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TREES, LOGS AND LUMBER.

Timber Cutting in the Great Mills of the Saginaw Valley.

For sixteen miles down to Bay City, near Lake Huron, the stream flows between wooden strands. The eye strains itself in vain to see beyond the lumber horizon that stretches east and west. The yellow waters, perhaps two hundred feet wide, pass first between continuous booms, each inclosing its army of giant logs. These booms reach far above Saginaw, and if we include the tributaries of the river and count both sides, make up a reach of log posts seventy-five miles long. Next to the logs and on the bank proper rise, most impressive of all, the tracts of sawn lumber. Pile on pile they rise on either side for sixteen miles up and down the stream, covering acre after acre, until the wooden monotony becomes oppressive. Now and then the wooden strand becomes thinner, only to rise again to more imposing hight and width around a new cluster of mills. These mills, often of grand proportions, spring from their lumber heaps as a giant of fairy story looms amid the disintegrated bones of his victims. Their tall chimneys belch black smoke, the rattling saws cut the air with their distant rasp, and the sense of industrial activeness is filled out by the hives of workmen swarming over the lumber hill and loading them, by slow but steady toil, into barges whose hulls rival the capacity of a Cunarder.

Along this stretch of sixteen miles of the Saginaw river there are cut annually 1,000,000,000 feet of lumber, and last year the figures went 50,000,000 higher than that amount. Since to most readers these figures are a vague immensity of numbers, let us try to simplify them by an illustration. A foot of lumber, the unit of board measure, means a board one foot square and one inch thick; so that, for example, a plank two inches thick, one foot wide, and ten feet long would contain twenty lumber feet. Now apply the measure to the figures of the annual Saginaw lumber product as cited above. We shall find that the Saginaw mills turn out each year so much lumber, large and small, that if it were all cut in inch-thick boards, each of them one foot wide, and then these boards were placed end to end, they would reach about 200,000 miles, or four times around our planet. The product, to put the illustration a little differently, would supply lumber enough for a fence four times around the world, made of solid wooden posts and with a double row of boards each six inches wide. More roughly I estimate that the yearly Saginaw lumber product in logs floating closely together would cover a water area of considerably more than four square miles.

Up the Saginaw in a wide region, reached either by the river or its tributaries, the great pine saw-log often three feet in diameter, has its birth. Pine forests, now rapidly thinning out, once covered several thousand square miles around the headwaters. Entering that lumber region in the late autumn, the lumbermen establish camps, 'round which during the whole winter long axes resound, the tall trunks fall, and in sections are rolled to the adjacent streams for the spring floods to bear away. Floating down to the main river, the "boom men" pick out each owner's logs as identified by the brand, and gather them inside the booms, which may be curtly described as long tree-trunks chained together at the ends, often inclosing a smooth water surface of several acres. The coves of the Saginaw—called locally "bayous," a term borrowed from the Lower Mississippi—are especially adapted for the gathering and organization of these log armies. The military metaphor, indeed, has peculiar fitness here, for the logs are mustered side by side in companies, held together by a rope fastened to each log by a device not unlike the domestic clothespin. As these logs down stream are worked up by the tireless mills, these upper booms are drawn upon for more, until the freezing river finds them quite empty, and another winter comes on to yield its fresh supply.

But the saw-log's story becomes most dramatic as it nears the mill and, loosed from the restraining rope is steered into the glade of open water that leads up to the wooden slide. Enter now the great lumber mill, and we shall be at the saw-log's death. Down the side of a wooden railroad runs a heavy truck, fitted with two cross lines of heavy iron teeth. With a plunge it dashes below the water, still holding its place on the rails. Then three giant logs are floated above it. At a signal, the steam is let on, the machinery reversed, the strong chain holding the truck tightens, and the truck itself begins to ascend. The sharp teeth catch the logs, which, in a trice, are lifted dripping from the water, whisked up like twigs 100 feet to the mill, and rolled off opposite the first set of saws. These saws are two in number; one set below is of the buzz variety, perhaps six feet in diameter, and cutting, therefore, through, a three-foot log; but as this semi-diameter is often insufficient for a big log, a second and smaller "buzz" placed above and in front of the first, cuts the slice, which otherwise might still hold fast the slab. One of the largest logs weighs a number of tons, and human strength alone would never suffice to turn it after one of its sides has been "slabbed."

Just here comes in a beautiful piece of powerful mechanism. At the touch of a lever a stout beam armed with iron teeth, rises by the forest Titan's side. It snatches the wood, and in less time than words can tell it the log is tumbled over, and the framework, rushing back and forth with amazing speed, has driven the edges of the tree athwart the saw, until the once rough stick stands forth a symmetrical square. Then, in another instant it is shifted before the "gang," a set of ordinary upright saws set an inch apart, and often with thirty or even thirty-five blades. Below an ordinary circular planer revolves in front of the gang and smoothes the lower edges of the boards. The immense piece of timber is run through in a few minutes, and what was five minutes before a rough tree trunk has passed into the inch boards of commerce. Nor does the work end here; for the slabs are passed to a new machine, which grasps them with almost human intelligence, and whatever part of them can be made so become laths. Other machines take the harder woods, ash, elm or oak and convert them with equal speed into staves, barrel heads or shingles; and finally the otherwise useless debris passes to the fires of the engines. There is seen little or no sawdust around the Saginaw lumber mills for the reason that it is all used for the furnace flames; and, in general the cycle of utilities by which one branch of the great industry is made to feed or supplement another seems as rounded as human ingenuity can make it.

Sometimes, particularly in the more modern mills, the routine as described is varied by lifting the logs from the river on an endless chain; and a number of minor mechanisms fill out the devices by which the lumber is cut and distributed. One ingenious machine, working double emery wheels, sharpens the buzz-saws on both sides of the teeth during a single revolution, and requires no attention beyond simply unfastening after the work is done. Another flattens out, by a clever mechanical expedient, the teeth of the saw, so as to cut a wider rent and prevent clogging as the cut becomes deeper; finally a system of elevated railroads takes the lumber-laden trucks and distributes the boards at the points in the yard or on the wharf whence they are to be shipped. Some additional conception of the size and importance of the industry may be derived from the fact that the Michigan Central railroad company takes away from one station there 100 car-loads of lumber for each day of the working season, to say nothing of the large quantities shipped from the river by the Flint & Pere Marquette railroad line, and even the large shipments by the lake barges.

Disappearance of a Lake.

Red Fish Lake, above Sawtooth City, on the summit of the Sawtooth range of mountains, in the Wood River region, Idaho, has dropped through the bottom. The lake had an area of several miles and was many fathoms in depth. It was on the summit of one of the peaks of the range, some 11,000 feet elevation above the sea, and surrounded by heavy timber, which rendered it a delightful place of resort in summer for camping, fishing and boating parties. The lake has been there since the white man has known the country, but lately—the day of the occurrence is not known—the bottom fell out. The country formation is granite and limestone, and an immense fissure has opened, whether caused by separation or settling of the earth's surface or from volcanic action, is not known. At present the bed of the lake is dry, and presents the appearance of a deep gorge or valley on the summit of the mountains. This lake has always contained millions of red fish, and been a favorite resort for bear, deer and other game. Where the fish went to is as much a mystery as where the water went.—*Hailey Times.*

The annual revolution is now going on in the free and independent island of Hayti, but comparatively few people know anything about it or its cause or its probable consequences. So far as the world at large is concerned, there might as well be no Haytian revolutions, for the most searching scrutiny can never determine what they are about, or what they have accomplished after they are ended.