

THE CANADIAN BACKWOODS.

THE GREAT FOREST WEALTH OF THIS COUNTRY.

Timber Tracts Recently Discovered — Our Country Seen Through the Eyes of an English Writer.

The following is the third letter of Mr. Ernest E. Williams in the London Daily Mail on Canada and Canadian resources. It is dated at Ottawa and is as follows:

I have just returned from a short tour through some of Ontario's lumber regions. (In saying "short" I speak in a relative sense; the distance traversed would be represented roughly by the area of England.)

The journey took me well into the famed Canadian backwoods though I should hesitate to call it the heart of the region. For every fresh exploration party finds new lumber country—vast forests of merchantable timber, previously assumed to be just barren wilderness. It is hazardous guess-work to attempt a location of Canada's timber limits.

Two years ago, for example Professor Bell, of the Geological Survey started out from Ottawa in a northerly direction towards James Bay. The country traversed was so little known, save in fragmentary fashion by the Hudson's Bay Company officials, who are reticent with their knowledge, that one result of Dr. Bell's expedition is the re-arranging of the official map. The rivers hitherto drawn upon the map as emptying into James Bay are now proved to be largely efforts of the surveyor's imagination, and an important river, called Bell river, will for the future take their place.

Naturally, with geography in this mediaeval condition, knowledge of the country's resources was sadly to seek. No one, indeed, seems to have troubled about forming an estimate on the subject, and its wealth-producing capacities were tacitly assumed to be a negligible quantity. Now, however, we learn that

THE WHOLE REGION

explored by Dr. Bell is well wooded, and has escaped the devastating fires which have ruined so many of the northern forests. The timber, moreover, is found to be of commercial value. It is varied in character, spruce and tamarack being the staple trees, but while birch and Banksian pine also flourish abundantly with balsam-fir, balsam-poplar, cedar, aspen, etc., and, in the southern parts of the district, white and red pines. This little newly-discovered corner of Ontario, it may be mentioned, covers an area of 70,000 square miles, and is therefore considerably larger than the whole of England and Wales.

About the same time that Dr. Bell was exploring Northern Ontario Mr. Henry O'Sullivan, inspector of surveys to the Province of Quebec, was engaged on another expedition in his section of the Dominion, north and east of Dr. Bell's ground. Here Mr. O'Sullivan explored a region 50,000 square miles in area, about equal, that is to England's area, which a couple of years ago was, to quote Mr. O'Sullivan's words, "as little known as it was in the days of Jacques Cartier."

ALL THE RAILWAYS IN THE DOMINION.

I cite these two instances of recent exploration to show how enormous, and as yet unmeasured, is Canada's forest wealth and what little ground there is for the statements circulated, as a rule with obviously interested motives, to the effect that Ontario's and Quebec's lumbering days are nearly over. To any one who has had but a glimpse of the northern forests the statements are too silly to smile at. It is true that in southern Ontario and wherever agricultural settlements have progressed there has been a clearing of the trees; that goes without saying; but also that lumbermen have been not only energetic in the past, but wasteful, cutting down saplings, and so hindering, or preventing future growth; true again, that Indians and settlers have been careless, and mining prospectors malicious, and that from these causes heart-breaking havoc has been wrought by fire in many parts of the country. But, making full allowance for all these elements of destruction it is within the most moderate bounds of truth to say that the great forests of Canada remain to-day for the most part as original as when, two centuries ago, Jesuit missionaries first threaded their way through the unknown regions.

There is a wonderful charm about the Canadian forests. Wild grace is perhaps the best description of their salient features. There are no huge trunks smothered in dense foliage, choked with rank undergrowth to oppress the voyager. You never feel that you want to get out somewhere into the open air and draw your breath. Despite the vast areas all around you, thickly studded with conifers, the sense

of freshness and lightness is always present. The land undulates, and the forest is constantly broken with lakes and streams, so giving comparatively extended views; and even when the prospect is narrowed to such vistas as the mesh of delicate, tapering stems affords, the open country feeling is not banished; it is just blended with what, for want of a better term, I would call the architectural feeling. There is the glamor of

MYRIAD FAIRY PALACES.

all around you. People here tell me I should see these woods in the summer or autumn, if I would appreciate their full beauty, but I incline to think there must be a special quality of beauty in the forest as it is now, with the snow capping the pyramid tops of the dark-foliaged spruce trees, and tracing out the dainty branches of pines and poplars.

