

### THE QUEBEC LUMBER TRADE DURING THE YEAR.

The lumber and timber trade during the past season, says the *Quebec Chronicle*, we believe, while fairly successful in some lines, has been very disappointing in others. During the contracting season last winter our shipping merchants found less difficulty in making contracts on the other side, stocks there had materially lessened and buyers were in a better mood for doing business, there was also a marked improvement in the ship building and other trades, which had its natural effect on wood goods, and sales were large as to quantity and fair as to price. As a consequence there was more activity than usual in the Quebec market during the summer, and first-class Ottawa rafts of White Pine changed hands at unprecedented figures, such as 40½ cts. for a raft of 70,000 ft. square 62 ft. average, and 21,000 ft. Waney, 22 ins. average, which we reported in July, and subsequent transactions at similar rates. Shipping merchants considered these figures too high, but new timber arrived slowly, and as there was not a great deal in the market for sale manufacturers were able to hold up the price. We reported amongst other transactions, two rafts in August, square about 49 feet with some Waney 19 inch at 35 cents, Red Pine at 22 cents; one common raft of small White Pine at 23 cts. and Red at 17 cents; choice Michigan Waney 19 to 20 inch at 45 cents. Later, a good raft of about 200,000 feet, the square averaging 54 feet, and the 80,000 feet of Waney about 20½ inch at 41 cents all round.

In Hardwoods there was also a steady demand, and prices were well maintained, such as, Oak 50 cents for 60 to 65 feet average; Elm 32 cents for 50 to 55 feet average; Birch 22 cents to 23 cents for 16 inch average, 32 cents for 18 inch average; Ash 30 to 32 cents for 14 in. and up 16 inch average. Elm came down in larger quantities, and of Ash there was a fair supply, which reduced the price in the latter part of the season. Oak maintained its price throughout the season. The spruce deal market was also firm, and remains so, although the reports from Great Britain are less encouraging, and in Liverpool an appreciable fall has taken place which should we think check manufacturers this winter, and be a warning to all that values have become too high. Pine deals have been, we are told, the most disappointing feature of the trade; as nearly all the stocks were bought up last winter there has been no fall in price on this side, but it has been impossible for anyone to realize on the market at the prices they gave last year, and the shipments which were made in the Fall at the advanced rate of freight must all have lost more or less money. This, in the face of the enhanced cost of manufacturing Pine deals, and the increased demand from the States, makes it the more disappointing that the English markets have not supported the prices given here. To-day the stock in almost all the markets in England is reported too heavy, and the markets are dull. We strongly advise our manufacturing friends to curtail the supply next year. Without this is done we fear there will be a material drop in prices before the end of next season. This can now be obviated by mill-owners at once realizing the position and curtailing the supply.

Stocks wintering at this port will be much the same as last year, and are chiefly in the hands of the shippers. In White Pine, Waney and square about 3,000,000 feet will winter; in Elm about 250,000 feet; Oak about 600,000 feet, as against 850,000 last year; Red Pine 600,000; Birch only about 35,000 feet it having been chiefly shipped out. Scarcely any Hardwood remains in manufacturer's hands. If the winter should prove favorable for making timber the production is likely to be larger than last year. It is difficult to forecast the quantities, but probably White Pine might reach to eight million feet. Elm is getting more difficult to procure each year, as the principal portion has to be brought from Michigan, which makes it much more expensive. The production will not likely be over 300,000 feet. Birch is not likely to be produced in as large quantities as last year, as it is becoming more difficult to get each year, and the producers will probably expect higher prices. In Oak the production will probably be a little more than last season, say a million to a million and a quarter, but this depends very much

on the kind of winter they may have in the manufacturing districts, as most of this wood comes from Michigan and Ohio, where the climate is very much against the operations of making and hauling, and the cost now of getting wood from that district makes it unprofitable if from 47c to 50c cannot be got for 60 to 65 feet average.

