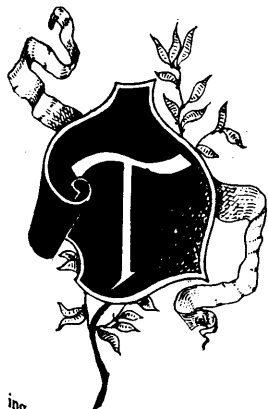


# BIG TREES IN BRITISH COLUMBIA.

By JAMES P. MACINTYRE.



O former dwellers in the eastern parts of this great Dominion and the Mother Country, who exchange their share in the national heritage, to fall into line with their more western kin in the youngest province in the confederation, the average growth of timber of the heavier orders which clothe the mountain slopes of the Pacific coast impels itself upon them with no scant force. In Britain there is history, and stand-

on the big things done, and to be seen in the States; but when he can show such a product as will accommodate over a hundred guests at lunch, the interior of the uncommon restaurant lighted throughout with electricity—he is to be forgiven. Still bigger trees are said to exist in their territories—a cedar at Gray's harbour being credited with a girth of one hundred and three feet. When a world's fair or an Anglo-Colonial fair shall be inaugurated at Montreal, the commercial metropolis of the Dominion, their is a likelihood of its being adorned with equally vast proportioned trees, the product of the Pacific portion of the Confederation.

It is recorded of the ancients that they understood the preservative qualities of the cedar, using its oil in the embalming process, also placing their documents in receptacles made from that genus of the conifers. The wise Solomon was indebted to the cedars of Lebanon for the wood work of his famous temple, the scant grove remaining of the forest from which the timber had been culled standing to-day as evidence of the Vandalistic nature of Hiram, King of Tyre. Remarkable as the Lebanon cedars may be in spread of bough and historic interest, those ancient trees, some of whose coats have gone concentrically mad, defying the botanist in his investigations—of age—they would stand as pignies alongside of their immensely tall prototypes which stud the mountainous Province of British Columbia. There is not on the Pacific slope a Nippon Dai Matsu such as the Japanese can boast of, with its extraordinary width over all of two hundred and forty-two feet, and its three hundred and twenty-six props; but a large member of the family of conifers afforded space sufficient in its hollow trunk to carry on a real estate business. On the peninsula bounded by the Canal de Sassamet, now known as Burrard Inlet, on the north, and on the other impinged on by the waters of False Creek, the inception of a town was marked by such an incident, and although the exceptional hollowness of this particular tree was rare, numerous others in the immediate neighborhood would have served as hotels, restaurants and general business houses if treated similarly with the monarch of Tulare.

One of the attractions of the same city is an immense cedar, fifty-four feet in circumference, looming up in giant proportions amidst its fellows, adorning the same park. It is arrived at under the best of circumstances in roads and bridges, while the eye is charmed with the sweep of headlands shooting away on either side to the Gulf of Georgia, the line of the horizon broken by a timber clad island.

Another genus of the order measuring forty-four feet—a fir—also stands serenely tall, gazed down upon by the two lions which Nature had formed when in a freakish mood, on the mountain top, remarkably co-incident with the fate of the gateway which they seem to guard, the inlet mostly meantime of the goods produced in the Orient and Southern Americas, through time the inlet and the outlet of an inter-colonial commerce, carried on under the watchful eye and powerful paw of the British lion.

If age does not always accomplish the decay of the hearts of the magnificent growths of tree life, the destructive agency of fire is at work and the Douglas firs, rich in resin, catch fire and hold it until but a shell of their majestic selves remain, or go crashing to the earth, shaking with an ominous force that which bore them in their stately uprightness for hundreds of years before. The landscapes which might be the never ending theme of the poet, and find their reflections on the easels of hundred of painters, are rendered disfigured by the marches of this enemy of beauty. Wherever the eyes are cast, rise from the younger growth and brush the bare rigid trunks of the martyrs to the oft recurring sweep of the fire fiend. Valuable timber is ruined when the forests are attacked by the all devouring element which finds increased hold in the matter that, extruded, would form important marketable commodities. The bark also of the hemlock spruce, which is most used here, is lost to the tanning industry which is yet but in its incipient state on the coast. Not so long ago a fire raged in the Surrey woods near the mouth of the Fraser river, which viewed from the opposite bank looked awesome. The dense smoke along the ridge of timber visible, capped long stretches of fire that spread with rapidity, borne swiftly along by the rich ingredients composing the trees which lay in its path. The atmosphere all

about, lurid as when charged with intense electrical currents, would brighten here and there; showers of sparks shot into the low lying cloud banks of smoke, prescient of the thundering fall of the giants whose proud plumed heads swayed and came tumbling to the earth. In the path of fire have been left tree stumps which force their large size upon one, from the novel uses to which they have been put. One of the most remarkable in this wise is that in which a bush-rancher at Mount Lehman, about forty miles inland from the coast, formed a comfortable home by dividing the interior of one of those relics of majesty and beauty into apartments, in which he lived, feeling no doubt more safe from the impending timber in the vicinity than if sheltered by a commodious house erected with mechanical skill. Some miles inland also, at a place called Langley, on the Fraser, it may be worth noting that a number of trees were discovered in which were chambers attributed to the aboriginal inhabitants of the country, but further than the mere finding of the interesting phenomena elucidation has not gone.

