

LUMBERMEN EXPRESS THEIR VIEWS.

THE CONSENSUS OF OPINION DECIDEDLY HOPEFUL.—RECOVERY LIKELY TO BE GRADUAL.—SOME TIMELY SUGGESTIONS BY MR. J. T. SCHELL.

IN view of the fact that the commercial industries of the United States and Canada are not likely to again be disturbed by a national election for a few years to come, the CANADA LUMBERMAN solicited the opinion of several prominent lumber manufacturers and dealers regarding the prospects for the Canadian lumber trade. The views expressed indicate a decidedly hopeful feeling, and while the recovery is likely to be somewhat gradual, it is believed that the improvement will be maintained for some time to come. Below will be found some of the replies received:

J. W. MUNRO, Pembroke, Ont.:—"I think the outlook for local trade looks bright, as I have heard of several of our mills in this vicinity having sold all the stock in their yards, and in this town our largest mill is running until 9 o'clock every night to keep up with orders. The result of the Presidential election appears to have given confidence to dealers across the lines. But, however, if I had a million dollars to invest I would put it into white pine, provided I could buy at present rates, as it is bound to advance, and past experience shows that it is certain to rise to a fair price, as there is sure to be a demand for white pine at a paying figure, and if one can hold his pine he will ultimately reap the benefit."

J. E. MURPHY, Hepworth Station, Ont.:—"In my opinion the return of Mr. McKinley in the recent Presidential contest in the United States has already had its effect on lumber interests in this country. Lumber manufacturers are now holding for higher values, and none are disposed to accept the low prices that have been currently offered for several months back. It is early yet to say what will be the effect on the lumber trade in the United States. Inquiry from eastern points are on the increase, but mill men, as a rule, are pretty short of the good stock asked for at this time of the year. English buyers are gradually turning their attention more and more to Canadian points, in search of hardwoods, and this trade will undoubtedly increase in volume from year to year. Formerly this trade has been done through middlemen in New York, Boston, Albany and Buffalo. The local demand for hardwood has been no good to me for the past three years, but local trade in hemlock has been excellent, and my sales have been larger this year than for three years past."

MICHELLE, DYMENT & SON, Barrie, Ont.:—"In reference to the outlook for the lumber business, we are looking for an improvement in the business, but do not expect much change before next spring, and then we think it almost impossible for cheap lumber to raise much in price, as there is such large quantities of low grade lumber at the mills in this country. If the present curtailment of cutting in the woods this winter is continued, there is no doubt that next year will see a decided change for the better. The trade at present requires careful handling, and the manufacturer must not manufacture large quantities, and if a reasonable curtailment is continued we may look for a more prosperous and paying business. We attribute the ruinous prices to the over-production."

A large manufacturer in the Ottawa Valley writes:—"In view of the depressed condition of business in the United States for the past three years, there is no doubt that the growing use of lumber was much curtailed, and the demand lessened; and as a consequence a very considerable surplus has accumulated at the various manufacturing centres. With the improvement that is almost certain to follow the results of the general elections in the United States trade will assume a healthier tone, and in due course of time the accumulated surplus of lumber will be worked off and trade will again assume its normal condition. Just how soon this condition will be reached no one can tell—there are so many conditions that may affect the question one way or the other. Our own feeling is simply this, that bottom has been reached, and a turn for the better will soon take place. We expect that

the improvement will be gradual; we neither expect nor hope for any boom and consider steady, healthy trade better for all concerned."

MR. J. T. SCHELL, Alexandria, Ont.:—"I have noticed in the press expressions of confidence for the future outlook for lumber on account of the election of McKinley. Instances of sales by Ottawa lumbermen are noted, also that the holding price for the Western States mills has been advanced; the hopeful views of numerous dealers have been published, that the lumber trade will wear a brighter smile from this time forward. I agree with the hopeful ones. The advance in asking prices of the western men indicates hope also, but even an advance of 50 cents and \$1.00 per thousand does not put them on the basis of two years ago, and for some time to come their profits will be reckoned on the pages of their ledgers marked "hopeful." The Ottawa sales are not out of the ordinary—the prices not above former years—and not in any way connected with the United States elections, as the buyers were British."

"The improvement hoped for in lumber matters will come in time, but I see no cause for large advances in price, or much increased demand from the United States at this season of the year. Owing to the fact that the depression has been severe and long continued, stocks have become depleted; dealers and manufacturers have only filled their immediate and necessary requirements, and to a certain extent some stocking up may be done; but when we consider that the buying of lumber has been going on all the time for the "necessities" of the country, we must look for the "great expansion"—as one writer has it—in the lumber demand to come from those who buy for the rise they expect, or wait until the "expansion" gets here in fact."