We have heard of a very large sale of timber now being made, at prices fully up to or even higher than those paid for similar wood last year, but it must be remembered that the demand is only for special descriptions of timber, that is, wood suitable for deck planks, either prime or good fair average. There is a very small demand for other descriptions of square Pine, and the present value in Liverpool, Cardiff, and other markets for ordinary square Pine of 50 to 55 feet average would show a very severe loss on the values here. A large amount of Waney has been sold, chiefly from Michigan and the north shore of Lake Superior, all at high prices, and although this wood is being made in larger quantity than last year there is not much probability that any will be made that has not been previously contracted for. It will be in the interest of limit-holders not to glut the market by over-production, as, by manufacturing more than the trade needs they only hurt themselves without doing anybody else any good, but we would suppose that the sad experience of many past seasons would act as a deterrent in this respect.

### MEETING OF TORONTO LUMBERMEN.

The Lumber Section of the Toronto Board of Trade held their annual meeting at the board of trade rooms, Toronto, January 20th. The secretary-treasurer, Mr. Edgar A. Wills, presented his financial statement, which showed that the finances were in a healthy condition. The Chairman, Mr. J. Donogh, read the annual report which was as follows:

GENTLEMEN,—In issuing the call for this meeting it has been deemed advisable to include in the invitation all firms, members of the board who are in any way connected with the lumber interest, whether manufacturers, wholesale or retail dealers.

Our meetings have by our constitution been limited strictly to members of the wholesale trade in Toronto, I think it has been felt that this was restricting the operations of the section to lines that are altogether too narrow for interests as large as those that are involved in the lumber trade.

There are so many matters of common interest, so many points at which trade lines converge, that it would seem as if it were to the mutual advantage of all engaged in the lumber business that all branches should be represented in a united organization. There can arise no question affecting the wholesale trade in which the manufacturers have not some interest; there can arise no question concerning the retail trade in which the wholesale dealers and the manufacturers have not an interest. I therefore express the hope that the meeting to-day will result in bringing into the lumber section of the board of trade all firms who are in any way engaged in the great lumber industry.

I think I may safely congratulate the members of the trade upon some of the results of united action during the past year. In the winter of 1888-9 the evil of the "excess freight" system became so intensified by the manner in which many local railway agents interpreted and executed their instructions, that endurance on the part of dealers and shippers became intolerable. A meeting of all persons interested in this question was called and held in the council chamber of the board of trade December 25, 1888. The greatest unanimity prevailed, a guarantee fund was subscribed, the Hon. Oliver Mowat was retained as counsel, and steps were taken to bring the railway companies to an issue on this matter. As the result of considerable correspondence, a meeting with General Manager Hickson was arranged, and on April 8, 1889, a deputation consisting of Messrs. Donogh, A. K. McIntosh, George Gall, A. A. Scott, James Tennant, of Toronto; Robert Thomson and H. T. Brennen, of Hamilton, and E. A. Wills, secretary of the Toronto Board of Trade, went to Montreal by appointment and had a personal interview with the officials of the Grand Trunk railway, when all grievances were fully discussed. The deputation urged strongly the adoption of a freight rate per 1,000 feet instead of the present rate of 100 pounds, but this they failed to obtain. What was gained, however, by the conference was the opportunity of discussing personally with the heads of the railway company the various matters which have been in dispute for many years. And there was obtained from the company the promise that weigh scales should be erected at all important shipping points; that the guessing of weights by agents would be stopped, and a reduction in freight rates was granted which, to some extent, compensated for the failure to obtain a change from the weighing system. All of these promises have not yet been carried out, and there is still need for the united action of the trade.

Another question with which the lumber section has had to deal was the scarcity of cars, which entailed great loss and inconvenience to the trade in the months of October and November. On representation to the council of the board of trade a strong and influential committee was appointed to deal with the matter, and as a result the Grand Trunk Railway Company was stirred up to the making of some efforts which

were partially successful in relieving the strain of the situation.