In height the Douglas firs and cedars especially attain striking altitudes, trees of two hundred to three hundred feet not being uncommon; in circumference, too, showing a remarkable extent. A tree, the hollow remains of which can conveniently hold a team of heavy draught horses with driver standing between, would cause some comment in countries less fortunate in the extent of timber, but the camera has depicted such a scene in immediate contiguity to one of the rising coast towns. Sections of trees measuring seven to fifteen feet in diameter are often found bolstered up and conspicuously placed in the thoroughfares of young cities, where they act as the bill poster's friend and bulletin board.

It is natural under such circumstances that lumber should form one of the most important industries of the province. Skid and railways mark a course into the thickest part of the forests, from which the timber is transported to the nearest water for conveyance in booms to the mills, which occupy suitable sites in different parts of the country. Arrived at the place of consignment the large logs, secured conveniently to the shute up which they glide, and laid their length to the large saws, go shrieking and groaning through the process which turns them out in lumber at the opposite end of the mill—the firs for house building and other purposes—the beautiful cedar for doors and sashes and shingles—and the white spruce for stepping, and boxes for use in the transport of canned salmon, a slightly less important industry than that of lumber itself. This, the principal industry, spurred on by the convenient and inexhaustible supply of suitable timber for milling purposes, has developed in a measure commensurate with the demand for lumber in the Antipodean and Oriental countries. The mania of insurgism which makes the southern republics such a hot bed of strife and rebellion, augmented by the prolonged trouble in Chili, has had a fluctuating effect on the export timber trade of the province. Notwithstanding, the more passive nations to the east and far south have a constant fleet of vessels in communication with the companies doing business in this line. The Chinese, in imposing duty, levy the tax on the stick irrespective of size, so that a China bound ship may be determined at her berth by the almost uniform dimensions of the timber being stowed; whereas in the case of consignments to countries whose tariff demands a scale of duty per foot measurement, the lumber is sawn and shipped in the requisite sizes for immediate use in building. With the impetus given the industry through its foreign agencies, the facilities in conveying the timber, from its arriving at the mill until it emerges in its different proportions suited to building, have been improving so that at the present time the aid of mechanism has made it possible on the Fraser river to raise a log from the water and pass it through all the processes, almost without a hand being placed to the lumber unless to mark on the different lengths. No less striking than some of the immense trees, in their virgin glory, clothed with a swaying foliage still verdant and untouched by the destroying agency of men, or the more relentless fury of fire, are some of the timbers which have been shipped from the coast mills. Two sticks whose dimensions registered three feet broad, by the same measurement in depth and sixty feet long, were shipped by a Burrard Inlet milling company to the order of an eastern firm—the combined weight reaching twenty-five tons. Each stick comprised six thousand four hundred and eighty feet of lumber, it being allowed that they formed the two largest timbers ever cut by any milling concern in the province. Timber scaling ninety feet long with a measurement otherwise of about thirty inches have been produced in the Fraser river saw mills, being forwarded east, where they must have

ing out prominently from its pages are instances in which royal hands have planted shoots from trees, which ultimately under careful tending, attained to giant dimensions. Of those evidences of the reign of monarchs a high appreciation is felt, as well for significant events projected at the period of their planting as that the oak is emblematic of great and gallant deeds performed on ships of war, manned by hearts no less impervious to fear than were the planks on which the sons of insular Britain trod to the arquebuses and other engines of destruction in use in the early period of her history. Groups of well tended trees of different genus, of immense spread of bough, stand immovable sentinels through the ages, over some grand historic mansion, while those of whose patrimony they form part live and die, passing away while the space of their lives seems but to add strength and respected beauty to the noble emblems of heroic deeds. Forests of fir add beauty to the romantic landscapes of Scotland, as they burst upon the view in varying tints of green, as the sun courses his way through the zenith, casting light and shade as the reflection sweeps strongest from east to west, at one time on a shoulder, later on over the whole front when the foliage is one mass of bright green, the trees in echelon scaling the mountain side and only lost to view across the summit.

But reflection to boyhood's days in the older countries also tends to conjure up less significant phases of tree growth. There is the Fiji band with its tinkling timbrels, its German concertinas and piccolos, its squad of happy faces, and a fading day; cool and still cooler as the troop of merry young musicians wend their way into a beautiful glen, the road through which they pass fringed with hazel trees loaded with nuts, in the bed below a trout stocked stream meandering its way to the sea. Farther on is the roaring mill; the boom of the falling waters striking upon the ear in deep hur-mony with the surroundings. There is a grassy plot—a plateau, resting on the edge of the abyss into which the waters tumble and are crested with foam—whipped into anger by the rocks underneath. Spruce beer bottles are unpacked from a basket, the corks popping no less lively during lunch, accompanied with more natural laughter than does the product of the cork tree from the more elegant necks of champagne bottles at a banquetting table.

Extraordinary cases of growth or spread of bough are well attested, those instances where vast extent has been arrived at by any species of timber occupying a monumental celebrity in the minds of those who have viewed them. The votaries of 'fads' have for their most recent diversion turned their worship to a tree god. This contrivance for making life still worth the living was not sprung on the world unexpectedly; old Chappay's walking stick was a sign before of the way the fad hunting mind was tending. Big pieces of trees, and big trees rage, but how long their meteoric transcendence will last is likely to be more exactly arrived at after the world's fair in Chicago in 1893. A section of the famous Tulare county, Cal., cedar which measured three hundred and twelve feet in height, and ninety-nine feet in circumference at the base, taking ten experienced woodsmen five months and twelve days in the operation of cutting it down, is not likely to be the least interesting of the exhibits at the great fair which our cousins shall shortly foist upon the world, the magnetic powers of attraction of which shall be felt by most people of the earth. Our cousin is blamed for a little imaginative propensity in his nature, when dissenting