



It is seldom otherwise, let business men anywhere play sharp and their chickens will come home to roost some day. In the interview that took place the early part of the month between the hardwood lumber men and Mr. J. Burton, of the Grand Trunk, the latter made the statement in after conversation with several of the deputation that the practice of underbilling on the part of manufacturers had reached such a point that a little more than a year ago his company had found it necessary to establish a bureau of investigation at a cost of \$20,000 to, if possible, put a stop to this evil; at least to check it. The result so far has been that the bureau had actually saved the company \$130,000. Mr. Burton, of course, meant this as an off-hand, if not an official, reply to the lumbermen who were complaining that they were being called upon to pay freight, very often, on a car billed to hold 30,000 pounds of lumber, where the actual weight probably would be 5,000 pounds less than this. In these cases, said Mr. Burton, the lumberman walks the deck. In a good many cases where underbilling has been going on the Grand Trunk have had to walk the deck. It was not intended that this should serve as a reason why the honest lumberman should pay for the sins of the dishonest man, but it was an illustration, that discreditable practices cannot be perpetrated by anyone, in any line of trade, without the whole trade being effected thereby. It is the old story of dog Tray keeping bad company. Mr. Burton stated that as a matter of fact the biggest sinners were the grain and lumber trades of the country.

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A fortnight ago I was in company with a number of Ontario lumbermen when the subject of shingles came up for discussion. No one enthuses over shingles these days, for if lumber generally has been slow for some time past the shingle trade has been slow in a superlative degree. There was a time when the term shingles, so far as this province is concerned, simply meant white pine shingles, but with the introduction of the red cedar shingles of British Columbia, and, though only to a limited extent, the white cedar shingle of New Brunswick, conditions have changed. Perhaps it is natural that Ontario lumbermen should hold to their first love, and think that after all there is no shingle to compare with white pine. I find the impression is growing among them that the red cedar shingle is not going to show itself possessed of that strong measure of endurance that has always been considered its leading recommendation. The Pacific Coast people tell of the red cedar shingle as showing no signs of decadence, after having been 30 years and more on a roof. Ontario lumbermen, as I have hinted, may be prejudiced against their red cedar rival. It is the case that those with whom I talked on this occasion were of one mind that whether it was owing to the process of kiln drying, or what not, red cedar shingles were not even now proving satisfactory. "It is all very well," said Mr. McBean, of McBean Bros., "to talk of the longevity of this shingle, but I doubt if on the Pacific Coast they are put to the test of the severe east rains and snow storms that we get in Ontario, and which will test almost any roof if not well covered, both as regards material and workmanship. I hear complaints of shingles that have only been two or three years in Ontario, as unable to withstand the rains of this province." Probably this point will be disputed by our friends on the Pacific coast, but I am giving some views, at least, that prevail in Ontario.

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Mr. Eyer, of Read & Eyer, local lumbermen, is of the view that a determined effort ought to be made to organize the lumber trades of Toronto, and, the organization might perhaps include the provinces. "We are seeing the weakness of individual effort," said Mr. Eyer, "at the present time when we have a strong case against the

Grand Trunk in the matter of freight charges. I would not like to say that, as a result of our interview with Mr. Burton a fortnight ago, we are not going to get anywhere, but the case would be very much strengthened if a stronger front could be presented in this matter as in any other case where we have a grievance. Then we see the need of organization in so many different ways. I do not know what others think, but for my part I would not care to ship a stick of hardwood to the United States as the market stands to-day. There is no money in the business for Canadian hardwood men." I remarked on this point that there was certainly a demand for hardwoods from the United States and the enquiries for specific classes of wood from that country were quite numerous. "I will grant this," replied Mr. Eyer, "but our hardwood men seldom act in concert. They have certain quantities of wood to sell and the disposition is to sell at almost any price rather than lose a sale. Were the trade organized there would be an opportunity to establish a fixed price, one that would represent a small margin of profit at least and not a loss. Furthermore the difficulty that is cropping up all the time as regards want of uniformity in inspection and which results in loss to our lumbermen, could be easily remedied. For my part I am disposed to let my stocks accumulate, rather than sacrifice them, knowing that there is value in lumber." I asked Mr. Eyer what seemed to be the bottom difficulty of successful organization of lumbermen. He said: "One drawback is that what you may term the big men of the trade will not affiliate with the smaller men. Perhaps they think themselves above some of the rest. Other people are saying that. I am not saying it. But it seems reasonable to suppose that if a movement could be led by some of the larger concerns, that the smaller ones would come in and the big concerns as well as the little ones would be benefited by such an organization."

