

large establishment, in its transit to market, but with the sale of the rafts, the disbursement of large amounts of the proceeds to hands, and the rendition of final accounts to the owners.

The cost of running out lumber from the mills to the lower market, varies, according to the season and distance, at from five to eight dollars per thousand feet, not including wastage by breaking on the rapids, which may be estimated at one-twentieth of the whole. At a good stage of water, the run may be made from Wausau to St. Louis in twenty-four days. The great difficulty is in getting out of the Wisconsin into the Mississippi, and it is but seldom that this can be done with a fleet at one rise of the river,—so that it frequently requires several weeks to make the trip; this greatly increases the cost, and is a direct abatement of the profits of the business.

Immense amounts of money have been spent, from time to time, in putting in various improvements on these rapids, mostly in what are called slides; they are wooden sluiceways, over dams and falls, built of heavy timbers, secured by immense cribs filled with stones; they are laid from the top to the bottom of the dam or fall, at angles of fifteen to thirty degrees, over which the rafts are directed, with the speed of an arrow, frequently to the hazard of the lives of the raftsmen and the destruction of the rafts. The keeping up of these improvements is a matter of great expense, as they are of short duration, owing to the wear and tear of the currents. The rafts, in passing over, constantly cut them away in detail; but the principal cause of their destruction, is from the running ice in the spring, on the breaking up of the river. Some of the most expensive and best constructed of these slides, are sometimes almost entirely destroyed in a single day, by the running ice of the spring flood. Expensive booms, dams, and even mills, are frequently swept off in the same way, to say nothing of the peril and loss of whatever rafts or cribs of lumber may have been left in the stream over the winter.