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Algoma Letter
A trip to Algoma is now such an ordinary affair, and the famous North Channel route so popular with excursionists that it appears to be telling people what they already know, to mention any of attractions of an excursion from the towns at the South of the Georgian Bay, through the island-dotted channel, to the North of the Grand Manitoulin, the Sault River and to Mackinaw in Mackinaw Sts., at the entrance to Lake Michigan. But the thousands who every summer haunt the lakes of Muskoka, the waters of the St. Lawrence, or crowd the hotels of every port in Algoma are but the few, the mass of the people stay, and one in a hundred takes a vacation, more's the pity. Few even of excursionists learn much of the places or country they pass, even if they lay off awhile at one of the ports, their knowledge of the district generally savors more of black bass, and fossils, and boating, and a few Indian words, than of anything else. Quite properly so, perhaps, they come for pleasure and they get it. So perhaps a little about our country may be of interest, even if we do not take the round trip to the Sault and Mackinaw.

I did not greatly enjoy my return trip. We took the boat at Warton at midnight after a tiresome ride on the train, could get no stateroom, and like a great many more had to snatch a little sleep on a lounge. The officers of the boat did all it was possible to do to make us comfortable, but that was not much, with such a crowd aboard. One of them finding me with my head pillowed on the softest portion of a cane-bottomed chair, and my feet entangled among the extremities of a red-whiskered Hibernian occupant of the next lounge, kindly brought a softer rest for my head, but left my feet to the mercy of red-whisker's dreams. These dreams must have been of Parnell or Salisbury surely, no other subject would have excited the same vigor, I am certain. However it was pleasant next day, though there was too much of a crowd to be really enjoyable. It is but fair to the company running boats on this route to say that they had no reason to expect such a rush as there has been this summer, and were not prepared for it. Formerly one boat a week extended its trip to Mackinaw as an excursion, this summer every trip by each boat was a "Mackinaw," and yet the boats were too much crowded, not too much crowded for safety, but for comfort. Excursionists were obliged to secure their state-rooms one or two trips ahead to be sure of them. The "Mackinaws" are over now, but already we hear of preparations for better accommodation of passengers for next season. A large steamer, with all the newest improvements, and a speed of 18 knots an hour, is spoken of.

The unusual heat, perhaps, had something to do with the extra number of visitors. They came up here to cool off, and were quite successful. While you of Lower Ontario were sweltering with the heat of 100 Fahrenheit, the people here endured about as patiently a temperature ten degrees lower, visitors enjoyed the difference though.

The run from Warton is about one hundred miles due north to Killarney on the north shore, which we reached about 10 a. m. There was little of interest in the trip. There was some fog, and the islands usually in view were hidden, the people lounged and chatted, and read, or pretended to do so, or questioned the officers, and displayed as much ignorance of geography as a third-class public school boy should be ashamed of. Judging by the books held in hand, rather than read, the author of "She" is the most popular writer just now, "King Solomon's Mines" and "Allan Quatermain" being almost the only books in sight.

Killarney is the first point where granite, Indians, Halfbreeds, fish, blueberries, Indian sweet grass work and wigwags astonish the passengers, and they abound here. So everybody goes ashore, and feasts eyes and stomachs on the productions. Killarney would be a pretty place if the uncanny appearance of many of the inhabitants and the odor of fish did not war the impression. With its rocky islands across the narrow channel that leads past the place, the rugged almost bare mountains in the background, it should be one of Nature's pictures. Speaking of Indians reminds me of the question often asked down your way, of the number of Indians on the Manitoulin Reserve. From Killarney to Manitowaning we had aboard the Indian Agent who resides here. He had been paying the Indians at Killarney their annuities. Naturally our conversation turned upon the Redman, and he gave me considerable information about those on the reserve under his control. There are about one thousand eight hundred Indians on the east end reserve, besides several small reserves of about one hundred each on the north shore of the island, and more on the mainland.

It is a very common belief, but a very mistaken one, that the Indian races are dying out. Probably it was true at one time, when the advance of the white man destroyed the hunting grounds, and in other ways cut off their means of livelihood. The Indian then reached the lowest ebb of a miserable existence, now he has begun to ascend, as he has learned a little more of the white man than his vices. Their number is increasing, I believe, because they live better than formerly. It is rather a curious fact that among the halfbreeds the increase is much more rapid than among pure blooded Indians. But this is most probably explained by the better habits and greater industry of the halfbreeds. Not that the halfbreed is a creature of good habits, or very industrious, he is very low morally and in every way, and the pure Indian is lower still.

When the Indian Department by the Robinson Treaty received the lands of the Manitoulin from the Indians and opened the country for settlement, the Indians were guaranteed the payment of a certain sum per head per annum from the interest on the money received from the sale of their lands to settlers. But this Indian annuity business may become a burden on the Department yet; the Robinson Treaty was framed, apparently, on the assumption that the Indian "must go," that he was going, and would soon be known no more except as a history. The framers of the Treaty reckoned without considering the facts; the Indians are here to stay, and the Indian problem may be yet a greater care than it has been. Certain it is that the only way to make the race a help and not a burden to our country, is to help them rise in the scale of civilization.

