



HAVE made it my rule when starting for a hunting or a fishing tour not to plan out the trip too minutely beforehand, for if you do you are liable to find the most beautiful scenery and the best sport in places you may have planned to pass with but scant notice.

Such was our experience last summer, when we spent several most pleasant weeks on the lakes

and reaches of the Batiscan River, in Upper Canada, though we had never heard of any such place at the time of leaving our homes in the States.

We had started out with the intention of visiting the great Lake St. John, the source of the famous Saguenay River, some two hundred miles north from Quebec. There we purposed to fish the wininish, the famous land-locked salmon of the lake, of whose gameness and eating qualities we had heard so much.

With this end in view, upon reaching Quebec we called upon an old fisherman and friend, who owned some of the best wininish fishing in the rapids at the foot of Lake St. John, and it was while talking wininish with Mr. F— that we first heard of the Batiscan River and lakes, the surpassing grandeur of the Batiscan country and the magnificent sport to be had there,

After hearing his account of a trip made thither while the railway was still under construction, it did not require much deliberation to decide on giving up the trip to the great Lake St. John, and by his advice we determined to visit the Batiscan in preference. It was then some eighteen months since the railway connecting Quebec with the settlements on the great northern lake had been completed, and up to that time it had been used mainly for colonization purposes, though during the autumn the company organized a few excursions to show the public the new country opened up by their line.

Indeed, of the thousands who annually visit Quebec and make the tour, as it is called, of the Saguenay River, very few ever get farther than Chicoutimi, at the head of navigation on that river, or go farther inland from Quebec than the Falls of Montmorenci or some of the picturesque places at the base of the first range of the Laurentian Mountains.

It is in the heart of this Laurentian wilderness, north of the St. Lawrence, aptly termed the Rocky Mountain region of Eastern Canada, that the Batiscan River has its source, and flowing south-westerly empties into the St. Lawrence some one hundred miles west of Quebec.

The best idea of this section of country can be gained by describing it as a huge triangle, the northern apex being at the shore of Lake St. John, the southern the city of Quebec, and the eastern the town of Tadousac, on the St. Lawrence, at the mouth of the Saguenay. The sides of the triangles are, on the south, the

broad St. Lawrence, on the northeast the Saguenay, and on the west the line of the new Quebec and Lake St. John Railway, running nearly due north from Quebec.

Each of these sides is from two hundred to two hundred and fifty miles long and the objective point of our expedition upon leaving Quebec was a place on the railway about one hundred miles distant, where it crosses the Batiscan River for the last time, after following the windings of this stream for some distance among the mountains.

This point is almost at the watershed of the northern province, where the road, having slowly climbed the slopes of the Laurentian Range, meets the first small streamlets that form the rivers draining northward into Lake St. John and the Saguenay.

So much for the location of our proposed hunting and fishing grounds.

It was a bright day in August that found our party, consisting of the writer and two companions, journeying northward from the ancient city of Quebec.

We were all three loyal sons of that grand old New England institution of learning whose supremacy in the football field, at the oar and with the bat has become so marked of late, and we were also humble though enthusiastic woodsmen. Having had some experience in the wilds of our Northern States we had taken care to learn all about reliable guides and the necessary outfit and provisions in Quebec. In fact, we had the day before succeeded in engaging by telegraph as our chief guide a Montagnais Indian, whom our Quebec friend recommended and who was to meet us with two other guides and the canoes. Thus we had each his own guide and canoe, and, indeed, found that for the first and roughest part of our journey, from the railway to the lakes, we might have well employed another man to assist over the portages.

About 2 o'clock we arrived at the Beaudet water tank, whence we were to strike out into the wilderness and continue our journey up the river in canoes.

At this spot, the only settlement for a long distance along the railway, we chanced to witness a display of the loyalty of the real Canadian that we scarcely looked for, after having heard a great deal of annexation talk during a previous trip through New Brunswick and Lower Canada.

It so happened that the new Governor

General of the province, the Lord Stanley of Preston, was a northward-bound passenger on the same train with our party, on his way to visit and inspect the newly-made settlements about Lake St. John and to try a few days' sport among the winnish at the grand discharge of that lake.

As the train began to slow up for the station the nervous member of our party suddenly sprang up, as we heard several shots fired apparently on both sides of the train. He afterward confessed that he had at once thought of train robbers; but, though the shots continued and all the passengers became somewhat excited, no damage was done.

And the explanation was soon found, for as we drew up to the tank we found the entire population, some twenty in number, waving their hats and hurraing for the new ruler of the province.