In these backwoods human presence does not destroy the enchantment of the place. It is far too sparse to do that. What there is does but add the spice of human interest to the romantic glamor of Nature in her chastest mood. Profoundly interesting, in those parts of the forest region where settlement has been effected, is the curious blend of civilization with the rough pioneer life.

On Sunday, for example, I reached a little town which has grown up within the last few years at the confluence of the Mattawa and Ottawa Rivers. The place originally held no other human habitation than a Hudson's Bay Company fort; it is to-day an important distributing centre of the company, and is presided over by Mr. Colin Rankin, one of the Company's veteran officers. But it is besides the headquarters of the lumbermen, who have come into the district. The town, it has some 1800 inhabitants, is primitive in appearance, and the pine-clad rocks and rapid waters, give it a wild and picturesque look as I saw it through a mist of falling snow. The hotel is a rough frame building, yet each room has its globe of incandescent light. A visit to the Catholic Church served to heighten the fantastic impression wrought by the mixture of advanced civilization and primitive remoteness. The church is a large and handsome structure, the interior painted white, ornamented tastefully with gold, the coldness being relieved by the altar furnishings and the brightly painted casts of the stations, etc., which stood out from the walls. As the choir chanted the familiar words of the mass to Gregorian tones, and the faint perfume of incense came down the aisles and

THE RITUAL PROCEEDED

with all the stately appointments we are accustomed to at home, it was easy to imagine oneself back at Highgate or Spanish place.

A glance round at these worshippers in the backwoods was a source of engrossing interest. There was something pathetic about this congregation which filled a church that would be considered large in an English town of five times the size. 'Twas not an obviously devout congregation, but it was a quietly attentive one stolidly attentive, after the manner of courteous primitive folk. Hard life was written on their swarthy faces. French-Canadian, with a not infrequent dash of Indian blood, is the common stock here, but in a conversation I had with some of the men afterwards, their faces were quickly aglow with hope. In the bush as in the towns, a premonition of progress and prosperity is general.

These settlers in Mattawa feel now that the worst of the work lies behind them. 'Twas rough work a few years ago, when a railway was unknown within one hundred or two hundred miles of their shanties. It is rough, judged by English standards, to-day; but these people are inured to hardships, and think little of them, and, after all, to the healthy body and cheerful soul these are small hardships full of compensations. The men of this country do not dwell on them; their talk to me was all of the coming development and prosperity. Nor should they be disappointed. The wealth is certainly there in the raw; the water power, too, for the quick and cheap conversion of pine trees into boards; and when the projected canalizing of their river is accomplished, the buzz and scream of saw mills will soon, doubtless awaken the silence of the forest with the strident

NOTE OF SUCCESSFUL INDUSTRY.

The felling and sawing of logs for timber is not, however, the only form in which Canada's forest wealth can be given to the world. Recently there has commenced the growth of a new industry—the manufacture of wood pulp from spruce. In the United States also it has been started, but in Canada where the raw material is infinitely greater, and better in quality besides, pulp-making is already more important, and must become much more important in the near future. Canada now possesses, at Sault Ste. Marie, the largest pulp factory in the world. Indeed, the United States are Canada's chief market for the product. Canada's total export last year, principally across the border, reached a value of \$675,777, and in addition she sent away wood for the manufacture of the pulp to the value of \$627,865. When it is stated that so recently as 1892 the exports were only \$355,303 and \$219,458 respectively, it will be seen with what rapid strides this infant industry is progressing. And the figures to hand so far this year show that the business is still bounding rapidly. But these figures will read ridiculously funny in a few years, when the millions of acres of spruce awaiting the lumbermen shall have been brought by enterprise and better transport facilities within reach of the axe. For cities within reach of the axe are so vast the possibilities of wood pulp are so varied. You do not know it much in England yet, though paper made principally of this material and various celluloid articles are not uncommon; but many more things than these can be made of wood pulp.

Meantime, Canada's Government should put an export duty on the wood. The United States admits it free of duty; and the United States knows what it is about.

MR. GENTLEBY CHAGRINED.

Realizes in His Own Experience Something That He Had Often Read About in Books.

