

Chicago Lumber.

It becomes apparent as the season advances the lumber merchants at leading points are not, as the phrase goes, climbing over each other in their anxiety to secure stock for their yards. There have been some heavy purchases made, it is true, but when it is possible to get at the bottom of these transactions it is usually discovered that they were made on a basis somewhat more favorable to the buyers than the current prices for bulk lumber at the market. Trades have been heard of in which large blocks of stock have changed hands in the log at fully \$1 below the figures which were paid for the same kind of lumber a year ago. Those who are buying heavily are probably getting an average on their purchase of somewhere about this sum below the 1887 prices. This theory of the situation is measurably confirmed by the reported weakness of the great bulk supply point for the east—the Saginaw Valley—where all good stock is from \$1 to \$2 off from the opening prices. Some of the shrewdest jobbers and most careful observers of the conditions of the trade are convinced that they can supply themselves with about all the lumber they can find sale for at figures that will give them a full dollar difference in their profit accounts if they succeed in making a selling average equal to last year. While there is some doubt as to the latter point, the situation is not hopeless in this respect. Lumber is weak at distributing points, but a strong effort later in the season, after the heavy buying has been done, may enable operators to recover the little ground now lost.

THE FRIENDS OF FREE LUMBER.

In the congressional debate on the lumber schedule in the tariff bill, Messrs. Weaver, of Iowa, and Wilson, of Minnesota, made arguments favorable to free lumber, in which they expressed themselves as follows:

Mr. Weaver—Mr. Chairman, the venerable gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. Kelly] and the gentleman from Maine [Mr. Reed] cannot both be right. The gentleman from Pennsylvania appeals to the committee not to destroy the lumber industry of this country. How can it destroy this industry if the other contention of the gentleman be correct that the price of lumber is not increased by the tariff? The gentleman from Maine contends that the price of lumber will not be affected. Then I say what harm is there in placing lumber on the free list?

The gentleman from Maine took good care not to deny that the lumber interests are combined in a "trust" for the purpose of limiting the supply and controlling the prices of lumber. It is not only true—historically true, and I refer gentlemen to an article in the *North American Review*, by Mr. Lloyd, as far back as 1884, and to a recent work published by William C. Cook, of the New York bar; it is not only true that this lumber interest is engaged in a "trust" to limit the supply, and control the price, but it is also true that they control the local dealers, and require them to sell at a schedule price also.

And, sir, by reason of their further combination with the transportation monopolies, no man can engage in the lumber business without the consent of the Lumber Trust, and the transportation companies, which together constitute one of the most unconscionable trusts ever organized in this or any other country. It is organized for the purpose of plundering the people who are far removed from the great centers of lumber manufacture. I challenge the gentleman to deny before the American people that this lumber industry is engaged in a trust, the object of which is to absolutely determine who may, and who may not deal in lumber, to limit the production, and to control the price—a criminal organization at common law because in the nature of a conspiracy in restraint of trade.

Now, as an appeal has been made in behalf of these "trusts" by gentlemen on the other side of the House, I stand here and make my appeal in behalf of the people of the west who consume this lumber. Let this trust take its clutch from the throats of the people, and quit robbing the consumer. Let them pay some respect to other people's industries, which are just as sacred, and should be as inviolable as their own.

Now, I wish to call the attention of gentlemen to the fact that the law of 1883 also put railroad ties of wood on the free list. The railroads buy them ready hewn in Canada, made by cheap Canadian labor, ship them over here by the million, and thus they obtain cheap ties for their roads. But they are unwilling to treat the people with equal fairness. The same law puts the lumber which my constituents must use in constructing their houses, their granaries, and their barns on the dutiable list at the rate of from \$2 to \$3 per thousand feet. This is an unmitigated shame.

It is a plain discrimination in favor of the railroads and against the farmers and builders. This bill, sir, in a broad and catholic spirit, treats the monopolies and people exactly alike. It puts the lumber of the poor man upon the free list and at the same time it leaves the railroad tie on that list also.

