AUSTRALIAN HARDWOODS.

IN a lecture on Australian hardwoods and their uses, delivered before the London (Eng.) Imperial Institute recently, Mr. C. R. Fenwick, A. M. I. C. E., said: "In those colonies there was a very large extent of land growing timber that came under the general denomination of hardwood. Of the eucalyptus alone, for example, there were some 120 varieties, and of the acacia over 300. South Australia was the only Australian colony that had reason to complain of not being well off in timber. The colony was dependent on its neighbors for supplies of the article, but was taking steps to correct the deficiency by extensive planting. In Tasmania the forest trees were mostly fruit trees. In Western Australia there were two varieties of eucalyptus not known elsewhere. Some of this wood was used by native tribes as incense for propitiating the gods, and much of it was used for engineering purposes, while iron-bark was found good for paving. String-bark, which was found plentifully in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania, was useful for jointing, planking, and other purposes. The blue gum grew extensively in Victoria, towards Cape Otway, and there were two varieties of it—the true and the bastard. The difficulty and cost of transport by rail was a great hindrance to the exportation of much of these woods. These hardwoods were very valuable as piles and sleepers. Great discrimination had to be observed in making selections of the timber, as the quality of the wood varied very much in different districts, and the same name was often given in different districts to different kinds of wood. Blue gum resembled string-bark when it came to be dealt with. The paper went on to give instructions which should be observed in selecting timbers for commercial purposes, and one of these enjoined the necessity of inquiring as to the quantities in which they should be obtained and the facilities of obtaining them. This point was all the more important as in some of the Australian colonies the question had been raised whether the exportation of some of those woods should be encouraged. There was, in fact, a probability of the supply of them becoming scarce, but there was still no question of there being an immense superabundance of timber in these colonies, which left a large margin for exportation. Western Australia enjoyed a great advantage in its more favorable geographical position for exporting purposes over the eastern colonies." The subject is one that is engaging considerable attention in Great Britain, and Timber, of London (Eng.), says: "Among the more valuable varieties of eucalyptus are the ironbarks. These yield very good timbers, some of them being unrivalled for strength, elasticity and durability combined. Sleepers made from the narrow-leaved ironbark have been taken up perfectly sound after twenty-four years' continual use. The tallow-wood, so called from the greasy nature of the timber when freshly cut, is one of the best for use in bridge construction, also for decks of ships, and is readily worked with saw or plain. The black-butt, when properly selected and seasoned, is invaluable for piles, sleepers, decks of ships, bridges, carriage work, etc. The spotted gum, when the sapwood is removed, is often equal in industrial importance to the ironbarks. The red or flooded gum is largely used for street paving, also, when free from gum veins, for railway sleepers, retaining its soundness for many years. The grey or white box, a common variety of eucalyptus, possessing considerable strength and elasticity, is largely used for telegraph poles, wheel-spokes, shafts and railway sleepers. The forest mahogany, not being readily attacked by the toredo, and lasting well when underground, is much preferred for piles, also for rafters in buildings, being found in excellent condition after fifty years' use. The swamp mahogany, which derives its name from thriving most readily in swampy ground, is useful for shipbuilding purposes, also for railway sleepers. The blood-wood, which resists both white ant and damp, is used principally for piles and sleepers. There are other kinds of eucalyptus of a similar serviceable character. Most of the timbers above mentioned possess all the requisites for the construction of sound and durable roads and pavements.

"Among other hardwoods is the blackwood, which has been found suitable for the construction of railway carriages, also for a variety of purposes, such as the interior fittings of buildings, furniture, and engineering and architectural construction. The turpentine tree resembles the tallow-wood in some of its properties, and furnishes an excellent timber for wharf construction and fencing. It is difficult to burn. The rosewood is much used for cabinet work, turnery and shipbuilding. The white beech, which resists the white ant, is one of the best outdoor flooring woods known, and is largely employed for verandahs and ships' decks. The negro-head beech is utilized for furniture making, window sashes, doors and joinery work. It takes a beautiful polish. The red cedar is one of the most valuable of the New South Wales timbers; its combination of lightness and durability causing it to be largely in request for fittings in buildings, furniture, etc. It is identical with the Moulmein cedar of India. In some of the oldest buildings in Sydney, dating from the earlier days of the colony, the cedar woodwork is often found in almost perfect condition."

AN EVIL WITHOUT A REMEDY.

THE part played by the scalper in the lumber industry is discussed as follows by the St. Louis Lumberman: Everybody but the scalpers themselves concede that their presence in the lumber trade—probably in other trades as well—is a thing to be deplored. They are in the business, but not of it, in the sense that they fail to conserve the real interests of any department outside their own operations. They are a tax upon both buyer and seller, without performing for either a service of real value. The risk of their dealings falls upon the producer or wholesaler from whom their stock is received, but in return he receives no compensating benefit since the profit on any transactions they make is absorbed in the "scalp," little or none of it comes to those whose capital and credit furnish the real basis for them.

