

## THE POTASH INDUSTRY OF CANADA

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The chemist of to-day who thinks of the production of potash in terms of the output of Stassfurt will be surprised to learn that at the middle of the last century between two-thirds and three-fourths of the world's product of potash came from Canada. Regarding this product as a Canadian industry it will be equally surprising to learn that for many years the export of pot-ash and pearl-ash ranked next to lumber in the shipment of forest products to other countries. In the fifties the export of potash and pearl ash from Upper and Lower Canada for several years exceeded a million dollars in value per year and a million dollars was a big sum to the Canadians of those days. It was very important to the individual settler in the first half of the last century, because it was the one product of all his varied labors that could be depended on for ready money. It was paid for in cash whereas most of his other earnings and crops were traded for groceries, dry goods and implements. His wool went to the custom woolen mill and came back in cloth or in roll cards for the settler's wife to spin; the wheat went to the grist mill and came back largely as flour and feed, and butter and home-made cheese came back in other groceries but potash always came back in real money.

In many parts of the country the manufacture of pot and pearl ash became a specialized industry carried on all the year round. Men were employed in going through the settlements, collecting the ashes saved by the farmer who burnt his timber, not more for the sake of clearing the land than for the sake of the money obtained from the sale of ashes. Many farmers had their own pots and converted their wood into potash, while every new settlement established an "ashery" in which both pot and pearl ash would be made, from ashes hauled in from neighboring clearings. In 1851 there were 237 asheries in Upper and Lower Canada (Ontario and Quebec). In 1871 there were 519; but by 1891 these had dwindled