Trees and Our Money Chest

When John Muir, the famous Naturalist, was strolling one day through a California park, he saw a group of axemen chopping down a mammoth Cedar tree. To learn the age of the monster Mr. Muir counted the rings. It was a painstaking task but when he arrived at the edge he had established the tree's age as four thousand years. In the same grove stood many members of the Sequoia family that had weathered from two to three thousand years of history.

It taxes our imagination to think that in our own day we could gaze upon a living thing that has breathed the same air as David and Goliath. Yet that very fact is a happy illustration how this old world never outgrows its need for trees and forests. We have thousands of Canadian trees that are mere children to-day and will probably witness the unimaginable events of two centuries hence. Similarly, we have many a Western tree that could unfold strange tales of Indian warfare even when Champlain was planning new defences for Quebec.

In the office of any great Trust Company, you may see tiers of steel boxes. Each contains the story of an estate, placed in the hands of the company for careful management. The heirs of each estate are looking to the company to safeguard and improve each piece of property —whether a farm or a row of houses or the cattle on a ranch, or a mine—with such close attention that the estate will return a profit year after year and if possible, the profit must never grow smaller.

We Canadians, children or grownups, are a good deal like that trust company. We have been given by our forefathers a splendid country, not as spending money but as a sacred trust, a savings account. That is the way the people in France and Switerland and Sweden look at it. France has forests probably four times as large and many times as rich as they were a hundred years ago. They do not burn down their forests in Europe as we do, but prefer to keep them green and thriving in order to provide employment and keep everybody prosperous. There are towns in France and Switzerland that pay all their taxes out of the profits of pieces of forest no bigger than those we burn up year by year in nearly every province of Canada.

In 1918 Nova Scotia ranked fifth among the provinces in lumber production with a cut of 166,332,000 bd. ft., valued at $4,089,039. Spruce is the chief cut. In 1915, 63 per cent of the saw timber figured as spruce, 18 per cent hemlock and 9 per cent white pine.

In 1909 Dr. B. E. Fernow, of the University of Toronto, was engaged by the Provincial Government to make a reconnaissance survey of the forests of the province. Careful estimates in his report entitled "Forest Conditions of Nova Scotia" show that, in spite of the fact that an area of two million acres has at one time or another been so severely burned that it is now semi-barren of commercial trees, there were still, in 1912, 5,774,000 acres of coniferous saw timber on the mainland. This area, with the addition of that to be found on Cape Breton island, should yield ten billion feet of merchantable saw timber for Nova Scotia as a whole, according to the clause of the provincial government.

The reserve of pulpwood figured out at 24 million cords, viz.: 12,000,000 cords in the pulpwood and mine-prop forest of Victoria and Inverness counties, 2,000,000 in the other parts of Cape Breton island, and 10,000,000 cords on the mainland. The pure hardwood area of Nova Scotia amounted to 526,824 acres.

Timber conditions in Nova Scotia are related to the geological formation. The granite area, while seldom affording good farming land and showing a proportion of swamp and of natural or burned over barrens, has good forest soils, the thinner soil of the ridges for fir, that of the steeper slopes for mixed growth, that on the gentler slopes and on the bases for spruce and hemlock. The quartzite areas composed of rock less easily disintegrated than that of the granite they enclose, show more frequent barrens. It is the slate formations that occur in these areas and the better of the glacial deposits in the valleys that provide good farm lands and show a finer forest growth. The timber of the northern slope, which drains into the basin of Minas and the Northumberland strait, though of the same character as the timber of the Atlantic slope, is more luxuriant, owing to the wide spread diversity of limestone, slate, sandstone and conglomerate.

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