

THE Cities and Towns of Canada

ILLUSTRATED.

XIII.

ARNPRIOR AND VICINITY.

A GLANCE AT RENFREW—SAND POINT—BRAESIDE—"THE McNAB" AND "THE OTHER McNAB"—THE LATE DANIEL McLACHLIN, ESQ.—A SPLENDID ESTATE—ARNPRIOR AS IT IS—THE MOST NORTHERN NURSERY IN CANADA—ARNPRIOR MARBLE—BUSINESS NOTES—THE CHATS—LOVELY SCENERY AND ILLIMITABLE WATER-POWER.

On my way down the Canada Central from Pembroke, I stayed over a day at Renfrew, which I had read of in a guide-book as "a flourishing incorporated village." I found the village easy enough, and have no doubt about the incorporation thereof, but I was sorry to find the "flourish" missing. The village is situated on the banks of the river Bonnechere, about nine miles from its junction with the Ottawa. A considerable fall in the river bed occurs at the village, and the water-power thus afforded has been utilized for a variety of purposes, but the industries at the time of my visit were of a very modest character, and depended upon a very uncertain demand. Renfrew is apparently an outgrowth of the lumber trade, and its decline in a measure dates from the check which that industry experienced some few years back. If the National Policy produces the results which its advocates predict, I should say Renfrew will not be among the last to benefit by the change. It is adjacent to a good agricultural section of country, and may be said to be the terminus of the Opeongo Colonization road. It has churches, schools, a bank agency, plenty of hotels, and a weekly newspaper. It is rather prettily situated; is forty miles from Pembroke and eighty-nine from Brockville—but it wants life. Enquiring as to the standing of the townspeople, whose names were painted on a directory board, covering the side of a room in one of the hotels, I was grieved to learn that, with but few exceptions, all had either failed or left the place. The completion of the railroad from Kingston will undoubtedly largely benefit Renfrew, but I trust that even before that is accomplished a revival of the lumber trade and a full utilization of the Bonnechere water-power will have taken place—events which will at once justify the guide-book description, to which I have referred above.

Fifteen miles from Renfrew is the village of Sand Point, for some time the terminus of the Canada Central RR. It is prettily situated on the banks of the Chat's Lake, an expansion of the Ottawa River, and opposite a large group of picturesque islands. As a summer resort it offers many attractions, not the least being good hotel accommodation.

Two miles and a half from Sand Point there is a cluster of cottages and a splendid steam saw mill—the nucleus of a pretty village, but, at the time of writing, silent and deserted. This place, named Braeside, was founded by the Osborne family just in time to encounter the depression which caused the closing of lumber establishments all over the country. Occupying a charming site by the roadside there is a tastefully-designed villa, well adapted either as a summer resort or as a residence for a family tired of city life. It belongs to John Osborne, Esq., of Arnprior, who is ready, I understand, to accept any reasonable offer.

A pleasant ride of three miles by the lake side brought me to

ARNPRIOR,

a village of considerable pretensions, situated on the banks of the Madawaska, far enough back from the Chat Lake to prevent the despoilment of the shore by out-houses, pig-styes, and tumble-down sheds—the rule where a place fronts immediately upon the Ottawa or St. Lawrence—and not so far away as to render the walk to the water tiresome. Bordering the lake are the fine grounds of the Renfrew Fruit and Floral Co.; the magnificent McLachlin estate, and a grove, which, for general beauty and lovely bits of sylvan scenery, I have never seen surpassed—all, happily, thrown open to the public, and, I am glad to say, highly appreciated.

HISTORICAL NOTES.

About the year 1837, an individual known as Chief McNab secured from Government a tract of land, now called McNab Township, which he proceeded to settle with Highland immigrants. The McNab—as he delighted to be dubbed—erected his first log shanty on the lake shore at Arnprior, close by where the McLachlin mansion now stands. He brought in a good few families, and a considerable area of land was put under cultivation, but after a time the settlers became dissatisfied with the terms which the McNab exacted, and finally the Government paid the Chieftain to quit the place. He subsequently went to Hamilton, where he built a mansion of magnificent proportions. On each side of the gate he had placed a life-size figure of a Highlander in full costume, and over the porch the legend—"Dreadnought." The place is now a convent. A portion of the Chieftain's pomposity, it is related that upon one occasion, when he was making a call with Sir Alexander McNab, the

latter caught sight of the former's card, bearing the words "The McNab," and, being without an engraved card, promptly wrote upon a piece of pasteboard "The Other McNab."

