The Pines of Timagami

By Mildred Low

I saw the pines against the white north sky,
Very beautiful, and still, and bending over,
Their sharp black heads against a quiet sky,
And there was peace in them.—Rupert Brooke

There is always peace in the pines. They satisfy the physical senses. The eye is pleased by their rugged, irregular outlines, the delicate fringes of their evergreen, needle-like leaves, the graceful swaying of their flexible limbs. As music to the ears is the soft soughing of their branches in the breeze, and how sweet and refreshing to body and spirit is their pungent resinous odor!

There are eighty known species of the pine tree distributed in various parts of the world, nine of which occur in Canada. Three species are found only in eastern Canada, four only in the west. One variety barely crosses the international border from the northeastern states into the eastern provinces of the Dominion, while another extends right across from the Atlantic to the boundaries of British Columbia.

Whether taken up as a profession or as a hobby, no subject is more delightful, more enriching, than the science of forestry. For it is in nature's great university, the broad outdoors, that the lover and student of trees is forced by the very peculiarities of his choice to take his course of study.

The United States and the Canadian Governments have facilitated this matter by the permanent establishment of forest reserves, where camping privileges may be obtained for the asking, and the canoeing routes are endlessly fascinating. A sojourn in one of these national forests is undoubtedly the best way to learn about trees.

For the study of the eastern pine, the Timagami Forest Reserve is well adapted for Canadians. Not only is this the predominating tree of the Timagami region, but it is found here in its virgin splendor, as this area has never been invaded by the lumberman. It lies among the high hills of northern Ontario, just south of James Bay, the lower extremity of Hudson's Bay, its millions of acres literally covered with the growth of the forest primeval. Though absolutely a wilderness, parts of which have never been explored, the reserve is within easy reach of civilization via the Canadian National Railways, a line of which penetrates the southeastern corner, while various branches touch the border farther north.

Timagami station, from which the voyageur almost invariably starts out, is situated directly on the lake of the same name, and is about fourteen
hours from either Montreal or Toronto. A steamer takes the traveler from the station to one of the large organized camps on the lake, or to his own private camping ground.

As the Timagami Forest Reserve comprises some 6000 square miles of unspoiled country, it offers infinite possibilities to the botanist, the herbalist and the forester. All traveling is done, of course, by canoe. There are routes innumerable in every direction, amidst exquisite scenery, where every turn in the course of the waterway reveals new beauties. As the fishing throughout the park is freely permitted on the payment of a trifling license other coniferous wood known to commerce. It is used in every part of the construction of buildings from shingles to sills. A list of its other uses would include practically every wood-using industry in Canada."

This species is distinguished from other pines in the locality by the comparative smoothness of its bark and by the arrangement of its needles. The latter grow in bundles of five, unlike any other native eastern pine. On account of its thin resinous bark, the white pine is greatly subject to damage by fire. The need of extreme caution in this regard cannot be too much impressed upon campers.

The white pine, it says, "was for many years the most important lumber tree in Canada. The wood is soft, easy to work, easy to season, and once properly conditioned holds its shape as well as any of all conifers in eastern Canada, this tree is the tallest and most stately. Under favorable conditions it may reach a height of 200 feet with a six-foot diameter. Usually, however, it is not more than 100 feet high, and from two to three feet across the trunk. Its cones are from five to ten inches long, and their formation is slender, curved and stalked, with thin scales.

The red pine is so called from the intensely reddish-brown color of the bark, which is thick and resists fire fairly well. The needle-like leaves are from three to six inches long, and are borne two
in a bundle. The cones are about two inches long, and more or less spherical when opened, with scales thickened at the ends. Red pine lumber is very similar to that of white pine, though darker in color and more resinous. Being also somewhat harder and stronger, it is more valuable for structural timber.

The range of the white pine and the red pine in Canada is practically the same, from the tip of Cape Breton across the eastern borders of Manitoba. Neither extends north of the height of land line running between parallels forty-seven and forty-eight. North of this, the beneficent, sweet-smelling evergreen still lifts its sturdy bulk as a hiding place and protection for the creatures of the wild. The
rocky slopes of the Laurentian hills, here as elsewhere, are clothed and beautified by mantles of living verdure. It is still the friendly pine, the Canadian's well-beloved, that holds out friendly arms of cordial welcome to the voyageur.

The species common here is called the Banksian, or jack pine. It is a much smaller tree than the red or white pine. At its best it reaches a height of about sixty feet with a two-foot diameter, when growing in pure dense stands on dry, coarse, sandy lands. The jack pine also grows profusely on very poor soils or on bare rocky situations, but on such unfavorable sites it remains small and scrubby.

The leaves of the jack pine, which like those of the red pine, grow two in a bundle, are easily distinguished from the latter as they are twisted and very short, averaging about one inch in length. The cones are from one to two inches long and are usually found in pairs, one on each side of the twig, curved and pointed toward the tip of the branch. They may remain on the tree many years.

The wide distribution and common occurrence of jack pine in Canada make it a tree of considerable commercial importance, though the lumber is not nearly so valuable as that of the red or white pine. It is used for rough construction work, for railway ties, for fuel, and in the manufacture of kraft pulp.

Throughout the Timagami Forest Reserve are many other species of coniferous trees, including varieties of tamarack or larch, spruce, cedar and fir. Deciduous trees with a far northern limit are species of birch, aspen or poplar, cherry and mountain ash. These intermingle freely and charmingly with the pines, and form those dense woods that so wonderfully conserve the waters of the north, making a paradise for the sportsman and nature lover.