

nor (2) too great a depth for the key to be depressed before the hammer hits the string. A pressure of about $2\frac{3}{4}$ ozs. should be enough for the bass keys, $2\frac{1}{2}$ ozs. for the middle of the key-board, and $2\frac{1}{4}$ ozs. for the treble. There should be no lumpiness nor drag in the touch, no feeling that the finger has first to overcome a decided resistance and then to fall limply by its own weight—a piano which has the least lumpiness in its touch is one to be avoided. Three-eighths of an inch is about the usual *depth* of a good touch. This will ensure quick and perfect *repetition*—a great desideratum. Try a few rapid scale passages on repeated notes in several portions of the key-board, so :—



The rapid and effective *damping* or silencing of the strings after the fingers have left the keys, should be carefully seen to. The dampers should come into contact with the strings without the least noise, even when a chord or single note has been struck *ff*. A piano which has a *double-damper action* is to be preferred. The long, heavy strings in the bass often generate high ringing *overtones* (or harmonics, as they are sometimes called); a double-damper action prevents or silences these. Good judges always try if the hammers will “kiss” the strings—*i.e.* whether

they will cause the strings to sound under the softest possible touch when the keys are merely stroked or caressed by the fingers. (Another romance of the keyboard!)

Our examination of the piano is nearly finished, but not quite. We must see whether the two pedals act effectively and noiselessly, and we must observe also the height of the keyboard from the ground. Twenty-eight and a half inches is a good height, measuring from the upper surface of the keys downwards to the ground. See that there is a conveniently-arranged music-desk. In some upright pianos the desks are so badly contrived, that no book of any size (such as a volume of Beethoven's Sonatas) will remain standing open, but will come tumbling down “over the noisy keys” unless it is held in its place by a second person.

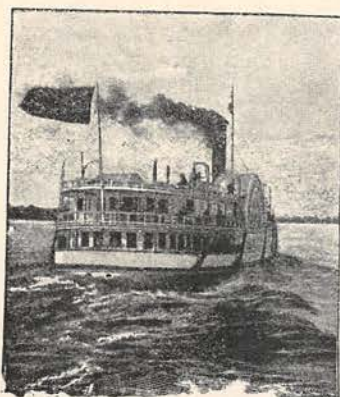
It is also a matter of considerable importance that the wooden back which carries the iron frame should be of the strongest construction possible. This back not only gives support to the iron frame, but prevents that frame from being fractured when the piano is being jarred and jolted during its transit by road, rail, or sea.

Enough has been said to show that it is really a difficult task to successfully choose a piano, and one which is decidedly better left to the experience of a skilled professional musician. Sometimes even good judges may be deceived in an instrument.



ON THE CANADIAN LAKES AND CANALS.

BY MARGARET POLSON MURRAY, MONTREAL.



ON THE LAKES.

equal it, and in few are there such facilities for enjoying it.

THE praises of a Canadian winter have long been sung. Who shall sing us those of a Canadian summer? It must be known and felt to be appreciated. In few countries in the world is there anything to

Not a river or a lake that has not temptingly steamers. Not a province that does not abound in charming and varied tours. Those who “rush it” have the whirling train. For pleasure, we take the water, the canals, the lakes, with their wayside life and traffic.

A steamer puffs and waits for us at the dock in Montreal on a September morning. The saloon is bright with mirrors and flowers, and our state-rooms are clean and comfortable. From the galley comes an odour of roasting and broiling that telephones to us a pleasant anticipation of breakfast. Freight has been piling on all night, with its noise and bustle. Now all is quiet for the passengers to embark. In the freshest of mornings we step on, and the gangway is shoved ashore.

There is a screaming too-too-too from the engine, and we are off. The captain looks



A DISTANT VIEW.

sociable. The sun is playing round the wavelets. We have an excellent party. There is no mistake about our holiday this time.

The most formidable of the rapids in our course are escaped by a series of the most magnificent canals in the world. Through one after another we pass quietly and systematically, here and there jostling with the traffic of the upper lakes on its way to the sea—long streams of barges with grain for hungry Europe. We pass mill after mill, dock after dock, till at Lachine we strike out into Lake St. Louis. The locksman, pipe in mouth (the French-Canadian smokes from sunrise to sunset of his life) waves us good-bye as we steam away from the bustle of trade. At the extreme end of the lake, with its yachting clubs, its regattas, its canoes, its songs, its tents and camp-fires, we come upon another canal, at whose further end we pass Valleyfield, with its huge cotton and paper mills, and enter Lake St. Francis.

