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DECEASED TREES.

The Western catalpa, formerly little known beyond the region of the lower Ohio, except as a few specimens have been grown for the sake of their beautiful flowers, which resemble somewhat those of the horse chestnut, has lately been found to be one of our most valuable trees. What chiefly commends it, in addition to its very rapid growth, is its remarkable durability. No tree is known to be equal to it in this respect. It seems to be almost imperishable when exposed to moisture, and was formerly much used by the Indians for canoes. It has been a favorite material for fence and gate posts, and posts are now to be seen which have been in the ground from 50 to 100 years and show hardly any signs of decay. It promises to be a very valuable tree for railway ties, and some of our railway companies, especially in the west, are planting it extensively on this account. Hundreds of acres of prairie land, with not less than 2,700 trees to the acre, are now being set with catalpa and ailanthus trees. The Iron Mountain Railroad Company, whose road runs for hundreds of miles through a heavily timbered country, have made a similar contract for planting near Charleston, Missouri, one hundred acres of the catalpa as an experiment. This they do because, while they own some of the finest white oak timber on the continent, catalpa ties have stood on their road for 12 years entirely unaffected by decay, and the demand for ties and for posts of this wood far exceeds the present supply. It is estimated that the new railroads built in the treeless states in 1879 require over 10,000,000 ties.

RAIDS ON U. S. TIMBER BY CANADIANS.

A special from the Red River reservation to the St. Paul Pioneer Press says:—A party of Red Lake Chippewa hunters have returned from their spring hunt on the Rainy River, and report that a party of Canadians, with a number of British Chippewas, were and have been lumbering on the American side, on land belonging to the Red Lake reserve. These hunters, who are reliable Indians, state that no less than one thousand logs are on the bank of Rainy River, and that a tug had been busily at work hauling them over to the Canadian side. Large quantities of cedar posts have been cut and are now awaiting a speedy transfer over the river. The lumbering camp seems to be in an isolated place, and would have never been discovered had it not been a choice place for muskrats, whose these Indians repair every spring for their hunt. They have utterly riddled one cedar swamp, converting it into ties and posts. Parties here who were there at the time of the former trouble with lumbermen and their whiskey, during Maj. Runce's time, state that the pine is of the first quality, accessible to the river, and that there is no better cedar in Minnesota. It keeps

these Indians busy in watching the maneuvering of greedy lumbermen. In the vicinity of Red Lake fall's hardwood and pine are said to have been cut during the winter by hordes of Swedes and carried off to their homesteads. There is no doubt that large quantities of timber are cut every winter on this reservation. A person need only go to the very margin of the reserve at any point of its boundary to hear the lumberman's axe. These Indians did hope that the government would do something for them last winter. The majority, especially the younger class, are desirous of a change to a good agricultural spot. The Red Lake Indians have always had the name of being the most peaceful and industrious of all the bands. It has been conceded to them by the government inspectors, and it is strange to them how the government can leave them so helpless, especially since their treaty, which ran out three years ago. All that the 1,500 here have to depend upon is their husbandry, pushing the majority thereby into the hunt for their sustenance. Their annuity, which is a gratuity, consists chiefly in three-foot blankets, and these never arrive until a time when they are of little use to them.

OLD OAK.

A writer in the *American Architect*, of a recent date, in an article styled "A Chat on Old Oak," says:—In the good old time long ago, when knights and barons, and abbots and monks, built their castles and towers, and cathedrals and monasteries, they made their furniture in the same spirit that they did the building, rightly, sternly, thoroughly, and well, and so it comes to pass that for centuries it has remained firm and strong, and endured the vicissitudes of ages with a fortitude that true principles alone can give. Sometimes in the old world one stumbles upon such an old relic, old and brown, staunch and firm, a venerable protest against the rubbish which in the name of furniture is made in this enlightened age. Furniture which chiefly seems only put together that it may fall to pieces at the earliest convenient season, and even so long as it exists, taxes the patience of its unhappy possessor in gathering up the fragments of it, and paying frequent bills for the regluing and adjusting of its scattered particles.

