

## CORRESPONDENCE

Letters are invited from our readers on matters of practical and timely interest to the lumber trades. To secure insertion all communications must be accompanied with name and address of writer, not necessarily for publication. The publisher will not hold himself responsible for opinions of correspondents.

## UNIFORMITY OF GRADING.

To the Editor of the CANADA LUMBERMAN:

SIR,—I would like to call the attention of the lumber trade to some of the difficulties which have been felt by all, more or less, and which the dull times and close competition necessarily attendant thereon have emphasized. I allude to the want of uniformity of grading and inspecting lumber between us and our best customers, the United States. I think it should be our aim to remedy this evil, and the only way it can be done is by the united co-operation of all the people interested on this side of the line. Our Boards of Trade and our representatives in Parliament might take it up, but first become united and decide definitely what reforms we want, and then have our representative bodies take the matter up with the Boards of Trade and Associations of lumber dealers in the U. S. In this way much more may be accomplished than if the matter is left to individual effort.

What do we want? In my estimation we want uniformity of grading and laws to cover the same; we want a common standard, so that all may know when a certain grade is spoken of exactly what is meant—a standard that will not fluctuate with the rise and fall of the market. Let the prices be high or low, this standard will be the measure of quality of what we have to buy or sell. As the value of gold depends on its fineness and its abundance or scarcity, so let our standard of quality be the same. I need hardly remind my lumber friends of the trouble and annoyance that is caused by the difference in meaning attached to common names and terms, as for instance, "Common" or "Fine Common," would mean in the American markets an entirely different and much superior grade to what it does here; the same with the term "Dressing," which here means almost anything that will hang together long enough to go through the planer. On the other side it is a grade that must have two clear edges, and the defects must be in the nature of small sound knots. Generally it must be of a quality to make tight work, that would not allow water to leak through it. There are other discrepancies that will readily occur to the dealer, such as No. 1 Culls in the New York market and No. 1 Culls at the mills on the Georgian Bay.

If we can get uniformity in our names of grades, and also in our understanding of what the quality should be, then the question of price can be left to take care of itself; but now a dealer who finds himself with a large stock on hand may be inclined to say, "I am prepared to give my customers any quality they want. I will sell them shipping culls at a low figure and let them call it what they like, so long as I get my money. I will make three or four kinds of Box, or Dressing, and sell them at different prices. If a man wants a cheap lot, I will give him one out of which all the best and widest boards have been taken, and then I can sell the wider lots for more, and thus get an average." This reasoning may look all right on the face of it, but it is bad for the individual who adopts it, and it is bad for the rest of trade, as a lot of lumber sold of a certain quality at a certain price, fixes that as the market price of that grade, and if a lot is sold at a lower price than the regular market rate, the fact that it is a "doctored" lot is suppressed, and thus it has a depressing effect on the market. I say, keep up your grades and keep them uniform. If the supply of any kind of timber runs out, and the quality of the logs will not make lumber of the thickness, width or clearness set by the rules laid down, then there might be a revision of the rules and a modification of the standard made, but these changes should only be made when absolutely necessary and at a meeting of the representatives of all parties concerned.

Another reason why we should have a common standard of inspection is: Our customers on the other side buy of us goods of a certain quality, which we undertake to furnish according to our rules of inspection, delivery to be at point of shipment. Well, the goods go on to New York or Boston and very often when they reach

there they are refused for trivial reasons, or an inspector is put on and the goods remeasured and inspected, and great discrepancies reported and allowances demanded, or threatened refusal of the goods and consequent handling and storage charges. Now these discrepancies could only occur for two reasons. First—want of uniformity in our inspection of lumber, called by the same in the two markets. Second—dishonest inspectors at either or both ends. If the same system of grading existed in both countries, the inspector who shipped would get so near the right grade that the receiving inspector would not dare make such reports as are too common now. It would be too palpable and glaring a steal that his employer could not afford to allow him to "make his wages and a little more that way."

The same reasons hold good for a rule or standard of inspection that will govern, and that can be enforced between the buyer and seller in our own market. The absence of this has led to conflicts between dealers and manufacturers. The dealer has sold a quality that has an actual definition and description in the New York or Boston market, and he makes his bargain with the manufacturer for this grade, but when he sends his inspector to ship it, the mill man finds the inspection different to what he expected it would be, or as some other person tells him it ought to be. He "fires" the inspector and will not let the purchaser have the lumber sold, thus entailing loss of profit the buyer should have made on the goods, and the buyer's time and expenses. In small lots of lumber, to try and enforce by law a bargain thus made, would cost more in time and annoyance than it would be worth. If this should be repeated in a number of purchases, the dealer is often put to a great deal of inconvenience, and suffers considerable loss besides. He has to fill the orders he has taken and must get it of the quality called for in his sale. In order to do this, what constitutes a certain grade should be plainly laid down, so that the consumer or dealer who buys in the United States, and the dealer or manufacturer here, may all understand what constitutes the grade sold, and hence avoid confusion, annoyance and loss; and it will also to a large extent prevent the "wobbling" dealer from doing his peculiar style of business—the wobbler being the man who will sell by any inspection and buy the same way.

