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SKETCH OF A CANADIAN LUMBER KING.

It is said of Mr. J. R. Booth, of Ottawa, that he is the greatest lumberman on the American continent. This distinction he has earned by enterprise, perseverance and business ability, his wealth when launching out to make his way in the world consisting of less than ten dollars. A review of the life of such a remarkable man is always read with interest, while it must also furnish an example of what may be accomplished even by those born in humble circumstances.

Mr. Booth is a native Canadian, having been born in the town of Waterloo, Ontario, over seventy years ago. Like many of the leaders in the commercial world, his early days were spent on the farm. When reaching manhood he secured employment in the city of Ottawa as a sawyer. His first business venture was the purchase of a machine shop, which was destroyed by fire after eight months. There was a small mill lying idle on the present site of Mr. Booth's great establishment. It was rented by men who intended to start in business, but the deal fell through, and the young millwright secured a lease of it for ten years. He started on a small scale with a single saw. His first encouragement came in the shape of a contract for furnishing lumber for the Parliament buildings, awarded in competition with other bidders. He worked out his contract at a substantial profit, and purchased the saw mill after three years' occupancy. That was in 1860. In war times his business was very slack, and he was compelled to take a partner, but the outlook was so doubtful that the latter retired at the end of a year.

Mr. Booth had a large stock of lumber on hand, and shortly after his partner left a brisk demand sprang up and he sold all he had. This gave him a good start. About this time several tracts of timber land along the Ottawa river were offered for sale, comprising the estate of John Egan, who had owned a tremendous quantity of timber. Mr. Booth was doing a small business with the bank, and the officials had confidence enough in him to advance a sum, for which he paid 7 per cent. interest. With this money he secured a large limit at a fraction of its value, and increased the capacity of his mill by putting in two gang saws. He used all the money he made and all that he could get credit for in buying more timber limits, running largely into debt. This proved to be a wise policy. To-day he owns more pine timber land than any other one person in the Dominion.

Frequently Mr. Booth found it necessary to add to his mill plant, and in 1892 he had 13 band saws and four gates in operation, with a capacity of more than one million feet in ten hours. Day and night crews could turn out two million feet of lumber in twenty hours, but as double crews were never employed on account of the difficulty attending

the handling of such an amount of lumber after it leaves the saws, the capacity has always been stated as one million feet, and exceeds that of any other mill in the world.

In the month of May, 1894, his extensive mill was destroyed by fire, entailing a serious loss to Mr. Booth and to the citizens of Ottawa and Hull. Shortly afterwards he purchased the old Perley & Pattee mill adjoining the burned property, and fitted it up with improved machinery. The plant as it stands to-day will cut from six to eight hundred thousand feet of lumber in a twenty hour run, and consists of a series



MR. J. R. BOOTH.

of buildings, some of which are of stone, the walls of which remained intact after the fire, while the other buildings are of timber. There is a lath and picket mill, a mill for the reduction of slabs into shingles, box boards and lath, a mill with one large band saw, swing saws, etc., and the main mill, which is fitted with four single bands, a pair of twin circulars, two 62 inch Wickes gangs, trimmers, butters, etc. Last year the season's cut was 130,000,000 feet.

The mill is situated on the Chaudiere Falls at Ottawa, and is driven by water power. The sawdust has for many years been dumped into the Ottawa river, but as an act has been passed by the Dominion parliament prohibiting the dumping of sawdust and refuse into rivers, steps are now being taken to dispose of the sawdust in another manner.

Over twelve hundred men are now employed about the mill and yards, and 368 wagons are utilized in moving the lumber from the mill to the piles or from the yard to the cars or river boats for transportation. The deals destined for

the English market are loaded upon river boats and towed to Montreal, for re-shipment by the regular ocean liners. Probably fifty per cent. of the product of the Booth mill finds a market in England, while the balance is sold in Canada and the United States, Mr. Booth's large trade in the United States being supplied largely through the mill and sorting yard at Burlington, Vt., and the sales office in Boston. There are often carried in stock over 100,000,000 feet of lumber, and the mill and lumber yard cover 160 acres of property.

To the subject of this sketch the mill employees of the Ottawa valley are indebted for a reduction in the daily working hours. In the spring of 1895 Mr. Booth voluntarily reduced the working day of his employees from eleven to ten hours, without any corresponding reduction in wages. This generous action was freely commented upon, and was very soon copied by other mill operators, until to-day ten hours has been almost universally adopted as the standard day.

As previously stated, Mr. Booth owns very extensive timber limits, estimated at 5,000 square miles, at the head waters of the Ottawa river, 100 to 240 miles above the mill boom. After the logs are driven to the boom they are sorted into the smaller booms, the size and quality of the log deciding its final resting place. A novel method is employed by Mr. Booth for getting the logs from his Nipissing limits to Ottawa. Five miles from Lake Nipissing to the north-east is the Mattawa River, an important tributary of the Ottawa. Between Nipissing and the Mattawa is the rise of land separating the waters of the north and east from those of the west and south. Mr. Booth put down five miles of track connecting the two bodies of water, and built a great barge on which he floated a standard size locomotive from the Canadian Pacific Railway to his isolated track a feat that was applauded far and wide in that region. For twelve years that locomotive has been puffing back and forth transferring logs over the watershed.

Twenty-three years ago Mr. Booth established at Burlington, Vt., extensive lumber yards and wood-working factories, covering an area of forty acres. This branch of his business is under the management of his brother, Mr. E. Booth. A box factory there consumes from 5,000,000 to 8,000,000 feet of lumber annually. Most of the lumber handled is the product of the Ottawa mill, but lately considerable spruce has been taken down the lake by boat.

BUILDING OF RAILWAYS.

In addition to his extensive lumbering operations, Mr. Booth has interested himself very largely in the construction of railways. In order to obtain a direct outlet for his lumber to Atlantic ports and eastern inland cities of the United States, he built, some years ago, the