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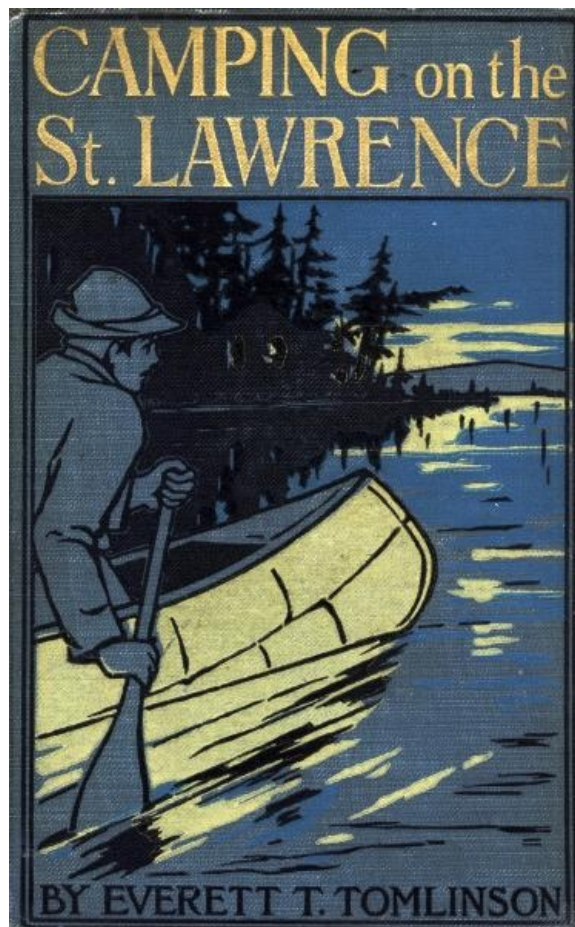
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CAMPING on the St. LAWRENCE
BY EVERETT T. TOMLINSON



"He stood up in the boat, and gave all his attention to the fish." [Page 73.](#)

CAMPING ON THE ST. LAWRENCE
OR
On the Trail of the Early Discoverers

BY
EVERETT T. TOMLINSON

Author of "The Boys with Old Hickory," "Tecumseh's Young Braves," "Guarding the Border," "The Boys of Old Monmouth," "Washington's Young Aids," "Ward Hill at Weston," etc., etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY A. B. SHUTE

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PREFACE.

In this story I have endeavored to take my young readers to one of our noblest rivers, and not only to make them share in the stirring experiences which are to be had on its waters, but also to make them feel something of the power of the wonderful history of those who first looked upon its scenes of beauty.

The events recorded have largely been taken from actual occurrences, the characters, I trust, will not be found untrue to life, and the historical references not inaccurate or uninteresting. Young people are able to feel the inspiration of nature's power when they are not able to define or express it, and perhaps the best form of teaching is that which enables them to look out with the inner vision rather than to observe these things from the outside.

Inspiring as is the majestic river, no less inspiring is the story of the men who first sailed over its waters. Their heroism, persistence, and consecration are qualities which are needed by all men, and in all places and times. We never outgrow these things, though the best parts of our lives may grow out of them.

A better understanding of our own land—its natural beauty, its history and heroes—is certainly not one of the least of the demands of the present time; and the author of this story has had the modest hope that its readers may gain a desire in its perusal to see and know more of those possessions which with pardonable pride they are able to claim as their own.

EVERETT T. TOMLINSON.

ELIZABETH, NEW JERSEY.

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CAMPING ON THE ST. LAWRENCE.

CHAPTER I. PREPARATIONS.

"Have you heard from Bob? Will he come?"

"Can't tell yet. I had a letter this morning, and he writes that it's doubtful. He hasn't given up all hope, though, and says he may get on the rear platform just as the train pulls out."

"That would be just like him. He never started for chapel till all the fellows were there, or went into classroom until the recitation was just ready to begin. He never wasted a minute of his time hanging round."

"He never was late, though, in his life."

"That's all right. I know that as well as you do. I sometimes used to wish he would be late, for it made me half provoked to see him. Nothing ever seemed to put him out, and yet he'd always come in just at the last minute, as if he hadn't hurried or he somehow knew they wouldn't begin until he got there. It was just the same with his studies. There I'd be burning my midnight oil and putting in my best work, and he'd sit down for a few minutes at the table and do in half an hour what it had taken me three straight hours to work out. I never saw such a fellow."

"Yes, Bob was a great fellow."

"You don't have to remind me of that. Haven't we roomed together all through senior year? I used to think before he took up his bed and came over to room with me, that if I could only have him with me, somehow I'd catch the way he did his work, but it wasn't contagious."

"He's got, without asking for it, what my father says is the one thing he sent me to the academy for, and what he's going to send me to college to get, though I'm afraid he'll be disappointed."

"What's that?"

"Oh, it's what my father calls the power of concentrating your mind."

"Well, Bob had it for a fact. It didn't seem to make much difference to him whether there was a room full of fellows about him, or not. When he got ready to work, he just sat down to it, and you might yell in his ears or pull his chair out from under him, and it wouldn't make a bit of difference. He'd sit there on thin air and dig away until his work was all done and then look up as if he was as surprised as you please to see any one in the room. Do you know, I just envied Bob. I did for a fact. I'd give all my father's money to stand in his shoes."

"Perhaps your father would have something to say about that. But Bob was a great fellow; no mistake about that. Do you think he'll have to give up going to college with us?"

"I don't know; I hope not. His mother's a widow, you know, and since his father died, I think they've had a hard time of it. If it was any other fellow I'd say right off he couldn't go. But Bob's different, you see. He didn't have any money and couldn't do lots of the things the others did, but he was the most popular fellow in all the school, for all that. So I somehow don't give up hope that he'll go with us in the fall, after all. Everything seems to turn his way."

"Don't you believe it. It's the other way around, I'm telling you. He just turns everything his way."

"Well, I don't care how you put it if he'll only join us in the camp. I say, Jock, how did you happen to hit on this plan? It's great, that's what it is."

"Oh, I didn't hit on it at all, it was my father. You see, he spent the first vacation he's had in ten years last summer down at the Thousand Islands. We all had such a good time that we wanted to go again this summer; but he couldn't get away, and my mother wouldn't go without him, so they finally compromised on me. At first they thought they'd send me down to Alexandria Bay and Round Island to one of the hotels, and for fear that I'd get lonesome they were going to select some fine man who was well up in Latin and Greek to go along with me, just for company, you see."

"Yes, I see," laughed his companion. "They were going to get a tutor for you, were they?"

"Yes, that's what some people call it, I believe. But when I astonished the family by passing my entrance exams., they didn't know what to do, so at my own suggestion my father hired a camp on Pine Tree Island, and the result is that you and the other fellows are to benefit by my brilliant labors. You ought to be grateful; but this is a cold, cold world, and I'm not building my hopes too high. The trouble is, I *know* you."

"Oh, we'll do the dutiful act and put in all the flourishes," said his friend, with a laugh. "But say, Jock, is it really true about the fishing and canoeing and all that sort of thing that they tell about there?"

"True? well, I should say it was! You won't need but one look at the river to make you think you've found the best spot on earth. Fishing, fishing? why, let me tell you."

"No, no! please don't. I can't bear too much, you must remember."

"Fishing?" resumed Jock, unmindful of his friend's banter, "why, one morning last summer I got up before breakfast—"

"Impossible!" interrupted his friend. "I can stand your fish stories; but that—that is too much for me."

"One morning I got up early, as I was telling you," resumed Jock.

"I believe you did make some remarks upon that subject."

"Keep still! Well, I got up before light—"

"What, what?"

"And went out with my boatman. We caught thirty of the biggest bass you ever saw—"

"Ever saw or ever expect to see," broke in his friend.

"And we were just going ashore to cook our dinner—"

"But when and where did you have breakfast? You've got ahead of your story. Tell me about the breakfast. I haven't recovered from the shock of thinking of you as being up before that was ready."

"And just before we landed, I was beginning to reel in my line. I had out about a hundred and fifty feet, when all at once—"

"What, what? Oh, don't keep me in this suspense, I can't bear it," again interrupted his irreverent friend, striking an attitude of eager attention as he spoke.

"I had a strike that almost yanked my rod out of my hand."

"Ah, yes, I see, your hook had caught on the bottom."

Jock flung a book at the head of his friend and then laughingly said: "Well, you just wait till we get into camp, that's all I can say. If you don't tell bigger stories than I can now, it will be because language has failed you."

"I usually fail in language; my marks are apt to be below par. But I must be going now, Jock. You say the train leaves the Grand Central at nine to-night?"

"Yes. You'd better get your ticket and check your trunk early. There's likely to be a crowd at this time of the year."

"I'll be there. Got your ticket, Jock?"

"Me? Yes. I've got a pass for Bob and myself, or rather my father got one for us."

"That's the way in this world," said his friend, with mock solemnity. "Here you are the son of a railroad magnate and just rolling in lucre, and you don't have to buy a ticket like common mortals. No, you have a pass and all the conductors and porters stand off and look at you as if you were the King of Croesus or some other thing, and we poor little sons of lawyers have to march up to the ticket-office and plank down good, hard-earned straight cash for our little pieces of pasteboards."

"You are to be pitied," replied Jock. "I heard my father say the other day the reason the railroads couldn't make any money was because the lawyers got in first, and the roads had to take what little they left."

"Did he say that?"

"Yes, for a fact."

"This moment I return to my ancestral domicile and demand of my stern parent the portion which falleth to me. He has kept his possession of such vast wealth concealed from his family. I go to make him disgorge."

"Don't forget the train leaves at nine," warned Jock. "I've got the sleeping-car tickets, or at least I've got a section and a berth. That'll be enough if Bob shouldn't come, and if he does, why, two of us will have to double up, that's all."

Jock watched his friend as he ran down the stairway, and then turned back into his own room and

continued his preparations for the proposed journey. Fishing tackle was rearranged, a gun was placed carefully in its case, and many details looked after which only a light-hearted lad, eager for a new experience, knew how to provide.

And certainly Josiah Cope apparently had everything to add to his happiness. His home was one of wealth, and all that father or mother could do had been done for him. He was an eager-hearted lad, as full of good impulses as one could well be, and as he moved busily about in his room it was not difficult to understand why he was such a universal favorite among his mates. His face had that expression of frankness and good-will which somehow draws to itself all who behold it, whether they will or no; and the devotion with which his mother watched over him was, in a measure, shared by his schoolboy friends, for there was something about him which appealed to their desire to protect and shield him from ruder blasts which others might endure more readily.

Not that Jock (for so his friends had shortened the somewhat homely name which the lad was the fifth in direct descent to bear) was in the least effeminate, but his slight figure, his dark eyes and somewhat delicate features, left one with the impression that he was not over-rugged. Whatever others might think, his mother was most decidedly of that opinion, and perhaps not without reason; for she had seen his brothers and sisters enter the home only to remain for a few brief years and then go out forever, and Jock, she frequently declared, was her all. If she meant all she had left, she was correct, and certainly the love he received in his home might easily have been shared with many, and then no one would have complained of receiving too small a portion.

But Jock had somehow survived the perilous treatment and apparently was as popular among his mates as he was in his home. And unknown to him it was the loving fears of his mother that had led to the experiment of a summer camp among the Thousand Islands in the hope that the breath of the great river and the outdoor life would bring a little more color into the cheeks that were too pale for a well-grown lad of seventeen to have.

The decision once made, the next move was to select his companions. This was not a difficult problem, and soon the choicest three of his friends in the academy from which Jock had just graduated, and with whom he hoped to go up to college in the coming autumn, were invited to join him,—an invitation quickly and eagerly accepted by all save Robert Darnell, the “Bob” of the preceding conversation, and the reasons which led him to hesitate have already been referred to.

Still all hoped that the sturdy Bob, the quiet self-contained lad, the leader of his class in scholarship, and easily the best bat in school, could come from his home in the country and join them.

Albert, or “Bert,” Bliss, who had been having the conversation we have already reported, was a short sturdy lad, always ready for a good time, his curly hair and laughing blue eyes causing one to laugh whenever he saw him, so irresistible was the contagion of his overflowing spirits.

The fourth member of the proposed party, Benjamin, or “Ben,” Dallett, was in many ways the opposite of Albert, and in school parlance they had sometimes been known as the “Siamese twins,” or “The Long and the Short of it.” Certainly they were much together, and just as certainly was Ben as much too tall as his friend was too short.

All of the boys save Bob had their abode in New York and had come from homes of wealth, but in their presence Bob almost never thought of his own deprivations, or only when it was impossible for him to engage in some of the enterprises of his friends, and certain it is that the envy to which Ben had given expression, if there was such a feeling manifest among the four friends, was much more of the sterling worth and quiet powers of Bob than of the possessions of the others. At all events, they had become fast friends, and, bound together by such ties as can only be found in school and college, would be certain to have a good time if once they should be together in the camp on the selected island in the St. Lawrence River.

The evening had come, and the three boys had eagerly been watching in the great station for the arrival of their friend. As yet he had not appeared, and when the gong sounded its warning, reluctantly they grasped their various belongings and, holding their tickets in their teeth, passed through the gate and boarded their train.

“It isn’t time yet,” said Bert. “He won’t come till the train begins to move.”

“I’m afraid he isn’t coming at all,” replied Jock, as he arranged his various parcels in the section, all the time keeping a careful lookout for the appearance of the missing Bob in the doorway of the car.

CHAPTER II. THE JOURNEY.

The train was now increasing its speed and swept swiftly past the city blocks, and then with a groan darted into the long tunnel. The rumble became a roar, and as the boys were convinced that the missing Bob had been left behind, they glanced about the car at their travelling companions.

Apparently every berth had been taken, and it was evident from the fishing rods that could be seen that many besides themselves had started for the great river. There were young people and old, and little children who already were rubbing their sleepy eyes, unable to remain awake longer, in spite of the noise of the fast-flying cars and the roar of the train in the tunnel.

Soon the sounds changed, and all knew that they had passed through the underground way, and the scattered lights of the streets could be seen again. As the boys turned once more to glance behind them, Jock emitted a shout; for there, standing quietly in the aisle, was the missing member of the band, Bob Darnell

himself.

"Where did you come from, Bob?" shouted Jock, delightedly, as he grasped his friend's hand. "We thought we'd lost you."

"It's mighty easy to get lost in this town of yours. Who would want to live in such a place?" replied Bob, quietly.

"But where were you? How did you get aboard? We waited and waited for you, but you didn't come. Tell us about it," exclaimed the eager boys, as they made room for their friend to take the vacant seat.

"You might have known I'd be here. You needn't have wasted your precious thoughts on me."

"I know it, Bob, but I don't see how you got here," said Jock.

"You city chaps don't understand, and you never will," replied Bob. "You always rush around as if you hadn't a minute to spare. What's the good of it, I'd like to know?"

"Not much good, if we could only be as sure of being on time as you are, Bob," said Bert. "Why don't you tell us how you did it?"

"There isn't anything to tell. My train got in about an hour ago, and I went up on Madison Avenue to Jock's house. They told me he'd gone to the station with you fellows, and they all seemed to be very much excited about it, too. All they could say to me was: 'Hurry up. Make haste, or you'll be left.' Queer folks, these New Yorkers."

"Well, you did almost get left, didn't you?"

"Left? Not a bit of it. It's true they had closed the door, and the gateman didn't want to let me pass, especially when I didn't have any ticket. But after a little argument he relented, and I went down to the platform. There I had a tussle with the porter, for he was just getting aboard the train, and had taken in his steps. He, too, wanted to see my ticket, but I didn't have time to stop and talk much with him, so I just climbed in after him. I found I was on the last car, so I had to travel all through the train to find you. You ought not to have made me do that, fellows; it's too much of an exertion," he added regretfully.

The boys all laughed, and their evident unconsciousness of the presence of the others in the car, and their light-hearted and merry voices, soon drew the attention of their travelling companions. Old men glanced at them with a softened expression on their countenances, as if the sight of young life and care-free lads reminded them of days in their own lives now far away and dim in the years that were gone. Old ladies watched them and smiled, without understanding what it was that made their eyes light up as they listened to the contagious laughter of the happy-hearted boys. Little children came tottering and staggering down the swaying aisle, and stopped before them, peering wonderingly at the band as if they knew they must be having a good time, and would like to join in it themselves. Jock passed pieces of candy to the little ones, and the enjoyment of the boys became keener as they watched the children thrust the sweetmeats into their mouths, and then go staggering back to their mothers, and, climbing into their laps, point gleefully to the group which had treated them so well.

Indeed, the very presence of the boys seemed to create a different atmosphere in the car, and in whatever direction they looked, they were sure to be met with smiling glances. Certainly, thoughts of possible evil days to come did not disturb them; the burdens of life were all for others, and as far as our four friends were concerned, life itself was colored with a halo of the brightness which not only was theirs by right, but was increased by the anticipation of days that were soon to come in the camp on Pine Tree Island.

"I haven't bothered my head much about the details of this thing," said Bob, "but I'd like to know how much work we've got to do to-morrow."

"No work at all, Bob," said Jock, laughing. "I wouldn't dare lay such a contract as that on your delicate shoulders."

"That's kind of you," replied Bob, shrugging those same shoulders, which certainly to the ordinary observer gave no symptoms of delicacy. "But I was thinking about the camp, you know. Some tent or some thing or other has to be set up, I suppose. Who's to do that, I'd like to know?"

"That's all been done," said Jock, laughingly. "My father wrote Ethan Barnes last week—he's to be our guide, you know, or rather one of them, for his son is to be there too. Everything has been sent on ahead and probably by this time Ethan's got everything all ready for us. You see, my father used to live in that part of the world when he was a boy, and he and Ethan were old school friends. They used to sit together on the same bench, I believe. Father says the old red schoolhouse is still standing, and he'd like to have me go over there some day. He says I'd find his initials cut in the seat with the first jack-knife he ever owned. There's one thing you'll have to do though, Bob."

"What's that?"

"You'll have to reel in your own fish when you get a strike."

"Strike? What's a strike? Do I have to do the striking?"

"No, no. When a bass swallows your hook they call it a 'strike.'"

"Who calls it a strike, the bass?"

"No, everybody calls it that."

"Well, all I can say, I don't blame a bass for striking then. I'd strike, too, if I was in his place."

"You? not much, you'd never strike. You'd just wait till somebody came along and took the hook out of your mouth," was Ben's merry comment.

"How do you do the fishing?" inquired Bob, apparently unmoved.

"Why, we go out in boats, you know. Skiffs. Those St. Lawrence skiffs are beauties too, let me tell you," said Jock.

"But how do the skiffs go?" persisted Bob. "By steam?"

"No, no. We'll have boatmen. Ethan will pull one and his son the other, and two of us will go in each. It's great sport."

"It must be. You don't know what a load you've lifted from me. I almost gave up when I thought I'd have to work. It doesn't agree with me. Never did. My mother has noticed it ever since I was born. But she's the only one who understands me. Hello, here's the mogul!"

The boys looked up as he spoke, and saw the conductor and the porter near them. As their tickets were taken and the berths assigned, Bob said:—

"Jock, you say you'll take the berth in the next section. There won't be any room left for you, I'm thinking.

That's all spoken for now."

For the first time Jock noticed who was seated in the adjoining section. A woman was there, but never in all his life had he seen one so stout. It almost seemed as if she completely filled the seat, and it was evident from her manner that she was far from feeling at her ease. She glanced nervously about the car, and not for a moment relaxed her grasp on the seat. Her eyes, too, betrayed her alarm, and it was plain that the experience she was then undergoing was a new and not altogether pleasurable one.

As the boys glanced at her, her fear seemed to increase. She rose from the seat, but a sudden lurch of the car sent her back again with an exclamation of anger which could be heard by all.

"Here, you!" she called. "I say, mister, come here!"

It was the colored porter to whom she was speaking, and as he turned back respectfully to listen to what she had to say, his face beamed with good nature and amusement.

"What is it, madam?" he said kindly.

"I thought they told me this was a sleepin' car."

"So it is."

"It is, is it? Well, where do folks sleep, I'd like to know?"

"Why, in the beds."

"I don't see no beds," she replied angrily, as she looked about the car.

"Why, madam, these seats are the beds."

"The seats are the beds? Humph, pretty beds they are! Do you expect *me* to lie down on 'em?"

"They are changed and made up. I'm the porter and I'll make up your berth whenever you want it."

"You're the porter, be ye? Well, I thought you was one o' the Vanderbilts, with all yer gold buttons and fine clothes. Well, ye jest make up mine now."

"I'll be back in a minute and fix you up all right, madam. You're going to Philadelphia, aren't you?"

"Yes, I am. I'm goin' to Philadelpy, an' the sooner I get there the better."

As the porter turned away to complete his collection of tickets, Jock turned to his companions and said: "That woman has made a mistake. She says she's going to Philadelphia, and she's got on the wrong train, as sure's you live. I'm going to tell her."

Leaving his seat, Jock approached the troubled passenger and said, "Did I understand you to say you were going to Philadelphia?"

"Hey? Yes, I'm goin' to Philadelpy, but I don't see how that concerns you, Bub," and as she spoke she hurriedly felt in her pocket as if she expected the stranger who had dared to address her was one of the light-fingered gentry who she had been informed infested the city and were wont to take advantage of innocent and unsuspecting strangers.

Jock's face flushed as he heard himself addressed as "Bub," and his confusion was increased as he saw an expression of amusement creep over the faces of his companions; but he was too polite to heed now, and was determined to assist the old lady in what was her evident confusion and mistake.

"All I wanted to say, madam," he continued, again speaking to the troubled woman, "was that I fear you have made a mistake. If you wanted to go to Philadelphia you ought to have gone on the Pennsylvania road, not on the New York Central; this train doesn't go to Philadelphia."

"Hey? What's that ye say?" exclaimed the startled woman. "Got the wrong keers, have I? Here you, Mr. Porter," she shouted, standing with difficulty and shaking a huge cotton umbrella at that officer. "Come here, come here!" she called in increasing excitement.

As the porter hastened toward her, the eyes of all in the car were turned upon her. Some of the passengers were evidently amused, and some were sympathizing with her in her trouble.

"What is it, madam, what is it?" inquired the colored man, politely.

"This boy says this isn't the train for Philadelphia," she exclaimed wrathfully. "What d'ye put me on this keer for, I'd like to know?" She was grasping her pocket with one hand and waving her cotton umbrella frantically in her excitement with the other. "Ye jest meant to rob me!" she continued. "I know ye. Ye knew I had six dollars and seventeen cents in my pocket. Ye shan't get it, that's what ye shan't!"

"But, madam, this train does go to Philadelphia."

"Hey? it does, does it? What d'ye mean, then?" she demanded, turning again upon Jock. "Then it was you that wanted to rob me! I'll turn you over to the police, I vum I will!"

It was some time before it was explained that there was a little junction not far from the St. Lawrence which rejoiced in the same name as its larger sister in the adjacent state; but at last all was made plain, and covered with confusion Jock took his seat once more, hardly daring to look around upon his fellow-travellers, who evidently had been hugely enjoying the scene.

But the troubles were not yet ended. As the porter volunteered to make ready the old lady's berth at once, the boys vacated their seats for their neighbor, who watched with evident consternation the preparations for the night.

The berths were speedily prepared, and then the porter said, "I'll take your tickets, madam, and you can retire when you please." As he took the slip the porter glanced once more at her in amusement as he said: "Yours is the upper berth, madam. Wait a moment and I'll get the steps for you."

"What!" exclaimed the excited woman. "Up there in that garret? Me? well, I guess not. Jerushy Jenkins don't climb up into any sech hole as that! Not much; I'll ride on yer old cow-catcher afore I'll do that."

"You may have the lower berth, madam," said Jock, quickly. "I'll be glad to give it up to you."

"Ye will, will ye?" said Jerusha, suspiciously. "Well, I don't know whether ye will or not. Do ye think it's safe, perfectly safe?" she inquired of the porter.

"Yes, madam."

At last the trembling traveller was mollified, and soon afterward all in the car were asleep. With the coming of the dawn our boys hastily dressed and soon were gazing out of the windows at the silver-like strips which here and there could be seen in the distance, and in a moment knew that they were drawing near to the waters of the majestic river, which already were reflecting the light of the coming day.

CHAPTER III.

THE SAIL DOWN THE RIVER.

The first impression of the boys was that they were passing through a country hoary with age. The scattered homes of the farmers, which occasionally could be seen, were evidently all of recent date, though many of them were weather-beaten and had never known the touch of a paint-brush. But the country itself in the gray of the dawn seemed to be wrinkled and old. It was a level land and without any marked features, save that of its venerable appearance; but all this was instantly forgotten when suddenly the full sweep of the mighty St. Lawrence burst into view.

Far as the eye could see the great mass of water stretched away, and of what a beautiful color it was! Its strong, swift current could be discerned even from the cars, and in the distance were the islands. Beautiful cottages and well-kept lawns were before them, and from the flag-poles fluttered the stars and stripes, winding in and out as the morning breeze shook out the folds of the bunting. Far to the east could be seen the shores of the larger islands, many of them covered with trees, and already changing color in the light of the rapidly approaching dawn. All together, the sight was one of imposing beauty and grandeur; but all other things were speedily forgotten, for the great river, as it went surging in its way, seemed to fascinate the eyes of the eager boys.

Too much impressed by the sight to give voice to their sentiments, for a few minutes the lads gazed at the changing scene before them; but they were speedily recalled to their immediate surroundings by the movements of the people in the car, who were all astir by this time.

"Here we are!" called Jock, gleefully, as the rumbling train came to a standstill, and the passengers all prepared to leave the car.

In a moment the boys joined the procession, and as they stepped upon the dock they saw that steamers, large and small, were there, and innumerable smaller boats of all kinds and descriptions. What impressed our boys more than the steamers and yachts, however, was the sight of the beautiful St. Lawrence skiffs, numbers of which were near the dock. Graceful and light as a birch-bark canoe, and with cushioned seats and even equipped with chairs, it seemed to them that never before had they beheld such beautiful little crafts. What speed could be made in them, and once in the current of the great river, how they would go!

The dock was filled, in spite of the early hour, with a multitude of people, some of whom were selecting their baggage and giving orders for its transfer to the waiting steamers. Others were calling to the porters, and still others were themselves rushing back and forth between the train and the boats, looking after their own belongings and seeing that they were properly placed. It was a stirring sight, and the fact that almost every man, to say nothing of the boys, was equipped with the case which plainly enclosed a fishing rod, showed that others besides themselves had hopes of sport on the great river.

Jock, who was the leader of the party, was looking eagerly about in the crowd for some one who should correspond to the description his father had given him of Ethan, the man who was to be their guide and cook; but for a time he was unable to find any one whom he dared to address as the one he was seeking.

Soon, however, a man clad in the country garb, with a flannel shirt open at the neck, and a huge straw hat on his head, came near and peered inquiringly at the boys. Satisfied with his inspection, he approached and said in a deliberate manner,—

"Mebbe you're Jock Cope's boy?"

"Yes, yes," responded Jock, quickly. "He's my father, and you are Ethan, if I'm not mistaken."

"That's what folks call me. These the boys goin' into camp with ye?" he inquired with a drawl, turning to the other boys as he spoke.

"Yes, these are my friends," and Jock proceeded to introduce each to Ethan.

"Glad to see ye," responded Ethan, apparently not very much impressed by the sight of the band. "Got yer trunks checked?"

"Yes, they were checked through to Alexandria Bay. We don't have to do anything here, do we?"

"Naw, unless ye want to go down to the Bay on the steamer. I've got my boat here, an' if ye want to ye can sail down with me. Ye'll have speak up, sonny, though, for if ye want to take the steamer ye'll have to say so mighty quick."

"We haven't had breakfast," said Jock, "and if the other fellows feel as I do, we'll want something to eat."

"Ye can get breakfast aboard the boat if ye want to an' can afford to pay for it, or ye can go up to one o' the hotels an' get it, an' I'll wait here for ye. 'Tisn't for me to say."

"Oh, let's wait and get our breakfast at one of the hotels, and sail down the river in Ethan's boat," said Bert, eagerly; and as it was apparent that all the boys shared in his desire, it was quickly decided to leave their rods and the personal effects they had brought with them in his care.

Ethan received the rods with a grunt, which was not expressive of high admiration for their outfit, and the boys at once started up the street to secure their breakfast. They were too much excited to give much attention to the straggling little village of Clayton, for their appetites were imperative and must be satisfied, and soon they entered one of the hotels and secured places in the dining room.

"I tell you what," exclaimed Bert, "this is great! I never saw such a sight as this river. We'll have a great time here. Even Bob is excited."

"Hungry, you mean," replied that individual. "You fellows have been all stirred up by the scenery, but I'm thinking of the inner man."

"I'm not," said Ben. "Do you know, Jock, I'm afraid of that Ethan of yours."

"Afraid of him? What do you mean?"

"Why, he acts as if he was a king or some other potentate. You don't really suppose he actually owns one of these islands, do you?"

"I don't know," replied Jock. "I'll ask him, if you want me to."

"Well, the way that same Ethan looks at us, and sniffs at our rods, and treats us as if we were boys, just scares me; it does, for a fact. I don't know the difference between a reel and a rod, and somehow I know I shan't even dare to put a worm on my hook if he's looking at me."

"Put a worm on your hook!" exclaimed Jock, laughingly. "You are green. You don't use worms here."

"Don't use worms? What do you have for bait, then, I'd like to know?"

"Minnows, little fish."

"I should think it would hurt 'em if you put 'em on the hook," drawled Bob; "I'm too tender-hearted for that."

"You won't have to hurt your tender feelings, Bob," laughed Jock. "Ethan does all that for you. That's the advantage of having a boatman, you see."

"Ah, yes, I see," replied Bob, with a sigh of relief.

But the breakfast was now brought in, and in a moment all other things were forgotten as the boys fell to with a will, and ate as only hungry boys in the early morning air of the St. Lawrence can eat.

When this task was at last completed, they started eagerly toward the dock, and as they approached they discovered Ethan watching for them. He had already hoisted his sail and all things were ready for the departure.

As the boys leaped on board, they noticed the beautiful little craft of which Ethan was the proud owner; but as he was evidently eager to set sail at once, no remarks were made until after the boat was free from the dock. Then the strong breeze and the swift current combined to send them swiftly on their way down the river, and in the exhilaration of the scene the boys for a moment gave free play to their feelings.

"You don't often have a day like this, do you, Ethan?" said Jock.

"Hey? oh, we have 'em 'most as often as they come."

"I know that, but they don't often come, do they?"

Ethan looked at his questioner for a moment before he said, "You don't know much, I see. Lived in the city all yer life, haven't ye?"

"Yes," replied Jock, feeling for the moment as if he were guilty of something, though of what he could not just determine; but the boatman's contempt was so evident that the lad resolved to ask no more questions.

"Then you're Jock Cope's boy, be ye?" said Ethan, after a pause.

"Yes. I've often heard him speak of you, and tell how you two used to sit together in the same seat over in the little red schoolhouse. Father says it's still standing, and he wants me to go over and see it some day while we're here."

"Wants ye to see it? What fur?"

"Oh, just to see it, that's all. He wants me to see the place where he went to school when he was a boy."

"Humph! it isn't much to see. Jest a little shanty, that's all. Say, they tell me your pa is worth a lot o' money. Is that so?"

"I don't know," said Jock. "He's got some, I suppose. Enough to pay for our expenses here this summer, I think."

"But heow much has he got?" persisted Ethan.

"I don't know just how much. He never told me."

"Got five thousand dollars?"

"Perhaps so."

"I don't b'lieve it," grunted Ethan, contemptuously. "I know Jock Cope, an' I know he ain't worth no sech money's that. He's done a pile o' harm to this country, though, I'll say that for him," he added glumly.

"Done harm? My father done harm? I don't believe it!" exclaimed Jock, warmly.

"Well, he has, whether ye believe it or not."

"What's he done?"

"Oh, he wasn't satisfied to stay here an' do what his father did afore him. No, he had to go off down to New York, an' they say he's worth five thousand dollars now. I don't believe it, but all the boys reound here do, an' so they're goin' off to teown to make their fortunes too. Now my boy Tom, he's goin' to help reound your camp, ye know, he's got the fever too. Somebody's told him if he'll come down there they'll get him a job on the street cars an' pay him a dollar an' a half every day." And Ethan's eyes became large as his voice dropped lower in his efforts to be more impressive. "He's nothin' but a young fool, that's what he is, and he's all took up with the notion. I want you boys to tell him 'tisn't so, that is, if you know anything about it, which I don't much believe for my part. It doesn't stand to reason that there'd be anybody so tarnel foolish as jest to give him a dollar and a half every day for standin' up on a street car. No, sir. I don't believe no such thing."

The boys looked at one another, and not even the sight of the beautiful river could keep back the look of amusement which crept over their faces.

"Ethan, have you ever been in New York?" inquired Bob.

"Who, me? Well, I rather guess not. They don't get me to go to no sech place as that. Pickpockets an' thieves an' gamblers. No, sir. I've never been outside o' Jefferson an' St. Lawrence counties in all my born days. This 'ere river is good enough for me, an' I'm goin' to stay where I'm well off. Since these city people have got to comin' up here summers, I'm makin' money."

From Ethan's manner it was evident that he wished the boys to question him, and Bob was the first to improve the opportunity.

"Ethan, are you a rich man?" he inquired solemnly.

"Rich? well, I don' know as ye'd call it that exactly. I'm doin' pretty well, though. D'ye know heow much money I took in last summer rowin'?" he added, as if he were about to disclose some great secret.

"No; I can't imagine. How much was it?" said Bob.

"One hundred an' ten dollars an' sixty-nine cents!"

"You don't mean it! It can't be possible!"

"Well, it is trew, whether it's possible or not. I saved thirty-one dollars an' sixteen cents an' have got it in the bank up to Wat'town now."

"What did you do with the rest of it?"

"Oh, I had to live, didn't I? Well, I used that in livin'. My neighbors thought I was livin' pretty high, but I didn't put on no airs. I ain't proud."

"Whose island is that?" inquired Ben, pointing to a small island on which there was a beautiful cottage. He felt that diversion was necessary to break the spell Ethan's astounding statements had produced, and accordingly asked the first question that occurred to him.

"That? oh, that b'longs to another fool deown New York way. They tell me he's just bought it an' give a thousand dollars for it. 'Tain't worth it. 'Tisn't worth fifty cents. Ye jest can't raise nuthin' on it. Why, I could 'a' had that island for a gift if I'd been willin' to pay the tax on it twenty-five year ago, an' that wasn't more'n fifty cents. There's yer camp ahead o' ye, boys."

Instantly the statements of the incredulous Ethan were forgotten, and all peered eagerly at the place he had indicated. Even the exhilaration of the sail which had occupied two hours and a half was also forgotten now.

As they had swept on in their course the boys had been more and more elated. On past beautiful islands, and summer camps, and parks which seemed like large villages, they had come. Sometimes they had passed close to the shore in places where the channel was almost like a mill-race in its swiftness, and then again they were out in the river where only an eddy here and there indicated the tremendous power of the great water, on whose surface they were sailing. Wooded islands had been seen, and then islands which appeared to be only great rocks and boulders loomed up before them. Camping parties like their own had been passed, and salutes had been fired to acknowledge their approach. Men and women, boys and girls, had all seemed to catch something of the life of the great river, and on every side there appeared to be the joy which came from the freedom from care and the life-giving breezes of the majestic St. Lawrence.

Only Jock, of the party, had ever been there before, and in the novelty and delight of the experience, his companions had, perhaps, failed to be duly impressed by the sceptical sentiments of their boatman. At all events, when Ethan declared that the camp was in sight, even his own presence became vague and unreal as the boys peered eagerly before them at the place where they were to stay for the coming six weeks, and where doubtless many and thrilling experiences were to be theirs.

CHAPTER IV. IN CAMP.

As the swift little boat swept forward the tents were soon visible, standing as they did near the shore and yet close to the woods which stretched away in the distance. There were two of these tents, and the white canvas outlined against the green foliage presented a wonderfully attractive appearance, at least to the eager boys, who were all unmindful now of their boatman's financial problems and intent only upon the vision of their abode for the coming few weeks.

Ethan explained to his companions that one of the tents was designed to be their sleeping quarters and the other was to provide a kitchen which could be used on stormy days. On other days the cooking was to be done in the open air, and the fireplace and the pile of logs which was to furnish fuel soon could be seen clearly as the party came nearer to the island.

There was a rude little dock near the camping place, and to this Ethan guided his boat and soon landed his passengers. As the boys leaped out, Bert called to his companions: "This is great, fellows! Let's give the school cheer!"

Instantly their united voices rang out, and Ethan looked up in astonishment. "What d'ye do that for?" he inquired blankly.

"That's our school yell, Ethan," replied Jock. "Give it again, boys!"

As the sharp, clear cry rang out again they saw a young fellow of about their own age approaching from the tents, and his evident surprise was as marked as that of the boatman. Only a brief glance, however, was required to convince the boys that it was Ethan's son before them. There was the same general outline of features as in the older man, and the same peculiar hitch as he walked.

"That's yer school yell, is it?" said Ethan. "Do they make ye do it often?"

"Oh, whenever we feel like it," laughed Jock.

"Well, your pa an' I used to have a school yell when we went to the little red schoolhouse, an' I want to tell ye that not one of ye can come up to him either. Many's the time I've seen him toe a crack, an' when the teacher brought his hickory ferule down ker-whack, yer pa could make a louder noise than any o' you boys. He was a powerful one to yell, Jock Cope was!"

Even Ethan's recollections were not of sufficient interest now to prevent the boys from running up the bank to their tents, and soon they were eagerly examining all the details of their camp. There were four cots in one of the tents and in the other were places where their trunks and guns and rods and their various belongings might be stored. Ethan's son, who had been introduced as Tom, remained with his father and assisted in bringing from the boat the articles which were to be stored in the tents, and soon had everything arranged and in order.

The camp was on the wooded shore of one of the larger islands. Before them was a view of the broad river, dotted here and there with islands, on some of which were cottages and on others camping parties not unlike their own. It was noon time now, and the sun was almost directly above their heads. The air was almost motionless, but the restless river was hastening on as if wind or wave, or heat or cold, were all alike to it. The sublimity of the scene, the novelty of the camp, the rushing waters, and tall silent trees all combined to produce a feeling of intense delight in the hearts of the boys, and they stood together on the shore looking out over the beautiful sight and filled with expectations such as only light-hearted lads at such a time can

know.

"I say, boys, mebbe ye'd like something to eat."

In a moment the beautiful vision had lost its power, and turning eagerly to the camp, Jock said: "You are right, Ethan. How did you know we were hungry?"

"Didn't have to know. Folks have to eat, don' they? It's dinner time, that's what it is. Most o' folks like to look at the river when they first come, but they find scenery isn't specially fillin' as a diet. They mostly wants somethin' to eat afore long."

"We're like the others, then," said Ben. "Did you say you had dinner now in the middle of the day?"

"Yes, that's what I said. When did ye expect to have it?"

"Oh, I didn't know. We usually have it at night when we're at home."

"At night? Dinner at night?" exclaimed Ethan. "Ye must be funny folks. Noon's the hour for dinner. Everybody knows that."

"Go ahead, Ethan. Have it now. We may want it every hour in the day, if the feeling I have is anything that lasts very long."

Thus bidden, Ethan and Tom at once prepared dinner. While the younger man made a fire, Ethan prepared the potatoes, whittling the skins as if he had been carving an oar. He also split three black bass which Tom had caught in the morning, and made them ready for broiling. In addition to these he had fresh vegetables, a coffee pot, a can of milk, and various other necessities, and to the surprise of the boys it at once became evident that both Ethan and his son were adepts in the art of preparing a dinner in a St. Lawrence camp.

Soon a savory odor rose from the fireplace, and the curiosity of the boys gave place to a feeling of eagerness for the time to come when they would be summoned to the repast. The few dishes were at last brought forth, the dinner was declared to be ready, and the boys fell to with a will.

What appetites they had! How good everything tasted! For a time even conversation was neglected, but at last, when the cravings of the inner man began to be appeased, then the joy and inspiration of the hour once more returned.

"I s'pose ye've got a pretty fair house down to New York?" queried Ethan of Jock.

"Oh, yes. It's one you might call comfortable, I suppose," said Jock, with a laugh.

"Got good beds in it?"

"Yes."

"Your ma keeps a girl, I s'pose?"

"Keeps a girl? I don't know that I understand what you mean," said Jock.

"I mean what I say. She's got a hired girl, hasn't she?"

"Do you mean the maids? The servants?"

"No, I don' mean no *servants*. I mean hired girls."

"Well, yes, I suppose she has."

"They have four servants—hired girls, I mean," drawled Bob.

"Four, four? What's yer ma do herself?"

"Oh, she's busy all the time, too busy, my father thinks," laughed Jock.

"Four hired girls! I swan, if that don' beat all creation! What did ye want to come down here for then, I'd like to know? Eatin' outdoors and sleepin' on a cot when ye don' have to; that beats me! Ye city folks must be a queer lot."

"That's just what we're here for, Ethan. We came on purpose to get a taste of outdoor life."

"Well, ye're likely to have a good deal more'n a taste, I'm thinkin'. Now, then," he said to Tom when the dinner had been eaten, "I'll leave ye here to look after the boys while I go over to the Bay an' get the trunks an' things that were checked through. I'll be back by the middle o' the afternoon. Ye can get along without me, can't ye?"

"Yes, yes," said Jock. "We want to get out our rods and fix things up a little. We can try the fishing to-morrow, can't we, Ethan?"

"Yes, ye can *try* it," replied Ethan, dryly.

"You don't think we'll do much? Is that it, or isn't the fishing good this summer?"

"Oh, the fishin' is all right. Lots o' fish here. No trouble about that."

But Ethan at once went down to the dock and set sail for Alexandria Bay, and the boys began to look to their rods and guns. Tom, who was supposed to be clearing away the dishes, frequently paused in his occupation to examine the belongings of the campers; but, although he was feeling more at ease now with them, not one word of surprise or commendation did he bestow. Indeed, his companions began to fear that their tackle must all be wrong or out of date, for the only response Tom would make to any of their anxious inquiries, was that 'he supposed 'twas all good enough; he could tell better to-morrow.'

When everything had been done which could be done before the trunks came, the four boys together left the camp and walked up the shore. The novelty was still strong, and they were eager to examine their immediate surroundings. And there was much to interest them. Swift steam yachts frequently passed up the river, and the groups of happy people on the decks could be plainly seen from the shore. Occasionally a puff of smoke could be seen, and the boom of a small cannon on some of the neighboring islands could be heard, and then the shrill scream of the whistle of a passing yacht or steamer would respond in acknowledgment of the salute. Skiffs were also seen, and the rod held in the hands of the person seated in the stern would indicate the occupation upon which he was bent.

Above them was the clear blue sky, behind them the whispering trees of the forest, and before them the great, onward-rushing river, its blue waters knowing no rest, and yet in spite of their evident haste imparting a feeling of restfulness to all the beholders, so vast was the power, so slight the effort required to maintain the steady, constant course.

To Jock the great river almost seemed to be alive. At times it was restless and almost angry, and then again it seemed to be hastening past him as if it were unmindful of its surroundings, or scornful of the puny people who sailed over its surface or stood wondering upon its banks. But the feeling of exhilaration, the delight in the presence of one of nature's most wonderful works, was apparent in all the boys.

As they turned at last to retrace their way to the camp, Bob, who had been silent most of the time, said:

"This is a great place, Jock. 'Twas good of you to have us all here."

"Yes, it was pure philanthropy," said Jock. "You see, I had been down here before and wanted all the more to come again; but my father didn't want me to come alone; so I just had to make up a party, or stay at home. I'm generous, am I not?"

"Yes; what was that?" Bob suddenly said, stopping short and peering excitedly out into the river at a place where a whirl or eddy in the stream appeared.

"That? oh, that was probably some fish."

"Jock Cope, do you mean to tell me they have fish like that in this river?"

"Why, yes; what did you think was here?"

"Oh, I didn't know. But I'm wondering what I would do if a fish as large as that one was should get hold of one end of a line and I should be at the other."

