

LUMBERING IN THE ADIRONDAKS.

Much has been said and is being written—says a correspondent of the *Daily Advertiser*, Boston, who contributes the following interesting facts about the lumbering operations of this most romantic section of country—of the desecration of the Adirondack region by the building of railroads, the despoliation of its forests by lumbermen, the pollution of its waters by saw mills and tanneries. If an enterprising man enters within its sacred groves he is immediately assailed, anathematized and spoken of as enemy to man and defrauder of posterity. However pertinent these warnings may be to other regions, they are wholly inapplicable to the Adirondack region, and I believe to most lumber regions, for reasons that are patent to all who can or will study the subject. Like all primeval forests, ours consists of trees of every age and size, from the tiny sapling up to the mature tree that has defied the storms of a century, and its more venerable congeners that are passing down the other slope of the antinatal of life. Some having lived their allotted time, converted all their vital energies, died, and are falling *par passu* to their mother earth, reticulating it with their prostrate forms in every state of decomposition.

At present, the only means of transporting lumber of this region is by floating it, in the round log, down the streams to mills located on one of the railroads that skirt every side of it. None but coniferous trees, pine, spruce and cedar, will float well, therefore none other are cut, and of these none of less than 27 to 30 inches in circumference are marketable. The result is that the lumberman takes, on the average, ten or fifteen of the largest and most mature trees from an acre. When railroads are built through the region, which will be done sooner or later, probably an equal number of deciduous (hard wood) trees will be cut for the market. Even in this case no more trees (and those the maturest) will be cut than a scientific forester would take out, had he no other view than the health, beauty and vigor of those that are left—young trees that are awaiting their turn. Is it not better that those mature trees should be utilized by the present generation of men, than that they should fall and decay uselessly, except to generations of trees that may reveal in their elements a hundred or a thousand years hence? When this subject was discussed in the New York Legislature last winter, a trustworthy expert stated that if he could take the whole assembly over the Adirondack region in a balloon, not one in 50 of the members could tell where the lumbermen had cut all the saleable trees and where he had not. He was right. None but an expert, and one, too, that had viewed the premises before the despoliation, could tell; and then by only missing the black tops of the firs. In 10 years these will reappear, and the territory can be profitably lumbered again.

That fire may follow the woodsman's axe is possible, but not so probable, nor are its effects half so deplorable as that of a virgin forest. The conditions favorable to the former are more so for the latter. The largest and most destructive conflagrations have occurred where the green timber was still standing. When a fire is once started in a resinous group it does not wait for dry food, but leaps from conifer to conifer, and from base to top with electric speed, incinerating the living with the dead. That prince of explorers, Baron Nordenskiöld, in his "Voyage of the Vega," in speaking of the pine forests that he discovered on the Veneset, within the Arctic circle, in Northern Siberia, says: "It is of enormous extent, a primeval forest nearly untouched by the axe, but in many places devastated by forest fires." The most thrilling and awful sight I ever witnessed was a grove of terebinthine trees on fire, lighted from a match that had lit my cigar. Almost instantaneously each was a writhing pyramid of flame. It was Shelley, I think, who called the lightning the laughter of the clouds. This seemed like the revelry of the demons, in which the four winds joined and outvoiced the roar of the ocean.

I have said that the logs are all floated down the stream. They go principally to the mills at Potsdam on the Raquette and Glen's Falls on the Hudson. The current and gravity take all

but a small percentage to the latter, in the course of three years, mostly in the first year, while owing to the wide bays, narrow gorges and rocky rapids only a small percentage would ever reach the former without other aid. A drive of about 750,000 logs, all just 13 feet 8 inches long, belonging to half a dozen owners, sufficient to make 50,000,000 of manufactured lumber, passes down the Raquette annually occupying several months. That which passed this place in April has not reached Potsdam yet. The cutting and running of these logs is an industry of some magnitude, the picturesque and novel features will be interesting to those not familiar with the subject. About the time the sun crosses the line in the autumn, gangs varying from 25 to 75 stout men may be seen passing from her genial rays into the shade of the great wilderness, like flocks of hybernating birds and, like birds, they do not reappear into force until the sun has recrossed the line and the vernal season is at hand. They go in with dampers down and in silence, but come out with throats open, jostling the air with the outpourings of their long pent-up exuberance. When they reach the territory from which they are to cut marketable trees, they build a log shanty, with two communicating apartments, covered with long spars hollowed out trough-like, with the axe, laid side by side, the space between them covered by others inverted and locked into them, making a water-proof, and, when calked on the inner side with moss, a warm roof. One apartment is used by the men, who sleep in berths or bunks built, in tiers of three, against the wall, of saplings fastened with withes, and filled with fragrant boughs for mattresses. These berths are made without the use of nails or tools save the axe. The other apartment is used for a storeroom and kitchen, where the food is cooked and served to the men, which is otherwise considered sacred to the uses of the women cooks, scullions, etc., and their families.