At various times legitimate operators have undertaken to restrict the work of scalpers, and diminish to some extent their power to injure the business, but the efforts in this direction have not, it must be admitted, been attended with any success. If any scalper has been driven out of business because of speeches and resolutions against him, the fact is not known.

On the contrary, in spite of anything done or attempted, operators of this class have rather increased, some of them even thriving to such a degree that they have been able with accumulating means to abandon the methods of the scalper and to adopt those of the legitimate dealer, with capital invested and a basis of credit. The scalper is evidently so far rather master of the situation.

It is likely that he will continue to occupy this position in a greater or less degree. Much as his methods may be disliked, so long as he lives up to his contracts and pays for what he buys, there will be no lack of stock which he can obtain on about his own terms.

With many mill men the problem of selling is the most difficult their business presents, and through lack of skill, experience, or the means to employ better methods, they are practically forced to put themselves into the hands of scalpers as the only way of getting their stock quickly into market. To sell promptly is a necessity the scalper takes advantage of to make a bargain of which the best end always comes to himself. He is, in fact, the product of conditions which have brought into the saw mill trade many operators whose capital is so small in proportion to the amount of business they aim to do, that a steady sale of their product is necessary to keep them going.

If this proposition is true, there is no remedy for scalpers while the small mill men remain an important element in the trade. So long as there is money to be made in handling the product of these small mills at the expense and risk of the maker, there will be no lack of men to take up that line of business, no matter how much they may be discredited by operators on a higher commercial plane.

Upon the principle that it is wise to modify, and as far as may be control, an evil that cannot be remedied, should it not be the policy of the lumber trade to frankly acknowledge that scalping cannot be eradicated, and to use such measures as may be available to diminish its depressing and disturbing influence upon the business?

Individually the scalper is often—perhaps in a majority of cases—a capable business man who is simply trying to get a start by the shrewd use of other people's capital. If he can avoid the numerous dangers that beset his pathway, he will eventually work out of scalping methods into a more legitimate manner of doing business.

Is there not some way by which the scalpers who mean to be honest may be distinguished from the sharks, so that manufacturers may know whom they deal with in this fraternity with this risk?

If the efforts of the trade could be turned in this direction instead of being wasted in mere denunciatory resolutions which effect nothing, the chances of accomplishing some improvement would be vastly increased.

Scalpers are evidently a permanent feature of the lumber business, and as they cannot be removed, the only thing to do is to get along with them as well as possible.

ROCK MAPLE.

IT has become a habit among the lumber papers to devote a large amount of space to a few of the showy woods, such as oak, cherry and birch, with poplar as a subject on which something can always be said. This is hardly fair to other woods and their manufacturers. It may possibly be true that oak demands all that is said of it, for the wood is hardly out ranked in real importance by any other on the continent, hard or soft, although there are others which run up into higher figures in total value of annual product. But the manufacture of poplar is practically restricted to three or four States, and in amount of feet of annual product it ranks far below several others. Its value, however, gives it a certain position warranted by nothing else.

White ash, or the four species commercially known as such, has occupied a most prominent place, both as regards amount produced and value. But is now waning in favor, and its use is becoming greatly restricted, because of its growing scarcity. Hickory occupies about the same position, while rock elm is, to a certain extent and for many purposes, usurping the place of both.

There are several woods which are generally spoken of in a sort of casual way, which really deserve much more extended mention. The most noteworthy of these is, perhaps, rock or hard maple, which is one of the most widely diffused woods on the continent, and in humble ways has at all times been of great value to the country. The casual reader would probably get the impression that the principle, if not the only, use of this wood is for flooring. But great as its use for this purpose, and valuable as it thus is to the building world, there are other uses where its value is many fold greater.

Go into any great carriage, wagon or agricultural-implement factory and something can be learned of these uses. Many times more millions of feet of hard maple are used thus than for flooring, great and important as is that trade. The ordinary heavy wagon and agricultural-implement builder would hardly know what to do without this valuable but unpretending wood. But the greatest consumers of hard maple are the chair and furniture makers. In these lines of manufacture it may truly be said to be the poor man's friend.

For actually low-priced, substantial, honestly made, fairly good-looking goods, there is no wood that grows that can take its place. Again it is worth repeating, in the furnishing of the poor man's home, there has nothing yet been found to take its place; it is the poor man's household friend. Flooring takes millions of feet of the honest old tree, but the workman's furniture and household utensils, his tool handles and the like, take billions. Of this amount it must not be forgotten that household utensils consume a large quantity, and what a long list of them, all most useful articles, the housewife can make.

In addition to these, it would probably surprise the public to know how many pairs of wooden shoes are annually made from hard maple, even in the United States. Then there are shoe lasts and boot trees, and a lot of other things for similar use.

Maple has been called an honest wood, and so it is for a fact, for there is no other wood which takes so unkindly to all attempts to stain it or disguise it as some other more showy species. Do what you will it shows up last for just what it is, honest old rock maple.—Hardwood.