"When there arose in the household a question as to the expenditure of money for a purpose that to me seemed a luxury we could not afford and should not indulge in," said Mr. Gentleby, "I opposed it vigorously. I am not so sure but what some of my vigor arose from the fact that the money to be spent would come out of my own pocket; but I was right about it, anyway. It would have been an unwise and unreasonable expenditure for us to make, and I knew it, and I resisted it to the extent of refusing to make it.

"And then I made a great mistake. After I had got it all settled for good reasons, and finally and distinctly had refused to spend the money, then, moved by Mrs. Gentleby's continuous discussion and by my own desire to please her, I said all right, we'd spend the money.

"Well," said Mrs. Gentleby, "I think they ought to put you up on that pole!" and she pointed to a flagpole on a building within sight of our domicile, upon which there was once a weather vane, which we often consulted, but which has now been removed.

"Well! I haven't been so shocked in years! I had read in novels, and everywhere else, about how women like strong men, that above all other qualities they admire courage, and that they glorify the resolute and despise the vacillating, but I had never realized it until now. But I realized it now with a vengeance. By this one act of weakness, prompted by kindness though it was, I had knocked myself down from my pedestal.

"Hereafter when I kick I kick to the end."

TRUTHFUL HISTORY.

Tourist, out West—I presume this neighbourhood is full of exciting history.

Guide—You bet. D'ye see that point o' rocks? When the sheriff's posse got after Buffalo Jim, they chased him to the top of that there peak, three hundred feet high, and the only way he could escape them was by jumping.

Tourist—Goodness me! The fall killed him of course?

Guide—No. He didn't jump.

THE SACRED FIRES OF INDIA.

The sacred fires of India have not all been extinguished. The most ancient which still exists was consecrated twelve centuries ago, in commemoration of the voyage made by the Parsees when they emigrated from Persia to India. The fire is fed five times every twenty-four hours with sandal wood and other fragrant materials, combined with very dry fuel. This fire, in the village of Oodvaah, near Bulsar, is visited by Parsees in large numbers during the months allotted to the presiding genius of fire.

TREE IRREGULARITY.

A naturalist pointed out the reason for trees growing in their irregular shapes. Their irregularity serves a most important purpose. When a gale is blowing the branches will be seen to sway in all directions, and their movements tend to balance the tree. Were they to sway in the same direction the tree would be uprooted or broken off.

SIDE LIGHTS.

A wise woman never looks a bargain gift book on the price mark. All the world's a stage, but most of it isn't fitted up with foot-lights.

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LATER EXCESSES IN MANHOOD
MAKE NERVOUS, DISEASED MEN

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Wm. A. Walker of 16th Street says: "I have suffered untold agonies for my 'gon' life." I was indiscreet when young and ignorant. As 'one of the boys' I contracted syphilis and other private diseases, I had ulcers in the mouth and throat, bone pains, hair loose, pimples on face, finger nails came off, emissions, became thin and dependent. Seven doctors treated me with Mercury, Potash, etc. They helped me but could not cure me. Finally a friend induced me to try Drs. Kennedy & Kergan, by their New Method Treatment. I felt a new life thrill through my nerves. We were united again and are happy. This was six years ago. Drs. K. & K. are scientific specialists and I heartily recommend them."

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KLONDIKE CONUNDRUMS.

Odd Questions Asked in Letters Received by Government Officials.

Many letters are received at the Canadian Department of the Interior, at Ottawa, from persons who want to know all sorts of queer things regarding the Klondike and Yukon matters in general. This is the case in Washington, also. Referring to such communications, Mr. Macdonald, of the United States Alaskan survey, at present in Ottawa on business for his Government, said:


"Only a few days before I left Washington for Ottawa, a man down in Texas wrote asking me how much it would cost to take four teams of mules across the Chilkoot Pass, and if I could fix it, when at Ottawa, to have them sent in duty free. Would you kindly let me know if a plough would be of any service in working a placer claim in the Klondike," asked another gold-crazed American. Another wanted me to inform him if it would be possible to take a folding-bed to Dawson City. The day previous to my leaving Washington I received a letter from a farmer of Millbrook, N. Y., in which he stated that he had written to every man in authority at Ottawa asking which was the best way to come out without being robbed, and he added: 'I have got no answers to my letters, but, perhaps, I should have offered a tip for the desired information. If so, you let me know and I will fix it all right.' A man in Buffalo asked me if it would be possible for him and his wife to sleep in the same sleeping bag; while another questioned me as to the best way to get a sewing machine to the Chilkoot Pass.

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