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THE IMPORTANCE AND WEALTH OF OUR FORESTS.

We are accustomed to read of the "inexhaustible forests of Canada," and to form from this stereotyped phrase very incorrect conceptions respecting the timber resources of the country.

The Canadian forests are no doubt very great, but they are far from being inexhaustible sources of national wealth. The circumstances attending the first settlement of a new country, necessarily involved an enormous destruction of valuable trees, which, at the time of the invasion of the wilderness by the pioneer of civilization, were hewn down, cut into lengths, piled into heaps, and consumed by fire as fast as possible, in order to admit the warm sunlight to the earth and fit it for the plough. Millions of magnificent trees, which would now command a fabulous price, have been destroyed in this way, so that the lumberman is compelled year by year to retreat farther into the wilderness, and this will continue until the inferior quality of the timber arising from a too rigorous climate will arrest his operations. The products of the Canadian forest consist chiefly of timber in all its forms, from the massive square timber to the crooked "knees" for ship-building, together with ashes, both pot and pearl.

One hundred years ago (1759) the exports of lumber amounted to \$31,250; about half a century since (1808) the value of the exports of lumber did not exceed \$400,000, so that within the memory of many who can recollect lumbering operations at the commencement of the present century, the foreign trade has increased twenty-fold, besides the enormous quantities which have been consumed by a population growing from 300,000 to 2,500,000 souls. The value of the imports of lumber in 1860 exceeded \$10,000,000.

The most important and extensive timber territories of Canada are subjoined:—

1st. The country drained by the Ottawa, containing an area of 75,000 square miles. The white pine, red pine and ash are chiefly obtained from this region.

2nd. The St. Maurice and its tributaries, draining an area of 22,000 square miles. Contains large quantities of white, yellow and red pine, spruce, birch, maple and elm.

3rd. The Saguenay country, area 21,000 square miles. Rich in white and red pine, spruce, birch and tamarac.

4th. The north shore of lake Huron. White and red pine, spruce, cedar, birch and maple.

5th. The extensive Gaspé peninsula. White and red pine, spruce, tamarac and birch.

6th. The peninsula of Canada West contains oak, elm and walnut.

7th. The Ontario territory, north of lake Ontario, still contains a large amount of white pine, elm, maple, &c.

The Lumber Trade.

Not less than twenty-five thousand persons are directly engaged in lumbering operations. Government works, technically called slides, have been constructed on the sides of the falls on the great rivers down which the lumber is floated from the interior. Farmers have followed the lumberers far beyond the frontiers of the settlements in order to supply them with oats, potatoes, peas and hay. The lumberers are essentially the pioneers of civilization, and although they leave the marks of desolation behind them in their progress through the wilderness, these soon become obliterated, and the snug farm-house in the course of a few years occupies the site of the lumberer's rude log shanty, being the second stage of the transformation of the forest wilds into fruitful farms.

The amount of revenue accruing from timber dues and ground rent in 1861 was \$327,503, and from slide dues \$55,546, or a total of \$383,060.

British American lumber is chiefly exported to the United Kingdom, but there can be no doubt that the trade is diminishing, while there is every prospect of an increased trade taking place between continental European ports and British America. Thirty years ago, one-third of all the British tonnage trading beyond the seas, or about 300,000 tons, navigated by 16,000 seamen, was engaged in the colonial timber trade. During the year 1830, out of 40,000 emigrants which arrived from Europe more than 30,000 were carried out by the timber ships. During the four years between 1857 and 1860, both inclusive, the proportion of British North American lumber imported into the United Kingdom was in

1857 .....	50 per cent. of the whole.
1858 .....	48 " " "
1859 .....	44 " " "
1860 .....	45 " " "

Hence it appears that the average decrease in the imports of lumber from British North America to the United Kingdom, during the above period, is about 11½ per cent., while the increase on the imports of foreign lumber is nearly 10 per cent