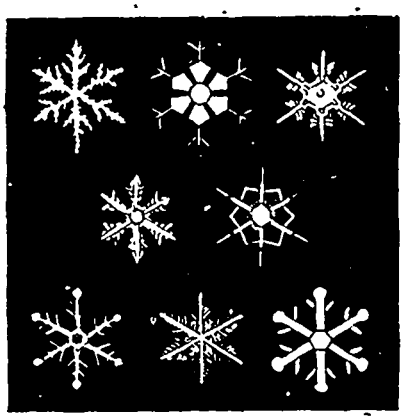


glory, and turned the whole thing into better than King Solomon's mines,—a fairyland of forest, silver forest, necklaces of diamonds, wreathes of sunshine; glittering, sparkling, twinkling. A small boy was full of mischief. He struck the tree I was admiring, and lo! with a crackling crash the crystal beauty was gone.

Did you ever observe how delicious the air is after a snow-storm; how it is alive with life, full of clear and cool atoms, sparkling and dancing in the sunlight, with many-coloured beams glancing hither and thither?

Now, set a glass jug of water in your room at a temperature of 22°. Put a thermometer into the jug, and let it stand untouched. The temperature of the water will show 22°, and still the water is not frozen. But shake the water, and instantly it turns into a mass of spongy ice with the thermometer at 32°.

Look at the evergreens. We despise them in summer, and say they mean poor soil. We are glad of them in winter when we have nothing else. When the prophet sang of "instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree" it was not the same species as ours. The most valuable of our evergreens is the pine. The spruce, too, is used for building. The hemlock looks well, but is not of much use. It grows on the very poorest of land, and is scarcely worth the trouble of cutting down, except for rough fences, and the inside covering of roofs. Its bark, however, if not better than its bite, is at least better than its wood, and is much prized by our tanners. A young hemlock looks light, graceful, and feathery, and sways beautifully in the wind. An old one is sturdy, rough, deeply-furrowed, gnarled, broken, and top-blighted.

The fir is better for staves of baskets and casks than for boards. The tamarack is chiefly used for fire-wood, and even then it is best for kindling. When green, though very resinous, it burns with difficulty. When dry, it consumes quickly, and throws off light burning fragments called "flankers" which are dangerous. Our cedar, though unsightly and zig-zag to a degree, may be exposed to all sorts of usage from time and the weather without the slightest symptom of decay, except perhaps the bark dropping off. It is almost indestructible. It grows in marshy land, and crops up very densely. A cedar swamp is our farmers' joy. But our farmers would do well to shew a little providence for the future.

Every tree has its own form and manner of growth, so that now, when we have not a leaf to guide us, we still can know it. Every tree has its life and history, told on its face and by its surroundings. In sketching them in, always remember this. No two trees,—no two blades of grass alike no two clover blossoms--no two flakes of snow. Our wonderful world! An elm tree that has grown in the forest, will die when transplanted to a meadow,—die for very loneliness and grief. It cannot do without its friends.

AN OLD GRUB.

INGENIOUS BOYS.

BY IOTA.

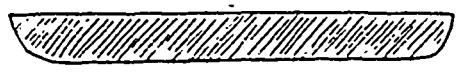
Look at a map of Canada and west of Lake Superior, you will see a chain of small lakes. Lakes and rivers make a chain from these, westward and northward, far into the heart of our North-West Territories. Scattered here and there throughout this vast region are numbers of Indian Reserves, and at some future time I may tell you something of the life people lead on them, but at present I am just going to give you an instance of how dexterous these Indian boys are that dwell in the far north-west.

There is nothing to show that the Indian in his native state had anything corresponding to our skates, but these have been introduced for many years by white traders, and Indian boys know their use and value. But skates are very dear indeed in this part of the world, and many an Indian boy longs in vain for the shining steel bars that are such a help in moving over the glassy lake or river. Not being able to purchase, the boy sets to work to make them out of such materials as can be got on an Indian Reserve. Blacksmiths' shops are generally not be found there, and even if they were, he has no more money to pay the blacksmith than to pay the store-keeper, so he must trust to simpler materials.

First he gets a piece of wood and fashions it roughly into the form of the body of an old-fashioned wooden skate. At this stage it looks something like this

Next he takes a saw and saws a long slit down his wooden body; or if a saw be not obtainable, he digs out a slit with a knife.

From some source he has obtained an old piece of hoop iron, perhaps a piece from a Hudson's Bay Company iron-bound packing case, or from an old pork barrel. This he rubs patiently on a rough stone until it looks like this



and then he drives it into the wooden body. If the fates are agreeable, the iron sticks firmly in the wood; if not, he must tighten it by including a piece of old rag as he drives it in, or drive in a few carefully kept iron nails beside it. The skate is now near completion. Four more nails are driven into the sides of the block, and to these he attaches his thongs of deerskin and the skate is complete. Since he has no boots, but wears moccasins, a screw in the heel is out of the question, and the way he gets about on the ice shows that these home-made articles answer the purpose for which intended very well.