

CHAPTER XXXVI.

OUR CABINET MAKING INDUSTRY.

By Robert W. Merrill.

“These woods were first the seat of sylvan powers.
Of nymphs and fauns and savage men who took their birth
from trunks of trees and stubborn oaks.”
“For when the world was new the race that broke
Unfathered, from the soil or opening oak,
Lived most unlike the men of later times.”

It has been stated by popular authorities that there was no special reason for the establishment and development of the cabinet making industry at Grand Rapids. To the contrary notwithstanding, there appears to be many excellent reasons for its evolution at this point. Grand Rapids is situated in a locality where hard woods grew to the comparative exclusion of soft wood species. The early settlers having thrust upon them those things of greatest natural growth and plenty, turned the most favoring elements to the most valuable account.

The pines of Michigan are a survival from the Devonian age, being contemporaries of the Lycopods, the Sigillards and the Cycads, whose remains constitute our vast coal resources. They are the oldest living representatives of the forests of the ancient world. The pine is handicapped in the race of life because of its inability to reproduce itself with the vigor of other trees, “hence, the oaks have driven the pines to the sands,” as have also other nut-bearing trees. Although inflowing streams of Grand river were bordered with a luxuriant growth of pine, nevertheless on the uplands and plains of the Grand river valley all varieties of hardwood timber grew to the comparative exclusion of other vegetation. “The oak being the most majestic of forest trees, and holding the same rank upon the plants of the temperate zone that the lion does among the quadrupeds, and the eagle among birds, is the emblem of grandeur, strength and duration of force that resists as a lion is the force that acts.”

When in the development of the Grand river valley it became