

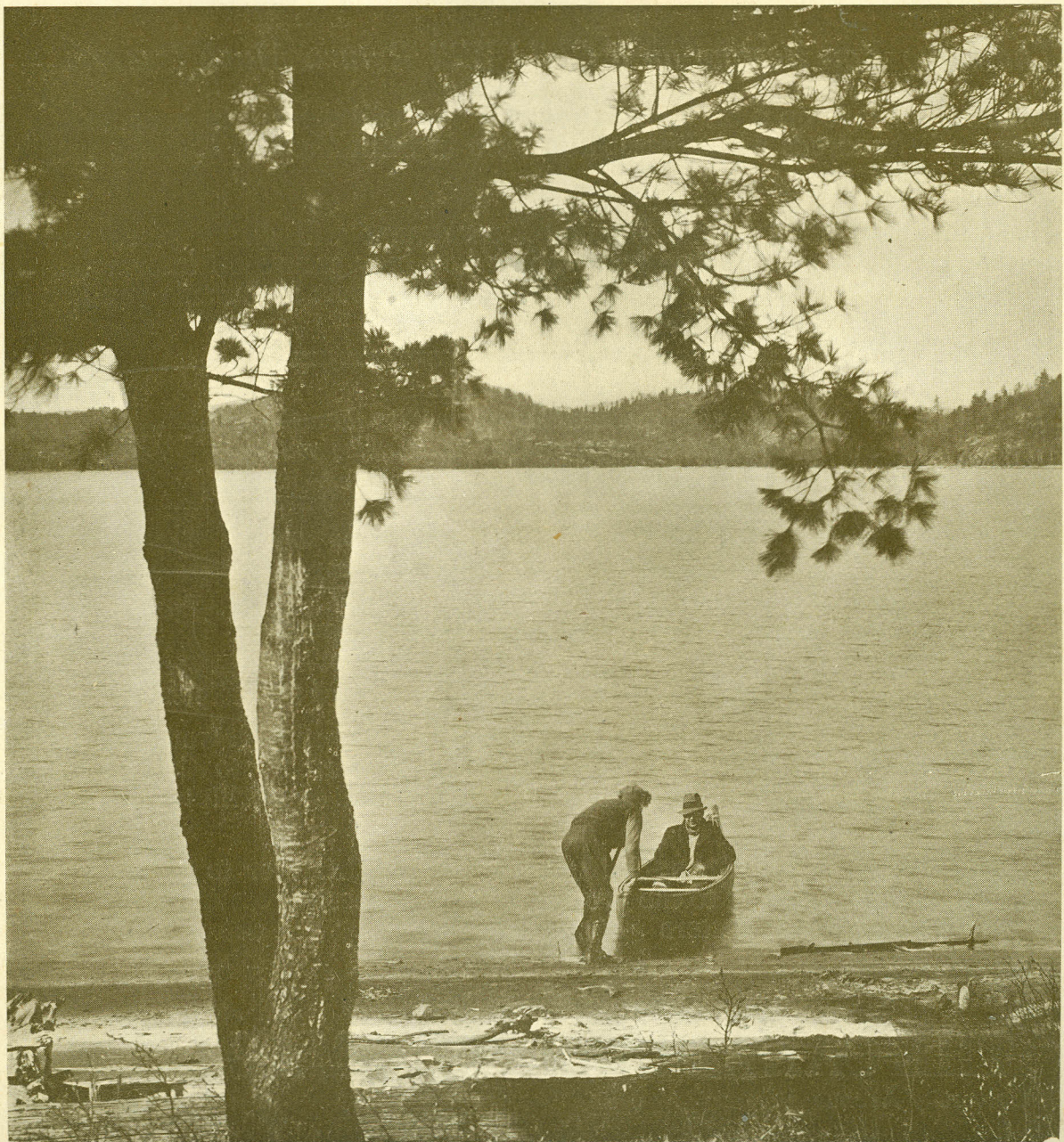
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THE CANADIAN CHILD