In the early days of the mediæval ages domestic architecture was in a very crude state. Few except the knights or barons were able to build, and the buildings were half fortresses, half houses, a great hall in which the baron and his retainers ate, and caroused, and slept, flanked by towers containing a few "bowers" or apartments for the use of the ladies. Such places were rudely furnished, a few rough oaken tables, and benches and beds, that was all; but as property became more secure by the establishment of good governments and the making of wise laws, chivalry

began to destroy barbarism. Knights built stately castles, less of the fortress, more of the home, and being less occupied in fighting with their next-door neighbors, domestic life flourished and made advances and property accumulated. The ladies spun fine linens and wools, which were woven and made into fine garments and dresses, and coffers had to be made to store these away. The knights must have drinking cups of silver and flagons for their ale, and dishes for their venison, and so they must needs make them dressers to display these upon when not in use, and thus article after article was added to the household store, and the study of the history of furniture from this age till it reached its culmination in the glorious examples of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries is at once most interesting and delightful, and necessary to every art student of the present day. There are few examples remaining of these early ages of furniture, but we have abundant records of their shape and character from the missals and illuminations prior to the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and from that time to the present there are in various museums and collections numerous examples that may be thoroughly studied. The most impressive features of this early furniture are the truthfulness and thoroughness of its construction, its simplicity, its fitness, the severity of its lines, and the perfection of its decoration. At first simple slabs of smoothed wood were used, well pegged together with wooden pegs, and then decorated with diapers or geometrical rosettes in very low relief, occasionally the corners were protected with corner-pieces of exquisitely wrought iron, and the hinges of the same character almost covered the door or the lid. Everything was solid, stern and severe; by and by greater progress was made, instead of using solid slabs of wood, first was made a strong framing honestly tenoned together, and the spaces between the framing filled up with panels or doors, scratchings on the framing took the shape of mouldings in the simple form of beads and hollows, and the carving grew more vigorous and less geometric; conventional flowers and foliage appeared; then, as the workman became more skilled in his craft, turning was introduced, greater refinement of design, richer ornamentation, and so from stage to stage furniture developed from barbarism to beauty, and in castle and cathedral were erected choir stalls and screens, buffets and coffers, and presses and chairs, which have never been surpassed, and are still the wonder and the glory of this age. It is remarkable that in the whole of northern Europe as far south as Italy the favorite wood in these ages was oak; it is a rare thing to find any other wood employed. Rigidly and sternly did these old mediævalists refuse any other wood; it was the most fitting in qualities of strength and endurance, and thus we learn with what serious intention they built their furniture that it might last; it

passed down from father to son, from generation to generation; it was the pride of the household, well cared for and beloved, and often upon it was carved the pictured story of some famous deed of valor, or some history connected with its possessor, or the family arms, or some wise motto or saying; such old oak was indeed furniture, in the highest sense of the word. Like the man who built strong and true, what remains stands calmly to-day as an everlasting rebuke to an age of shams.

It is a delightful thing to possess a few pieces of this old work. As I sit in my studio the old buffet stands opposite to me; it has become quite a familiar friend, and I often speculate as to what manner of man made it, and through what strange scenes it had passed. It came out of an old manor house near Lancashire. It is a fine example of seventeenth century work, of fine English oak of that deep rich colour age only can give. It is well and truthfully constructed, numerous honestly pegged pegs very visible. Its proportions are fine, its decoration is exquisite and quite a study, the carvings possess considerable delicacy, and the ornament is admirably placed. The scratched moulds and beads are sharp and clean, and it has a remarkable feature in the shape of a marquetry panel, which is exceedingly good in colour and very decorative, and I consider it a perfect specimen of what a piece of furniture should be in construction, utility, proportion, and decorative effect.

Of late it has become quite the fashion to collect old oak; the revival of decorative art during the last few years has again turned attention to old work, and its value is now fully recognized; it is becoming rare. Some years ago Belgium was an excellent field; last year I went without finding one desirable antique, although I found lots of imitations were to be had, and were being sold as antique. There is an old man in Ghent who imitates them very cleverly; in fact so successfully that it is really difficult to tell the spurious from the genuine. One day I went to see him; he showed me several specimens which I pronounced shams; he was very indignant, and assured me they were "his ancient veritable antiques." I went away, and next day I found his yard door open, and got a view through it of the old sinner very busy with a pot of ammonia and a brush staining up a new cabinet into a "veritable antique." I went into the yard and found the old fellow had quite a collection of old panels, moulds, and carvings, which he manufactured into tables and cabinets, and sold as genuine.

A SHIPMENT of lumber from Shreveport, La., was made on the 30th ult. for the state of Chihuahua, Mexico, 170 miles south of El Paso. The cars were loaded in the saw mill grounds, and will not be unloaded until their destination is reached.