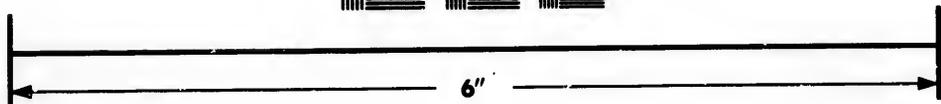
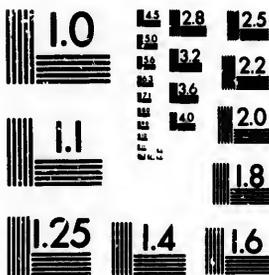


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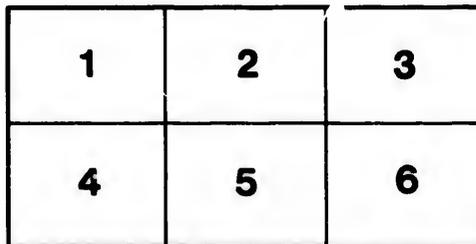
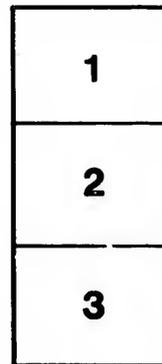
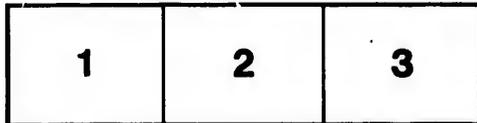
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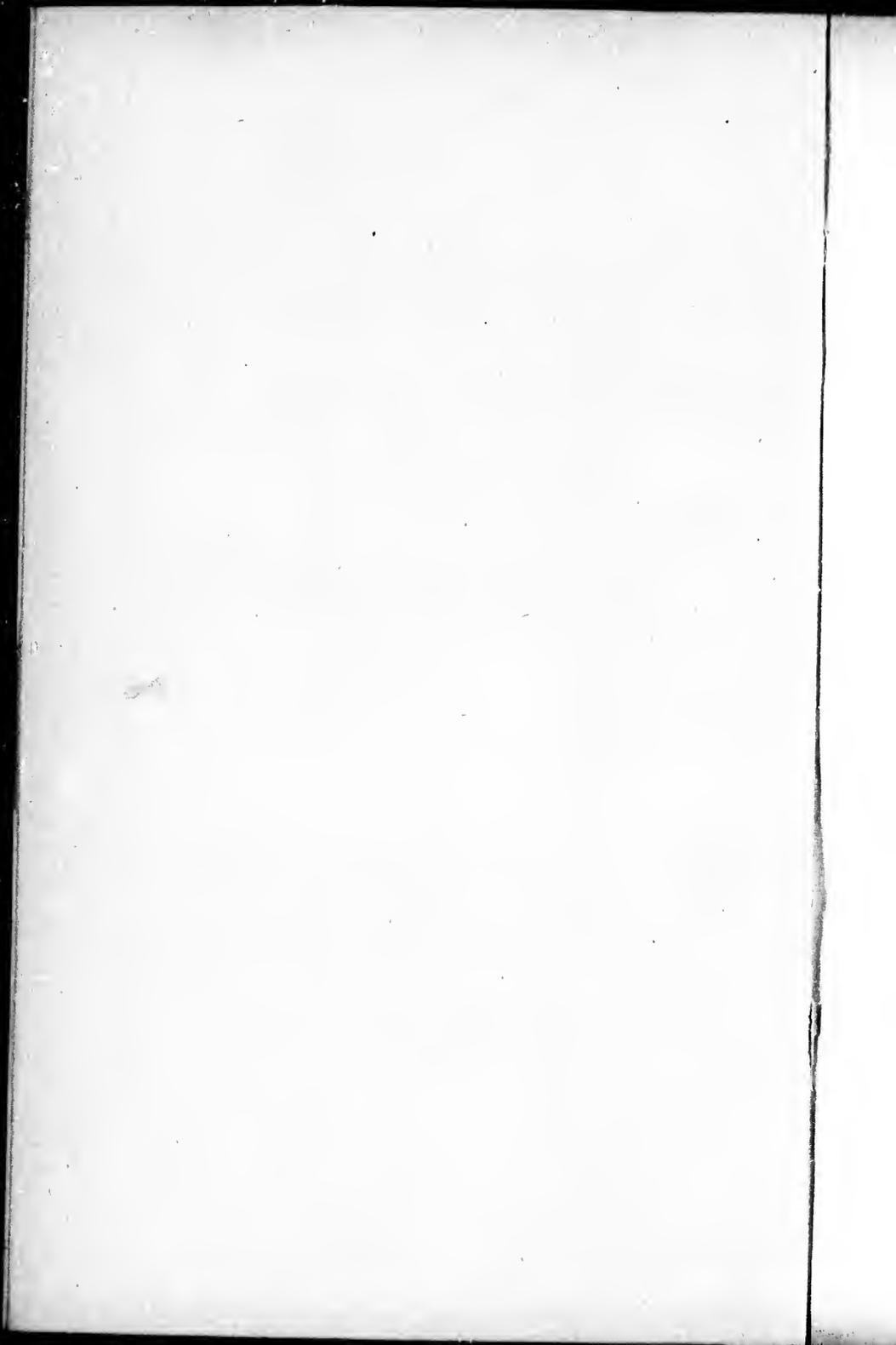
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LUMBERING  
ON THE  
RIVER DU LOUP;

