

Correspondence.

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TORONTO LETTER.

The Toronto Board adjourns until September—Our correspondent writes us a summer resort letter.

DEAR EDITOR,

Your readers are indebted to you for a super-excellent number such as your last issue was. There was no stint of substantial provision for future thought, and a generous supply of the usual information regarding current matters. I skipped my usual letter from sheer laziness, but its place was indeed well filled by weightier and worthier matters of your own providing. The Toronto Board having adjourned until the first Monday in September, there are no items to give concerning that wonderful body, so often reported moribund, and yet living on. Well, here I am in Muskoka Land, far from the "maddening crowd," and the torrid heats and frets of city business life in July. I will venture this time to write you an unbusiness like letter, something idyllic, pastoral, pine odorous, if I may. Possibly, the perusal may cause you to cease for a while the consideration of Fire Loss Ratios of Canada and the United States, and to lay down Share Lists and Bank Statements and the like, which become worries in the Dog days.

Of all summer resorts favored by Torontonians, Muskoka easily holds first place in our affections, and year by year, an increasing number of American visitors are coming in. It is a land of huge rocks and limpid waters, dark and deep, where the pine, the spruce and the birch tree predominate. It is a land of glorious sunsets and lingering twilights and star-lit nights, in which, owing to its northern position, often the luminous shadows of the mysterious aurora or "Northern lights," slit athwart midnight skies. Cool, often cold nights make sleep delightfully refreshing, and ever, day and night the sweet pure air is about one, resinous, balsamic, for the prevalent winds are west and north-west, and these blowing off Lake Nipissing down through a pine wilderness of 75 miles in extent, come to us freighted as with the very breath of life, especially to those suffering from any lung trouble. When one goes away summering, it is expected that some comforts will be left behind, but the scattered residents of this country place recognise that the summer visitors are folk worth cultivating, bringing as they do into the district much substantial coin, and much of color, to the relief of that sameness in a rural life, with its special isolation in Muskoka.

So, year by year, unless parties take up residence in very remote or new locations, they may secure all necessities and most of the usual comforts of city life, added to the local benefits above alluded to. Your scribe, having in charge three ladies (an excellent number by the way, and better than two or four for obvious reasons), resorts to the present in a small cottage on a big flat rock, down a bay. Hither, all the breezes that blow come. There is much shade around us, and across the water way, $\frac{1}{4}$ of a mile distant, a large island of rock rises many feet high, very densely wooded, being in its wild state. A few strokes of the oar and I can reach this opposite shore, where even at noonday there are nooks and bosky glooms in which the coolness of the night dwells. Reclining at length on dry mosses in such wild, fern-environment spot, the only sounds predominant are the sigh of the breeze in the pine tree tops, the shrill of hurrying bird wings, the patter of the ripples on my skiff's sides down on the rocks, below me, and perhaps, as a faint touch of civilization, the tinkle of a far away cow bell. My thoughts contrasting, call to mind the rush and bustle of King and Yonge streets, with the jangle of car bells, the shooting bicycles, the hurrying to and fro of hot and dusty humanity, and—well, I am content. What matters it then if my bedroom be only 7 x 7, almost necessitating the going into the next room to turn round; that it has a window that slides back, enabling me at will to put my head out into the forest—or that

my bedstead is home made, not "French" but true Muskoka, built by my farmer landlord to stay, in fact is part of the house and is insurable with "insurances,"—or that my toilet set never—but I forbear. These things are but trifles. Then we have our animal friends. A collie dog from the distant farm house pays a regular daily visit, making the round of all his master's cottages, as if to see that all goes well. Two black birds are constant visitors, and a pair of chip munks have taken up quarters near by in an old tree trunk. In the sunny hours come humming birds in green and gold to the scarlet flowers by our verandah. This way, down pleasant forest roads skirting the woods, grow the large cool raspberries, to yonder point we go by water for blueberries, and as September nears us, come the blackberries; what more would you have, but the time to stay and enjoy these things? One mile from us are two summer hotels, and as the season waxes an ever increasing number of row and sail boats pass our door, which is twenty feet only from the water's edge. In the twilights there are voices, and the sound of laughter and merriment on these waters before us, but not always can we see the merry-makers by reason of the deepening shadows from the island rock before us. Far into the summer night these wanderers on the waters make melody, and some of them, lovers perhaps, linger after the manner of lovers, on their homeward way.

Speaking of Muskoka waters reminds me of boating one summer evening, when a lady passenger who had been dragging her hand through the cool water over the side, after that pretty fashion they all have, remarked that as the rocks in this country are said to be highly magnetic, it seemed to her that the water was also magnetic. Whereupon the gentleman sitting near her put his hand in the water near hers, and I suppose, as he left me to do all the rowing home afterwards, he must have been magnetically affected in some way also. An occasional rainy day or night is not unwelcome in these wilds. There are real pleasures round the rough pine table, though of a gentle kind. Letters to home stayers and friends—lots of books, magazines, etc., and occasionally our landlord will stroll down and tell us yarns of the long ago, when some 40 years back he and "mother," fresh and ruddy from Yorkshire homes, entered together the then unbroken wilderness of Muskoka, taking up this very section of land on which we now stand, making it into a good farm, and rearing there a family of sturdy sons and daughters. Of the toils and cruel hardships undergone in the struggle to conquer the rocky ground, yearly in their career losing their winter's supply of provisions by the burning of their log shanty—how tea and sugar were once a week luxuries for many years, and every pound of flour had to be first carried as wheat through dense forest to the nearest mill—money was rarely seen, everything procured by exchange or barter. The nearest neighbor for years, three miles distant. Once returning from a long journey on foot he lost his way and, coming out on the lake at a certain point, decided to stay all night there, and making a fire to cook his bit of pork, accidentally set the woods on fire, and so at all night with his back to a rock, dozing and then watching the flames roaring and driving inland. Then he would tell of a trip to Bracebridge, also on foot, one late autumn with fifty pounds of wheat on his back and a small pig in a bag (a veritable "pig in a poke") for barter. The passing of the night on the way, in a deserted shanty, with the pig placed in a log sty, and he himself sleeping as best he could in a mass of oats in the granary. All night long the wolves prowling round the pig sty. With such like stories of pioneer trials and hard work our farmer-landlord would in his broad Yorkshire dialect interest us. But I must conclude, with advice to any one going to Muskoka, based on what was given me by my friend, running to this effect: If in your rambles or round your house "early or late" you should observe a good looking, perhaps black and white cat, seemingly sauntering innocent like, you are not to say "Pussy, Pussy, come here, good kitty," nor are you to make any sudden noise or throw stones, because it is not