



# THE CANADA LUMBERMAN

DEVOTED TO THE LUMBER AND TIMBER INTERESTS OF THE DOMINION.

PUBLISHED SEMI-MONTHLY BY THE  
Peterborough Review Printing and Publishing  
Company (Limited), Peterborough, Ont.

## Terms of Subscription:

One copy, one year, in advance ..... \$2 00  
One copy, six months, in advance ..... 1 00

## Advertising Rates:

Per line, for one year ..... \$0 00  
Per line, for six months ..... 50  
Per line, for three months ..... 30  
Per line, for first insertion ..... 10  
Per line, for each subsequent insertion to 3 mo's ..... 05  
Cards not occupying more than 12 lines (1 inch) per annum ..... 3 00  
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Cards not occupying more than 6 lines, for 6 mo's ..... 3 00

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Advertisements intended for insertion in any particular issue should reach the office of publication at least four clear days before the day of publication. Timely insertion.

THE CANADA LUMBERMAN is filed at the Office of Messrs. SMITH, DRAGON & CO., 164 Leadenhall Street, London, England, who also receive advertisements and subscriptions for this paper.

PETERBOROUGH, Ont., AUGUST 16, 1886.

## THE TRADE.

REPORTS from the English markets continue to be of a very leaden hue, and the silver lining is not perceptibly larger than it has been for sometime. Commenting on the London market, a writer conversant with the business decries on the "utter stagnation of trade." That phrase looks strong and may be hyperbolic to a certain extent. Yet the evidences of sluggishness are plain. There certainly appears to be no sufficient grounds for hope, according to reports viewed, for an immediate revival of the trade in England.

When we turn to this side of the Atlantic things look somewhat brighter. Generally, business prospects are brightening up, and the general press uses the better prospects for a theme for its articles. A general revival of profitable business activity would be shared by the lumber trade and the signs of that revival will be welcome. Across the border the condition of business is much the same as in Canada. No doubt the labor troubles injured, what promised, at the outset, to be a profitable season, but a better feeling seems to exist. As yet, however, there is a disposition to wait to see which way the feline will leap before going to any lengths. That able Chicago trade paper, the *Northwestern Lumberman*, is hopeful, and in its issue of August 7th gives its views as follows:—

"From one standpoint the prospect that higher prices may soon be obtained for lumber was never brighter. Throughout the country the stocks in retail yards are very light. A few years ago the retail dealer made it a point to stock up at stated intervals very much as dealers in merchandise think that at certain seasons they must lay in a stock of goods. The retail lumber dealer, however, has changed his method of buying. He purchases from hand to mouth. For the average retailer a car load of lumber is a good purchase. He has learned to take advantage of railway facilities. If within easy reach of a distributing point an order written to-day will start a car load of lum-

ber on the way to-morrow. For this reason the amount of lumber carried in the retail yards is comparatively small, and it is doubtful if the retail dealer will ever again fall back on the custom of buying heavy bills.

"If the wholesale markets are investigated it will be found that there is no surplus stock in that direction. Of course there is lumber and lumber, but it is stated by buyers that it is by no means an easy task to find good dry stock in desirable quantities. If the hunt were for coarse stock it would be different, but a majority of the dealers in the markets west of Chicago have their eyes on eastern trade—a trade that demands well-manufactured stock from a good quality of timber. Several Chicago dealers are also reaching east with their long arms. The wonder is, not that every man can sell lumber in the eastern states does so, but that the consumption of good lumber in those states is so large. The demand for good lumber to go east is leaving a residue in many a yard that is neither desirable or readily salable.

"As if to help the lumber dealer out the clouds withhold their rain. Should the drought continue for the next three weeks a large number of mills will shut down for want of logs. It must be remembered that never in the history of the lumber business in the northwest were the logging streams driven so clean as they were last year. Not only did all the logs come down but it was often the case that the mill booms were cleaned out before the sawing season ended. As a result mills were obliged to do little or no sawing until new logs came to hand. Were heavy rains to set in now there are plenty of logs on the head waters which would not reach the saw the present season, even though it were miraculously prolonged. The most lively imagination cannot figure out how there can be any but an ordinary-sized stock of lumber on hand when the mills shut down for the season. There will probably be no scarcity of lumber, but any time from now until new lumber is plentifully piled on the docks next season there can be no surplus to warrant dealers climbing over one another's heads in order to see who can sell cheapest.

