

The Lumbermen's Excursion.

In response to an invitation from the wholesale lumber dealers and manufacturers of Western Canada, issued some weeks ago, on Monday afternoon, Aug. 15th, at 4.30, the boat express which pulled out of the C. P. R. depot, Winnipeg, carried a large party of the retail lumber dealers of Manitoba and the Territories on their way to take part in an outing on the waters of and tributary to the Lake of the Woods. This is the third time that the lumber manufacturers have thus entertained their retail friends and the numbers of those who responded to the invitation was proof of the growing popularity of the excursions and of the abilities of the wholesale men to entertain.

Arrived at Rat Portage the excursionists, to the number of 125, embarked on the steamship Keenora, by long odds the finest boat now plying upon the waters of the Lake of the Woods and modeled, by the way, on precisely the same lines as the C. P. R. lake boats, and after a couple of hours spent in social intercourse among themselves and with the many Rat Portage friends who gathered to see

susceptible ones began to get a little white around the gills. One by one they silently stole away to the state-rooms or the lower decks where they could give free vent to their feelings to the great amusement of those who were fortunate enough to escape that bugbear of all poor sailors—mal de mer. The trip across the Traverse was delightful to those who could stand the motion of the boat without experiencing any uncomfortable feelings.

About 8.30 the light house, and later the low-lying lands which mark the mouth of Rainy River, appeared to view and in a short time the vessel entered upon its comparatively calm waters, and breakfast was then announced.

From the mouth of Rainy River to its headwaters at Fort Francis is a distance of eighty miles, and the writer can truthfully say that there is not an uninteresting mile in its whole length. The river is wide and presents an unusually majestic appearance. The trees and scrub with which its banks are lined, where they have not been cleared away by settlers, grow right down to the waters' edge and when the waters are smooth, as is nearly always the case, it is sometimes hard, so perfectly are the shadows thrown, to tell exactly where the water ends and the banks begin. The Canadian side of the Rainy River, as no doubt many of the readers are aware, is pretty well settled and numerous little villages and stopping places are passed during the trip along the river. In some places the country is settled for as much as ten miles back from the river. The land along this river, when it is cleared, is reputed to be rich as any in the world for agricultural purposes. Certainly the appearance of the crops which were just being cut in some places at the time of this excursion gives evidence of the truth of this assertion. Grain stood easily five feet high and the heads and berries were remarkably rich and sound looking. But this is digressing a little.

At Emo, one of the principal points on the river the boat stopped for a little while and the excursionists were given an opportunity to go ashore and stretch themselves. Embarking again, the journey was continued and hour after hour slipped away in unalloyed enjoyment of some of the best scenic effects to be found anywhere until evening when just as the shades of night began to shut out the details of the scenery from view the rear of Couchiching falls broke upon the ears of the party and Fort Frances suddenly appeared to view. Landing the party spent a little while in visiting the various points of interest, the famous but unfinished locks, appearing to attract the most attention, and then tired and happy betook themselves to bed—with some exceptions in the latter case. The orders were for a six o'clock start in the morning, and some of the boys aforementioned seemed to think the only way to be sure of being up that early was to stay up all night, and of course they had to amuse themselves. They did this by holding a pow-wow and free-and-easy in the salon of the boat to the consternation of those who wanted to sleep. The brass drum belonging to the band was made to do duty for a tom-tom and in addition to "the boys" several of the most dignified gentlemen of the party acted as chief mourners. This is, of course, a secret. After the singing of the Highland fling the meeting adjourned.

Wednesday morning at 7 o'clock all hands having been reported safely on board the return trip was begun. This proved to be even more enjoyable than the trip out. The sun shone brightly all day and the water was as smooth as a mirror. The beautiful Manitou and Long Sault rapids were seen to advantage on the return and the interest while the good boat was shooting them was intense. Part of the return trip was through the part of the Lake of the Woods, which had been traversed in the dark on the way out and this with its innumerable and always beautiful islands was a new source of delight during the closing hours of the return trip. At nine o'clock on Wednesday morning Rat Portage was reached and the party disembarked in the presence of a large crowd, which had gathered to greet them. This practically ended the trip and the party broke up at Rat Portage some returning west by the boat train while others remained over to spend a few days in Rat Portage.

Before the Keenora docked at Rat Portage a general meeting of the excursionists was convened on the deck of the steamer and Mr. J. L. Campbell, M. P. P. of Melita, on behalf of the Re-



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them off, at midnight, amid a blaze of fireworks and the tuneful music of the Rat Portage brass band which accompanied the excursion, cast off from the dock and entered upon what to many of the participants, as they afterwards expressed it, was the most enjoyable outing of their lives. The capacity of the steamer was taxed to its utmost to provide sleeping accommodation for everybody, but after a great deal of good-natured chaffing and competition for the best places, the boat's officers succeeded in providing for everybody, and those who wanted to went to bed. A few of "the boys" proposed to stay up and entertain themselves after a fashion of their own and unmindful of the muttered threats of those who were kept from sleeping by the row they made, proceeded to have a good time.

The first dawn of the morning found many of the excursionists on their feet again and by the time the vessel had reached the Big Traverse, which she did about 6 o'clock, the decks were well filled with sightseers. The weather was rough and as soon as the long swell of the big sheet of water began to catch the boat some of the most



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tailors. Association after a few felicitous remarks, presented an address to the representatives of the wholesale association present, expressing the thanks of the party for the very pleasant outing which had been provided by them and also expressing thanks to the railway companies who had provided free transportation, the officers of the boat for their exceedingly courteous treatment of them and to the Rat Portage brass band which had accompanied the party and provided a large share of the amusement. Mr. J. C. Graham responded for the wholesale lumbermen in his usual good-natured vein and said his only regret was that they had not been able to invite the gentlemen to bring their wives along with them and expressed a hope that the next time this would be found possible. It was only a question of accommodation that prevented them doing it this time. Mr. Shaw, of the C. P. R. traffic department, who accompanied the excursion, replied for the company which he represented, and Mr. MacDonald, for the M. & N. W. Co. Capt. Thompson, who commands the Keenora made an exceedingly happy