

RAMBLER'S PEREGRINATIONS.

I took a run up to Gravenhurst some days ago, and had the pleasure of visiting some of the large saw mills which form a circle around Muskoka Bay. Lumbermen are thick in this part of the country during the summer, but it is evident that the climate in winter is not to their liking as they nearly all seem to forsake their old haunts in the fall of the year and take up their abode in a more favored clime. This fact seemed to be particularly noticeable at the time of my visit, but perhaps it was a knowledge of my coming and not the aforesaid reason which accounted for their absence. However, I made myself familiar with the place during my brief sojourn, and can remember with pleasure the free and easy cordiality which I met with while visiting the dozen or more mills in the place.

Gravenhurst is a smart town of some 2,000 inhabitants, situated in the Muskoka district. It is certainly an oasis in a rocky, but picturesque, country, in which, so far as I could judge while passing through by rail, it would be difficult to find sufficient soil on which to build a house. Still, while this is the case, there is abundance of woodland, large and apparently healthy trees growing out of crevices in the rock in thousands. A gentleman travelling beside me, in answer to my query as to how such trees get their nutriment, gave it as his opinion that the air made up for the deficiency in soil, which as the best answer to a difficult problem I give for what it is worth and for the want of a better solution.

The Gravenhurst mills—12 in all—are still busy cutting, but will soon shut down for the winter. The output this season is fully up to, if not above, the average. Mickle, Dymont & Co. operate three saw and one shingle mill, the combined output being about 15,000,000 of lumber, 15,000,000 shingles, and 5,000,000 lath. They will have four camps in operation this winter, and in the neighborhood of 160 men in the woods. The average number of men employed in and around these mills is 130. All the lumber manufactured by this firm is handled by Messrs. Christie, Kerr & Co. of Toronto.

I did not think while viewing the fine mill belonging to Mr. Isaac Cockburn such a short time ago, that in these rambling notes I would be called upon to chronicle its destruction by fire; but such, unhappily, is made necessary. I am not aware how this fire originated, but while there it occurred to me that there might be danger of fire connecting with the mill from the burner when the wind was blowing in the right direction. The refuse from this mill was carried in the ordinary way to the high rocks some fifty yards distant, where it was burned. It certainly did not appear to me as the safest plan to adopt, but, of course, my calculations may have been wide of the mark. During the progress of the fire on the 26th ult. two of the four boilers exploded, part of one being thrown a distance of two hundred yards. Fortunately the huge piles of lumber adjacent were left uninjured, but by the destruction of the mill Mr. Cockburn will lose about \$20,000. He had, however, a fair insurance on the property which is certainly a matter of considerable satisfaction. This will not only be a severe drawback to the owner but also to the town, as about 60 men will be thrown out of work. Mr. Cockburn's cut this year, had the mill run a little longer, would have been 6,000,000 feet of lumber, 3,000,000 shingles and 3,000,000 lath. He has already got three camps established, and intends taking out an average cut. I learned that Mr. C. had serious thoughts of remodeling his mill the coming winter by introducing a rotary gang and other new machinery. Now that he finds himself minus even the old mill, I hope to hear of his carrying out his original intention of adding the latest improved machinery.

I failed to find either member of the firm of Thomson & Baker, but ran across the genial son of the latter gentleman, Mr. Thos. Baker, who has a good head for lumber, and I am glad to learn is making the most of his opportunities. In conversation with this gentleman I learned that Thomson & Baker own three single-circular mills at Gravenhurst and still another at Huntsville, a village some distance north. In their mills here they cut on an average of from five to six million feet of lumber, and from two to three million at Huntsville. Mr. Baker informed me that the lumber business here, as in many other places, was not by any means as profitable as in past years. Prices, however, appear firm and the demand fairly good.

I ran across Mr. Theodore W. Taylor, of the firm of G. W. Taylor & Co., but did not have an opportunity of interviewing him. This firm's operations are being carried on to about the same extent as in past years. They are cutting quite extensively for the Ontario Lumber Co. "Theo.," although getting on towards middle age, is one of the boys in Gravenhurst, and I would liked to have had an opportunity of getting better acquainted with him.