"Owing to the conditions briefly stated above, certain grades of lumber in certain markets have slightly advanced. Whether the movement will extend generally is past prophesying. By special pleading the conclusion might usually be reached that the general law of trade has no control over the lumber trade. There are dealers in Toronto who sell lumber though the heavens fall; there are Mississippi river dealers who will meet Chicago men, and there are rail-mill men whose highest ambition on earth is apparently to understell everybody. With these combinations in the field the future of the lumber trade is difficult to anticipate. The manufacturers always stand ready for higher prices, it is said, but believe the east shore dealers will be fairly satisfied if the \$9 basis for dimension is sustained on the Chicago market, and without much doubt it will be. The purely jobber wants higher prices, and he wants them badly. He may meet competition and cut the insides out of his own pocket book, still, all the same, he longs for prices that will afford him more profit than he is making now. And he knows that in order to get that profit prices must go up. He has abandoned the hope even of jumping on to the necks of the manufacturers with any effect. He has learned within the last two years that typical lumber manufacturer has become like the adamant rock so far as his idea of prices goes.

"As the diagnosis has shown, there are conflicting elements. The manufacturer is doing but little complaining just now. The jobber would whoop up prices in prices in a York minute were it in his power. The retailer wants no higher prices at distributing points, claiming that from his customers he would be unable to obtain a corresponding advance. The way the cat will jump will be seen later on."

## THE REAL AGAINST THE FALSE.

The manufacturers and shippers of cherry have for a time complained that the demand throughout the east for their product was decreasing, and prices were not as firm as formerly. It is also conceded that the demand

for cherry has increased throughout the west, while buyers in this section are said to be willing to pay asking prices at the mills for good stocks. An inquiry into the situation in the east reveals a few features which are presented for consideration. It is a trait of human nature to imitate in order to gain a desired effect at a reduced price. A few years ago it was the custom to use cherry in the natural color or stained just enough to give the wood an even color, slightly darker than the original wood. This process of filling and staining did not rob the wood of its natural beauty, and a glance revealed, even to a casual observer the true nature of a most beautiful species of timber. It was about this time that mahogany began to assume an important place in the estimation of manufacturers, especially in the furniture line, and as that wood was expensive there was an immediate and decisive disposition to imitate it. It was found that cherry, by being deeply stained, could be made to so closely resemble mahogany as to require an expert to tell the difference. The process is known as mahognizing, and it has been adapted in a general way for the finishing of house decorations and even for store work.

The next step was to imitate cherry, and for this purpose popular is used mostly when intended for house finish, and red birch furniture. The habit of staining real cherry to a blood red, or in other words totally obliterating the natural shade of the wood, has paved the way to palming off other woods, deeply stained, upon many unsuspecting purchasers. It has also resulted in a marked diminution in the demand for cherry; and while the manufacturer may be able to increase his profits by a bare pretension, the handlers of the genuine article are forced to compete with a cheap adversary.

This condition of affairs is the direct result of a demand for a grade of cherry superior to the work of nature—a quality of lumber absolutely free from defects in the nature of gum streaks, the very presence of which bears witness to the genuineness of the article. To offset these alleged defects the finisher has stained cherry to a shade so dark that other and cheaper woods could be used to equal advantage, and there are many users of household furniture who take great pride in what they suppose to be cherry sets, who are in reality idolizing a concoction of birch lumber and cherry stain, for which they paid a price nearly, if not fully, sufficient to have purchased a much handsomer article of cherry.

Cherry in its natural color, when dressed, is a pale pink, and if finished without stain, or with just sufficient to give the entire surface an even shade, can never be successfully imitated by any of the cheap woods, and it need never be feared but that it will stand on its own merits.—*Northwestern Lumberman.*

## THE OUTCOME ON AN INVENTION.

Readers of the *Lumberman* may remember that a few years there in its columns a machine for compressing sawdust, and from occasional inquiries it is evident that the invention is still of interest to people who are of the opinion that sawdust ought to be utilized.

