

**A HALT NEEDED TO BE CALLED.**

In the lumber industry there is surely something rotten in Denmark. There is a wrong principle underlying the ways of conducting the lumber business. There is an absence of firmness and a lack of determination on the part of the manufacturers to obtain for the product of their mills what it is worth. There is a saying that any article of trade is worth just what it will sell for, and no more. In one sense this old saying, as applied to lumber is wholly wrong. Unwise competition may force prices below where they would go were trade allowed to take its natural course. Hot-house processes, as much as they may be beneficial to the growth of certain plants, are detrimental to any branch of trade.

If the amount of standing pine could not be approximately estimated; if stumpage was of no value; if there was not rapid depreciation in mill property, then a low price for lumber might be excusable. But that the great body of white pine will in a short time, as compared with the time that our great and growing country will demand lumber, be practically exhausted; that stumpage has a positive value, no matter how little it may have cost the present owners of it; that saw-mill machinery from wear and fire is short-lived, are facts acknowledged by all. Then why should a business that is limited as to the time it can be conducted, and the conduct of which is expensive, be carried on at a small profit to some and an absolute loss to others?

Of late years it has been charged by manufacturers that the jobbers of the Chicago and other markets have been responsible for the unsteadiness of prices. The *Lumberman* has claimed that the argument was fallacious, and the conditions of trade as they now exist, prove that such is the case. It is for the interest of the jobbing trade to buy as cheaply as possible, but no matter how much of an effort the jobbers might make to hammer prices, if their yards could not be filled at one price they would at another. The manufacturers have this matter in their keeping. But it seems they do not keep it well. There is no more competition today between jobbers and manufacturers than there is between manufacturers themselves. A majority of the latter have also become distributors, and when several of them meet in one neighborhood to look after their customers they pound prices as hard as the jobbers ever did. The interior Michigan mills make it interesting for one another's customers in the territory reached by these operators south of the state line, and the first cut in uppers of which we learned this spring was made by these very mill men. Yet they stand up and denounce the jobbers, and say they are overlastingly trying to stave the bottom out of the market.

The same conditions exist west of here. Duluth and Minneapolis have had a fight in the Northwest, and Duluth has come out ahead because her mill men can handle their lumber for less money than the Minneapolis mill men can. The latter sought to overcome this disadvantage by low prices and big discounts, but when the other side resorted to the same practices, the disadvantage of the big Minneapolis handling bill was still apparent. So, too, the mill men on the upper waters of the Mississippi, have endeavored to knock out the lower river men, and have succeeded to such an extent that some of the latter openly declare that their present locations are not profitable ones for saw mills. Even the log towing bill stands in the way of successful competition with their neighbors up stream. The policy with the manufacturer is to sell lumber at a fair price if they can, but to sell it anyhow.

This policy we regard as wrong, for the reasons heretofore stated in this article. Every foot of pine in the Northwest ought to bring a price that will pay a fair profit to the owner and manufacturer of it, and further, to both the jobber and retailer. Such a price would be no hardship to any one, and a positive benefit to many. The consumer would be obliged to pay more for lumber; but \$2 or \$3 per thousand feet on the amount of lumber that enters into the construction of the average house or barn would cut but a small figure. If that amount were added to the price of lumber, building operations would not be curtailed, provided the

builders were satisfied the prices had gone up to stay. It is the uncertainty as to prices that calls a halt in improvements.

If firmness could be sustained, not only the retailers but the jobbers would be relieved. As it is now, they do not know when to buy. If lumber is cheap this week it may be cheaper next, and it is almost sure to be if salesmen from different territories visit the town at about the same time.

The *Lumberman* is by no means in favour of exorbitant prices, and prices that would pay a living profit to all, from the owner of the stumpage to the retailer, would not be exorbitant. Such prices every business should be expected to pay, and jobs pay when well conducted. Lumber is a staple commodity, and its value should not be tossed about by bulls and bears, as though it was the watered stock of a railway corporation. It is admitted now that there is little that is speculative in the lumber trade, and if not then values should not be subject to fluctuations that cause distrust and halting by any branch of the trade. The manufacturers, and they only, can say whether the same conditions which now govern the trade shall continue to govern it.—*Northwestern Lumberman*.