The McBurney & Laycock Lumber Co. are doing a profitable business here also, and lay claim to having one of the best equipped one-circular mills in the country. Their

cut this year will be about 5,000,000 feet of lumber and 3,000,000 lath. Their average cut per day is 38,000 feet. Mr. C. Ayre is manager of this business and evidently understands his business thoroughly. Donogh & Oliver, of Toronto, will handle the entire output of this mill this year.

I was unable to pick up much information concerning the other mills here, further than that they were all running and doing a profitable trade.

Nearly all the logs intended to be converted into lumber at the Gravenhurst mills are brought by water a distance of about fifty miles, the assorting ground being at the mouth of Bracebridge river, eleven miles distant. All the mills are operated by steam, and the equipment is first class. The refuse is all disposed of by burners covered with sheet iron, each of which stands some 150 feet high. There is a complete net work of sidings connecting with the Grand Trunk Railway which renders the shipment of lumber easy. Speaking of the Grand Trunk railway reminds me that the one great grievance among the mill men of Gravenhurst is the scarcity of cars for shipping lumber. Perhaps the reader will say that this is an old complaint, and so it is, but being such it is none the less serious. This difficulty has hampered the trade too long, and it is quite time that a united effort should be made to remedy the evil. Millions of feet of lumber are lying in the piling grounds awaiting the convenience of the railway company to move it. The retailer blows up the wholesaler for not filling his orders in a reasonable time; the wholesaler looks to the manufacturer; and the manufacturer does as he will, has no other course open but await the pleasure of the G. T. R. company. Surely if an honest effort were made to cater to the wants of such an important industry the railway companies could provide sufficient cars to meet the demand. I hope soon to see this difficulty removed, but a firm and decisive stand must be taken by the lumbermen before such a turn in the wheel of fortune can be realized.

I could say much more concerning the lumber interests of Gravenhurst but I have already occupied enough space for one issue. On my way south I dropped into the Longford Lumber Co.'s wooden-ware factory at Orillia, and was much interested in an inspection of their new and well-equipped factory. This factory only commenced operations last July, but already an extensive business is being carried on, about 45 hands being employed in the manufacture of tubs, pails and other wooden-ware. The factory has a capacity for turning out 2,500 pails and tubs per day, and the machinery, which is principally of American manufacture, has been selected from among the best in the market. By a novel and unique arrangement the whole premises including the private office, some distance away, are heated by the surplus hot air from the dry kiln. As THE LUMBERMAN has already published a full description of this factory I will not extend my remarks further. Mr. Geo. Thompson is the manager of this business, Mr. C. Wright, assistant office manager and shipper, while the mechanical department is under the supervision of Mr. D. A. Lundy.

Leaving Orillia I struck the little town of Waukegan which is situated on the Midland division of the G. T. R., at ten p.m. and was fortunate enough to enjoy the hospitality of one of its leading citizens and his good lady, until nearly the wee sma' hours of the morning. There was a large company of friends present enjoying one of those social gatherings which goes far to make life in a small country village endurable, if not pleasurable.

Waukegan is the home of the Georgian Bay Consolidated Lumber Co., of which Mr. A. M. Dodge the well-known millionaire is president. In fact, I understood, that every foot of land and every building in the village is owned by this company. My visit here also was rather inopportune as Mr. Dodge had but a few days previous forsaken his magnificent summer house here and returned with his family to his winter quarters in New York. It was my pleasure, however, to meet the courteous Secretary-treasurer of the company, Mr. Jas. Scott, who kindly gave himself up for an hour to discuss lumber lore, and from this gentleman I gleaned some useful information, which for want of space will have to be discussed in a future letter. The Georgian Bay Lumber Co.'s mill here is undoubtedly one of the finest in Canada, if not in America. The outfit consists in the main of two stock gangs, a slabbing gang, twin circulars and a large circular saw. The most modern equipments, have been introduced, and in point of cleanliness it is certainly conspicuous. But little material goes to waste here, for after the sorters for shingles and lath have done their work the burner receives but poor fuel. In a separate building adjoining the mill proper, is located the box factory, in which some 35 hands are employed. The machinery here is also of the best, and the factory has a capacity for turning out 5,000 standard size boxes per day. From 25 to 30 different sizes are manufactured, which all find a market in the United States. Stepping from the box factory, my escort, (who by the way, is an associate of my younger days), took me into still another building, in which are located the

