

The Quebec District.



QUEBEC HARBOUR.

It would be quite impossible to write about Quebec, even from a strictly commercial standpoint, without alluding to the unrivalled and commanding position the city occupies on the shores of one of the grandest rivers of the world. As a natural fortress, as a shipping port, as a picturesque city, it stands without a peer on the American Continent. Many eminent writers have attempted to describe its unique beauties and the wondrous loveliness of its surroundings, but were unable to convey its many charms, and the brush of the pen is not able to depict the ever-varying beauties of the city, the St. Lawrence and the grandeur of the hills and plains that surround old Quebec.

From the great preponderance of the French-speaking population, the visitor can hardly realise that he is in a part of the British possessions; the Continental appearance of the houses and streets would lead one to think that he was in a provincial town in France, but still there is too much English spoken in commercial circles for that, and very soon the ear and eye get accustomed to the strange and happy co-mingling of races which characterises modern Quebec.

As the port in British North America best situated for shipping timber in the log, Quebec always has, and doubtless always will, stand pre-eminent, for nature has endowed her with every requisite and facility for being the depot for that trade. The shipment of balk timber has declined in all the timber-producing countries of the world, and it is therefore no matter of surprise, nor is it any fault of the Quebec merchants, that it has fallen off there. As great a volume of wood is probably being now shipped from the St. Lawrence as ever, but a large proportion of it goes forward in the shape of deals and boards. Our contractors, shipbuilders, carpenters and joiners, &c., now wish to buy wood converted more nearly to the sizes in which it is to be used, and the same revolution has taken place in the supplies from the Prussian, Swedish, and pitch pine ports.

It is recorded that the first timber shipped to Europe from Canada was sent from Quebec by Talon in 1667. Lieutenant Hocquart sent timber and boards to Rochefort in 1735, but the export to England began in the early days of the present century, when the Continental ports were closed to us by Napoleon. The trade grew rapidly, and as many as 1,350 square-rigged ships have entered the river yearly to load timber. The trade appears to have reached its zenith about 1864, when 20,032,520 cubic feet of white pine timber were exported. Since then the trade has gradually declined to 2,838,000 ft. in 1895. In pine deals from this port the falling off is very pronounced. In 1880, 5,823,263 standards were shipped, against 501,200 last year. But the decline in the shipments of all sawn goods is counter-balanced when the quantities now sent from Montreal are taken into account.

The steady increase in the value of white pine deals over a series of years has been very great. The fair average value for 1st quality was given in 1855 at £12, and in 1864 at £23 to £25 per standard. Spruce values have not risen in proportion. In 1855 it was quoted at £6 per standard, and £8 to £8 10s. in 1894.

The supplanting of wood by iron for shipbuilding was a serious blow to the Quebec oak trade, and the shipments seem to have shown a steady falling off. Thus, in 1874, 3,433,280 cubic feet were exported, but last year only 809,560, but for the last ten years it has been mostly near a million feet, twice only going up to 1,500,000.

Red pine shows a steady falling off from 5,182,320 cubic feet in 1845 to 326,080 last year. This is doubtless due to the low price at which pitch pine has been sold, but shipments of red pine are now being made to England for sleepers.

The export of tamarac has ceased for some years, in fact, since 1878, in which year a disease broke out affecting this tree as well as spruce; but a little has been again shipped this year.

The oak stave trade which was at one time an important