NOTES OF A TRIP TO HUNTERSTOWN,

ST. MAURICE TERRITORY,

*CANADA EAST.*

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BY  
CHARLES ROBB, CIVIL ENGINEER.

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**Montreal:**  
JOHN LOVELL, PRINTER, ST. NICHOLAS STREET.

1862.

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## LUMBERING ON THE RIVER DU LOUP.

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It is a common practice with persons who have lived for some time in Canada, and who fancy they have acquired considerable knowledge of the country, to express surprise at the ignorance of foreigners, and especially Englishmen, with regard to its geographical features and institutions generally. But if they would look a little nearer home, they would probably find that they themselves are ignorant of many matters of interest and importance, which are daily transpiring within the Province, and are exercising a powerful, though unobtrusive, influence upon its present condition and future destiny. There are, even within the limits of the explored and partially settled regions of the Province, though aside from the main streams of thoroughfare and traffic, extensive tracts of country lying as yet comparatively unknown and unvisited; but which are the sites of active industry, and are interesting alike to the political economist, the lover of the picturesque, the naturalist and the sportsman.

These reflections have been suggested to the writer of this notice by a visit which he has paid during the summer of the present year to Hunterstown, in the St. Maurice Territory, the head-quarters of the Hunterstown Lumber Company; and by short excursions which we had the opportunity of enjoying while there to the scenes of the operations of that

company. Having been much struck with the extent of these operations, and the admirable system on which they were conducted, we made many inquiries, and gathered many facts in regard to them which seem worthy of being recorded; and which we propose to embody with such brief notices of the physical and social condition of this district, as our very hasty reconnoissance enabled us to make.

The district of country to which this sketch refers is situated on the North Shore of the St. Lawrence, about 70 miles from Montreal, and 110 miles from Quebec, and extends about 50 miles back from the river, or rather from Lake St. Peter, into which the St. Lawrence here expands itself. It is traversed throughout its entire extent in a north and south direction by the River du Loup *en haut*, a stream of very considerable size, and of remarkable purity and beauty; which taking its rise in a chain of lakes in the northern part of the territory, underlaid by the Laurentian rocks, at an elevation of probably not less than 500 feet above Lake St. Peter, breaks through the barriers interposed by the hard bands of rock in this formation, giving rise to a succession of falls and rapids; and thereafter holds its peaceful course through the flat country occupied by the Silurian rocks for a distance of ten or twelve miles to its embouchure at Lake St. Peter. Such is the general character of all the streams flowing through the St. Maurice territory, the Maskinongé, Du Loup, and St. Maurice River itself; and as their head waters are situated in a country abounding in pine and other useful kinds of timber, and present unusual facilities for artificial control and regulation, they have long formed the sites of lumbering operations.