"You'd wake up and go to work, for once in your life."

"I think I should, for a fact. I almost wish we could try it to-night."

"We'll try it, all right, in the morning. Ethan will have to get our minnows for us. Hark! what's that?"

The boys were now near the camp, and suddenly stopped as the sound of some one calling was heard. And yet the voice was more like that of one in distress, and fearful that something was wrong they began to run.

As they came to a place from which they could see into the interior of their camping place, they stopped and gazed curiously at the sight before them. Tom, evidently thinking that he was unobserved, had taken a position in front of one of the tents and was looking up into the sky. His arms were occasionally flung out, moving with the grace with which a pump handle performs its duties. He was standing with his feet far apart, and his entire bearing betokened the evident excitement under which he was laboring.

The startled boys were about to rush forward to his assistance, when they were still further astonished by the words which Tom thundered forth.

"Tew be—or not tew be," shouted the young fisherman.

The listening lads gazed blankly at one another, but before they could speak Tom's voice was heard again.

"*Tew be—*," then came a long pause before he shouted, "*or not tew be.*" His arms were again flung out wildly and his face was still turned toward the sky. Apparently the question received no answer, and varying the emphasis and inflection, the sadly troubled Tom again broke forth,—

"*Tew be-e-e, or not tew be-e-e-e.*"

Again our boys gazed blankly, first at the excited young fellow before them, and then into one another's faces.

"He's sick! He's crazy!" said Ben, excitedly.

"He's going to commit suicide!" responded Jock, with equal excitement.

Moved as by a common impulse all four of the boys instantly darted into the camp; but the startled Tom, bestowing upon them one glance of terror and confusion, turned and ran swiftly into the woods.

CHAPTER V. BEN TRIES THE CANOE.

Before any of the boys could start in pursuit of the fleeing Tom, one of them suddenly called out, "Isn't that Ethan coming?"

They all turned at the words and perceived the fisherman already near the dock, and with one accord they ran swiftly to meet him. His boat was apparently filled with their trunks and belongings, and the two canoes which Jock had ordered to be sent were also on board.

As Ethan ran his craft alongside the dock, Jock, too excited to note carefully whether all his possessions had been obtained or not, called out, "Oh, Ethan, something's the matter with Tom!"

"Hey? somethin' the matter with him? How long since?"

To the surprise of the boys Ethan did not seem to share in their alarm. He was giving all his thought to the landing he was making, and as soon as his boat was made fast he climbed up on the dock and stood calmly regarding the excited lads before him.

"What's he been doin' now?" he said.

"Oh, I don't know," exclaimed Jock. "We had all gone up the shore and when we came back to camp we heard Tom calling. We could see him, too, and he was waving his arms and calling out as if he was in pain, and when we ran in, he just looked at us a minute and then started off into the woods as fast as he could go. He must be sick, Ethan. Come on, we'll help you look for him."

"Was he a-sayin' anything?" inquired the fisherman, still for some unaccountable reason not much aroused by the startling announcement.

"Saying anything?" exclaimed Bert. "I should say he was. He was calling and groaning. Why, we could hear him way up the shore. He must be in trouble. Come, Ethan; come on! We'll all help you."

"Was he a-sayin' anything? I mean any words like?"

"Yes, I believe he was," said Bob. "We could make out a few words."

"What was they?"

"Oh, he said something about 'to be' or something like that. We didn't stop to listen much. The poor fellow was in such distress. What are you waiting for, Ethan? Why don't you come on?"

"That's jest what I thought. Tom was sayin' his Hamlick."

"Saying what?"

"His Hamlick. Don' ye know what that is? Hamlick's a dialogue or a play. I don' know who writ it, but Tom does. The young folks over to the Corners is goin' to give a exhibition, and Hamlick's the one they decided on. Tom is to be Hamlick, and he was jest a-practisin' his piece."

For a moment the boys gazed blankly at one another, and then all but Bob rushed from the dock as if they too had been stricken by the same evil disease which they feared had seized upon Tom.

Bob, however, remained with Ethan, and with his face as expressionless as he could make it at times, inquired soberly,—

"When is this play going to be given, Ethan?"

"Oh, I don' know. Some time this summer, I suppose. They 'most always give somethin' while the summer boarders is here, and this year the walks needed fixin' up in the Corners some, so they—I mean the young folks, o' course—decided to give Hamlick; and Tom he's to be the Hamlick in chief. Ever hear that dialogue down to your place?"

"Yes, I believe I have. I've heard of it, anyway."

"I thought likely. Pretty good thing, isn't it?"

"I believe it is thought to be a very good one. We shall want to know when it is to be given so that we can all come over and see it."

"I'll let ye know when it comes off."

Ethan suddenly placed a finger in his mouth and emitted a shrill whistle. "I guess that'll call up Tom," he explained.

A repetition of the signal brought the reluctant Tom from the woods, and as he approached the dock he gazed in a shame-faced way at Bob, as if he expected him to say something about what had happened; but Bob's face was still expressionless, to the evident comfort of the young fisherman.

"Step lively here, Tom," called his father. "We must get these trunks and things up to the camp afore night. You 'most scared these boys to death with your Hamlick," he added.

"Your father has been telling us about the play you are to give at the Corners, Tom," said Bob, quietly. "We shall want to come over and see it. You mustn't fail to let us know when it is to be given."

Somewhat reassured by the kind manner of Bob, Tom was more at his ease and at once began to assist his father in transferring the cargo of the little boat to the camp.

The other boys now returned, but a warning look from Bob caused them all to be silent about the recent occurrence. In a brief time the trunks had been placed in the tent where they belonged, the canoes were left on the shore, and then Ethan and Tom began to prepare supper.

The appetites of the boys apparently were as keen as they had been at noon time, and the rapidity with which the table was cleared was a delight to Ethan's heart. Neither Hamlick nor the Ghost could interfere now, for the demands of their hunger were supreme.

Soon after supper Ethan and Tom departed for the night, promising to return at daybreak in time to prepare breakfast and be ready for the fishing which was to be done on the following day. The boys stood on the shore and watched the boat as it sped away over the river, and then when it had disappeared from sight they all turned and demanded of Bob the explanation of Hamlick.

But Bob was in no mood to banter, and so he soberly related what Ethan had told him about the efforts of the "young folks" at the Corners to do something which should aid in improving the little hamlet in which they dwelt. Somehow it all appeared in a different light now, and the merriment was soon gone.

"I'm going to have a paddle in one of the canoes before I go to bed," exclaimed Jock, as he leaped up from the bank on which they were all seated.

As the other boys had had no experience in that sport, they all stood on the dock, eagerly watching their comrade as he took his seat in the light little canoe and wielding his paddle swept swiftly over the water.

"Did you ever see anything like that!" exclaimed Ben, delightedly. "It's like a feather on the water or a leaf upon the stream, or something like that we had in our English last spring at school. Isn't it fine!"

"Yes, and how easily Jock does it too," added Bob, with a wink at Bert as he spoke. "Travelling like that is just fun."

"I wonder if I can't do it," said Ben, looking longingly at the other canoe, which was still on the bank.

"You can try it, can't you?" drawled Bob. "Nothing like trying, you know. It's a knack, that's all, and you have to be careful. Shall I help you bring the other canoe down to the dock?"

Ben glanced once more at Jock, who could be seen far out on the river, and the sight served to increase his eagerness. "Yes; come on, fellows. If you'll help me, I'll try it, anyhow."

In a moment the canoe was lifted and carried down to the dock. Then Bob held one end of it securely and Bert the other, while Ben cautiously took his seat in the middle. A shout from Jock caused them all to look up, and they could see that he was paddling toward them with all the speed he could summon.

"Perhaps he's calling for you to come out and meet him," said Bob, soberly.

"I'll do it," said Ben, eagerly, "and then race him for the dock. Push her out, boys!" he added gleefully, as he grasped his paddle.

The canoe shot out from the dock, and the boys stood eagerly watching Ben as he drove his paddle deep into the water.

"Look out there, Ben!" shouted Bob. "Remember, you'll have to keep your balance."

"Be careful, Ben! Look to your paddling!" called Bert.

"Don't tip her so much to one side!"

"Ease up, there! Don't lean so far over!"

"Sit up! Lean back! Lie down! Tip over!" called Bob, soothingly.

"Go up the river! Go down the stream! Come ashore! Turn around! Go ahead!" shouted Bert, encouragingly.

But poor Ben was too much occupied with his own efforts to heed the confusing calls of his companions. Twice the little canoe had almost capsized, but somehow Ben had managed to keep it afloat, though he had abandoned all efforts to paddle and was only striving to keep his craft above the water.

"I say, you fellows!" he called in despair. "I can't manage this—Hi!" he added, as the canoe gave a lurch

and almost went over. "Throw me' a rope! Come out and help me!"

"I can't, my dear, though much I wish,
For, oh, you've tied my hands,"

sang Bob, mockingly.

"Oh, come ashore, Ben, if you can't go ahead," called Bert, soothingly. "You won't tip over. I'll risk it! I'll risk it!"

"You risk noth—" began Ben, desperately; but his exclamation was not completed, for as the canoe gave a sudden lurch to one side the unfortunate lad leaned to the other to assist it in righting itself. He leaned too far, however, and then strove to reverse the weight. His actions were frantic now, and it seemed as if there could be but one result, and that must come soon.

"It's going!" shouted Ben, in despair.

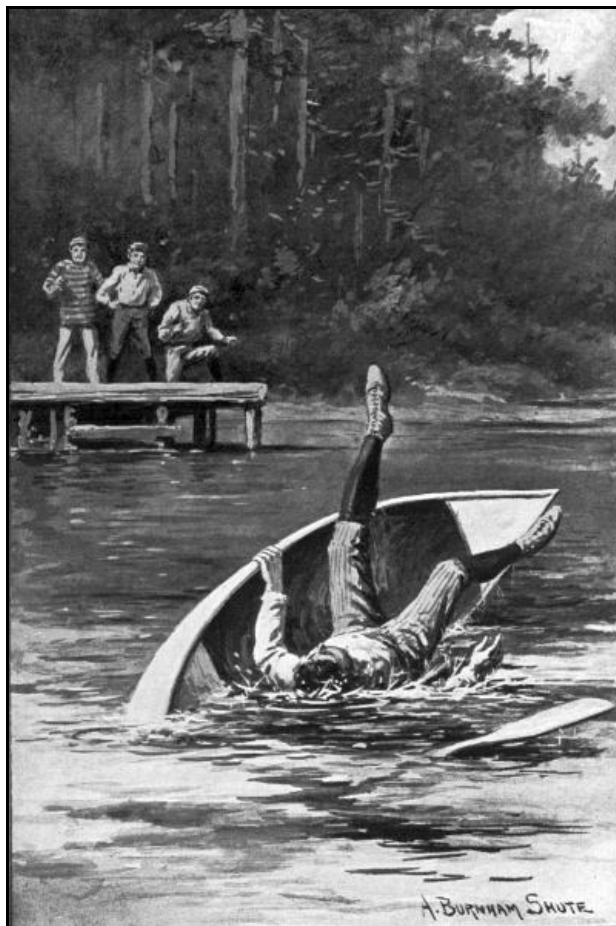
"So I see," called Bob, encouragingly. "Keep it up, Ben! what you need is practice. Practice makes perfect, you know. Keep it up! Keep it up!"

"I'm going! I'm going! I'm go—" shouted Ben.

It was evident that he had spoken truly. For a time or two he succeeded in righting his craft, but each effort seemed to make his condition worse. Suddenly the canoe went over; the paddle in Ben's hands flew out over the water, and then the lad's long legs and feet appeared to be lifted into the air, and waved frantically for a moment before, with a circular movement, they followed their owner and quickly disappeared in the river.

"Going, going, gone!" called Bob, solemnly, as he gazed out over the water at the place where his friend had disappeared.

Ben was an expert swimmer, much the best of the four, so that they had no fears for his safety; and the ludicrous sight of those long legs, with what Bob called "their despairing appeal to come over and help us," disappearing in the St. Lawrence, was more than either could endure. They burst into shrieks of laughter. They hugged each other in their delight, and even Bob laughed until the tears rolled down his cheeks.



"Suddenly the Canoe went over."

But Ben speedily appeared, and as he started out for the dock, Bert called to him, "Your canoe's going down the river, Ben; so's your paddle."

"The proper way, my friend, to paddle a canoe is from the upper, not the under, side," said Bob, soothingly. "Take my advice, Ben."

Ben was for taking the canoe, however, which already was drifting away from him; but as he started to swim toward it, Jock swept past him, and, calling to him to go ashore, said that he would get both canoe and paddle.

When Ben climbed in his dripping clothes up on the dock, the laughter of the boys was renewed.

"You'd have done all right, Ben, if you'd left those feet and legs of yours ashore. They were in the way. There are some things even the St. Lawrence won't stand."

"You wait," said Ben, doggedly. "I'll show you yet."

And "show" them he did. As soon as the canoe was restored he insisted upon repeating his experience. It

was true that he was capsized again, but he sturdily stuck to his task, and in an hour had, in a measure, mastered the problem, and was able to paddle swiftly up and down the river.

It was dark now, and the boys were soon ready for bed. A pile of logs had been placed before their tent, and as soon as the other boys were in their cots, Jock started the fire. The light of the flames could be seen far out over the river, and it was long before sleep came to the campers. The sighing of the wind in the tree-tops, the rush of the mighty waters, the constant lapping of the little waves upon the shore, the twinkling stars, which could be seen beyond the waving branches, were all novel and strange. Then, too, when some of the boys would be ready for sleep, others would not feel so inclined. They would leave their tent and fire their guns at imaginary enemies or wild beasts. The school cheer, and even the school songs, had to be given again and again, but at last even these experiences became monotonous, and the tired boys slept.

It was not long after dawn on the following morning when Jock and Ben sat up in their beds and looked about them. Both of their companions were gone, but the sounds that came from the river left no doubt as to their whereabouts. Hastily dressing, both boys ran down to the shore and there beheld their friends, clad in their bathing-suits, and practising the art of paddling a canoe without departing from the craft when it was in motion.

Apparently both boys had already succeeded, but even their efforts were ignored when Ethan and Tom were discovered approaching in their sailboat, and all knew that not only would the breakfast for which they were eager soon be ready now, but that their first efforts in fishing in the St. Lawrence would soon be put to the test.

CHAPTER VI. THE FIRST DAY'S SPORT.

Ethan and his son soon had breakfast ready for the campers, and as they had brought with them from home some dainty viands such as only the housewives of the region knew how to prepare, these, with the food the fishermen cooked, made a repast over which even a king might have rejoiced, especially if he could have boasted of such an appetite as the lads on Pine Tree Island had.

None of them was thinking, however, of kings or of kingly appetites that morning; and when at last the boys ceased, chiefly because even the well-spread table had been cleared, Jock turned to Ethan and said, "Where are you going to take us to-day?"

"Fishin'."

"Yes, I know; but where are we going to fish?"

"Oh, I haven't jest made up my mind yet. Mebbe in one place, and then again mebbe in another. Will try our luck till we strike what we want."

Perceiving that Ethan was averse to committing himself on such delicate matters, Jock called to his companions and they at once began to collect their rods and the various necessities of the day, and by the time they had all things ready, Ethan and Tom had stored away the cooking utensils, and soon after came to the dock.

"Is it safe to leave everything here in the camp without any one to watch it?" said Bob.

"Hey?" replied Ethan. "Safe? 'Tisn't goin' to rain to-day."

"Oh, I wasn't afraid of the weather. I didn't know but some one might come along and, finding no one in the camp, help himself; that's all."

"Folks is honest here," said Ethan, gruffly. "I s'pose you have to keep your doors locked down to New York, don't ye?"

"Why, yes, we usually do," said Bert.

"Well, I'm glad I don't live there, that's all I can say then. I haven't got a lock on my house over at the Corners, and I haven't had since I built, nigh on twenty-two years ago."

"What!" exclaimed Ben. "You don't mean to say you don't lock up nights, do you?"

"That's just what I mean to say. I never had nothin' stole since I've lived here. Folks is honest here, I tell ye. If anything is taken, it'll be because some o' the city folks what come down here summers has taken it. The city must be a dreadful place to live in. They say even flowers won't grow there; an' if the posies don't like it, I don't know what it must be when it comes to huming bein's and boys. Heow ye goin' to divide up yer party?"

It was speedily arranged that Jock and Bob should go with Ethan, and the other boys with Tom. The skiffs were at once prepared, and when the fishing tackle had been placed on board, the boys took their seats as the men directed.

What a delightful experience it was, they all thought. The skiffs were models of beauty and grace, and the seats the boys occupied were cane chairs from which the legs had been cut, and were also provided with cushions. Bob was seated in the stern and Jock in the bow, with Ethan between them, and in the other boat a similar arrangement had been made.

As soon as he perceived that they were ready, Ethan grasped the oars, and with steady strokes began to row out into the river. The water over which they passed was clear and beautiful. Scarcely a breeze ruffled the surface, and as the light skiff darted ahead, it almost seemed as if it required no effort to send it forward.

"I don't know but ye might as well bait up," said Ethan, when they had gone a few hundred yards from the camp. "I don't s'pose ye'll catch anything here, but there's no harm in tryin'. It's about time for the muscalonge to begin to run, an' who knows but ye might strike one?"

Ethan rested on his oars, and taking first one of the lines and then the other, attached a live minnow to each of the hooks, and threw them overboard.

"Neow, let out about a hundred an' twenty-five or fifty feet," he said, "an' we'll troll till we get where we're goin' first."

Far behind on one side of the skiff stretched Jock's line, and on the other was Bob's, and as they paid out the slender cord they could see that their friends in the other boat, which was distant about two hundred yards, had followed their example.

"This is what I call great sport," said Jock, contentedly.

"It is pretty good," replied Bob. "At least it isn't what you call actual labor, except for Ethan. I think it's rather my way of fishing. I've heard them tell about catching trout with an eight-ounce rod, and how a fellow has to crawl through the bushes and tumble over the logs, and then he makes his cast. He mustn't move, they say, not even if a million million mosquitoes and black flies light on his hand; and then if he succeeds, at last he yanks up a little speckled trout that weighs about four ounces, and he thinks he's had a great catch. No, I think this is the situation which is better adapted to my precious and delicate frame," and as he spoke Bob stretched himself out lazily in his chair and permitted his rod to rest on the boat, while he gazed about him with an air of deep satisfaction and content.

And truly there was much to produce that feeling. The early sunlight now flashed across the water and covered all things with its halo. In the distance were the dark green forests, and here and there among the islands, or on the main shore, the rising curls of smoke indicated the location of the cottages or summer camps. The very air was a tonic; or, as Jock declared, 'it seemed to him it was so laden with life that he could almost bite it off.'

And all the time the two boats were moving slowly and steadily over the water, Ethan pulling lightly at the oars and from time to time glancing keenly at the lines, which seemed to fade away in the river. The calls of the far-away crows or the sight of a great hawk circling high in the heavens above them only increased the wildness of the scene, and for a time the roar of the great city and the sight of its crowded streets seemed only like the memory of a dream. Even the occupation in which the boys were supposed to be engaged seemed unreal, and Bob closed his eyes dreamily and permitted the rays of the sun to strike him full in the face.

"I say, Ethan," said Bob, opening his eyes lazily, "don't you think it hurts the fish you put on those hooks?"

"Hurt 'em? Naw! Fish hasn't any feelin's."

"How do you know that, Ethan?"

"They never make no complaint, do they?"

"Yes, they kick."

"No, they don't kick. They can't kick without legs, can they? They jest wiggle."

"It's all the same. It seems pretty hard to put 'em on those hooks."

"Hard? Not a bit. It's give an' take with a fish. The big fish eat the little ones, and the little ones eat the smaller fellows. Now it's only gettin' what they tried to give, that's all; and they can't complain."

Bob made no reply, and settled back into his former lazy attitude. Ethan still rowed slowly on, casting occasional glances at the lines, which the boys had apparently forgotten. But the fisherman knew what was unknown by the others in the boat, and that was that they were approaching a shoal, and it was not unlikely that something might happen here of interest to all on board.

Suddenly Bob sat erect in his seat and made a frantic grasp at his rod, which had almost been torn from his hands.

"Hold on, Ethan," he said quickly. "My hook's caught on the bottom."

The fisherman smiled, but made no reply as he backed water and swung the little boat around in the current.

"Caught on the bottom, did ye?" he inquired sharply. "Well, that doesn't look much like bottom!"

As he spoke, about a hundred feet in the rear of the boat a good-sized fish leaped from the surface in the sight of them all, and almost seemed to shake himself as a dog does when he has been in the water.

"Bass," said Ethan, laconically. "Now look out heow ye play him. Don't give him any slack. Be careful. Keep yer hand on the reel."

It is doubtful whether Bob heard any of the boatman's directions, for he was all excitement now. He stood up in the boat and gave all his attention to the fish, which was struggling to free himself. Again and again the tip of the rod was drawn under the water, and the "zip" of the line as it sped from the reel was distinctly heard.

The bass was well hooked, and for a time the struggle became most exciting. Again and again Bob brought the fish near to the boat, and then, with a dart and a rush, away the victim would go, making the reel sing as the line was drawn out.

"Be careful," muttered Ethan. "You'll tucker him out pretty quick, an' then we'll have him. Give him the line, but don't let him have any slack. That's right. Let him go," he added, as once more the fish darted toward the deeper water.

Bob steadily held to his task, and when he felt that the run of the bass was ended, began once more to reel him in toward the boat. The fish was evidently tired now, and his resistance was much less strong. Nearer and nearer the eager boy brought him, and soon, peering over the side of the boat, could see in the clear water the movements of the struggling fish. Ethan had grasped his landing-net, and was ready for the last effort.

"Bring him up near the boat now," he said, "and we've got him. Look sharp, and don't give him any slack!" he added, as the fish, perhaps having caught sight of the boat, began once more to struggle desperately. Darting first in one direction and then in another he made the line cut deeply into the water, while more than once he dragged the rod far below the surface.

"Look out, now! Don't give him any slack! Bring him up alongside!" called Ethan, as with his landing-net in the water he endeavored to thrust it under the struggling fish.

But, alas! in his excitement Bob either neglected the directions given him or was unable to comply, for somehow his grasp on the reel was removed, the line sped out, and when the excited lad began to reel in

again, the tension was suddenly relaxed, and with a quick movement of the boat he was thrown back into the chair.

"He's gone! He's got away!" exclaimed Bob, ruefully.

"So I see," remarked Ethan, as he calmly picked up his oars and resumed his labors.

"But he was a big fellow!" protested Bob, "and I had him right up to the boat."

"He was a pretty good one," said Ethan, "but it's a game of 'now you see him and now you don't.' It's a good deal of a trick to know how to land a three-pound bass. Still, you didn't do so very bad for a greenhorn."

Bob made no reply as he slowly reeled in his line at the boatman's direction. Greenhorn! Well, there were some things he did not know, although he had spent much time in the city. To his mind Ethan, with all his good qualities, had been the greenhorn; but now the boatman was the one to accuse him of the possession of that very quality. His respect for Ethan went up instantly, and he looked up at him in a new light.

"You'll soon get the hang o' it," said Ethan kindly, as he proceeded to bait Bob's hook again. "You did first-rate for a beginner. The main thing is to look out for yer slack. A bass is a fighter, and he'll take advantage o' ye every time you give him a chance. I think we'll try it again around this shoal. One strike may bring another."

"Why do the bass come to the shoals, Ethan?" inquired Jock.

"That's where the minnies [Ethan meant minnows] are, and they're the ones the bass feed on. Now we'll try it again."

Once more Ethan began to row, and the long lines dragged on behind the boat. Both boys were all eagerness now, and Bob's laziness had departed. They watched and waited for the longed-for "strike," and soon to Bob's great delight he felt the tug upon his line which indicated that his hook had again been seized.

"Now be careful, son," said Ethan, "and mind you don't give him any slack."

Mindful of the caution, Bob worked carefully, and after a time succeeded in bringing the fish up to the boat, when Ethan deftly thrust the landing-net underneath it and threw it into the boat, and with a blow of a stout hickory club speedily put an end to the struggle.

"I 'most always does that," he explained. "I don't s'pose a fish knows anything about it, but I don't like to see 'em go ker-flop, ker-flop! so I puts 'em out o' their misery. Besides, they're better eatin' when ye treat 'em that way."

"This one is a little fellow," said Bob, regretfully, as he gazed at the fish, which now had been thrown into the fish-box. "The other must have been ten times as large as this one. That was a monster!"

"The big ones 'most always gets away," replied Ethan, smilingly. "An' they grow mighty fast, too, sometimes. The farther away they git the bigger they be."

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, nothin'; but that I've knowed a man when he was out with me to lose a half-pound bass, an' by the time he got back to the camp or the hotel, that 'ere bass weighed a plump five pound. It's marvellous like, the way they grow sometimes."

"Where's the other boat?" said Jock.

"I dunno. We'll let 'em look after themselves a bit. We'll try it here again afore we leave. It's your turn next to get one."

Eager to continue the sport, the boys once more let out their lines, as Ethan began to row slowly over the shoal again.

CHAPTER VII. IN GOOSE BAY.

The success which attended their efforts was not great, and after a few more bass had been taken, Jock, to his chagrin, not having even one strike, Ethan decided to leave that ground for another.

"I think I'll take ye over to Goose Bay," he said. "That's where I told Tom to go, and probably they're there by this time."

"That's historic ground, isn't it, Ethan?" inquired Bob.

"Yes. The British and Yankees had a bit of a go round there in the War of 1812. I'll show ye jest where it was when we get there."

"How did you know there was a fight there, Bob?" said Jock, quickly.

"Most everybody knows about that, I s'pose," said Ethan, before Bob could reply. "Everybody round these parts has heard of it."

Bob looked up at Jock and winked slowly. "Do you remember what Oliver Wendell Holmes said about every little place he went to thinking it was the central spot of all the world, and that the axis of the earth came straight up through it? He went down to a little place named Hull, once, and when he came away he said the people there were all quoting Pope, though they didn't know it, and saying, 'all are but parts of one stupendous Hull!' Remember that, Jock?"

"Ye needn't be makin' fun o' me," said Ethan, sharply. "I guess folks round here is as smart as they be anywhere. You city people talk about how green country folks are when they come to teown, but I don't believe they're any greener than city folks be when they go into the country."

"I didn't mean that," said Bob, quickly. "I was only wondering a little why it was that you thought everybody ought to know about Goose Bay, and the time the British and our men had here in the War of 1812."

"Why shouldn't they know about it, I'd like to know?" replied Ethan, somewhat mollified. "It's hist'ry; an' ye study hist'ry, don't ye?"

"We pretend to; but Jock here doesn't know much about it, you see," said Bob.

"He'll larn. But I was speakin' about the greenness o' city folks in the country. Well, they be green. My wife had a time of it with the fresh airers only last summer."

"The 'fresh airers'? What are they?"

"Don't ye know what they be? Well, I swan, ye're greener 'n I thought. They're the boys an' girls the folks pick up off the streets in the city and send up into the country every summer. We had some last year."

"Oh, yes, I know. You mean the children sent out by the fresh-air fund."

"I s'pose I do. We call 'em 'fresh airers' up here."

"What did they do?" inquired Jock.

"Lots o' things. Two of 'em—we had five to our house—was walkin' along the road with me the next day after they come, an' one little fellow ran up the bank an' began to pick some buttercups what was growin' there. The other little chap was scared like, an' he called out, pretty sharp, 'Hi, there, Henry! Keep off the grass or the cop'll get ye!' An' he meant it too."

"Poor little wretches," said Jock, sympathizingly.

"'Twasn't whether they was wretches or not; 'twas their greenness I was thinkin' on. We had a lot o' beehives out near the back door, an' after dinner that same day my wife looked out the window an' she see that same little chap there with a stick in his hand. He'd jest poked one o' the hives over, and the bees was fightin' mad. She was scared 'most out o' her seven senses, my wife was, an' she jest grabbed her sunbunnet an' hurried out o' the house an' screamed to that young 'un to come on. He didn't want to come, an' was layin' about him with his stick; but my wife ran out an' grabbed him by the hand an' they started up the hill 'lickety-whew, yer journey pursue,' an' the bees after 'em. They finally made eout to get free from 'em, an' then the little shaver was for goin' back an' havin' it out with 'em. 'Them bugs bit me,' he says, says he, 'an' I'm goin' to go back and fight 'em.'"

Both the boys laughed heartily at Ethan's narrative, and now that his good humor was restored, he said, "Wasn't that greenness for ye? That same little chap was a great one, he was. He was tickled to pieces to gather the hens' eggs. He'd be out in the barn an' kep' so close after the hens they didn't have a chance to hop onto a nest, so that my wife had to tell him that he mustn't go out there for the eggs except when she told him he could. He teased like a good fellow, an' finally 'bout noon the next day she told him he could go out an' get the eggs. He was gone a long time, an' she kind o' mistrusted some-thin' was wrong, so she started out to 'view the landscape o'er,' as the tune says; but pretty quick she sees him a-comin' out o' the barn holdin' his hat in his hand, an' lookin' as disconsolate like as if he'd lost every friend he ever had or ever expected to have on this earth. 'What's the matter, sonny?' says she, 'can't ye find any eggs?' 'Yes,' says he, 'I found two, but they ain't no good.' 'What's the trouble?' says she. 'They ain't no good,' says he, again. 'The old hen was on the nest, an' when I scart her off, the eggs was spoiled,' says he. 'I guess she's cooked 'em, for they're both warm!' I'd like to know if any country boy could be greener in the city than that city boy was in the country?"

"I don't believe he could," laughed Jock.

"That's my opinion, too," said Ethan, soberly. "Why, that there boy was the greenest thing alive! D'ye know, he 'lowed he'd never seen a live pig in all his born days. What d'ye think o' that? Yes, sir! never had seen a live pig, an' he was a boy ten year old, goin' on 'leven.'"

Ethan's reminiscences were cut short, however, for they were now entering Goose Bay. Its wooded shores and high bluffs, its still waters and little islands, in the light of the morning sun, presented a scene of marvellous beauty, and both boys were much impressed by the sight. In the distance they perceived their companions, and as soon as they had been seen, Ethan exclaimed,—

"They're still-fishin'."

"Still fishing? Of course they are. Why shouldn't they be?" inquired Bob.

"Ye're as green as that city boy I was tellin' ye of. Still-fishin' is jest fishin' still, ye know. Not trollin' the way I'm goin' to, but they're anchored, and are havin' a try with worms for bait."

"What do they catch?" said Bob.

"I don't know what they're catchin', but there's perch there, an' I presume that's what they're fishin' for. We'll try the bass, though, a spell longer."

Ethan rowed slowly in near the shore, and had gone but a short distance before Bob felt the welcome tug upon his line, and, after a contest of a few minutes, succeeded in bringing the struggling fish close to the boat, where it was successfully landed by the boatman. Bob was doing better now and profiting by his mistakes, but Jock had not caught a fish since they had started from the camp.

"What's the trouble, Ethan? Why don't I get any?" he said.

"More'n I can tell ye. Bees won't sting some folks and dogs won't bite 'em, either. Mebbe it's the same way with fishes."

Jock's ill-luck still continued, however, and although Ethan rowed over the rocky shoal for an hour and a half, not a fish did the eager lad secure. Bob was rapidly becoming an expert, and already had landed a half-dozen large bass, and had lost only three.

"I'll row ye in-shore a bit," said Ethan, dropping his oars and taking a tin cup, with which he dipped up some of the water in the bay and quenched his thirst.

"What's wrong with this work?" inquired Bob. "I'm not finding any fault."

"Probably not," replied Ethan, dryly. "We'll change our tune a spell, and see if we can't do some thin' for this other boy."

Bob uttered no further protest, and Ethan at once sent the little skiff swiftly toward the shore. As it grounded upon the beach he said, "Now you two boys get out an' wait for me here. I'll be back pretty quick, an' we'll see what can be done."

The boys obediently leaped ashore and then stood for a moment together as they watched their boatman. Ethan moved out near a low point and, dropping overboard his anchor, took a light little rod they had noticed in the boat, and began to fish. They could see him as he drew several into the boat, and then in a few minutes he came for the waiting lads.

"Wait a minute," he said, as he drew the boat up on the beach. "I'm goin' to do somethin' else. I'm goin' to have young Jock get a fish if such a thing is possible."

Ethan walked up the shore, and the boys could see him as he darted in among the rushes, leaping about like a schoolboy. They could not perceive what his object was, but as they had implicit confidence in his ability, they remained contentedly where they were, and Ethan soon returned.

"There!" he exclaimed. "Neow if them fish don't bite, it won't be because we haven't given 'em what they want for dinner. Get aboard, boys."

The boys quickly resumed the places they had occupied, and their boatman once more began to row. "Don't let out yer lines yet," he said. "Wait till I'm ready for ye."

Wondering what plan Ethan had in mind, the boys obeyed, and Ethan soon started toward another part of the bay. He glanced keenly about him and then peered over into the water. Apparently satisfied with his inspection, he let the anchor fall, and as the skiff swung around before the light wind and settled into position, he said, "Let's have your lines, boys."

"We're going to still-fish, are we, Ethan?" said Jock.

"I'm thinkin' some on it."

"What do we catch here?" inquired Bob.

"That depends. Some folks catches one thing and some another, an' sometimes they doesn't catch anything at all."

"Why do you put such a fish as that on my hook?" exclaimed Jock, aghast.

Ethan had taken a fish, a "chub," he termed it, which must have weighed a full half pound at least, and baited Jock's hook with it.

"To catch fish with," remarked Ethan, laconically, as, after inspecting the struggling bait, he threw it overboard. "Now let him take your line and go where he wants to. Not too fast. Go easy, like," he added, as he turned to equip Bob in a similar manner.

"Ethan thinks we're after alligators or whales," said Bob, as his own line began to run out. "Oh, well, we'll have the fun of sitting out here on the water if we don't get a strike," he added, settling back in his comfortable chair.

Indeed it did seem as if no fish in the St. Lawrence would be attracted by such a bait as that which the boatman had provided. Neither of the boys really expected any result, but they were not inclined to protest.

The scene about them was the reflection of that within. A perfect summer day, with woods in the distance, and a silence interrupted only by the harsh cawing of the crows. The beautiful water glistening in the sunlight, and the gentle motion of the skiff as it slowly turned with the slightly changing breeze, increased the sense of absolute peacefulness. The roar of the city seemed like something unreal and something which they never had actually heard. Neither of the boys spoke for a time, and Bob closed his eyes as he leaned back in his seat. Ethan also was silent, but his keen eyes were seldom taken from the lines.

"Your bait seems to be goin' up-stream," he said in a low voice to Jock.

Instantly the lad sat erect and looked eagerly at his line. It did seem to be moving through the water, but as yet he had felt no tug, and could hardly believe it was anything more than the motion of the "chub."

"Is it a fish, Ethan?" he exclaimed excitedly.

"Looks like it."

"Shall I reel him in?" he inquired, as he started to rise from his chair.

"No, no!" replied Ethan, quickly. "Let him get the bait. If he swallows it for good and all, you'll have him."

All in the boat were now following the movements of Jock's line. The lad had reeled out more, and still it was steadily moving away. For two full minutes the excitement continued, and then Ethan said:—

"Reel in now, a bit. Do it gently, and don't skeer him. Want me to take the rod?"

"No!" exclaimed Jock, decidedly. "I'll win or lose him myself."

Slowly he turned the reel, gazing eagerly all the time at his line in the water, but as yet he had felt no response.

Suddenly there was a yank which almost took the rod from his hand, and which made the reel sing as the line was drawn from it.

"Let him go! Let him go! Ye'll have to tucker him eout!" exclaimed Ethan. "I'm thinkin he felt somethin' prick his heart."

"Shall I stand up?" said Jock, in increasing excitement.

"No, ye'll be overboard if ye do. Now, keerful! Reel him in when ye can, and when he wants to take the bit in his teeth let him go. There! That's the way! That's the way to do it!"

Jock was enjoying the contest hugely. He would reel in a few yards, and then with a savage plunge the fish would dart away again, only to have the measure repeated. Five minutes, ten minutes, passed, and still the contest was not ended, nor had Jock had one glimpse of the fish he had hooked. From its struggles and the manner in which it pulled, the excited lad thought he must have caught a monster of some kind.

He was reeling in steadily now, and peering at the same time over into the water. Suddenly he caught sight of a huge body near the boat and knew that it must be his victim; but the glance was only for a moment, for with another desperate plunge the fish darted away again and the reel repeated its song.

"He's gettin' tuckered out," said Ethan. "Now don't give him any slack, and look out for your rod, or he'll snap it in a minit. Keep a steady hand this time, an' I'll see what I can do with the gaff."

Jock had no idea of what a "gaff" was, but he gave it little thought, whatever it might be. The fish was coming steadily this time, and once more the eager boy could see him in the water.

"Now be keerful! Bring him up alongside the boat. There! That's right!" said Ethan, in a low voice.

"What a beauty!" exclaimed the delighted Jock.

"Keep still, or ye'll scare him," warned Ethan.

But the fish was within reach now, and the boatman leaned forward, and with a quick thrust of his gaff drove it into the body. There was a splash of water, the light skiff rocked until the boys were almost thrown from their seats, and then they instantly recovered themselves and turned to see the result of Ethan's effort.

CHAPTER VIII.

JOCK HAS HIS TURN.

There was a commotion on board which seemed to threaten the safety of all. The huge fish was throwing himself from side to side, but Ethan was equal to the emergency, and with his merciful hickory club soon put an end to the struggle.

"Whe-e-w!" exclaimed Jock, in delight. "Isn't he a beauty!"

"That depends," said Ethan, laconically. "I don't believe that chub thought he was specially pretty, when he saw this fellow get after him."

"He seems to have a remarkably open countenance," drawled Bob, as he pried open the great mouth with the end of his rod.

"'Tis something of a mouth the pickerel has, for a fact," said Ethan. "D'ye see how the teeth are all set the wrong way?"

The two boys eagerly examined their prize. The mottled sides still glistened and the beautiful markings were all clear; but the mouth, as the boatman had said, was enough to strike terror to all fishes of lesser degree.

"Not much chance for a chub if that trap once shuts to on him," said Ethan. "If he tries to back out, he only drives the teeth in farther."

"How much will he weigh, Ethan?" inquired Jock.

"Oh, seven or eight pounds. It's a pretty fair pickerel."

Jock was disappointed. To him it had seemed as if the pickerel must have weighed much more than that. His disappointment was still further increased when Ethan added, "They ain't much good for eatin'. Oh, ye can eat 'em if ye want to, an' some folks like 'em first-rate, but give me a bass every time."

"That's the reason I caught bass," drawled Bob. "It's a shame to pull out a pickerel when you don't want him."

"Pity about you," laughed Jock. "I don't care about fooling with little bass that aren't big enough to leave their mothers. When I catch a fish I want to get one large enough to know what he's doing. Hello," he suddenly added, "there comes the other boat. I wonder what luck they've had."

The other skiff was now swiftly approaching, as Jock had said, and in a few minutes it came alongside. Long before it was near enough for his voice to be heard, Jock exultingly held up to view the immense fish he had captured, and when his friends came closer, great was their astonishment and many their words of praise.

"We'll go ashore for dinner now," said Ethan, after the prize had been examined. "Ye're ready to stop a bit, aren't ye?"

"We are," shouted the boys together; and side by side the two skiffs moved toward the shore.

Before the boys landed they discovered that near the place to which evidently Ethan was going were the ruins of some building which plainly had been a large one. The boatman explained that a hotel had stood there at one time, but it had been burned, and never had been rebuilt.

As the boys leaped ashore they all eagerly examined the catch which Tom's boat had made. There were several bass and a fish which strongly resembled the pickerel which Jock had caught, though it was much smaller.

"They've got a pickerel, too," said Jock, as he discovered the fish.

"That isn't any pickerel," remarked Tom.

"What is it, then? It looks just like one," said Jock.

"It's a muscalonge. It's a little fellow, and the first one I've seen this year."

"Ye ought not to have saved him, Tom," remonstrated Ethan. "If you'd let him go, he might 'a' growed big enough to amount to somethin'."

"I thought of it, but I didn't know what luck you were having, and I knew we'd want some fish for dinner, so I let him stay."

"If they're beginnin' to run, mebbe we'll strike one some day that's o' decent size. Jock, if ye ever get a muscalonge what weighs forty pound on the end o' yer line, ye'll find out that catchin' pickerel's boys' play alongside o' it."

"Do you really think we'll get one?" said Jock, eagerly.

"Can't tell. Like enough ye will, an' jest as likely ye won't. Out with ye now, the whole kit and posse o' ye," he added, and the boys turned toward the grove of maples which grew near the shore.

"This is what I call great fun!" exclaimed Ben, as he threw his long body on the grass. "I think I could almost make up poetry if I was to stay here long enough."

"Your face looks as if it was burning with poetic fire," drawled Bob.

"It can't look worse than yours," replied Ben, as he placed his hands on his cheeks.

Indeed, all four of the boys presented a similar appearance, for the effect of the rays of the sun reflected from the water had made all their faces of a decidedly brilliant hue. Jock tried to comfort them by explaining that that was what was to be expected, and that more marked results than these were likely to be attained before their stay in camp was over. But for the present the boys were content as they lay beneath the grateful shade of the spreading maples. In the distance was the glorious St. Lawrence, and an occasional whistle indicated that yachts were speeding over its course, or that the river boats were passing. Other skiffs had now entered Goose Bay, and as they moved slowly over the shoals or anchored near the "weeds," it became evident that its waters were well known before the coming of our boys.

It was now noon time, and the leaves upon the trees were hardly moved by a breeze; out on the bay the sun was beating, and the quivering motions of the air under the influence of the summer heat could be distinctly seen. In the distance the calls of the crows could be heard, but otherwise the quiet of the day was

unbroken. On every side was the solitude, and as one of the boys expressed it, 'they could almost hear the silence.'

Yet the impression produced by it all was as strong as it was novel. The struggle for existence, the life of the city, the rumble and indefinable roar of the town, were all forgotten for the time. Here, at least, was peace, and the reluctance of Ethan to leave his home by the great river, or depart from the comradeship of the St. Lawrence, could be readily understood. All four of the boys felt the influence of the scene, and after a few minutes the laughter and conversation ceased, and the young fishermen were as silent as the silent trees above them.

Their reverie was soon interrupted by the call of Ethan for them to come to dinner, and with a shout the boys leaped to their feet and ran to the place where the dinner had been prepared. The sight which met their eyes was one which might have done even an epicure good. Both the fishermen had been busy, and the results of their labors were now manifest. A fire had been kindled near the shore, and over it had been placed a contrivance with which nearly every fisherman on the St. Lawrence was provided. A frying-pan and pot had been used, in the former of which small pieces of salt pork and some of the recently caught fish had been cooked, and in the latter were green corn and potatoes. Coffee, also, had been made, and when the boys seated themselves upon the bank they perceived that Ethan had brought other dainties from his home. Huge "doughnuts," and cookies of ample size, as well as pickles and various other dainties, were there. A large can filled with milk was also placed upon the improvised table, and altogether the "spread," as Bert termed it, was most inviting.

"Where did you get all these things?" exclaimed the delighted Bob.

"Brought 'em with me in the skiff."

"Is that what you do, every day you go fishing?"

"Most always, when I take out city folks. I think they like the dinner we cook about as well as they do the fishin' itself. 'Long about noon time we usually land and cook the dinner. Every boat has a lay-out somethin' like ours, though I don't say every one is as good as this," he continued, with pardonable pride.

"I should say not," replied Ben, as the boys all fell to with a will.

For a time scarcely a word was spoken, so busy were they all in the occupation upon which they were engaged. Ethan still remained by the fire, and from time to time brought pieces of the sputtering pork, which somehow seemed to disappear almost as rapidly as they came.

"What kind of meat did you say this is?" inquired Bob, as distinctly as one could pronounce the words when his mouth was filled with the article in question, and at the same time leaning forward to make sure that the last piece on the plate should not be wasted.

"Salt pork."

"I never tasted of it before."