The McNab settlement did not amount to much until 1854, when the late Daniel McLachlin, Esq., took up his residence and purchased the land on which the village now stands. He caused a survey to be made, built a dam and bridge, erected saw-mills, and offered building lots cheap. The result was that people flocked in, and the village grew rapidly. A very fine flour and grist mill, now owned by Eric Harrington, Esq., was erected by the late Nathaniel Burwash, Esq. It has a capacity of some 500 bushels per day. In 1861 the village was incorporated by special Act of Parliament. The same year the Prince of Wales visited Arnprior, making the trip across the lake from Pontiac in a large birch bark canoe. During his stay, His Royal Highness was the guest of Daniel McLachlin, Esq., in whose grounds, to commemorate the event, he planted a young oak, which I was pleased to see has grown finely. The Prince received from a large deputation of raftsmen an address, written on a piece of birch bark. The stalwart fellows, got up in their best holiday attire, came into the Royal presence in characteristic style—on a crib of timber—and the sight is said to have been exceedingly picturesque, each man being picked for his fine stature, and wearing long boots, grey pants and shirts, parti-coloured sashes and bright tuques. The Prince drove to Almonte—a fact which the country folks well remember, as they say the roads were never put in such splendid order either before or since.

In 1875 a very fine steam saw-mill, erected by Mr. McLachlin, was totally destroyed by fire, and has not been re-built.

THE VILLAGE AS IT IS.

Arnprior, in common with most places, has suffered keenly from "hard times." When business was brisk and the mills were all in full blast, the population was estimated at 3,000; 2,000 is now about the figure. The village covers an area of 960 acres; the taxable real estate is valued at \$359,615, and the total taxation amounts to twenty-two mills on the dollar. There is a good Town Hall building, comprising Council chamber, Clerk's office and market stalls. The public hall would be all the better for a little tasteful decoration, or even if the walls and ceiling were tinted. Arnprior boasts possession of a first-class steam fire-engine, and a few years ago attained a somewhat unenviable fame on account of being the scene of more fires per week than any other village in the Dominion. There are three excellent schools—the Public School, the High School, and the R. C. School. There are six churches—Anglican, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Wesleyan Methodist, Episcopal Methodist, and Baptist. There is also a small community of Cecilites. Among other "institutions" may be mentioned a weekly newspaper and two brass bands.

The Reeve is Eric Harrington, Esq., who has held the position, with but a brief lapse, since the village was incorporated. Mr. Harrington has thrice been Warden of the County, and in 1871 was returned to the Ontario Legislature, sitting four years, and declining re-election. He is a Lieut.-Col. of Militia, and President of the Agricultural and Horticultural Association. In 1871 Mr. Harrington had a piece of land in the west end, adjacent to his residence, laid out in village lots, and quite a large suburb has thus been built up, embracing some sixty dwellings and a Baptist church.

THE McLACHLIN ESTATE.

As I have stated above, the late Daniel McLachlin was really the founder of the village, and for many years everything like progress was to be traced to him. He lived at a time when business was good; his operations were of the mammoth order and they all prospered. He could not bear to see a man idle; to give employment he often started works on the spur of the moment, such as building a row of cottages, for instance. Naturally he became exceedingly popular, and it will be many a long day ere his fame dies out. The business is now in the hands of McLachlin Bros.—the firm being composed of the two surviving sons, Mr. H. F. McLachlin and Mr. Claude McLachlin. They have extensive limits up the Madawaska, and two splendid mills at Arnprior, engaging in both the square timber and sawn lumber trade. During the past two seasons the mills have done little or nothing—a most serious blow to the village, as, formerly, when trade was brisk, they ran day and night, and the firm was able to afford employment to between six and seven hundred men. It is hoped that there is a good time near at hand, and that in the near future the busy hum of the whirling saws will be heard as of old—making night a trifle hideous to outsiders, but regarded as sweet music by the families whose bread and butter depend upon operations at the mills. Independently of the firm, Mr. H. F. McLachlin has embarked in the square timber business, having limits on the Madawaska, the Bonnechere and the Colonge. Mr. Claude McLachlin is interested in the development of the marble interest, of which more anon.

The family mansion, now the residence of Mr. H. F. McLachlin, is situated on a plateau overlooking the Chats Lake. The grounds are extensive and beautifully laid out. The descent to the water's edge is terraced and clothed with velvety grass. The views up and down the lake are very fine, particularly at sunset or by moon-

light. The proprietor kindly allows the public to enjoy the use of his magnificent property—an example which might well be followed by the owners of park-like estates in other parts of the Dominion. In the old country it is the rule for the nobility and gentry to throw open their grounds to the public under certain reasonable conditions.

