

THE RAFTSMAN'S LIFE.

Since the opening of navigation several gangs of raftsmen have been employed at the Northern Railway docks in constructing the timber which arrived there over the different railways, into rafts to be towed to Quebec and then shipped to Europe. Within the last decade the quantity of timber received at this port has materially decreased, and as each succeeding year greater inroads are made upon the primeval forest of Ontario, the total extinction of the trade is but a question of time. As yet, however, it retains respectable proportions, and this spring nearly half a million dollars worth of timber will be constructed into rafts at the Northern Railway docks, and forwarded to Quebec. The bulk of this timber is rock elm from Muskoka, but a considerable quantity of walnut and other fine woods have a place in the collections. The firm who build the rafts have men at work in the woods all winter cutting lumber, which is dragged over the snow to the nearest railway where, as soon as spring opens, it is shipped to Toronto. When the lumber train arrives here it is shunted on a siding close to the margin of the dock, and then commences the work of raft building. A gang of men roll the logs from the car into the water, where a wire rope is hitched around them. By the aid of a horse power which revolves on a strongly built raft, the logs are hauled to any spot desired with rapidity and ease. The timber is first formed into a small raft, which is called a dram. A dram is generally about 50 feet wide, by 300 feet long, and contains from 25,000 to 40,000 square feet of timber. The logs are bound together in a solid mass by maple saplings, which are twisted by machinery as to be extremely pliant. After a number of drams have been completed a steam tug tows five or six of them to Prescott, where they are formed into one great raft, which generally comprises about seven drams. This immense mass of timber is then towed down the St. Lawrence until the rapids are reached, when the raft is broken into single drams and in this way passes the many rapids of that mighty stream. The crew who man the rafts are thoroughly conversant with the intricacies of the channels, and it is very seldom that a raft comes to grief among the rushing waters. About two weeks is the time generally consumed in making the voyage from Toronto to Quebec, but of course if the weather is unfavorable a much longer time is occupied in the trip. When the timber reaches Quebec it is cut up into lengths suitable for shipment, and is then forwarded to England by sailing vessels.

A few seasons ago it was not an uncommon thing to ship 40 drams of timber from Toronto by raft, but this season only 20 drams will be made up. The value of these is about \$20,000 per dram, so that the total value of the timber made up at the Northern Railway docks will not fall far short of half a million dollars. The number of men employed at the work is about 120, principally French Canadians. For some reason or other the light and volatile French Canadian seems better fitted to endure the alternate hardship and ease of a raftsmen's life than his Ontario fellow-countryman. At all events, but very few Ontarians follow the raftsmen's hazardous calling. The party who have been working at the rafts at the Northern docks here are what the late Artemus Ward, of facetious memory, would term a "gallus lot." Accustomed to the easy romantic life of the lumbering camp, their free spirit revolts at the idea of submitting to the restraints imposed by civilized life. They cherish a deep-rooted antipathy to living in a dwelling-house, and to humor this fancy, their employer has given them quarters in several old shanties in the lumber yard, adjoining the docks. In their humble quarters here they seem to be supremely happy, and seemingly enjoy their free and easy style of living quite as much as the pampered child of luxury enjoys his style. In the evening, when the labors of the day are over, the men assemble in the yard and adopt various devices for killing time. The musicians of the party will bring out their instruments and furnish the music to which some giddy youth will trip the light fantastic. The yards resound with the music of the deep voices of the lumbermen as they gaily trill short snatches of some

old French song. Some amuse themselves by playing euchre and other sinful games, with packs of cards that look as if they had seen the service of many winters. The curiously inclined gather around the "oldest inhabitant," who, with that voracity characteristic of ancient residents, tells his open-mouthed audience of the hair-breath escapes which he had from death while running a raft down the night, St. Lawrence. In these and sundry other ways they manage to pass the time, and each evening their quarters are visited by large crowds of citizens who are anxious to view a realistic representation of life in a lumbering camp.

In the winter months the raftsmen busy themselves in cutting timber in the woods, and when the return of spring loosens the ice king's grasp on the mountain's torrent, the raftsmen has often to guide logs down to a spot where it is convenient to ship them from. This is a situation that requires great steadiness of nerve and courage, and it is no infrequent thing to hear of adventurous lumbermen getting drowned while taking a drive of logs down stream.

After the raft building operations are concluded each year the men receive their well-earned wages, and so often go on a prolonged spree which lasts until their money is exhausted. In the fall they are generally as badly broke as the ten commandments, and anxious to go into the woods for another winter. This routine continues while their health can stand the strain, and when asking the lumberman what becomes of the men who were too feeble to go back to the woods he answered simply "God knows."