Probably none of the other rivers named are, however, nearly so favorably situated in these respects as the River du Loup; and its superior advantages have been recognized and turned to profitable account by a company of enterprising Americans, which was incorporated in the year 1858, under

the title of "The Hunterstown Lumber Company," for the special purpose of manufacturing lumber. However the Canadians may affect dislike or jealousy of their brethren from the other side of the lines, it is certain that it is to them that they are mainly indebted for pointing out the road to success in the development of their natural resources; and although our acute and far-seeing friends are no doubt actuated by motives of self-interest in their investments in Canada, the results tend greatly to the advantage of the land of their adoption, and their labors deserve every encouragement at the hands of the government and people of Canada.

It must not, however, be inferred from what we have said, that the whole of the tract of country whose boundaries we have designated, was originally occupied, or is now possessed by the company, or that they were the first to settle and institute industrial operations in that locality.

That portion of it which lies between the borders of Lake St. Peter and Hunterstown—a distance of sixteen miles—belongs to the Seigniories of Grandpré and Dumontier, and is in fact one of the oldest settled parts of Canada. At the present day it presents all the well known and often described characteristics of French Canadian scenery and occupation—a level tract of country divided into farms consisting of long narrow strips of land abutting upon the main road, each with its neat painted or whitewashed cottage by the way-side, giving to the whole the appearance of a continuous village—a soil originally very rich and fertile, and no doubt heavily timbered, but now exhausted by a villainous system, or want of system of cultivation, and with every vestige of the original forest vegetation swept away—and a numerous and apparently happy and contented population.

The roads through the seigniories are very good; and the way-side crosses, the gaudily painted cottages with their curvilinear eaves, thatched barns, long sweeping well-poles, and detached clay built ovens, in the form of enormous tortoises,

give an air of picturesque quaintness to the landscape, reminding the traveller of the descriptions of rural scenery in old France. Throughout the whole extent of the seigniories, with one exception, which ~~we~~ shall presently name, ~~we~~ observed no tavern or house of entertainment; but here and there might be seen, dangling by a string at the corner of a cottage, a bottle with a sprig of spruce stuck into it; a significant emblem, ~~we~~ presume, of the fact that *spruce beer* might be had within. The exceptional case ~~we~~ referred to is an excellent hotel at the celebrated St. Leon Springs, about five miles from Lake St. Peter; very pleasantly situated on the bank of the river, and a place of most agreeable summer resort to the toil-worn citizen, or valetudinarian seeking to enjoy the undoubted benefit of its mineral waters.

The property more immediately acquired and controlled by the company consists of the Township of Hunterstown, adjoining the seigniories to the north, and comprising about 40,000 acres in one block, of excellent farming and lumbering land, held by them in fee-simple; together with about 350 square miles of *Timber Limits* to the north of the township, held under a license from the Crown at the usual nominal rates; and abounding in pines of the largest and finest description, as well as many other valuable kinds of timber which we shall hereafter specify. These limits comprise the entire watershed of the River du Loup, and are intersected in all directions by its tributary streams, which are fed from lakes of considerable dimensions; thus giving unusual facilities at all parts and under all circumstances for the conveyance or "driving" of logs down the river. Within the whole extent of the township and limits there is no point distant more than five miles from a stream navigable for logs; and the reservoir capacity of the lakes, some of which are ten or twelve miles in circumference, is such that in the driest season there is always abundance of water at command for floating the logs over the shoals and rapids. The vast practical importance of thus

having the depth of the streams in a lumbering country under control will be appreciated by all who are practically conversant with the details of the operations. In other districts which do not possess these advantages, the whole year's labor is frequently lost from the logs *sticking* in a dry season, or great expense is incurred in keeping a large force of men on hand waiting for the rains to swell the streams. Another most important advantage possessed by this company is the absence of competition on the river, giving them the full control of all their movements without danger of coming into collision with rival interests.

