

DOWN THE ST. LAWRENCE RAPIDS BY SKIFF.



It was about half past three o'clock one afternoon when we stepped into our boat at Brockville. "We," means a companion and myself who are in the habit of going for a canoe cruise every summer, generally through some of the lakes and streams which lie between the St. Lawrence and the Ottawa. Having enjoyed the novelty and excitement of a trip down the rapids on a raft, I had suggested that we should vary our usual procedure by repeating the trip from which I had experienced so much delight, a suggestion which met with ready assent. But we were reminded that "the best laid schemes o' mice and men gang aft a-gley," for when our outfit was all packed, and we were ready to step on board, a telegram brought the disappointing intelligence that the raft would not be ready to leave for some days. I knew too much of the uncertainty of rafts, as a means of transit, to be very much disappointed, and like the Scottish clan, one of whose members declared that it was not beholden to Noah for having preserved it from destruction in the flood, having "a boat o' our ain," we determined to have our trip down the rapids, raft or no raft.

Our boat was the ordinary St. Lawrence skiff, about 20 feet long, with two pairs of oars, a folding centre board, and a lateen sail of about 50 feet area. We had a somewhat bulky cargo, for though our culinary department was not extensive, nor our larder stocked with a great variety, we were well supplied with bedding and waterproofs; for the season was getting late and the weather uncertain, and we were determined not to suffer from cold or wet.

With a good breeze from the south-west the twelve miles between Brockville and Prescott was soon covered, and as the wind had freshened and I was responsible for the sailing of the craft, a feeling of relief came as we fairly flew into one of the slips and found ourselves in smooth water. A walk down the main street of this sleepy old town, a call at a book store for the daily papers, some inquiries as to a camping place and the rapids, and we were again off. We had intended to camp for the night on Chimney Island, a place of historical interest, not far from the old windmill which figured so prominently in the rebellion of 1837, and which, now utilized as a light-house, stands a prominent landmark on the river bank. We did not camp on Chimney Island, for we were warned that, as it was a favorite resort of Indians, we might find it too much inhabited with an undesirable kind of companion, so we sought a lodging place for the night on another island across the channel. It was utterly devoid of wood, but we managed to pick up chips enough to boil the kettle; and, after a hearty meal, for which our sail had given us good appetites, we turned in and enjoyed the sleep of the just.

Early the next morning we were awakened by the sun streaming into our tent, and the noise of saw and hammer plied at the new Northern New York asylum on Point Airy, not far off. It was a glorious day, with not a breath of wind; and, after breakfast, our camp was struck, and we were soon heading down the river and rapidly approaching the Galops—the first of the St. Lawrence rapids. Neither of us had ever run the rapids in a small boat, but I was pretty well acquainted with the currents and rough water from having observed them closely from raft and steamer, and we were furnished withal with the very accurate charts of the United States coast survey. A fisherman having advised us to keep about one-third of the distance from the northern bank, we boldly ventured in, I rowing, my companion at the rudder, and after an exciting but delightful run, found ourselves below the breakers, but still speeding along at a rapid rate; for the current is very strong all the way to the village of Iroquois, situated at the foot of the Junction canal, built to overcome the

Galops and now being enlarged like the rest of the St. Lawrence canals. By following the fisherman's advice we avoided the Scylla of the great breakers, which would have swamped us, and the Charybdis of the eddies below the points along the shore, which might have capsized us, and though we passed over some mighty swells, there is really no danger in running these rapids if ordinary care is observed. I cannot be regarded as rash in such matters, but the next time I go down I purpose taking a party of ladies.

Not far below Iroquois we reached the Rapide du Plat, a worse rapid in many respects than the Galops; but, by observing the same precautions, and keeping well clear of a bad eddy on the north side, we were soon at Morrisburg, a thriving village at the foot of the rapid and the Morrisburg canal. Here we stopped for dinner and spent a couple of hours under the hospitable roof of a mutual friend, so that the afternoon was well advanced when we moved on. But the current is strong all the way from Prescott to Cornwall, even where there are no rapids, and with one pair of oars we proceeded at times at the rate of seven or eight miles an hour. Towards evening we passed Farran's Point, where there is a swift rapid, overcome by a short canal with one lock. Below this rapid the river is full of eddies and cross currents, one of the former being, it is stated, strong enough to suck a boat under. It may be avoided by keeping well to the south.

In the reaches of the river our nerves were frequently startled by hearing a rush of water boiling up from below, directly under or close beside our boat. Though somewhat startling, there is no danger arising from these eddies.