The most approved plan for these logging shanties is one inherited from early civilizations, but better adapted to the wants and health of its occupants than any modern conception. It is oblong, with an aperture some 6x12 feet in the centre of the roof, beneath which, on the earth, a fire fed by logs 8 to 10 feet in length is kept burning night and day, affording a genial heat and perfect ventilation, and around which the men, wet from melting snows and dripping trees, sit, dry their clothes, smoke their pipes, and while away the long evenings, and then turn into the surrounding bunks and sleep, without being assailed with fetid air or unwholesome draughts, there being no other opening for light or air. The men in these camps are very rarely affected by the colds, coughs, sore throats and neuralgic pains that afflict almost constantly men in camps warmed by stoves and lighted by windows.

The most classical, best preserved and most superb specimen of the early style of construction, which these lowly huts follow in a very distant and feeble manner, is the Pantheon, in Rome,—

The shrine of every saint, the temple of all gods,
From Jove to Jesus.

Built 27 years before the birth of the latter, the opening in the dome (which is its only means of admitting light, or air) still bears the marks of sacrificial fires kindled to pagan gods almost 1,000 years ago. But I have wandered far from and far above my subject. Some of the logging camps on the Ottawa in Canada are so distant and inaccessible to wheeled vehicles that supplies for the autumn have to be hauled in on sleds the previous winter. This is rarely done on this side of the St. Lawrence. Late teams begin to run regularly after the moon goes in.

The logs are cut and placed on skidways, ready to be rolled on the sleds, in the autumn and early winter. As soon as there is sufficient snow, teams are sent in with large sleds that will carry from 15 to 20 good sized logs to the load, the roads are broken down and sprinkled with water, until they become, if the weather is favorable, sheets of glare ice. The logs are hauled on the river, where they remain until the ice breaks up in the spring. Every operator has his mark or brand registered in the county clerk's office. The die is cut upon the face of a hammer and indented upon both ends of the logs while they are on the skidways.

They float at random, mixing with other logs, until they reach the assorting booms at the mills of their owners.

A gang of river drivers consists of a boss, a cook, choro boys and 40 to 60 men, who must be young and sinewy, as the work is rough and dangerous. They have to leap from log to log, and sometimes ride one ashore on the crest of a cataract or be carried over it; only experts can ride a log. It consists in balancing one's self on a log, keeping it from rolling and propelling it in the required direction, by a peculiar undulating and rocking movement, without paddle or other implement. Floating logs lodge upon projecting rocks and in narrow gorges, and pile upon one another until they form what are called jams, many feet high and extending back miles. A jam is not usually broken until the rear of the drive approaches, as the water thus held back helps the operation. It is a thrilling and sometimes fearful sight to see these jams broken and see the logs plunging down precipices of one hundred feet in as many rods, leaping, like a flying fish, entirely out of the watery abyss below, into the air, and bury themselves in the white foam of the next fall.

To return to the matter of preserving the sylvan beauties of the Adirondack region. The legislature of New York enacted a law at its last session restraining any further sale of the state lands, and I think I have shown that it is clearly not beneficial to the private owners of timber lands to despoil them, and self interest is a powerful motor in the conduct of men. But there is another, a meteorological reason, why this region is not likely to be shorn of its forests. No considerable area is ever deforested or (in the vernacular) "cleared," unless it is adaptable to agricultural uses. It has been demonstrated that in consequence of the long cold season of the Adirondacks, no land lying more than 1,500 feet above tide-water in that region can be cultivated profitably, or without frequent disaster. Nearly all the wilderness proper lies above this line; its finest and most interesting scenery, all its rock-riven and romantic passes, its affluence of lake and river systems, most of its summer and hygienic resorts, and its chief attractions lie above the line of profitable cultivation of the soil.

A LOST TIMBER SHIP.

