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Recently a large party of Norwegian wood choppers arrived on the steamship Illinois at Philadelphia. They are under a contract with an extensive firm of Minneapolis to work among the forests of Minnesota.

The contract for supplying lumber to the Montreal Water Works' Department has been awarded, says the Star, to Messrs. Henderson, who get \$10 per thousand feet for deal, as against \$37 last year, and 14 cents per foot as against 11 cents last year for tamarac.

It is stated from Berlin, under date April 13, that the Committee of the German Parliament to which the bill for raising the wood duties was referred has read the Government proposals a first time by 11 against 10 votes, after agreeing to a motion for reducing the tax on timber used in mines and rejecting a proposed decrease in the duty on cask staves.

The Toronto Mail says that about 800,000 feet of square timber will come down the Midland Railway to Toronto this spring, and be rafted in the bay. A large number of cedar piles are being brought down this road, and being cut on land that has never been cut over before, are of a superior quality. These will be used at the new breakwater at the Island.

#### COSTLY CABINET WOODS.

"The demand for fine wood," said one of the members of a well-known Centre street firm, is "increasing every year. The finest and costliest is French walnut, which, by the way, is not French at all, but is a product of Oriental countries. It grows in Persia, Circassia, and Asia Minor. You have seen it in veneering upon costly furniture, but you probably have no notion how expensive it is, nor how careful we are to prevent waste in its use. Come into our workrooms and I will let you see it in process of cutting."

He led the way into some extensive rooms, where ponderous machinery was revolving and heavy chains rattling. In one room steam rose from cracks in the floor.

"Down there," said the gentleman, "is a pit where we lay large and valuable logs and subject them to the action of steam until they become almost as soft as butter. Then we take them out, fasten them to an iron beam (here he led the way into another room), and this beam revolves around a finely tempered knife, of the same length as the log."

With each revolution, a strip of wood was shaved off smoothly, and laid in piles upon the floor like skins of leather or sheets of paper.

"Every time this beam turns around it moves a fraction of an inch nearer to the knife. The whole apparatus works with extreme precision,

No printing press or weaving machine is made with greater nicety. The knife that shaves off the sheets of wood is rigidly immovable, and ground to a razor-like edge. The heavy beam that revolves with its great load of timber is firmness itself, and is regulated like clockwork. The slightest tremor in the beam or knife would break and twist the thin sheets that you see turned off here with the regularity and perfection of newspapers turned out by the printing press. These sheets are about 1-120 of an inch in thickness, but frequently we shave off veneers as thin as 175 to the inch."

He lifted a corner of one of the long sheets, and it seemed to be about the thickness of ordinary writing paper. The wood was warm and pliable.

"It is only in this condition that this shaving process is possible. When fresh from the steam pit the knife slips easily through it. Were the wood cold and hard, the process would be impossible. Even if the knife could do the work, the sheets would be too brittle, and would crumble into small fragments."

"For what purpose are these extremely thin sheets used?"

"The veneers used upon furniture are, as a rule somewhat thicker than those that we are now turning off. The thinnest veneers are used on picture frames. They are as thin as the finest tissue paper, and must be backed with ordinary paper attached with paste to prevent the glue by which they are fastened to the body of the frames from showing through. These veneers are also used to a large extent in the same way that wall paper is used—for covering the walls of rooms. Besides this, there are many other and novel uses to which they are put. A short time ago somebody conceived the idea of having business cards printed upon them, thinking that the novelty of the material would cause people to preserve the cards."

"Do you ever saw logs in such sheets?"

"Sometimes, but rarely, with the more expensive woods. Sawing involves a good deal of waste. For the cheaper woods it is sometimes more desirable, as it is not necessary to go through the steaming process when we use the saw, but there is a great difference in the number of sheets that are turned out in that way. The most that we can get by sawing is twenty-five to the inch."

"What is the value of the French walnut?"

"I have seen it sell as high as \$2 a pound. At the Paris Exposition for 1878 one burl was sold for \$5,000, and its weight did not exceed 2,200 pounds."

"What is a burl?"

