

WHERE THE LOON LAUGHS.

a steamer passing in the distance, the steamer which will ultimately carry them homeward again. The place is as wild and primeval as though there were not a settlement within a hundred miles.

One of the first excursions the party makes is to the wonderful Shadow River—one of the show-places of Muskoka. The canoes go dancing across the bay to this. Even with a load the canoe, modeled directly after the red man's primitive design and changed in no particular save that basswood takes the place of birchbark, has a certain capriciousness in its motion. But with just two paddlers in it to carry, its coquetry breaks out and colors all its behavior. It goes swiftly through the water, but with a little mincing way that is indubitably charming—never steady for a moment. The little creature seems to enjoy herself too much in her play with the water to be sedate. She curtsies to it, invites it, shifts away from it, coquettes with it, and acts generally like a willful, beautiful hoyden in the presence of a big lover she is more than half afraid of.

The water of Shadow River is so dark and still that it looks like a pool of ink, and the shadow pictures in it are depicted with extraordinary fidelity. The stream winds and winds through ever-changing banks, and the sheer beauty of it is beyond description. Here it will be shut in and overarched by deep, dark forest, with now and then a little opening glade that gives you a vista of a hundred yards or so, not of the ordinary tangled mass of rock and rotting timber common to this country, but something as soft and soothing to the senses as an English landscape. Then the banks will change to rocks and ferns and gorgeous wild flowers, with little curving pools formed for no other purpose than to delight the eye. Sometimes the trees shoot straight up and leave the open water to paint its color harmonies of sky and cloud and bank, and then, again, the overarch is so complete that the sun only comes through in little flecks and splotches. But, sun or shadow, the pictures are always there—such pictures as it is worth a three weeks' journey to see. There is a curious illusion forever in the mind of the visitor to this extraordinary stream. He is led to expect that the next bend will bring him in sight of some bit of ancient architecture—a monastery, a cathedral, a battlemented tower, something to complete the impression of old-world mystery and romance which seem to belong by right to magical Shadow River.