"Go 'long," said Ethan, incredulously. "Ye don't really mean it, do ye?"

"Yes, I do mean it," replied Bob. "It's my first experience; and my only hope is that it won't be my last."

"If you don't stop before long it'll be your last, I'm sure," interrupted Ben, himself as deeply engrossed in the occupation as was Bob.

"Well," said Ethan, "I wouldn't 'a' believed that ye never eat any fried salt pork afore. Why, everybody eats it."

"I don't wonder," murmured Bob, as he dexterously flung a corn-cob, which had now served its full duty, at a tree in the distance.

"I'm afraid Ethan doesn't think we know much," said Jock. "He's been telling us this morning about the greenness of city people when they're in the country. I'm inclined to think he's right, too."

"Well, they be green," protested Ethan, sturdily. "I had a young fellow from Bosting up here last year, what I rowed for, an' if ye believe me, he didn't actually know how many teeth a cow had on her upper jaw. No, sir, he didn't for a fact; an' he was in college, too. Mebbe ye don't believe me, but it's true as yer life, what I'm tellin' ye."

There was a twinkle in Ethan's eyes as he spoke, which was not lost upon our boys, who were looking somewhat foolishly at one another. Perhaps they were fearful that the question would be brought home to them.

Their anxiety was relieved when Jock spoke up quickly, and said, "Tell us, Ethan. How many teeth does a cow have on her upper jaw? I don't know; I don't, for a fact."

"Thank you! You have expressed my feelings exactly," said Bert, partly rising from his seat, and bowing in mock honor at Jock.

"She has all she needs, I'm thinkin'," said Ethan. "If ye don't know, I shan't tell ye. I understand all four o' you boys are goin' to college, an' when ye get there I'm thinkin' some o' those Latin or Greek books'll tell ye all about it."

At last the dinner apparently was finished, and with a sigh Bob rose from his seat.

"This has been a great treat, Ethan," he said. "If Delmonico or the Waldorf-Astoria can do better, I've yet to learn it."

"There's one thing they can't furnish," said Ethan.

"What's that?"

"The appetite. It takes this river and the air to furnish that."

"That's so; though I hadn't thought of it."

"Hold on," said Ethan, quickly. "We aren't done yet. Tom, you go down to my skiff an' bring up those pies an' things in the box under the back seat. Be quick, lad, or the appetite'll get away from these boys."

"Poison things? What do you mean, Ethan?" laughed Bob. "Aren't you satisfied with feeding us in this way? Don't you want the trouble of rowing us back to camp?"

"I didn't say nothin' about 'poison things,'" replied Ethan, gruffly. "I was talkin' about pies. Ye know what pie is, don't ye?"

"I do that," replied Bob. "It's something I have never had enough of yet."

"I should think ye ought to get enough, if ye have it three times a day."

"Three times a day! I never have it but once, and then in small doses."

"Sho! I know better. All folks always have it reg'lar three times a day. Why, I shouldn't feel as if I'd had

my breakfast if I hadn't had a piece o' pie and a doughnut along with it."

"Ethan," said Bob, soberly, "do you take summer boarders at your house?"

"No, I don't. We did take some one time, but we'll never do it again."

"Why not?"

"Why, do you know," said Ethan, in a low voice, as if he was imparting a secret, "some o' those folks bothered us dreadful. Yes, sir; they did, for a fact. There was one o' the men we couldn't get eout o' bed before six o'clock in the mornin'. What d'ye think o' that? Yes, sir, he'd actually lie in bed till six o'clock in the mornin'! But we must get out o' this if we're to do any more fishin' to-day. Come, Tom, help me clear away these dishes."

That task was speedily accomplished, and then the sport was resumed. A fair degree of success attended their efforts, and as the sun began to sink low in the western sky, Goose Bay was abandoned for the time being, and the two skiffs were headed for the camp on Pine Tree Island.

CHAPTER IX. ANCIENT HISTORY.

It was supper time when the boys arrived in camp, and Ethan and his son at once prepared the evening meal. Strange as it may seem to be, the appetites of the campers were almost as keen as they had been for the dinner at Goose Bay, and a full hour had elapsed before they rose from the table.

As soon as the remains of the feast had been cleared away, that is, if dishes can be called "remains," for little else was left by the hungry lads, Ethan and Tom prepared to depart for home, promising to be back in camp in time for breakfast.

"You won't forget what I told you, Ethan," called Jock, as the men were about to set sail.

"No. I'll go over to the bay [Alexandria Bay, Ethan meant] and stop on my way home. I'll fix you out to-morrow mornin' sure."

"What conspiracy are you up to now, Jock?" inquired Bert.

"That's a secret," replied Jock, laughingly. "If it's a good day to-morrow you'll know all about it. You'll like it, too. I'm sure you will; and it'll leave even the fishing we've had to-day away behind."

"What is it?" persisted Bert. "More fishing?"

"No. You've had enough of that for one day, I should judge by the looks of your face. It'll peel in a day or two."

"I can stand it to have a layer or two drop off. But what is it you and Ethan are going to do to-morrow?"

"Sufficient unto the day is the question thereof," answered Jock. "I shan't tell you, Bert. It's to be a surprise."

"Come up here, you fellows," called Bob from the bank. "We want your valuable assistance. My little body is aweary."

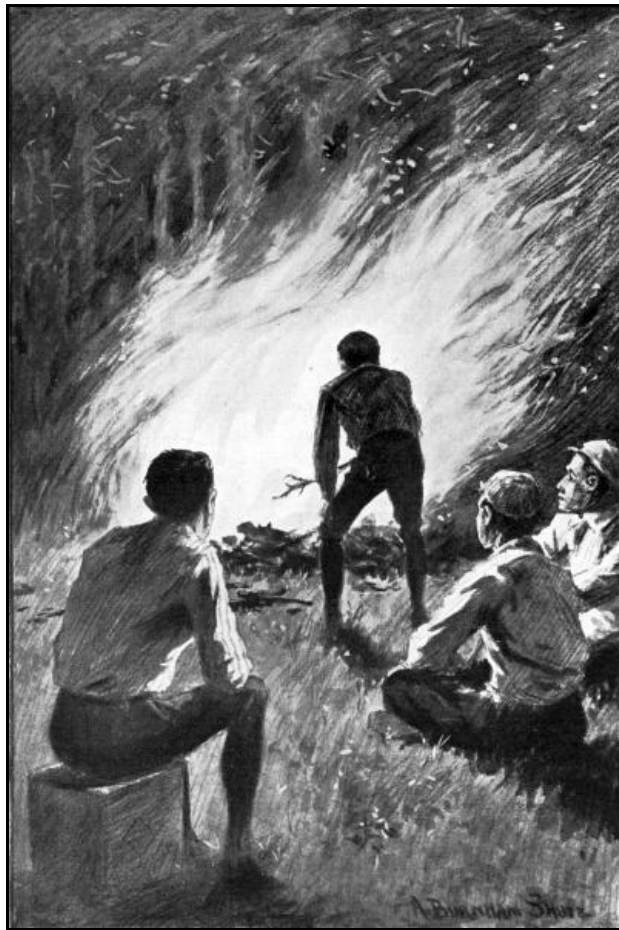
"Since when?" called Jock, as he and his companions started back to camp.

"Since I've been trying to roll these logs into position. Lend a hand, you two. I'm not equal to the task."

The boys all began to labor now, and soon had a great pile of logs in the fireplace in front of the camp, under these some kindlings were placed, and as soon as all things were in readiness, Bob took a match and started a fire. The flames were soon leaping into the air and cast their beams far out over the river. The boys then threw themselves upon the ground in front of the blazing logs, and for a time no one spoke.

The fire roared, and the flames leaped higher into the air. All about them it was as light as day, and the scene was indescribably weird. The great river swept onward in its course, and its waters reflected the light of the blazing camp-fire. The branches of the tall trees in the rear of the camp swayed before the night wind, and increased the wildness of the scene. Bats could be seen circling about in the air, as if they were startled and confused by the strange light. Across the water came the faint and indistinct sounds of a party of young people out for an evening sail. Altogether the experience was so novel that the boys were all impressed by it, but it was impossible for them long to remain silent, and Bob was the first to speak.

"I've been thinking about the history of Goose Bay. It is an historical spot, you know, boys, just as Ethan said it was."



"The fire roared, and the flames leaped higher."

"Suppose you tell us about it, then," said Ben, whose long form had hardly stirred since the fire had been kindled.

"That's just what I was intending to do," replied Bob.

"It'll be a good lullaby," drawled Ben. "If you hear any sound that leads you to suspect that I have fallen asleep, please don't blame me. I always go to sleep when I try to read history."

"As long as there are live coals here, you'd better not go to sleep," warned Bob. "I'll serve you worse than the tithing-men used to serve the old farmers who went to sleep during the sermon."

"Oh, no, you won't. It won't be my fault if you put me to sleep. Did you ever hear what Henry Ward Beecher said about the tithing-man and his pole?"

"No. What did he say?"

"He said if he saw anybody going to sleep when he was speaking, he didn't want any tithing-man to come around with his stick and stir the man up, but he wanted him to take his stick and stir him up, for it was his fault if he let a man go to sleep. See?"

"Yes," replied Bob. "I'll do my best. Listen, then, my children, and you shall hear the wonderful tale of Goose Bay."

"I knew a goose had a tail, but I didn't know Goose Bay had a tail."

"Well, it has," replied Bob, as he pretended to kick a live coal toward the mocker. "This is the tale of Goose Bay. Many years ago, away back in 1813, the British and Americans were at war. I know just how much you know about that, so I'll not go into particulars."

"Don't," drawled Ben. "I'm beginning to feel sleepy already."

"Well," resumed Bob, "it was about the middle of July in that year. Our forces were over at Sackett's Harbor, but they weren't having much excitement, so it was decided to fit out an expedition and come around the lake to Cape Vincent and then go on a cruise down the St. Lawrence, seeking whom they might devour."

"I thought it was a lion, a ro-a-a-ring lion that did that," interrupted Bert.

"So it is sometimes."

"But wasn't it the British lion you were telling about? Now I could understand how a lion, a real genuine British lion, might go roaring around, but when the eagle, the genuine American eagle, starts out on an expedition, I never thought of him as 'roaring.' What is a roaring eagle, Bob? Any relation to a soaring lion?"

"Oh, hold on, Bert, give Bob a chance to tell his story," said Jock.

"Story? Story? What more of a 'story' do you want than that? The American eagle going down the St. Lawrence roaring and seeking whom he might devour. Is that where 'Goose' Bay got its name, Bob?"

"As I was saying, when I was interrupted by this infant crying in the night," resumed Bob, disdainfully, "the expedition was partly national and partly individual, that is to say, it was a privateering trip with government backing. The man who fitted it out was named Gilbert, I believe."

"A kind of patriot for revenue only?" inquired Ben, blandly.

"Precisely. Well, they had two gunboats, the *Neptune* and *Fox*, and about forty-five or fifty men. They stopped at Cape Vincent and Clayton, or French Creek as they used to call the place then, and then kept on their way rejoicing, until they came to Goose Bay. There they landed and had a parade."

"What did they parade for?" inquired Jock.

"No one knows, or at least I don't. What do they ever parade for?"

"For to show brass buttons and for to delight the ladies and small boys. I used to think a drum-major was a bigger man than the President," replied Ben, quickly.

"After they had landed and paraded, they—"

"Went fishing?" inquired Ben.

"They sent a few men down toward Ogdensburg to spy out the land."

"Weren't they roaring and seeking whom they might devour this time?"

"Keep still, Ben, I want to hear about this," said Jock.

"The next afternoon two men, their names were Baldwin and Campbell—"

"Good names!" interrupted Ben, again.

"—came back and reported that a gunboat and fifteen loaded bateaux were coming up the river. The gunboat was the *Spitfire*—"

"That's a good name, too," remarked Ben.

"At once there was great excitement among the American men. They arranged a force to cut off all retreat, and then started for the enemy. Before they fairly knew it they were all taken."

"Who?"

"The British," replied Bob.

"Were they dead? Did they like it?"

"Then the Americans landed at Goose Bay. Oh, I forgot to say that not a shot was fired in the attack on the bateaux and the *Spitfire*."

"That's the way to fight," drawled Ben. "That would suit me exactly. If I could parade and then go out and call names, and then march back in triumph with the haughty foe in chains, I'd like to be a soldier. I wonder why I wasn't born into this world in my proper age."

"Of course our troops were highly elated," resumed Bob, "for the *Spitfire* was armed with a twelve-pound carronade and fourteen men, and in the bateaux were two hundred and seventy barrels of pork and as many bags of pilot bread."

"Was that where Ethan got the pork we had for dinner to-day?" inquired Bert, innocently.

Not deigning to reply or to notice the laugh which arose at Bert's words, Bob resumed. "The Americans sent sixty-nine prisoners across the country to Sackett's Harbor, and then with the others they waited for the enemy to come."

"Why did they wait? What did they want them to come for? I should think they'd all have gone 'cross lots to Sackett's Harbor," said Jock.

"They wanted to save the gunboat and supplies. The next morning about sunrise the bold and brave foe, to the number of two hundred and fifty, hove in sight. They had four gunboats and two transports and were evidently ready for the fray. Our men had been stationed in detachments along the shore, and soon the action was begun. 'They fit all day and they fit all night,' as the poet says, though I don't know whether that's history or not; but two of the gunboats had soon been so injured by our fire that they had to stuff the holes the shot made with weeds to keep them from sinking."

"Oh! Oh! Oh!" groaned Ben, sitting quickly erect, "I have lived long in this weary world of woe, but that's the worst I ever heard yet. A British gunboat stuffing the holes in its sides with weeds! There's an insane asylum down at Ogdensburg, and either you or I must go there."

"It is a pretty big story, but that's what the book says," protested Bob.

"Go on! go on!" said Ben, eagerly. "After the British had stuffed the gaping wounds with seaweed, and our brave and determined lads, with a fresh supply of spitballs and slingshots—go on! go on!"

"The next morning the redcoats wanted to call it quits, or rather they sent a flag and a demand for our men to surrender 'to save the effusion of blood.' The proud foe was sternly repulsed, and the firing was resumed. It seems all they had expected was to gain time. Trees had been felled across the creek,—Cranberry Creek they called it, I believe,—but the foe managed to get away. They were said to have lost a good many men."

"Did our side lose any?" inquired Bob.

"Three. But reinforcements soon came, and after the boats had been patched up they started up the river again, bound for Sackett's Harbor. Off Tippet's Point they fell in with the *Earl of Moira*, which chased them, and finally to get away they had to sink the gunboat they had taken and the most of the bateaux, so that the expedition came out about even."

"Bob," demanded Bert, once more sitting erect, "the next time hadn't you just as soon tell us a true story?"

"That's true. I read it in the old histories."

"Do you know any more as 'true' as that?"

"Yes. I've been reading up on the St. Lawrence. I wanted to know something about the region before I came down here. I don't believe you know anything about Cartier, or Frontenac, or any of the early discoverers."

"Carter? Who's Carter?" demanded Ben.

"I didn't say Carter. I said Cartier. He's the discoverer of the St. Lawrence."

"He was, was he? Well, he's the man for me. Just think of it, fellows, we'd never be camping here if this place hadn't been discovered. I move you," he added, "that the professor be invited to resume his falsehoods to-morrow evening, and that whenever we are seated before the embers of our glowing camp-fire, or can't get asleep nights, that he soothe us with his fairy tales."

The boys laughingly agreed to the proposal, and as they rose, Ben said, "I feel a craving in the inner man. Any of you got a 'crave' too?"

All four declared they were in suffering need of food, and at once began to prepare another supper. When their labors were ended, however, the results were far from satisfactory. Somehow the fish did not tempt them, and when Jock opened the coffee-pot he exclaimed: "I thought coffee was a liquid, fellows. Look at this, will you?"

With his fork he lifted from the interior of the pot long, stringy substances, which certainly were not inviting to the sight.

"What do you suppose is the trouble?" said Ben. "There must be something wrong with the coffee. Do you suppose it's poison?"

"I don't know. I'll leave it and ask Ethan in the morning," said Bob. "He'll know all about it."

However, the boys discovered the pies and other viands the boatmen had left in camp, "pies'n things" Bert termed them, mimicking Ethan's dialect, and their immediate wants had, to all appearances, been satisfied when they sought their cots.

So tired were they that even the question of what Jock and Ethan had prepared for the morrow was soon forgotten, and the smouldering camp-fire burned low and lower, while the boys slept the sleep which can only be gained within the sound of the music of the mighty river.

CHAPTER X.

TOM SURPRISES THE CAMP.

The sun was just appearing above the tree-tops on the following morning, when the camp was shaken by a report which caused the boys to leap from their beds and rush out into the open space. So startled were they that the absence of Jock was not perceived; but when they discovered him on the bank, and a cloud of smoke could also be seen floating over the river, they knew at once the cause of the alarm.

The presence of a small brass cannon on the ground near where Jock was standing would have revealed the cause of the excitement if nothing else had; and, as Jock laughingly turned to greet them, he said:—

"That's the signal to get up, boys. Ethan will be here soon, and we don't want to delay breakfast."

"Where did you get it, Jock?" said Bert, eagerly examining the cannon as he spoke. "It's a beauty!"

"Oh, I brought it with me, but I hadn't had a chance to mount it before. We wanted something to salute the sun with, to say nothing of the yachts and steamers that pass us every hour or two."

"You don't know how you frightened me," said Bob, slowly. "I almost thought the British had come back for us."

"Look out at that smoke, will you, fellows?" said Ben, pointing to the little cloud which could still be seen. "What do you think it looks like?"

"What does it look like, Ben?" inquired Jock.

"It reminds me of the tail of a goose. Something like the tale of Goose Bay, with which our imaginative friend here regaled us last night."

"It makes me think of the story Virgil tells about Æneas, where the 'pious son' tried to grasp the shade of his faithful wife Creusa. She just vanished into thin air, you remember."

"It's like Bob's history,—too thin," laughed Bert. "Isn't that Ethan's boat?" he added, pointing as he spoke to a sail which could be seen approaching the island.

"Yes; that's Ethan. Hurry up, fellows, or you'll be late for breakfast. You know what his opinion is of people who aren't up early in the morning."

His companions hastily returned to the tent, and by the time Ethan landed they were ready for the breakfast which he speedily prepared.

"Goin' to have another good day," remarked Ethan, as he and Tom cleared away the breakfast dishes.

"That's what we want," said Jock. "Ethan, did you bring over the things we were talking about last night?"

"Yes, they're in the boat. We've got just the kind of a day we want, too."

"What is it, Jock, you and Ethan are plotting?" inquired Ben.

"You'll find out pretty soon."

The boys were all eagerness as they followed Ethan down to the dock. The boatman soon brought forth a small mast and sail, and as he spread the latter out on the ground, its peculiar shape at once impressed the interested beholders.

"What do you call that thing, Ethan?" inquired Bert.

"A sail."

"Yes, I see; but what kind of a sail is it? I never saw one like it before."

"Likely not. They don't grow in cities. It's a 'bat wing.'"

The name was so appropriate that no one had any difficulty in understanding the cause of the term, but the boatman did not deign to make any further explanation and at once proceeded to fit the mast in one of the canoes.

"I only had one," he explained, when the task was completed. "I can get another at the Bay, probably, and as I didn't have time to stop there this mornin' and see whether there was any letters for any o' ye, if ye don't object, I'll take Jock along with me and sail over there now. I can show him a little how the thing's managed on our way over, and then when I come back I'll have a couple o' the bat wings, an' can let the rest o' ye have a try, if ye want it."

Jock protested that some other one of the boys should be permitted to have the first sail; but they all declared that he was the one to go, and so the lad took his place in the little canoe, and in a moment the light craft was speeding swiftly over the water in the direction of Alexandria Bay.

"Isn't she a beauty!" exclaimed Bert, delightedly. "They wont be gone long, will they?" he added, turning to Tom.

"No," replied Tom. "You'll get all the sailing you want, to-day."

The boys watched the canoe as it sped on before the wind. They could see Jock, who was seated on the edge of the canoe in the bow, while Ethan was in the stern and was managing the sail. At times the canoe

dipped until it seemed to the watching boys that it must be swamped, but it always righted itself and then leaped forward with ever increasing speed. At last it disappeared from sight behind one of the neighboring islands, and then the boys turned with a sigh to the camp, all of them eager now for the return of their companions, and for the opportunity to try the merits of a canoe fitted out with a bat-wing sail.

"What'll we do to pass the time, fellows?" said Ben.

"I think it would be a capital idea for Tom here to speak his piece before us," drawled Bob. "He wants to practise, and perhaps we can be of some help to him. Ben here is a prize speaker, you know."

Tom's face flushed, and for a moment he evidently thought Bob was poking fun at him. "It isn't much of a piece," he said in confusion. "The young folks are going to have a dialogue and try to raise some money to fix up the walks over at the Corners."

"So your father told us," said Bob. "I'm in dead earnest, though, Tom. It's more than likely that Ben can give you points. He took the school prize in speaking this summer. Go ahead, anyway."

"And you boys won't make fun of me?" inquired Tom.

"Not a bit of it," said Bob, cordially. "We're coming over to see the show when it comes off, anyway, so you might as well give it to us now, or, at least, your part. You had pretty good courage to tackle one of Shakespeare's plays, though. How did you happen to do it?"

"Oh, that was Mr. Wilkinson's idea; he's the teacher at the Corners, you know. He said we might as well learn something worth hearing while we were about it, so we finally chose 'Hamlet.'"

"Quite right, too," remarked Bob, encouragingly, as if he was familiar with all such little matters as the great dramas of Shakespeare, and was willing to share his courage with all the world.

Tom at last reluctantly consented, and striking an attitude, gazed up into the sky as if nothing less than the ghost was beckoning to him. His eyes assumed a far-away expression, and he waited a moment before he began. Then apparently every muscle in his body became rigid, and in a loud and unnatural tone of voice he commenced.

"Tew be-e-e- or not to be-e-e-e-e-"

As he spoke his right arm shot suddenly out in front of him, much after the action of a piston rod in a great locomotive, and his eyes began to roll. Bert suddenly rolled over upon the ground and hid his face in the grass, and Ben as quickly turned and gazed out upon the river as if something he had discovered there demanded his attention. Only Bob was unmoved, and without a smile upon his face, he said solemnly, "Why do you talk it off like that, Tom?"

"Isn't that the way to do it?"

"I should hardly think so. Don't you think Hamlet was puzzled and was somehow half talking to himself? It seems to me as if he was musing and didn't think of any one to whom he was speaking. He was talking to himself, so to speak. Don't you think so, Ben?"

"Yes," replied Ben, desperately striving to control his voice, and not turning his face away from the spot he had discovered on the river.

"Well, I don't know about it," protested Tom. "It always seemed to me that Hamlet was a good deal of a crank, and instead of acting naturally he was more likely to do the most unnatural thing in the world."

"That may be so. Perhaps you are right about that," said Bob, "but still I think he was communing with himself. They call it his soliloquy, don't they?"

"Yes; but he was crazy, wasn't he? I think that's what the critics say."

"I don't know. I believe so," replied Bob, though somehow his air of confidence seemed to be departing. "Tom," he added, "have you read much of Shakespeare?"

"I've read all he wrote," said Tom. "We can't do much except read in the winter down here on the river."

Ben by this time had either examined the distant object on the river to his entire satisfaction, or else was startled by Tom's words. At all events he quickly withdrew his gaze and looked at the young boatman in surprise, and even Bert had ceased to bury his face in the grass. Somehow the comical aspect of Tom's speech had suddenly changed.

"What have you read this winter, Tom?" inquired Bob, slowly.

"Oh, I've read all of Shakespeare, as I told you, and then I've read all of Parkman's histories, and all of Bancroft. You know Parkman has a good deal to say about the men who first came up the St. Lawrence, and I wanted to learn all I could about the part of the country I live in. But I wanted to know something about other countries too, so I've read Motley's 'Rise of the Dutch Republic,' and Prescott's 'Conquest of Peru and of Mexico.' Then I've read Wordsworth's poems. It seems to me I enjoy him better than I do any other poet, for the country around his home must have been something like this St. Lawrence country. Don't you think so?"

Before Bob could reply, Ben and Bert suddenly rose from the ground, and ran speedily into the tent where the trunks were.

"What's the matter with those boys?" inquired Tom, innocently, looking up in surprise at the sudden departure of his companions.

"I don't think they feel very well," replied Bob, demurely; "or it may have been that they've gone to see if their fishing tackle is all right after the experience of yesterday. Tom," he added, "do you read any fiction, any novels?"

"Not many. Pa doesn't like to have me. He says they're all lies anyway, and there's enough that's true to read. I've read a little. I've read most of Scott's novels and Charles Kingsley and some of the other writers. The last book I read was Defoe's account of the London plague. I don't like that very well, do you?"

"I've got to see what those boys are up to," said Bob, suddenly, leaping to his feet as he spoke and moving with unusual quickness away from the place where he had been lying.

"I say, Bob," said Bert, when their friend joined them, "the next time you catch a weasel asleep, you let me know, will you?"

"I wouldn't have believed it," spoke up Ben, quickly. "Here we were thinking we'd get some fun out of this greenhorn, and then he turns round and puts us all in a hole. I wonder if he really has read all those books he says he has?"

"You might examine him and see," replied Bob, dryly.

"Not much. You don't catch me that way. Here I was thinking we'd do some missionary work for the poor benighted heathen of the region, and lo and behold, they turn upon us and beat us at our own game. Who

would have believed it? I know I shouldn't, for one."

"Serves us right. I'll keep clear of Tom till his 'pa' comes back."

Bob's sentiments were echoed by his companions, and not one of them ventured to remind the young boatman of the desire to hear him recite Hamlet's soliloquy. Indeed, they did not venture near the camp until it was almost noon time, and then Ethan and Jock returned with the new "bat-wing sail." As they had also brought with them letters for each of the boys, the time until dinner was ready was all consumed in reading them, and perhaps no one of them regretted the fact.

After dinner, both Ethan and his son gave their entire attention to the task of teaching the young campers the art of sailing a canoe equipped with a bat-wing sail. Only one of the party was taken out each time by a boatman, and then, after a trial trip, he was allowed to hold the sheet while the boatman occupied the place in the bow which the pupil formerly had held.

In this manner the entire afternoon was consumed, and when they all returned to camp for supper, Ethan declared that he thought it would be safe for the boys to use the canoes, though he advised that no one should venture far from the island, and promised on the following day to repeat the lessons.

When he and Tom had gone, Ben declared he was going out alone for a sail. He would not listen to the remonstrances of his comrades, and soon started from the dock. The boys watched him until the canoe disappeared behind the nearest island. They had no thought of peril, but when the darkness deepened, and at last the hour of retiring had arrived, the uneasiness in the camp had become a fear which no one dared to express.

CHAPTER XI. A NIGHT OF ANXIETY.

To add to the consternation of the boys, the face of the sky was now obscured by clouds, and the rising wind gave tokens of a coming storm. The tall trees groaned and swayed, and the quiet waters of the river were rising, and already were beginning to lash the low beach.

"I'm afraid Ben's in trouble," said Jock, unable to endure the silence longer. "If he's all right, he never could find his way in such darkness as this."

"He started out as if he was going up the stream," said Bert, no less troubled than his friend. "He ought to have been able to get back."

"He ought not to have gone out at all, as far as the 'ought' is concerned," replied Jock, gloomily. "Here we were thinking Ethan was a greenhorn; but he's forgotten more than we ever knew. It was a fool trick for Ben to start out as he did."

"Well, he went, and that's all there is to say about it. We'll pile the logs up higher and wait. It's all we can do now," said Bob.

Bob's suggestion was at once acted upon; and soon the light of the camp-fire was leaping up in long tongues of flame. The wind served to increase the blaze, and the roar of the blazing logs was added to that of the rising storm.

For a time the boys sat in silence before the fireplace, gazing out over the river, and eagerly looking for the sight of the little canoe. They knew that even a skilled sailor would not dare to venture out in such a night, but as Ben was already on the river, he must find some place to land; and so, hoping against hope, the lads waited.

"There comes the rain," said Bob, at last, as a few drops fell upon his upturned face. "What a night to be out on the river in!"

"Jock," said Bert, "haven't I read that these canoes are upset very easily on the river here?"

"I think it's likely. They are capsized, whether you've read it or not."

"Ben can swim, anyway," said Bert, "and that's one comfort."

"I'm afraid he couldn't swim very far to-night," replied Jock, gloomily. "He couldn't see ten yards before him, and he wouldn't know where to start for. Whew! Just hear that!"

The rain was now coming faster, and beat upon the faces of the boys and fell sputtering into the fire. The wind, however, was so strong that the fire roared and snapped, and a cloud of smoke was borne away down the river. Inky blackness surrounded them, and the sounds of the storm-swept river became steadily louder.

"There's no use in all of us staying out here in the rain. The rest of you go into the tent, and I'll stay here and attend to the fire," said Jock.

"Don't you think we'd better try to go over to the mainland and rouse out Ethan? Ben may be in trouble somewhere, and Ethan'll find him if any one can," said Bert.

"I've thought of that," said Jock, "but it won't be safe to try it. We've nothing but the canoe here, and it couldn't live in such a storm as this. Just hear that, will you!" he added.

There was a great roaring in the trees now, and the sound became steadily louder. The rain, too, increased, and sometimes seemed to dash upon them in sheets. Out on the river the tossing waters could be seen where the light of the camp-fire fell, and, capped with white, they presented a wild sight. And Ben was somewhere on those angry waters! For a moment it seemed to the troubled Jock that he could see the picture of a little white-winged canoe driven on by the furious storm, and in the stern of the boat was a terrified face which strongly resembled that of the missing Ben. Just then there came a still more furious blast. The tall trees bent and groaned, and the tossing waters leaped before it, as a highly strung horse darts forward at the touch of a whip.

Again it seemed to Jock as if he could see the little canoe driven before the roaring wind. The gust seemed to lift the light craft in its grasp, the pale face of the lad on board leaned forward, then there was a sudden lurching of the boat, the sail dipped until it touched the water, and then boat and boatman disappeared from sight and nothing could be seen but the tossing waters and nothing be heard but the roar of the storm. Thick darkness settled over all, and even penetrated the heavy heart of the anxious watcher.

None of the boys was willing to leave Jock alone to watch the camp-fire, and after the mackintoshes had been put on they all returned and waited. Occasionally a fresh log was thrown upon the blazing pile and the sparks flew upward, serving only to render more intense the thick blackness that surrounded them.

There was slight hope of Ben returning now, but the anxious boys were determined to keep the fire burning, for it would serve as a landmark if, by any chance, the absent lad might be near. Their eyes were seldom taken from the river, and hour after hour passed as the vigil continued.

About midnight the storm abated, and soon the twinkling stars appeared in the sky. In the renewed hope that Ben might have been able to gain the shelter of some secluded island and remain until the storm had passed, they piled the logs still higher and waited and watched for the canoe to appear.

There were few words spoken now. The river gradually became more silent and resumed its former peacefulness, and the tall trees ceased to bend and sway. Perhaps the end had already come and even the waves were satisfied with the ruin they had wrought.

"I shan't give up hope yet," said Jock, at last. "Ben wouldn't be likely to try to get back before morning, and he'll wait for daylight wherever he is."

"Wherever he is," murmured Bert, as if he was speaking to himself.

"You don't really think he's been—that anything has happened to him, do you?" said Jock, anxiously.

"I hope not."

"I don't know what I'd say to his father and mother," began Jock, again. "And just think of it! When we were counting on such a good time, too, and to have this happen almost at the very beginning! Don't you think we'd better go over to Ethan's now and rouse him out? He'd know what to do."

"I think we'd better wait till it's light, anyway," said Bob. "I suppose you're thinking of sending Ethan with his sailboat to look him up?"

"Yes, that was what was in my mind. You see, Ben may have met with an accident. He may have lost his paddle, or his mast may have been broken. There's a hundred things I can think of, and if he should be cast away on some island, he wouldn't be able to get off without help."

"You don't know whether to go up the river or down," said Bert, disconsolately.

"Ben started up the river when he went off," replied Jock; "but it's just as likely that he's been carried down the stream, with the current and the wind both to push him on. Ethan will know what to do, though."

"He'll probably go in one direction and Tom in the other," suggested Bob.

The three boys lapsed into silence, and while no one spoke openly of the great fear in his heart, it was nevertheless evident that a common anxiety had them all in its grasp. Occasionally one would rise and go down to the dock and peer eagerly out over the river, but his failure to discover anything of interest would be betrayed by his silence and gloom when he rejoined his fellows.

The slow hours dragged on and still the heavy-hearted lads waited. The leaves of the trees dripped steadily, and the monotonous sounds served only to deepen the feeling of depression. Try as they would the boys could not shake off their fears, and when at last the first faint streaks of the dawn appeared in the eastern sky, they were so worn by their watching, and the anxiety of the long night, that the coming day brought no relief.

"Two of us had better stay here in the camp," suggested Bob, when the light became more pronounced. "If you know where Ethan lives, Jock, you'd better take the canoe and go over to his place."

"I'll go," replied Jock, quickly.

The opportunity to bestir himself afforded a slight relief, and going at once to the bank he lifted the overturned canoe from its place and bore it in his arms down to the water. Quickly taking his place on board he grasped the paddle and with vigorous strokes sent the light craft swiftly over the water in the direction of the mainland. His two friends watched him as long as he could be seen and then returned to the camp. The fire had burned low by this time, but as daylight was at hand there was little use in keeping it up, and the boys occasionally stirred the embers as if in the ashes they were looking for something they had lost.

As the glow of the dawn became more pronounced, and at last the great sun itself appeared above the horizon, the waiting lads had no thought of breakfast. Even the wonderful appetite of which they had boasted on the preceding day, was not able to move them now. The keen air had lost its power, and all hunger was gone.

From time to time a boat was discovered on the river, and the lads watched each in silence until it was hidden from sight among the islands; the missing Ben did not appear. More than two hours had elapsed since Jock's departure from the camp, when Bob suddenly exclaimed:—

"Isn't that a canoe out there on the river?"

"Where? Where?" inquired his companion, eagerly.

"Out there in the direction of the point! Hold on a minute, and I'll get the glasses and we'll see what we can make of it."

Bob hastily ran into the tent and returned with the glasses. Lifting them to his eyes he gazed long and earnestly at the little spot on the surface of the river, and then without a word handed them to his friend. Bert eagerly took them, and after he had peered intently at the distant object, he lowered the glasses and said in a low voice, "It's a canoe, Bob, and it's headed this way."

"That's what I made out of it," replied Bob.

"If it was Ben he'd have a sail."

"I don't know whether he would or not. He might have lost it, you know, in the storm. That isn't the direction from which Jock would come."

"No. He went straight across from here. Do you think it's Ben?"

Bob made no reply, but he ran swiftly down to the dock, and his companion as speedily followed him. There they waited for the approaching canoe, confirming themselves by repeated uses of the glasses that it was headed for the camp. The little boat became more distinct, and soon they could see the movements of the

occupant as he deftly wielded his paddle.

At last, when it was within two hundred yards of the dock, after another long look through the glasses, Bob said, "It's Jock."

Neither of them spoke until Jock ran the canoe in-shore, and then by the expression upon his face they knew that he had no good report to make.

"I found Ethan," said Jock, as he lifted the canoe out of the water and placed it on the bank, "and he and Tom have gone out. One has gone up the river and the other down."

"What did he say?" inquired Bert, eagerly.

"Nothing."

"Does he think Ben's—"

Bert did not complete the question, and then said, "We weren't looking for you to come from that direction. We thought perhaps it might be Ben."

"Ethan sent me over to a man he knew a little farther up the river. I've started him out to look, too. That's the reason why I came from that direction. Ethan suggested that I should bring some breakfast over for you, but I didn't think you'd want any. I knew I didn't, anyway."

"Nor do we," said Bob. "What are we to do now, Jock? Isn't there something we can do?"

"Ethan told us to stay here in camp till he came. He says he'll be here by noon, and then if he doesn't learn anything, we'll decide whether we'd better telegraph home or not."

Jock's voice broke as he spoke, and his evident anxiety was shared by the other boys. The end would soon be at hand, but before Ethan's return there was nothing for them to do but to strive to possess their souls in patience and wait. Working would have been much more easy for them all, but there was nothing they could do. They dared not venture forth from the island for fear of losing their way in the tangled maze, but they paced back and forth along the shore, peering eagerly out over the river for the boat which still did not come.

About noontime Ethan returned to camp, but he had found no trace of the missing Ben; and when an hour later Tom returned, he also had the same disheartening report to make, for neither had he seen any one who knew of the lost boy.

CHAPTER XII. THE MISSING CAMPER.

Ethan beckoned to Tom, and together they at once began to prepare dinner. The boys noticed their proceedings, but in spite of the fact that they had had no breakfast, none of them took any interest in the boatman's task. They did not leave their position on the bank, and still stood looking out over the river, vainly watching for the coming of a canoe which as yet had not appeared.

Dinner was soon ready, and Ethan at once summoned the young campers. His own distress was evident, and did not tend to allay the anxiety of the boys; but in response to their protest that they were not hungry, he said:—

"That doesn't make a bit o' difference. Ye've got to eat whether ye want to or not. It may be we'll have a lot o' work yet to do, and if ye don't eat ye can't work."

"Ethan," said Jock, "don't you think we'd better telegraph to my father or to Ben's?" The boys had obeyed the summons, and were now seated at the table, but the eyes of all were upon the boatman.

"Telegraph?" replied Ethan. "It'll cost ye four shillin' to do that."

"I don't care what it costs," said Jock, recklessly; for even Ethan's fear of a telegram and its probable expense did not interest him now.

"Wall, mebbe, mebbe," said Ethan, slowly. "Ye'd better eat yer dinner first, and then we'll see what can be done."

No one spoke during the early part of the dinner, and although the boys managed to eat some of the food which had been provided for them, it was evident that they were not hungry, and their thoughts were all upon their missing comrade. The hopes which they had had at the coming of the day had disappeared now, and with the passing of the hours the conviction deepened that Ben was lost. How could they ever send word to his home? When Jock thought of the enthusiasm with which they had come, and then realized that he was the one who had proposed the camp, he was ready to blame himself as the cause of all the sorrow and trouble. Already in his mind he could see Ben's father and mother, when the word should be received in their home. How could he bear it? But Ben was gone; there could be no question about that, and it was quite probable that they never would learn how or where he had disappeared. The hungry current of the river bore swiftly onward in its course all that it seized, and traces of missing boat or boy would be difficult, if not impossible, to find. His eyes filled with tears, and he started abruptly from the table.

No one spoke to recall him, for they all understood his feelings, and indeed their own sympathies were now increasing; but as Jock ran toward the shore, he perceived that Tom was standing on the bank and gazing earnestly out upon the river.

Jock looked up to see what had interested Tom, and perceived a small steam-yacht coming close in-shore. Even while he was watching it, the beautiful little craft stopped, and a moment later he saw a canoe lowered from the stern and some one step into it.

The whistle of the yacht sounded shrilly, and in a moment all the campers were running swiftly toward the dock. No one spoke, but the canoe was now being paddled toward them, and in a brief time such a shout rang out from the watchers as was seldom heard on the great river.

"It's Ben, it's Ben!" cried Jock; and instantly his companions joined in the word.

There could be no doubt about it now, for even Ben's face could be seen as he occasionally turned and glanced at them. The yacht whistled again, as if the people on board shared in the manifest excitement of the camp, and then turned and steamed up the river, leaving a long trail of dark smoke behind it. None of the boys marked her departure, however, interested as they would ordinarily have been in the approach of such a beautiful visitor, for they were all intent upon the canoe and its occupant now.

Nearer and nearer came the canoe, and soon it was close to the shore. In their eagerness, the boys ran into the water, and to save himself Ben was compelled to relinquish his paddle, and suffer himself to be drawn up on the beach. As soon as he was safely landed, there was a scene enacted which none of them ever forgot. Jock was laughing and crying at the same time, and even the phlegmatic Bob was not unmoved.

"You rascal!" he said at last, when a momentary lull came, "what do you mean? Give an account of yourself, sir!"

"Here I am," replied Ben, evidently not unmoved by his reception. "Proceed, my lord, and do as it seemeth good in thy sight."

"Where have you been, Ben?" said Jock, eagerly. "Tell us about it."

"Mebbe he wants some dinner, first," suggested Ethan, who was not the least unmoved of the party. "He can tell us while he's eatin'."

"We're all hungry, now," said Bert; "we've been fasting while you've been gone, Ben. Don't we look so?"

"Fasting, fasting?" exclaimed Ben; "then you must have suffered keenly. I'm as hungry as a bear, myself. Come on, and I'll tell you all about it, while I'm sampling Ethan's wares."

The boys were soon all seated at the table again, and now that their lost comrade was found it seemed as if the lost appetites had also been restored. They fell upon the food before them in a manner which highly delighted Ethan, and compelled him and Tom to busy themselves in preparing more.

The dual occupation seemed in no way to interfere with Ben's ability or disposition to talk, and he at once began his story.

"Well, fellows, it was like this. When I started out last night I intended to go only a little way. I was going up just around the first island and then come straight back to camp; but when I rounded the island, I found the passage so narrow and dangerous I thought I'd go on around the next one. When I got to the end of that I found I was a good way out of my course; for the island was a pretty long one, you see, and when I cleared it, and I came out into the open river again, I must have made a mistake in my bearings. I didn't realize I'd lost my way till about a half an hour later, but then I knew it. There were islands all around me, and the wind had died away, or at least had died down a good deal.

"I kept on, thinking I'd strike a familiar spot, but the current is much stronger over there than it is here, and I found I was going down the stream all the time. I ran the canoe in-shore and took in my sail and thought I'd paddle, for the wind was mostly gone, as I said. I got along all right till I was out in the open water again, and had gone a good distance, but I couldn't find the island I was looking for.

"I began to look about me then, for the sun was almost out of sight by that time, and the first thing I knew it was dark, and the rain was on me. I'd been so busy I hadn't fairly realized there was a storm coming, but I knew it pretty quick then, I can tell you. I kept on and did my best, but that wasn't much, as you can imagine, and all the time it kept getting darker and darker. I was wet to the skin in no time, and the way the waves began to toss my frail bark about was a caution. Paddling wasn't of much use, and I began to look about me for some place to run into. Everything was pretty dark, and getting darker all the time, and I couldn't make out any island anywhere near me. But I wasn't staying in one place all the time, let me tell you, for the river was busy if I wasn't, and I went down the stream very swiftly, for the wind was at my back.

"I don't just know how long the thing kept up, or how far I'd gone, but I pretty soon saw a light ahead of me which I decided in very short metre must be a cottage or a house on some island. The paddle was still in my hands, for I'd been lucky enough to hold on to that, and then I did my best to steer for the light I'd seen.

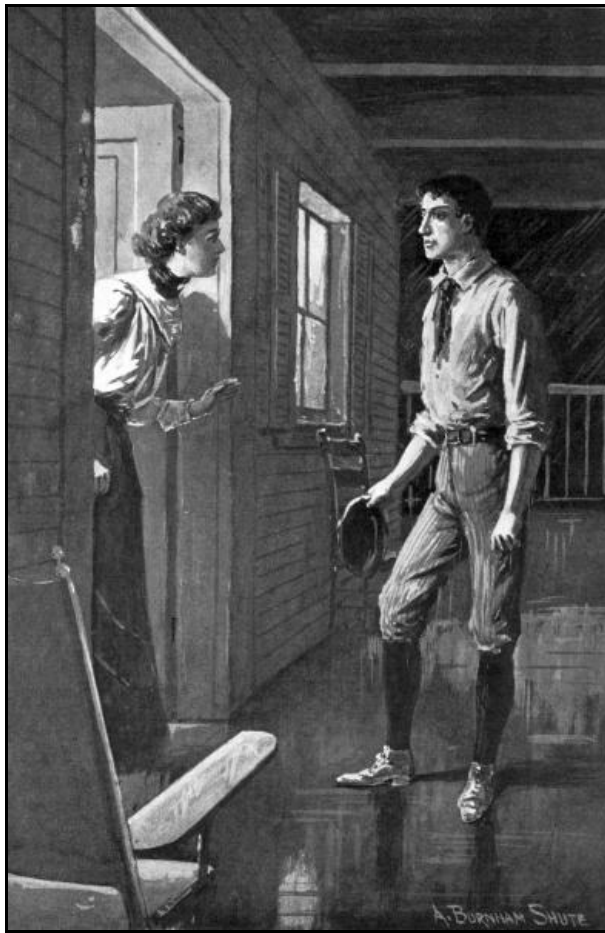
"It kept coming nearer to me all the time, or so it seemed to me, though I suppose I was the one that was doing the travelling, and after a while I found I was correct, and that it must be 'a light in the window for thee, poor sailor, a light in the window for me.' I pulled for the shore, or rather ran for it, and I thought I was just going to run into shelter, when plump! my canoe struck a rock, and I was in the water before you could say Jack Robinson. The water didn't come much above my knees, and then, when I discovered that I wasn't dead, I swallowed my despair, also a few gallons, more or less, of this noble river, made a grab for my canoe, and somehow managed to get to the bank.