There is the parish church, and by it nestles the house of the curé. All around cluster the cottages of a happy and contented peasantry. Out on the lake we meet the ceaseless traffic of barge and tug, with the "puff-puff-puff-puff" so familiar to denizens

of our inland waters. On the barge the family wash is out in the wind. The bargeman smokes his afternoon pipe, his brawny children romp on the deck, and his thrifty wife husks the corn for supper.

At Cornwall another "too-too" wakes up the drowsy locksman, but we are comfortably in dreamland and hear it not. No more hear we the chatter of midnight stoppages. Our sleep is that of wearied limbs in grateful and inviting berths. But very early we are coaxed out of bed by the sun and the air. Suggestions of broiled fish, the morning's catch, and crisp toast from a French oven, come in whiffs from below. Flocks of birds are blown about in every direction. Lighthouses are dotted here and there. The keeper and his wife steal a glance at us as we pass by. A trifle lonely they seem, poor souls, cut off for seven long months from the chatty village green or the evening news-room.

Geese swim out to cackle us good-morning. The farmer's boat lies idle on the beach. Lazy cows turn their heavy heads to wish us *bon voyage*, with a specially friendly whisk of their tails. French dogs bask in the autumn sunshine. In pretty bays tiny feet wade after polliwigs, while "gran'pa" sits watching them and drops his line in quest of shiny bass.

In the saloon the morning sweeping is over, and breakfast is smiling for the captain and his guests. All file in and sit down, and with little formality the meal is commenced. Cans of milk have been brought on board, and the Scot has his oatmeal, John Bull his beef-steak, Mossoo his onions, and Pat his stew. Everybody is hungry and everybody

is pleased. A heavy noise below tells that we have lain-to for wood for the fires.

Huge piles, in measured cords, lie waiting on the dock. Men with wheelbarrows keep up the procession out and in, and with a loud "hilloh" drop their cargo down the hold. Sometimes a score of sticks are pitched into the furnace at one stroke, and a cord per hour is quickly gobbled up. The "hands" are mostly French, picturesque in carpet shoes and cow-breakfast hats, with strong arms and iron muscles.

The wood once in, we are off again. We steer out and in to avoid the heavy currents of the great river, now making good speed against them, and sometimes hardly holding our own. Here a market waggon rumbles along on shore, its driver half-asleep among melons and cauliflowers.

There a flat-bottomed skiff tosses in the surge of our good ship. Here a stream or "creek" has started a successful grist or saw mill. There the village postmistress drives a roaring trade in boots and shoes, flour and peppermints, tweeds and hairpins, cakes and syrup jars, all sweetened with the gossip of the neighbourhood.

"The innocents," too, are abroad. A very lonely old lady keeps a constant eye on her satchels, every one of which is in momentary

fear of bursting. A grumpy dyspeptic shakes his tonic as he slips along to the filter for iced water. A young matron with six sturdy boys makes an effort to tide over between meals by a chronic supply of apples and doughnuts, and a demure spinster is agonised over the crumbly mess on the carpets.

Everywhere "Mossoo" makes himself at home, his attention to his pipe being occasionally relieved by a thought of madame. But the trees; the wild flowers; the greenness; the busy autumn life; the horses dragging their loads to the brown barns; mamselle training her vines and feeding her chickens; children romping in the fields, and granny knitting in the sunny doorway swaying to and fro to the music of the autumn air—how can it all be told?

