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LUMBERING IN BRITISH COLUMBIA.

[BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT.]

LUMBERING on the Pacific coast is a vastly more difficult problem to work out than lumbering in the eastern parts of the Dominion. The absence of snow and hard frosty weather plays its important part in the item of cost of logging; then again, the logs can be bought from the logger as cheaply as a limit holder can take them off his own limits. This seems hard for the eastern lumberman to take in. To put it in other words, the selling value of logs delivered at the mills is the cost of the labor that has been put on them, plus fifty cents per thousand feet timber dues, plus the profit (if any) the logger may have; so that as things have been, and as they are likely to be for a time, the limit holder realizes nothing on his holdings worth the venture.

The local government of British Columbia, who seemingly all along have been selling their berth-right for "a mass of pottage," are to blame to a great extent for this state of affairs, but at the same time the distance from consuming markets and the heavy freight rates regulate the prices that may be netted for forest products. This in turn regulates the price of logs and wages, with the result that a great many men, not satisfied with their lot, are joining in the [illegible]d seeking rush to the Yukon country, and the cost of labor is increasing in value on both the Canadian and American sides of the line, while the immediate supply of logs and lumber is less at the present time than has been the case at any previous time since the trade began. All things considered, the lot of the mill-man in British Columbia cannot be called an overly happy one.

Another item that plays its part in the cost of manufacture is the necessity for the operation of dry kilns in connection with every plant. All lumber and shingles shipped, excepting heavy dimension stuff, must be kiln dried, this being done purely to lessen the freight, while the use of a dry kiln always means heavy cost in handling and re-handling stock, besides the cost of the plant and the steady consumption of as much steam in the process of drying as would run a mill of the same capacity in Ontario. Still, in spite of all the difficulties and draw-backs, the Pacific coast lumbermen struggle on with commendable pluck, and whether they are meeting with any great measure of success or not, they surely deserve their share. For several years past none of the mills can claim to have made much money, and a number of large and very expensive plants are still lying idle, the combined capacity of the idle plants being much greater than those in operation. The total capacity of all mills in existence in the province is about 650 million feet of lumber and about 350 million shingles per year. Hopes are entertained by those in the trade that next year will show more encouraging results than any year yet, these hopes being based largely on the prosperous state of the North-West. The volume of trade done shows a steady increase, year by year, but there is room for much more increase in trade before real prosperity can be looked for.

Touching on the woods being manufactured, first in order of commercial importance comes the Douglas fir (Pseudotsuga Douglasii). Our American friends to the south, with their characteristic egotism, call this wood Oregon pine. Eastern Canadians are getting more acquainted with this wood every year, and while it does not and cannot supersede the use of white pine for many purposes, all over Canada it is supplying a want where large and strong dimension timber is called into use. For flooring this wood is particularly well adapted on account of its freedom from knot or defects and tough wearing qualities. Throughout Manitoba and the North-west fir flooring is almost exclusively used, and through the eastern provinces many who are acquainted with the nature of the wood are specifying its use for different purposes. This wood is also exported by water to all points of the world.

Next in order of commercial importance comes red cedar (Thuya Gigantae). Our American friends have the ownership of this wood nailed also, as they call it Washington red cedar. However, red cedar is all right, whether its stump happened to be in British Columbia or in Yankee land. Comparing this wood with Ontario woods in point of usefulness to man, it is about half way between white pine and Ontario cedar, fit for all the purposes for which Ontario cedar is adapted, and used for the same purposes as white pine in some cases, and as door and sash making, shingles, house finish, ceiling, siding, etc. This wood is much softer and takes a bruise easier than white pine, but for non-liability to shrink and swell, and for beauty of natural grain, it leaves pine behind. At present British Columbia mills are shipping red cedar, to some extent, over the whole Dominion.

Lastly, in order of importance, but still a useful wood, is spruce (Picae Englemanni). Our American friends call this wood by a lot of names, and not a little of it is sold in their eastern markets as white pine. It fills a want that neither fir or cedar can. Its main use at present is in box making, the consumption of it in salmon and fruit boxes totalling to a surprisingly heavy quantity. Considerable of it is also shipped in the form of clear squares for turning lumber for piano and organ building, and for refrigerator construction, and it is also manufactured into various finished forms, such as ceiling, siding, etc.

Apart from these three woods no other Pacific coast wood need be mentioned. The province is practically without hardwoods, and where such are required for mechanical uses, they are imported from the eastern parts of Canada. Some experiments have been made in using Australian hardwoods, but without much satisfaction, and where the good old hardwoods of Ontario, such as oak and hickory, are useful in Ontario, they are equally useful in British Columbia.

INVENTOR OF THE BAND-MILL.

WRITING from Charleston, West Virginia, a correspondent of the Chicago Northwestern Lumberman says: The inventor of the band-mill, without which no modern saw-mill is thought to be complete to-day, lives in Charleston, W. Va. This man is J. R. Hoffman, who made the first attempts to produce lumber with a band-saw in Fort Wayne, Ind., in 1868. He did the first work alone, working out his own ideas against the advice and opinion of saw mill men everywhere, who did not believe such a device was practicable. The first band-mill had a 7 foot wheel, and the saw used was 45 feet long, 6 inches wide and 16 gauge. The pulley was built up from an iron center with wooden arms and a wooden rim. The saw for this mill came from France, there being no works in this country at that time that could furnish a saw of this kind. During the Franco-Prussian war the factory from which this saw was obtained was destroyed, and it became necessary to seek another factory. This was finally found in France, and the industry proceeded without further interruption. After putting up 50 or more band-mills in various parts of the country the Hoffman patents began to expire, and Mr. Hoffman abandoned the business to return to that of sawmilling, with which he had been identified for a long term of years.