"The storm was getting in its fine work then, but it didn't make much difference to me, for I was wet and couldn't be any wetter. I'd reached the superlative degree, you see, by that time. I looked up, and there on the bluff was the light which I'd seen when I was out on the river; so, when I'd carried the canoe up on the bank, I decided to try my luck in the house, for I knew I couldn't get back to camp that night, so I marched up to the door and rapped as bold as you please.

"I almost fell over backward when the door was opened by one of the prettiest girls you ever saw. She looked at me a minute as if she didn't know what to make of it, and to tell the truth, fellows, I couldn't think of anything to say. But her father came to the door just then, and in a few minutes they knew all about my story, though I don't remember a word I said.

"At any rate, if I was a stranger they took me in, and the goodman of the house dressed me out in some of his clothes. He was 'a trifle too short, and a shaving too lean' for me, so that when I was finally dressed I didn't hardly dare to go downstairs again, for I could hear their voices through the floor, you see, and I knew there was more than one girl there then.

"Finally, I plucked up courage and went down, but do you know what those girls did when I came into the room? Well, they tried to be polite and all that, but they were mightily tickled about something, and pretty quick one of them got up and made a rush for the window and made out that she was looking out into the storm; but I could see her put her handkerchief to her face as if she was crying, and then the other three girls went to join her and see the dark, and then one of them said, 'Tee-hee,' and before you could say Jack Robinson they were laughing with 'inextinguishable laughter,' as our Homer has it.



"She looked at me a minute, as if she didn't know what to make of it."

"At last one of them turned to me, and I was glad to see her blush, for she ought to have been ashamed of herself, and I think she was, and she said, 'You must excuse us, Mr. Dallett. We are ashamed of ourselves, but really we couldn't help it. If you will come over here with me you'll see for yourself what it is that troubles us.' Well, I went over and she stood me up in front of a mirror and what do you suppose I saw, fellows? There was a chap looking at me from that mirror, and he was a little pee-culiar I must admit. The coat he had on was about three sizes too small for him. His trousers were about four inches above the tops of his shoes, and he looked as if he was mostly hands and feet.

"Well, I laughed. I couldn't help it, and we had a good time, after all. You see, Miss Bessie had three of her classmates with her spending the vacation, and they're a lively lot, I can tell you. I had a good time, and this morning, clothed in my right mind and also in my proper garb, they brought me back to camp in their steam-yacht."

It was the middle of the afternoon before Ben's story was ended, and after they had given vent to their delight over the safe return of their friend, Ethan said, "Ye don't want me to stay any longer to-day, do ye?"

"No, Ethan. You can go home. Come over early to-morrow morning."

"To-morrow's Sunday," said Ethan, soberly.

"You don't mean it?" exclaimed Jock. "I'm ashamed to say I'd actually forgotten even the days of the week."

"I'll come over and take ye all to church," suggested Ethan.

"We'll go to church, but you needn't come for us," said Ben, quickly.

"Ye can't go then, for I thought I'd take yer canoes back with me. I don't want to leave ye in any more danger."

"No, no. You're not going to take the canoes," protested Ben. "We're going to master them, now. I'll never give up in the world."

Ethan hesitated, and then under protest finally yielded. He explained that they could attend service at the Corners, at Alexandria Bay, or the "Park," as they preferred.

"We'll go to the Bay," said Ben, quickly, so quickly that the boys all laughed, thinking that they understood his motive.

"'Twill be better for ye to go there," said Ethan, soberly; but he had no idea of the trouble which his suggestion brought on the young campers on the following day.

CHAPTER XIII.

A MISHAP.

Sunday morning dawned clear and beautiful. When Ethan came over to the camp to prepare breakfast, the river lay like a sheet of glass before the vision of the boys. The twittering of the birds was the only sound to break in upon the stillness. The summer sunshine covered all things in its softened light, and as far as the eye could see the hush of a solemn silence seemed to have driven away all other effects. Even Ethan's manner was more subdued than on other days, and when our boys obeyed his call to breakfast, they also were in a measure under the spell of the perfect summer day.

Sentiment did not interfere with appetite, however, and ample justice was done to the boatman's labors; and though he referred to his desire, when he was ready to depart for home, to carry the boys himself to the Bay to attend service, his offer was once more refused.

About an hour before the time when the service was to be held, the boys placed the two canoes in the water again, and with Jock and Bob in one, and their two friends in the other, they began to paddle. The light little crafts sped swiftly over the water, and keeping well together, not long afterward began to approach Alexandria Bay.

To them all it seemed like a novel way of attending church, but they soon discovered that they were not the only ones to come in that manner. Sailboats and skiffs, canoes and steam-yachts, could be seen in various directions, and though these were not numerous, it was evident that they were all bent on an errand similar to their own.

The boys were paddling more slowly now, as they came near the dock, and the two canoes were within a few yards of each other. Not an accident had occurred, and the confidence of the young campers had been largely increased by their success. They halted a moment to determine where was the best place to land, when Ben glanced up at an approaching yacht, and discovered his friends who had welcomed him to their cottage when he had escaped from the storm. His own presence was discovered by them at the same moment, and the girls crowded together near the rail, waving their handkerchiefs and calling to him, as they perceived that he had seen them.

Eager to return the salutation, Ben took his paddle in one hand, and with the other tried politely to lift his cap. But alas for human efforts! His movement suddenly destroyed the equilibrium of the treacherous canoe, and as it tipped dangerously to one side, Bert, who was taken unaware by the movement, strove to restore the balance; but unfortunately he leaned to the same side to which Ben turned, and in a moment the canoe was capsized, and the occupants sent speedily into the water.

A cry of alarm and dismay escaped the lips of the girls on the yacht, and the few men standing at the time upon the dock echoed it. Startled by the shout, Jock glanced up, and to his consternation discovered his friends struggling in the water. In his efforts to turn about his own canoe, he too destroyed its balance, and instantly both he and Bob were also thrown into the river.

The second accident increased the confusion and alarm, both on the yacht and on the dock; but in a moment two skiffs were manned, the struggling lads were drawn from the water, and the canoes as speedily seized and restored.

When it was seen that the boys were all safely landed, the yacht came in alongside the dock, and as the girls sprang lightly from the boat and beheld the dripping, woe-begone lads before them, they burst into a hearty laugh, in which the boys themselves, in spite of their confusion, were compelled to join.

"Good morning, Mr. Dallett," said Miss Bessie, to Ben. "What made you go into the water? Did you think we wouldn't recognize you unless you came before us in wet clothes?"

Ben laughed, and presented his friends to the young ladies and then to Miss Bessie's father and mother, Mr. and Mrs. Clarke. The last named expressed her sympathy for the boys in their accident, and suggested that the yacht should be used to carry them back to their camp.

"I don't believe they want to go back, unless Mr. Dallett wants to get that suit of papa's he wore the other night," said Miss Bessie, mischievously. "That would make a good go-to-meeting suit for him."

Ben laughingly declared that he preferred his present garments, but the offer of Mrs. Clarke to the free use of the yacht was declined, and, waiting only until the party had disappeared up the street on their way to the church, the boys speedily reëmbarked, and began to paddle swiftly back toward the camp on Pine Tree Island.

"I say, fellows," said Ben, eagerly, as they landed, "let's dress up and go back again. We'll get there in time for the benediction."

"It's more than that you need," said Bert, glumly. "Tipping two canoes over in one morning ought to be enough to satisfy you."

"Ben's right," said Jock, quickly. "It'll be all the better to go back now. We don't want to give up, do we? We started out to go to church, and I say let's go. We'll have to be quick about it, though, to get in even for the benediction."

The proposal was agreed to, and hastily changing their clothing they resumed their places in the canoes, and soon afterward landed at the dock at Alexandria Bay. Then they walked swiftly up the street to the little church, but were chagrined to find that they were too late even for the final part of the service. The congregation had already been dismissed, and as the boys approached the building they discovered the people just beginning to depart.

Their friends soon perceived them and expressed their surprise at their return, which Ben hastened to explain had been brought about by their desire to accomplish that which they had set out to do in the beginning. "They were not going to be floored," he declared, "by any such little thing as the upsetting of a canoe."

As they walked down to the dock, Mr. Clarke said to Jock, "I received a letter from your father, yesterday."

"Did you?" replied Jock, eagerly. "I didn't know that you knew him."

"Oh, yes, we've had business relations for years. He's a good man."

"You're not the only one to hold that opinion," said the boy, with a laugh.

"No, I am aware of that. He wrote and requested me to keep an eye on you. From what I saw this

morning, I'm afraid I ought to keep two eyes in the direction of your camp, instead of one."

Jock laughed, and his cheeks flushed slightly as he heard the laugh echoed by the girls, but he protested that such an accident as that which had occurred was not to be considered in a serious light.

"Not that, perhaps," replied Mr. Clarke, "but the one your friend had the other night was serious enough. It was a narrow escape he had."

"Yes, we were all badly frightened."

"I'm not going to scold you, for I doubt not you'll learn by your mistakes. Still I should advise you not to take many chances with canoes on this river. What with the swift current and the squalls which come, no man knows when or how, it's hardly safe for one who is not an expert."

"I know that, and we shall be careful."

"That's right. Now Mrs. Clarke would be pleased, I know, to have you go back home with us and dine there to-day; or if it is not convenient to-day, then some other day will do as well," he added, as he saw that Jock hesitated.

"I thank you, Mr. Clarke, and I am sure all the boys will be glad to come, but Ethan will come over to get our dinner for us to-day, and there's no way of getting word to him."

"Very well; then come some other day. You'll let us carry you back to your camp in our yacht, won't you? It's directly in our way."

The invitation was accepted, and the canoes taken in tow. Upon the invitation of the boys the party all landed at the dock and went up to the camp together. There everything was of interest, particularly to the girls, who wanted to understand just the uses of all the various camp belongings.

Doubtless very clear explanations were given, for at last when they returned to the yacht they all expressed themselves as delighted with what they had seen, and the boys were glad to renew the promise Jock had given that the invitation to dine at "The Rocks," the name by which Mr. Clarke called his cottage, would be accepted soon.

Not long afterward, Ethan appeared, and as he began his preparations for dinner, he said,—

"I hear ye had trouble over to the bay to-day."

"Who told you?" said Ben, quickly.

"I don't know as I just remember. Everybody was talkin' of it, though. I warned ye. Yer pa can't say I was responsible."

"You aren't responsible, Ethan," said Jock, quickly; "'twas Ben."

"How?" inquired Ethan, stopping short in his occupation, with the frying-pan in his hand.

"He got light-headed and destroyed our balance. The centre of gravity fell outside the base, and as a natural consequence what took place naturally occurred."

"Was that it?" said Ethan, slowly. "I heard ye capsized."

After dinner the boys stretched themselves upon the bank, and in the cool shade began to talk over the experiences of the morning. At last even that topic ceased to interest them, and for a time they were silent.

"This is a great river," remarked Ben, at last, breaking in upon the stillness, and looking out over the water, which was sparkling under the rays of the sun.

"So it is," replied Bob, lazily. "That was an original remark, my friend. I'd like to know just how many times it's been said since the first white man saw the river."

"Bob's going to tell us about Carter," said Bert, solemnly.

"I know of no Carter. Cartier discovered the river, if he's the one you have in what you are pleased to call your mind."

"I stand corrected," replied Bert. "Go on with your Carter or Cartier."

"I don't know that there's much to tell. Jacques Cartier was a Frenchman who lived about four hundred years ago. Just think of it, fellows; four hundred years, almost, since the first white man saw the river St. Lawrence."

"Did you say he lives here now?" inquired Ben, solemnly.

Bob gave him a look of scorn and then went on with his story. "Francis I. fitted him out with two ships of sixty tons each, and with a crew of a hundred and twenty men he set sail from St. Malo, April 20, 1534. They say it was only twenty days later when he reached the east coast of Newfoundland."

"They say?" interrupted Ben. "Who are 'they'?"

"The historians, and other fellows. He sailed north, and finally planted a cross on the coast of Labrador near Rock Bay."

"What did he plant it for?"

"Then he went south," continued Bob, without giving any heed to the interruption, "and came down the west coast of Newfoundland until finally he was driven by the unfavorable winds toward the Magdalen Islands. He soon started out again, and, still sailing west, landed at last at the mouth of the Miramichi, and with some of his men began to explore the bay of Chaleur; but pretty soon afterward he set sail with his ships—"

"Did he take his men with him?" interrupted Ben.

"And sailed north and landed in the bay of Gaspé. He thought the bay was the mouth of a large river, so he landed and remained there a little while before he started on again."

"He was a wise man," said Ben. "Now if he'd remained there after he'd started on, that would have been another matter. But to remain there before he left the place,—ah, that's the man for me, every time."

Even Bob laughed good-naturedly at the interruption, and then resumed his story.

"He had some dealings with the Indians there at the bay of Gaspé, and one of the chiefs was so taken with Cartier that he gave him permission to take his two sons back to France with him on the condition that he would bring them back in the following year."

"Whose two sons? Cartier's?" inquired Bert.

"No, the Indian chief's. Of course the Frenchman promised; but before he left he planted another wooden cross there, and put on it a shield with the arms of the French king, and the words, *Vive le roi de France*."

"How the king must have felt to have his arms left there," murmured Bert.

"Cartier soon after set sail, and after doubling the point of Anticosti found himself in a channel and sailed a little way up what was really a branch of the St. Lawrence, though he didn't know then, of course, that

there was any such river."

"He'd found the St. Lawrence and didn't know it?" inquired Jock.

"Yes."

"He was like some men I know," said Bert. "He knew more than he thought he did."

"Some men think they know more than they do," replied Bob, soberly. "Well, Cartier knew the winter was coming on, so he decided to go home. He sailed out through the straits of Belle Isle, and finally arrived at St. Malo, September 5, 1534. The king was mightily pleased with the trip, and promised to send him again in the next year."

"Then, as I understand it," said Jock, "Cartier didn't really sail up the river in 1534. He only found a little piece of it, and didn't know what it was he had discovered."

"That's it. He'd discovered it, but didn't know it."

"Poor fellow!" murmured Ben. "And, Bob, did he die?"

"You'll find out," said Bob, "when I tell you the rest of it."

"What! is there more to follow?"

"Yes, it's 'to be continued in our next.'"

"I don't know what I've done to deserve all this," said Ben, "but I suppose I'll have to put up with it. When's the next instalment due?"

"Not till after we've finished the other thing we're to do to-morrow."

"What other thing?"

"Oh, that's a secret between Jock and me," was Bob's reply, as he rose from the bank and started toward the camp, an example which all of his companions at once followed.

CHAPTER XIV.

ETHAN TELLS OF THE "JUMPERS."

With the coming of the morning the little brass cannon in the camp on Pine Tree Island woke the echoes, and likewise the boys, who had not left their tent when Jock had gone forth to greet the sunrise. There was no sleep to be had, however, after the summons, and soon all, except Bob, were dressed and waiting for the coming of Ethan.

That worthy was soon discovered, though he and Tom came in the sailboat instead of the skiff which they used on ordinary occasions, and the sight recalled to Ben the "secret" which had been referred to on the preceding evening.

"What's to be done to-day, Jock?" inquired Bert, as he stopped to watch the approaching craft which was speeding swiftly toward them under the strong breeze.

"You'll have to wait till Ethan comes and tells us," answered Jock. "It's never safe to reckon without your host, you know."

Ethan and Tom soon landed, and questions of the future were soon ignored in the immediate prospect of breakfast. Bob also had to be aroused, and as that was a task which required the combined efforts of his friends, by the time it was successfully accomplished breakfast was waiting, and all speedily seated themselves before the rude little table.

"I'm thinkin'," said Ethan, "that it would be a good day for a trip down the river. The wind's good this mornin', and if you boys want to try it, I don't know as we'll find a better day."

"That's the thing," said Ben, enthusiastically. "How far down do you go, Ethan?"

"Oh, that'll depend," replied the boatman, who was usually as averse to giving a decided expression of his opinion as any lawyer might have been. "We can go as far as we want to, if not farther, and then if we haven't gone far enough we can go farther, I take it."

"Precisely," laughed Bert. "Thank you, Ethan."

"Ye haven't anything to thank me for," replied the boatman, soberly. "I was jest givin' you my opinion, that's all."

"That's what I was grateful for," said Bert. "Ethan, do the people down here ever laugh?"

"Laugh? I s'pose so. I don't jest know what ye mean."

"Oh, nothing much; but I've noticed how sober everybody was. We've seen a good many, but I don't believe I ever heard one of them give a real good hearty laugh. I didn't know but they'd forgotten how."

"I guess they don't spend no time grinnin', if that's what ye mean," replied Ethan, evidently stirred by the apparent reflection upon the people of the region. "I don't know as they have the regulation snicker some o' the city folks puts on. I've sometimes suspicioned that they put on that grin o' theirs first thing in the mornin', along with their clothes. They say, 'how de do,' 'how de do,' an' smile an' smile jest as if they'd got to do it, same's as they'd take a dose o' pickery. I don't see no sense in it, for my part."

"There's comes a big steamer!" exclaimed Ben, suddenly pointing up the river as he spoke. "Good-by, fellows! I'm off!"

"It's a liner," said Ethan, soberly, pausing to look at the boat, which was larger than any other on the St. Lawrence, and which was leaving a long trail of thick black smoke behind it as it approached.

"What's a liner?" inquired Bert.

"Don't ye know what a liner is? It's a line boat."

"But what is a line boat, Ethan?" persisted Bert.

"It's a boat that goes regularly to Montreal," said Tom. "That's what pa means. It gets along here purty

early in the morning."

"What's that young un up to now?" exclaimed Ethan, abruptly. The boys all turned at his words, and saw that Ben had run down to the bank and launched one of the canoes. He leaped on board and, steadying himself carefully, was already paddling out upon the river as if he had gone to meet the huge steamer.

"He's goin' to take the breakers, the pesky little reptile," said Ethan, evidently annoyed by the recklessness of Ben. "I should think he'd had enough o' canoein' in rough water for one day."

Ben, however, was too far out by this time to be recalled; and as the boatman probably thought all attempts to summon him would be useless, he wisely held his peace and stood upon the bank with the boys watching the movements of the reckless lad. The great steamer came steadily and swiftly forward, and Ben almost as swiftly advanced to meet it. He was plying his paddle rapidly, and the canoe almost seemed to leap over the water. A long line of rolling waves were upturned by the steamer in its course, and stretched away like a furrow left by a ploughman.

Ben rested a moment as the great vessel came abreast of him and then, quickly dipping his paddle deep into the water, sent the light canoe straight for the tossing waves. No one on the bank spoke as they breathlessly watched their companion, and it was evident that they all expected to see him overturned in the boisterous water.

Soon Ben could be seen as he entered the wake of the steamer, the canoe was lifted high for a moment and then disappeared from sight. Again it rose and seemed almost to stand upright, but it rode the wave successfully and again went down into the trough of the sea. So up and down, tossed like a leaf on the stream, the little canoe held to its course, and it soon became apparent that Ben was master of the situation.

"He done it," remarked Ethan, forcefully if not grammatically, and a sigh of relief escaped from his companions as they perceived that Ben was safe.

Jock quickly turned, and the brass cannon belched forth its salute to the passing vessel. The delight of the boys was great when they saw a little cloud of steam shoot upward from the steamer and the heavy whistle acknowledged the salutation. Some of the passengers on the deck waved their handkerchiefs, and not to be outdone Bert seized the tablecloth from the table, from which the dishes already had been cleared, and waved it in response to the salutes from the deck.

There was another cloud of fluttering handkerchiefs waved at them from the deck, and then the great steamer passed on its way to the largest of Canadian cities.

Ben by this time had returned to the camp, and as he landed and lifted the canoe to its place on the bank, Ethan said sharply to him:—

"That was a foolish risk to take, boy. What did ye do it for?"

"Oh, I wanted to see how it seemed to take those breakers," was the reply. "Besides, I thought it was a good time to put my ability to the test."

"Ye haven't got no ability," replied Ethan, gruffly. "It was a foolish trick; and if ye'd been spilled and got drowned, I'd had the blame of it."

"I knew you were close by, Ethan," protested Ben. "I couldn't drown when you were in camp. I just had to do it, you see, for I wasn't going to let that canoe get the better of me. I'm going to learn how to manage one while I'm here if I get tipped over a dozen times."

"Ye ought to be careful, though," said Ethan, evidently mollified by Ben's words of praise. "I didn't believe a city fellow would have so much grit."

"You don't know us yet," replied Ben, with a laugh.

Ethan said nothing more, and at once gave his attention to fitting out the sailboat. This task was soon completed, and the eager boys at once took their places on board.

"Have you got everything we shall want?" inquired Jock, before they set sail.

"I don't know whether I've got everything ye want, but I've got everything ye need," said Ethan.

"Got those 'p'is'n things'?" inquired Ben, soberly.

"Yes, I've got the pies an' things," replied Ethan, shortly. "Now, if ye've got no further speeches to make, we'll cast off."

The boat was soon free from the dock, and, as the sail filled, it began to move swiftly over the river. There was a strong breeze, and aided by the swift current the boat drew rapidly away from the island. Ethan held the tiller, and when, after he had satisfied himself that nothing had been neglected, he at last took his seat, and gazed about him with a smile of contentment upon his sunburned face.

"This is something like it, boys!" exclaimed Ben, as he looked about him over the great river.

The wooded islands, the glistening waters of the river, the strong breeze, and, above all, the swift motion of the boat, lent an additional delight to those who were on board.

Camps, not unlike their own, were passed; cottages, on the piazzas of which groups of people could be seen; the beautiful St. Lawrence skiffs, in which were men starting forth on an errand like that which had taken our boys a few days before to Goose Bay, were noted, and all were enthusiastically greeted. Occasionally some beautiful steam-yacht would meet them on its way up the river, and in response to their hail would toot forth its salute. Altogether, the scene and experience were so novel and inspiring that the boys all felt the exhilaration, and their delight was unbounded.

"Do ye see that island over there?" inquired Ethan, pointing as he spoke to one which lay between them and the shore.

The boys all glanced in the direction, and then the boatman said, "They had a fracas there in the Civil War with the bounty jumpers."

"Bounty jumpers? What are they?" said Ben, innocently.

Ethan gave him a look which was almost one of contempt, and then said, "I thought you was goin' to college."

"I am," said Ben; "but I don't go because I know it all, but because I don't. If I knew as much as you do, Ethan, perhaps I shouldn't go."

"Ye don't know much for a fact," replied Ethan, soberly. "I s'pose ye'll be studyin' Latin and Greek and lots o' such 'tarnal nonsense when ye git there. If there was a six-year-old boy 'round here that didn't know what a bounty jumper was, I'd send him to the 'sylum, I would, for a fact. Have ye found out how many teeth a cow has on her upper jaw yet?"

"Not yet," laughed Ben, good-naturedly. "What's that got to do with bounty jumpers?"

"A bounty jumper," began Ethan, ignoring the question, "was a man what jumped his bounty."

"How far did he jump? What made him jump, anyway, Ethan?" said Bob.

"He jumped straight into Canada, and then he jumped back again."

"Was he any relation to the wise man who jumped into the bramble bush? Ever hear that story, Ethan? It's a good one. Jock knows it, and he'll tell it to you if you want him to," said Bob.

"Tell us about the bounty jumpers," interrupted Jock, quickly.

"Well," began Ethan, slowly, "you know, they was a-offerin' a bounty of a thousand dollars to every man who'd enlist."

"When?" interrupted Bob. "Was it during the War of 1812?"

"No. 'Twas in the secesh war, that's when it was."

"You weren't here when the War of 1812 broke out, were you, Ethan?" inquired Bob, soberly.

Ignoring the laugh which followed, Ethan went on: "They wanted men putty bad in the Civil War, and so they offered a thousand dollars to every one who'd enlist. Well, lots enlisted; and then, after they'd got their money, they'd leave the army and put straight for this river, and git over into Canada. Then they'd cross over the border somewhere, and enlist somewhere else, take another thousand dollars and light out for Canada again. 'Twas a payin' job in those days; paid better'n drivin' a horse-car down to the city. There were regular 'bounty brokers,' as they were called, to help these rascals, and finally the government sent some provost marshals up here to look out for these fellows, and one of the liveliest tilts happened right by that island.

"There was a camp o' the jumpers on that island, and they had come to be as bold as ye please. There was so many on 'em that they felt pretty secure like, and besides, the wife o' one o' the men lived in a little house right on the shore. She used to go to school with me an' your pa," he added, turning to Jock as he spoke, "and he'd know her name in a minute if I should tell ye what it was. Well, she used to come out and wave a white cloth at the camp, and then her husband, or some other fellow, would come ashore an' get what she cooked up for 'em.

"One of the marshals found out the trick an' he made up his mind he'd get some o' these fellows; so one day he came down to the house, and as he wasn't dressed up like a soldier, jest wore ordinary clothes like yours or mine," he explained as he glanced at the boys, not one of whom changed the expression upon his face as he was addressed, "and so, though the woman was pretty suspicious, she didn't think he was on the lookout. Pretty quick she went out o' the house and waved the cloth, for she probably thought the men were gettin' hungry, and then a boat left the camp, and when it came pretty close to the shore the marshal, who was a-peekin' out o' the window, saw the very man he wanted most of all—this woman's husband.

"He waited till the boat was close in, and then he rushed out and yelled to the man to give himself up, and to strengthen his argument pulled out a pistol. The man was scared like at first, but the woman wasn't a mite, an' she jest yelled out, 'Don't ye do it, Bill; don't ye do it.' At that the marshal began to make his pistol pop, an' he fired all six o' the cartridges, an' never once touched the man or the boat, either."

"Is every man hereabouts as good a shot as that?" drawled Bob.

"I'm thinkin' they shoot as well as they do anywhere," replied Ethan.

"Well, some o' the marshal's friends came up, an' they went into the house to make themselves to home. They waited all night, an' a neighbor came in an' told them the jumpers was fixin' to come ashore and shoot every one of 'em. Jest then they heard a drum an' fife over in the camp, and they fixed up the house to stand a siege. They barricaded the doors and windows, and waited for deserters, an' likewise for the mornin'.

"The mornin' came, but the jumpers didn't; an' as the camp was too strong to be attacked, the marshal an' his friends cleared out afore noon and left the region. But that scrape happened right over there by that island. I could tell ye a whole lot more o' stories o' the jumpers, but I've got to look out for this boat now, or ye'll all be goin' down to the bottom instead of down the river."

As Ethan spoke, he quickly rose and began to give some sharp directions to Tom. Apparently they were needed, for the boat was moving with wonderful speed now. As the boys looked over into the river they could see that the swiftness of the current had greatly increased. The waters ran like those in a mill-race, and it almost seemed as if the boat had been lifted by some unseen and mighty hand, and thrown forward with incredible swiftness. No one, save Ethan, spoke, and the white faces of the boys indicated that the alarm which they thought their boatman had displayed was shared by them all.

CHAPTER XV. IN A FOREIGN LAND.

On either side the boys could see great eddies in the stream, in which the water whirled as if it were twisted about on some unseen axis. The boat itself was moving swiftly, and as it was swept onward by the current, they of course could not fully perceive the motion of the river. The experience was a novel one, and the alarm of the boys was but natural.

Their confidence was in a measure restored when they saw that Ethan apparently was not frightened, and as he noticed them watching intently a whirling eddy off to their right, he laughed and said,—

"That's a pretty good twister, isn't it, boys?"

"Yes," replied Bert. "What would happen to us if we should be caught in it?"

"Nothin'. Nothin' at all."

As the boys looked up in surprise, he continued, "There's a mighty sight o' difference between the eddy

and the current, let me tell you. Some folks mistake one for the other in more ways than one, I'm thinkin'. In my paper, which comes reg'lar every Friday, I sometimes read the most alarmin' articles. I suppose the men that write them think they're all true enough, an' they really are afraid the country is goin' to the dogs. When I read 'em I confess I'm a bit skeered at times; for what with the strikes an' riots an' all sorts o' things that happen, it does look like as if it was goin' to be a bit of a blow; but I look out o' the window o' my house, an' I see the great river a-hurryin' on as if it was all the while afraid it would be late, or wouldn't get there on time. But I see more'n the current, for I see some big eddies, too. They whirl an' boil as if there was a big fire down below, an' when I see 'em I always think that some folks can't tell the difference between a eddy and the stream. Then I make up my mind that that's what's the trouble with those newspaper fellows. They've seen a eddy and mistook it for the current: an' all the time the great stream is a-goin' on jist as smooth and swift as ye please. This river is a great teacher, in my opinion."

Ethan's quaint words served to quiet the fears of the boys, though doubtless they failed to appreciate the deeper philosophy which lay beneath them. At all events, they soon perceived that the river was calmer now, and that the boat was not moving at the speed it had had a few minutes before.

"That must have been one of the rapids, wasn't it, Ethan?" inquired Jock.

"Rapids? I rather guess not. That spot's no more like the rapids than a milk pail's like a mill-pond. No, sir! When ye strike the rapids, ye'll know it. It's most like slidin' down hill on water."

"But how do the boats come up the river, then?" queried Ben. "They do come up, for I see them every day. I shouldn't think they could get through the rapids, if they're like what you say they are."

"No more they don't."

As the boys looked blankly at him, Ethan laughed and said, "They come up the canal. Course they can't get through the rapids."

"I didn't know there was a canal," said Ben.

"Humph," grunted the boatman; but it was evident that his opinion of their knowledge was but slight, in spite of the fact that they had endeavored to impress him with the entrance into college they had all gained.

"Are we going down to the rapids to-day?" inquired Bert.

"To-day? Well, I guess not," said Ethan, decidedly. "How far down the river d'ye think them rapids be?"

"I didn't know," protested Bert, hastily. "I only asked for information."

"We'll go down there some time, but we'll have to make a two or three day trip of it. Even this boat o' mine, and she's no laggard, I'd have ye understand, couldn't make it in a day. But we're goin' down there. There's fishin' below the Longue Seaut that leaves Goose Bay and Eel Bay and all the spots among the islands in the shade."

"What do they catch?" inquired Bob.

"Fish."

"Oh!" And Bob lapsed into silence once more.

Indeed, it was becoming more and more difficult to deal with Ethan; and his estimate of their knowledge, or rather their lack of it, was so apparent that they began to feel as if they were the embodiment of the city greenhorns he had so contemptuously referred to when they had first entered camp.

For a time there was silence on board, and the boys all gave themselves up to the enjoyment of the hour. In the distance were the shores, and in various places the farmers could be seen at their work. The farmhouses, low and quaint, appeared here and there, and the cottages, though less numerous than among the Thousand Islands, were still much in evidence. Perched on some high bluff along the shore, or built in groups in some grove, they continually presented a spectacle of life far different from that which was to be seen in the towns or cities.

To Ethan their coming was the most natural thing in the world, for where could another such region be found as that along the borders of the majestic St. Lawrence? The only thing against which he rebelled was the price paid for the spot on which some cottage had been erected, and as they passed the summer homes he frequently referred to the amount of money which had been paid for the lots.

"That's where Tod Church lives," he explained, pointing as he spoke to a low farmhouse on the shore, near which stood several modest cottages.

"Is that so?" replied Bob seriously, as if the abode of Tod was a matter of intense interest to him. "Was he in the War of 1812 too?"

"No; he wasn't. Tod's a young man. He's only fifty-nine, jest three months younger'n I be. But Tod's got rich!"

"You don't mean it!" exclaimed the serious Bob. "How did the aforesaid Tod acquire his wealth?"

"He didn't do nuthin', an' yet he's well off, Tod is. Some folks is born lucky. That's all the difference there is between folks, in my opinion. Some has luck for 'em and some has it agin 'em."

"And Tod had it with him, did he?" inquired Bob.

"He did that. His father left him well fixed, for Tod had the house and fifty acres o' land all clear. And now he's gone an' sold some lots up there on that bluff where he couldn't raise nothin', and he's got two thousand dollars in clean money for 'em. Neow if that isn't luck, then I don't know what luck is," said Ethan, impressively. "He jest works when he feels like it, and when he doesn't, he doesn't. Jest takes his ease and comes an' goes when an' where he pleases, an' doesn't ask no odds of nobody."

"Fortunate youth!" murmured Bob; and again silence came upon the party.

For an hour more they sped on before the breeze, which still continued strong. The sun was high in the heavens, and across the bright blue of the sky occasional masses of silver-colored clouds passed. It was a perfect summer day, and the deep peace which rested over all things seemed to include the boys in its embrace. The boat was handled perfectly by Ethan and Tom, and it must have required men made of different material from that in our boys not to feel the keen delight of living amidst such surroundings. The rush and roar of the city were things impossible to be imagined, and even the grind of the closing days in school, and the prospect of the hard work in college, were all vague and meaningless.

"What's that place ahead, Ethan?" suddenly exclaimed Jock, sitting erect as he spoke, and pointing to a place of considerable size to their left.

"Brockville."

"Why don't we stop there and get dinner?"

"I've got something for ye to eat aboard the boat."

"I know that; but we'll want it all on our way back."

"It'll cost ye four shillin' apiece for your dinner if ye go to the hotel, though I know another place where ye can get it for three shillin'; but I'm not sure the place is bein' run now."

"Never mind the cost, Ethan," said Jock, recklessly. "We're out for a time of it, and even such extravagance can be put up with once in a lifetime."

"Jest as you say," replied Ethan, though it was evident that he felt in a measure responsible for the expenditures of the lads under his care.

The dock was soon gained, and as Ethan made his boat fast, the light-hearted boys leaped ashore. "Come on, Ethan! Come on, Tom," said Jock. "We'll go up to the hotel and get our dinner."

"Who? Me!" exclaimed the boatman in surprise.

"Yes, you. You and Tom too. Come on, both of you."

"No," said Ethan, shaking his head decidedly. "I ain't a-goin' to pay no four shillin' for a dinner when I've got enough to eat aboard my boat."

"Well, let Tom come, anyway," urged Jock, perceiving that Ethan was not willing to accept the invitation. "We should be glad to have both of you come, and we'll stand treat for the dinners."

Ethan was about to refuse permission for Tom to accompany the boys, but perceiving the look of intense desire upon his son's face, and as Jock increased his solicitations, he relented, and together the boys started up the street.

It was nearly two hours later when they returned, and as Ethan perceived them, he said, "I hope ye got yer money's worth, boys."

"It wasn't our fault if we didn't," laughed Jock. "Now, Ethan, we want to look about the place a little. Will you come with us?"

"I s'pose I'd better, or ye'll git lost," replied the boatman; and soon afterward the little party was walking about the town, which, in its architecture and life, presented many contrasts to that with which they were more familiar.

When they approached the public buildings, Ethan related the story of the rescue which a party of American soldiers had made there in the War of 1812. It seemed that a considerable body of prisoners had been secured by the British, and confined in the jail at Brockville, or Elizabethtown, as the place was known in the earlier days. Their friends on the other side of the river had assembled for their rescue, and crossed the ice one dark night and fell upon the guard, and at last secured the release of their fellows. Ethan told the story with many quaint additions of his own, and we may be sure his young friends were deeply interested.

"This *is* a great country," said Ben, when Ethan ceased. "It's historic ground from one end of the river to the other."

"I s'pose so," remarked Ethan, quietly, "though I don't take much interest in such things. Folks is queer. They call it hist'ry when a lot o' men git up with guns and shoot at one another; but when they are peaceable like, and just 'tend to their farms an' mind their own business, then it isn't any hist'ry at all. I've seen a crowd gather in a minit up at the bay or Clayton around a man what's drunk, but when a man is sober and decent they don't pay no 'tention to him at all. It seems to me this 'hist'ry' you're talkin' about is a good deal like that."

"Perhaps it is," admitted Ben. "I hadn't thought of it before."

On their way back to the boat Ethan stopped to make a few purchases, and carefully stowed the packages on board when they set sail.

"We'll go a bit farther down the river," he said, as he headed the boat down the stream. "We've time enough."

"Ethan, what have you got in those bundles?" inquired Ben.

"Some things my wife wanted me to git. Can buy 'em cheaper over here."

"But they'll cost you as much after you've paid the duty, won't they?"

"Duty? Duty? Who's a-goin' to pay any duty, I'd like to know?" replied Ethan, sharply.

"Why, I thought everybody had to pay that when they bought things in Canada."

"Well, I'm not goin' to. I'd like to know why I can't buy things in Brockville if I take a notion, 'specially when they're cheaper."

"But I thought everybody up here believed in a high tariff, and voted for it."

"So they do. We ain't a-goin' to have them come over into our country and compete with us! Not much!"

"How can you buy over there and not pay duty, then?"

"Hey? What's that ye say? Ye act as if ye thought I'd been stealin'. Most everybody does it, an' I guess it's all fair enough. Did you pay duty for that dinner ye et up to the hotel? Ye brought some things away inside o' ye, an' I brought some outside o' me. Tell me the difference, will ye?"

"Ben ought to have paid," laughed Bob. "When a man buys food by the wholesale, he ought to pay duty, I'm sure."

Ethan said no more, and as the boys were not disposed to dispute the strange ethics in which he evidently believed, the party once more became silent.

An hour later Ethan sighted a steam-yacht coming up the river, and in response to his hail it stopped and took the boat in tow. This made the returning voyage easy, and added to the novelty as well; and just before dusk the line was cast off, and the boat was headed for the camp, where soon after the boys arrived safely.

"I'll get ye some supper now," said Ethan, as he and Tom at once began their preparations for the evening meal.

"Good for you, Ethan!" said Ben. "All the 'p'is'n things' you had on board have been long since exhausted."

"So I noticed. I wonder sometimes if there's anything that will fill ye up."

"Your supper will, I'm sure."

"I'll try it, though I'm doubtful," replied the boatman, grimly.

A little later he left the tent and approached the boys, holding something in his hands. "Somebody's been here while we've been gone," he said. "They've left a letter and their tickets."

Jock received the note and the "tickets," as Ethan called the visiting cards, and tearing open the missive

he read it and then said: "Mr. and Mrs. Clarke have been here, fellows. They have left an invitation for us. Keep still and I'll read it."

He read the letter aloud, and in a moment his friends were as interested in the contents as he himself had been.

CHAPTER XVI. AN ALARM IN THE CAMP.

The note extended a cordial invitation to the boys to dine at "The Rocks" on the following day, and Mr. Clarke offered to send his yacht to convey them to his island. The dinner was to be in the middle of the day, in accordance with the custom of the region, and as that fact left the afternoon practically free, all the party were eager to accept. Perhaps it was not merely the expected pleasure of meeting Mr. and Mrs. Clarke, or of enjoying a trip in his yacht, which was acknowledged to be one of the most beautiful and fleet on the entire river, which moved them; but if other inducements, not referred to in the note of invitation, did appear, no one mentioned them.

After supper, when Ethan prepared to depart from the camp, Tom said, "I think I'll wait a little while, pa. I'll come home in a couple of hours."

"All right, son," responded Ethan. "I think ye'd better take one o' the canoes when ye start, and leave the skiff with the boys. It'll be safer like, ye see, if they take it into their heads to go out on the river."

Ben made a wry face at the implied slight on their ability to use the canoes, but no one spoke, and the boatman soon departed.

"I wanted you to hear me speak my piece again, if you would," said Tom, when his father had gone. "I know I don't do it very well, and as you have had so much better advantages than I have, I'd like to have you help me, if you will."

Before any one could reply, Bert made a sudden dart from the camp-fire and was speedily followed by Jock. "What's the matter with those boys?" inquired Tom, innocently, as he glanced up at the departing lads.

"I don't think they feel very well," replied Bob, soberly.

"They don't? Do you want me to go over to the bay and get a doctor? It won't take an hour."

"No physician can reach the seat of their trouble," said Ben, solemnly. "It's deeper than any human skill can go."

"You don't mean it! Perhaps I'd better wait and not ask you to hear me speak my piece to-night."

"Oh, that won't make any difference. Ben, here, is perfectly willing to hear you. In fact, he enjoys it; and while you are speaking, I'll go and look up the other fellows, and see what I can do to help them."

Bob's evident desire to escape was all unnoticed by the unsuspecting Tom, and as soon as he was left alone with Ben, he began to speak. For a half-hour or more the camp resounded with, "Tew be or not tew be-e-e," but no one returned to disturb the orator until the practice had been ended.

Then, as the three lads came back, Tom said, "I'm sorry, boys, that you don't feel well. I told Bob I'd go over to the bay for a doctor, but he said you didn't want any."

"No physician in Alexandria Bay could prescribe for those boys when they get an attack of self-abasement. It's a serious matter."

"There's one thing about it," said Jock, "and that is, that Bob, here, isn't likely to catch it."

Tom, evidently, did not appreciate the point, but he nevertheless accepted Jock's invitation to remain, and stretched himself on the grass before the roaring camp-fire with the others.

"I was about to remark the other evening, when my irreverent friend interrupted me," began Bob, "that Cartier came back here."

"Bob, are you going on with that yarn?" demanded Ben.

"No yarn about it. I'm going to help you fellows to see the point for once in your lives."

"You mean you're going to try to make a point some one can see," retorted Ben. "Well, wake me up when you come to the point. Life's too short to spend it in trying to understand Bob's stuff. If he ever comes to a point, let me know;" and Ben rolled over upon the grass, and covering his face with his hat, pretended to be sleeping.

"Go on with your Cartier," said Bert. "I don't know what we've done to deserve all this, but if we've got to have it, then the sooner it's done the better."

"Cartier," began Bob, giving the name a peculiar emphasis to expose Bert's ignorance, "made a great stir when he got back to St. Malo,—that was in September, 1534, as I said,—and the king was tickled most of all. He immediately promised to fit out a new expedition, and a lot of the young nobles and swells wanted to join. Cartier was the rage, you see, and even the children cried for him; and as for the ladies, why, even brass buttons didn't count along with Jakie's commission as 'captain and pilot of the king.'

"About the middle of the next May everything was ready, and Cartier and his men went up to the cathedral together, and special services were held for them, and the bishop gave them his blessing. Having looked after that part of it, Cartier then took his men aboard his squadron and set sail. He had three vessels this time, though I don't just recall the names of them."

"*La Grande Hermione, La Petite Hermione, and L'Emérillon,*" suggested Tom, who had been listening attentively.

"Thank you," replied Bob, somewhat confused, to the evident delight of his companions. "Those were the names. Well, they hadn't been out on the ocean sailing very long before they were separated by the storms,

but after a rough passage they finally came together in the straits of Belle Isle."

"At the inlet of Blanc Sablon," suggested Tom.

A laugh greeted his words; but though Tom's face flushed, he soon perceived that he was not the cause of the merriment, and though he could not understand Bob's momentary confusion, he, too, joined in the good-natured laughter.

"On the last day of July they sailed to the westward and started up the St. Lawrence. It was the first day of September when Cartier found the mouth of the Saguenay, and the fourteenth when he came to a little river about thirty miles from Quebec, which he named the Sainte Croix. The next day an Indian came to see him—"

"Hold on, Bob, isn't that enough?" inquired Bert, in apparent despair.

"The Indian was an Algonquin chief with a funny name—"

"Donnacona," suggested Tom, mildly.

