

The immediate destination of the square timber conveyed by water or railway is the "banding ground," where it is formed into the immense rafts that are such a distinctive feature of our lake and river scenery. A raft is composed of from ninety to a hundred cribs, "banded" together by "wythes," or twisted saplings, of hard, tough wood, and joined at the ends by "lashing-poles," which are fixed to the end traverses by chain wythes. In place of these, "cat-pieces" are sometimes used—that is, lengths of strong scantling, stout enough to bear a considerable strain, and long enough to reach easily from crib to crib. Thus the cribs are kept close together, yet are allowed sufficient independence of motion up and down to lessen the strain on the huge raft. The raft can be readily taken apart and put together again; as each part is passed down a rapid, the men return overland to the part not yet sent down, carrying their gear in wagons.

Like the separate cribs of which we have spoken, the raft is propelled ordinarily by sweeps or, weather permitting, by sails. Often a steam-tug is employed, a curious variety being the "fiddle-boat"—that is, two long boats, or sections of boats, with the paddle-wheel between them. The crew consists of from forty to fifty well-built and skilful men, who live—sometimes with their wives and children—in little wooden houses on the raft. The strange craft presents the appearance of a village, progressive enough certainly, and in America that is the ideal of perfection. The chief danger to be avoided is falling through the openings between the ends of cribs of unequal length. These water spaces become filled with floating foam and chips, so as to be almost indistinguishable from the solid surface of the log. On the rivers the greatest danger to rafts and raftsmen is from the rapids; on the lakes, from storms; yet owing to the skill of the pilots and the efficiency of the crews, accidents are rare; and these timber islands, after a journey from the remotest parts of Canada, float down the broad St. Lawrence, sound as when first banded together, to their destination in the coves of Quebec.

At these coves the rafts are finally broken up, and from the acres of timber thus accumulated, the large, ocean-going ships are loaded. Near the vessel men run actively over the floating timbers, and with the help of pike-poles select the cargo. Each stick or spar is lifted by means of a chain slung from a spar on deck, and brought to a level with the large receiving-port near the vessel's bow. It then rests on a roller, and is easily shoved in, and stowed away. "Deal" planks are brought alongside the timber-ship in large barges moored fore and aft of the ship, and the deals thrown in through the ports. When the steadily-increasing load within the hold sinks the vessel to its lower ports these are closed, and the loading is resumed at those immediately above. The scene is a striking one. In the foreground the dark ship, contrasting with the gay motley of the lumbermen's costume; farther off, the coves, with the miles and miles of booms, and millions of feet of timber; in the distance,

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