



**DOWN The
MOON RIVER**

1902-

DOWN THE MOON RIVER.

L. S. WILSON,

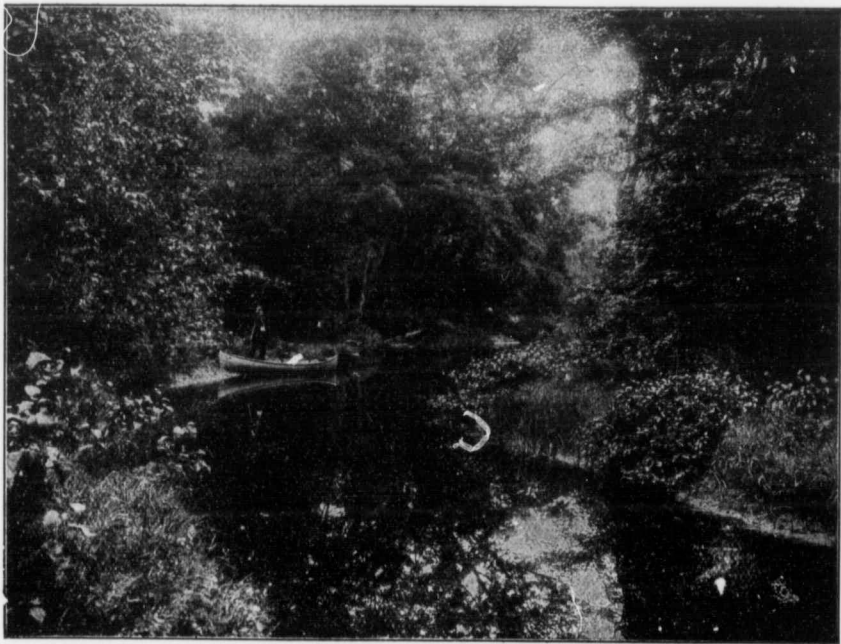
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ONE day that overshadows others spent on a summer trip in the delightful Muskoka country, is Moon river day. Doubtless there are many streams equal in picturesqueness to the Moon; streams on which just as delightful days may be spent; but I have not seen them.

The Moon and the Muskosh rivers deliver the waters of Lakes Joseph, Rosseau and Muskoka into Georgian Bay. These waters fall 20 feet or more at Bala, at the extreme Western shore of Muskoka lake, over rocks and boulders, and for 2 miles from the Muskoka river, which, after that distance, is known in its northern branch as the Moon river, and in its southern stream as the Muskosh. Both are wild. They make their crooked ways through forests of pines, hemlocks, and oaks, these trees towering high above a mass of tangled undergrowth through which, it seems, man has never passed. Fires of long years ago, perhaps in Indian times, have left their marks in many places, and tall pines, straight as arrows, devoid of all green, lift their heads, which have been washed by the rain and bleached white by the sun, high above the second growth. They belong to the old guard. The beds and shores of these rivers are rocky; falls and rapids abound and add much to the charming wildness.

The Moon is a narrow stream. The impression is that it has literally forced its way through the forest, cutting its irregular course in many places through solid rock. You

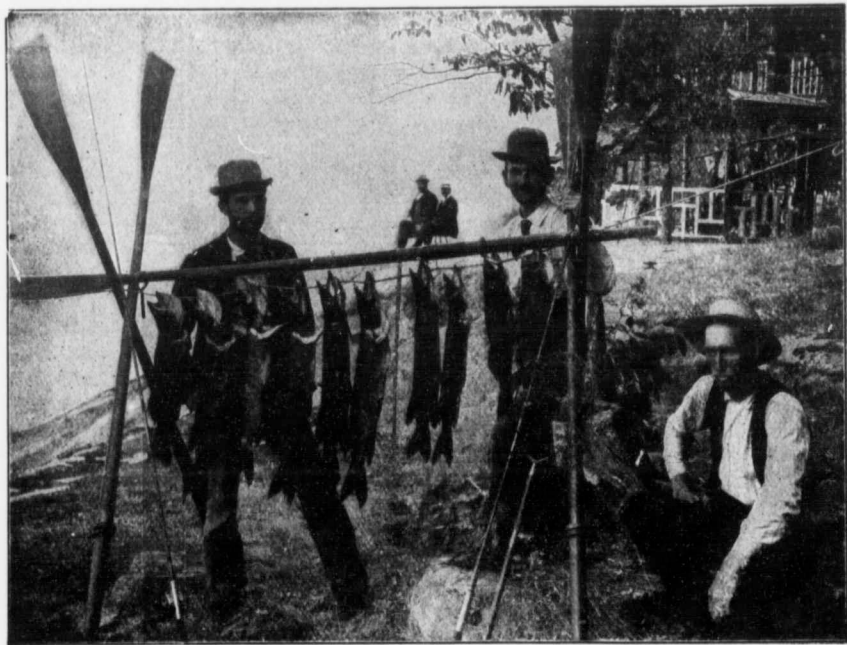


ON THE MOON RIVER

glide along for miles between woody banks and moss-covered rocks without sign of man. There are no villages, no camps, no sound save voices of the wood birds, the musical running of the rapids, the tumbling of the falls and the constant dip of the paddles. You feel that you are viewing a creation of nature's chief Landscape Gardener. You are a congregation, all by yourself, small but attentive and appreciative, to whom the great Preacher is delivering a mighty sermon without words. You will not forget it. In after days you will, perhaps, contrast it with the spoken word from the desk in some grand church and that silent sermon will be with you still, strong, refreshing and inspiring.