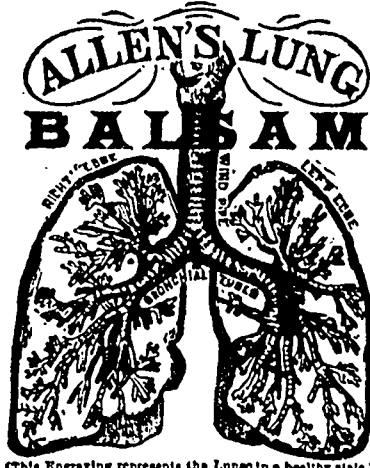
The men who are working on the rafts this spring are a very quiet and well behaved lot. Since their arrival here the police have not once been called on to suppress any disturbance. In a few days the men will take their departure, and instead of the merry shouts of the raftsmen, the shrill whistle of the propeller, and the gruff voice of the schooner captain, as with many unscriptural quotations he urges his crew to increased diligence, will be the sounds that will break the nightly stillness of the lakes.

VICE-ROYALTY ON A CRIB.

OTTAWA, May 29.—The first crib of the season began to come down the slides yesterday, and his excellency the Governor-General and Her Royal Highness the Princess Louise, having expressed a desire to "run the slides," special arrangements were made for their reception. About five o'clock in the afternoon His Excellency and Her Royal Highness, attended by a numerous suite, drove to the head of the slides at the Chaudiere. Here a raft constructed with unusual care of timber belonging to the Messrs. White, and fitted with rough but secure seats for the accommodation of Her Royal Highness and the Ladies in Waiting, was lying in readiness. Having boarded the frail-looking craft, Mr. W. A. Humphrey, who acted as pilot, took charge of the raft. Some half dozen raftsmen, carefully selected for their experience and trustworthiness, formed the crew, and under the watchful eye of Mr. Humphrey the rafts with its distinguished passengers passed through the danger of the slides without accident and mishap of any description. About six o'clock it shot out into the broad expanse of the river opposite the Parliamentary grounds where the steamer which plies between Hull and the Ontario shore ran out to meet it, and took the Vice-Royal party ashore. His Excellency and Her Royal Highness expressed themselves as being delighted with the success of the trip, and paid many well-merited compliments to the raftsmen. Amongst the Vice-Royal party was Mr. Samuel L. Clemmens' "Mark Twain" who will now have another chapter to add to his rafting experience.

PROPOSED FORESTRY CONGRESS.

A new item has been going the rounds of the Southern press to the effect that a proposal has been made to hold a Forestry Congress at Lake de Funiak, in Florida, during the month of March, 1884. It does not appear under whose auspices the proposed Congress is to be held, nor has anything transpired showing who are to be invited to attend its deliberations or take part in its discussions; but the forestry interests of the South are among the most important



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of its industries, and it is an encouraging sign to find that someone has become aroused to the necessity of conserving the vast reserves of growing timber that abound in that section. Lake de Funiak, which is on the line of the Pensacola & Alabama R. R., is a new town, but it is in the midst of forests, and is in an appropriate place for such deliberations to take place. If taken in hand by well informed men of practical knowledge and intelligence, such a meeting ought to result in benefitting the important lumber, as well as agricultural interests of the Southern States; but preserve us from a gathering of doctrinaires, whose chief object in attending such a convocation would be for the purpose of ventilating well-worn theories that are as impracticable as they are useless. The importance of tree planting in this country can not be over-estimated, and anything that will stimulate the interest that ought to be felt upon this question, should receive the support and co-operation of lumbermen.—N. Y. Lumber Trade Review.

Logs "Banked."

The Lumberman's Gazette of Bay City, Michigan, says:—The storms of the past week were exceedingly destructive for the lumbermen on the rivers in the loss of logs, quite a number of rafts being broken up and the logs scattered along the shore in almost inextricable confusion from the mouth of the Saginaw river to the mouth of the Au Gros. Messrs. Chapman & Co., I. H. Hill & Son, and some others are among the losers by the heavy northwest gales, which thus scattered their logs, and sent the tugs flying to the river for shelter. The Bay City Lumber Company had their rafts containing nearly one and a half million feet of 20 per cent. logs banked between the mouth of the Kawkawlin and Saginaw rivers, and some of them so effectually banked that it will cost as much as the worth of the logs to secure them again.

A New Canal.

The Florida ship canal scheme is likely to result in the actual opening of a water-way from a point near Jacksonville, on the St. John river, to a connection with the Suwanee, near the Gulf of Mexico. The purpose is to construct a canal capable of the passage of the largest ocean steamer. The company has been formed and is ready for business. This work will shorten the distance between gulf ports and the Atlantic 800 miles. It will be important to the yellow pine trade of Pensacola, Mobile, and other producing and shipping points on the gulf coast, as it will shorten the route to

New York and Boston by nearly a thousand miles, and obviate the dangers of navigation among the reefs around the southern end of Florida.—Northwestern Lumberman.

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