my opinion, possibly compare in glory and sublimity with the descent of the sun. It is by comparing objects which excite emotion in the more familiar and greater things that we conceive the extent of their beauty. But this sunset has nothing beyond it in sublimity. It stands unsurpassed in glory. It alone can illustrate itself. The changing colours and the richness of the tint as the sun gradually sinks below the tops of the mountains, is something which it is impossible to conceive the grandeur of.

Once more must I have recourse to Byron's description of the Alps.

"Day dies like the dolphin, whom each pang imbues
With a new colour as it gasps away. The last still
Then all is o'er, and all is grey." [Loveday.]

There is but one Niagara; but it may change and sink into an inconsiderable rapid in the lapse of time, so there is but one sunset, but which no lapse of time can alter or affect. How must our forefathers have been enraptured by such a glorious sight, and how can we be surprised that the simple savage should connect the idea of his God with this most magnificent and useful of luminaries!

THE CHURCH.

Murray Bay possesses one Protestant church, which is used by both the English and Presbyterian denominations. It is very comfortable, well seated and lighted, and is kept most scrupulously clean. The building is of wood, nicely varnished or painted.

COMMUNICATION WITH THE WEST.

There is one great drawback to the growth of Murray Bay as a watering-place, and that is the want of daily communication with the west. If the Montreal Telegraph Company were to open an office here, I think that it would do a great deal towards advancing the place. But at present it is extremely awkward for business people to live here, as they know not the hour they are required home, and there are no means by which they can ascertain this knowledge. A railway is of course out of the question, the mountains forming a great obstacle to its construction. The Navigation Company's steamers touch at the wharf four times a week on the down-