Mr. Wilson, of Minnesota—Will my friend permit a suggestion? The gentleman from Maine made a point which seemed difficult to answer, but if any one can answer it the gentleman from Iowa can. He said that if this duty were taken off, the lumbermen of Canada, who are not one-fifth as wealthy as ours, would overwhelm us and run us out of the market. How can you answer that?

Mr. Weaver—That overwhelms me. Ask me an easy one. I tremble for my feeble country and her infant industries. Why try to answer such an argument? It is a mere chimerica of the brain and wholly absurd. It answers itself.

Mr. Wilson—But I do not wish, Mr. Chairman, to be interrupted.

Allow me to say, sir, in this matter that the property invested in the lumber interest equally in my friend's district and in my locality within the last fifteen years has risen in value to an extent I am sure of not less than 300 to 500 per cent., whereas the property of the agricultural community, who are compelled to pay \$2 a thousand feet to support and enrich this lumber interest, has not risen 1 per cent.

These are the facts for our consideration. And yet this tariff law compels the agriculturists, men who purchase from the lumbermen, to pay a heavy tribute to them; and I repeat that within the last fifteen years this agricultural property has not risen 1 per cent. to match the increase of 300 to 500 per cent. which this protection has afforded to the lumbermen. It is time that this condition of things was brought to an end. It is time that we stopped making these poor men support the millionaires. To keep up any longer this state of things is simply to legalize injustice, and although some of my best friends in the world are manufacturers of lumber I cannot vote to sustain this condition of things.

From remarks of Mr. Outhwaite, of Ohio. Take the state of Maine; total value of sawed lumber, \$7,933,868; total value of materials \$4,951,957; and this estimate of material is, of course, at the high price that the manufacturers adopt as their estimate. Take the one sum from the other and you have remaining \$2,981,911. From this subtract the amount of wages paid and divide the remainder by the capital, and it gives you 28½ per cent. on the capital invested. Take the number of employees engaged in that business, and divide that into the total wages paid, and you get as the wages paid to a lumberman during one year \$170. In other words, Mr. Chairman, a man working during the year in this business in the State of Maine gets for his subsistence \$170, while the capitalist upon every \$1,000 invested gets a return of \$285. Is not that a spectacle to show how protection benefits the laborer?

From the same page let us read the figures of the State of Michigan. The amount of wages paid there, as shown by a similar calculation, is in the lumber business \$305 per year, the percentage upon capital invested is 33.7. In other words, the laborer during the year gets \$305, while the capitalist upon each \$1,000 invested gets \$337, or \$32 more than the other laborer receives.

Mr. Reed—That portion of our lumber which is not produced in the United States is obtained solely from Canada. In the United States twenty-four thousand million feet of lumber are cut; the proportion imported from Canada is only about 2½ per cent. and it would be very difficult to make it 10 per cent., under the most favorable circumstances. Now, I do not expect to effect many of the members on the other side by the consideration I am about to submit; but I do say to them that if they were business men, with business education, they would see at once from these figures that there is no possibility of lessening the cost of lumber and material for houses by letting in Canada lumber. The sole effect of it will be that there will be just so much added to the price of Canada lumber, just so much added to the price of Canada "limits." This bill does not touch that; and the result will be that whatever amount of money may by reason of this bill fail to go into the treasury of the United States will go into the pockets either of Canadian subjects or of American subjects who have had the wisdom to purchase lands in Canada—except on the Pacific coast, where, by competition with Chinese labor, it is quite possible some damage may be done to the American industry.

SAWDUST TURNING INTO SOIL.

Did any of *The Timberman* readers ever make a study of sawdust turning into soil? Doubtless many have, in some measure, given the idea a passing thought, but have not watched the action of nature in resolving back again into its original elements the capital she had lent out over a thousand years ago, to build up the stock in trade of a pine tree. The study is one of engrossing interest, and its results are well worthy of a brief notice in these columns. Twenty-five years ago, East Saginaw, Mich., was a scattering hamlet, built here and there among and along the edges of swamps and bayous,