Again a loud laugh greeted his word, and the abashed Tom subsided.

"That's right; that's what it was," said Bob, quickly. "Thank you, Tom. Well, Cartier had the two Indians with him whom he had taken to France, and so he could hold a powwow with this Algonquin, but I haven't time to tell you what they talked about."

"Oh, yes. Please tell us," pleaded Bert, in mock eagerness.

"No, I can't stop—"

"You're right. You can't tell, and you can't stop, either, till you're run down."

"As a result of the interview, Cartier left two of his vessels there, and, taking the *L'Emérillon*, he sailed up the river as far as Lake St. Peter, but he found a bar there—"

"What?" exclaimed Bert, sitting suddenly erect.

"A bar. That's what I said."

"Was he looking for a bar all this time? Didn't they have any farther down the river? I'm ashamed of Carter. I didn't believe he was that kind of a man."

"This was a sand bar," laughed Bob, "and blocked his way, so he left the ship's crew there—"

"The ship's screw?" interrupted Bert. "Now I know you're giving us a fairy tale. Ships didn't have any screws then. They hadn't been invented. Even side-wheelers weren't known then."

"I didn't say ship's screw. I said ship's crew. Can't you understand plain English?"

"That's what I said, too, the ship's screw. Didn't I, fellows?" appealed Bert, turning to his companions.

"There's a big difference between a ship's screw and a ship's crew."

"Perhaps you can see it, but I can't. A ship's screw is a ship's screw, and that's all there is to it," protested Bert, solemnly.

"All right; have it your own way," said Bob. "Cartier left his behind him, anyway, and with three of his men took a little boat and came on up the river, and on October 2d arrived at Montreal, which he called Mount Royal."

"What did he call it that for? Why didn't he call it what the people there called it? I believe in calling things by their right names, I do."

"It had an Indian name which I don't at this moment recall—"

"Ask Tom," suggested Bert.

"Hochelaga," said Tom, in response to the appeal.

"What did you say, Tom?" inquired Bert, soberly.

"Hochelaga," laughed Tom.

"Oh! Then that was the place where the bar you spoke of was, was it, Bob? Pardon me. Pray resume your fascinating disquisition, as improbable as it is flighty. You were about to describe your Carter when he and his followers stopped on the bar, a course of action of which I highly disapprove. That's one thing I like about this river, it's all wool and a yard wide. A safe place for children and no temptations to speak of—unless a canoe is one for Ben."

"A yard wide?" interrupted Tom. "The St. Lawrence a yard wide! Why, it's three-quarters of a mile wide up here at Cape Vincent, where it leaves the lake, and on the other side of Quebec it's ten and twenty and even thirty miles wide, and at Cape Gaspé it's all of a hundred miles wide."

Again the boys broke into a hearty laugh, in which Tom was compelled to join, although he did not understand just what it was he was laughing at; but the good nature of them all was so apparent that he did not suspect that he was the cause of their enjoyment.

"Cartier stayed only three days at Montreal—" resumed Bob.

"Didn't he like the Hochelaga?" interrupted the irrepressible Bert.

"Keep still, Bert," pleaded Jock, laughingly. "I want to hear about this."

"I would I were as this one is!" drawled Bert, pointing to Ben as he spoke, who was now soundly sleeping and apparently doing his utmost to emphasize the adverb as much as he did the verb.

"Cartier left after three days," began Bob once more, "and went back to the mouth of the Sainte Croix, and there he passed the winter. And a terrible winter it was, too. The men weren't used to such awful cold, and they suffered from the scurvy so much that when the spring came twenty-five of them were dead, and only a very few of the hundred and ten who were alive were free from disease. His men had been so reduced in numbers that Cartier decided to take only two of his vessels back to France with him and so left the *Petite Hermione* there."

"That's a likely story," said Bert. "Left the ship behind him?"

"Yes, that's what he did."

"It may be so, my friend, but I don't believe it."

"It is true," said Tom. "They found the old boat in the mud there in 1848,—the very ship that Cartier left more than three hundred years before."

"Oh, of course, if *you* say so I'll believe it," replied Bert.

"He first took possession of the land," said Bob, "by setting up a cross bearing the arms of France and a Latin inscription, *Franciscus primus, Dei gratia Francorum rex, regnat.*"

"I've read about that inscription, but I don't know how to read Latin," said Tom, eagerly. "What does it mean?"

"Ask Bert," suggested Bob.

"Jock'll tell you," said Bert, quickly.

"Bob knows it, and he'll tell you," protested Jock, hastily.

"Cartier stole Donnacona and nine other Indian chiefs and sailed away for France, where he arrived about the middle of July, 1536. And that's the end of chapter two," Bob added, as he rose from his seat.

Tom now departed for home, and as the boys began to prepare for the night, Bob stopped for a moment before the prostrate figure of Ben, who was still sleeping soundly on the ground before the camp-fire.

"I was never treated thusly in all my experience as a lecturer," said Bob. "I'll fix that fellow. I'll show him he mustn't spoil my speeches with his hilarious snorings."

Running into the tent Bob speedily returned with several short pieces of rope, in each of which he made a slip noose. Then he carefully adjusted one to the sleeping lad's right hand, and without disturbing him, made the rope fast to the nearest tree. In a similar manner he treated the other hand and then the two feet, and last of all the head of the still unconscious Ben.

"Now, I'd like to wake him up," said Bob, regarding his work with much satisfaction. "He won't go to sleep again when I'm lecturing, I fancy. If he moves his right hand he'll make himself all the more secure, and if he tries to stir his other hand or his feet he'll be still worse off. Next time he'll see the point, I'm thinking."

The boys were soon ready for bed and still Ben slept on. The camp-fire flickered and burned low, the long shadows ceased, and even the waiting boys at last closed their eyes and slept.

How long they had been sleeping they did not know, but they were suddenly awakened by a yell that startled them all. Quickly sitting up, the boys at first could not determine what it was that had so alarmed them.

In a moment, however, the yell was repeated, louder and longer than before.

"It's Ben," said Bob, quickly. "I'll go out and ascertain whether he can see the point."

As he turned to rush into the open air, he was startled by the sounds which came from the roof of the tent in which they had been sleeping. Something was moving about on it, and to the alarm of the boys it sounded very much like the snarl of a wild beast. Evidently it was something large, too, and in a moment all three darted forth from the tent into the darkness, just as there came another yell from the prostrate Ben, even more piercing than those which had preceded it.

CHAPTER XVII. ON GUARD.

Bob's first impulse was to run to his prostrate friend, and with a knife he quickly severed the cords by which Ben was bound. Angry as Ben was, he did not speak, but instantly leaped to his feet and stood with his companions peering eagerly at the body which could be seen upon the roof of the tent.

The fire had burned low, but still threw out its long shafts of light, and in the shadows the animal seemed to assume fantastic shapes. The boys were all alarmed, and to their distorted vision the visitor was apparently of large size, and every moment they expected to see him spring from the tent. He had not moved since they had rushed out from the tent, and though he uttered no sound he seemed to be crouching as for a spring.

"It's a bear," whispered Bert.

"No, it isn't a bear; it's a panther," replied Jock, in a whisper as tremulous as that of his friend had been.

The suggestion was in no wise reassuring, and for a few moments the boys stood and watched their strange visitor, ready to dart into the woods at the first sign of new danger. The animal, however, had not stirred, and was still crouching upon the roof.

"If I only had my revolver, I'd fix him," said Ben.

"Where is it, Ben?" whispered Bob, eagerly.

"In the tent there. I say, fellows," he continued, "if you will keep his attention off to one side I'll crawl in and get the pistol. Can't you throw some sticks or stones at him, or poke him with a long pole? While you're doing that, I'll creep round to the other side and get into the tent. He won't see me if you keep him busy."

The suggestion of a pole met with no favor, but sticks and stones were more practical, and selecting a short club as a weapon of defence in case of an attack, the three boys drew off together a little farther into the woods and then began to throw the missiles at the crouching animal.

As their aim was poor they added shouts to their other "weapons," and soon the camp was ringing with their calls, though the animal did not move and seemed to be alike fearless of their missiles and wild cries.

Ben, meanwhile, had crept stealthily around to the farther side of the tent, and when the uproar of his companions rose to its highest point, darted quickly into the tent, secured his revolver and then ran out again with a celerity which his friends might well have envied.

Possessed of his weapon he called to the boys, and as soon as they had joined him he stepped nearer the spot and cocked his pistol. He could still see their visitor in the same attitude and place where he had been when first discovered. The camp-fire flickered and the trees moaned under the night wind. The wash of the waves upon the pebbly beach was the only other sound to be heard, unless the rapid beatings of the hearts of the boys were audible to others besides their owners.

"Don't move, fellows," whispered Ben, as he slowly raised his revolver and took aim.

His warning apparently was not needed, for not one of the boys moved from his place. Each was intently watching that crouching form upon the roof, and waiting for the report of the revolver, which should either put an end to their suspense by killing the animal, or bring upon themselves the rush of an angry and perhaps

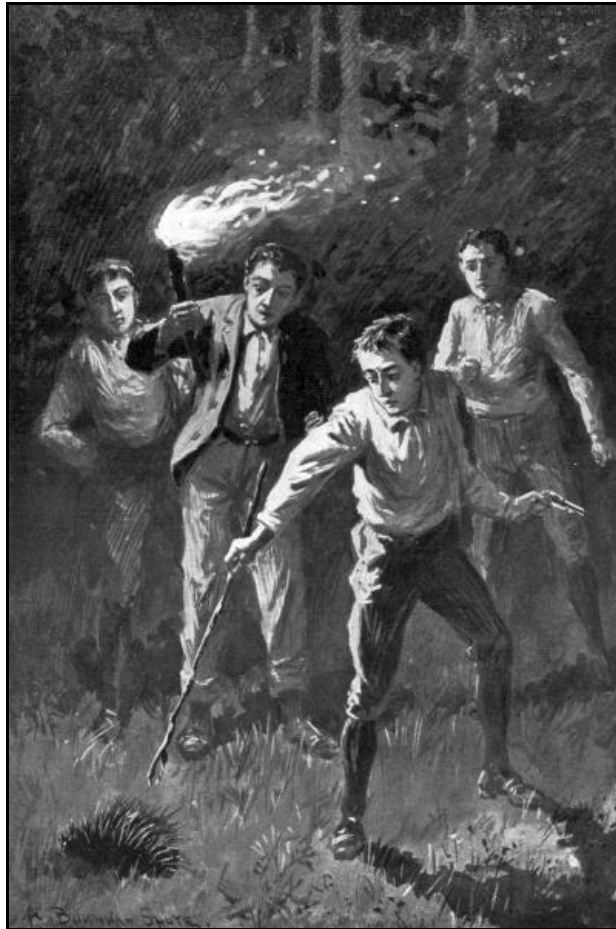
wounded beast.

The suspense was not ended when the first report of Ben's pistol broke sharply in upon the stillness of the night. From all appearances they thought the animal had not been hit, but as he showed no disposition either to advance or retreat, Ben quickly raised his revolver again and two shots rang out in quick succession.

"Look out, Ben, you'll hit the tent," whispered Bob, made somewhat bolder by the continued failure of the animal to move.

Ben then fired the remaining cartridges, and to the delight of his companions, they saw their enemy roll from his place on the tent and fall with a thud upon the ground. There was the sound of a struggle for a moment, and then all became still again.

The boys waited anxiously, and at last Ben said, "I hit him! I hit him! He's dead, fellows. Go on and see what he was."



"Bob took a long stick and poked the motionless form."

As no one seemed to be quite willing to respond to the appeal, Ben himself thrust a long torch or broken limb of a tree into the fire, and then, holding in his hand the blazing branch, at the head of the column advanced to view the fallen foe.

They approached carefully and cautiously, Ben explaining that "panthers sometimes lived a long time after they were dead," and soon they could see the motionless body before them. Holding the torch in one hand and his reloaded revolver in the other, Ben stood ready to shoot at the first returning sign of danger, while Bob took a long stick and cautiously poked the motionless form.

His actions produced no response, and then, concluding that their enemy was indeed dead, they came nearer and soon stood looking down upon their victim. A closer inspection revealed the fact that it was a much smaller animal than they had thought it to be, but none of them had ever seen one like it before.

As Jock leaned down to touch it with his hand, he suddenly drew back with a cry of pain, and instantly his companions darted from the spot. As they were not pursued, their courage revived, and once more they returned to inspect the body of the strange animal. He was dead now, that was evident; and satisfied as to that fact, Bob declared that he was going back to bed.

"We ought to keep a guard to-night, though," suggested Bert. "Perhaps these animals hunt in pairs. I've heard of panthers that do."

"That's all right; we'll have a guard," replied Bob. "Ben's the one to do it."

"Me? Well, I guess not! Say, who fixed me that way?" he suddenly inquired, his anger evidently returning at the thought of the wrongs he had suffered.

"Well, I did," drawled Bob, "if you really want to know."

"What did you do it for?"

"To make you see the point. When I'm lecturing on the early discoverers of the St. Lawrence, I don't want you to go to sleep. I'm not doing it for the fun of the thing. It's duty, pure duty; I want to teach my benighted countrymen something about the heroes of this region."

"Nobody asked you to," replied Ben, half laughing, though he was still angry over his wrongs. "If I'd invited you to speak or paid for the privilege that would have been another matter. Where did you get the stuff, Bob? Out of an almanac or the cyclopædia?"

"Out of my head. By the way, Ben, what made you yell so when you woke us up?"

"Yell? Well, perhaps you'd keep quiet when you opened your eyes in the night and saw a wild beast crawling over the roof of the tent and ready to spring upon you and devour you. Then when I tried to move I found some one had tied me hand and foot."

"Your voice was free. Your lungs seemed to work all right," suggested Bob.

"They might not, though, if it hadn't been just as it was. When I tried to raise my head the string choked me, and I couldn't use my hands to help me, either. That was a dangerous thing to do, Bob. I don't believe in practical jokes. Why, do you know, I thought at first I was having the nightmare; but when I saw that great beast there, I knew I was only too much awake. No, Bob, you'll have to be the one to stand guard to-night."

"Makes no difference to me," drawled Bob. "I'm entirely willing."

It was evident that the other boys were as willing as he, and after Ben had given him his revolver, and all three had bestowed upon him many cautions and much advice, he was left to himself.

Bob waited until the sounds that came from the tent indicated that all within were asleep, and then he coolly entered, and selecting his own blanket and pillow, returned with them to the fire.

Before spreading them upon the ground, he stopped for a moment and seemed to be thinking intently upon some matter. The result of his deliberations became apparent, when he placed both blanket and pillow carefully behind one of the trees in a spot where they would not be seen by any one in the camp. Then he returned, and, cocking the revolver, advanced to the front of the tent.

Lifting his arm, as if he was aiming at the distant sky, he suddenly opened his mouth and emitted some screeches that might have made an Indian chief envious, and at the same time began to dance about and discharge the revolver.

"Hi! Yi! Yi! Hi! Yi! Yi!" he shouted.

The din caused by his unearthly cries, punctuated by the rapid discharge of the revolver, brought the startled inmates instantly to the door.

"Hi! Yi! Yi! Hi! Yi! Yi!" repeated Bob, dancing about with increased vigor, and at the same time discharging the last remaining chamber of the revolver as he beheld his frightened comrades.

"What is it? What is it, Bob?" exclaimed Ben, breathlessly.

"Did you see anything?" added Jock, equally excited.

"See anything? No, I didn't see anything," replied Bob, slowly.

"What! You didn't see anything?" demanded Bert. "What did you make all that racket for, then?"

"Did I make any racket?" inquired Bob, in his most innocent manner.

"Didn't you really see anything?" said Jock.

"No-o-o. I didn't see anything. But I'll tell you, fellows, I was afraid I might. I thought it might be just as well to scare away any prowling beast that might be near. Did I disturb any of you?" he innocently added.

"Oh, no, you didn't disturb us," said Ben, sarcastically. "We just came out to see if you were all safe yet."

"It's fearfully lonesome out here, fellows," drawled Bob. "Don't one of you want to sit up with me awhile?"

"Not much we don't," replied Ben, as he darted into the tent again, followed by the other two boys. "We'll leave you alone in your glory."

"Well, wait then till I load up again," said Bob, as he, too, entered the tent. "Where's the cartridge box, Ben?"

"Over there on the table," replied Ben, lazily. "Help yourself," he added, as he turned over upon his side.

Bob evidently did "help himself," for he not only filled the empty chambers with cartridges, but he slipped the box also into his pocket. When he returned to the fire, he spread the blanket upon the ground once more and carefully adjusted the pillow.

"If I've got to stay on guard I might as well do it in style," he murmured, as he stretched himself upon the blanket, and was soon sleeping as soundly as his friends in the tent.

He did not sleep so long, however, for about once in every half hour he rose, and taking his stand in front of the tent he repeated his war dance, punctuating it with the sharp reports of his revolver and his ear-splitting shrieks.

In vain the boys begged of him to permit one of them to relieve him of the task, but Bob remained obdurate. "No, sir," he declared. "I'm doing my duty! I'm not going to let one of those St. Lawrence panthers into this camp to-night if I know myself. I'm going to protect you, no matter at what cost to me."

And so there was not much sleep in the camp that night, though it was likely that Bob enjoyed as much as any one, for between his efforts to frighten away the "prowling panthers," he slept on his blanket before the fire.

Perhaps the excitement of the night caused the boys to sleep somewhat later than usual on the following morning, for Bob, who was the first to awake, was roused by the voice of Ethan.

"What ye sleepin' out here for?" demanded the boatman in surprise.

"That you, Ethan?" drawled Bob, as he opened his eyes. "Oh, that reminds me," he added, as he hastily leaped to his feet, and grasping the revolver, rushed up to the front of the tent, where he repeated his frequent performance of the night.

"What ye doin' that for?" demanded Ethan, in astonishment.

"Keeping the wild beasts away. Ethan," he added solemnly, "we've been attacked. A fearful beast leaped on our tent in the night, and tried desperately to tear it into pieces and get at us to devour us."

"Hey?" demanded Ethan, sharply.

"Yes. That's just what he did," repeated Bob, as the boys came out of the tent and joined him. "But we managed to shoot him."

"Ye did, did ye? Well, where is he now? Show me yer beast."

Bob silently led the way to the spot where they had left their victim. Ethan looked sharply for a moment at the body, and then with a snort of contempt, said, "Pish! Nuthin' but a hedgehog!" and Tom, for the first time our boys had heard him since their arrival at the camp, laughed aloud.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AN UNEXPECTED RACE.

The other boys by this time had joined the group, and so crestfallen were they all when they discovered how insignificant was their nocturnal visitor, that Ethan quickly said,—

"A hedgehog will make a big scratching sometimes. I've known 'em when I've been logging to git up on the shanty in the night, and from the noise they made, I'd been willing to declare a bear was after us. It was perfectly natural, boys, for ye to be skeered."

Breakfast provided a speedy diversion, and after securing some of the quills of their victim they cast the body into the river, and turned to their repast. It was decided, in view of the visit they were to make that day at "The Rocks," that they would not venture far from camp; but about an hour later Jock called the attention of his companions to a spectacle on the river.

About a half-mile in front of the camp they beheld a tug moving down the stream, dragging behind it several huge loads, which, although they were not boats, still somehow resembled them. They rested low upon the water, and men could be seen moving about over them.

"What's that, Ethan?" demanded Bert, as he beheld the strange procession.

"That?" replied the boatman, pausing in his task and looking in the direction indicated by the lad. "Them's logs."

"Logs? I don't understand. What do you mean?"

"I mean what I say. They're rafts made out o' logs. They come from up Ottawa way. Ye see, the lumbermen cut the logs in the winter and float 'em down the stream, and a good many on 'em is sawed up over there, but not all. They make rafts out of a part, and haul 'em down the river to Montreal, or some other town."

"But what are those houses or huts I can see on the rafts?" persisted Bert. "And there are people there too. Yes, I can see women and children," he added, as he lowered the glasses he had been using.

"That's what they are," replied Ethan. "They're cabins. They have to have a place for their women folks and children, don't they?"

"Do you mean to tell me they *live* on board those rafts?"

"Course they do. Why not?"

"Bert!" exclaimed Ben, quickly, "I'm going to take a canoe and go out to visit them. Want to go along?"

"Yes!" exclaimed Bert, eagerly, as he ran with Ben to the beach, where the canoes were kept.

The other boys followed them, and warned Bert against intrusting himself to a canoe in which Ben was to be pilot and helmsman; but both were too eager now to heed the advice of their friends, and in a few minutes they had launched the canoe, adjusted the mast and, spreading the bat-wing sail, went skimming over the water in the direction of the approaching rafts.

Whatever Bert's fears may have been, and doubtless they were many, Ben managed to keep the canoe upright, and in a little while drew near the slow-moving crafts. The sail was then lowered, though the canoe was almost capsized in the attempt, and using their paddles, the boys soon drew alongside one of the rafts and successfully clambered on board, dragging their boat after them.

It was a strange spectacle which greeted their eyes. Two families evidently were living on board, and the children stood and shyly watched the arrival of their unexpected visitors. Two little huts had been erected near the stern of the raft, and the women were then hanging their weekly washing on the lines which had been stretched from side to side.

One of the men now approached the boys and respectfully saluted them, and Ben explained their purpose in coming. In response to their request they were conducted to one of the huts, and hospitably invited to share in the meal which was soon to be prepared.

Ben declined the invitation, but curiously observed the places in which the people were dwelling for a time. Rude berths or bunks had been built along the sides of the cabin, and a few rough chairs and the various utensils which were necessary for cooking were also seen. On the open raft a fireplace had been made, over which an iron pot could be placed.

Altogether the scene was as novel as it was interesting, and after remaining to talk with the men and to bestow some small coins upon the bashful children, as the camp on Pine Tree Island had long since disappeared from sight, they soon departed, thanking the people for their kindness in explaining all the details to them.

The boys succeeded in embarking safely and then set sail for the Island, where they arrived about three-quarters of an hour afterward. Ethan and Tom had already departed for the day, and the campers were now waiting for the arrival of Mr. Clarke's steam-yacht, which was to convey them to his cottage.

"I'm going down there in a canoe," exclaimed Ben. "Any of you fellows want to come along with me?"

"Nay, verily," said Jock. "You have a fancy for appearing before the girls in your wet clothes. For my part, I don't enjoy that."

"I'll not tip you over," replied Ben. "I'm learning about all there is to learn in handling canoes. It's as easy as—Latin, when you once get the notion of it."

None of the boys could be persuaded, however, and soon Ben departed alone. He placed two paddles in the smaller of the canoes, and then spreading his sail, departed from the camp amidst the cheers of his friends, not one of whom expected to see him in a presentable condition when they should arrive at "The Rocks."

Ben, however, was unmindful of their scepticism and sailed away as if no shadow of possible ill clouded his vision. In spite of his many mishaps he was determined to master the canoe, and no matter how many upsets he had, they all only strengthened him in his purpose.

It was a perfect day for his venture. A gentle breeze slightly ruffled the surface of the river and bore the

light little canoe steadily on in its course. The water was so transparent that in places, as Ben occasionally glanced over the side of his boat into the river, he could see the rocks upon the bottom, and several times beheld the hungry bass as they darted swiftly away at his approach. The sound of a belated mowing-machine came faintly from the shore where he could see men toiling in the fields. The reflections of the islands were so clear and distinct that he could hardly have determined which part was above and which below the surface as he glided past them. The bold rocks, the deep green of the bordering trees, and the many-colored cottages provided variety in the scene about him, and as Ben moved onward before the gentle breeze, at times it almost seemed to him that he was in fairy-land.

His first interruption came when a steamer approached, and not yet ready to test his prowess too severely, he turned out of the course far enough as he thought to place him beyond all danger; but he soon discovered that the wash of the steamer reached far that morning, and in a moment his frail craft was being tossed about as if it had been a leaf in the current of the mighty stream.

However, he managed to hold his boat, and soon the troubled waters subsided, though he could see that the motion of the waves had extended even to the shores of a far-distant island.

At last he came within sight of "The Rocks," and beheld the girls on the dock watching one of their number whom he could see in a canoe not far away. The yacht could not anywhere be seen, and concluding that it had gone to the camp for his friends, he gave all his attention to the immediate task of landing in the presence of the girls without capsizing.

As he approached he discovered that the beach on one side of the dock was low, and not quite daring to run in alongside the regular landing-place, he sent the canoe straight ashore and succeeded in his attempt with no worse mishap than wetting his feet.

He was eagerly greeted by the girls, and as he took his stand on the dock beside them, one of them said:

"Have you given up appearing here as you did the first night you came?"

"I hope so," answered Ben. "I'm going to keep at it till I have got the better of the thing. I practise every day."

"Are you practising for the races, Mr. Dallett?" inquired one of them.

"What races?"

"Why the regular canoe races next month. Don't you know about them?"

"Tell me about them."

"They meet down here not very far away, and have a regatta every summer. They have races with double bat-wings and single bat-wings, and one paddle and two paddles, and I don't know what all, only it's perfectly lovely. And the girls wear the colors; and yes, there is a race for the ladies, too. We're urging Bessie here to go into that. Have you ever seen her in a canoe?"

"No, I never have."

"Well, you ought to. And are you really going to enter the canoe race, Mr. Dallett? And will you paddle or sail?"

"Yes," said Ben, forming a sudden resolution, "I'm going into the race."

"And will you paddle or sail?"

"Paddle."

"How perfectly lovely. I say, girls, wouldn't it be fine sport for Bessie and Mr. Dallett to have a race now? Mr. Clarke won't be back for a little while yet with the yacht and the boys, and I think it would be fine to have a race right here."

"Not very fine for me, I fear," replied Ben. "Miss Bessie would beat me."

"I'd do my best, you may be sure of that," exclaimed the young lady referred to. "Do you want to race with me, Mr. Dallett?"

"I'm afraid—"

"Oh, never mind, if you are *afraid*," said Bessie, quickly, her eyes sparkling as she spoke. "Possibly you might tip over."

"I'll try it," said Ben, doggedly. He knew he would never hear the last of it from his companions if he should refuse, and even the girls would not be averse to referring to the matter.

"Get your canoe, then," said Bessie, quickly.

"What's the course to be?" inquired Ben.

He wished now that he had not consented so readily. If by any chance he should win the race, he could see that his rival would not take her defeat quietly; and, on the other hand, if he should be beaten by a girl, his life in camp would not be lacking in spice. And Miss Bessie was so confident and eager. Yes, he wished that he had not consented, but there was no withdrawal now.

"The course will be around the island," explained Bessie. "It's about half a mile and clear water. If you lose the race and are beaten by a girl," she exclaimed, "I'll despise you."

"And if I win," laughed Ben, "you'll never forgive me."

"If you *win*? Win if you can!" and she quickly took her place in her canoe and began to wield her paddle in a manner that increased Ben's misgivings still more.

He, too, was soon ready, and as the canoes came alongside in front of the dock, one of the girls counted "One! Two! Three!" the signal agreed upon for starting, and in an instant the race was begun.

Whatever Ben thought about racing with a girl, he speedily discovered that it was no holiday task before him even to keep up with her canoe, to say nothing of passing it.

Quick to take advantage of the start, she was fully three yards in advance of him when his paddle struck the water. His long arms gave him a decided advantage, but what his contestant lacked in reach she seemed to supply in quickness, and her dexterity was simply marvellous.

In his eagerness not to be outdone, Ben drove his paddle so far down into the water, that his canoe was almost upset, and when he tried to right it Bessie had increased her lead and called mockingly to him that 'she could tow him around the island.' But he soon had gained his balance, and his long sweeping strokes began to tell. Nearer and nearer he came to the canoe in front of him, and, do what she could, she could not increase the distance between them, and when they turned the point and were hidden from the sight of the girls on the dock, she was only a length in advance.

Almost together they then swept on, and when at last they turned the other point and came in on the home stretch, they were side by side.

Suddenly their ears were saluted by calls and shouts and the shrill whistle of the yacht which was now approaching with the boys on board. Ben did not mean to win now, but he did want to come in even, and was doing his utmost to hold his own.

He was paddling in a course parallel to that which Miss Bessie had taken and about three rods distant, when suddenly he found himself in the wash of the little steamer, and before he was aware of what had befallen him, was struggling in the water.

Ben's disappearance was greeted with shrieks of laughter, but when several minutes had passed and he did not come to the surface, the laughter suddenly ceased and the onlookers were gazing into one another's faces with consternation and fear. In a moment Jock and Bert leaped into a skiff and with swift strokes rowed out to the place where Ben had capsized.

CHAPTER XIX. A MOONLIGHT SAIL.

The alarm of the boys was in nowise decreased when they were unable to discover a trace of the missing Ben. The clear water enabled them to look far down into the depths, but only the rocks upon the bottom of the river could be seen. Their alarm had become consternation now, and they glanced into each other's faces with an expression of fear, which was increased by the shouts of the girls on the dock and the calls of those who were still on the yacht.

As the boys changed the course of the skiff, Bert suddenly exclaimed, "Look at that, will you? See that canoe!"

The canoe in which Ben had capsized had been left to itself and was steadily drifting toward the shore of the island. Suddenly it was lifted from the water, and the long form of Ben appeared as he carried the little craft upon his shoulders, his head still remaining concealed beneath the boat.

Not heeding the shout which greeted his welcome appearance, Ben waded ashore, and after depositing his burden upon the bank, turned and quietly faced his companions.

His solemn manner, his dripping clothing, and above all the relief which all felt at his escape caused the shouts to be renewed; but Ben slowly approached the group of girls and said, "Miss Bessie, I'm ready to try it again. Shall we take the same course?"

"No, sir!" exclaimed that young lady. "You've frightened us almost to death, and I'll not be responsible for your safety any more."

"But I was safe, perfectly safe," replied Ben, soberly. "I'm at home in the water, every time."

"It's a pity you're not more at home on it, then," replied Bessie, with a nervous little laugh. "How did you escape? Where were you?"

"Who, me? Why, I swam up under the canoe, it sheltered my delicate face from the sun, you see, and I just pushed it ashore."

The others had landed by this time, and although the boys joined in the laughter, Ben could see that Mr. Clarke was annoyed by the trick he had played.

"Go up to the house," said Mr. Clarke, quietly, "and I'll get you a change of clothing. But you ought never to play such a prank as that again. It's altogether too serious a matter. This water is so cold that it is very easy for a man to be taken with a cramp in it, and sink before any aid could come to him. Don't do it again."

Ben, somewhat chagrined, made no reply, and followed Mr. Clarke to the house. When he reappeared he found his friends seated on the broad piazza, and they hailed his coming with shrieks of laughter, for Ben once more had been compelled to don the garments of their host, and as they were much too small for him, the sight he presented was ludicrous in the extreme.

"I think, Mr. Dallett," said one of the girls, "that you ought to buy that suit of Mr. Clarke. You don't know how becoming it is to you."

"No, I don't believe I do know," replied Ben, ruefully, glancing down at his wrists, which protruded several inches below his sleeves. "I'm not just sure whether I wouldn't have felt better to have stayed out there in the river."

"A trifle too short and a shaving too lean,
But a *nice* young man as ever was seen,"

murmured Bob.

Even Ben, and Mr. Clarke, who had now joined the group, were compelled to join in the laugh which followed, and soon the good nature of all was apparently restored, Ben himself adding to the fun by the nonchalance with which he paraded in his "uniform" before the admiring gaze of the assembly.

After dinner had been served, the group returned to the piazza and seated themselves in the chairs, evidently at peace among themselves and with all the world. The cottage, as has been said, was situated on a high bluff, and from it a view could be obtained of the majestic river for miles in either direction. The bracing air, the sparkling water, the sight of passing yachts and of swiftly moving canoes, all lent an additional charm to the occasion, and for two hours they remained there, enjoying themselves as only light-hearted young people can.

At last Mr. Clarke proposed that they should take a trip with him in the yacht, and as they eagerly hailed the invitation, all, including Mr. and Mrs. Clarke, were soon seated on board. There they sang songs and told stories and commented upon the constantly changing scene of beauty into which they moved. Darting in and out among the islands the fleet little yacht, skilfully handled by the pilot and engineer, daintily seemed to pick its way, as if it too shared in the delight of the company. Beautiful cottages, palaces they seemed to the boys, were passed, and quaint little spots, dotted by tents or rude huts, whither some humble family had come for an outing, were frequently seen. Fishing parties were discovered among the bays, and parties of campers, living much as did our boys in their camp on Pine Tree Island, were passed; and when at last the yacht turned homeward, all were ready to declare that never before had they had so enjoyable an afternoon.

To the proposition of the boys that they should return to their camp, a strong objection was offered by Mrs. Clarke, who declared that they must remain for supper; and we may be sure no great amount of urging was required to make them yield.

"I'll take you back to camp this evening," said Mr. Clarke, when they all resumed their seats on the piazza.

"I thought I'd go back in my canoe," suggested Ben, who was clad in his proper garments now. "I want the practice, you see."

"No, sir!" said Mr. Clarke, sharply. "You are to go back with us. I'll not be responsible for your safety in that shell of yours."

Ben made no reply, and soon was sharing in the enjoyment of the party. The sun was now low in the western sky, and as its departing beams fell across the waters it made them glow like a veritable lake of fire. The wind had all died away, and the surface of the river was almost like glass. A scene of greater beauty or of more indescribable peace and calm they never before had seen.

But the laughter which came from the piazza of Mr. Clarke's cottage, and the enjoyment of the assembly there, were not to be checked even by the solemn stillness of the river.

"One would never think," said Mr. Clarke, when a break of a moment came, "that this peaceful river was ever the scene of bloodshed."

"Bob, here, knows all about that," said Bert. "He puts us to sleep every night with his stories of the early discoverers. We almost feel as if we were on their trail."

"So you are, for it's all historic ground," replied Mr. Clarke; "but I wasn't thinking of the discoveries just then, but rather of the struggle along the border here in the War of 1812, and of the pirates."

"Pirates?" exclaimed Miss Bessie, quickly. "Why, you never told us there were any pirates here. I shall be afraid to go out in my canoe again—unless I have Mr. Dallett along to protect me," she added.

Ignoring the laugh which followed, her father said, "Well, there were pirates here, for you can't call them by any other name. There are none here now, of course, but in what was poetically called 'The Patriot War,' it wasn't the same peaceful St. Lawrence that we see."

As all appeared to be interested in his words, Mr. Clarke continued. "This patriot war, so called, occurred along about 1837-40. It really was an attempt to revolutionize Canada by a lot of desperadoes, or pirates, as I call them, who were filled with hatred as bitter as it was unreasonable against our sister country, and the worst leader of them all was a William Johnston, or Bill Johnston, as he was more familiarly known by his neighbors along the St. Lawrence River. He lived near here, you see.

"In December, 1837, a band of disguised men from Canada set fire to the steamer *Caroline* out near Niagara Falls, and aroused great excitement all along the border. The next month Congress appropriated \$625,000 for the protection of the northern frontier, and called for volunteers. On the very same day a circular was issued over here at Watertown, signed by six prominent men, asking for money and help for the so-called refugees from Canada. The signers professed to be law-abiding citizens and all that, and *perhaps* they were, though there were serious doubts about the matter then and since.

"In most of the villages secret organizations had been formed, known as Hunter Lodges, and they were making plans for raising money and men to invade Canada. Indeed, they had their preparations all made for crossing on the ice as soon as the river here was frozen over, and falling upon Kingston.

"One night in February the arsenal at Watertown was broken into and four hundred stands of arms were stolen by men who were thought to be engaged in the proposed movement. Some of the things were afterward recovered, and a reward was offered for the capture of the men.

"Matters were made worse by the fact that the arsenals at Elizabethtown and Batavia were also broken into at about the same time. The very next day after the affair at Watertown, men began to arrive at Clayton, which used to be called French Creek, and it is said that there were four thousand stands of arms there, five hundred long pikes, and twenty barrels of cartridges; but what they lacked was men, for, though nominally there were a good many there, there were few if any real *men* among them, as you can readily imagine.

"There was no discipline, and less order, and when, at last, less than two hundred of the rascals crossed over to Wolf Island, they were more like a mob than an army. The Kingston people were badly frightened, though they had slight cause to be alarmed, and they sent over a force of sixteen hundred soldiers to meet the 'invading army'; but when they arrived at the island, the 'army' had pretty much melted away. Still the country was pretty thoroughly stirred up, and forces were stationed at Cape Vincent, Clayton, and other places to maintain order. Congress also took further action, and most of the people thought the troubles were ended.

"But in the last of May, 1838, the steamer *Sir Robert Peel* was plundered and burned over here at Wells Island. She was a large boat, I understand, and some hundred and sixty feet long. She started from Brockville, and there were threats made before she set sail that she would have trouble, but no attention was paid to them. The passengers were all asleep when she arrived at Wells Island, and the crew were taking on wood, when a band of men, disguised as Indians, and rejoicing in such fictitious names as Tecumseh, Judge Lynch, Bolivar, Captain Crocket, and I don't know what all, rushed out of the woods, and, yelling, 'Remember the *Caroline*,' drove away the crew and passengers, and taking the steamer out into the channel, set it on fire.

"First they had seized the money on board and such valuables as they could find, you may be sure.

"Of course there was a great stir then in the country. This Bill Johnston I mentioned a little while ago was one of the leaders, and both the Canadian governments and our own offered big rewards for him and the

other men. I believe Governor Marcy placed the reward for the arrest of Johnston at \$500 and \$250 was offered for some of the others, while some were thought to be worth only \$100 each. The Earl of Durham did better still, for he promised to give £1000 for the conviction of any of the parties engaged in the outrage. Some of them were arrested and tried over at Watertown, but it was almost impossible to convict them, and the jury brought in a verdict of 'not guilty.'

"Was Johnston captured then?" inquired Jock.

"He was captured, but not then. He was taken later, but not until some other stirring events had occurred, and even then it didn't do much good. But I'll have to reserve the other parts of the story of the St. Lawrence pirates until your next visit, for if I'm going to take you back to camp, we must be starting."

When the boys went down to the dock they found that the girls also were to accompany them. Ben's canoe was taken on board, and then the party started on one of the most enjoyable experiences on the great river—a moonlight sail among the islands.

The time passed rapidly, and when they came out into the channel near their camp they discovered one of the great river steamers before them. To the eager request of Miss Bessie "to take the breakers," Mr. Clarke reluctantly consented, and the little yacht was headed for the waves which could be seen in the wake of the steamer.

The conversation ceased as the yacht approached. Ben had taken his seat in the bow, and the girls were huddled together amidships, half dreading and yet eager for the exciting experience.

Nearer and nearer came the little craft, and soon it was lifted high on the crest of the waves. Down it went into the trough of the sea and rose again as the swell lifted it. On the third attempt, however, it failed to respond as promptly as it had done before, and instead of rising on the crest of the billow it struck it fairly in the midst, and in a moment a great flood of water fell upon the yacht and swept over its entire length.

CHAPTER XX.

THE START FOR THE RAPIDS.

There was a moment of intense excitement on the yacht and then came a shrill scream as the brave little craft righted itself and came out into the still waters once more. As soon as it was perceived that no one was injured, the reaction came, and shouts of laughter succeeded the cries of alarm.

It was speedily found that no one had entirely escaped the sweep of the great wave, but Ben had fared worst of all. Seated high in the bow as he had been, he had received the full force of the water and was drenched from head to foot. Some of the others had not fared so badly, but now that all danger was past, they were disposed to make light of the mishap and to look at it in the light of a joke.

"The next time we'd better leave Ben at the camp," suggested Bob. "He's a regular Jonah. If he can't fall into the river, he manages to have the river fall on us. The only safe plan will be to leave him out."

"I don't think you need complain," replied Ben, as he ruefully surveyed his dripping garments. "I was a regular breakwater for you all. I got the most of the water myself."

"We shan't complain," said Mr. Clarke, quickly. "It was a foolish venture at best. The waves were coming too swiftly for the boat to adjust herself. She took the first two of the breakers all right, but before she could rise for the third it was upon us and there was no escape."

The engineer and pilot had not spoken during the conversation, but the broad smiles upon their faces were indicative of their quiet enjoyment of the mishap, and soon they brought the little yacht alongside the dock in front of the camp. The good nights were then spoken, the boys leaped ashore, and as their visitors departed, they discharged the little brass cannon as a parting salute. The shrill whistle of the yacht responded, and soon the fleet boat had disappeared in the darkness, and all was quiet in the camp on Pine Tree Island.

The days which followed were filled with their own experiences, interesting, if not novel. Every morning Ben rose before his friends, and when they came forth from the tent for breakfast they would usually see him returning from the river in his canoe. His mishaps had only served to increase his determination to succeed, and though he was careful not to boast of his success in the presence of his friends, nevertheless his own progress was satisfactory, to himself at least.

Nor was he the only one to use the canoes. Sometimes with the bat-wing sails, and at other times with only a paddle, the boys set forth from the camp, and perhaps their lack of skill in no wise detracted from the zest of their enjoyment.

There were trips among the islands on the excursion steamers, visits made to Kingston, Gananoque, and various other points on the Canadian shore, and occasionally the boys donned their evening dress and repaired to the parlors of the hotels at Alexandria Bay. On Sunday Mr. Clarke had stopped for them with his yacht and they had gone up to Thousand Island Park to attend service there in the huge tabernacle. Indeed, the days were all filled with their own interesting experiences, and not one of the boys had found a moment of the time dragging or uneventful.

The nearest approach to that experience had occurred when one rainy day had come and compelled them to remain most of the time within their tents. Bob had improved the opportunity by perusing a book which he refused to let his companions examine, and thereby greatly increased their curiosity as to its contents; but he had declared they would know what he was doing in due time, and must rest content until he should be willing to explain it all.

A decided break in the camp life came one day when Ethan said: "I've been makin' arrangements for you

boys to go down the Longue Seaut. I shan't go with ye; but you won't need me, for I've got word from two o' the boatmen down there, and they can do more for ye than I could, 'cause they know every foot o' the ground."

"Down the Longue Seaut?" exclaimed Jock. "I'd like to go, but I don't know what my father would say to it. I promised him when we came away we wouldn't take any chances."

"I wrote him," replied Ethan, quietly, "an' he says it's all right."

"Right it is, then," exclaimed Jock, delightedly. "I've been through the rapids there on a steamer when I went to Montreal, and it's a great experience, I can tell you, fellows. The water is tossing and boiling all around you, and the boat just shuts off all steam and lets her go it. You feel the boat go bump! bump! and all the time it seems as if the water was just dropping out from under you all. Do we really go through the rapids in skiffs, Ethan?"

"Yes, that's jest what ye do, only ye take what they call the Little Seaut instead o' the Big Seaut. All the difference the' is, is that one is on one side o' the island an' the other the other. An' the Little Seaut isn't quite so big as the Big Seaut, though there isn't a sight o' difference between them."

"You think it will be safe for us, do you?" inquired Bob, quietly.

"Safe? Yes, or I wouldn't let ye go. 'Twouldn't be safe for ye to try it alone, but in the hands o' the men I'm goin' to trust ye to, ye'll be all right enough. An' ye'll find some fishin' there what is fishin', I'm tellin' ye."

"I'm sorry you and Tom are not to go," said Jock.

"So be I; but I've got some work to do on my place, an' Tom here is goin' to practise his Hamlick. They're to have the show next week, ain't they, Tom?"

"Yes," replied Tom. "I'd like to go with you, boys, but I can't this trip. Perhaps you'll get a muscallonge or a sturgeon, and that will pay you well."

"Yes," said Ethan, "it's 'bout time for muscallonge to begin to run. If ye git one o' them fellows, you'll never forget it all yer born days. They're fish what is fish! An', besides, everything isn't fished out down there. Up here the lines is so thick that it's like runnin' through the meshes of a seine for a sizable fish to get up the river."

The interest of the boys was keen enough now to satisfy even the old boatman, and in response to Jock's request he explained the plans he had made for them.

"Now yer best way will be to take the steamboat down to Ogdensburgh to-morrow mornin', and there ye change to a little boat that'll take ye down to Masseny, or rather it'll take you to the Landin'. Then ye can drive over to the Springs [Massena Springs, Ethan meant] an' there's some big taverns there. City folks come up to drink the water, though for my part I'd about as soon drink dish-water or pisin' tea."