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Wherever and whenever it is possible to get after any man who can talk lumber, or who has been where there is a likelihood of securing lumber information, I am brisk and enough to waylay him without ceremony. A representative of the business end of the LUMBERMAN recently made a trip through the leading cities of the eastern states, calling upon the lumber trade, and on his return I was after him. "Tell us how you found the lumber trade, and what were the features of it that particularly impressed you." This is the way I started at our man from the counting-house. "Let me say," he replied, "I enjoyed my trip immensely and found United States lumbermen jolly good fellows and business from the word go. Whether in New York, Albany, Buffalo or Philadelphia, I found no one talking very loud of the splendid trade they were doing. All had one story to tell in this respect, that trade throughout the year has been terribly dull. Of course the tariff was blamed. The President came in for his share of censure. Canadians and free lumber caught it occasionally, though seldom—but trade was dull. That was the point. White pine men say that yellow pine is proving a competitor in certain lower grades, and the difference in price is sufficient to knock out white pine to some extent. Since the tariff has changed business has revived in part, but the year is going to close with the annual statements of most lumber concerns, showing a serious shrinkage in sales. But there is a lot of rubber in the composition of the average American. Whilst there is nothing bright to tell of lumber trade now, I found the feeling general that business was going to be all right after the turn of the year, and that spring would open out with activity in building lines, which is always a help to the lumber trade, and with snap in business at all quarters. When anyone wants white pine or yellow pine they know where to get plenty of it, if they have got the money to pay for it, but I found lumbermen nearly every place I visited making enquiry, 'where can we get supplies of hemlock or birch or ash or elm or some other particular class of hardwoods?' It occurred to me that hardwood trade in Canada ought to be good if our lumbermen would just lay themselves out to meet the needs of those who are enquiring for supplies of this kind. Just let me put in a word for the business end of the concern here by saying that I found United States lumbermen of the

view that the issue of a weekly edition of the CANADA LUMBERMAN was going to prove an important factor in helping business in this direction, and generally, between the two countries."

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Comfortably seated in the reading room of the Queen's Hotel, I had an opportunity recently of chatting on lumber matters with Mr. D. L. White, jr., one of the large lumbermen of Saginaw, Mich., whose firm is interested in Canadian lumber. "A number of us," said Mr. White, "have just returned from Ottawa where we have been interviewing the Minister of Trade and Commerce, Hon. Mr. Bowell, and other members of the Cabinet, concerning the duty on boom sticks. The visit was pleasant and will, I believe, result satisfactorily for the lumber trades of Michigan and of Canada. Of course, diplomatic like, the Ministers, after hearing our case, agreed only to take the matter into their serious consideration, but we have every expectation that the decision will mean a removal of this obnoxious regulation." The lumbermen of Canada, as much as those of the country to the south of us, will, I believe, regard this as a satisfactory ending of an unpleasant difficulty. On no point have I found lumbermen more completely of one mind than on this question of the exacting of a tax on boom sticks. Naturally we talked about lumber conditions. Taking it altogether, whilst trade had certainly been slow during the year, Mr. White leaned to the opinion that 1894 would not close as unfavorably as some of the trade had expected. The stocks on hand in Michigan, in Mr. White's judgment, will not go beyond, probably, 200,000,000 to 300,000,000 feet, in place of 600,000,000 feet, as was stated a few months since by certain lumber authorities. Prices, of course, are not what they were a year ago and Mr. White hardly thinks they will reach so high a level again for some time. At present, however, they are firm and will likely hold at present figures. The outlook, after the turn of the year has been reached, is deemed to be encouraging, though no great boom is anticipated. Improvement will be gradual and sure. I asked this Michigan lumberman if he anticipated that the change in the complexion of the American Congress, a result of the late elections, would mean any amendment to the lumber tariff. "Unless there should be some unpleasant friction," said Mr. White, "between the Canadian and United States governments, I do not think that the tariff, so far as lumber is concerned, even in the case of dressed lumber, will be disturbed." To what extent free lumber may result in the building of saw and planing mills by American lumbermen in Canadian territories, is a disputed question on both sides of the line. Just as a number of mills have already been built here and will be operated by United States lumbermen, to a still greater extent Mr. White thinks this plan would be pursued, whilst the rafting of logs from the Georgian Bay shores to Michigan would probably fall off some. Methods of handling lumber, I learned, are changing to a considerable extent in the United States. The commission man is gradually being wiped out. In Wisconsin and Duluth, Mr. White said, the mills were establishing their own yards and distributing their own lumber. This method of doing business was growing. Another change, as effecting the white pine trade, was to be seen in the steady demand for yellow pine in eastern markets. Mr. White said that for flooring, ceiling, joist and car sills, yellow pine was now being largely used, and the prices at which it could be brought into the east was something that white pine operators could hardly understand. A good clear lumber can be secured laid down in Michigan for \$15. per thousand and the same wood can be laid down in Canada for 16.50 "We could not begin," said Mr. White, "to give any such grade of white pine for these figures." As a parting query I tapped Mr. White for information on the probable cut in the woods this winter, but as is the case with lumbermen generally, he felt that this was a subject that could not be touched upon with certainty so early in the season.

PUBLICATIONS.

Edward Bellamy, the author of "Looking Backward," is to tell in the next issue of The Ladies' Home Journal what he believes a "Christmas in the Year 2000" will be like.