For many years previous to the acquisition of this property by the present company, lumbering was carried on to a limited extent in the township, and the produce was manufactured at the village of Hunterstown, at the south-eastern angle of the township where a succession of falls occurs on the main stream of the River du Loup, yielding unlimited water-power. Here, in addition to the saw-mill, which was kept working without intermission for fourteen years, cutting deals for the Quebec market, a grist-mill with four runs of stones had been erected by the previous proprietors, and a store established for the supply of the lumberers and farmers throughout the township.

In carrying on operations on a large scale, however, as designed by the Hunterstown Lumber Company, it was obvious that a land transportation of sixteen miles of their manufactured produce to the shipping port would seriously curtail their profits; and accordingly, having purchased thirty acres of land at the mouth of the River du Loup, they erected there extensive steam saw-mills, with all the modern improvements, capable of manufacturing six million feet, board measure, of lumber annually. The "Upper Mills," as they are now called, at Hunterstown, have consequently been allowed to fall into disuse, except such portions of the establishment as are required to supply the wants of the inhabitants of the township—such as the grist-mill, clapboard and shingle machine

and the store. The saw-mill also, though fallen somewhat to decay, is most useful in supplying the local demand ; and there is ample scope for the addition of further branches of industry to the establishment at Hunterstown.

The amount of water-power available for manufacturing purposes at and near the village is very great, there being a total fall of nearly fifty feet on the main stream at this point. A woollen factory might be carried on here with undoubted success, as ample supplies of the raw material could easily be obtained ; and the abundance of maple, birch and other woods adapted for the manufacture of furniture, suggested to our minds the idea that that business might also be very profitably followed here.

In our examination of the rocks around the village, we discovered extensive bands of decomposing and compact felspar, apparently of the kind so extensively used in England for the manufacture of porcelain and the finer descriptions of pottery, as well as for other purposes in the arts ; quartz also and the other materials for the pottery manufacture are very abundant. On some parts of the property copper ore, plumbago, ochres and other valuable mineral products have been discovered, and although the time at our disposal did not admit of such explorations, we should judge it quite probable, from the geological position of the district, that it may contain mineral deposits of importance.

The total population of the township at this date, probably does not exceed seven hundred, of whom about five hundred are settled around the Upper Mills, or Hunterstown village, which contains about sixty houses and tenements for laborers, a large and commodious house for the managers, store-houses, &c., all belonging to the company ; besides a farm of 500 acres under excellent cultivation, together with barns, offices and stabling for a hundred horses. They have sold about sixty farms within the township ; and the banks of the river, which flows through it in a very winding course, are bordered by

wide intervalles of very fertile alluvial land, much of which is already under cultivation, yielding excellent crops of oats, barley, hay, &c. Hunterstown already possesses the advantage of a daily mail, and as the lumber lands and all the tributaries of the River du Loup are situated above and at no very great distance from the village, its situation as the key of the whole district is remarkably well chosen. An extensive region lying immediately to the north of these limits, along the banks of the Matawin River, is exceedingly well adapted for settlement, and has already received much attention from the government of Canada with that view; the main road to this region when opened up must undoubtedly pass through Hunterstown village.

The numerous lakes comprised within the townships and limits, and the reaches of the noble river which meanders through them, now dashing over falls and rapids and anon gliding peacefully between level and fertile banks, afford every variety of picturesque scenery, such as can rarely be surpassed; and are beginning to attract the attention of artists, several of whom we found had visited the place this season in search of subjects for their pencils.

These lakes literally swarm with the finest trout in the world; and to those sportsmen who are fortunate enough to have the privilege of penetrating to them, will yield a glorious reward for the labors and hardships they may have to encounter; not the least of which, at the season when we visited them, consisted in the attacks of the black flies and mosquitos, who seem to have been expressly deputed by the Great Spirit, with microscopic tomahawk and invisible poisoned arrow to avenge the extermination of the native Indian tribes upon all the white skins who dare to invade these remote solitudes. In proof of its superiority as a fishing ground we may mention that last season, General Sir Fenwick Williams of Kars, having expressed a wish to enjoy his favorite

sport of angling for a week within an accessible distance from Montreal, was recommended by the knowing ones to select this locality, and had no cause to regret his choice.