"Do they have 'pi's 'n things' there too?" inquired Bert, soberly.

"You'll find eout all 'bout that," responded Ethan. "Then the next mornin', afore it's fairly light, ye'll have to be drove back to the river,—it isn't more'n three or four mile,—an' yer boatman will be there by the Landin', all ready and waitin' for ye. Then they'll take ye in their boats down through the rapids, and send the team along the shore, so't ye can ride back; an' they'll have a rig to bring back the boats too."

"Why don't they sail or row back?" inquired Ben.

"Why don't they row back? Well, I guess ye won't be askin' no sech question as that after ye git there. Ye'll know more'n ye do now. Oh, there's another thing," he added; "ye don't want to take yer fish-poles along."

"Why not?" inquired Jock, quickly. "I thought you said there was fine fishing there. I should think we'd want to take our rods with us."

"No, ye don't want yer *rods*," said Ethan, sharply. "Ye might jist as well have pipestems as them poles o' yours. They'll have all the rods ye want. I've got that all fixed for ye."

Ethan soon afterward departed from the camp, and left the boys to themselves. For a time they talked over the exciting prospect, and at last Bob said: "It grieves me, fellows, to see you wasting your time like this. Now I feel it my duty to enlighten you as to the third expedition which Cartier made—"

But Bob got no further. With a shout his companions rose from the ground, and ran swiftly to the tent, where they at once prepared to retire. Bob soon followed, first piling the logs high upon the camp-fire, and then he too forgot all about Cartier's third voyage of exploration.

The camp was astir early on the following morning, and as the boys were to go to Alexandria Bay to take a steamer at an hour which was early even for the early-rising Ethan, they hastily ate the breakfast of "pi's 'n things" which the boatman had prepared before his departure on the preceding night.

As soon as this had been eaten they closed the tents, which Ethan and Tom had promised to visit daily in the absence of the boys, and ran down to the dock, where the skiff was in readiness.

"That's too big a load," said Ben, as he stopped before the boat in which his companions were already seated. "I'll not go in that craft."

"Oh, come on, Ben!" shouted Bert. "You won't have to do any of the rowing."

"I'm not afraid of that."

"Well, what are you afraid of, then? Come along."

"I'm afraid of you. I'll go over to the bay in my 'light canoe.'"

As he still refused to listen to the boys, Jock said: "Let him come in the canoe, fellows. He'd only tip us over if we took him in the skiff."

"I'm learning to paddle my own canoe," called Ben, as his friends started. "I'm like the little busy bee, which improves each shining hour—"

"Come on, Ben," called Bob. "You'll be late, and we'll lose the steamer."

Ben smiled as he took his place in the canoe, and, grasping his paddle, sent his craft swiftly over the water. Soon he had overtaken his companions, and despite the efforts of Jock, who was rowing, to keep up with him, speedily passed the skiff, and arrived at the bay long before they did. The boys discovered him seated on the edge of the dock, swinging his long legs over the water, and gazing with an air of abstraction about him.

"Why, hello, fellows! Where'd you come from?" he exclaimed, as the skiff approached.

"That's what you've been doing mornings, when you were up so long before us, was it?" said Jock, as the boys landed. "I must say you have improved, Ben, in your 'canoemanship.' What are you thinking of?"

Whatever the thoughts in Ben's mind may have been he did not give them utterance, and after the boys had left the boat in charge of a man at the bay, they all returned and joined him on the dock.

It was not long afterward when the steamer arrived, and they were received on board. Taking their seats together on the deck beneath the canopy, they gazed with interest about them as the boat passed down the river. The camps and cottages were stirring now, and again our boys felt the exhilaration of a ride in the early morning on the great river. When they approached "The Rocks" they could see the people on the piazza, and waved their handkerchiefs as a morning salute. A returning salute was given, but whether they had been recognized or not they could not determine.

The ride to Ogdensburgh was enjoyed all the way, and when they arrived there they had their dinner, and soon after embarked on the little steamer which was to carry them to Massena.

The increasing novelty of the scene kept them interested in spite of the time which had been consumed since they had departed from their camp. The current was much swifter, they perceived, as they went down the river. In places it seemed to rush with a speed that made the efforts of the little boat almost useless. There were great whirling eddies, too; and as the boys gazed at them they were wondering what the Longue Seaut Rapids must be if the place where they were was thought to be comparatively smooth and safe.

Late in the afternoon they arrived at the "Landing," and although they discovered there that they might have made plans different from those which Ethan had made for them, they were not inclined to complain when they were seated in the wagon which was to convey them to Massena Springs.

The road led through a prosperous farming country, and though evidently it was somewhat new, as far as the abode of the people who dwelt there was concerned, it still left upon the boys the impression of great age. Occasionally, in the distance behind them, they could obtain glimpses of the mighty St. Lawrence rushing onward as if already it had heard the call of the rapids. Dairy farms, orchards, cheese factories, and various other interesting sights were passed, all of interest to the eager lads. There was almost no time for them to tire, for a ride of a few miles brought them into the little village of Massena.

Then up the long street they rode to Massena Springs, distant about a mile from the main village, and there their driver stopped before a modest brick hotel.

This, then, must be the "tavern" of which Ethan had spoken; and glad to have arrived at the end of their journey, the boys leaped out, and at once entered the building.

CHAPTER XXI.

SHOOTING THE LONGUE SEAUT.

That evening the boys visited the "Springs" proper, and drank of the waters which were supposed to be of a quality to restore all wasted faculties of mind and body. The taste, however, was anything but agreeable to the lads, which was explained to them by the fact that none of their vital forces had been wasted, and, therefore, there was no craving for that which would supply their deficiencies.

They were interested in the stories which were told them of the good old times before the introduction of railroads and similar modern contrivances, when people from far and near used to journey to the springs in pursuit of restored youth and strength, stories which "reminded" Bob of the efforts of the early discoverers to find the fountain of youth in the far-off land of Florida.

He was compelled to postpone his lecture, however, for the boys decided to retire at once, and soon all four were sleeping soundly in the "tavern" which Ethan had recommended.

Only the gray of the dawn had appeared when they were summoned in the morning, and hastily dressing, they made their way to the dining room, where an early breakfast was served them. Their carriage was in waiting for them even at that early hour, and soon they were riding back to the Landing, where boats and boatmen were to be ready for them, if Ethan's plans were fulfilled.

The driver explained to them on their way that the day was not to be a very good one for fishing, for it gave promise of being bright and intensely warm. The latter prophecy was the more difficult to believe, for the boys felt the chill of the early morning, although each had brought an overcoat for protection.

The impression of the great age of the region seemed to be stronger in the early hours even than it had been in the preceding evening. The stillness was almost oppressive. Anything like the bustle and stir of the great city was almost like the memory of a dream. Here, at least, were peace and quiet, and even the problems of life itself were all remote and vague. As they drew nearer the river, from some of the farmhouses the occupants came forth and stopped for a moment to gaze at the passing carriage, and then turned to the barnyards where the cattle were waiting to be milked. Men and women, boys and girls, all came forth to engage in this occupation, and all alike seemed to have been there for years, and to belong to the very antiquity of the region.

Keenly as the boys were enjoying the ride, they all seemed to be disinclined to talk, and the first break in the silence came when the flash of the great river was perceived beyond the distant trees. Soon they came to a spot from which the swiftly moving waters could be more clearly seen, and then their driver turned into the road which ran along the bank, and the river was all the time within sight.

It was a marvellously impressive scene. The glory of the coming day was almost upon them. The fertile farm-lands, the thriving farmers, the cattle huddled together near the barns, or already trailing off for the distant pastures, driven, perhaps, by some barefooted boy; the evidences of life and civilization on all sides, were supplemented by the swiftly moving waters of the mighty river from which they were seldom able to remove their gaze.

It was not long afterward when they arrived at the Landing, and all other thoughts were forgotten in the eagerness with which they looked before them to discover some trace of their boatmen.

These were speedily found, and as they declared that all things were in readiness for the expedition of the day, our boys were soon on board the skiffs, which were as beautiful and shapely as those they had seen and used among the Thousand Islands.

Jock and Bob were assigned to one skiff, in which their boatman, George, was waiting. He was a young man of quiet manners, and his companions at once had a feeling of implicit confidence in him as he quietly greeted them. Ben and Bert were in the other skiff, and with their boatman, a much older man than George, were the first to leave the dock, and soon had disappeared from the sight of their friends as they moved swiftly down the river.

Jock and Bob soon followed, and as George rowed out with the current, he said, quietly, "You might as well put out your lines, boys. You never can tell what'll happen."

He rested a moment upon his oars, and after baiting the hooks with frogs, cast the lines into the water and, taking up his oars, again held the boat closer to the shore, and prevented it from moving too fast in the swift current.

The rods, as Ethan had foretold, were very different from those which the boys had previously used. They were short, stout hickory poles, and the reels were several times as large as the ones to which they had been accustomed. Indeed, they seemed like small wheels, four or five inches in diameter; but as Jock settled back into his chair in the stern and began to pay out his line, he could see that Bob, whose chair was on the other side of the boatman, was as content as he, and no questions were asked.

For a time the boys gave themselves up to the enjoyment of the morning, after George had declared that they had enough line out. The sun was now to be seen above the eastern horizon, and was flooding the earth with its glory. Birds were singing in the bushes on the shore, the sparkling waters were rushing on with unabated speed, and the beautiful skiff seemed to be a part of the scene itself, and almost to belong to the river. George was watching the lines of the boys, though they themselves were unmindful of them, as the boat was carried forward by the stream.

Suddenly Jock felt a gentle tug at his line and turned sharply about. The pull was not repeated, but as he glanced at George questioningly, the boatman nodded his head and Jock began to reel in his line. He soon discovered that something was pulling sturdily back, but he reeled steadily, and as he glanced down into the water, he could see a fish fast to his hook.

"Pike," said George, quietly. "Reel him in. Be careful! Don't give him any slack. There! That's the way," he added, as with a quick movement of his gaff he drew the struggling fish on board.

"He's a beauty!" exclaimed Jock, delightedly. "What'll he weigh, George?"

"Oh, four or five pounds, perhaps. You'll see some bigger ones than that if we have any luck to-day. 'Tisn't a very good day for fishing, though."

He resumed his labors with the oars, but both boys were alert now, and were waiting for the welcome tug which would indicate that the longed for strike had been made.

Bob was the next to reel in his line, and to his delight he discovered that he too had a pike, though not so large as that of his friend. Several fish were caught by each of the boys as they went down the stream, and for the time the thoughts of the rapids were forgotten in the excitement of the present occupation.

"This fishing doesn't amount to much," said George, quietly, as he removed Jock's latest catch. "When we get below the rapids yonder we'll be more likely to find 'em."

At his words the boys glanced up, and the sight before them almost drove the color from their faces. Far in advance they could see the tossing waters of the Longue Seaut Rapids. A whirling mass of water seemed to stretch away in the distance as far as they could see. The waves tossed and rose and fell, and the air was filled with clouds of spray. The rocks along the shore were at times almost hidden from sight as the mad river dashed against them. A roaring sound seemed to fill the air, and already the boat appeared to feel the quickened movement of the river, for all about them the St. Lawrence was moving forward, swift and silent, as if it, too, had drawn in its breath for that fearful plunge into the tossing, heaving, boiling, boisterous mass before it.

Not far in advance they could see a great island, which seemed to present a point to the advancing river. At all events the waters divided there, and along each side went rushing on to the calmer regions below.

"Whew!" said Jock, drawing a long breath. "Then that's the Longue Seaut, is it?"

"Yes," replied George, quietly, as if the awe-inspiring sight produced no impression upon him.

"You don't mean to say we're going through that in this skiff?" inquired Bob.

"Yes."

"Is it safe? Can you make it?"

"Yes."

"We go to the right of the island, don't we?" said Jock, in a low voice.

"Yes."

"This side is what they call the Little Seaut, isn't it?" he inquired.

"Yes."

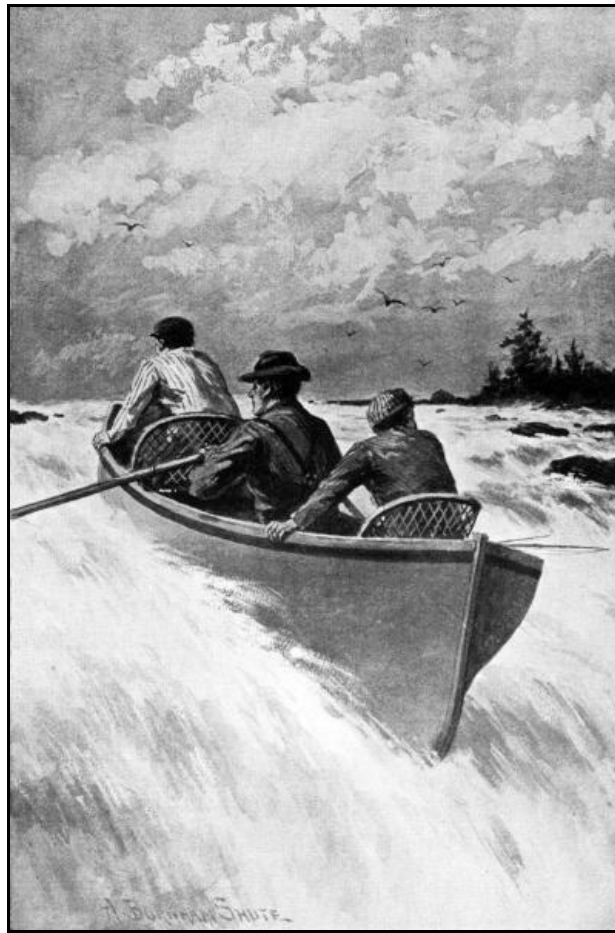
The boys glanced nervously again at the seething waters in the distance. The fact that they were to go through the "Little" Seaut, instead of the Big, did not seem to afford any great amount of comfort; but neither spoke, and their boatman, they had already discovered, was very different from Ethan, and not inclined to conversation of any kind.

"You'd better reel in your lines, boys," said George, quietly.

"I thought you said this was where the fish were," said Jock, nevertheless beginning to reel in as the boatman directed.

"No. Down below the rapids. The fish work up into the bays and lie there for what they want to come down the stream, and then they dart out and get it. I'm going to land here for a moment."

He sent the boat ashore, and the boys eagerly watched him as he took a light pole and went out to one of the projecting rocks. There he fished for a few minutes, and after he had secured a half-dozen good-sized "chubs," he returned to the place on the shore where the boys were waiting for him and said,—



"On and on moved the swift-flying skiff."

"Get aboard, now. We'll shoot the rapids, though I haven't as many of the chubs as I wish I had. It's too bright and warm a day."

Both boys could testify to the latter fact, as they resumed their seats on board. Their faces were streaming with perspiration, though as a matter of fact the warm rays of the sun had little to do with that. They could not remove their gaze from that terror-inspiring scene, and as George drew back his sleeves and grasped his oars, they, too, unconsciously grasped the sides of the boat as if they were seeking for some protection.

No one spoke now, and soon the little skiff was caught in the current and began to dart forward with ever-increasing speed. George's face was set and hard, and he, too, occasionally glanced behind him as if he was striving to get his bearings.

On and on moved the swift-flying skiff, and then, almost before the boys were aware of it, they were caught in the foaming rapids and swept forward with incredible speed. The boatman was not rowing now, only striving, with an occasional use of one oar, to keep the bow of the skiff pointed straight down the river.

A moment later and they were in the midst of the roar, and the swiftly moving skiff increased its speed. Jock was aware of Bob's white countenance, and somehow felt rather than saw that the trees and rocks along the shore were rushing rapidly past them. He had no thought of time. He was too excited even to feel afraid. The boat was darting madly forward, and almost before he was aware of it they had gained the foot of the island, and there he discovered that the two parts of the rapids came together and the loud roaring became deeper and stronger.

Out into the united channel the frail skiff was swept, and then the current bore them with the speed of a race-horse straight across the river, till it seemed as if nothing could save them from being dashed upon the rocks that lined the opposite shore.

George had not spoken since they had entered the rapids, and, indeed, the roar of the rushing waters would probably have drowned the sound of his voice had he tried to speak aloud to his companions. He was, however, constantly alert, and with an occasional quick strong pull upon one of his oars, kept the boat headed aright.

Just before the skiff came to the shore, and it seemed as if nothing could save them, there was a sharp turn in the current. Instantly George drove one oar deep into the water, and putting forth all his strength, brought the skiff aright, and then it dashed forward down the stream.

There was a grating sound as the boat touched a rock that came close up to the surface, but as the boys, with still paler faces, glanced over the sides to look at the bottom, they were swept onward, and in a moment the peril was passed.

Soon the waters were calmer, and though running swiftly, were not so boisterous, and the tossing waves were all behind them. As Jock glanced back it seemed to him that they had come down a hill of water; but before him the river apparently had resumed its peaceful aspect, and the danger had been passed.

"That was a close call," said Jock, with a sigh of relief. "When we struck that rock I thought we were done for. Weren't you frightened, George?"

"No."

"But what would have happened if it had made a hole in the boat?"

"We'd have sunk."

"We could have swum with the current, I think," said Bob.

"No, you couldn't," said George. "You'd have been sucked under in a minute."

"Whew!" whistled Bob. "I'm glad we've been through the Longue Seaut, but I don't believe I care to do it again."

"Where are the other boys?" inquired Jock, quickly. "They were ahead of us. You don't suppose they've had any accident, do you, George?"

"No; they're down in that bay you can see ahead of us."

"Is that where we're going?"

"No, we'll stop here," replied George. "If we don't have any luck, then we'll go on down where they are. That's the best place along the river."

George turned the skiff, and with a few short, powerful strokes, sent the boat into the quiet waters. Almost as if a line had been drawn, across which no waters could pass, the quiet place in the river was separated from the rushing current. It seemed strange and almost unnatural, but the dividing line was plainly to be discerned, and, besides, the skiff was as motionless as if it had been resting on a sheltered pond.

To make them still more secure, however, George dropped the anchor overboard, and then baiting the hooks with the large chubs, threw them into the water close to the dividing line, and resuming his seat, waited to test the "luck" which was to be had in still-fishing in this sheltered spot.

CHAPTER XXII. THE RIVALS.

For a time the boys were busy in the occupation which followed. Evidently they had arrived at the right time, and when a half hour had passed, a number of bass and pickerel had been added to the collection already stored in the fish box. After that there was a lull in the sport, and they were more occupied in watching the hurrying waters only a few yards away, than in their own immediate task.

George, meanwhile, had taken one of the dead chubs and, placing it on a hook, dropped the line into the water, and though he had no rod, he "played" his bait so well that in a few minutes he felt a savage tug, and quickly yanked his line on board, though he failed to land his trophy.

"They're savage this morning," he remarked, as he looked at his hook, on which the head of the chub was still fast, having been cut from the body as if by a knife.

"Did a fish do that?" inquired Jock, eagerly, as he gazed curiously at George's hook.

"That's what he did. I've known 'em to do worse things than that. Hello," he suddenly added, "the other boy's got something."

Bob, who was too much engaged to heed his new appellation of "the other boy," certainly did "have" something. His rod was drawn beneath the surface, and when he strove to lift it, it seemed to be fast to the bottom.

He was speedily undeceived, however, for his line began to cut swiftly through the water, and he rose from his seat in his eagerness. The others were as deeply interested as he, and it was evident that Bob's strike was of no ordinary character. George grasped one oar and brought the boat about, carefully avoiding the current and at the same time favoring the movements of the excited young fisherman.

"He must have a monster!" said Jock, eagerly.

"It's a big one, and no mistake," replied George. "Now, be careful with your slack. There, that's right," he added, as Bob once more permitted the struggling fish to run with the line.

But Bob was wary now, and had had sufficient experience to enable him to play his victim well. The struggle continued for several minutes, and at last, with a quick, deft swing of his rod, he brought the wearied fish alongside the boat, and George speedily had it on board with a thrust of his ever-ready gaff-hook.

Both boys were excited as they viewed the prize, and Jock exclaimed,—

"It's a pike, isn't it, George?"

"Yes."

"How much will it weigh?"

"Oh, twelve or thirteen pound. Look there, will you!" he added, as he drew from the mouth of the pike, which had been despatched with a blow from the hickory club, a part of the body of a large chub. "He's the fellow who cut my bait in two."

"What savage fellows they are!" said Jock, as he examined the bait which George had thrown upon the bottom of the boat.

"They are that," replied George. "All these fish are regular tigers, and the bass are about the worst of all. Still, they'll take good care of their own young ones. I've seen the bass form a regular patrol in front of some little bay or creek where the little fellows are, and woe be to the fish that dares to come anywhere near them! We'll try it some more," he added, as he placed a fresh bait upon Bob's hook and threw it into the water.

But with the capture of the huge pike success seemed to have departed, and at last George drew up his anchor, and after bidding the boys to let out their lines, grasped his oars, and sent the boat out into the swiftly running current once more.

Again they were borne down the stream with almost incredible swiftness, and soon approached the bay where George had declared they would find their friends. And there they discovered them, trolling back and

forth in the sheltered spot.

Their approach was greeted with a hail, and they could see Ben seated in the stern of the boat, even then reeling in a fish. As his friends came nearer he held aloft the prize he had taken, and shouted,—

“What luck, fellows?”

“Great!” responded Jock. “What have you had? How many have you got?”

“We’ve sixty or seventy pounds,” replied Ben, as he resumed his seat.

“What does he mean by that?” inquired Jock, turning to George as he spoke.

“Oh, everybody down here measures a catch by its weight. They don’t count their fish; they weigh ‘em, or guess at the weight.”

“How much have we got?”

“We haven’t over fifty pound. Hold up that pike, and ask ‘em whether they’ve got anything to match that.”

Jock held aloft Bob’s prize, and called proudly, “Have you anything to match that? Isn’t that a beauty?”

“That’s pretty good,” replied Ben, “but we’ve one that can go you one better;” and as he spoke he, too, held up a pike which certainly was no smaller than the one in Jock’s hands, and might be even larger.

“Dum it!” muttered George, as he began to row again.

“What’s the trouble, George?” inquired Bob.

“I don’t want to go back and have it said that Hank McBride had a bigger catch than I did. I wish we could get a muscallonge.”

“Isn’t it early for them to run?” said Jock. “I thought they came later.”

“’Tis a bit early, but then we might strike one. I’d like to have you get the first of the season, for I haven’t heard of one being caught yet. There always has to be a first, though, and if we could get it, it would make Hank green with envy. He thinks he’s the boss boatman on the river.”

“You don’t wish so any more than we do,” replied Jock, eagerly. “I’d be willing to give a silver dollar for one.”

“Hush!” said George, quickly.

“What’s wrong?” inquired Jock, innocently.

“Don’t let them hear anything about money. If we should happen to get a muscallonge and they should hear you say anything about money, Hank would declare we’d bought it. It’s the way he always does.”

The conversation suddenly ceased, for Jock had felt the welcome tug at his line, and all his attention was required to land his fish. When it was thrown into the boat it proved to be a pike of fair size; but George was keenly disappointed, as it was evident now that he longed for larger game, both to satisfy his own desires and to show the envious Hank that he owned no monopoly of the fish of the St. Lawrence.

The rivalry between the boatmen was a new and novel feature of the sport, and Jock and Bob soon found themselves sympathizing with their own boatman. They were almost as eager as he to add to their catch, and every strike was hailed with a fresh delight.

The sun was now high in the heavens, and, sheltered as the boats were from every breeze, the boys were soon sweltering in the heat. To add to their discomfort the fish almost ceased to bite, and when another hour had passed and not a further prize had been secured by either party, George rowed his skiff in toward the other boat and hailed his rival.

“Hank, isn’t it about quitting-time?” “Yes,” responded Hank, as tersely as George had spoken.

“Where shall we have our dinner? Isn’t Barnhart’s about as good a place as any?” “Barnhart’s all right,” responded the other boatman. “You go over and start a fire, and we’ll join you in a few minutes.” “Keep your lines out, boys,” said George to his companions. “You probably won’t get anything, but you might as well be ready if a muscallonge does come along and takes a fancy to your bait.”

With lusty strokes he turned the skiff about, and once more rowed out into the swift current. Then down the stream they darted, but the novelty was mostly gone now, and besides, both boys were ready for the dinner to which George had referred.

After the skiff had gone with the current for a half mile or more, its course was changed and, passing through the stiller waters, was sent ashore at a beautiful place on Barnhart’s Island.

As the boys leaped out they perceived that the spot selected by their boatman was in the midst of a grove of maple trees, a “sugar bush,” George called it, and the cool shade was so inviting that both threw themselves upon the grass, glad of the opportunity to stretch themselves once more.

“If you boys want to help you might be getting some wood together,” suggested George. “If you’re hungry it will hurry up things a bit.”

Both boys quickly responded to the invitation, and soon had a considerable pile of broken branches and driftwood collected in the spot indicated by their boatman.

“It’s just like Hank McBride to leave me to do all the work and then come in when everything’s ready,” growled George, as he placed a small iron pot over the wood and started a fire.

“What do you do it for, then?” inquired Bob, lazily.

“Hey? Oh, I have to. Hank’s been here longer’n I have, and what he says most generally has to be done.”

Neither of the boys continued the discussion, however, for just then they discovered Hank approaching with their friends. In a moment his boat was grounded, and before any one could leap ashore, Jock and Bob ran hastily toward them.

“What did you get? Where’s your catch?” inquired Jock, eagerly.

When the fish box was opened before them they could instantly see that the catch was greater than their own; but they made no comments, and returned with their friends to view their own fish.

“They aren’t all there,” declared George, who now joined them for a moment. “I’m cleaning some for dinner, and, besides, we didn’t save the little fellows. They’d add to the weight, of course; but it didn’t seem fair to keep ‘em just for that. My plan is to throw ‘em back and let ‘em grow up.”

Hank smiled, and, looking for a moment at the catch, said, “Pooty fair! Pooty good! Ye did real well, George, for a beginner.”

George smiled disdainfully, but the threatened rupture was averted by the necessity of both boatmen joining in the preparations for dinner. It was soon discovered that the intense heat had curdled the milk, which had been brought in glass jars, and that no coffee could be made, but all seemed to consider that a light matter when at last they were summoned by the boatmen.

The dinner was not unlike that which Ethan had prepared at Goose Bay, and the appetites of the boys were so keen that they declared it was a repast fit for a king; and indeed it was. The successful sport of the morning provided an added zest, if such an addition was necessary, and as they ate their dinner, seated as they were in the grateful shade of the majestic maples, it seemed to them all that never had they enjoyed anything more. Before them was the great river, its waters still rushing forward from the force of the fall at the Longue Seaut Rapids. In the distance on the island they could see barns and farmhouses, and over all was the peace of the perfect summer day.

"I suppose this is historic ground, too," suggested Jock, as he helped himself to a fourth ear of corn.

"I s'pose so," replied Hank. "'Long in 1812 they had considerable many fracas here. Leastwise that's what my grandfather used to say to me."

"Where was the biggest fight?" said Jock, quickly, suspecting that Bob was about to make inquiries of his own, and desiring to forestall him.

"'Twas back by Chrysler's Farm; that's on the Canadian side of the river, across from Ogdensburgh. General Wilkinson had command o' our forces, but he wasn't much good. Indeed, from what my grandfather used to tell me I should think the American officers spent more time fightin' among themselves than they did in fightin' the redcoats. Neither side could lay claim to vict'ry in the battle o' Chrysler's Farm, but our men acted so that they left everything open to the British hereabouts, an' you never saw a Englishman yet who was slow to use any chance that opened. An' they didn't hereabouts, I'm tellin' you. They were all riled up over our trip to Toronto, and paid off old scores. I believe the expedition, which was bound for Montreal, was given up by Wilkinson after the fight back here. He wasn't much good, though they whitewashed him in their investigations afterward. But if we're goin' to do any more fishin' we'll have to be startin'. I say, George," he added generously, "I don't s'pose you know the grounds as well as I do. If ye want to, you can come along with us."

"No, I'm going somewhere else," responded George, quietly, as he rose to assist Hank in clearing the table.

When at last our boys resumed their places in the skiff, George whispered to them, "I'm after a muscallonge this time. We'll show Hank yet."

His confidence increased the enthusiasm of Jock and Bob, and when, after going with the current for a mile or more, George rowed into a broad bay, they were more than ready for the attempt to secure the great fish of the St. Lawrence.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A PRIZE.

No great measure of success attended the efforts of the young fishermen in the place first selected by their boatman, and after an hour had passed and only two small pike had been secured, George rowed out into the current and went still farther down the river.

Whether it was the brightness of the rays of the sun, or the intense heat of the day that worked against them they could not determine, but the fish were wary, and only a few were added to the numbers already taken.

George, however, was determined to continue the sport, if the occupation might still be called by that name, and frequently expressed his determination to secure a muscallonge, and thereby gain an advantage over his rival. The enthusiasm of his companions visibly cooled, and by the middle of the afternoon all hopes of securing one of the mammoth prizes was gone. They enjoyed the day none the less, and the frequent swift descents in the current whenever George rowed out into it, the variety of the scenery by which they passed, and the goodly sized catch they had already secured, were all sufficient to make them reasonably content.

"George," inquired Jock, when the boat passed another island on which a farmhouse could be seen, "what do the people here do in winter?"

"About the same as other folks, I suppose."

"No; but they must be cut off from shore when the river freezes."

"That's just the time when they're not cut off. They can get over to the mainland then just as easy's not."

"Is the ice strong enough to bear them?"

George smiled as he replied, "They most always drive there. The ice will hold anything you can pile on it."

As the boys gazed at the rushing waters, the words of the boatman seemed almost incredible. That those angry currents should ever freeze to such an extent that horses and loads could pass over them was almost among the impossible events, but before they could speak, George went on to say,—

"Of course there are times when the folks are shut off from the shore. When there are thaws or freshets, or when the ice is forming, they have to stay on the islands. But that isn't for a very long time, and it isn't so hard as you might think. Everybody around here loves this river, and it's no hardship to have to stay near by. There was a man from New York up here last summer, and I used to take him fishing almost every day. He was a fine man, too, and when he got ready to go back home he made me a good offer to go back with him, and said he'd give me a good place. But bless you! I couldn't think of leaving the St. Lawrence. If I didn't see the heaving waters first thing in the morning I'd be as lonesome as a hen with one chicken. I've lived hereabouts all the twenty-six years of my life, and I'm too old now to learn new tricks."

"What's that place ahead, George?" inquired Bob, pointing to a town on the Canadian side of the river some two or three miles in advance of them.

"Cornwall. It's quite a sizable town, too."

"Don't you think we'd better go ashore?" said Jock. "We must have a good ten-mile ride, and it'll be night before long."

"Not just yet," pleaded the boatman. "We haven't got that muscallonge."

"And aren't likely to get it, I'm afraid," replied Jock. "Where are the teams to meet us, George?"

"Right down here. We've time enough yet," persisted George, as he turned the skiff into another bay. "Try it here, boys. We may get a muscallonge before you know it, and then Hank McBride will have to keep still."

The boys made no protest, though the sun was already low in the western sky. In a few minutes their desire to return was forgotten, for the fish were striking again, and several pike and pickerel were safely landed.

"I think, George, we'd better go back now," said Jock, as the boatman turned to resume his course up the bay. "It's getting late."

"Just one turn more," persisted George. "If you knew how Hank will talk after we get back, you'd be willing to keep on a little longer."

"All right," agreed Jock, good-naturedly. "We'll take one more turn, but then we'll have to go ashore. I don't want to be out here any longer."

George made no reply, and began to row with increased deliberation. Slowly the skiff was sent up the bay, but not a strike rewarded his efforts. Still more slowly he took a wider sweep as he reversed the course, never once speaking or taking his eyes from the long lines which trailed far behind in the water. Neither of the boys was expecting anything now, and when two-thirds of the remaining distance had been covered, Jock began to reel his line in, satisfied that the day's sport was ended.

"One more?" suggested George, pleadingly.

Jock shook his head and continued his occupation.

"You might as well take yours in, too," said George, sadly, to Bob. "I wish you weren't in such a hurry. I believe we might get a muscallonge yet."

"We haven't been in a hurry," said Bob. "You've given us a great day, George; we'll never forget it, or you. Hold on a minute. Back water a bit; my hook has caught in some of the grass, I guess."

George obeyed, but as he rested on his oars, suddenly Bob's line began to run out with a rush that almost yanked the rod from his hands.

"Grass, is it?" exclaimed George, excitedly. "Hi! Look at that, will you?" he exclaimed a moment later.

About a hundred and fifty feet behind them a monstrous fish leaped from the water, and in a graceful curve plunged into the bay again, but all could see that Bob's line was fast to him.

Then began such a contest as neither of the boys had ever witnessed before. With furious rushes the great fish darted first in one direction and then in another, and the reel on Bob's rod "sang" as the line was drawn from it. Bob was standing erect now, and, grasping the rod tightly in one hand, with the other attended to the reel. At times the strong rod would be drawn beneath the water, and Bob was compelled to exert all his strength merely to hold on, while the light boat was drawn swiftly over the bay, and George was doing his best to assist the eager boy with his oars.

"Look out! Look out!" the boatman called, quickly. "He's coming straight for us! Reel in! Reel in! Don't give him an inch of slack or you'll lose him! Hadn't you better let me take the rod?"

"No," replied Bob, decidedly. "I'll get or lose him myself."

The line was now loose in the water, and as Bob turned the reel in desperate haste, there was a great fear in his heart that the fish had torn himself away; but when at last he had secured all the slack, there was another savage pull and the line went darting through the water once more.

Five minutes, ten minutes passed, and still the exciting contest continued. Bob would draw the powerful fish farther in toward the boat, but every time the muscallonge would dart away again, and sometimes every yard of the line would be drawn from the whirling reel before he would pause in his flight.

"Tucker him out! Tucker him out! It's the only way to get him," said George. "Don't you think you'd better let me take the pole now?"

But Bob was still determined, and the fierce contest was not relaxed. Hither and thither, now up and now down the bay, the fish darted in his efforts to free himself, but Bob was still master. Jock was an interested spectator, but was unable, seated as he was in the stern, to render any assistance to his friend, even if Bob had desired any.

When a quarter of an hour had passed, it became evident that the fish was becoming tired. The lunges still continued, but not so much of the line was paid out now, and every time Bob reeled in he drew his victim nearer the boat.

At last there came a time when he could reel steadily, and, to his intense delight, he could feel the heavy fish following the line. Nearer and nearer came the muscallonge, and Jock, who was leaning over the edge and peering down into the depths of the clear water, suddenly exclaimed,—

"Oh, Bob! he's as big as the boat! You'll never get him in here in the world!"

Perhaps the great fish heard his words, or caught sight of his captors at that moment. At all events, he suddenly turned and dashed away again with another burst of speed that made the reel sing merrily. He did not go far, however, and as the line slackened, George said in a loud whisper, "That's his last turn. Now look out, and if you don't give him any slack, you can bring him where I can reach him with my gaff. Careful, now; careful!"

Apparently Bob needed no advice, for slowly and steadily, although his hands were trembling in his excitement, and his eyes almost seemed to stand out from his head as he peered eagerly down into the water to obtain his first glimpse of his prize, he drew the fish toward the boat.

Either discouraged or worn out by his struggles, the muscallonge followed the lead now, and with every turn of the reel offered no resistance. Both Bob and Jock were hardly breathing in their excitement, and they could feel, rather than see, that George had taken his gaff and was leaning over the edge ready for the last great effort.

Suddenly George thrust the cruel hook into the water, the boat dipped dangerously, the boys were almost thrown from their seats, as with one lusty pull the monstrous fish was lifted into the air and then fell upon the bottom of the skiff.

For a moment even the excitement of the boys was forgotten in the struggle which followed. With great strokes of his powerful tail the fish struck the sides of the boat until it seemed as if they must be broken into pieces. From side to side he threw himself, and to the eager lads it appeared as if he was everywhere at once.

But George was ready for the emergency, for, watching his opportunity, he threw himself upon the struggling muscallonge, and with a few hard blows of his hickory club, put an end to the contest, and then stretched their victim upon the bottom of the boat, as he was much too large to be placed in the fish box. The contest was ended, and Bob had been victorious.

And what a contest it had been! The great, savage head, the beautifully mottled sides, the immense size of their prize, could be seen now to advantage, and for a moment no one spoke. The feelings of the boys were too keen, however, for them long to remain silent, and in a moment they broke into a cheer which must have awakened the echoes along the shore.

"Well, I guess you aren't very sorry you followed my advice now," said George, who was the first to speak.

"Well, I rather guess we're not!" responded Bob, eagerly.

"It's quitting time now, though," said George, glancing again at the sun, which was just above the western horizon. "The teams will be up there at that farmhouse you can see yonder. We'll get some milk to drink there, too, and that'll help to stay your stomachs till you can get back to the hotel."

The boat was speedily sent ashore, and the delighted boys leaped quickly out upon the bank.

"You can take the muscallonge, and I'll bring the fish box," said George.

Securing a stout limb of a tree he thrust it through the gills of the monstrous fish, and then, with one end resting on the shoulder of each boy, and the muscallonge dragging almost to the ground between them, they started for the house, where George soon after arrived with the fish box, which of itself was no mean load.

He dropped the box on the grass near which the boys had placed the muscallonge, and said, "I'll get some steelyards in the house, boys, and we'll see how much the fellow weighs."

In a moment he returned, but before he proceeded to weigh the fish, he opened its huge jaws and began to thrust into them some of the smaller pickerel and pike they had caught. Not satisfied with his efforts, he was about to add some good-sized stones, when Jock, who had been watching the actions of the boatman as if he did not understand what he was doing, suddenly exclaimed,—

"Here, George, what are you doing?"

"Getting this fish ready to be weighed," replied George, without pausing in his occupation.

"Well, then, weigh the muscallonge. We don't want to weigh all of St. Lawrence county. The muscallonge will do."

George stopped abruptly, and gazed for a moment at the boys as if he had not correctly heard them. Their determined manner was not to be changed, however, and as he rose from the ground, he said,—

"Well, I must say you beat all the men I ever saw. Why, that's the way everybody does down here when they weigh a fish."

"It isn't the way we do. We want to know exactly what this fish weighs," said Bob.

Evidently chagrined and disgusted, George nevertheless weighed the great fish, and glancing at the steelyards, said, "Humph! He only weighs thirty-eight pounds!"

"Thirty-eight pounds!" exclaimed Jock, in his delight.

But even the present elation was forgotten when Hank McBride and the other two boys were seen approaching with their catch, and in a moment Jock turned to greet them with a shout of triumph.

CHAPTER XXIV.

WHAT BECAME OF THE PRIZE.

"You act as if you had caught something you want us to see," said Ben, as he ran before his companions. "Let's see your fish."

The muscallonge had not been placed with the other fish, and as Ben glanced down at the row which had been spread in order on the grass, he therefore did not see the prize of which his friends were so justly proud.

"You did well, but we've beaten you!" he exclaimed, as Bert and Hank McBride now came up to view the victims.

"That's pooty good," remarked the elder boatman. "You've done very well for beginners. George is improving every day, and it won't be long afore he'll do 'most as well as men of experience," he added complacently.

George made no response except to wink soberly at Bob, and then turned with the boys to examine the catch which Hank's party had made.

They certainly had been very successful, and as the fish were taken from the box and placed in a row upon the grass, both Jock and Bob were loud in their words of praise. Several large pike served to increase the effect, and when at last all the fish had been seen, it was perceived that in numbers and weight Hank's party had exceeded that of the other.

"Come into the house, boys, and get some milk," called George. "You must be hungry by this time."

Before entering, the boys all went to the barrel, which stood beneath a corner of the eaves, and dipping from the rain-water stored there, washed their faces in the tin basin. Refreshed by the act, they then all followed the boatman, and seated themselves before the table, on which the housewife had placed a large pitcher of milk and several earthen cups.

The milk speedily disappeared, and the pitcher was again filled before the boys rose from their seats.

"How much shall we pay you for the milk?" inquired Jock, as he turned to go out into the yard again.

"I don' know," replied the woman, hesitatingly. "I don' know jest what it is worth."

"It's been worth a good deal to us," said Jock, feeling in his pocket for a coin as he spoke. "We want to pay you whatever you say."

"I don' know jest what it is worth," repeated the woman. "Do ye think five cents would be too much?"

"Hardly," laughed Jock, as he handed the hostess a quarter.

"I don't think I've got any change," said the woman, reluctantly.

"Change? There isn't any change."

"Do ye mean to say ye're goin' to give me all this money for that milk?"

"Why, yes. It was good milk, and we haven't been modest in using it."

"It's too much to charge!" she said decidedly. "I can't take so much."

Perceiving that she was in earnest, Jock did not press the matter, and finally compromised by inducing her to accept fifteen cents. Then as he hastened to rejoin his companions, who now were waiting for him in the yard, and perceiving that the muscallonge had not yet been shown them, he said, eagerly,—

"Come over here, fellows; I want to show you something. You come, too, Hank," he added; and in a moment he led the way to the place where the monstrous fish had been covered with grass.

As he removed the covering and the great head of the muscallonge was seen, Ben exclaimed in astonishment, "What! What's that?"

"That," replied Jock, gently, "is our prize fish, or rather it's Bob's, for he caught it out here in this bay."

"Is it a muscallonge?" inquired Bert.

"That's what George calls it, I believe. I'm not very familiar with the names of the fish hereabouts, but that'll do as well as any other, I fancy."

For a moment the boys all crowded about the place, eagerly examining the prize, and making many comments in their enthusiasm. Hank, however, had not spoken, and after his first glimpse of the great fish, turned away his head and pretended to be gazing out over the near-by St. Lawrence. George, too, affected an air of indifference, which he was far from feeling, and which an occasional keen glance at his rival boatman betrayed.

"I say, Hank," called Bob, "did you ever see a bigger fish than that caught here?"

"Lots o' times," responded the boatman, coldly.

"Did you ever catch a bigger one?" persisted Bob, evidently enjoying the jealous rage of the elder boatman.

"Ho! Lots of times. And when I catch 'em, I catch 'em, too!" he added meaningly.

"That's what we do, too," said Bob. "When we catch 'em, we catch 'em."

"Ye never caught that ere fish," retorted Hank, disdainfully.

"We didn't! How did he get here, then?" demanded Jock, quickly.

"Oh, fish is cheap over in Cornwall," replied Hank, with a peculiar smile. "When I see ye headed that way, I knew ye weren't goin' for nothin'."

"Do you mean to say we *bought* that fish?" demanded Jock, aghast.

"I'm not makin' no insinuations," said Hank. "But I knows what I know."

The boatman's suggestion seemed to afford intense delight to Ben and Bert, and though they joined at once in the banter, it was evident they did not share in the suspicions of Hank McBride.



"Did you ever hear about the fox who wouldn't be hired to eat the sour grapes?" said George, turning to the boys, and striving to ignore the presence of his rival.

"I believe I have heard that story somewhere," replied Jock. "Did you ever hear it, Hank?" he added, turning to the envious boatman.

"I knows what I know," retorted Hank, adopting a line of argument which is not confined to the region of the St. Lawrence.

"You'd better be starting, boys," interrupted George. "You've got a long drive before you, and you'll be too late to get any supper at the hotel if you stay around here any longer, wasting your time and words too."

The suggestion was at once acted upon. The fish were stored in the carriage which was to convey the boys back to the hotel, and after they had assisted the boatmen in lifting their skiffs from the water and placing them upon the frame wagons which had been sent down to carry the boats to the place from which they had started in the early morning, they all clambered into their seats and were ready to depart.

"Hold on a minute," called George, as he ran quickly toward them. "Who's going to drive you back to the Landing to-morrow morning?"

"I don't know. We'll find some one," replied Jock.

"If ye don't mind I'd like to do it myself. I've got a good team and a pretty fair wagon, and I won't charge you any more than you'd pay any one else. I'll come over for you about eight o'clock, if you say so."

"All right, George," said Jock. "We'll be glad to have you. We'll call it settled, then, and you are to come for us to-morrow morning at eight."

