

AN IMPORTANT MILL FLOWAGE DECISION.

A despatch from Washington states that the United States Supreme Court has decided the case of *Head vs. the Amoskeag Manufacturing Company*, known as the overflow case, sustaining the decision of the court below. The question at issue was whether the New Hampshire flowage act of 1868 is in conflict with the provisions of the 14th amendment to the United States constitution. The highest court of New Hampshire held that such legislation is constitutional and valid. The United States supreme Court sustains this decision. The decision is one of great importance in and out of New England. It determines the constitutionality of the "Mill Acts" in force in most of the States, by which land is condemned to dam streams for water power. This feature of the right of eminent domain has been maintained in all the States save Vermont, Michigan, Alabama and Georgia. It was brought in question in the Supreme Court on the ground that it is contrary to the 14th amendment to the constitution, in that it deprives citizens of their property without due process of the law, and under the changed methods of to day the use of water in driving mills of private parties is not an imperative and public necessity. The decision affects the "Mill acts" of more than thirty States. The "Mill acts" in the different States are so nearly identical that the decision of the Supreme Court seems to decide the validity of all.—*Boston Journal of Commerce*.

SWEDEN AND THE ENGLISH TRADE.

According to what we are given to understand from Sweden great difficulties appear to stand in the way of an agreement binding the principal millowners in the north of that country to diminish the "get" of logs this winter by 30 per cent. under the average of winters 1882, 1883, and 1884. If the proposal of the Society of Sawmill Owners and Timber Exporters of Stockholm should prove abortive, it can scarcely fail to have an unfortunate effect on prospects for first open water, inasmuch as importers will, in all probability, make their purchases under the apprehension of glutted markets later on in the season.

As far as we are able to judge, there is every reason to believe that the different markets will be required to absorb at least 700,000 Petersburg standards of Swedish sawn and planed wood in 1885, without reckoning the not inconsiderable quantity exported via Norwegian harbors. An important question, therefore, for both importers on this side and saw mill owners in the Scandinavian is whether the markets can bear this large quantity without disturbance. To enable us to answer this question with any pretensions to accuracy, we must try to ascertain what our neighbors in Finland are likely to do.

During the late season our Finnish friends have done their utmost to neutralize the effect of the diminution in the export from Sweden, having shipped altogether probably 310,000 standards—the largest quantity on record. This export has been made in the face of the asseveration that a very large diminution indeed in the number of logs got out last winter had taken place in Finland. Subsequently this heavy shipment has been explained as a consequence of the large stocks carried over from 1883, but this can only partially have been the case, as we have been informed by responsible people in the south of Finland that a heavy f.o.w. shipment may also be looked forward to next year, and which could not have been the case had a substantial diminution in the log-get winter 1883-1884 really occurred. A combined shipment of about a million Petersburg standards of sawn and planed wood from Sweden and Finland may therefore, with every show of probability, be relied on in 1885.

At the present low prices of almost everything that goes towards the building of a house, prices can hardly by anything short of a miracle fall lower, it does not require a seer to inform us that we are likely to witness a considerable amount of activity in the building trade before long. In spite of the collapse in the ship-building trade, which was a foregone conclusion many months before it happened, the complaints

of timber importers even now are rather on the score of small or fractional profits than the absence of demand. All large concerns, therefore, with command of capital, that have too little accommodation, will doubtless seize the present opportunity to make any extensions that may be required, as well as to put their works and premises into a good state of repair. We are thus of the opinion that, in spite of the present indifferent outlook in many branches of industry, an averaged demand may be looked for in building timbers next season in this country under the stimulus of low prices.

Continental markets, and especially those of France and Spain, are, however, in a worse position than our own as far as the consumption of sawn wood is concerned. Unless an early change for the better occurs in the countries referred to, any substantial improvement in prices of inferior and medium qualities of sawn redwood is out of the question for f.o.w., as millowners will be obliged to force too much wood of this class upon the market, same as has occurred in the late autumn, and which is at present keeping down prices in London. The course of the market for next season is very much in the hands of millowners themselves; with a reduction of 25 per cent. in the production of raw material this winter between Gulf and Hernosand inclusive, on the Swedish side and a corresponding diminution in the south of Finland, firm markets for the first open water might be anticipated, and which would probably develop into a rise before the close of the season.

Importers will, in all probability, be in no hurry to purchase for next season, to judge by the absence of business to date. This, we think, is questionable policy, as we believe the earliest birds will be likely to get the best worms in 1885. It must be borne in mind that both in Finland and Sweden the floating for the past three seasons have been exceptionally successful, and rivers are consequently bare of logs in the interior, so that a partial failure in the floating would have a very quick effect. It is not, of course, likely that a want of water will be experienced next year, but it is a contingency that might easily occur, and ought decidedly to be taken into account. Whitewood producers, both in Sweden and Russia, have done exceptionally badly this year, and have dropped money, so that the best firms will doubtless reduce their production. The weak ones cannot sometimes do this.—*Timber Trades Journal*.

THE ENRICHED GRAINED VARIETIES OF WOOD.

