

Winter in the Backwoods

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COME with me from the heart of civilization, from the realm of comfort and refinement, and glance for a moment upon the other half of the world, of whose lives this half knows almost nothing. We shall winter in the backwoods of Canada;—the backwoods, geographically, because removed from the outside world by a three days' journey over rock, and snow, and ice; the backwoods, morally, because cut off from every outside influence for good, and shut in with all the natural tendencies for evil.

The little village of the backwoods, lying at the mouth of the river bearing the same name, is founded literally upon a rock, hard, bare granite, which rises in three sharp ridges, and upon which the rude homes of the lumbermen are built. A gully, filled in with sawdust until a tolerably navigable road is formed, runs through the village, and is the only street of which it boasts. With a view to personal safety, the flattest portions of the rock have been selected as residential sites; and, as a result, the huts are perched promiscuously, regardless of the fact that Euclid defined a straight line for the benefit of posterity. The large lumber mill down by the river, and the great flat monotonous yard traversed by tramways, along the sides of which are piled thousands of feet of lumber, stamp distinctively the occupation of the villagers. Beyond the river the opposite bank rises gray and barren; and the landscape of sawdust and rock, with here and there a stray evergreen, which tells of former luxuriance, looks desolate indeed.

The interior of the houses is, if possible, more dreary. In a futile effort to prevent the wind and snow from penetrating the walls, which are built of a double layer of boards with sawdust filled in between, the inside has been covered with gray tar paper, but all evidences of any other attempts at comfort, save the endless rag mats on the floor, are conspicuously absent. The houses of all but the most luxurious, boast of but