Adjoining the McLachlin grounds is the beautiful grove before mentioned, bordering the lake for over a mile. This is a favourite picnic ground, and a more charming place can hardly be imagined. The soil is of a kind that never gets muddy; the trees are large and elegantly formed, the grass is soft and fine, and the whole place is well cleared of underbrush. Here and there are openings and glades giving a glimpse of the silvery waters of the lake. I remember one spot where could be seen, every afternoon, a picture worthy of Rosa Bonheur's brush. Regularly, at a certain hour, when the earth seemed to be baking, and the only sound was the "clack!" "clack!" of the flying grasshopper, some thirty well-favoured kine would slowly emerge from the dark green pine bush and enter the lake, where a sandy shallow extended far out. Slowly they would waltz out till they seemed a quarter of a mile from shore, and there they would stand up to their knees in the limpid water, as still as statues, until the melodious call of the cow-herd rang through the woods, when, as gravely as they came, they would go ashore and quietly disappear in the woods. There is another pretty place I visited several times, and each time regretted that I could not fix its beauties upon canvas. A path through a thick wood suddenly enters a clearly defined avenue, formed by the pines on each side interlacing their branches overhead. The avenue is about one hundred yards long, and at the end there is a vividly green grassy plain, with here and there a group of dark dwarf cedars. The sunlight never penetrates the avenue, which renders the vista at the end, with its lights and shades, all the more entrancing—a veritable glimpse of fairy-land; indeed, just such a spot as one could fancy would suit exactly Queen Mab and her dainty tribe of nymphs and sprites. I was not surprised to learn that the place has been christened "The Lover's Walk."

THE RENFREW FRUIT AND FLORAL COMPANY.

The little attention paid to fruit culture in the country bordering the Ottawa is quickly noticed by anyone who has travelled through Western Ontario. While in the latter part of the Dominion scarcely a suburban or rural dwelling is without an orchard, it is very rarely that one sees a fruit tree about the farmhouses of the Ottawa district. Two or three reasons are assigned for this fact. In some places there prevails the erroneous idea that fruits cannot be profitably grown in the latitudes in question; in others fruit culture has been attempted, but a fatal mistake has been made in purchasing trees from Western or Southern nurseries, and because they have not turned out well, the intention of establishing an orchard has been abandoned in disgust. Many, again, have been grossly victimized by pedlars, unknown and irresponsible, who, by dint of "cheek" and tall talk, have palmed off poor, common trees as the healthiest and best in the universe. I have before me as I write an *exposé* of a gang purporting to represent a Vermont nursery, who, last season, swindled a number of people along the Ottawa Valley in this way. Such of the trees as took root proved anything but what they were represented to be. A duped farmer writes that some apple trees which bore the high-sounding name of the ex-President of the United States, and were said to bear splendid fruit, turned out "most miserable crabs—sour and bitter"—characteristics which have never been ascribed to General Grant, even by his most severe critics. Again, some raspberries sold as "Mammoth Clusters," proved to be common plants, such as can be found along the fences." The document enumerates many other similar frauds, and concludes with an intimation that the parties who sold the trees (and the farmers) had better not revisit the scene of their operations if they value their health. The moral of all this is: Buy of responsible parties, and only such varieties as experience has proved will thrive in your locality. To meet a great want, the Renfrew Fruit and Floral Company has been formed, and there is no doubt that it will in a few years work quite a transformation in the localities indicated. The Nursery, which is the most northern in Canada, is finely situated on the lake shore at Arnprior, immediately in rear of the handsome residence of the Managing Director, John Osborne, Esq. Great taste and much ingenuity has been displayed in the laying out of the grounds, which, unlike most nurseries, are not on a dead level, but made up of wide terraces and gentle slopes, with here and there a fountain or fish-pond. The ornamental floral portions are exceedingly beautiful, while what may be termed the practical sections are systematically arranged and neatly kept. A pretty wind-mill pump forces water from the lake to a monster vat concealed in a pine grove on the highest level. From this vat pipes are laid to all parts of the grounds, enabling the plants to be watered expeditiously and liberally. The same source supplies the fountains, &c. The various buildings—green-houses, potting-houses, forcing-beds, &c., &c., are all first-class, and constructed according to the most approved designs. The increasing demand in our cities for forced vegetables during the winter months has led to considerable attention being paid to this branch, and quite a large trade in such luxuries is being built up. An interesting department is that

where mushroom culture is carried on—a long, low, windowless building, fitted up something like the steerage of an ocean steamer—boxes containing the mushroom spawn taking the place of "bunks." Mushrooms are only grown during the winter months. Unlike the wild fungi which develop in a night, the cultivated kind take from four to five days to bush above ground and open out. They are much firmer than wild mushrooms. Darkness and an equable temperature, with careful watering, are essential elements in the successful growth of these dainty edibles.

