

DOWN THE RIDEAU.

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By
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HAVE you ever been down the Rideau? No? Then go, as soon as you can, if not this summer then next, for if ever there was a place where Mother Nature took the tired children of civilization to herself and bared them to forget all the seams and uncomfortable places in their lives, that place is the Rideau.

We, my friend and I, were taking a summer holiday, and having heard of the beauties of the Rideau river and lakes, we started off to see and judge for ourselves. I was to stop off, midway, at a camp in Big Rideau Lake. She elected to go through to Ottawa.

We boarded the comfortable and home-like "James Swift" at Kingston at six o'clock one Monday morning in July. The rain was coming down in torrents, the decks were "soppy," our skirts were dragged, the crew looked half-drowned, and we hadn't even the advertisement side of a newspaper to read. "It was you who suggested this trip," said my friend, and her tone conveyed distinct reproach.

As it was still early I reflected that the truth of the old saw, "rain before seven, clear before eleven," had plenty of time to be proved, and the wisdom of my proposal sustained, so I merely said (very properly) that the rain was good for the crops, and found, as I have so often before, that the softer and simpler the answer, the less is wrath turned aside by it.

Conversation languished, and my friend turned her attention to what could be seen of a very "blurry" landscape through the cabin windows, and, as our fellow-passengers were uninteresting, I followed her example.

Presently the hills about Kingston Mills loomed up, grey and phantom-like through the rain.

I asked Kate to go on deck.

"No, I've seen Kingston Mills in decent weather. You may get drenched if you like," was the answer. So I went alone. As the "Swift" slipped along between the hills, and into the first lock, bit after bit, which would delight any artist, came into view.

After locking through here we wound slowly along the River Styx, the name given by some facetious individual to the six miles of stumps and snags surrounded by water that intervene between Cataract River and Big Cranberry

Lake, and we—for my friend was cheering up—the sun's re-appearance having taken to, on an air of probability—were lost in admiration of the skill of the man at the wheel. We were steaming, slowly, through several small lakes: Big Cranberry, Little Cranberry and Whitefish; now wondering whether the steersman intended cutting the mainland in two, for no place of egress was to be seen, when suddenly, down would go the helm, round would come the boat's head, and a fresh and more beautiful bend would be disclosed; then again making wild guesses (which were nearly always wrong), as to which of many apparent outlets the pilot would choose.

As we were passing through one of the lakes the genial purser came round to enquire our destination, and incidentally collect our fare, and he volunteered the information that he thought it would clear up very soon.

Kate said "thank you" with such fervour at this point, that he smiled, and said he thought we must have taken the weather to heart. Well, we had! How were we to judge, even partially, of the Rideau, when she kept her attractions hidden behind a drop curtain of rain?

Shortly after this I heard a prolonged, "Oh!" of delight from my friend, and I turned to find it was inspired by cows—cows standing placidly in

mass, and the scenic setting of this is very wild and picturesque.

A summer hotel, and the American tourist have invaded the place. Two of the latter were fishing from the bridge, with the newest thing in fishing rods in their hands, and the ugliest of white commodore caps upon their heads. They were fat, they were forty, but, alas! they were not fair. (The mate says the trinity of F's is indivisible, but he's wrong). And they were American, through the length and breadth of them, and the contrast between the solidified placidity of their whole attitude, and the wild eagerness with which they masticated the luscious tutti frutti, was sharp, indeed.

Just then, rather opportunely, we thought, for the tutti frutti had made discord in our souls, which before had been tuned in harmony with nature's symphony all about us, a horn announced dinner, and there was a scurry back to the boat, and a moderate indulgence in good English roast beef, (rare), well-cooked vegetables, and flakey pastry, all daintily served, prepared as with a due appreciation of the loveliness of the channel into which the "Swift" glided, when the waters had borne her up out of the last lock. It is beautiful beyond words, this entrance to Sand lake, a narrow, winding way, where the steep banks on either

side are thickly wooded, and covered with an undergrowth of ferns, flowers and grasses, almost tropical in their luxuriance.

The branches of the trees stretch out far overhead from either side, and down on all this exquisite beauty shone the sun, lighting up the clear, brown water into a golden green. A vain young oak leaned over to look at itself in the translucent mirror, and we reached out and pulled each a branch, as it lightly brushed the passing boat.

Slowly the

"Swift" moved through this lake as though she would let us absorb all the loveliness, and then on into Lake Opinicon; from that to Clear lake.

Passengers we had not noticed before began to appear. There was the girl who retired every few minutes to curl her hair, only to have the curl taken out again by the dampness, and the pretty little fairy whose locks were a mass of curls and kinks, which no humidity could eradicate; and the fascinating miss who said, "You don't say so? Isn't it lovely? I think it's just sweet," to any sight or observation which was not of the depressing order, and "Oh! isn't it awful? I think it's just terrible" to anything that was. And there was the tall, dark girl, whom I admired, and the stylish little creature, with the Yankee twang, whom my friend admired.

A man's voice, speaking with the languid, Southern accent, attracted our attention.

"You Canadians don't half appreciate the beauties of your country," it said. "Why, you might have this place filled with Americans, if you only let us know about it."



KINGSTON MILLS LOCKS, SOUTH.

the water. She "just loved a pastoral scene like that," she declared. I don't, it is too reminiscent of a time which to think of, even now, makes me shudder, when, as a visitor of distinction in a village, I was asked to judge the works of art (?) at a township fair, and a picture painted by the village belle, who "took" painting one whole quarter at a select seminary, represented some wonderful kine, knee deep in a placid pool, and the tips of the horns of the cows in the middle distance were a trifle higher than the top of a patriarchal elm in the foreground.

A true prophet was that purser, for the sun came out before we reached Jones' Falls, and even if it hadn't, he would have been remembered with gratitude, for we would have felt that he did his best, anyway.

When Jones' Falls, with its four locks, ancient blockhouses, reminiscent of Indian raids and the American Revolution, came in sight, we were allowed to get off, while the "Swift" locked up. No little passing waterfall this. There is a fall of ninety feet, and the water comes down in a rushing, roaring, foaming