Bala, on Lake Muskoka, is the starting point for the Moon river trip. Guides who are familiar with every rock in the channel, who know which lively rapids are not safe to shoot, will, for a reasonable sum, furnish neat canoes and paddle where you will. You will not, in all probability, see a living soul after once fairly away on the trip. Start early. You will require no advice about returning. If you have never experienced the delight of a canoe trip, then there is a new sensation added to all the wealth of scenery on view wherever the eye turns. If the trip is made in the spring, and sometimes even as late as July, you will see the river drivers logging between Bala and the junction of the Moon and the Muskosh. After passing the Muskosh do not expect to hear the voice of man other than your guide. You are entering a wilderness of woods and rocks. A solitary bushranger may call from the shore and ask if you are going far, and warn you to carefully extinguish fires built at lunch hours; but the probability is that you will not see or hear even him.

Once in the Moon you will be enthusiastic over what appears to be a quiet little stream, and will wonder if, indeed, falls and rapids are before you. Ere you have ceased wondering, you have your answer; you hear a roar and in a moment your guide is saying, "We will have to make a short portage here." The carry is necessitated by the falls, and a dam is constructed to force more water through the Muskosh, to aid the running of logs to Georgian Bay.



A DAY'S CATCH ON THE MOON RIVER

You "carry round and put in" and are off again. Another half mile or so and you approach a rapid too swift and too stony to run. A little farther on what is known as the Island portage is reached. Here great rocks rise in the center of the river, creating rapid currents on either side, the water rushing and foaming over sunken boulders that forbid the safe passage of canoes.

Your guide may ask before you have covered an additional 20 rods, "Care if you get a dipping?"

Answer him as you like, but if you say "No," he will shoot the next rapid. Give him your assent and have a swift ride down the watery slope. The stream has a treacherous look, tumbling as it does over rocks and making a slight bend, but the strong hands at the paddle will safely carry you through. If fishing be one of the objects of your outing, the canoe will be run upon a bit of marshy land at the foot of the rapids and you will chase a lively breed of frog. In season, this low land is feeding ground for deer.

Once more in the canoe, you move quietly along, making many short portages. Each time you step on land you note the density of the woods, the impassable tangled underbrush and the queer shale rock formations. These portages give most welcome varieties to the trip. At about 10 miles from Bala, your guide pushes up a short stream and sticks the nose of the canoe into a patch of rushes. He crowds the little craft through tall, coarse grass and water lilies for 100 yards and then enters 'Lunge lake, noted in that region for its maskinonge. It is a small lake, with its shores well wooded, and you will have poor luck indeed if, after an hour, your patience is not rewarded by fish that are fish. A 10-pounder is about the average, and he will give you a tug that will repay you for the journey, if you have not already felt repaid 100 times.

Back into the river, you rest at one of the falls for lunch, casting for bass above and below the falls with success always. You can go through to Georgian Bay if you like, and back to Bala by the Muskosh, a sterling canoe trip requiring 3 days or so. Nearer the bay the falls are more abrupt, the rapids more swift, the portages longer, but the grandeur



BRIDAL VEIL FALLS—MOON RIVER

of the scene remains until you reach open water. A good day's trip is to 'Lunge lake and back to Bala. The return with the slanting rays of the setting sun lighting the tops of the trees, with the river's quiet pools and little bays acting as mirrors for the perfect reflection of everything on the score line, and with gulls, cranes and owls in view as you glide along, makes you conscious of a restfulness peculiar in its charm, that you wish might be abiding. It cannot long remain. Like all good things, it too, has its end.

It has its end in fact but not in fancy. Memory will retain the scenes of such a trip and permit us to bring them up when winter winds are blowing and when ice and snow hide stream and field. We may see in the grate fire before us the summer blue of the sky; the sun tinted green of the woods; hear the delightful ripple of the winding brooks and the restful songs of the birds. Nature speaks at all times in every season to those who are alive to her charms. Her summer voices to the many are most melodious, but even cold, bleak, December's voice, though often harsh, has in it no discord for those who hear aright.

If all memories ended with our summer vacations what little rest or enjoyment would our outings afford. The good that comes from living over a delightful experience, had in close communion with generous nature, is not to be counted in dollars. How rich, then is one who, having seen, has retained the wondrous pictures to be viewed on every side during a vacation wandering in this matchless region of the Muskoka Lakes.



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