

THE HIGHWAY OF THE OTTAWA.

BY T. W. EDWIN SOWTER

The Highway of the Ottawa! What pleasure it is to give rein to the imagination and endeavor to reconstruct this old waterway as it appeared in the days of Champlain! What a glorious revelation it must have been to that grand old Frenchman when for the first time he passed up between the shores of the Ottawa! Unblemished by the arts of civilization, how appealing to the eye of the painter or poet must have been the majestic splendor of the savage wilderness! The shores of our great river, bordered by a vast primeval forest and chafed by the resistless rush of mighty falls and foaming rapids, where malignant and fierce-eyed Manitous and Okies glared out of their leafy lairs at the strange men with the pale faces, and the voice of the great Oki of our own Chaudiere Falls roared out his thunderous protest against the advance of a new culture upon his ancient domain.

How changed is all this to-day. The forest has almost disappeared before the axe and the brand, and in its place are green fields and prosperous towns. The voice of the locomotive has frightened the lives out of the malignant spirits and made them seek a more congenial habitat. Even the oki of "The Big Kettle" has lost prestige, as he now receives offerings of sawdust, instead of tobacco, as in the old days.

Our written history of the Ottawa begins with Champlain in 1613; but, long before European contact, the Indians themselves had prepared for us priceless ethnic records of their activities on the Ottawa, and anyone that wishes may read them to-day. These curious old manuscripts are no less than their ancient camping grounds, beach workshops and burial places that lie scattered along the shores of the Ottawa in great profusion. Here, by the old fire-places, where the fires have died out and the hearths grown cold, and their occupants long since departed, we may read much concerning the lives and activities of a now vanished people, before the coming of the white man. The Indians have also left records, in their places of sepulture, that reveal to us much of their past. In answer to the question as to what the camp-site reveals, it may be said that you find there various forms of arrowhead with which the Indian killed his game; the large arrowhead-shaped flint knife with which his better half skinned and cut it up; and the fragments of the earthen pot in which she cooked it for her lord and master.

The writer has in his collection the contents of a single grave found on Aylmer Island. The occupant was well provided with a plentiful sup-