

Reminiscences of Lumbering Days.



T was three o'clock when the train slowed up at the little flag-station in the woods.

"Hustle off now, boys," said the conductor. "We haven't long to stop here."

Quickly we bundled out, with our turkeys on our backs, thirty-five rugged lumbermen, bound for the tall timbers of Northern Quebec. The walking-boss was at the train to meet us and smiled approvingly as he ran his eagle-eye over the stalwart forms of this fresh contingent of pine-eaters.

"If you're as good as you look, you'll do me," he remarked with a knowing grin. "We'll try you out by asking you to walk to camp this afternoon; it's a mere step, not over fifteen miles.

"This way! follow me."

With whoops and yells the men started down the steep hill, at the foot of which the mighty Ottawa rolls on its never-changing way, whispering hoarsely to its rocky shores; while here and there the towering pines lean far out over the waters as though they fain would hear what the dark old river is sighing about.

We crossed by means of a heavy old float, which required the united efforts of six of the men to propel it. Then we turned and took a last long look at the Ontario shore and the railway track winding away eastward in the direction of R; but, turning resolutely about again, set our faces northward and entered the grim solitudes of the lumbering wilds, out of which we were not to emerge for seven long months.

It was a beautiful clear day in the latter part of October, and for a time the brisk walk through the pleasant woods proved agreeable and refreshing; but when the dusk began to thicken and the camp was not yet in sight, the songs and laughter suddenly changed to low murmurs and complaints against the boss, who had told us we had only fifteen miles before us. At last, about 8 o'clock, on ascending a steep hill, we beheld far down in the valley below, the light of a camp-fire glimmering on the placid surface of a broad sheet of water, and immediately a shout of gladness went up; which was answered by some twenty voices in camp below.

Here we were treated to a surprise, for now we learned from "the boss" that winter camps had not yet been built and that we should be obliged to sleep in tents for a week or ten days.