In the course of my walk through the nursery I was particularly struck with the long lines of grape vines. In their catalogue the Company say: "We have found no fruit more successful than the grape," and the splendid vines I saw, heavily laden with luscious bunches, fully bore out the remark. The vines—all in the open air—were pictures of health and prolificness. And so with other fruits, apples, pears, plums, cherries, raspberries, &c. The management has kept steadily in view the purpose for which the nursery was established—viz., "For supplying Northern and Eastern Canada with such fruit and ornamental trees, shrubs and flowers as will endure the rigors of the climate," and the result is a large and varied assortment which can be depended upon. Consequently, no one willing to be guided by experience, need fear failure, as the varieties of large and small fruits, ornamental trees, shrubs and plants recommended in the Arnprior catalogue, have been thoroughly tested, and proved to be "hardy, flowering and fruiting in perfection and giving complete satisfaction." I am informed that the Company have customers from Prince Edward Island to Manitoba, and that from the most northern latitude the testimony as to the hardiness of the trees supplied has been "exceedingly satisfactory. I may mention that a specialty is made of rose culture; the stock, comprising some two hundred and fifty varieties, and one house being devoted to the growing of ever-blooming or monthly roses. The bulk of the rose trade is carried on through the Post Office, the plants being put up in mailing packages, so as to carry safely any distance. Till within a comparatively recent date, the Americans sent over large numbers of rose plants through the Post, and thus evaded the duty. The stoppage of this has stimulated native production, and the growers are now enabled to supply plants cheaper than ever before, viz., six for one dollar—an instance of how "Protection" works.

It is to be hoped that the Renfrew Fruit and Floral Company will meet with the encouragement which so laudable an enterprise merits, and that the Ottawa region and other northern districts will ere long bear favourable comparison with the West in the matter of fruit culture. I am glad to be able to write that the prospects are good, so much so, indeed, that the Company have recently resolved to extend their operations, and for that purpose have acquired one hundred acres of land on the Madawaska river, about a mile and a half east of the village. The scheme has the support of many influential personages, the Board of Directors being composed as follows: Hon. James Skead, President; Hon. George Bryson, Vice-President; and J. Lorn McDougall, John Osborne, Allan Fraser, John Poupore, M.P., Walton Smith, James Gillies, and Willoughby Cummings, Esq., the latter gentleman also officiating as Secretary. Persons interested in fruit or floral matters should write for a catalogue, which, by the way, contains much useful information.

ARNPRIOR MARBLE.

Visitors to the Houses of Parliament, Ottawa, will notice in various places beautiful pillars of dark clouded marble, richly veined and highly polished. This marble was quarried at Arnprior, where immense fields of the same material await utilization. It might have been expected that a demand for the marble would have sprung from this exhibition of its good qualities, but probably very few who admire take the trouble to enquire any further, and doubtless the bulk of visitors set it down as a rare product of some foreign shore. Within the last few years, however, Mr. P. T. Somerville, the proprietor of the Arnprior Marble Works, has done much to improve matters in this respect. He sent a fine assortment of samples to the Centennial Exhibition, and had the satisfaction of carrying off the highest honours—no other marble-producing country offering anything to compare with his exhibits. He also made a creditable display at Paris, where he was awarded a silver medal, and, indeed, in various ways he is doing his best to make known the fact that Canada can furnish a marble which has beauties peculiarly its own, as handsome as it is durable, and of a shade which sets off the finest products of Italian or American quarries.

As might be expected of one so enterprising, Mr. Somerville has introduced steam-power into his establishment, and is thus enabled to execute work expeditiously and economically. The marble, rough from the quarry, is first sawn as near as possible to the required shape, and placed on a "rubbing bed," or circular board, which revolves while the marble is held stationary, sand and water being fed meanwhile. After the sand and water, it is rubbed by hand with coarse-grit sandstone, then with a finer grit, next with a very fine stone procured in Ayrshire, Scotland, and lastly it is polished with putty powder. If the piece is to be circular in form, it is rough-chiselled, put in a lathe, and turned with tools similar to those used for metals. It is rather astonishing to see how deep a cut can be taken,