We had occasion, during an excursion to one of these lakes with a similar object, to observe the variety and distribution of the timber trees in their native forests, the nature and extent of the lumbering operations, and the means by which the logs were floated during an unusually dry season to the mouth of the river. Fortunately during the time of our visit the men were employed in "driving" the logs which had been cut and collected during the winter; and we had the pleasure of witnessing a "jam" of about three quarters of a mile in length, where the whole river to that extent was covered with pine logs; the foremost rank being grounded upon a shoal, and the whole awaiting the arrival of other detachments from the rear, when a slight artificial flooding of the river (which can, if necessary, be accomplished at any time to the extent of about five feet) by opening some of the sluices at the mouth of the lakes, would float the entire mass over the shoal. We were informed that from 22,000 to 25,000 logs, the produce of last winter's lumbering, were then being driven down to the mills; and when all collected, would cover the river to the extent of about two miles. Very many of the logs we saw were over three feet in diameter; and the average might be about 20 inches, and all seemed to be of remarkably good quality. As an illustration of the great size to which the timber sometimes attains on this property, we were credibly informed of a single pine cut thereon in 1855 which yielded the amazing quantity of 13,000 feet, board measure, of good lumber.

The other descriptions of timber of economic importance which this territory yields in almost inexhaustible abundance are Spruce, Tamarack, Beech, Maple, and Birch. It is computed that the aggregate amount of merchantable pine timber in the township and limits will exceed 200 million feet, B.M.,

a quantity which, at the present rate of production, would keep the mills employed for thirty-five years. The quantity of spruce will not fall much short of that amount, and the tamarack may be estimated at one-fourth of the same. This latter description of timber is daily coming into more extensive demand for its valuable qualities for ship-building purposes, as will be seen from the following official return:—The quantity of tamarack shipped from Quebec in 1860 was 95,000 cubic feet; in 1861, 203,348 cubic feet, while during the present year it amounts to 582,444 cubic feet. Scarcely any of the spruce and tamarack on the property have yet been cut.

During the time the Hunterstown Lumber Company have carried on their operations, they have with very praiseworthy spirit and energy, devoted the whole of their large profits to the improvement of their works, construction of roads, &c.; and have erected not fewer than twelve dams and sluices above the upper mills to husband and control the waters, some of them at a cost of \$1200 each, substantially built of red pine. They have also removed the principal obstructions to the navigation of the logs throughout the whole length of the river; and have erected a dam and slide at the Grand Chute, a point about four miles below Hunterstown, in the Seigniory of Dumontier, where the river precipitates itself over a granitic rock, forming a magnificent cataract of about 130 feet in height, and presenting a scene of wild and romantic beauty and grandeur which can rarely be surpassed. In order to secure the right to this fall, which would afford enormous water-power, and to enable them to erect and maintain their timber-slide, the company have purchased from the seigneur the lot of 200 acres on which it occurs. Below this point as far as the lower mills, a distance of about thirteen miles, there are no obstructions to the navigation of the logs, but to collect and retain them at and above the mills, a range of booms over two miles in length is placed in the river and maintained by the company.

The Lower Mills are situated on the right bank and at the embouchure of the River du Loup, at a point as near the margin of Lake St. Peter as to ensure safety from the spring floods which periodically inundate the low lands immediately bordering on the lake. This lake which, as we before remarked, is simply an expansion of the mighty St. Lawrence, is navigable for ocean vessels; and the distance from the company's wharf at the mills to deep water navigation on the lake is about two miles, over which bateaux and schooners drawing four feet of water, and capable of conveying the lumber without break of bulk to Montreal, Burlington, Albany and New York, can at all times be safely navigated.