The good people, having neither cannon nor brass bands at their service, had welcomed his Excellency's arrival by placing a quantity of cartridges along the railroad track to be exploded by the train in its motion.

Here we found our guides awaiting us, and to their leader I presented the letter from our friend in Quebec. This guide was three-quarters a Montagnais, and held the honorable position of second chief or vice-president of that tribe of Indians.

He went by the very un-Indian name of Patric Cleary.

It was with Patric that we held our consultation, and he became henceforth the leader of our little party. The other guides or canoe men were Mose, a French Canadian "coureur des bois," and Joe, or "Indian Joe," a half-breed Montagnais, and a devoted follower of Patric's. The two Indians had been explorers and woodsmen from their infancy up, but Mose, as we afterward found out, had lived a most varied life before finally turning trapper and guide. Born near Lake Champlain, he was first a towboat man on the lake, then drifted down the Hudson and became a bricklayer's apprentice, near Peekskill, and an ice cutter on the Hudson. After that he was a horse-car driver out in Toledo, logging hand in Ontario and Lower Quebec, and having been employed along the line of this new railway had settled down as trapper and guide in this region.

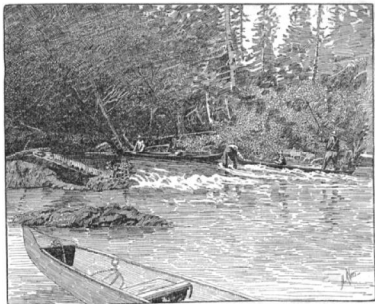
After making the acquaintance of our

men we looked about for a place to spend the night in, and with the assistance of the man in charge of the tank there soon found an old log hut that had been used by the men working on the road, and that made us a very good shelter. We then carried the canoes and most of the kit down to the river's bank, and wrote our last letters home, giving them to the tank keeper to put on the south-bound train for us next day.

Our dreams that night were made more rosy by the stories this man told us of

had not quite prepared us for what was to come.

The distance by the river from Beaudet tank to the La Passe Lakes we decided on our return to be about eighteen miles, and it took us three and a half days to cover this distance, making in all seven very rough portages, the longest one about three miles through the forest. However, we were handicapped by one day of very wet weather, and the lakes might be reached in a day less. We went along quite leisurely, fishing at all the likely



WHERE THE COLD WATER COMES IN.

enormous trout and fine caribou a couple of half breeds had brought down from the La Passe Lakes that spring.

On waking in the morning we found ourselves at the beginning of our real work, and by the looks of the stream we judged that the first day's work would be by no means an easy one. Patric had already told us of some long carries to be made, but we afterward found that he had only been over this route in the winter, when the snow on the ground made traveling comparatively easy, and so he

places in the stream, and were agreeably surprised at finding a good number of trout in the river, though we had been told to expect little fishing before reaching the lakes.

The largest taken in the stream was a two-pound trout, which in the swift water at the foot of a series of pitches made a very game fight, and was landed with difficulty from a projecting boulder.

We made all the portages but one with safety, and at that one suffered the loss of most of our potatoes, owing to the

hastiness of one of the men when unloading his canoe. Although there were a few caribou and bear tracks on some of the beaches along the river, we saw no large game whatever, but plenty of mink and otter, and got a few wood duck and a brace of partridge as we were going along.

On the evening of the second day we pitched our camp at the Grand Forks of the river, some eleven miles from the railway. Here the main branch of the river comes in from the east from the great Batscan Lake, and another branch from the chain of lakes known as La Passe, to which we were bound. This was a beautiful spot, and had we not been so anxious to reach the lakes we should certainly have stopped here for a day or two. The angle between the two streams was filled by an abrupt, overhanging bluff or butte, and the shores of the main stream below the union were thickly-wooded slopes of a terrace formation.

At this point, too, we found the headquarters of Patric's winter hunting camp, the hoop stretchers for caribou hides and beaver skins, and the *caché* on raised poles, where the Indians left their meat and provisions stored when away on their hunts from the main camp.

After leaving the forks the gorge of the river became narrower and more rocky, and we seemed to be going right into the heart of the mountains. Progress by canoes on the river ended next day with a three-mile carry over a spur of the main ridge, where the river, on leaving the lakes, makes a descent of some five or six hundred feet in three miles and is quite impassible for canoes.

It was about noon of the fourth day when we reached the outlet of Lake La Passe, and after paddling up a couple of miles selected a camp ground near the second narrows, where there was abundant firewood and good spring water. The peculiar situation of the place became apparent as soon as we left the woods and paddled out upon the surface of the lake.