**FOREST FIRES.**

During the past few days the people of New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania have had sad experience with forest fires, and they have come, too, at a time when they were least expected. Forest fires are usually looked for in times of drouth, and particularly in the latter part of summer or fall, but this time they came before the summer heat has parched the earth, and soon after, if not really before, all the snow in the northern part of New York state had disappeared.

To even approximately estimate the yearly loss from burning forests would be a difficult, if not a hopeless task. There is not only immense loss of property, but every few seasons a loss of life as well. The Peshtigo and Michigan fires, which were so productive of loss of life, are fresh in the minds of all, and rarely a season passes that several names are not added to the frightful list. A person cannot realize to what extent these fires have raged until he has travelled through the Northwest and seen the thousands of acres that have been burnt over, with the millions of trees standing thick, black and limbless. White pine owners estimate that there is one chance in ten that their possessions will be swept by fire every year, and without doubt the per centage is placed low enough. Indeed, many a careful investor shuns pine lands for this very reason.

On the Pacific coast the losses have been many and heavy. The South is the only section that has escaped, and the fires in the Carolinas a few weeks ago prove that even that section is not exempt in the neighborhood where turpentine is made.

What is to be done about it? Forest fires are preventable, the same as many other calamities may be prevented. But no preventive steps are taken. There is a horde of "foresters" and office-seekers who are everlastingly shouting, "Plant trees! plant trees! plant trees!" But we never hear them say a word about protecting the trees we already have from their worst enemy. They seem to think that it is a more laudable undertaking to set out a little staddle or plant a seed that will not become a tree of much worth until we are all dead than it is to protect a tree that is already grown. They should understand that protection is of more importance than reforestation; that at present there is no lack of trees of most kinds, and that their number could not be greatly increased, or, rather, the portion of the country now covered by forests could not be greatly enlarged, except at the sacrifice of agricultural interests, until farming becomes more of a science than it is now. Sure enough, the entire Ohio valley might be reforested for the alleged purpose of preventing floods which have swept that valley from times immemorial, but if it were, it would be interesting to know what would become of the inhabitants.

The only way to prevent forest fires is to collect and burn, under supervision, the dry brush and tree tops. Fire cannot exist unless it has something to feed on. This journal has

held for a long time that every lumberman operating in the woods should be required by law to take such care of his landings that they will not hazard the property of his neighbors. This would be a good deal of labor, and it would cost a good deal of money, but if thereby even a half of the losses by forest fires were prevented, both the labor and money would be well expended. And this rule should not be observed by lumbermen alone, but by others. In forests in which operations are not being carried on there is a constant accumulation of dry limbs and fallen trees, and these the owner of the land should be obliged to remove in some way, providing his wood joins others. If a man's timber is isolated to such an extent that, in case it burned, the flames would not be communicated to the timber lands of others, then let him do as he has a mind to. If he can afford to have his timber destroyed by fire others should not object.

The greatest difficulty to be met in the prosecution of such a work would be from wind-falls. It would seem sometimes as if nature stepped in to hasten the coming of the flames. Swarms, of such dimensions as only the elements can move, are cut through the forests by the wind, and for miles and miles every tree of decent size is laid flat. These windfalls are prolific of intense forest fires, and they have been the starting point of some of the worst fires on record. Here is where nature comes in and says that her trees are not all for the benefit of man, but that she will destroy a portion of them in her own good time and way.

The method described is the only one we believe to prevent forest fires, but the prosecution of it means difficult and prodigious work, and for this very reason, perhaps, it is not advocated by the "foresters," "botanists" and professors who now-a-days are so ready with their advice on all subjects pertaining to our forests, when really they no little about them.—*Northwestern Lumberman*.