machine shop, engine and boiler rooms. The motive power consists of a pair of independent cut-off engines of 550 h. p. and seven steel boilers, 5 feet 6 inches in diameter, the latter being fed entirely by sawdust carried from different parts of the mill. In addition to this mill, of which I have given but a casual glance, the same company own and operate two mills at Pyng Inlet, one at Collingwood and one at Port Severn, the average annual production of all these mills being from fifty to sixty million feet. Of this from 20 to 23 million feet is usually shipped by water and the balance by rail, the better grades finding a market in New York and elsewhere. At the time of my visit about one thousand men had been sent to the woods, and the intention is to make a large surplus cut this year, which course, I understand, has been made necessary in consequence of the company's limits having been badly damaged by fire during the past summer. I had almost forgotten to mention that a thorough system of fire protection has just been introduced at the Waukegan mills, the outfit consisting of a large Northey pump and 800 feet of linen and rubber hose.

My very brief stay at Midland did not allow of my making a personal visit to the various mill in that town, but I picked up a little information here and there which will give the reader some idea of the extent of the trade carried on.

The Emery Lumber Co. in their two-circular and gang mill will cut from 11 to 12 million feet this year, and intend taking out of the woods fully as much if not more than in past years. They will have about 40,000 pieces left over for spring sawing next year. This is an American firm, and some two or three years ago they turned out about 15,000,000 feet of logs from their limits on the French River. They also constructed a monster boat with a capacity of 3,000,000 feet of logs, the object being to convey their stock cut on the Canadian limits to the extensive saw mills at Bay City. After these 15,000,000 logs were ready for shipment the Canadian Government placed a duty of \$2 a standard on all logs exported to the United States. The company could not ship the logs, which after lying a short time on the shores of the lake were sawn at Midland into lumber. The past summer the Shepherd & Morse Lumber Co. purchased the entire stock, and is now shipping it through Canada and the United States in bond for Buenos Ayres, South America, and Sydney, Australia.

Messrs. Chew Bros. in their one-circular mill have nearly finished a cut of 3,000,000 feet of lumber, together with 3,500,000 shingles and 2,000,000 lath. They ship all their lumber to Toronto and Hamilton.

The Ontario Lumber Co. have decided to cut nearly all their stock at Midland in the future, instead of Gravenhurst as heretofore. They own an excellent one-circular mill, capable of cutting from 35,000 to 40,000 feet per day. The cut this year, however, will not exceed 5,000,000, owing to having been shut a considerable portion of the season for want of logs. They intend operating largely in the woods the coming winter.

Messrs. Peters & Cain are also doing a good trade, and their cut this year will be about 3,000,000 feet.

The lumberman throughout the Georgian Bay complain that the past summer has been a very unfavorable one for them, owing to the prevailing high winds. Many logs have been lost, as many as five thousand pieces being scattered around the Bay at one time. Men for the woods in this locality are very plentiful, and as a result wages has been reduced considerably.

On my way through the Georgian Bay district I learned that the new Band mill recently erected by the William Hamilton Mfg. Co., of Peterborough, in Mr. Beck's new mill at Penetanguishene, was being tested, and I accordingly paid it a visit. The band saw is fast asserting its supremacy as a lumber producer as well as a timber saver, and the opposition to it which presented itself on its attempted practical introduction is dying out as its superiority becomes recognized. When the introduction of the band saw was seriously considered, and a few enterprising pine lumber manufacturers adopted the innovation, serious doubts existed as to whether the saving in timber would compensate for the loss of time or lack of speed as compared with the old reliable circular. But practical results have removed all doubts in that connection, and demonstrated that not only can the saving of nearly twenty per cent. in timber be accomplished but that the band saw is rapidly crowding toward the speed of the most vaunted and useful circular. The mill above referred to is no exception to the rule as the work so far done by it is of the most satisfactory kind. So far as I am a judge from seeing this new band mill in operation and the quality of lumber it is producing, I would say that the owner of the mill has reason to feel as proud of its work as the manufacturers who built it. Mr. Beck informed me that the cut this year in his two mills would be about 10,000,000 feet. His operations in the woods the coming winter will not be quite as extensive as they were last season.

RAMBLER.