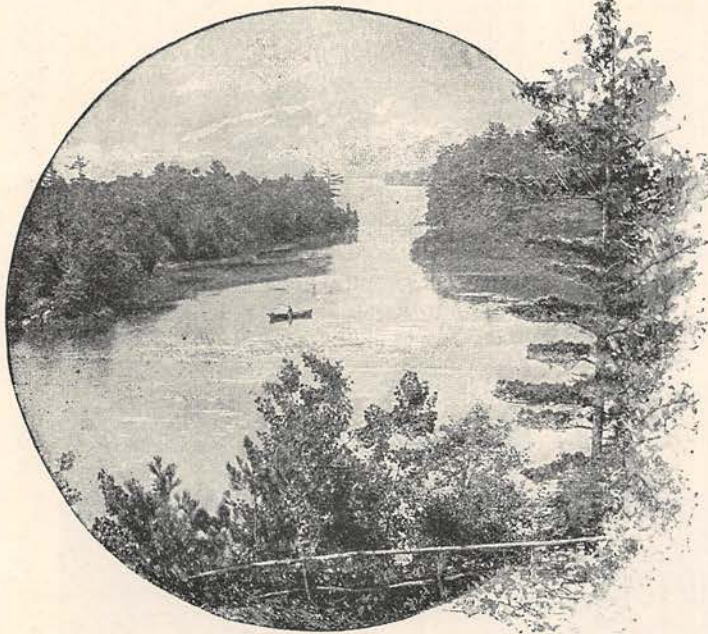
Through the Lake of the Thousand Islands we sailed on an afternoon and evening, enjoying the scene by daylight and moonlight. The islands, of which there are more than a thousand, are being rapidly bought up and used as summer resorts. Pretty cottages with flower gardens accommodate more than they can hold of campers and friends, but as the chief requisite is sleeping room, verandahs and hammocks play their part in the economy of the household. Canoes in artistic colouring are in attendance for cargoes of dainty



AMONG THE ISLANDS.

white-and-blue-bloused maidens. Here and there a tent peeps out from the trees, and anchors, moorings, sails, and masts all tell their happy tale of charming outdoor-life and glorious weather. Steam launches scud in and out with merry parties to exchange visits or drink afternoon tea. Wherever we turn we find the same idyllic life, the same embodiment of beautiful summer days and summer nights, and of a people who know how to enjoy them.

Passing up towards Gananoque and old



THE COUNTLESS ISLES.

historic Kingston we counted and counted the islands, but gave it up. We stuck at nine hundred and failed to get beyond. We took to pencil and paper to invoice them. No use. You can't. But a thousand is good enough for most of us.

Kingston is a quaint old city, and our captain gave us a few hours to ramble about. We took a peep at the ancient barracks, the funny old market-place, the park, the University, and were on our way to the penitentiary (figuratively speaking) when the well-known "too-too" recalled us to our ship. Back we hurried to our tea, and such a tea as I believe can only be provided on these lakes: such eggs and bacon; such broiled fish; such omelette; such rolls and butter; and as the weather is still exquisite, and the moon still seconding all our proposals for enjoyment, we are at peace with mankind.

As we head for Lake Ontario we are not only a happy but a merry party. Our fun bursts out over the piano. We should have carried it out bodily on deck but for a crusty musician, who nearly fainted at the thought. But the windows of the saloon are open. We sit in the starlight.

The great lake lies before us, the smallest of the chain, but large enough for the morning bath of a good-sized continent. Steamers and schooners are scudding about on the offing. Our own good ship is ploughing on bravely. We should reach Toronto by daylight.

With lights above and watch below we have but ourselves to think of, and we abandon ourselves to the welcome task. Song after song rolls out over the water, and, long after the piano has gone to sleep, keeps echoing in our drowsy ears.

Our last excitement is "The Rapids." Long have we heard of them, and often pictured to ourselves our first view of them. Loose spars are made tight. We choose a good stand.

Nearer and nearer we fly. Here we are. In. Down. Along. Hissing. Roaring. Darting. Leaping. Staggering. Clutching. We are "through" — through the Rapids of the far-famed St. Lawrence. Barrels of apples, boxes of cheese, sacks of grain, and tubs of butter

behaved bravely in the hold. More Rapids?

Yes; the afternoon brings us to the Cedars, where a few weeks before a steamer was beached in the current. But we flew on with the wild waves, and as we held our breath we had jumped out safely.

As a grand *finale* to our trip we cannot run the last Rapid. The water is too low. But we do not regret the canal instead. The sun is setting behind the mountain, with Montreal at its feet. Lights of many colours from ship, tug, and barge are floating on the bosom of the water, "floating double, light and shadow."

Signals at the locks trail long streams of red across our course. Church spires and domes stand out boldly against the moonlight. Luminous city clocks are set in the sky. One long final "too-too-too," and we are home.