In order to determine matters of dispute between parties to a purchase or sale, Boards of Trade and Lumbermen's Associations should have power to appoint qualified inspectors and graders—not that it should be imperative that all transactions should be determined by such inspection, but that in event of a disagreement between the buyer and seller, such an inspector, appointed either by Government or Board of Trade or Association, might be called in to act as official arbitrator as to the grading or quality. This would in a large measure get over the difficulties occurring between our dealers here and the manufacturers; and our friends on the other side, seeing and knowing our grades were established, would have more confidence in getting their purchases from us properly inspected here, and some who have calculated somewhat on our differences of grading to ask for large allowances, would find that we were working too closely to a common line to ask for or expect any such allowances or deductions. It would also have the effect of developing trade between the two countries. One great difficulty we have always had to encounter here was this difference of grading. It is one of the reasons that has led to Saginaw, Bay City and Buffalo doing a larger trade than Collingwood, Waubaushene or Toronto. In the former cities they laid themselves out to make their lumber conform to the demands of the Eastern market, and they got the business. Our dealers and manufacturers have too long tried the other line of "How poor can we get our customers to take our lumber and how much can we make them pay for it." When lumber is in brisk demand this may apparently work all right, but when dull times come the buyer is apt to say, "These people salted me when I had to buy from them; made me take culls and pay big prices; now I can get all I want elsewhere and get just what quality I buy. I will let these Canadians keep their stock till they want to grade it as we require it for our markets." In that way the want of uniformity in grading tells against us. A market becomes great or otherwise ac-

ording as traders find it suits their requirements. If they can get what they want, as they want it and when they want it, then there will be competition and an enlargement of the market; but if they find that while there are plenty of goods, they are not put up to suit their trade, and no disposition is shown on the part of the sellers to try and put their goods up as wanted or ship them in the time wanted, the buyers are going to quit that market and it is going to decline.

There is too much of the latter style about our ways of doing business, and particularly in regard to grading. Will some of the influential men in our trade take this question up and try and bring it to a satisfactory issue. If this can be done I feel it will prove of the greatest service to the lumber trade of this country. The grain trade of Canada is one of our most important industries, but I do not think that it distributes as much money to as large a number of people as does the lumber industry, and yet they have a grain standard by which all purchases and sales are regulated, and it works for the benefit of both farmer and grain merchant and establishes confidence in our grades among the buyers in England or the continent. Why should not the same rule work in the lumber trade? It is of national as well as of local importance, for what an army of men are dependent on lumbering operations. The railways and their employees, the vessels and their crews, are all interested in the question of whether the lumber business is brisk or dull. The uniformity of inspection will not make lines either good or bad of itself, but it will materially assist in the building up of trade.

ONE INTERESTED.

## AUTOMATIC SPRINKLERS

THE automatic sprinklers with which many of the larger mills are equipped have greatly demonstrated their value and the worth of the protection they give, during the year past, by stopping incipient fires before they had become actual ones. They have also demonstrated another thing, namely, that they are not good for anything, in fact are worse than nothing, because they produce a false feeling of security, like a revolver that when you need it is too rusty to turn the cylinder, or operate the hammer, unless they are kept in good, solid working order. If they are neglected, allowed to get rusty, or the apparatus working stiff and unreliably, or the water supply is allowed to get short, they cannot be expected to do their work any better than a night watchman in the same condition. Machines that work automatically, that are allowed to get out of working order and are not kept fully up to their proper standard of efficiency, are no better than the human working machine that is allowed to run down and lose his self-respect and interest in his work and the welfare of his employer.

## AUSTRALIAN TIMBER.

EVEN in far away Australia the Government is taking the care of the forests into its own hands and the colonies have each a forestry department, under the supervision of a conservator, so that the wanton destruction of timber which formerly went on is not now permitted. Among the woods for which Australia is noted are blue gums, gray gums, memeto, mountain ash, red gum, iron bark, karri and jarrah trees, and from these are cut timber suitable for railway sleepers, bridge work, piles, wharf work and other engineering and building purposes. Some of these timbers are said to be almost indestructible when exposed. They also take a very high polish and are useful for ornamental purposes. The Jarrah wood has lately been brought into prominence to a great extent as a timber suitable for pilling as it resists the attack of the teredo navalis. Then there are the blackwoods of Victoria and Tasmania and a cedar of New South Wales and Queensland, admirably suited for fine cabinet work. Kauri pine is said to make an excellent wood for boat building, house fitting and many other purposes, being close grained and free from knots, which is characteristic of Australian woods in general. Quite a business has been worked up in exporting these woods to England and the continent where they are laid down at as low prices as many Swedish, Canadian and American woods.