But enough of Indians, they are very little thought of here, though the Indian village, Wikwemikong, is one of the chief points of interest near here. Few tourists to our town miss a visit to it. A boat ride a mile across the bay, then a ride of six miles over a good road behind Indian ponies, brings one to the village. Little time is spent looking at the small hewed log houses, without fence or ornament mostly, but if possible a visit is made to the stone church, a large one for the place, the boys' school, the convent, and girls' school. The boys and girls learn to read in English, and learn also how to work like "Shogo nosh," which he somewhat despises. Who would expect to find in this hiding place men who have pursued their studies in France and Italy! Here are young men too, the Brothers, teaching in the schools and studying under the Professor for ordination as priests, all under the charge of one Father. A lonely time they have surely, but some of them are in love with the work, to them it is a work of faith. They are worthy successors of the Fathers who gave their lives for these Indian races in the days of French rule, leaving mementoes of their presence in the names of lakes, rivers and bays, and a few of them rude mementoes which protect their last resting place.

These remote villages, like Manitowaning, have pleasures and enjoyments peculiar to themselves—pleasures that give muscle and vigor. A long walk here is not regarded as a serious matter, a drive of a hundred miles is an ordinary affair, a twenty-five mile row is only a pleasant trip. Two others and myself took such a row a few days ago. We started out in the teeth of a headwind, but we had consulted a barometer, and the wind should have gone down. However, barometers are not infallible, it seems, and we had the headwind and sea all the way, and more of it as we proceeded. But "more power to your elbow," and the boat keeps going. We reached Little Current after over six hours' hard rowing, with two rests, a little weary and hand sore, but as ravenous as wolves. We returned next morning in five hours with the bay quiet.

I am satisfied to return here after my vacation. There is a freedom and vigor about these places that one feels not in older places. Every pleasure gives sound sleep and a big appetite; there seems to be animation in the very air. The very enjoyable summers almost reconcile one to the monotony of the long and rather dull winter.

J. BASSINGTHWAITE.

Our Toronto Letter.
I am afraid that the readers of THE LIBERAL will by this time have arrived at the conclusion that I have been very remiss during the past month in writing them as to what was going on in Toronto. Had I been in the city I should no doubt have to plead guilty to the charge; but like many of my friends I have been off for my summer holidays, and have therefore not been in a position to fulfil my usual duties. I will try and make amends by telling your readers something of that part of the country that I was in, and of which comparatively little seems to be known at present.

It was one evening in the beginning of August when in company with a neighbor who was going to lay out a township on

the Upper Ottawa for the Ontario Government, that I left Toronto by the North-ern Railway. In the morning we arrived at North Bay, a rising town at the junction of the Northern and the C. P. R., and which is 230 miles north of Toronto. From there we took the C. P. R. for Mattawa on the Ottawa River, where our men were hired and the balance of our provisions obtained. Mattawa is an incorporated village and is 46 miles east of North Bay and 190 miles above Ottawa City. I had not expected to see such a lively little place in what I had always regarded as a wilderness. Most of the people are French Canadians, but nearly all of them speak English as well as their own language.

Our destination was one hundred miles farther up the river, and the morning after our arrival at Mattawa we boarded the little steamer which was one of the line running between that point and the French Canadian settlements on Lake Temiscamingue, and began the remainder of our journey. The banks of the Ottawa here are in places five and six hundred feet high and the scenery is grand. Every few miles we had to land on account of the rapids and cross a portage to another steamer waiting for us on the other side. This of course took some time, and it was midnight when we arrived at the head of the Long Sault Rapids, where Lake Temiscamingue, which is an enlargement of the Ottawa River, begins. The river in many places here is very deep. The captain of the steamer stated to us that some men going down on a raft a short time ago endeavored to anchor it. Three coils of rope, each nine hundred or a thousand feet in length, were fastened together and attached to the anchor, and all was let out, when they at length gave up the attempt to anchor in despair.

On Sunday morning we arrived at Priest's Bay, the headquarters of the French Canadian Colonization Society, and here we remained until the next day. About one hundred families are settled here and in the neighborhood, but they have accomplished very little in the way of clearing up the land, and little enterprise of any kind is apparent. The crops looked well and the land appears to be of a good quality. A large tract has been granted by the Quebec Government to the Colonization Society, which disposes of it at thirty cents an acre. No one is allowed to settle there without the consent of the Society, the aim of which is to make it a French Canadian settlement. From what I could gather it is almost a religious enterprise, and only Roman Catholics are allowed to take up land there.

At noon on Monday we arrived at our destination, and the next day began work. The township is six miles square, and nearly all the land is good clay loam. The principal timber is spruce, balsam, birch, poplar and cedar. It is not large, varying generally from three to eighteen inches in diameter, and in some parts I have no doubt a man could chop an acre in a day. A river passes through the entire length of the township and a number of little streams run into it. The land I am told is far better than that on the Quebec side of the river, and it certainly presents greater inducements to settlers. Almost everything grown in the neighborhood of Toronto can be raised there and can be readily disposed of to the lumbermen who require large quantities of supplies every year. Hay is selling this year at thirty-five dollars per ton, oats at seventy-five cents per bushel and flour at over four dollars per hundred. A settler could obtain work at good wages in the lumber camps during the winter time. The French Canadians, knowing the value of this land, have been endeavoring to obtain control of it, but without success, and it is to be hoped it will be settled up by Ontario farmers. In the township below the one our party was in, there is a clearing where crops have been raised for several years and at the time of our departure, the beginning of September, there had been no frost there.

Our trip down the river for the greater distance was a very pleasant one, and had I space at my disposal I would go into particulars more fully. I was not, however, at all sorry to get home again.

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