**CEYLON BOTANIC GARDENS.**

In a handbook recently issued by Dr. Trimen, the following interesting particulars are given: The Royal Botanic Gardens at Peradeniya were established in 1821, six years after the final occupation of the Kandyan Kingdom of the English. The site is a little less than four miles from Kandy to the Colombo road, and occupies a loop of the river Mahaveli, which surrounds it on all sides except the south, where it is bounded by the high road. The area, nearly 150 acres in extent, beautifully undulated, its average elevation above sea level being about 1540 feet. The climate is hot, moist, and very equable; the mean annual temperature is about 77° F., April and May being the hottest and December the coldest months. Rain falls on about 200 days in the year, the annual rainfall being about 85 inches; it is pretty evenly spread through the year, but is heaviest in October and November and in June, at the full establishment of the N. E. and S. W. monsoon respectively. February and March are the driest months, but even then there are showers at no distant intervals. Before its occupation as a Botanic Garden the greater part of the land had been a royal demesne occasionally occupied as a residence by the kings of Kandy. The earth-mound and ditch along the south boundary are still evident, and remains of stone buildings have been found. The name *Pera*, Guava, and *deniya*, an enclosed place—indicates its use as a fruit garden of which the existence of some very odd mango trees is further evidence. On another part of the site stood a small temple or flower shrine and priest's house, abandoned, however, before the formation of the garden. This garden now contains considerably over 2000 species of plants. The director has also under his charge, as adjuncts to the Peradeniya Gardens, smaller branch establishments in different climatic districts of Ceylon. Hakgala Gardens are situated at an elevation of 5500, about six miles to the east of Nuwara Eliya on the road to Badulla. They were opened in 1860 as a cinchona nursery. The climate admits of cultivation there the numerous European and Australian plants, and those of the tropical mountain regions. Henaragoda Garden is a completely tropical one, scarcely above sea level, and in a wet steaming climate which varies little. It is about three-quarters of a

mile from the railway station of the same name on the Colombo-Kandy railway. Many of the plants grow at Peradeniya flourish there with far greater luxuriance, and others can be cultivated there only.—*Federal Australian*.

**THE LUMBER OUTLOOK.**

Now that the logging season has closed we have endeavored to inform ourselves of the situation, and are gratified to know that the resolutions made by our lumbermen last fall to curtail the output of logs has resulted in a material reduction. The Ottawa district shows 1,500,000 less logs on hand than at this date last year, which, averaging the logs at seven to the thousand feet, would be equal to 215,000,000 feet; while the reduction in the St. Maurice district is proportionately greater, being from 50,000,000 feet last year to 15,000,000 feet this year, or a reduction in the output of pine of 250,000,000 feet in these two sections. Should it also be found, which is believed to be the case, that the pine-producing districts of the Georgian Bay, Muskoka, Peterborough and Trent have made similar reductions, there would this year be fully 500,000,000 feet less pine to cut than last year.

Coupling the foregoing with the statement made that the spruce product of New Brunswick and Maine is 268,000,000 feet less, and the further fact that our own spruce districts of the St. Lawrence and eastern townships have greatly reduced numbers of logs, many mills not having stocked up at all, we cannot be far astray in estimating the shortage in pine and spruce east of Lake Huron at one thousand million feet. This curtailment in supply must have the effect of restoring the lumber industry of Canada to its normal condition, and if the conservative action of the lumbermen meets with its reward in enhanced prices for their stock, few will regret it. That the lumbermen may reasonably anticipate higher prices is evident when it is seen that the stock is only two-thirds of last year, and since the home consumption was then fully one-third of the stock, and there is now every appearance of an equally large home consumption this year, this amount, deducted from the small stock of the present season, would obviously leave only about one-half as much on hand for export to Britain and the United States.—*Journal of Commerce*.

**A PLEA FOR TREE PLANTING**

The following article from the *New York Independent* will repay perusal, at this time: "In every town and village something can be done to beautify and greatly improve the public grounds and highways. All that is necessary is for some one or more persons to start the wheels and unite in calling a meeting of the residents to discuss the matter. Let the ladies take hold in good earnest and start the movement. A village society once organized could do, in a very few years, an astonishing amount of work, with very little effort. One single day in a year devoted to village improvements would very soon change the whole appearance of any place. Such work is rapidly increasing in popularity. Mr. B. G. Northrop, of Connecticut, is now giving almost his whole time in lecturing on the subject of Rural Improvements.

What he said, in a recent address in Shelbyville, Indiana, is highly spoken of by the *Indianapolis Journal*. We copy from a recent report the following interesting points, given by Mr. Northrop on that occasion. His topic was 'Arbor Day.'

It may be objected to Arbor Day, or to any school lesson on forestry, that the course of study is already overcrowded. I reply that the requisite talks on trees, their value and beauty, need not occupy three hours, all told. Those talks on this subject, which Superintendent Peaseley says were the most interesting and profitable lessons the pupils of Cincinnati ever had in a single day, occupied only the morning of Arbor Day, the afternoon being given to the practical work. Such talk will lead our youth to admire our noble trees, and realize that they are the grandest products of nature, and form the finest drapery that adorns this earth in all lands. Thus taught, they will wish to plant and protect trees. This love of trees early im-