It was not until many millions of feet of the more richly grained redwood of California had been recklessly and thoughtlessly consumed for general purposes, that special attention was attracted to the fact that a considerable percentage of redwood lumber possessed characteristics of great beauty and inherent qualities as to shrinkage and in other particulars, which entitle it to favorable consideration among the ornamental wood of the United States, for manufacturing and house finishing purposes. During the earlier periods, and until more recent years, the rich, curly "bird's eye," and other peculiarly marked species were cut for rough lumber. The softer, straight grained kinds being so much more easy to work, less liable to shrink endwise, and not so liable to split in nailing, because the favorite material for building and other purposes for which redwood was used, to the exclusion of the wavy and peculiarly grained varieties from the list of first-class redwood. Consequently, trees, or logs indicating a very feature, which of late have given prominence to California redwood, were cut into plank, scantling and dimension lumber, where size and strength were specially required; and millions of feet of choice grained wood have been split into railroad ties, and cut up for fire wood, and otherwise destroyed, which, if to day was available in board lumber, and on the markets, would command a largely advanced price over and above present merchantable, first class redwood.

The redwood forests of California have yielded some most beautiful specimens of tree growth, which for richness and peculiarity of grain, is excelled only by the finest of costly hardwood. The peculiarity of shrinkage end-

wise is, perhaps, special to this wood, but does not extend beyond thorough seasoning, which perfects itself much more rapidly than in California sugar, or Eastern States pine. The value of the one discarded kind of redwood for manufacturing and finishing purposes has greatly increased during the past few years, and the present demand is greater than the supply of the handsome variety, even for home consumption. Consequently, manufacturers of redwood lumber are paying attention to this fact, and will in the future regard with special interest such trees as will produce the rich grained article.—*California Architect*.

THE COST OF INSURANCE.

As some proprietors of wood working establishments believe that their insurance costs them too much, it seems worth while to make a few comments on this subject.

In the first place it may be admitted that insurance rates are, generally speaking, rather high, even when full weight is given to the frequent and heavy losses sustained by the companies. But we do not pretend to say that this fact is ever a sufficient excuse for neglecting to insure. Our position is that to be insured is a duty every business man owes to himself and to his creditors, and one who omits this precaution through pure parsimony, as some unfortunately do, deserves little sympathy if he comes to grief thereby.

But we believe that, after making all due allowance for losses, an insurance company which exercised reasonable caution in accepting risks might offer rates lower than now prevail and yet realize a fair profit.

But the trouble with most of these companies is that their management and methods of doing business is too expensive. Most of them have high salaried presidents and numerous other officials whose positions are almost sinecures, the bulk of the work being done by subordinates much less liberally remunerated.

Another source of heavy expense is the commissions paid to agents and for this it is only just to say that the public is largely responsible. A large proportion of people would never resort to insurance if their attention were not called to the matter by personal solicitation, and the agents who perform this work must be paid for their time and trouble. But this burden does not fall upon the men who deal with agents. It is a tax distributed among all the policy holders of a company, and few people not actually engaged in the insurance business understand how heavy a tax it is.

If these agents could be dispensed with, the result would be a very decided decrease in insurance rates. It is a matter which the public has in a measure in its own hands. If it insists on employing agents instead of applying directly to the companies, it must expect to pay the agents for his services. We do not say that as a rule he is paid more than he deserves, for his business is arduous and often disagreeable, but the question is why should such a host of agents as now exist be employed at all? Some are, of course, necessary; but for one of these there are twenty who could well be dispensed with. But the public has not yet decided to part with them, and until it does it is hardly worth while for it to grumble at high rates of insurance.—*Saw Mill Gazette*.

The Age of Trees.

An eminent Scotch writer upon forestry says that of all the forms of nature, trees alone disclose their ages candidly. In the stems of trees which have branches and leaves with nettled veins—that is to say in all exogens—the increase takes place by means of an annual deposit, spread in an even layer upon the surface of the preceding one. In the earlier periods of life trees increase much faster than when adult—the oak, for instance, grows more rapidly between the twentieth and thirtieth years, and when old the annual deposits considerably diminish, so that the strata are thinner and the rings proportionately closer. Some trees slacken in rate of growth at an early period of life; the layers of the oak become thinner after 40, those of the elm after 50, those of the yew after 60 years.

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Lumber Shipments to American Ports.

A careful estimate places the amount of manufactured lumber in the shape of spruce deals, palings, laths, etc., pine planks and boards, shipped from St. John to American ports during the year 1884, at 75,000,000 feet. Probably deals alone, ranging from six to sixteen inches in width, would foot up to nearly one half this quantity. In this trade our people have comparatively little interest, as it is controlled almost entirely by Americans, under the provisions of the lumber treaty, yet it is really of considerable importance. The logs are cut on the Aroostook, Fish, Medux-nakeag and other rivers wholly on American Territory, but before they reach their destination a great deal of labor is given to provincial loggers, stream drivers, boomsmen, millmen and those employed or interested in shipping. The quantity shipped in 1884 was about equal to that of 1883, although the Aroostook log cut amounted to only 48,000,000 or about 15,000,000 less than in the previous year.—*St. John, N. B., Telegraph*.

Terrific Boiler Explosion.

WILLIAMSPORT, Pa., Jan. 12.—The boiler in the saw mill of Weigel & Babst, opposite here, exploded this afternoon. Peter Houser and Thomas Purvis were instantly killed, and seven others seriously injured. Daniel Babst, one of the proprietors, was so badly scalded that one of his legs had to be amputated. He is not expected to recover. The force of the explosion was terrific, not a timber of the mill was left standing. A visitor to the mill said to fireman Purvis this morning, "That boiler isn't safe." Purvis replied, "I'll risk it." It is stated that the boiler was full of leaks and two flues plugged.

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