"That's the way to do it," said Ben. "Don't you let these fellows have any chance to explain how they got the muscallonge when you aren't near to put in a word."

George made no reply, and the boys at once started.

"There'll be a pitched battle between those men before they get home," said Bert.

"Oh, no, the' won't," said the driver; "it's just the way with them. They're as jealous of one another as all possessed, but they're good friends, too. But I guess Hank McBride won't put on quite so many airs as he's been doin' of late. He's a notion he's the only fellow that can take out a party hereabouts."

About an hour and a half later the boys drove up in front of their hotel, and, leaving their driver to look after their fish, ran up to their rooms, and speedily prepared for the dinner which was ready for them.

When they at last came out of the dining room and appeared on the piazza, they beheld a small crowd assembled about a spot on the lawn. When they joined the group, they discovered that their fish were the objects which had drawn the spectators. Many were the exclamations of astonishment at the number and size of the victims, and when at last the people departed, the boys were left to themselves.

What to do with their catch then became the question. They had talked of packing the muscallonge in ice and forwarding it to their parents in New York, but the intense heat and the thought of possible delays had seemed to make that impracticable. They had finally decided to give them all to the proprietor of the hotel, and had just turned to enter the office to inform the clerk of their decision, when a man approached and accosted Jock.

To the lad's surprise he recognized him as a friend of his father's, and, after introducing him to his friends, the man expressed a desire that the huge muscallonge should be given to him if the boys had no other plan of disposing of it; and, wondering at his urgency, and aware that the remainder of their catch would be ample for all the immediate wants of the hotel, they readily consented.

It was some three weeks afterward when they learned that the man to whom they had presented their prize had first had a photograph of himself and his two boys taken with fishing-rods in their hands, and the monstrous fish in the foreground, and had then shipped the fish to the editor of the local paper of the village in which his home was. A marked copy of this paper had been sent the boys, in which they read a long account of the struggle this man and his boys had in catching the muscallonge, and how, at last, success had crowned their efforts, and in their generosity they had sent their prize, "which weighed some sixty pounds," to the editor himself. Great are the ways of fishermen, and marvellous the increase in weight which some fish attain after they have been drawn from their native waters! All that, however, is an outside matter, and as our boys did not learn of the various uses to which their prize was assigned until weeks had passed, it has no legitimate part in the records of this story.

Promptly at the appointed hour on the following morning George appeared before the hotel, and the boys took their seats in his wagon to be carried back to the Landing. It was evident that George was in no wise downcast over the envious charges of his rival boatman on the preceding day, and as they rode on he explained to them many of the points of interest in the region.

As there was an abundance of time before the departure of their boat for Ogdensburgh, they were all eager to examine the places he described, and as he had dwelt particularly upon the attractions of a neighboring cemetery,—“graveyard,” George called it,—they consented to stop and visit it.

It was a quaint little spot, and its humble headstones indicated that the great cloud which hangs low over all mankind was not wanting even in the healthful region of the great river. But what had been of peculiar interest to George was the inscription on some of the headstones, and as he pointed out one after another, his companions were soon as interested as he.

"Hold on, fellows," said Bob, taking out a note-book and pencil as he spoke; "I must have this one."

The boys waited while Bob made an exact copy of the epitaph, and this is what he found:—

"Jimmie Dooley is my name, Ireland
is my nation, Brasher is my dwelling
place and heaven my expectation.
When I am dead and in my grave
and all my bones is rotten, this stone
will tell my name when I am
quite forgotten."

"Got it all, Bob?" inquired Ben, soberly.

"Yes."

"Verbatim?"

"Yes."

"Literatim?"

"Yes."

"Punctuatim?"

"Yes."

"Spellatim?"

"I think so" laughed Bob. "Why? What makes you so particular?"

"I can't stand it any longer. It's too pathetic for me."

"I suppose the folks here feel just the same as they do in the city," said George, curtly. "I didn't bring you here to have you poke fun."

"I'm not poking fun," said Ben, soberly; "but the exquisite pathos of that poem is too much for my tender feelings. Poor Jimmie! I don't wonder he's dead. Do you know the poet, the author of those touching, plaintive lines?"

As the boys broke into a laugh, George turned abruptly away and took his seat in the carriage, an example his companions speedily followed.

When they arrived at the Landing they discovered that there were yet two hours before the little steamer would depart, and in response to George's suggestion, for his good nature seemed to be restored now, they accepted his invitation and went with him to view some "sturgeon pounds."

These pounds were pens in the water, near the shore, in which the boys discovered some fish which even put their great muscullonge to shame. These fish were caught, they learned, from a slender pier or framework built out into the rapids. There, men, equipped with long poles, each of which had a hook on the end much like the gaff George had used on the preceding day, took their stand, and as the mighty sturgeon slowly forced their way up the stream and against the current, they were seen by the waiting fishermen, and "hooked." They were then thrown alive into the pens and kept, with others, until a sufficient number had been obtained, when they were all shipped to Montreal.

Interested as the boys were in the sight, they did not long remain there, and soon after their return to the Landing went on board the steamer, and were ready to depart. Bidding George good-by, and thanking him once more for all the assistance and pleasure he had given them, they were eager, when the boat left the dock, to return to the camp on Pine Tree Island, for which they had now come to cherish almost a feeling of home.

CHAPTER XXV.

EARLY DISCOVERERS.

The progress of the little steamer was necessarily much slower now than when the boys had come down the river, moving as she was against the strong current. There was, however, too much of inspiration in the experience to make the young campers feel impatient, and as there were but few passengers besides themselves on board, they took their chairs to a sheltered spot on the upper deck, and the sounds of their merry laughter and shouts soon resounded over the river. They cheered the passing boats, and gave their school cry whenever they approached a camp.

After a time even these measures became tame and failed to satisfy the boys, and Bob, quick to seize his opportunity, said, "I'll now resume my lectures, with your kind permission."

"I don't think our permission will have much to do with it," said Ben. "You'll go on just the same."

Bob scowled, but as he knew the boys really were interested, and wanted to learn something more about the early discoverers, he began:—

"When Cartier returned to France after his second voyage, the hardships and losses he had to report were not, of course, very encouraging to the Frenchmen, who wanted him to find a country where the streets of the cities were all paved with gold. But Francis de La Roque, the Lord of Roberval in Picardy, had himself appointed viceroy and lieutenant-general of the new territory, Cartier still being called captain-general and chief pilot of the king's ships.

"Five vessels were then fitted out, and in May, 1541, Cartier started with two of them and was soon afterward joined by the others. Then all five started across the ocean blue, and three months later landed at Sainte Croix. He began to cruise about, and finally sent two of his ships back to France, though he kept the other three at the mouth of the Red River.

"Cartier then went up to Hochelaga, hoping to be able to come farther up the river, but the winter was a terrible one, and his men were so discouraged that in the spring, his provisions being exhausted, and the Indians beginning to cut up, he sailed away for France. On the way over he met Roberval, who ordered him to go back again; but Cartier did not see it in that light, so he kept on, and finally got back to France, where he lived and died in peace."

"Oh, more! more!" said Ben, mockingly.

Bob laughed as he replied, "There was no more, so far as Cartier was concerned. It was three times and out with him."

"Then he never came as far up the St. Lawrence as we are now?" asked Bert.

"No. Cartier never did. Of course others came, and I'll tell you about them."

"It's a wonderful river," murmured Jock. "And just think of it, fellows. We're sailing over the very same river those old chaps did. Just the same, after three hundred years have gone."

"No, it isn't the same," replied Ben.

"Why not, I'd like to know?" demanded Jock.

"Oh, the water keeps running away all the time. They call it the same river, but it's never the same for any two minutes. The banks are the same, but the river itself is constantly changing."

"You're getting it down too fine for me," said Jock. "And that's Canada, over there," he added, pointing to the distant shore as he spoke. "I wonder where they got that name. Do you know, Bob?"

"There are two theories," replied Bob, quickly. "One is based on the story that Stefano Gomez, a Spaniard, was the first white man to enter the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and that he came in 1525. He died over here somewhere, I believe, so the story can't be denied. There is an old Spanish tradition that he came into the gulf and landed, and when he didn't find any gold, or mines, or any of the things for which he was looking, he exclaimed, 'Aca-nada,' which means, I'm told, 'Here is nothing.' And Canada is said to be derived from that."

"What's the other theory? You said there were two, Bob," said Jock.

"Oh, the other is that Canada is another form of the Indian word, Ka-na-ta, which means a village. I've given you both, and you can take your choice."

"But how did the gulf and the river get their names, Professor?" asked Ben.

"Cartier gave it to them in honor of the saint who was supposed to be the patron of the day when he made his discovery—the 10th of August, you know. I think the saint deserved to have his name given, too, for it is said he was broiled on a gridiron in 253."

"Good time," remarked Ben, dryly. "Two forty is better, though."

"Bob," demanded Bert, "how do you know all this stuff. I don't see how one small head can contain all you know."

"That isn't original, my friend," remarked Bob. "You have the idea but not the language of our last textbook in English Lit. How do I know so much? Oh, it comes natural to some people. I know a heap more than I have told you, though. If you want me to, I'll give you some of it now. We haven't got to Ogdensburgh yet."

"Oh, do! do! Lend the charm of your voice to these interesting details you have picked out of some almanac," said Ben.

"I'll lend you my voice if you'll lend me your ears!" rejoined Bob.

"Never!" shouted Ben, claspng those members as he spoke.

"Well, turn the whole length of them toward me and it'll do just as well. They're more becoming to you than they would be to me."

"Oh, go on with your yarn," interrupted Bert. "We'll listen to you till we get to Ogdensburgh. After that, if you dare refer to one of the early discoverers, overboard you go! Doesn't he, fellows?"

"Hear! Hear!" shouted Ben, sitting quickly erect.

"I shan't forget," said Bob, laughing. "You fellows seem to think I'm giving you these facts for the fun of the thing."

"You are," said Ben.

"It may be rare sport," said Bob, "but I don't see it in just that light. I'm trying to teach you something, so that when you go back to the city you'll be able to make a half-decent appearance."

"Nonsense!" protested Ben. "You've been cramming up, and are just spreading your knowledge before us, the way Ethan says his peacock gets into the house and spreads his tail in front of the looking-glass and struts around like all possessed. You can't fool us, Bob."

"I don't have to," said Bob, good-naturedly.

"Quit your fooling and go on with your story, Bob," said Jock. "We'll be at Ogdensburgh pretty soon, and then you're under bonds not to refer to another discoverer there. And I want to know about these things."

"All right," said Bob. "Well, the French kept sending somebody over here almost every year after Cartier stopped coming, but nothing of any consequence was done before 1608. Then a Calvinist named DeMonts obtained freedom for himself and his religious sympathizers in the New World, only the Catholic religion was to be established among the natives, and finally Champlain and Pontgrave were sent over here in that year to begin a settlement and look after the trade in furs. They were both sterling men and had had plenty of experience, and no better ones could have been found."

"Champlain reached Tadousac on the 3d of June, and after a month was at Quebec, where Cartier had spent the winter almost three-quarters of a century before. He saw what a fine site there was there for a city, and at once selected the spot as the place for a settlement."

"The next spring, in April, Samuel Champlain, along with two of the Frenchmen, started up the great river. They got along fairly well, and at last turned to the south and went down and discovered the lake which now bears his name, and then went on into the other lake, which, as you know, is Lake George."

"Yes, I've heard of that lake," murmured Ben.

"Five years afterward," continued Bob, ignoring the interruption, "Champlain succeeded in having four Recollets appointed to begin a mission work among the Indians. To get the favor of the red men, Champlain himself, and a priest named Joseph Le Caven, went with them to help whip the Iroquois; but the Iroquois weren't in a mood to be whipped that time, and drove off their enemies and wounded Champlain, just as if he hadn't come on his merciful errand."

"Hold on, Bob," said Jock. "You didn't tell us whether Champlain found Lake George all named when he got there."

"It was named," replied Bob, "though it wasn't named George. The Indians called it Horicon, and the Frenchmen named it Lake St. Sacrament. Sir William Johnson, afterward, for good and sufficient reasons, changed it to Lake George. But to resume. When Champlain was wounded he had to spend the winter with the Indians; but he made good use of his time and learned a lot about them—their language, customs, and all that sort of thing."

"It was in 1625 when Henri de Levi, Duke de Ventadour—he had purchased the vice-royalty of New France, you see, before this time, for they didn't mind such little things as selling a kingdom or two, with a

world and a few stars thrown in—sent over here Father Lallemand and four other Jesuit priests and laymen. Father Lallemand was a good man and very earnest, and the Recollets, of course, received him and his companions very kindly.

"In the following year three other Jesuit priests were also sent over here, along with some settlers and mechanics, and they soon made the little settlement begin to look something like a town. In 1629 the English happened to come along, and quietly took the place as their own; but there was a treaty made, and they had to stand by it, so the French owned the town again in 1632; and the very next year Champlain was appointed once more as governor of New France. He'd been governor before, you see, and this was only putting him back into his own place. But he didn't live very long, for, if I recollect aright, he died in December, 1635."

"What for?" inquired Ben, soberly. "Were the gubernatorial honors too heavy for his shoulders? Perhaps he didn't like the political methods of the Indians. I wish you'd explain it, Bob."

"From that time, for a good while, the Jesuit missionaries kept coming over here, and the work they did was something marvellous. They went up the river and kept on out along the lakes, and even down other rivers. They dressed as the Indians did, and ate and lived with them, just to learn their ways and convince the red men that they were their friends. They were tortured sometimes, horribly, but they never flinched. They just kept right on, and you can well believe it wasn't very long before their priests had a grip on the Indians which wasn't very small. Every tribe of the Iroquois of New York had its own special missionary, and almost every nation out along the lakes and down the Mississippi had one too; and they made themselves of so much use, going with the men even into battle, that they're not forgotten yet.

"Well, of course, where the missionaries went, there business went too; and it wasn't long before fur-trading posts were established wherever the Jesuits were. Then, to protect the fur traders, and to keep the English from getting any of the business, soldiers had to be sent along; and so, as Quebec was the head centre of the whole affair, it wasn't long before there was a regular business all along the St. Lawrence, long before any real settlements were made on its borders, or at least along the lakes."

"I say, Bob," interrupted Ben, "did you ever read any of Oliver Wendell Holmes's books?"

"Yes, I've read the 'Autocrat.'"

"Do you remember about that chap who could talk a lot on some subjects, and didn't know anything about others?"

"You mean the one who'd read a volume or two in the cyclopædia, and not much besides?"

"Pre-e-cisely! Now I've found you out. *You've* been reading a volume of the cyclopædia, and are giving us its contents."

"Which volume?" asked Bob.

"The one that has the C's in it. Cartier, Champlain, Canada, Caven, Catholic, Cortereal—don't you see, fellows?" he added, turning triumphantly to his friends. "We've found him out! He's crammed up on his C's. Now, to prove it, let's ask him some questions on other subjects. What was the first settlement above Quebec? What soldiers came in here? Who was—who was—a—a—"

"Hello! That's Ogdensburgh ahead there!" exclaimed Bob, suddenly; and as he spoke he ran quickly to the bow of the steamer, ostensibly to obtain a better view of the town which they were approaching.

CHAPTER XXVI. THE SQUALL.

The little steamer soon afterward arrived at its dock, and the transfer to the large boat was speedily made. Then, in the eagerness to be first in the dining room and to satisfy the cravings of their appetites, which were already keen, Bob's lectures and the early discoverers were all forgotten.

Nor did Bob seem to grieve at the apparent disregard, though whether it was his hunger, or his unwillingness to hear the suggestion Ben had made as to the source of his information, which was the cause of it, he did not feel called upon to explain.

At all events, when the boys returned to the deck they were at peace among themselves and with all the world; and as Bob was careful not even to hint at the men who had sailed up the river centuries before this time, no occasion arose in which the explanation of Ben could be taken up again.

Apparently, in spite of the fact that the large steamer was moving against the current, there was no less speed displayed than on the voyage down the stream, for greater efforts were put forth. Bert solemnly called the attention of his companions to the fact, and with no less solemnity urged them to profit by the lesson that greater obstacles only called forth the greater powers of boats and men.

Doubtless his moral lesson was not duly appreciated, for the lads were in no mood for sermons. The constantly changing scene about them, the sweep of the great waters, and the saluting of passing vessels, occupied the most of their time and held their undivided attention.

It was late in the afternoon when at last they perceived Alexandria Bay in the distance, and knew that they had almost arrived at the end of their voyage.

"It looks as if we might have a storm, fellows," said Jock, pointing as he spoke to some heavy black clouds that could be seen in the distance.

"If it'll hold off till we get back to camp we shan't care," replied Bert, lightly.

They were all so eager to land now that they had no disposition to stop and consider even the threatenings of the storm-clouds.

"Hello! There's Ethan!" exclaimed Jock, as he obtained a glimpse of their boatman on the dock. "Perhaps

he has his cat-boat with him. I'm sure I hope he has, for I don't want to row back to camp, especially if it's going to rain."

As soon as they landed, Ethan greeted them, and without waiting to listen to the story of their experiences in the Longue Seaut, he said quickly, "Git aboard my boat, every one o' ye. It's goin' to rain, an' I want to land ye afore it begins. Git yer skiff an' I'll take it in tow, an' we'll start right off."

Jock ran quickly to the place where his skiff had been left, and as he rowed around the corner of the dock to the cat-boat, Bert said, "Where's Ben? He'll have to get his canoe too."

But Ben at first could not be found, and the anger of Ethan waxed strong. "That pesky boy is always the one to bother us. Where do ye s'pose he is?"

"There! there he is!" exclaimed Bob, pointing as he spoke toward a canoe which could be seen out on the river.

The occupant could not be plainly seen, but after watching his movements for a moment they were all satisfied that it was indeed Ben, who, probably in his desire to paddle his own canoe, had slipped away unobserved, and was already well on his way back to camp.

Ethan uttered another exclamation of anger, but as he quickly bade the boys take their places on board his boat, there was no time lost in further investigations, and soon, with the skiff in tow, they were headed down the river. There was, however, but little air stirring, and soon the cat-boat was almost becalmed. The heavy clouds climbed higher and higher in the sky, but the waters of the river were almost as motionless as glass. The sail flapped idly against the mast, and the boat slowly drifted with the current.

Ethan did not speak now, but his evident air of alarm speedily communicated itself to his companions. They glanced nervously at one another, and then at the great black mass which was almost directly over their heads.

"Don't you think we'd better take the oars, Ethan?" suggested Jock.

Ethan shook his head, but made no other reply. A streak of light gray in the dense blackness of the clouds could now be seen, and as the boatman discovered it, he said, "Take in the sail, boys. It'll be—"

But Ethan did not complete the sentence, for suddenly the deluge was upon them. In a moment the wind began to blow, and like a startled horse the boat suddenly seemed to leap forward. A roaring sound filled the air, and the trees along the distant shore bent and swayed and tossed their branches wildly, as if they, too, shared in the alarm. The river was quickly covered with white-caps, and the rail of the cat-boat was almost beneath the water.

"Here! here!" shouted Ethan suddenly, endeavoring to make his voice heard above the noise of the storm. "Two of ye hold the tiller while I take in the sail."

Bob and Jock sprang to do his bidding, but their combined strength was hardly sufficient to hold the boat to its course. Ethan worked his way slowly toward the mast, and after a hard struggle succeeded in lowering the sail, a part of which dragged in the water before he could draw it on board.

At last, succeeding in a measure in his efforts, he returned to his place in the stern and resumed his labors with the tiller. The fury of the storm had now increased. All on board were soon drenched; but they did not mind the wetting, for a great fear was in their hearts. The roar of the wind was like that of a railway train under full speed. Even the outlines of the shores could not now be seen. Under bare poles the boat sped swiftly forward. Once or twice they caught a glimpse of other luckless men caught as they were in the squall, but they were speedily lost to sight, and the cat-boat darted ahead with ever-increasing speed.

Suddenly Jock discovered that it was no longer rain which was falling upon them, but hail; and even while he looked up in astonishment, the hailstones seemed to increase in size. As they struck the Boys in the face or upon the head they produced a sharp pain, and every one speedily covered his face with his cap and drew his coat up more tightly about his neck.

"Go into the cabin, every one o' ye!" shouted Ethan; but his voice was drowned by the storm, and no one heard or heeded his cry of warning.

On and on plunged the boat, higher and higher rose the tossing waves, stronger and stronger became the force of the pelting hailstones. In spite of their fear the boys all looked up as they heard a sudden sound of breaking branches and snapping trees. Just before them through the blinding storm they could see a shore and tossing waters as they fell in waves upon the rocks. A great tree had just fallen, and the sound of the crash it made as it fell upon the smaller trees about it increased the terror in the boat. They were not more than twenty yards distant now, and it seemed as if no power on earth could save them from being dashed upon the projecting rocks. A great mass of earth had been torn up by the roots of the tree which had fallen, and they could see the wall it presented.

Nearer and nearer to the shore sped the swift-flying cat-boat. The boys relaxed their hold upon their caps and coats, and grasped the sides of the boat as they waited for the crash which threatened. Ethan was struggling desperately with the tiller, and doing his utmost to keep his boat away from the rocks, but his efforts were like those of a little child. No one spoke, but the terror each felt was known by all.

Then came a moment of breathless suspense; a low cry escaped the lips of Jock. The boatman rose and threw himself bodily against the tiller, striving by one last desperate effort to keep his boat off the rocks. There was a grating sound from the keel, and then in a moment they swept past the dangerous point and were out in the river again. They had been so close to the rocky shore that they almost could have leaped upon it, but if any one had had it in mind to make the foolhardy attempt, the opportunity was gone before he could use it.

The sense of relief which came at the escape in nowise prevented the boys from knowing that the fury of the squall had not yet spent itself. They could see piles of hailstones on board the boat, and some of them seemed to be almost as large as small eggs. They were pelted upon the head and about the body, and there was no escape or relief. The wind still roared, the seething waters tossed and rose about them, the boat lurched and pitched, and yet all the time was driven swiftly forward under the terrific force of the gale. Other perils might lie before them, and with the thought the boys all peered eagerly ahead, though they could see but a short distance through the blinding storm.

Suddenly a lull came, and as the boys glanced up they could see a broad streak of light in the western sky. The black clouds were scurrying overhead, and the sound of the thunder seemed to be a little farther away. Swiftly as the storm had approached, with almost as great swiftness it departed. The flashes of the

vivid lightning could still be seen, but they were farther down the river. The outlines of the distant shores became more and more distinct, and almost before the boys were aware of what was occurring, the blaze of the sun broke through, and the wind and the storm subsided.

"We're all right now," said Ethan; and with a sigh of relief the boys turned to look at him.

"Them squalls," explained the boatman, "are mighty sudden. Ye never know when to expect 'em, or jest what to do when they come. Now, ye see why I told ye not to go far from camp with yer canoes."

The mention of the canoes instantly recalled their thoughts to the missing Ben. He had recklessly ventured forth in his, and doubtless had been caught in the same storm which had so suddenly swept down upon them.

For a moment no one spoke, and then Jock said tremblingly, "You don't suppose anything has happened to Ben, do you, Ethan?"

"No knowin'. Mebbe he ran in to some island when the squall broke."

It was evident, however, that the boatman was no less troubled than they by the thoughts of the absent Ben; but he at once placed the tiller in the hands of the boys and went forward to hoist his sail once more.

The wind had subsided now, and the boisterous waves were rapidly resuming their former state of calm. It was the first experience the boys had had in the sudden squalls which are wont to swoop down upon the St. Lawrence, and oftentimes bring sorrow and destruction in their wake. Ordinarily they subside as rapidly as they rise, and the present instance proved to be no exception to the rule. The river was soon calm, the low sun was shining clear and strong, and only a gentle breeze ruffled the waters that only a brief time before were tossing like the waves of an angry sea.

Steadily the cat-boat kept on its way, and as it had not been driven very far out of its course, not a long time had elapsed before the party was landed at the dock in front of their camp.

But what a sight met their eyes there! Neither of the tents could be seen, and directly across the path which led down to the shore, a huge tree had fallen. Broken branches strewed the ground, and the signs of the fierceness of the gale were apparent on every side.

Slight heed was given to any of these things, however, so alarmed were the boys over the safety of their missing companion. Poor Ben! Was ever a more luckless mortal born into this world? He was ever the one to meet with mishaps, if mishaps befell; but his peril in the present instance far exceeded all he had experienced before.

"Now, boys," said Ethan, "you'd better take the skiff and row back up the river. You may find Ben somewhere, and he may need ye, too. While you're gone I'll see where the tents have been blown to and try to set things to rights again."

Without waiting to reply, the three boys quickly freed the skiff which the cat-boat had been towing, and Jock and Bob, each taking a pair of oars, began to row swiftly over the river. They had no definite idea as to just where it was best to go, but they kept on their way back toward Alexandria Bay, hoping that somewhere they would discover Ben paddling to meet them in his canoe. Their strongest hope was that he had landed somewhere before the storm broke, and now that it was gone, would be on his way back to the camp.

They had been gone about a quarter of an hour, when Bert, who was seated in the stern, exclaimed, "There's a canoe up ahead, fellows, but there's no one in it."

His companions stopped rowing for a moment and glanced eagerly behind them. Then with redoubled speed they began to move toward the drifting canoe. Soon they had overhauled it, and a low cry escaped Jock's lips when he recognized it at once as the one which had belonged to the missing Ben.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE SEARCH.

The feeling of gloom in the hearts of the boys was reflected in the dusk which now had settled over all. The sun had disappeared, and the blaze in the western sky seemed weird and unnatural. The silence that rested over the river was so intense that it almost seemed as if they could hear it, if such a thing were possible. For a moment the boys looked blankly at one another, but no one seemed willing to give utterance to the fear which evidently possessed them all.

Jock was the first to speak, and as he reached over and grasped the canoe to make it fast to the skiff, he said in a low voice, "This is the worst yet, fellows. I'm almost afraid to go on."

"We'll have to go, whether we're afraid or not," said Bob.

His decided tone could not conceal his anxiety, but his suggestion was so manifestly practical that the oars were at once taken up, and, with the little canoe in tow, they resumed their way up the river.

The waters were calm now, so calm that scarcely a ripple could be seen. Lights began to appear in the distant cottages, and the darkness steadily deepened. Still the boys rowed swiftly on, unmindful of the long and wearisome day which had gone, and thinking only of their missing friend. Bert was keeping a careful lookout, though just what he or his companions expected to see was not evident.

"I think, fellows," said Bert, at last, "you'd better row farther in toward the shore of the islands. The storm came from the west, and if Ben landed anywhere, it would be likely to be on one of the islands. We can go up a mile or two, and then if we don't see or hear anything we can cut across to the Bay. He may have been picked up by some boat and carried back there, you know."

The direction of the skiff was quickly changed, for the advice seemed good, though no one replied to Bert's words, and soon they were skirting the islands. Again and again they stopped and shouted together,

but only the echoes along the shore or the calls of the night birds responded.

The slight hope they had cherished was almost gone now. The empty canoe was a constant reminder of their loss, and the longing in their hearts was fast becoming changed to despair. Not even the paddle had been found, and the fear that the canoe had been capsized in the squall, and its occupant thrown into the water, was becoming almost a certainty.

"There's one thing, fellows," said Bob, at last, striving somehow to keep up their courage, "and that is, that Ben, though he is the most unlucky fellow in some ways that ever lived, in others is the most lucky. Just think of the scrapes he's been in since we came down here, and yet he got out of every one. If it had been any one of us, we'd have gone straight to the bottom of the St. Lawrence, but Ben, somehow, manages to come right side up with care, and I'll not give up yet."

Bob endeavored to speak confidently, but his words failed to cheer his companions. The lights of Alexandria Bay could now be seen in the distance, and the end of their attempt to discover the missing Ben had almost come. Failure was to be stamped on them all, they thought; and though they still continued to row, the dejection of all three was becoming more and more apparent.

"We might as well strike across for the Bay, now," said Jock, at last, pausing as he spoke, and looking sadly above him in the twilight.

"Yes, I think we'd better go over there," replied Bob. "Of course Ben may have gone back to camp long before this, but as we are so near, I suppose we might as well go on and do what we can."

They were only about twenty yards from the shore of one of the little islands now, and as they grasped their oars again to carry out Jock's suggestion, they were startled by a shout that came from a projecting point in advance of them.

They could perceive some one standing there and waving a handkerchief aloft on a stick. The faint sound of his call was sufficient to interest the boys at once, and without uttering a word they began to row swiftly in that direction. Bert was peering eagerly at the figure of the man standing on the rock, and as soon as the sound of the hallo became a little more distinct, he said in a low, intense voice, "I believe it's Ben, boys. Give him the school cheer, and let's see."

The boys stopped, and the school cheer rang out, and then they waited a moment in breathless suspense for the response.

Faintly across the water came the answering cheer, and then, half laughing and half crying, Jock said, "Did you ever see such a fellow in your lives? It's just as Bob here says. Ben can get into more scrapes, and get out of them too, than any chap that ever lived."

"Never mind that part of it now," said Bob, quickly. "Give way, Jock, and let's go for him. Of all his scrapes this is the worst."

There was no mistaking the reaction now as the boys swept over the river, making every stroke tell. As they approached the point, they perceived Ben seated on one of the rocks, and leaning upon his paddle as if he was the most unconcerned spectator of their movements. Quickly the skiff was sent ashore, and as Bert leaped out, Ben, who had not stirred from his seat on the rocks, said,—

"I must say, fellows, you have taken your time. I didn't know but you were going to leave me here all night. I've travelled clear around this island three times since I landed, and I haven't seen a boat or a man. I thought I was Robinson Crusoe for certain, and done into modern English."

"Oh, Ben," said Jock, in a trembling voice, "don't talk that way. You don't know how frightened we were. We started out to search for you just the minute we got back to camp, and when we found that canoe of yours empty and floating down the river, we didn't know what had happened—"

"Did you find my canoe?" interrupted Ben, eagerly.

"Yes, yes," said Jock, laughing in spite of himself.

"Where is it?"

"Right here. We took it in tow."

"That's good. The thing got away from me, and I didn't expect ever to see it again. You see, the wind drove me straight ashore here, and I was mighty glad to get ashore, too. When I grabbed my paddle and jumped out, and then turned around to pick up my canoe, why, it was like the Irishman's flea—when I put my hand on it, it wasn't there."

"What did you do, Ben?" inquired Bert.

"Do? I didn't do anything. The wind blew so I thought it was going to tear up the very island itself. I hid myself behind the rocks, and waited. When the storm had passed I began to look about to see how I was to get away from my desert island. I travelled around it three times, as I told you, but I couldn't find any way of getting off, and I'd about made up my mind I'd have to spend the night here, when I discovered three men in a boat, and hailed them."

"Did you know who we were?"

"No; and I didn't care. All I wanted was to be taken off."

"We'll take you now," said Jock. "Come along; it's getting dark."

"I'll take my canoe, if you please," said Ben, glibly.

"Ben, you're not going to paddle back to camp in that cockle-shell to-night?" exclaimed Jock, aghast at the proposal. "I should think you'd had enough of it for one night. Come along and be civilized, and take your place at the oars in the skiff, like a little man."

"Here I take my stand. I can do no other," responded Ben, striking an attitude as he spoke. "If I go back to camp, it'll be in my light canoe."

"Let him go on a raft if he wants to," said Bob, glumly. "We've done our part, and it's his own risk now."

"Ben, you'll keep close to us, won't you?" pleaded Jock.

"Yes, if you'll keep close to me," replied Ben. "You'll have to do your best to keep up, though, I can tell that."

Lighthearted now, the boys resumed their places in the skiff, Bert taking Jock's place at the oars, and with Ben in his canoe, which had not suffered any from the storm, started down the river.

Ben was as good as his words, and though the two pairs of oars enabled his friends to make excellent time, they were compelled to exert themselves to the utmost to keep the skiff within sight. As a consequence, when they arrived at the camp, as they did soon afterward, they were thoroughly tired, and ready for the

supper which Ethan and Tom had provided.

Ben's appearance was as welcome to the boatmen as it had been to the boys, and while they were seated at the table he was compelled to relate the story of his adventure again. As Jock perceived that the tents had been restored, he turned to Ethan and said,—

"Did you have any trouble in setting the tents up again?"

"Just a little," responded Ethan. "One o' 'em I found up in the top o' that pine tree over yonder, and t'other one was down on the shore, but we managed to git 'em all right enough. Neow then, I'm a-goin' to take that canoe back with me to-night. I jest won't leave it where that Ben can get hold of it. The next time he'll not be so lucky."

Even Ben uttered no protest; but when Ethan started for the place where the canoe was kept on the bank, it could nowhere be found. Ben pretended to search with the others; and when all their efforts proved unavailing, Ethan declared testily,—

"The pesky thing's got afloat again. Well, there's one comfort, and that is that this boy can't bother with it. I shouldn't sleep a wink to-night thinkin' o' him, if 'twas left here."

After the departure of the boatmen Ben demurely entered the woods, and soon returned with the treasured canoe in his arms.

"That's too bad, Ben," said Jock. "You know what Ethan said."

"I'm not going to scare Ethan to-night," replied Ben, "for I've had enough to satisfy me for one day. But you don't think for a moment that I'm going to give up my work in this thing, do you? Well, I'm not. It's just got to come to my turn, and that's all there is to it!"

None of the boys were surprised when they came forth from the tent on the following morning to discover Ben paddling about the river in his canoe. It was true he did not venture very far from shore, the lesson of the previous day evidently not having been entirely lost, and as the rest of the night had restored the spirits of his companions, they were all inclined to look upon his persistence in a spirit of good nature.

Ethan, too, displayed no anger when he arrived and discovered Ben in his customary morning occupation, and, while the boys were seated at the breakfast table, made many inquiries as to their experiences and success in shooting the Longue Seaut Rapids. His enthusiasm was great when he learned of the capture of the muscollonge, and again and again he referred to his own prophecy concerning the fishing in that part of the St. Lawrence River.

For several days the life in the camp on Pine Tree Island was uneventful, though every day was filled with its own interesting experiences. Ethan contrived to spend more of his time with the boys than he had previously done, and though he did not refer to the perilous experience in the storm, they all understood that that was the motive which controlled him, and, if the truth were known, not one of the boys objected. Though the vividness of that fearful ride in the gale had in a measure departed from their minds, still the memory of it was strong, and even the determined Bob seemed to have profited by the lesson.

One day, in the week which followed, the Clarkes came with their yacht and took the boys with them for a picnic on Chimney Island. The remains of the old French fort were still standing, and as the view of the St. Lawrence from the ruins was one which extended for miles up and down the river, they all could readily understand why that spot had been selected by the soldiers of that far-away time. Bob offered to explain the early history to his friends, but as Ben said quickly, when Bob began,—

"There it is again! It's just as I said. Bob has been reading up one volume of the Cyclopædia. It's the one with the C's in it. Cartier, Champlain, Canada, Catholic, Cavon, Cortereal, and now it's Chimney Island. For one, I've had enough."

The laugh which followed when the meaning of Ben's words was explained to the party caused even Bob to desist, and changing the subject, he inquired,—

"Have any of you young ladies ever seen Hamlick?"

"Seen what?" said Miss Bessie. "What's Hamlick? Is it another fish you caught in those wonderful Longue Seaut Rapids?"

"No," replied Bob. "It's Ethan's word for Shakespeare's play. The 'young folks' are going to give it to-morrow evening over at the Corners for the benefit of the public walks. We're going, all four of us; and I didn't know but you would like to go, too."

The proposition was hailed with delight; and when the party broke up in the late afternoon it was agreed that Mr. Clarke was to stop for the boys on the following evening, and that together they were all to go to the Corners and witness the much talked about play of "Hamlick."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

HAMLICK.

Early in the following evening the yacht stopped at Pine Tree Island, and after our boys had been received on board, proceeded on its way to the Corners, where the entire party landed, and at once started up the village street toward the town hall, where "Hamlick" was to make his long-expected appearance.

It was soon discovered that many others were evidently going to the same place, and along the dusty country roads teams could be seen approaching from almost every direction. "Smart" appearing turnouts, along with others which must have done duty for several generations for the busy folk of the region, were seen, and Bob demurely pointed out what he declared to be the original of the "wonderful one hoss shay."

When our party climbed the rambling stairway which led to the room in the third floor of the town hall

where Hamlick was to appear, it was an unusual sight upon which they looked. Old people and young were entering the room; mothers with little babes in their arms; the ever-present small boy, whose disposition does not vary materially whether he dwells in country or city; bashful young fellows, who apparently were wondering what they should do with those hands of theirs which, somehow, would protrude too far below the short sleeves of their coats; all these and many more were there.

In the front of the room the platform was hidden from sight by some blue denim curtains hung on wires, which were to be manipulated by some one behind the scenes. Some kerosene lamps were giving a faint light from brackets on the walls, and a huge wood stove stood in one corner of the room where it had done duty for years at the gatherings in the bitter winter days.

There was no usher to show our party the way, but as they perceived that no places had been reserved, and that all were free to go where they chose, they at once turned toward the few remaining seats which were well up in the front of the room and quietly seated themselves. These seats were benches, across the backs of which narrow strips of board had been nailed, and forced the occupant to maintain an attitude which was anything but comfortable. The whole scene was so strange and unlike anything which any of them had ever seen before, that the novelty banished even the sense of discomfort, and all gazed about them with an air of interest as keen as doubtless that of the good people of the Corners would have been had they been privileged to enter some spacious hall in the great city from which the summer visitors had come.

To add to the interest, Ethan was discovered seated in the end of one of the pews or benches which our friends appropriated, but his appearance was so markedly different from that to which the boys had been accustomed that they had some difficulty in really persuading themselves that it was their boatman before them.

Ethan was dressed in a suit of rusty black broadcloth, which evidently had seen other days if it had not seen better, and his bearing was so solemn that at first the boys fancied that he was conducting himself as he would have done in church.

"Aren't they almost ready to begin, Ethan?" inquired Jock, after he had presented the sturdy boatman to his friends.

"I s'pose so. They were to begin at seven-thirty sharp," replied Ethan, solemnly.

"Tom must be excited," suggested Jock, for want of something else to say.

"I s'pose so."

It was plain that Ethan considered the occasion too solemn for such trifling questions, and accordingly Jock turned to his other friends, who were not troubled by any such scruples, and was soon talking and laughing with them.

The interest in the scene did not decrease as the moments of waiting passed. Boys entered and lurched heavily into their seats and began to snap the peanuts, with which their pockets had been well supplied, or industriously began to busy themselves with pieces of spruce gum which the present owners had wrested from the trees by their own efforts.

Solemn-faced elderly people entered, and frequently a young mother came, bringing with her a baby which was sleeping in her arms or nodding its head sagely, as with wide-open eyes it looked out upon the assembly.

The interest in the audience was speedily transferred to the stage, from which the curtains now began to be drawn back. Apparently something was wrong in the apparatus, for they "hitched" when about half of the platform appeared in sight, and after a whispered conversation had taken place, in tones so shrill that they could be heard by the entire assembly, a well-grown lad stepped from behind the scenes and adjusted the strings by which the screens were worked.

His appearance was greeted with a shout of delight from the small boys in the audience, as they called him familiarly by his name, and bestowed other signs of their approval upon him. The greeting, however, was not received in the spirit in which it had been given, and the "manager," after vainly striving for a moment to adjust the workings, speedily retired in confusion. A yank upon the curtains quickly followed, and though a sound as of tearing cloth was heard, the view of the platform was soon unobstructed, and the audience became silent, waiting for the performance to begin.

After a brief interval Bernardo appeared, gazing carefully about him for Francisco, who, too tender-hearted to disappoint his commanding officer, speedily strode forth upon the platform, prepared to do or die.

"Who's there?" began Bernardo, in a loud stage whisper.

"Nay, answer me; stand, and unfold yourself!" thundered Francisco in reply.

"Long live the King!" responded the officer, as if he were trying to make the people in Alexandria Bay aware of his patriotic feeling.

"Bernardo?" exclaimed Francisco, in apparent surprise, though he had been standing within a few feet of the man all the time.

The conversation continued until Horatio and Marcellus joined them, and at once began to speak. Horatio was evidently master of the situation, but poor Marcellus had an attack of stage fright. When it came his turn to speak he began impulsively,—

"And liegemen to—to—to—to—" but he could go no further. Again he began, in lower and more impressive tones: "A—a—and liegemen to—to—" but the desired word would not come.

"To the Dane," whispered some one behind the scenes in a penetrating voice which reached to the utmost corners of the room.

"And liegemen to the Dane," responded Marcellus, boldly.

Apparently he had recovered now, and all went well until the time came when the Ghost was to enter. Whether it was the terrifying dread of the nocturnal visitor, or the evident alarm of the four who were conversing so eagerly upon the stage that produced the trouble which followed, is not known; but no sooner had he glided in with his unearthly tread, and no less unearthly glances, which he cast about the room, than Marcellus, in his most awe-inspiring whisper, began, "Peace! Break thee off; look where it comes again;" and then one of the babies in the room began to scream.

Bernardo boldly continued, "In the same figure, like the king that's dead."

"Thou art a scholar," responded Marcellus. "Speak to it, Horatio."

But the wailing infant in the front seat was not to be suppressed, and his screams of terror or rage were

becoming more and more shrill, and were dividing the attention and sympathy of the audience and even diverting their gaze from the stage.

Apparently human nature could not endure the strain, and suddenly resuming an upright attitude and speaking in tones marvellously like those of an angry man, the Ghost turned to the audience, and said sharply, "Excuse me, ladies and gentlemen, but we'll have to stop the performance till the mother removes that yelling young 'un from this hall."

Without a protest the young mother rose, and, despite the increased lamentations of her offspring and his vigorous bodily contortions, departed; and at last, when "the infant with no language but a cry," as Bob afterward described the scene, could no longer be heard, the play was resumed.

No one had appeared to be surprised at the interruption, and Ethan had never once glanced at the boys. Dignified and unmoved he sat watching the stage as if such slight deviations from the words of the "Immortal Shakespeare" were not able to divert his attention, and he had slight sympathy for those who would even look about them to discover whose baby it was that was now creating the disturbance.



"Without a protest the young mother rose."

Babies were expected to be present on such occasions, and if present they were in duty bound to make themselves heard—that was a matter of course; and which particular baby it was exercising its lungs at the present moment was, in his opinion, too insignificant a matter to interest any one.

The interruption seemed, however, to have wrought havoc once more with Marcellus, for when the play was resumed he began to falter and hesitate, and like all people who hesitate, was speedily lost.

After he had boldly bidden Horatio to question the terror-inspiring visitor, and had declared "it was offended," he seemed to lose heart.

"'Tis gone, and will not—not—will not—not— 'Tis gone and will—will. 'Tis will and not gone. No," he added abruptly, apparently as much to the surprise of the Ghost himself, who could be seen peering from behind the curtain, as to that of his audience, "No, 'tisn't 'tis will, it's 'tis gone.' 'Tis gone and—and—and—"

Poor Marcellus gazed about him in despair, as if he was looking for help; but no help came, except from the side of the platform, where the prompter tried in a loud whisper to aid the desperate player.

Horatio, to help his comrade, went back to the last line he had spoken, and repeated, "Stay! speak, speak! I charge thee, speak!"

"That's what I'm trying to do, but can't," replied Marcellus, casting Shakespeare and discretion aside at the same time.

The words were too much for our boys, who, up to this time, had been striving desperately to remain quiet. Jock had stuffed his handkerchief into his mouth, but the explosive force of the last despairing speech of Marcellus had proved too much for him to bear, and a prolonged squeal came from his lips which forced even the handkerchief from its place.

"He-e-e-e-e!" he cried, and in a moment his companions were all clinging to the back of the seat in front of them and shaking with laughter. But few others in the audience seemed to be similarly affected, and Ethan turned and gave them a look which greatly aided in restoring their composure.

Marcellus was thoroughly angry now, however, and glared down upon the offending Jock as if he were minded to add other words which Shakespeare might perhaps have used, but which he certainly had not incorporated in the tragedy.