A MAGAZINE FOR MOTHERS



A Canoe Trip in Hastings County

With Rare Beauty and Good Sport to Beguile the Way

By ELIZABETH H. MILLS

FOR many years now, I have spent the summer at a small lake about thirty-two miles northeast of Belleville, but it was not until last year that I saw anything of the surrounding country. Friends who have a cottage near us, had been taking a yearly canoe trip from Crowe Lake up through Belmont Lake and Deer Lake, for several seasons and after a long discussion as to ways and means, we decided to join them, making a party of eight, three to go in each canoe and two in the rowboat and to take with us supplies for two days.

Unlike most days which are looked forward to, the morning we started was perfect, not a cloud to be seen anywhere, and not a ripple on the lake. We left at seven and by a quarter to nine had entered the gap which brought us out just below the first rapids. Fortunately for us, the water was quite high at the season and by careful steering we got through between the stumps and dead-heads without mishap. The water we found was also high enough to enable us to pass the rapids without portage.

By this time we were absolutely out of sight of anything civilized and the scenery around us was becoming more and more beautiful. There was not a sound, save for the songs of birds and the dull splash of a turtle frightened from his log by our sudden appearance. A spell seemed to fall upon us and not a word was spoken until we came within hearing distance of the second or Black Snake Rapids. The silence once broken, everyone began pointing out things of interest as we went along: a crow's nest perched at the top of a dead pine tree which towered with naked branches far above the level of the other trees, seeming even in death to be majestic; a dead turtle with piles of broken eggs around it, lay at the foot of a steep sand-bank; a group of arrowheads, that common water-plant which many of us had studied in biology but had never seen growing; myriads of fragrant white water lilies—and at last, the first glimpse of the rapids themselves with a cart-wheel lying stranded in the middle. It was here we had to make our first portage and while waiting for the men to don their bathing suits we picked wild blueberries and wintergreen which grew thick along the bank.

There was a huge flat rock stretching out into the river and on it we gathered to watch the boats being pulled through. With the water swishing about them, the men came on, now up, now down, ankle deep, then shoulder deep in the water, which to the onlookers had a decidedly chilly appearance in July. Following them along, we got into the boats five or six hundred yards further on.

One of our party, who had taken the trip before, informed us that the third or Half-mile Rapids were not a great way off and that it was scarcely worth their while

changing to their clothes then, so on we went again and this time I was paddling in the bow of the canoe and was given very strict orders to watch carefully for rocks. This I did as well as possible but owing to the peculiar colour of the water it was almost impossible to see a rock until we were on it. The first one we got over with a few scrapes but the second, a huge boulder with an almost flat top, we were stranded on and one of the bathing suit brigade was obliged to climb out, push us off and swim ashore, where we picked him up again.

AFTER that, things went very quietly for the next half hour. We caught an occasional glimpse of a muskrat or a woodchuck but nothing broke the stillness but my frantic attempts to kill deer flies which followed our canoe and bit me so many times that I began to have visions of great knobs rising from the bites. The slapping continued so long that it was suggested that I resembled the tailor in Grimm's who killed seven at one stroke. Certainly I felt savage enough, as I counted as many as sixteen flies around me.

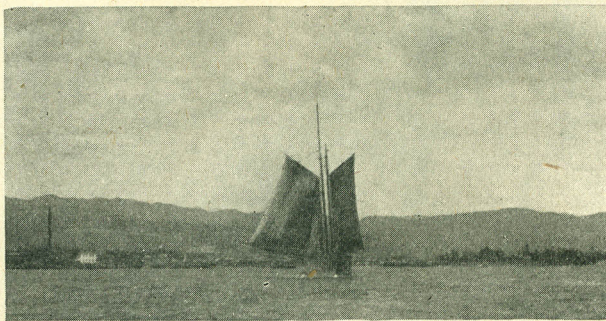
By this time the sky had darkened until I could not find even a trace of the beautiful blue which had been there earlier in the morning and a distant rumble of thunder warned us of an approaching storm. The wind was rising, although at the moment it did not disturb us in this sheltered river. We paddled now with renewed vigour and were soon at the foot of the rapids. With a half mile walk before us and a half mile pull for the others, we did not stop long to discuss our prospects.