The inventor of the machine was Mr. W. H. Smith, a gentleman of both general and special ability, and who during the war, was a government engineer of high repute. For years following the close of the war he studied on the machine of which we write. Level headed ordinarily, yet an inventor's enthusiasm took possession of him, and he could see millions in the child of his brain. There was no doubt, in his mind, but the invention would revolutionize trade. He would make sawdust into blocks of fuel, into pulleys, into fence posts, and even into railway ties. Sawdust fuel would become an article of commerce. Samples of it were burned in the *Lumberman* office with the best of results, and the engineers in the city who were furnished with a few hundred pounds to test against the same weight of coal recommended the new fuel in high terms. The use of the machine would not stop on sawdust, however. Oak, salt bran, hay, cotton—in fact any commodity that in its natural state was bulky for profitable transportation—could be compressed. Special emphasis was laid on bran. A car load or so was put through the machine and shipped to the English market as a test,

and while the success of the process was proved, word came back that the bran was worthless; that the miller had taken too much of the food element out of it, and had left nothing but a dry shell that could only stimulate the animals which ate it by scratching their insides. The advice spoke well for the Minneapolis miller from whose mill the bran was taken, but it was a crusher on the would be bran exporter.

Mr. Smith made preparations to build a machine at a foundry on the west side of the city, and for months worked hard. During this period he associated with him Mr. James L. Houghtalling, a gentleman who had both money and leisure and who at that time was treasurer of the Mackinaw Lumber Company. The machine on trial exhibitions worked fairly satisfactorily, but less of a mechanic than its inventor was could see that its construction was faulty. Tremendous power was required, and parts of the machinery were too delicate to withstand constant use. But improvements were made until it was thought that the machine could be put on the market, and one was built for the big saw-mill concern, the Rathburn Company, Deseronto, Ont. This company ran a line of steamers, and it was its intension to use sawdust fuel in the steamer furnaces. Whether there was any temporary success in the scheme we have never learned. At present however, the compressor stands idle, for the reason, it is safe to say, that it is unable to stand the heavy work required of it.

Two compressors were built. One, as stated above, is idle in Canada; the original machine is standing under a shed on the west side; Mr. Smith, the inventor, is dead; and Mr. Houghtalling is now engaged in a business that gives him no time to fool with sawdust compressors. The machine, practically, has been a dead failure. It was conceived in a bright brain, but it consumed the years, and we know not but the life of the inventor. To say the least, he died a disappointed man. He saw the work of years of mature manhood come to naught. The sawdust compressor was not only an ambition destroyer but a money eater. Mr. Houghtalling sank \$15,000 in the enterprise, and how much it pulled from the pockets of others we have no means of knowing.

Notwithstanding the dismal record presented above the *LUMBERMAN* is of the opinion that there would be big money in the invention were it perfected. The trouble is with the machine, and not with the process. The principle is all right; and the next man who attempts to carry it out we trust will have a less thorny road than those who have gone before him.—*Northwestern Lumberman.*

## FOREST FIRES IN MICHIGAN.

BAY CITY, Mich., Aug. 11.—Despatches to this city announce that terrible forest fires are raging along the entire line of the Michigan central railroad, from Mackinac city to Pinconning, in Montmorency and Otsego counties, standing timber has been destroyed and the fires are prevailing continually. Villages are threatened unless rain comes soon. The conductors report the scene at night both fearful and interesting.

ISHPING, Mich., Aug. 11.—The forest fires have done great damage in various parts of the upper peninsula. At Barraga, Choccolay and other points along the Chicago and Northwestern railway, there have been terrible fires. Nearly a million feet of standing pine have been destroyed. Unless rain comes soon there will be no more greater devastation.

Two large fly wheels in the Port Arthur Lumbering Company's mill, at Port Arthur, Ont., recently burst and flew in all directions. The wheels are six feet in diameter, and revolving about 90 times to the minute. Though several men were working a few feet away no one was injured.

RICHARD COX, an Englishman, who works on the steamboat "Walker Lilly," was loading ties at the Rockland mills, Ottawa, when a pile of lumber, beneath which he was standing, gave way, and the whole weight of the lumber fell upon him, killing him instantly. Cox had only been in the country a short time.