In both of these instances the value of the united action of the lumbermen, with the powerful backing of the board of trade behind them, shows that a lumber section can be and is an influential factor in promoting the interests of the whole trade.

A few words about the condition of trade during the past year. I think it may be stated as a fact that while the total volume of business done may not have been perceptibly diminished, yet the general results have not been as satisfactory as in former years. The local city trade has been done on a smaller margin and with larger risks as to bad debts than in other years. Speculative building in the outlying wards has been overdone, and as this class of trade absorbs a very large proportion of the lumber sold in Toronto, the profits of the dealers, both wholesale and retail, have been considerably affected by keen competition in selling and by the number of failures which have taken place among the small speculative builders. There is no doubt about the wisdom of rigidly inspecting the lines of credit granted to this class of builders. Trade in western Ontario has been fairly active, and, I think, has been generally conducted on a profitable basis, while there have been few failures of any account. There has been no increase of trade with the United States, and shipments will continue to be confined to the better grades as long as a specific duty of \$2 per 1,000 feet effectually prevents the handling of common lumber in that market. There are several topics that at this and future meetings might be taken up for consideration, and among these I would suggest the adoption of a uniform rule of inspection, the interchange of information upon the questions of credit and the regulation of freight delivery in Toronto.

An alteration in the constitution was effected whereby not only wholesale lumber merchants resident in Toronto and members of the board of trade are eligible as members of the section, but also merchants and manufacturers of lumber who are members of the board of trade have a right to become members of the lumber section. This makes some 40 additional members eligible for membership. The following were elected on the executive for the present year: Messrs. John Donogh, George Gall, A. K. McIntosh, A. A. Scott and A. R. Richards. The arbitration committee for the year will be: John Oliver, T. H. Willmott and J. Tennant, of J. Tennant & Co. The inspection committee, as newly elected, consists of: A. R. Riches, A. K. McIntosh and George Gall.

At a meeting of the executive of the lumber section Mr. A. K. McIntosh was appointed chairman, Mr. George Gall deputy chairman and Mr. Edgar A. Wills secretary-treasurer.

### THE EXPORT TRADE.

A large shipper of American woods to Great Britain and the continent of Europe, gives the following information in the *Southern Lumberman* which will be found to be of interest.

The demand for walnut, oak and poplar in England is very large through the entire year, but the market is at all times well supplied and frequently overrun, and prices therefore so low that in comparison, and considering freights, etc., prices are higher in the United States than abroad. The writer himself bought clear sap boards of poplar, worth about eighteen dollars out West, in England for thirty dollars per thousand, including three months free storage.

Exporters are able to hold their prices, providing they are satisfied with a small profit, if they know where to place their stock before shipping, but every body should be cautioned against sending lumber to English and Continental ports at random. A great many agents make it a practice to induce manufacturers here to consign direct to them, leaving the manufacturers under the supposition that they are dealing with large concerns or wholesale consumers, but these shippers soon find out that they have been duped, and that the consignees are mere commission men. I know of cases in which, for instance, one of these agents ordered six car loads of lumber, and after receiving two car loads as a trial, was asked for a settlement, but refused to remit, and insisted upon receiving the whole amount of order. Finally the American firm, well knowing the difficulty of obtaining his rights in a foreign country, was glad to escape further losses by sacrificing the two car loads. Newspapers ought to bring such cases before the public, so as to prevent the manufacturers of this country from being robbed this way.

The oak lumber for export is mostly cut up into dimensions, while walnut and poplar generally goes into boards and plank. Poplar firsts and seconds, thick plank, can be bought in England almost any time for thirty-five dollars per thousand feet. Export expenses, besides freight, amount to at least five dollars per thousand feet for handling, dock charges storages, etc., and very often more than that.

I ship during the year between thirty and forty million feet of hard wood lumber.