This desirable object, however, has not been secured without considerable outlay and trouble. Previous to the occupation of the property by the present company, a bar existed at the mouth of the river; and the prevailing south-westerly winds and currents constantly tending to deposit the silt from the lake at this point, rendered abortive any attempt at dredging. This difficulty has been effectually obviated by the construction of a species of breakwater, consisting of a row of piles, 2000 feet in length, strongly capped and sheathed, extending from the margin of the river as far as deep water in the lake, on the side exposed to the currents. This work, together with the subsequent dredging and deepening of the channel, has been executed at the joint expense of the government and the company, and has cost about \$5000—of which sum the government have contributed \$2000. A small steamboat is maintained for towing barges up and down the river, and for the convenience of the inhabitants of the village of River du Loup, about a mile above the mill.

The mills which were built about three years ago are arranged upon the most approved modern system of working, and with special view to the saving of labor in all stages of the process of manufacture. They are capable, as we have before stated, of cutting 40,000 feet, board measure, per day

of ten hours, or 6,000,000 feet during six months; this portion of the work being at present kept in operation only during the summer season, although there is no reason why the mills should not work also during winter, provided a sufficient supply of logs could be obtained.

There are eight steam boilers and a chimney about one hundred feet high adapted to burn the chips and saw-dust produced by the mill, thus supplying all the requisite power from its own refuse, which would otherwise be most troublesome and difficult to get rid of; and it is one notable and valuable feature in this establishment, that all the material which passes through the mill is turned to profitable account.

The company find their principal market for the manufactured produce in the States, their chief depot being at Burlington, on Lake Champlain, in the State of Vermont; and accordingly the forms into which the timber is cut are such as are specially adapted for that market, viz; planks, boards, shingles, clapboards, laths, door and window stuff, &c. At the time of our visit, their wharf and yard, which were about 1000 feet in length, were literally covered with immense piles of lumber in these various forms; and we were informed that there had been between two and three million feet piled up there during the winter, and the same amount in the company's yard at Burlington; in addition to this stock of manufactured lumber, the quantity of logs then at the mill was about a million and a half feet, B.M. This unusual accumulation of stock was due to the unprecedentedly low prices which had ruled for some time previous, in consequence of the war in the States; but the trade having now revived, the stock on hand was being rapidly conveyed to market. Four schooners and some bateaux were then lying at the wharf, receiving cargoes for Burlington, and each schooner would carry 120,000 feet—the bateaux about 40,000 each. The value of lumber sold by the company during the four months which had elapsed since the opening of navigation was about \$30,000.

The business conducted at this establishment, though large and flourishing, is capable of being very greatly increased, with little additional outlay or trouble, and still yielding a very handsome profit upon the capital invested. The greatest drawback is the want of a class of settlers who should combine the requisite qualifications for good farmers and good lumberers. If the township were settled with sturdy emigrants from the old country, there would be no difficulty in selecting from them fit persons to carry on advantageously the mills and other manufactories, for which the great abundance of water-power and convenience of bringing the produce to market, afford such facilities and inducements; and long before the materials for the lumbering business, at present in active operation, were exhausted, the farms would be so improved as to render the property extremely valuable, and the country would be so thickly settled that there would be ample scope for the profitable employment of all the water-power in factories of various kinds.

The lumber and timber trade in Canada is of vast and increasing importance, and the products of our forests will long continue, as heretofore, to constitute one of the great staple articles of export, second in importance only to our bread-stuffs; in fact, considering the great amount of shipping attracted to our shores by this trade, it exercises perhaps a greater influence on our commerce than any other. Canada exports annually about 30 million cubic feet of timber in the rough state, and about 400 million feet, board measure, of sawn lumber. The revenue derived by the Province during 1860, for timber cut in the forests amounted to about \$500,000.

For the prosecution of such a business on an extensive, safe and lucrative scale, we know of no district so favorably situated as that we have attempted to describe; combining as it does such advantages for getting the logs with ease and regularity to the site of manufacture and port of shipment; such proximity and facilities of communication with all the

principal markets, both in Canada and the United States; and such admirable arrangements and system, already in full operation, and producing handsome returns, although yet capable of almost indefinite expansion.

Montreal, 1st July, 1862.

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