It was just noon now and we saw the first and only farmhouse on the way. We were greeted by a flock of

sheep and more especially by a ram as we came out on cleared ground. Needless to say, we did not linger!

A very steep hill claimed our undivided attention for some time and then a bridge loomed in view. One after another, we climbed the rail fence and stood on the bridge watching the men, who seemed to be enjoying themselves immensely, sitting on the ends of the boats and paddling along, but an occasional move on their part told us that there were still rocks in the way. As they came up to the bridge, the water became quite shallow and it was impossible for us to get in there so we agreed on another half mile walk to the place where we had planned to have dinner. Along our path were wild raspberry and blackberry bushes covered with the most luscious fruit and we picked and ate as we went.

WE came finally to a clearing about twenty-five by thirty feet. A fireplace, already built and a couple of logs with flat boards between, told us we had found
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A type of boat peculiar to the lower St. Lawrence. Snapped from the deck of the steamer "Northland."

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the right place and we set about making a fire to cook the steak when the boats would arrive.

A few newspapers covered the table; bread was cut and put out with butter and salad, the meat was just done and I was serving it, when there came an extra heavy peal of thunder and then torrents of rain. Fortunately we had tipped the canoes over our bedding and supplies. We had with us a raincoat and a table oilcloth. With the plate of bread in one hand and a piece of meat in the other I made for the trees. One of the girls followed with a cup of tea and the oilcloth and behind her came her sister, likewise laden. We managed to get the oilcloth over our heads and by putting my meat on a piece of bread, I continued my interrupted meal.

We were nearly swimming by this time, but still laughing as one after another came out to grab tea or meat or a piece of bread. Not one of us thought of butter for that meal! The butter by this time was floating gaily in a dish of rain water. Though quite severe, the storm did not last long, and twenty minutes later we were sitting at the "table" once more, and we finished our meal, damp but not damped! With the fire blazing

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cheerfully again we were soon dry and ready to go on.

The portion of Belmont Lake which could be seen from here, looked almost impassable. Great, white-capped waves broke against the shore, dashing their spray far up the bank. The question was whether or not we should go on, but the majority voted to forge ahead and we were soon settled in the boats again.

Once out on the lake it was not bad, and we found the wind in our favour. Quickly our boats sped across the lake and we entered the almost unseen mouth of Deer River, and just at the turn, those in the skiff caught an eight or nine-pound lunge.

Waiting for them to catch up to us, I could not help noticing the peculiar transparency of the water. Every pebble on the bottom could be seen clearly, and thinking it could not be deep, I tried to touch bottom with the paddle. Reaching as far down as I dared, I could not even scrape a pebble. As we stayed there, motionless again, I could see several small bass and sunfish swimming about us and as the sun burst from the clouds and hit the water, the spots of the sunfish were like the colours of the rainbow. How small they are in the fish world and yet how gorgeously they are coloured!

THE others joined us, then, and on we went up the narrow winding river lined on both shores with birches and willows, pines and cedars, and beyond them, what appeared to be dense forest. Just ahead of us, a raccoon swam across, and scrambling up the other side, disappeared. Then more rocks and more rapids, not a hundred feet long this time, but still we were obliged to walk around them.

Just five more turns, some one told us, as we got in again. Four—three—and here was a bare spot of sawdust, the remains of an old sawmill; two—only two more turns before we should see the falls. Listen! Can't you hear them? Finally we rounded the last turn and once more we were in rapids. This time the men got out and guided the boats, while the rest of us watched eagerly for our first glimpse of Deer Falls.

(Continued next month)