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AN INTERESTING LETTER CONCERNING COOPERAGE STOCK.

Mr. J. C. Shepherd, of Tilsonburg, Ont., sends to our contemporary, *Packages*, a very interesting letter on the cooperage stock situation, in which he advocates the employment of soft wood for staves. He says:

"Last year was a very much off year with us. The supply of elm having given out the year before, I didn't even get in one log. Things looked mighty blue, and I began to look around for something else to do—a hardware stock, a farm or some other easy thing to end my days on; chance threw me in company with a miller who had heard that poplar and other soft woods made a first rate flour barrel stave and was willing to try them if he had some to try. Well, I knew where there was an old stave saw that had been lying around in saw dust heaps for six or seven years that could be had for almost any price, so I picked up that saw, fixed it up, set it up and made a few staves which I sent out for samples to some of my old customers. Sent out six lots and five out of the six wanted to buy. To one of these, the one who had first spoken to me about the staves, I sent a carload and they gave such good satisfaction that he bought all I had and all I could make the rest of the season. For this year his company takes half the saw can cut, while another company takes the other half.

"Naturally I feel pretty good, with all this work before me, and wouldn't take a hardware stock nor a farm just now as a gift. And, what's more, this thing is going to last me my time out, and a generation or so after me, if not on for all time, for you see these soft woods reproduce themselves every few years and with a little care the supply will keep up to the demand and then the thing will be everlasting.

"A few weeks ago I was in a bush where a hundred or so cords of poplar had been taken out for pulp-wood 10 or 12 years ago, and today as much more is there for stave wood. This, then, will do away with the notion that the slack barrel will have to be abandoned for another package because the supply of material will be exhausted. And then, mind you, this sawed stave barrel is a great barrel—far ahead of any cut-stave barrel that was ever made—no shake, and every one of them will ring like a pork barrel, a thing no cooper could ever make a cut stave barrel do. And again, the wire hoop is just the thing on the quarters—far stronger than a cut hoop, and never going to break in course of transportation, as the cut hoop so often used to do.

"Now then for a sort of sum-up, let me say that it seems to me slack barrel coopering is going to be just about turned upside down. Soft wood for staves and hard wood for heads. Beech, birch, maple and any old thing that can be picked up for heads. Poplar, basswood, spruce, balsam, hemlock, tamarack, and other soft woods for staves. Wire for hoops, with the exception of the chime hoops, which can be made out of birch quite as well as elm. This, then, is how I see it in the future. And in the very near future, if this cold weather continues, and there is every indication that it will, a drop in prices down to those that prevailed the year before last, but never so low as they were a year or so ago.

"As you know, winter has much to do in fixing the price on forest products. In fact, it



PILE OF BROAD 2 INCH CLEAR SIDINGS, 24 INCHES AND UP WIDE,
FRASER & COMPANY'S YARD, DESCHENE, QUE.

can do more than a meeting or even two meetings of any association that was ever organized. From the outlook now this winter promises to be a very low-priced winter—next summer."

Timber contains 45 per cent. of its weight in moisture. Timber felled in the winter holds at the end of the following summer more than 40 per cent. of water. Wood kept for years in a dry place retains 15 or 20 per cent. of water; wood that has been thoroughly kiln-dried will, when exposed to the air under ordinary circumstances, absorb 5 per cent. of water in three days, and will continue to absorb till it reaches 14 or 15 per cent., the amount fluctuating above or below this according to the state of the atmosphere. It will be evident, from the above statements, that wood, however dry, is still subject to change, and that even if kiln-dried, it requires to be stocked in a dry place until it settles to its natural condition of seasoned wood.

EXPERT SAW FILING.

LOCHLIN, January, 25, 1904.

Editor CANADA LUMBERMAN:

DEAR SIR,—In order to substantiate the claim made by me in the January LUMBERMAN, viz., that there is a great loss from improper saw filing, I will cite an instance that I made note of some time ago. I was employed with a lumber company who had a filer in their employ who ran his 8 gauge circular saws with $\frac{3}{8}$ swage. The following season I had charge of the same filing room and had no trouble in running the same saws with $\frac{1}{4}$ swage, and I put out the cut of 900,000 feet in shorter time than the man the year before had taken to cut 500,000 feet. I figured that he made a loss to the company by swaging his saws $\frac{3}{8}$ too heavy of 62,500 feet of lumber, which was worth that year \$812.50, to say nothing of the lumber that was reduced in price by bad sawing. Therefore, it is plain that the smallest fraction of unnecessary swage will count a large loss at the end of a season's cut. Now, the fact is that the better the saw is levelled and the more evenly it is tensioned and balanced the closer it will run to the timber, allowing the filer to diminish the swage to a trifle clearance and making a great saving of timber, time and power.

I see no other way of getting a uniform practice among saw filers than to establish an examination and furnish them with a diploma for the proficiency of their work. A manager of a well-known lumber firm, noticing my article in THE LUMBERMAN, told me the other day that he did not think my plan would improve that trade, as he said lots of men could talk theory on saw filing who could not do the work, but he freely acknowledged that a great loss was caused by poor mechanics in that line. I told him that the system of examination would not be only talk, but test, as the examination could be in a mill or in a saw works where each man's work could be tested by an expert, the same as a log scaler's examination, by giving them a certain piece of work to do. There is no reason why it would not improve the work of saw filers and be profitable to the manufacturers.

Yours very truly,
T. A. McALLISTER.

An estimate made recently by the Crown Lands Department of Quebec gives the forest area of that province as two hundred million acres. On this it is estimated there is sixty thousand million feet of standing timber, exclusive of pulp wood and undersized trees.