In a moment he rushed from the stage, seized the book from the hands of the prompter, and, returning to his place, read his part as the play was resumed. Then for a time all went well, and the eager boys found themselves looking forward to the time when "Hamlick" himself should appear.

True to his part, in the second scene the hero appeared, and our boys were soon all listening attentively. Tom's first words were uttered in a voice that trembled, but he soon was master of himself and was giving his mother that sage counsel which has done so much to make both her and him remembered.

The king stalked about the stage with a crown that fairly glittered with jewels upon his head, and as for the queen, her gorgeous train was sadly in the way of Polonius and Laertes, and even "Hamlick" himself once trod upon it and received a look from her which well might have caused him to pause in his undutiful language.

Marcellus, too, returned; but this time he was equipped with a book, as well as with a sword, and though he followed the lines with his finger as he read, and seldom glanced at his companions, and once his words, "my good lord," were evidently misunderstood by his audience, still no further interruptions came until the Ghost once more joined the group.

Then a fresh trouble arose. Just at the most impressive part, a long-drawn-out sigh seemed to come from Ethan, who had remained quietly in his seat at the end of the bench.

Marcellus had just been strongly warning Hamlet not to go with the untimely visitor, and Horatio had added, "No, by no means," when the sigh from Ethan's corner rose again, louder, longer, and more intense. All in the audience could hear it, and as it came once more our four boys glanced quickly at the boatman.

His head was thrown back against the wall, his eyes were closed, and his mouth was wide open. It was evident that Ethan was sleeping.

"It will not speak; then I will follow it," Hamlet was just remarking on the stage.

"O-o-o-h-h-h!" responded Ethan, in something more pronounced now than a sigh. His voice trembled and quavered, and seemed to gather force as on it went.

"Wake him up, Jock," whispered Ben.

"Stick a pin in him. He'll spoil the play," whispered Bert.

Jock turned to shake the boatman lightly and strive to restore him by gentle means, but his efforts were not required; for one of the small boys seated directly behind Ethan acted promptly, and at once produced results as startling as they were unexpected.

CHAPTER XXIX.

AFTER THE TRAGEDY.

The mischievous lad had been one of those who had been regaling themselves during the performance with peanuts, and the mark which Ethan presented was more than his youthful spirit could resist. Leaning forward, he quickly dropped into the wide-open mouth of the slumbering boatman one of his choicest bits, and before Jock could touch the man, the explosion came.

Ethan was instantly awake, and coughing, almost strangling, stared wildly about him. For a moment even the somewhat pessimistic views to which Hamlick was giving utterance on the stage were ignored by the audience, and the noisy boatman was the observed of all observers.

His efforts were so violent that either strangulation or relief was bound to result, and as the latter came, Ethan turned sharply and looked behind him. The demure face of the lad who had been the means of his somewhat sudden awakening did not even glance at him, and after a brief pause Ethan solemnly resumed his seat, and Hamlick proceeded with his misty surmisings.

Perhaps the play by this time had gained full headway, and nothing could interfere with its progress. At all events, no further interruptions occurred, save those of a minor character, and after a time the end came. The audience then solemnly filed out from the room, and soon few were left besides our party and those who had taken part in the play.

In spite of the ludicrous events which had interfered somewhat with the solemnity of the occasion, the boys were impressed with the amount of study which Tom and some of his companions had bestowed upon the parts assigned them. As Hamlick himself came forth from behind the scenes he was warmly greeted by Jock, and complimented upon the success he had attained.

"And do you really think we did it all right?" inquired Tom, eagerly.

"We have had a most enjoyable evening," replied Bob, soberly. "I can't understand yet why it was that you selected such a play for a popular audience."

"That was the schoolmaster's doings," said Tom. "I thought myself it was almost too difficult a piece; but he told us to get something good while we were at it, and something it would pay us to remember, so we chose 'Hamlet.' We give something almost every year, you see. Last year we gave the trial scene from 'Pickwick Papers,' but the folks here didn't seem to see the fun in it. They took it all in sober earnest, and never laughed from the beginning to the end. So this year we thought we'd try something in the tragedy line."

"Where do you get all the books you read, Tom?" inquired Bob.

"Some of them are in our school library and some the minister lends to us. We don't have very much besides history. I'm grateful to you," he added, turning to Bert as he spoke, "for hearing me speak my part up in the camp. It did me a sight of good."

"Don't mention it," said Bert, hurriedly.

Tom's reading had become a serious matter with our boys. His attainments had been so unlooked for, and, as far as the solid work was concerned, he had done so much more than they, that no one was inclined to belittle him now, no matter how much the young boatman's lack of familiarity with the manners and customs of "city folks" had impressed them upon their arrival at the camp.

"Heow was it? Pooty fair, I judge," said Ethan, who now approached the group, asking and answering his own question at the same time.

"The young people are to be congratulated upon the serious study they have given Shakespeare's masterpiece," said Mr. Clarke, before any of the boys could reply.

"Glad to hear ye say it," responded Ethan, who, in spite of his apparent contempt for Tom's studies, was nevertheless interested far more deeply than he cared to show. "I don' know much about sech things myself," he continued. "I never read one o' Dickens's plays, nor Shakespeare's neither, for that matter. I had to work fur a livin' in my young days; but Tom here, he has lots o' time, and he jist keeps his nose in a book pretty much all winter. What d'ye think o' it? Will it do him any harm?" he inquired of Mr. Clarke, somewhat anxiously.

"Not a bit, not a bit," replied Mr. Clarke, cordially. "In fact, I think I know of some young people who might profit by his example."

"I never did think there was sech a sight o' difference between city folks and country folks. Neow ye've seen this same performance in the place where you live, I take it?"

"Yes," replied Mr. Clarke.

"An' ye really think the young folks here hev done it about as well as the folks down to New York, do ye?"

"There were differences, of course. You must expect that."

"Of course; of course," said Ethan, delightedly. "Mebbe ye'd like to go over to Mis' Brown's. The young folks have gone there. They're to have some ice cream, I b'lieve. 'Twon't cost ye much, fur it's only eight cents a dish, two fur fifteen."

As it was not late, the invitation was eagerly accepted, an added zest being given when it was learned that the profits from the sale of the cream were to be added to those of the play, and that all were to be expended for the improvement of the walks in the little hamlet. The party accordingly made their way down the rough stairway and along the street, Tom having previously left them, and soon arrived at "Mis' Brown's," or the "Widow Brown's," as she was familiarly called by her neighbors.

Her establishment was found to be a unique one. A small "store" was in the front of the building, and on the few shelves were seen jars containing some toothsome, though apparently venerable, sticks of candy. Slate pencils, a few forlorn articles of "fancy work," spools of thread and such like necessities were the other parts of her stock in trade, but the sounds of revelry which came from an inner room left no doubt in the minds of the visitors as to the place where the ice cream was to be had, or as to the occupation which was then going on at the time.

Ethan boldly led the way, and as the door was opened, two long tables were seen, upon which were dishes of the famous article for which our party had come, and upon which the "young folks" already there were feasting. The unexpected entrance brought a solemn hush upon the room, and one young fellow who was standing near the head of one of the tables suddenly sank into his seat again.

"That's Tim Wynn," whispered Ethan. "He's been cuttin' up for the young folks, I s'pose. He's awfully funny, an' they all like to have him 'round."

"There doesn't seem to be any place for us," suggested Mr. Clarke. "Perhaps we'd better not stop to-night."

"I'll fix ye out in a minit," said Ethan, hastily. "Here's the widow, now. Mis' Brown, can't ye find a place for these folks? They want some o' yer ice cream, an' every one counts neow. Mebbe they'll buy enough to get another plank or two for the walks."

The hint was not to be lost, and speedily another table was prepared by placing two planks across some "horses," and as soon as chairs had been brought, the party all seated themselves and were speedily served, Ethan himself taking one of the chairs upon Mr. Clarke's invitation.

Miss Bessie whispered to Ben, who was seated beside her, that "it wasn't ice cream at all, it was only frozen corn starch;" but whatever the name may have been, the dishes were speedily cleared, Ethan's disappearing the most rapidly of all, as with heaping spoonfuls he swallowed the treat, apparently unmindful of its chilling temperature.

"I guess ye don't get nothin' better'n that deown to New York," he remarked with satisfaction, as he glanced up at Mr. Clarke.

"We never have anything just like this," replied Mr. Clarke, kindly. "Have some more, Ethan?"

"Thank ye, sir. I don' mind if I do, if it's all the same to you. Here!" he suddenly added, as if he had been struck with a sudden thought, "there's some lemingade, too. It's only three cents a cup, and I'll stand treat for the crowd."

"Permit me," said Mr. Clarke, quickly; and "lemingade" was at once added to the replenished dishes.

"Your young people are to be congratulated, Ethan," said Mr. Clarke, when all at last arose from the table. "You have quite a good-sized fund for your village improvements. Have you any idea how much they have made?"

"I don't s'pose they can tell jest yet. Prob'ly fifteen or twenty dollars."

"You can add this to the sum, with my compliments, then," said Mr. Clarke, as he slipped a ten dollar bill into the astonished boatman's hand.

Almost too surprised by the gift to express his thanks, Ethan responded to their "good night," and the party at once departed for their yacht.

It was a glorious summer evening they discovered when the boat moved out from the dock and began to speed over the silent river. In the moonlight the rushing waters glimmered like silver, and the low-lying shores cast shadows which were reflected almost as in the light of day. The silent stars twinkled in the clear heavens, and the air of eternal peace seemed to rest over all.

The young people were enjoying themselves too keenly to be silent long even amidst such surroundings, and as the experiences of the evening were recounted, in every way so novel and different from anything they

had ever seen before, their laughter rang out over the great river, and seemed to be caught up and sent flying by the very rocks and shores which they passed.

At last Miss Bessie started a song: "And every little wave has his night-cap on," and for a time all other things were forgotten; while Mr. and Mrs. Clarke joined in the spirit of the frolic as if they, too, were as young as their young companions.

Altogether the evening had been such an enjoyable one that it was almost with a feeling of disappointment that the boys at last perceived in the distance the white tents on Pine Tree Island. The songs had ceased now, and Bob said:—

"Mr. Clarke, I meant to have asked you to tell us the rest of that story about the pirate of the St. Lawrence."

"Who? Bill Johnston?" asked Mr. Clarke.

"Yes, I believe that was his name."

"Oh, well, that story will keep until next time."

"Yes, but the summer is almost gone now, and there won't be many 'next times.' We'll be going home soon."

"Not for some weeks yet, I trust. September is the most glorious of all the months on the river. When the leaves begin to turn, and the nights are so cool that you need a fire on the hearth in your cottage, and the air is so bracing that it is a delight just to breathe it, and the ducks begin to come, and you can vary your fishing with gunning, why, that's the best time of all the year. My nearest neighbors have even stayed here all winter, once or twice."

"It must be a wild sight here then," suggested Jock. "When the ice is so thick you can drive over it with a horse and sleigh, and the wind sweeps down the river at the rate of sixty miles an hour, it must be great fun to be here, and feel that you've got a good warm snug place, and can still see it all."

"Better to see it than feel it, I fancy," laughed Mr. Clarke. "I enjoy the river as much as any one, but I know where to draw the line. Still, if I could bottle up some of the September air and take it back to town with me, to use when occasion demanded, I should not object."

Miss Bessie and Ben had been taking no part in the general conversation, apparently being much more interested in one of their own.

"I want to ask you a question," she had said to Ben, who was seated next to her.

"Say on," responded Ben. "I'm all ears."

"Not quite all," replied the girl, glancing at Ben's long form as she spoke. "But what I want to know is whether you are really going to enter the canoe races next week?"

"Why?"

"Because."

"Oh, well, I'll have to tell you, you have such good reasons for asking. No one in the world, or at least in the camp, knows it; but I am going in."

"Aren't you afraid?"

"Afraid of what?"

"Oh, of falling into the water, or being beaten, or I don't know what."

"That remains to be seen," said Ben, sitting suddenly erect. "Now one good turn is said to deserve another, so as you've had a turn at me, I'll take mine now."

"What do you mean?"

"Are *you* going into the races?"

"Yes," replied Miss Bessie, after a brief hesitation. "That is, if my father is willing; but I don't want you to tell any one about it, either."

"Madam, I shall be silent. Do you recall the words of the immortal 'Hamlick' to-night on that subject?"

"No. What were they?"

"Let us go in together;
And still your fingers on your lips, I pray."

"Agreed," responded Miss Bessie. "I'll not tell about you, and you're not to tell about me."

"Oh you'll not tell," retorted Ben. "I never saw a girl yet who would do that."

The conversation was suddenly interrupted, for the yacht was now approaching the dock. To the surprise of the boys, they discovered that some one was in the camp, and hastily bidding their friends good night, they all turned and ran swiftly toward the tents.

CHAPTER XXX. BEN'S DISCOVERY.

It is doubtful whether Pine Tree Island, since the days when the red men had dwelt upon its shores, had heard such a shout as went up from our boys when they discovered that the visitor was Jock's father. When the lad learned that his mother was at Alexandria Bay, and that she and his father had come from New York that very day, nothing would satisfy him but to return to the hotel.

Before they departed, Jock's father explained that he had come over to the camp in the early evening with a boatman, but when he discovered that no one was there, he had decided to remain until they returned. As it

was now after ten o'clock, he had begun to feel somewhat uneasy; but the fact that all were gone, and that everything about the camp seemed to be in good order, had led him to believe that they could be in no danger, at all events, and so he had waited until the time when his patience had been amply rewarded.

After the messages from the other homes had been delivered, and Mr. Cope had satisfied himself that all were well, he said, "I think we'd better go back to the hotel now, my boy. Your mother will be uneasy about me, to say nothing of you."

"Do you think it will be safe for Jock to go?" inquired Bob, soberly.

"Safe? Why, yes. Why shouldn't it be safe?"

"Oh, I don't know. We've been living here in primitive style, you know, and whether Jock will remember how to behave is a question."

"It's time he reviewed his lessons, then," was the reply. "Good night, boys," he added, as he started toward the dock.

The campers followed Jock and his father to the dock, and as they were about to put off, Bob called out, "I say, Jock, don't forget to use your fork when you go into the dining room to-morrow."

"I'll try not to," promised Jock.

"And if I'm not mistaken they have napkins there, too."

"Good night, fellows. I'll see you in the morning," called Jock; and the skiff soon disappeared in the darkness.

Few words were spoken by the remaining campers that night as they prepared for bed. Perhaps the presence of Jock's father, and the eagerness of their friend to see his mother, may have produced similar longings in their own hearts; but if it was so, no one referred to them, and soon the great pile of logs was sending its ruddy glow over the shadows of the silent river, and the sounds which came from the tent indicated that any possible feeling of homesickness had at least been forgotten for the time.

When Bert awoke early in the following morning, he speedily discovered that he was alone in the tent. As he dressed himself hastily, and ran forth toward the bank of the river, he discovered the long form of Ben paddling in his canoe not far away, but Bob was nowhere to be seen.

It was such an unusual occurrence for Bob to be awake so early in the morning that the sturdy Bert was at a loss to account for his absence. As a rule, Bob was the last to appear for breakfast, and not infrequently a dash of cold water had been required to make him fully aware of the hour; and now to find him gone was, to say the least, surprising.

Ethan and Tom arrived, but still Bob did not appear. Ben came in from his daily task, but he, too, had not seen the missing Bob, and declared that he had left him sleeping in the tent when he himself had departed. The absence certainly was strange, and the boys were just beginning to feel uneasy as to the missing boy's whereabouts, when the lad in question was seen approaching the camp. But he was coming from among the trees, and his eager friends hailed him with the question,—

"Where have you been, Bob?"

"Out taking a peep at the rising sun."

"You've been taking more than that," exclaimed Ben, quickly, as he perceived that Bob's garments were all dripping wet. "You've been in the water."

"The early dew is heavy here," replied Bob, evasively, as he turned to the tent to change his clothing.

It was evident that Bob did not intend to disclose the purpose of his early rising, and Ben's suspicions were at once aroused. He concluded that his friend was practising for the race in which he himself was to enter. He did not refer to his surmise, however, and in a few minutes Bob came forth and took his seat at the table with his friends.

Soon after breakfast, Jock, accompanied by his father and mother, returned to the camp, and the greeting which Mr. Cope gave his old schoolfellow, Ethan, was one which warmed the heart of that worthy boatman.

"I thought mebbe ye'd forgotten yer old friends since ye've got so rich," said Ethan, soberly.

"Forgotten them? Why, man, they're the best part of my life. I've a painting of the old red schoolhouse hanging in my dining room, and I never see it without thinking of the boys and girls who were there years ago, and the good times we used to have."

"Got a pictur of it? Ye don't say so!" exclaimed Ethan, in surprise. "Well, I never thought nobody'd want a pictur o' that place. It's most gone to rack an' ruin now. I'm afeard we'll have to fix it up purty quick or it'll fall down o' itself."

"That's too bad; I should think the district would keep it in repair."

"The deestrick hain't got no money. The only folks hereabouts what has any money are mostly those who've gone off deown to New York. Seems as if 'most any fool could make money deown there. The' say as how Homer Perkins's boy has gone deown there, an' is a-gettin' a dollar an' a half a day the whole year through, an' all he has to do is to drive a hoss car."

Mr. Cope laughed as he replied, "I'm telling you the truth, Ethan, when I say I never worked so hard in my life as I do now. I used to pick up stones on the old farm, and haul and chop wood, and get up at four o'clock in the morning and milk eight or ten cows before breakfast, and then carry the milk to the factory, and that was before the day's work was supposed to have begun; but all that's as nothing compared with the way I have to work now."

Ethan was evidently incredulous, and said, "What time do ye get up in the mornin' now?"

"About eight o'clock."

"And I s'pose ye don't get down to yer store till about nine?"

"I usually go down to the office about that time."

"An' when do ye shut up?"

"Anywhere from half-past four to six."

"An' ye call *that* workin' harder 'n ye did on the old stone hill farm, do ye?"

"Yes, a good deal harder. It's true I used to get tired and go to bed some nights feeling as if every bone in my body ached, but I would go to sleep right away and forget it all, and next morning I'd be all ready for another day. Now I have to carry my load day and night, and there is no escape. I have hundreds, yes, thousands, of men dependent on me. When hard times come, and it sometimes seems to me that they come pretty often, I carry a good many of these men through just for the sake of their families, and when good

times come they seem to forget all about it, and some of them are always ready to make trouble. There are times, Ethan, when it seems to me my load is heavier than I can bear. I almost never have a day off, and sometimes I long to return to the old farm, and am hungry for its peace and quiet."

"I guess there ain't nuthin' to hinder ye from comin' back if ye want to," grunted Ethan. "The old place is for sale, an 'twon't cost over twenty-five or thirty dollars an acre. Ye can stand that much, can't ye? Yer boy here says he guesses ye're worth more 'n five thousand dollars."

Mr. Cope's cheeks flushed slightly, and he glanced reprovingly at Jock; but evidently wishing to change the subject, he said, "I fancy, Ethan, that most of the boys and girls who used to go to school with us are gone now."

"Pretty much."

"What's ever become of Hiram Munsell? Hi Munsell we called him."

"Oh, he went out to the state o' Milwaukee. He's got rich too, they say."

"Went where?"

"The state o' Milwaukee. He's a policeman an' gets a thousan' dollars a year, or leastwise that's what the report is. You know as much as I do about whether it's true or not. I hev my doubts, myself. Hi always was one to stretch it pooty good, as you may recommember yerself."

Mr. Cope glanced again reprovingly at the boys, who for some strange reason appeared to be highly delighted at the reference to the "state" to which the wealthy Hi had gone, and said quickly,—

"Well, Ethan, I want to talk over old times with you some more, and I want to go over to the old schoolhouse, too; but I'm to have only a day or two here, and I fancy the boys are more interested in my putting that to good use than they are in our reminiscences, so if you're agreed, we'll try the sport for a time. Can you take us fishing now?"

Ethan responded that he could, and when the two skiffs were made ready it was discovered that Bob was not to go with them. Ben said nothing, though his suspicions were at once aroused, and at first he, too, was inclined to remain in camp; but Jock's evident disappointment was so marked that he hastily recalled his words, and said that he would go, making one proviso, that he should be permitted to take his canoe with him.

Mrs. Cope was to remain in the camp, declaring that she wished to look after some of the belongings of the boys, which she said were in a "sad state," though just what she meant by the expression she did not explain, and that she was not in the least afraid of being lonesome. The party soon set forth in the skiffs, from one of which Ben's ever present canoe was towed, and Ethan directed the way to a spot where none of them had as yet been. Mr. Cope apparently was most enthusiastic of all. Whatever may have been his inability to cast aside his pressing problems when he was at home, here certainly they were not to be found, and he entered into the sport with all the zest of the boys themselves.

Their former successes in no way seemed to interfere with the eagerness of the campers in the present experience, and when at last Ethan and Tom rowed ashore to prepare dinner, they had all had a degree of success which corresponded with their most ardent desires.

After dinner the sport was resumed, but about the middle of the afternoon Ethan rowed his skiff close in to the other, and Mr. Cope called out: "Boys, we've decided to land over here and go up to the old schoolhouse, which isn't more than a mile and a half from the shore. Jock wants to go; and if you would like to go too, we should be glad to have you. What do you say?"

Ben looked at Bert a moment, and then said, "Thank you, Mr. Cope, Bert would like to go and so should I, but I ought to go back to the camp."

"Why? What's wrong?" inquired Mr. Cope, quickly.

"There isn't anything wrong, only I've something I ought to do. I was just thinking that I would take my canoe and go back, and leave you all here anyway. I didn't want to break up your sport."

"He wants to write a letter, I guess," said Jock. "Well, Bert, you come along, and let Ben go back if he wants to."

The proposal was agreed to, and Tom was to wait on the shore and guard the skiff while his companions were gone to visit the scene of Mr. Cope's and Ethan's earlier days. Ben did not wait, but hoisting his little sail began to speed over the river in the direction of Pine Tree Island.

What the urgent duty was which had induced him to depart from his companions became apparent when he approached within a half mile of the camp. He then lowered his sail and carefully scanned the river before him.

Apparently satisfied with the inspection, he took his paddle and began to send the light canoe swiftly over the water, but instead of making his way to the dock he paddled around to the opposite side of the island.

There he landed, and lifting his canoe, bore it up the shore and carefully concealed it among the bushes. Satisfied that he had not been seen, he cautiously made his way toward the shore of a sheltered bay not far away. As soon as he had arrived at a place from which the waters of the bay could be seen, he halted for a moment and peered cautiously about him.

Evidently not satisfied with what he saw, he began to advance again, stepping carefully from tree to tree, and at last arrived at a sheltered spot from which he could see both the shore and bay. Instantly he was deeply interested in something he there discovered, for he peered farther out from behind the tree, and watched Bob, who now could be seen near the shore.

"The rascal! He thought he'd fool us all," muttered Ben, as he watched his friend, who plainly was unaware that his actions were observed.

"What's that he's doing?" he suddenly added. "If that doesn't beat anything I ever saw before!"

So interested was Ben that he remained in the secluded spot for more than an hour, watching the movements of Bob, who was in sight all the time. Occasionally the watching Ben almost laughed aloud, and frequently uttered exclamations expressive of his astonishment or pleasure,—any one who might have heard him could hardly have told which,—but at last he retraced his way through the woods to the spot where he had left his canoe.

Speedily embarking, he paddled back around the island, and soon afterward approached the dock; and the first person he discerned there was Bob himself, seated on the edge and lazily swinging his feet out over the water.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE RACES.

Ben did not refer to his discovery, and after he had explained the reasons why he had returned alone to the camp he joined Mrs. Cope, who was seated in a camp-chair on the high bluff, and delightedly watching the constantly shifting scene which the great river presented. The pleasure Jock's mother felt in the marked improvement in her son's appearance was certainly shared by his two friends, and Bob demurely remarked that he even had hopes that Ben and Bert would also "improve," a wish which Ben laughingly declared was destined to be blighted.

As the shadows of evening began to appear, the return of the absent members of the party at once drew the attention of all to them, and while Ethan and Tom prepared supper, Mr. Cope described his visit to the old schoolhouse, and the enjoyment he had experienced in revisiting the scenes of his boyhood. His wife declared that she believed he had regained some of his boyish spirits too, for it had been long since she had seen him so animated and enthusiastic.

Just as Ethan announced that supper was ready, a skiff was seen approaching the dock, and a messenger-boy advanced with several telegrams, which Mr. Cope had left word at the hotel should be forwarded to the camp.

As Mr. Cope tore open the yellow envelopes, Ethan curiously observed his old-time friend, and when the telegrams had been read, said,—

"I hope ye haven't had any bad news, Jock?"

Mr. Cope laughed as he replied, "Rather bad for me, I fear. I shall have to return to New York to-night. You see, Ethan, I can't have more than a day off. I almost envy you your freedom."

"Did they send ye word in the telegrams?" inquired the boatman.

"Yes. They are about important business engagements."

"Bus'ness!" exclaimed Ethan. "I didn't s'pose any one ever telegraphed jist about bus'ness. I thought nobody ever telegraphed unless somebody was dead. Hi Perkins once telegraphed to his ma when he thought he was goin' to die with the pewmony; but it costs four shillin' for ten words, I'm told. Must be mighty important business what would make anybody send ye five or six on 'em."

"It is important; so important that I shall have to go back to the Bay and start for home to-night. I'm sorry, too. But then, if a business man doesn't have very much outside pleasure in life, his wife and children can have it, and he must take his in knowing that."

Soon after supper Mr. Cope bade good-by to the boatman and boys, and with Mrs. Cope and Jock departed for Alexandria Bay. Jock was to remain at the hotel for the night, but was to return to the camp in the morning, though his mother was to stay at the hotel until the boys should be ready to break camp and go home with her.

Apparently Jock's mother enjoyed the experience of the days which followed as much as did the boys themselves. Every day she was rowed over to Pine Tree Island, and sometimes the boys were persuaded to return with her for a dinner at the hotel, or to be present of an evening when something of special interest was occurring in the parlors.

Her friends, the Clarkes, also did much to add to the pleasure, for with their yacht they made various trips among the islands, or planned for picnics which were a never failing source of delight to all.

At last came the great day of the canoe races, and as it had been arranged that all the friends should go on Mr. Clarke's yacht to the place selected, and take a position on the river from which the races could be seen from beginning to end, the occasion had been looked forward to with great anticipations.

When the happy party stopped at the dock for Mrs. Cope and the boys, the greetings were unusually enthusiastic, for a more perfect day had not been seen since the campers had come to Pine Tree Island.

A few masses of silver clouds could be seen in the sky, but the sun was shining clear and strong. A gentle breeze ruffled the surface of the river, and the air was delightfully cool and bracing. Life was indeed worth living now, and as the light-hearted members of the party assembled on board the yacht, their laughter and joyous expressions seemed all a part of the day.

When Ben quietly picked up his canoe and placed that too on board, a shout greeted him; but as all already knew that he was determined to enter the contest, for he previously had entered his name, no one was surprised; but when, a moment later, Bob came, bringing with him a dress-suit case, evidently heavily laden, a fresh shout of surprise was given him.

"Oh, I knew Ben would fall into the water," he declared, "so I have brought a change of clothing for him. I'm very tender-hearted. It's my nature, though, and I can't help it, so you needn't bestow any praise on me."

"I shouldn't be surprised if you needed a change yourself," rejoined Ben, "before you've finished your race."

"Whom are you talking about?" demanded Bob, in surprise. "I haven't had any time to practise. I've been too busy."

"I know all about your busy-ness," retorted Ben, sharply.

Bob glanced up quickly, but Ben was looking out over the river now, and it was impossible to catch his eye. The yacht was free from the dock by this time, and was speeding swiftly down the river. For a time, apparently, all other things were forgotten in the joy of the morning. Other parties could be seen on the river, and it was evident that they too had started for the same destination, and as the voyage continued, the number of the boats steadily increased. Canoes, skiffs, steam-yachts, launches, sailboats, all were there, some draped with bright colors, all displaying flags, and every one carrying eager-hearted spectators who were acting as if life never had known a care or sorrow.

At last our party arrived at the place where the races were to be held, and bright-colored buoys, indicative of the course, could be seen on the water. Patrol boats kept the course free, and Mr. Clarke soon

selected a favorable place and his yacht was anchored.

Ben now prepared to take his canoe and start for the head of the course, where all those who were to participate were to assemble. As he lowered the canoe into the water, Bob approached him, and said soberly,

"I think I'll go with you, Ben. I've got your clothes here, and you'll need some one to look after you. I'm the kind-hearted friend to do that very thing."

"I was expecting you to say that," replied Ben. "I was wondering why you didn't speak up before. Where's your craft, Bob?"

"My craft! Why, I haven't any here, and you know it;" but a peculiar twinkle in Ben's eye caused him to approach, and a whispered conversation at once followed.

No one of the others could hear what was said, but the result was apparent when Ben consented to his friend's going with him, and in a brief time both boys were in the canoe, and Ben was ready to push off.

"You'll not forget that we have some luncheon on board, boys," called Miss Bessie. "You'll surely be back in time to have some of that."

"Don't be alarmed," laughed Ben. "I never knew Bob to be late for anything of that kind. I trust you have enough; for he'll be hungry, I can promise you."

A cheer followed the boys as Ben dipped his paddle in the water, and the canoe darted forward under his powerful strokes. His long form was not particularly graceful, but the speed of his canoe promised well, and Jock turned to the others and said,—

"I shouldn't be surprised if Ben did get a place in the finals to-day. He's improved wonderfully. The way he has kept at it is a lesson for us all. I wish he might win. I wonder what Bob really went with him for? Do you know I half suspect he's got a scheme of some kind of his own."

No one replied, for the sound of a pistol was now heard, and the first of the races was begun. It was a contest between cat-boats, and as the beautiful little crafts swept into sight and dipped low before the strong and favoring breeze, the shrill whistles of the steam-yachts, the waving of handkerchiefs, and the shouts of the people welcomed them.

As no one in our party was acquainted with any of the participants in this race, their interest naturally was not as keen as it was to be in some of the contests which were to follow, but they nevertheless were enthusiastic observers of the manœuvres of the skilfully handled boats. On they came, keeping well in line, their white sails and whiter sides glistening in the sunlight, and presenting a wondrously beautiful spectacle as they swept down the river.

As Mr. Clarke now discovered that most of the yachts were not anchored, but were free to follow the contestants outside the buoys, he, too, took his anchor on board and steamed down the river so that they could watch the boats all the way. The shores of the islands were lined with interested spectators, and the waving of bunting, and the cheers of the people, as the fleet boats approached, redoubled.

At last the stake was turned, and the boats started on the home stretch. They were not bunched as they had been, but three had gained over their rivals, and, well together, were tacking and striving each to gain an advantage over the others. It could be seen now that one was more skilfully handled than the other two, and soon it was distinctly gaining upon both. On and on they came, and finally the *Thistle*, bending gracefully before the breeze, swept first across the line, the men on board swinging their caps and shouting in their delight, while the screams of the whistles and the cheers of the spectators sounded shrilly in response. It certainly was a very inspiring sight, and the party on board Mr. Clarke's yacht, though they were strangers to the winners, were cheering as lustily in their delight as if it had been one of their own company who had secured the first prize.

A race between canoes equipped with double bat-winged sails followed, and the stirring scene was again enacted. The whistles blew and banners were waved, and the winning boat was as lustily cheered as the successful one in the first contest had been.

Then followed a contest between canoes with a single bat-wing sail, and once more the interest of the spectators voiced itself in the same expressive manner which had been used before.

The excitement on the yacht very markedly increased when it was learned that the next race was to be between canoes with one paddler in each.

In the row of beautiful little canoes which took their places in line, Ben's long form could be easily distinguished. As the party hailed his appearance with a cheer, Ben turned and discovered them, and while striving to wave his cap in response, almost destroyed his balance, and was very nearly thrown into the river.

There was no disposition among his friends to laugh now, and the girls uttered a little cry of dismay at the threatened mishap; but as Ben speedily regained his balance, they all became silent as they watched him intently. His long arms were bare, and his bright red sweater was to be easily distinguished in the line. In a moment the pistol sounded, and the racers were off.

There were seven contestants, and their paddles struck the water together. For a few minutes the line was almost unbroken; then it could be seen that three or four were pulling ahead of their rivals, and among the number was Ben. Faster and faster swept the frail little barks, and the interest of the spectators was evidently much keener than it had been in the other contests. The forms of the paddlers seemed to move like clock-work. The paddles were dipped rapidly and steadily, and the race between the leaders was very close. Slowly Ben gained upon his nearest rival and passed him, and then, with longer, swifter strokes, strove to gain upon the two who were still in advance of him.

Inch by inch, foot by foot, the distance decreased. Soon only about twenty yards remained between him and the end. Once more the determined boy bent to his task. His body swayed back and forth, the paddle was driven deeper into the water, and the light canoe seemed to gain increased speed. People were cheering wildly all about him, and a cloud of banners seemed to be waving on every side.

Again Ben responded, and was striving to use all his remaining power. He was not directly behind his competitors, being several yards to their left, and now he was not more than two feet in their rear. If only the course were a little longer, he thought, he would surely win; but shutting his teeth firmly together, he doggedly resolved to do his best. His eyes were almost closed, and his breath was coming in gasps.

Suddenly there was a moment of intense silence, as the shouting abruptly ceased, but Ben was oblivious of it all. In a moment, however, the shouting redoubled, there was a shrill screech of the whistles, and Ben

knew that he was across the line and alone.

As he turned about he discovered that his competitors had met with a mishap, and that one, in his zeal, had paddled directly into the other, and both canoes had been capsized in the collision. Their misfortune had left Ben the winner.

The yacht speedily approached, and as the girls waved their handkerchiefs and his friends called out their approval, Mr. Clarke assisted him to come on board.

"I can congratulate you on winning the race," said Mr. Clarke, cordially.

"Oh, I haven't won it," replied Ben, his flushed face beaming with pleasure. "That's only the preliminary. The finals are to come off this afternoon."

Somewhat disappointed, the party was headed up the river again, and soon approached the starting-place. They all laughed when they learned that a tub race was now to take place, and the astonishment of all except Ben was great when they discovered that one of the contestants was none other than their missing friend, Bob.

CHAPTER XXXII. CONCLUSION.

A tub race was a decided novelty to all the members of our party except the young ladies, who had seen one in the preceding summer, but there were special reasons now why they were as interested as their friends in the contest which was to take place. There were tubs large and small, some new and some evidently having seen hard service, and the paddles were of various sizes and ages. There were at least fifteen of the contestants, and Bob's sturdy form could be easily distinguished, for he was the fourth from the end nearest our friends.

The report of the pistol rang out sharply, and in a moment the race was begun. The scene which followed was one that begged description. The observant crowd of spectators shouted and cheered and laughed, and it almost seemed as if pandemonium itself reigned supreme. Meanwhile the contestants entered into the struggle with apparently all the zeal that had been manifested by their predecessors. The paddles were driven deep into the water and some of the men were making desperate efforts to outstrip their fellows. But the control of the awkward crafts was no simple matter. At times, for some unaccountable reason, the tubs would begin to turn and whirl, and, despite the efforts of the paddlers, would go in a direction apparently opposite to that which was desired. One poor fellow had already been thrown into the water, and as he was speedily drawn forth by his waiting friends, shouts of laughter seemed to be his only reward.

Bob was moving steadily with the current, and although several tubs were in advance of him, he did not appear to be troubled. He was not exerting himself as were most of the others, his foremost desire being to keep his tub from whirling and within the current.

Suddenly one of the tubs was seen to be headed directly toward Bob. The occupant struggled desperately to prevent a collision, but his efforts only served to increase his helplessness.

"Look out!" called Bob, sharply. "Keep off, or you'll hit me!"

The man endeavored to change his course, but his increased exertions only deprived him of what little control he still had, and in a moment the twisting, awkward craft came straight toward the alarmed Bob.

The lad was watchful, however, and as the tub came within reach he gave it a sudden push with his paddle and the peril was averted. The effect almost destroyed Bob's own balance, and for a moment it seemed as if he must be capsized, but as he righted himself he glanced at his rival, who was now in a sad state. He had raised his own paddle to return the thrust the anxious Bob had given him, but his zeal had not been wisely directed. The tub leaned dangerously to one side and as the boatman strove to right it, he threw himself too far to the other side, and after "wabbling" for an instant, it suddenly capsized and threw its occupant into the water. As he came to the surface he hastily swam to the upturned tub, and was soon rescued by the men who were skirting the racers for that very purpose.

Bob, however, had no time to waste upon his unfortunate competitor, and was carefully guiding his own treacherous craft. He could see that some of the desperate men about him were going sidewise or backward, and were striking out wildly with their paddles, striving to change the method as well as the direction of the procedure. Others were whirling and spinning about in a manner to make even an observer dizzy, to say nothing of the struggling paddler himself. Bob was not striving for speed, and was trusting much to the swiftness of the current to bear him on toward the coveted goal, and as he drew near the end, the wisdom of his course became apparent. Those who had been in advance of him were losing the advantage they had gained by some unfortunate stroke of their paddles, which sent their unwieldy tubs to whirling madly, and speed and control were soon both lost.

On and on moved the few tubs which still were in the race, bobbing up and down, and frequently stopping and whirling madly about as if some sudden and irresistible impulse had seized them. The confusion increased as the goal could be seen, and the first prize lay between Bob and two rivals.

Slowly and carefully Bob increased his stroke, and now only ten feet yet remained to be crossed. The three tubs were close together, and bunched for the final effort. Suddenly Bob drove his paddle far down into the water, and exerting all his strength, sent his tub forward with his final effort; but directly in front of him one of his rivals had drifted, and in a moment they struck together. The other contestant, to save himself, had instantly grasped Bob's tub and "wabbling," careening, threatening every moment to capsize, the two crossed the line together, and their mutual rival was a full yard behind them.

Instantly the whistles and shouts announced the end of the race, and Bob's rival turned good-naturedly to him and said,—

"I've got the first prize and you the second, though you wouldn't have had it if I hadn't towed you over the line."

"That's for the judges to decide," laughed Bob. "I think you fouled me and held me back with your hands, or I'd been first."

The boats now swarmed in, and, amidst the laughter of the people, it was decided that the first prize should be divided, for the two tubs had crossed the line after the manner in which the Siamese twins had moved through life, together.

"It's another case of 'united we stand, divided we fall,'" remarked Bob, as the decision was announced.

But there was no opportunity for further conversation, for Mr. Clarke's yacht now steamed close in, and Bob and his tub were received on board.

"A wise man of Gotham who went to sea in a bowl," said Miss Bessie, as Bob quietly took his seat. "I congratulate you."

"Thank you," replied Bob. "Did you say you had had your luncheon?"

"No, we've been waiting for the victor. We'll have it now."

As she departed to look after the various baskets, Jock said, "Bob, you're the greatest fellow I ever saw. You never seem to be working much, but yet you always come out all right. It's the same way with your studies. You don't work as hard as I do, but you always beat me. I don't understand it."

"Don't you believe that Bob doesn't work," interrupted Bert. "I know him better than you do. It's the thing he doesn't do that helps Bob, as much as what he does do. Now I watched him out there in the race. Most of the other fellows were striking out with their paddles in every direction, but Bob here just watched the current and let that do most of the work. It's the same way with his studies. Most of the fellows spend half their time in fussing around and getting ready, and then breaking in on their work after they've once begun. But you never saw Bob do that. He never makes a false move, or an unnecessary one, and when he starts, he just keeps at the necessary things and lets the others go. Bob does so well because he makes everything count."

"That's the secret of success, young man," said Mr. Clarke. "The reason why so many men fail in life is because they waste their time and strength in unnecessary things, and don't learn what not to do."

"I think our luncheon is ready now," said Miss Bessie, as she rejoined the group. "I had a basket of fruit I was going to give you," she added, speaking to Bob, "but I'm afraid it's spoiled."

"Never mind. To the victors belong the spoils," said Ben. "Give it to him just the same."

A groan followed Ben's pun, but the sight of the welcome baskets speedily banished all other thoughts, and for a time the scene on board the yacht was one in which all who were there certainly rejoiced. The perfect summer day, the sight of the many boats moving about over the river, the bright colors to be seen on every side, the animation and happiness of those on board the yacht, were sufficient to inspire all, and certainly the party in which we are particularly interested was not one that required much beyond the youth and health which were theirs to make them have an enjoyable time.

Their delight was increased when in the "finals" for the canoe races Ben was able to secure third prize. He himself was more than content with the award, for he had been compelled to enter the lists against some who had had the practice and experience of many summers, and he had had but one. His long arms, and, above all, his persistence in the face of all obstacles, had availed; and when our boys returned to camp they were highly delighted with the achievements of the day, as we may be well assured were the other members of the party.

On the way home Mr. Clarke had related the further story of the exploits of the "pirate," Bill Johnston, but it is doubtful whether any of the party retained a very clear recollection of the dark doings of the aforesaid Bill, and even Bob himself had only a dim impression that after various brilliant-hued deeds, in the so-called patriot war, he had been captured and taken to Albany, but had soon procured a release and returned to the Thousand Islands, where among his various occupations he had been keeper of one of the lighthouses to the day of his death.

Miss Bessie had not entered the canoe races, as her father had objected, but she had expressed her willingness to race with Ben whenever he felt disposed to enter into a contest with her. Whether it was her challenge or not, I cannot say, but in the days which followed there were many hours spent by our boys at "The Rocks," or in coursing over the river in Mr. Clarke's fleet yacht.

And what days they were! Every morning brought its own fresh experiences, and it was the regular thing for the boys to declare at night when they returned to the camp and prepared for bed, that *this* was the best day yet.

But all things are said to have an end, and certainly the camp on Pine Tree Island proved to be no exception to the rule. The September days had come, and though the crowds about the river became decidedly thinned, our boys still remained, and Jock's mother was still at the hotel at Alexandria Bay. Only one week remained before the beginning of the fall term in college, and it was at last decided that on the morrow the camp should be broken.

It was with special pleasure the last evening in camp that Jock broached a subject to Ethan and Tom in which he had been deeply interested, and concerning which he had had much correspondence with his father, and that was the promise of a position for Tom in Mr. Cope's office in New York.

Ethan at first was inclined to demur, but at last gave his consent, inasmuch as the position promised to be one which eventually might yield even more than the marvellous "dollar and a half a day," to which he had made such frequent references during the summer.

The last visit to the Clarkes had been made, the last sail taken in Ethan's catboat, the last spin enjoyed in the canoes, and now the boys were seated together for the last time before the roaring camp-fire, which in honor of the occasion had been made even larger than usual. Far out over the river the flickering lights cast their shadows. The moaning in the tree tops was more pronounced, as was only fitting in a September evening and before the departure of the boys. The sound of the laughter in the camp was more subdued, and all seemed to feel the sadness of parting, even from such inanimate objects as the rushing river and the green-covered islands.

For a time the boys were silent, then Ben, who could not long refrain from talking, said, "It's been a great summer, Jock. I don't know how we'll ever repay you."

"You have done that already," replied Jock. "I'm glad you fellows have had a good time. I know I've enjoyed it."

"There's been only one drawback," suggested Ben.

"What's that?"

"That volume of C's in the Cyclopædia. Cartier, Champlain, Caven, Cortereal, Chimney Island—"

"Oh, that's all right, too," replied Jock, laughing. "We've been on *The Trail of the Early Discoverers*, haven't we? Well, we ought to know something about them. We haven't had enough to spoil us."

"I trow not," interrupted Bob, solemnly.

"I say, fellows," said Jock, as a sudden thought seemed to strike him, "wouldn't it be a great thing to keep on with this! We've been on this trail this summer; now, why shouldn't we keep on and follow them into other places next summer?"

"A colossal idea," said Bert, "if it can be worked out."

"I'm going to fix that," said Jock, decidedly. "Come on now, fellows, it's time we were in bed. Let's fire off the cannon for the last time."

In a moment the roar of the cannon awoke the echoes, and then silence rested over the camp and the river.

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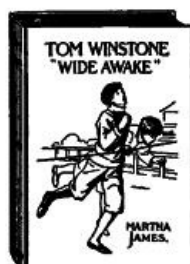
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