"This is a trade expression, and means the large and tough knots or excrescences like warts that grow upon the trunk of the tree. The French walnut is a small tree, crooked and dwarfed in its growth, that grows, as I have stated, in Asiatic countries. Its value is con-

lined entirely to these curious, tough, and contorted bumps that grow upon it. The trunk itself is of little or no value. You have often noticed the singular grain that French walnut has, if grain you can call it. The fibres and tissues seem to be twisted into the most singular and complicated figures. The intricacy of these figures, combined with their symmetry, is one of the elements that determines the value of the French walnut burl. Color and soundness are other elements of value."

"Does the burl play the same important part in mahogany and other valuable woods that it does in the French walnut?"

"There are rosewood and mahogany burls, but, unlike those of the French walnut, they are of little or no value. In those woods it is the trunk of the tree that is prized, the knots are discarded."

"How do other wood, compare in value with the French walnut?"

"Next to French walnut ebony is probably the most valuable. Occasionally a fine piece is found that brings even a better price than the French walnut. Not long ago I saw some that sold for \$350 a ton. For a particularly large piece, even \$5 a pound might be paid. In ebony the size is size. It is difficult to get large pieces that can be used without cutting. Rosewood and mahogany are always in demand. The best mahogany is that of San Domingo. Next come the mahoganies of Cuba, Honduras, Mexico and Africa. There is much less difference in value between different mahoganies and rosewoods than between different specimens of ebony and French walnut. Fair rosewood will sell in the log for 5½ to 7 cents per pound. French walnut can occasionally, if poor, be bought as low as three cents per pound, but the finer burls will sell for hundreds of dollars. Burls worth from \$500 to a \$1,000 each are not rare. I recently bought one myself for \$1,200, and I think I shall make it pay out \$3,000."

We must be very careful, however in buying these burls. Their value is often greatly lessened by the existence of hollows, sometimes in the very heart of the wood, the result of decay or malformation. These hollow places are filled up by fraudulent dealers with a substance that is made to resemble the genuine wood, and they will then sell the burls as sound. Manure, compressed to the requisite degree of hardness, is much used for this purpose. Worse even than this is the practice to which such knaves sometimes resort of placing stones in the hollows to increase the weight, for the burls, as I have already intimated, are sold by the pound. This fraud is liable to cause serious damage to the valuable knives that are used in cutting the veneers."

"How about our native woods? Do you deal much in them?"

"Yes, to some extent; but for choice cabinet work the foreign woods are, of course, more

highly prized. Burls in ash and maple, are plentiful and cheap, selling for two to four cents a pound. Black walnut burls command a higher price—ten to twelve cents a pound—but they are getting scarce. Yes, the demand for choice cabinet woods is constantly increasing. In the houses that the wealthy are now putting up, the fine wood work constitutes a large item in the expenditure. Look at these veneers for table covers. These handsome designs and this artistic ornamentation are all mosaic work, made by piecing together small fragments of woods of different colors, or inserting them in the body of a large sheet that constitutes the background. To one not acquainted with this work it would look like a drawing on wood; but turn the sheet over and you see the lines run through. You can get these veneers for fine tables at most any cost. You can get one as low as \$25, and you can have designs put together at as high price as you may care to pay."

"Are there many dealers in such woods in the United States?"

"The number is very small, but the business large and the competition keen. One of our firm makes frequent trips to Central America and elsewhere to look for rare specimens of cabinet wood. These trips have their attractions, but they are not infrequently accompanied by hardship and danger."—N. Y. Sun.

#### NEW ENGLAND DEALERS.

The lumber dealers of New England held a meeting at the Falmouth Hotel, Portland, recently, their object being to make uniform living prices for lumber for building purposes. There were present prominent dealers of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont and New York. It is proposed to raise the price one dollar per thousand. At the evening session the following officers were elected. President, F. A. Pitcher; Vice President, A. S. Brown, of Whitefield, N. H.; Secretary and Treasurer, David Birnie, Portland, and a board of five directors. A constitution and by laws were adopted. A reporter, in conversation with one of the heaviest lumber manufacturers, learned the principal reason for calling the present meeting and the results which are expected to be accomplished. The gentlemen state that the past has been a very hard winter, with a great fall of snow; the cost of labor and supplies has been heavier than usual. For these reasons it is said to be a fact that it has cost a dollar a thousand feet more than it did last winter to get the spruce to the mills. On the other hand the prices of manufactured lumber are lower, if anything, than last year, and less than the manufacturers can afford to sell for this season. During the season so far there has been little demand for building spruce, but there is much building in prospect during the summer, and there is every reason to expect a large demand soon.