La Passe, so called, is properly a chain of seven lakes, about twenty miles long in all, and connected by short narrows, with just enough current to make the separate lakes. This chain of lakes occupies a depression in the high plateau of the watershed region, and is surrounded by mountains and bluffs, many of considerable height. Rapid streams come tumbling down into the lakes from the gorges

between the hills on either side, and as most of them come down cold as ice, their places of discharging into the lakes are favorite spots for trout to come to in the warm weather. Many of these streams come down from smaller lakes and ponds lying somewhat back from the main chain, and during our stay we made explorations of some half dozen of them, all as yet nameless, and one or two spots of great beauty lying in small basins on the sides of the mountain. One and all of these were full of trout, though usually of smaller size than in the large lakes.

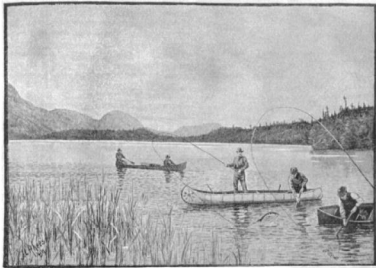
On one of these small lakes one perfectly calm afternoon the trout were rising all over the surface at such a rate that from our point of observation on a high rock we could not keep count of the rises within our range of vision.

In the main lakes the trout rose chiefly at the small brooks and at the head of each lake in the chain, where, at the narrows mentioned above, they could get the grubs and flies brought down by the current; and it was at these narrows that we took our best fish. The sport here during a stay of fifteen days exceeded anything I have known, whether in the famous Moosehead region of Maine or among the thousand lakes in the peninsula of Northern Michigan and Wisconsin.

After the first day we decided to throw back all trout weighing less than one pound, and even then found we had a good many to spare at the close of a day's fishing.

The largest trout captured by our party was a beauty of five and a quarter pounds. This fish was in poor condition and very lean, and might have weighed a full pound more if in good condition. His stomach when opened proved to be entirely empty. The next largest weighed four and a half pounds and was also in poor condition, though a much more game fish.

I was the lucky captor of this fish, which was taken on the morning of our last day at the lakes in the midst of a driving snow flurry and while paddling along one of the narrows. At first I thought my fly caught among the weeds, but was soon undeceived on that point, for on feeling the point of the hook the fish started on a dash and continued in a straight line until fully seventy-five feet from the canoe, when he came clear out of water in a splendid leap, showing his great size, and this he repeated twice amid shouts of



FULL SWING.

excitement and applause from the other canoes.

By this time I had him out in clear water in the deep part of the lake, which was fortunate, as he began circling round apparently in search of the weeds at the bottom. For half an hour he continued as game as possible and then gradually weakened and came to the landing net. It was a fitting finale to our fortnight's sport.

Besides these two largest we got a number over two and three pounds—one catch of ten trout weighing eighteen pounds and one of seven weighing sixteen and a half pounds.

No fishing trip would be complete without its account of the biggest fish of all—that was, of course, just lost—and so I will tell how we missed ours.

The nervous fisherman before mentioned was the hero of this encounter, and the rest of us passive but highly-interested spectators. He had a fair half-pound trout on his tail fly, and was just bringing him up to the canoe, when there was a most tremendous rush at the drop-fly.

It seemed as if a porpoise came rolling up alongside the canoe, but he failed to get the fly. However, the next instant

he seized upon the smaller trout already hooked, and apparently swallowed him, hook and all, and then went down to the bottom to enjoy his morsel. He went down with a steady pull and a vibration of the rod and line that would have indicated his great weight and size had we not seen him come up so plainly. For about ten minutes he played gently back and forth upon the bottom of the lake, and then, alas! of a sudden the strain relaxed, and the flies and leaders came up, intact indeed, but minus the two trout.

The larger fish had evidently swallowed the smaller, and then succeeded in worrying him off the hook. For an hour we all tried to tempt his finny majesty to rise again, but he would not, and so there were mourning and lamentation in the camp that night.

Various guesses were made as to the weight of this trout, running from ten to fifteen pounds, and for the first time we were willing to believe Patric's accounts of ten and twelve pounders taken by him in the winter through the ice.

In hunting we had not such luck as with the rod, killing no large game, and only on one occasion getting anywhere near big game. That was on one of the small ponds where we had discovered



COUREUR DES BOIS.

some fresh tracks in the mud, and whither I had gone on one of the warmest afternoons to see if the game would not come out from the woods to feed, so that I might get a fair shot.