"There is a large amount of lumber on the piling grounds of the mills both in the States and Canada to-day—a larger amount than usual—and wisdom would be shown by our millers if the logs taken out in 1896-97 would be very much less than formerly. If to the surplus accumulations of stocks during the last two years we add a heavy stock in 1897, I do not see how the lumbermen can get much benefit from the good times coming, as there will still be too much stock for the demand and prices will remain low. By taking out about one-third or one-half of ordinary year's stocks of logs, and allowing the demand to overtake the production, we could expect to realize fair prices next year, and until the next depression shuts off demand. I shall not cut over one-third as much this winter as last season, and will expect to make the profit for the business on the increase in price of the 1896 stocks, which we have not tried to sell at less than cost, and which we have largely on hand at this writing. I would be pleased to know that the same action would be taken generally, as I think it would mean two to three dollars rise in value, while a large new stock on top of present supplies will mean no profits for another year or so."

MR. JAMES SHARPE, Burks Falls, Ont.:—"The result of the election in the United States is most satisfactory to Canadian lumbermen. The market is firmer, and that tendency set in as soon as the election was determined. There have been a large number of enquiries since then, especially about shingles, and a very good increase in the sales. The trade, I believe, will soon boom, whether a tariff is put on by the United States or not."

A BANKER'S VIEW.

Mr. George Hague, general manager of the Merchants' Bank of Canada, visited several United States business centres shortly after the Presidential election, and has expressed himself on the situation as follows: "There can be no doubt that the result of the Presidential election will be to inspire confidence in all business circles, and there will be a renewal of confidence and activity in manufacturing enterprises, especially those which have been dull for some time past. In fact, I noticed before I returned home that a large number of establishments in several of the states which had been running half time were soon going full time, while others which had been closed down altogether have resumed operations. I think that one probable effect upon Canada will be the better demand for that which has been manufactured for the American market and which can only be sent there. The increased activity in manufacturing will give rise to a greater demand for lumber and will enable Canadian stocks to be got forward at a profit. The lumber market of Michigan

cannot fail to be benefitted, and as many of them seek their supply of logs in Canada a renewal may be looked for in that direction. It was understood some time ago that few logs would be manufactured in Canada for Michigan firms, but if such a demand springs up, as indicated, it is quite likely that operations in the woods may proceed almost on the usual scale. This, of course, will employ men in Canadian forests and the sending in of supplies will stimulate Canadian business. With regard to tariff legislation I did not hear much, but I fancy that owing to the large number of those who voted for Mr. McKinley being Democrats and free traders, it will be almost impossible to pass a tariff bill through Congress imposing higher duties than those at present prevailing."

CORRESPONDENCE

Letters are invited from our readers on matters of practical and timely interest to the lumber trades. To secure insertion all communications must be accompanied with name and address of writer, not necessarily for publication. The publisher will not hold himself responsible for opinions of correspondents.

A WORD FROM CHILI.

SANTIAGO DE CHILI, Oct. 12th, 1896.

DEAR SIR,—A copy of the CANADA LUMBERMAN is to hand, which I have found extremely interesting and desirable reading. I have been fortunate enough to promote considerable trade between Canada and Chili, and were it not for the fact that we are now passing through a severe financial crisis much more trade would result. Canadian goods in general compete advantageously here, in workmanship and price, with those of other countries, notwithstanding inconvenient and expensive shipping route. Nearly all Canadian goods are shipped from New York, and most always figure in Chilean commercial statistics as importations from United States. This fact in itself is detrimental to Canadian trade, and it should be the aim of Canadian ship owners and exporters to establish a line of vessels between Montreal and Pacific ports.

In normal times there is always a fairly good demand for fine lumber, such as walnut, oak, ash, hickory, clear white pine and rived oak staves. There is also a market for most all kinds of machinery for industrial and agricultural purposes. Steam engines, electrical apparatus generally, carriages and wind mills also sell fairly well. At present trade is altogether stagnated, owing to the recent Presidential election and also from uneasiness felt regarding stability of money laws which came into force last year.

Yours truly,

LEWIS E. THOMPSON,
Canadian Commercial Agent.

IT IS APPRECIATED.

Joseph S. Wallis, Port Carling, Ont., writes: "Your November issue is superb."

Mr. J. E. Murphy, Hepworth Station, Ont.: I like THE LUMBERMAN; it is pitily and pointed in all its original matters.

Messrs. Williamson & Crombie, Kingsbury, Que., write: "Your special number for November just here. It is just splendid."

Mr. T. A. Thompson, Iroquois, Ont., writes: "I must say that I am very much pleased with THE LUMBERMAN. I could not well do without it."

Messrs. J. T. Lillierap & Co., Lakefield, Ont., write: "We are much pleased with THE LUMBERMAN and notice a decided improvement during the year."

Mr. Geo. Cormack, Whitby, Ont., writes: "Your special number of the CANADA LUMBERMAN came duly to hand. I might say it does justice to the trade, and is worthy of the highest praise, and I trust that your circulation will ever be increasing."

Hickory promises to play an important part in the manufacture of bicycles in the way of handle-bars of 1897.

As indicating the wide range of the export lumber trade of New York, for the week ending October 27th shipments were made to the following points: Antwerp, Brazil, Argentine Republic, British West Indies, Bristol, British Guiana, Cuba, Danish West Indies, Dutch West Indies, Glasgow, Havre, Hull, Hayti, Liverpool, London, Port Rico, Santo Domingo, Southampton, Venezuela, Dunedin and Mexico.