Among the shipping casualties of the week, the most conspicuous and worthy of note is that of the abandonment of the Dublin timber ship *Westminster*, in the Atlantic Ocean, some 20 degrees of longitude westward of Cape Clear, on the 12th ult. It appears that the ship was caught in a heavy gale, increasing, it is said, to a hurricane on the 9th, when homeward bound with a cargo of timber from Quebec, and was struck by a heavy sea, which carried away the deck-houses, the boats, and the deckload, and also damaged the rudder, so as to render it useless; while up aloft the sails were blown out of the bolt ropes, after which the vessel became unmanageable, and apparently water-logged, as the crew of 23 hands, under the command of Captain Morris, could find no place to occupy but the poop or the rigging, while the ship wallowed helplessly in the trough of the sea, which washed over her like a half-tide rock.

Five men, it seems, were at the steering gear when the sea first broke on board, and the second mate and several others were severely injured, apparently by the loose timber and wreckage flying about. This state of things continued until Thursday afternoon, and doubtless the sufferings of the men, especially those that were injured, must have been very great, from their want of shelter and being reduced to a biscuit a day and some lime juice, as they could not get at any fresh water or provisions. Fortunately, on Thursday afternoon the steamer *Australian* hove in sight, and her commander, observing the signals of distress flying on board the *Westminster*, bore down to her, and extracted all hands from their perilous and almost desperate condition, and brought them to Liverpool. The published accounts are very meagre, but there does not appear to have been any life lost, nor is mention made of any case likely to prove fatal among the injured men, so that it may be anticipated that all will recover and become again able seamen, whose lives were

worth preserving for themselves and others. Nor is it found that the recollection of pains and perils past has any uncomfortable effect on the future lives and spirits of those who have suffered them if their health was not permanently damaged thereby. Neither are they discouraged from following their usual calling, and facing the same dangers whenever in the way of duty they chance to encounter them. They even obtain a sort of prestige among all their friends and acquaintances as heroes who have passed through a trying ordeal, and have a stirring tale of the sea to tell.

Now the *Westminster* was rather an old timber ship of 1,426 tons register, built at Quebec as long ago as 1867, and belonging to Mr. W. Murphy, of Dublin. But the trouble she fell into does not appear to have had anything to do with her age. There is no mention of her having sprung a leak, and the water that got into her seems to have come from above instead of below. In tearing away the deck houses and cargo, rents would be made through which water bursting in huge masses over the decks would find its way below in tons at a time; and the pumps in such a case would have been useless, even had the crew been able to keep the main deck and work them. Here, therefore, was a case where the worst perils of the sea befell a timber ship, whose only merit was—and an immense one it turned out to be—that in the last extremity water could not sink her. Everything was lost but the lives of those she carried, and, whatever they suffered, they no doubt feel thankful that they are now safe in Liverpool, and that the old timber ship kept them up till succor arrived to redeem them from the jaws of death.

It is so much the fashion to deride wood built ships as something obsolete and out of date, that we are glad of an opportunity to show where they have an advantage over their iron competitors, and when it is a question of saving lives no one is indifferent to the incident.

In the last fatal collision in the Channel between two iron ships belonging to the same company, the *Waitara* was said to have sunk in four minutes after she was struck, and to have carried down with her twenty-six of the people on board, some of whom had not time to get on deck before she filled. A very shocking thought to follow out, which need not be done here, and which could not have happened to those on board the *Westminster*, which saved her people when all else was past saving, and gave them another chance for their lives.

It may be argued that with a Quebec timber cargo on board an iron ship would not sink, but that is very doubtful, and at all events she would be too near total immersion for any one to live on board of her if once the water got the better of her. Also the loss of the *Westminster* may be attributed to her deckload, which of course rendered her deeper in the water and less buoyant than she would have been without it, and it being summer time more would be carried that way, because bad weather is not anticipated to the same extent as in the wild winter months, and long dark nights when more caution in loading is supposed to be exercised. But any way the deckload seems to have disappeared with the first heavy sea that broke on board, and in that way the ship was relieved of her superincumbent weight, and the people on board thereby found means to get at some food to avoid being washed off the wreck. All we profess to show in this brief allusion to the catastrophe of the *Westminster* is that timber ships wood laden are not liable to the same sudden destruction by accidents of the voyage as befall iron ships so often and so fatally if they come into collision with each other or are overpowered by stress of weather at sea.

In conclusion, we need only observe that too much praise can hardly be given to the captain of the steamer *Australian* (whose name by the way was not mentioned in the newspaper reports) for his prompt and efficient assistance in the hour of need to the crew of the *Westminster*. We so often hear of vessels hurrying past others in distress, like the *Levite* in the parable, that when we hear of a Good Samaritan at sea he ought to be made to feel by general acknowledgment that he has deserved well of his country.—*Timber Trades Journal*.