Armed with the best rifle in camp and shotgun loaded with ball, I took my position on an old gnarled tamarack growing in the swamp at the head of the pond, about 4 o'clock in the afternoon. My guide went off to the lake, some two miles distant, with the canoe, having instructions to come for me after sundown, or earlier if he heard any shots in the meantime. For two mortal hours did I remain perched on my tamarack, without seeing any signs of game and no living animals except a few muskrat and a couple of kingfishers that became so used to my presence in the tree that they came up quite close to my branch and made their dives into the shoal water for minnows.

But just before dusk my ear caught an unusual sound in the forest across the little pond, and soon I could hear the distant "plash, plash" of some heavy beast approaching the water's edge. Being quite cramped with my long stay in the one uncomfortable position, and fearing lest I could not get a good aim with the rifle, I put that weapon carefully aside in the crotch of the tree and prepared for action with the heavy ball cartridge in the smooth bore. But it was not to be; the animal, whatever it was, came steadily on until it must have been almost clear of the woods and not more

than one hundred yards from me in a line across the pond. Then, to my intense disappointment, the steps began to plash away again as steadily as they had come, and I could hear the noise growing fainter and fainter along the mountain side, while I was left to ponder why the game had not come out to the water's edge. Big game it undoubtedly was, and from the puffing made by the animal just when I expected it to break cover I think it must have been no less an animal than the moose, the huge monarch of those Northern woods.

By the time I gave up all hope of his returning to the pond the canoe and guide came up for me, and I returned to camp a considerably sadder huntsman than I was some hours before.

Of fur-bearing animals the mink and otter abounded, and we saw fresh beaver signs in several places. Rut as all furs were out of condition in August, we did not care to kill these animals wantonly.

We had several severe frosts after the middle of August and two slight falls of snow, and were obliged to keep a huge pile of hardwood, resembling a bonfire in dimensions, burning all night long before our tent. The cold weather gave us all unusual appetites, and we hold it responsible for shortening our stay at La Passe by several days, as our provisions began to run short.

The cold and snow also caused a great and rapid change in the coloring of the hardwood foliage, so that before we left parts of the shores looked like studies in gray and crimson, the ruddy-colored trees running up to the very foot of the bluffs, and it was with difficulty that we finally decided to leave this spot, long to be remembered by reason of its grand, wild beauty no less than for the magnificent sport we had enjoyed there.

We made the run down stream to the railway in two days, having very little to carry with us and running in safety several of the rapids that had detained us on the upward journey. All three of our men remained good, steady workers to the end, and as they were characters in their way I should like to tell of some of their peculiar traits, but will content myself with a few words about Patric Cleary, the chief.

Patric undoubtedly deserved the leading position he held among the Montagnais. His sagacity and executive ability would alone have entitled him

to that, but apart from these he had the distinction of having covered more trips than any other two men of the tribe. Throughout the Lake St. John region his fame as a dauntless and successful explorer stands unrivaled. He is one of the very few men who have penetrated to the great Lake Mistassini, far away north from the Saguenay, having gone as chief guide to the Canadian Government exploration party some years since.

We ourselves had little occasion to test his exploring qualities, but his capacity for carrying, as shown on the portages we made, was fairly marvelous.

A spare, rather undersized man, he ordinarily carried himself in a slouchy manner and appeared round shouldered and almost weak looking. But when it came to "sacking" the stuff, as they call it, he seemed to adopt a step of unusual length and elasticity, and the balance and swing of his body were a study for a gymnast.

Like most Northern peoples these Montagnais have a great deal of race pride, which shows itself occasionally in curious and even laughable ways. The paddles used by our two Indians were miserable affairs, unfit for good canoe work, being very narrow and pointed and rather unbending, so that Mose and his canoe easily led the others when there were stretches of any

length to paddle. He used the ordinary broad-bladed, light and springy canoe paddle known all over the Northern States and copied from the paddles of the Micmac Indians, upon whom, as on all Southern tribes, the Montagnais look with supreme disdain.

The peculiar shape of the Montagnais' paddles has probably been gradually evolved from the uses to which they are put on the broad flats of Lake St. John and in the shallow, swift rivers running into that lake, where they are needed as much to pole as to paddle with.

But wherever a Montagnais goes he either takes his own peculiar narrow paddle with him or soon makes himself one exactly like it, and no amount of proof of the superior utility of the broad, springy paddle can induce him to give up his own. The cunning logic and specious arguments used by Patric in defending his own against Mose's Micmac paddle would have done honor to any of the old Greek sophists.

On arriving at the Beaudet tank we found that a construction train was soon to come down the road, and it was with feelings of genuine regret that we shook hands with our men for the last time and turned our faces southward toward civilization, leaving them to wage their trappers' warfare during the long and bitter Northern winter.