We had passed Chrysler's farm and other points historic in the earlier history of Canada, and landed near the mouth of Hoople's Creek, where a decisive engagement took place in the war of 1812. After tea with a friend who has a farm fronting on the river, we crossed to Chrysler's Island, one of a series of considerable area which divide the waters into the north and south channels as far as the entrance to Lake St. Francis, nearly twenty miles farther down. Here we camped for the night.

The next rapid is the Long Sault, the north channel of which is known for its enormous swells, through which none but the large steamers attempt to pass. The south channel is used by the smaller steamers and rafts, and small boats sometimes run it, but its passage is risky, especially where the two channels unite, where there is rough, choppy water. We had thought of trying it, but acting on the advice tendered in answer to our inquiries, resolved to stick to the canal. As it was a wet morning we did not start till the rain was over, about 11 o'clock, and in an hour or so reached Dickinson's Landing, at the head of the Cornwall canal. This waterway is about twelve miles long, and is being enlarged to accommodate a larger and deeper class of vessel than heretofore. We found that after the first great pitch of the Long Sault, the water is not too rough under the canal bank—which does not, however, border on the main channel—for small boats, but there is a risk of striking on sunken rocks in the swift water and damaging the boat. We, therefore, kept to the canal as far as the second lock at Maple Grove, five miles from the entrance, and there portaged over the bank into the river—an easy task—and ran the remaining seven miles to Cornwall, through a strong current, and materially assisted by a favorable wind and our sail. I would advise anyone who makes a similar trip to do likewise, unless they have something larger than a skiff, in which case they may run the south channel.

We camped that night on a point just below Cornwall, it being our intention to return by an upward bound steamer, but a gentle north wind the next morning acted as a persuader to induce us to sail through Lake St. Francis, an expansion of the river some thirty miles long. Having break-

fasted and dried our things, which had been pretty well wet the previous afternoon while we were in the canal in one of the heaviest thunderstorms of the season, we set off, and raising our sail and lowering our centre board, we had a fine run through the lake. Lake St. Francis is pretty open in some places, and the wind freshened as the day wore on, but by keeping under shelter of the shore, though it lengthened our course some miles, we gained our point without feeling that we were running any undue risk of establishing a claim against any of the life insurance companies. Our only stop was made at the little island opposite the village of Lancaster, where stands the Glegg's cairn, a huge conical pile of stones built by Colonel Carmichael, to commemorate the rebellion of 1837-38, after the fashion of his country. The sun was still high when we landed on Isle Ronde in the swift water at the head of the Coteau rapid, and pitched our tent almost under the handsome iron bridge, just completed, of the Canada Atlantic Railway.

After a couple of days spent here, we embarked on board an upward bound steamer with our boat and so reached home.

The Coteau, Cedars and Cascades rapids which follow one another in close succession, can, we were told, be run by small boats, but a guide is indispensable, and the passage is at best attended with considerable risk. Below them is Lake St. Louis, another lake expansion, very open and without the shelter of islands, but only about twenty miles long. Then come the Lachine rapids, the last and most dangerous on the river, through which a skiff could not possibly pass in safety. At their foot lies Montreal—the head of ocean navigation. A passage around these two series of rapids can be effected by the Beauharnois and Lachine canals.

As a pleasant "outing," for those who enjoy such a form of spending a holiday, let me recommend a trip through the Thousand Islands and down the rapids as far, at least, as Cornwall in a skiff. Ladies as well as gentlemen can enjoy it. The scenery is charming, the excitement is pleasant; there are beautiful camping places where the waters rushing past may lull one to blissful repose, and if one has time to linger by the way, the fishing and the places of historical interest may well tempt you to do so. In no other way can the beauties of the grandest river in the world be seen to the same advantage.

J. JONES BELL.

Brockville, Canada.

CORRESPONDENCE.

To the Editor of the DOMINION ILLUSTRATED:

SIR,—In your last number you have given a view of the western transept of St. George's Church in this city, with the regimental colours of the Prince of Wales regiment.

As an officer of the Montreal Light Infantry, and cognizant of the history of these colours, allow me to state that they are the regimental colours of the Montreal Light Infantry, and were placed there by the late James Holmes, a Major in Her Majesty's Royal Canadian Rifles regiment.

When the rebellion of 1837 broke out the late Benjamin Holmes, an officer who had served with distinction and had suffered severely in the war of 1812, organized the Montreal Light Infantry. These colours were presented to the regiment by Lady Harcourt, and were always jealously guarded by Colonel Holmes, after he surrendered the command, although he did lend them for use to the regiment, that they should be carried to the front as they were at the time of the Fenian raid. They then passed into the possession of the late James Holmes, who gave them, after the disbandment of the regiment, to St. George's Church that they should be placed there, as may be learned by reference to the records of the church.

I remain, sir, yours truly,

W. B. LAMBE.

Montreal, 11th November, 1891.