bordering the Saginaw river. The sawdust and debris of the mills were used to fill up these inequalities, more for the purpose of getting rid of the annoying accumulations, than for any well defined knowledge of the value of such material, or its possible use as a future soil. From year to year the work went on. The swamps and bayous were filled up, and soil was spread on top of the sawdust of variable thicknesses, from sixteen inches to two feet. Strange, as it may seem, there was no settling of the ground, and heavy buildings were erected upon the soil thus made. These buildings are the best in the city, and show no cracked walls. Sewers are dug through what was formerly a bed of sawdust, and while traces of the original material can yet be found, still there is a clear evidence of the transformation process going on, beheld in each shovel of matter thrown out. It would be difficult to fully and clearly explain this process. It looks as though the exudations rising up from beneath the over-lying debris are continually acting as distilling elements, by which the granules of sawdust gather to themselves earth incrustations, and finally become a homogeneous conglomeration of original soil without undergoing the action of decomposition. This hypothesis may not be any clearer than mud, but it is certain that one of the finest and most substantial cities in Michigan, rests secured today on a bed of sawdust, which latter has resolved itself back into its original elements within a quarter of a century. Can any one account for this?—*Chicago Timberman*.

MIDLAND'S NEW PLANING MILL.

At the head of our beautiful bay, says the *Midland Free Press*, stands the most complete and best arranged planing mill in the Dominion, being built after the style of A. S. Mariani's mill of Quincy, Ill., which is considered one of the best in the United States. Messrs. Paterson & Hall commenced to build on the 9th of April and will have their mill ready for work this week. The main building is 20x54 ft. stone foundation, sides and roof covered with iron and practically fireproof. The engine house 30x32 ft. is built of stone and covered with metallic roofing. Adjoining the engine house is a shaving vault also of brick and stone, capable of holding three days' shavings, and in case of fire can, by pipes from the boiler, be instantly filled with live steam, one of the most effective agents to extinguish fire. The machinery consists of a double cylinder Lightning Matcher, capacity from twenty to thirty thousand a day. One No. 0 Sticker, capacity 10,000 lineal feet per day. One 26 inch Double Surfacier capacity; 40,000 feet. One Re-Sawer, and one Gang Rip, capacity 20,000 feet. The Re-Sawer was manufactured by an American firm, and the rest of the machinery is of Canadian production. To each machine is attached an automatic indicator which measures the lumber as it passes through. The boiler is made of steel 54 inches by 12 feet and 54-horse power. The engine is 12 x 20 cylinder, slide valve, and about 45-horse power. Engine and boiler were manufactured at the Toronto Engine Works. The shafting, with patent adjustable hangers, is all under the floor as a precaution against accident, as it does away with over-head belting; the pulleys are known as the Dodge wood-split pulleys and are considered the finest made. The mill will be kept clean by a large Sturtevant fan, which by means of exhaust pipes, carries all refuse direct from the machines to the shaving vault, from which it passes through a hopper bottom and is deposited convenient to the furnace door. The dock in connection with this mill is 200 feet long and 45 feet wide, and after the dredging is done vessels may load or unload at the end or either sides. A system of live rolls worked by a chain gear will run down the centre full length of dock, and convey the lumber to the planers as it is sorted. After passing through the machines the lumber is conveyed by rolls into cars on their own siding, or in case cars are not ready it is passed across the track to a large shed where it is protected from the weather for the time being. The object Messrs. Paterson & Hall have in view in erecting their mill here is to supply the Ontario market with every description of dressed lumber and moldings and their enterprise will prove a boon to the builders of Toronto and other large places, but more especially to those contractors who do not own planing mills. It is the intention of this firm to introduce into this country the long leaf yellow pine of Georgia, which makes a very handsome finish for buildings, and will be brought here by vessels from Chicago, but the principal part of the lumber handled will be cut in the mills of the Georgian Bay. It is expected that the mill will dress about 8,000,000 feet annually, but the proprietors will handle two or three million feet besides. The foreman of the mill, Mr. Wm. Pratt, has the reputation of being one of the best planing mill men in Canada, and was formerly employed by Withrow & Hillock, Toronto. The mill will be running shortly and as they have a stock of 1,000,000 feet of seasoned lumber on hand, parties ordering can rely upon prompt shipments.