

## THE MOUNTAIN LUMBER MANUFACTURERS' ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA.

This association is now in its third year and its membership amounts to about 30 firms, or 40 mills, and covers the territory west of the Cascades in British Columbia, and eastward as far as Calgary. Its usefulness is becoming more and more appreciated by the members, and it is now in a decidedly healthy condition. The last general meeting was held at Nelson on June 22nd, the session lasting all day. Among the matters under consideration were the trade conditions in the North-West. During the past winter and spring the demand had been light and the mills felt the slackness in trade severely. The claim put forward last year by those who opposed the interests of the lumbermen, namely, that the Canadian mills were unable to supply the market, was even then unwarranted, but with the addition of several new plants and increased capacity in some of the old mills, the condition now is that a very large quantity of lumber is piled in the mills in excess of what is required to fill the orders received.

The trouble has been largely aggravated by the fact that in the state of Washington, as a result of over-production and poor home market, a large number of mills are in liquidation, and the stocks of common lumber are being disposed of at sacrifice prices in the North-West and Manitoba, which is the sole market for the Mountain mills. Even in ordinary times, there being no duty on rough lumber coming into Canada, the American mills can undersell the Canadian, for the reason that machinery and labor cost less and timber limits are to be had at not only a lower original cost, but are less burdensome to carry. It is clearly shown that our opponents to the south can put lumber on the cars for a considerably lower price than we can. The mill men have brought these facts before the Government and requested a duty of \$2.00 per M on rough lumber coming into Canada, but although the plea was strongly pressed, and the lumber manufacturers' case was, as they thought, demonstrated beyond argument, nothing was

done, and the mistaken idea that the consumer in the North-West was getting the benefit of the lower prices was taken for granted.

These matters were considered at the meeting on June 22nd, and it was shown from personal experience of those present that the consumer is still paying for his lumber on the basis of the Association price, and the disadvantage in most cases reaps the benefit of the lower price of the imported material. In Southern Manitoba the Canadian mills are practically shut out of the market on account of the disadvantage they suffer in the matter of freight rates. The opinion was expressed that it would not be long before the view would prevail that the North-West farmers who receive the fullest protection and are directly benefitting by the British Columbia markets for their products, should not receive more than the lumber industry, which is now in its infancy in this section, and suffers from a more unequal competition. It was made perfectly clear that there neither was nor is any justification for the statement that a combine exists between the manufacturer and dealer. The policy of the former is to see that the whole North-West is properly supplied, and that the consumer is enabled to get his needs supplied without being subjected to excessive charges, and they realize that, by doing so, a greater quantity of their products can be disposed of. Arrangements with this end in view were begun some months ago whereby the price list was published throughout the whole North-west and now a powerful organization has been formed for the purpose of enabling the manufacturer to open up yards and supply lumber directly to the consumer. No change was made in the price list, save to permit a difference of \$1.00 in favor of cedar boards. In fact, in eighteen months there has been no change in the

price list, notwithstanding that the cost of logs at the mill has been increasing.

Grading rules were agreed upon after consideration of the report of a committee appointed at a previous meeting for the purpose of considering the question. This matter has been under way for some considerable time, and at first it seemed to some members impracticable to work out any feasible set of rules which would be just to all manufacturers, there being such a very great variety of woods, some of which might have to be treated as constituting a class distinct from others. However, it is now thought the present rules will prove satisfactory and a considerable benefit to the manufacturer and to dealers.

### BRITISH COLUMBIA LETTER.

(Correspondence of the CANADA LUMBERMAN.)

VANCOUVER, June 21st, 1904.—Prices of lumber and shingles in this city, delivered at the mills, are an indication of how utterly demoralized conditions are at present. In fact, prices are so bad and so cut to meet any particular demand or competition, that millmen do not care to make them public. An enquiry of one of the prominent shingle manufacturers as to what the prices of shingles at the mills were, elicited the reply that he did not know, and while this may seem somewhat paradoxical, it is nevertheless true. The figures are quoted from \$1.40 to \$1.60, according to quality, but are flexible that trade may be secured in what is the worst time that the lumber industry in this province has yet encountered.

Mr. C. M. Beecher, vice-president of the B. G. Mills, Timber and Trading Company, which has just closed its largest mill, the Hastings in this city, remarked the other evening: "The Government at Ottawa seems to think that those members who do not represent the West know the conditions best, but the bad times which are now settling down in earnest will bring Sir Wilfred Laurier and his cabinet to a realization of things, but only after considerable harm has been done. That is a brief summary of the outlook at

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