

struck by the way in which lumber is used, for the bridges on our rivers, the fences that divide our fields, the side-walks in our villages and cities, and for almost every conceivable purpose. In the country, and in many towns, the buildings are of wood; the country roads have their foundation of wood, and the newest method of paving our city streets is with wooden blocks. And in nearly every part of Canada, outside the towns, wood is the only material used for fuel.

In view of the prodigious consumption for the home and foreign market, the all-important question comes to be: How long can we go on at this rate? Is our forest wealth exhaustless, then? Enthusiasts talk in an airy way of the woods of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, of boundless wildernesses to the north of the Ottawa, of untouched districts between Peterborough and Lake Nipissing, and along the north shores of the Georgian Bay and Lake Superior, of the passes of the Rocky Mountain and Cascade ranges, choked with the Douglas pine and other monarchs of the forest. And doubtless a supply almost beyond computation remains to feed this greatest industry of Canada for many a year. But, in every Province, practical lumbermen hold very different language from that of the enthusiasts. Go to the great centres, to the mills on the Miramichi, the lower St. Lawrence, the Ottawa, the Trent; to the Muskoka and Parry Sound district, or farther west—and talk with the men who have ranged the woods for half a lifetime, and one and all may be heard sounding the note of alarm. They point out that many of the areas, boasted of as yet untouched, contain no pine of commercial value; that lumbermen are obliged to be less particular about the quality every year; that the farther they are forced back, the greater is the difficulty of getting the logs and sticks forward to shipping ports; and that already they are very near the line on the other side of which profits cease and work must stop. Many of the first authorities declare that, under the present system, the lumber business of Canada will be a thing of the past in twenty years.

To turn a deaf ear to such warnings would be folly. It is abundantly clear that if more wood is annually destroyed than the amount benignant Nature adds to our national store, we are killing the goose that lays the golden eggs, or acting like the spendthrift who draws upon a capital that he cannot replace. We must consider what are the chief causes of waste, and how we can best guard against the destruction or reduction of our splendid capital. We need not take into account what is lost by the advance of settlement. Farmers are of more value to a country than any other class. But, within our Laurentian ranges, there is little encouragement for farming. There are, it is true, river bottoms, and large patches where the limestone has been triturated and washed down into a sharp and generous soil. But, by far the greater part of those regions must be abandoned to the miner and the lumberman, especially to the latter; and if he is driven away, much of our national domain will be useless as Sahara.