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ADVERTISING RATES FURNISHED ON APPLICATION

THE OUTLOOK FOR LUMBERMEN IN ONTARIO.

Now that the Ontario Government has passed the restrictive legislation asked for by the lumbermen, in almost the exact terms of their request, and placed the saw mill owners of the Georgian Bay on a footing of equality with Michigan owners of Canadian stumpage, it remains to be seen what the immediate future of the lumber trade will be. The action taken of preventing the export of logs cut from Crown lands, whether the license was held by an American or a Canadian, was one which could not well have been avoided; it would have been an acknowledgement of utter helplessness to have permitted Americans to come here, cut down our forests, raft the logs to their mills in the United States free of export duty, while our own mills were closed down, our workmen idle, and the demand lost for all the subsidiary work and supplies required in running a saw mill.

We have never yet heard Canadian lumbermen say that they were afraid of any fair competition; but to quote the words of the lumbermen when before the government on the 10th of December last, "under present conditions of free logs for export and a duty of \$2.00 per thousand feet, sawing in the Georgian Bay for the American market could not be continued; the business of sawing lumber would, of necessity, be transferred to Michigan." This state of things would have been established by the action of the Dingley bill. That famous measure, which became the law of the United States on the 24th of July, 1897, has been a great disappointment to many of its promoters. When President McKinley was elected in November, 1896, a determined effort was made to boom the lumber business, and for two or three weeks great activity prevailed, especially at Michigan mills on the lake shore, shipping out lumber to wholesale centres; but the extraneous demand soon collapsed, and the same dreary listless condition of trade came back again.

A large trade like that of selling forest products has so many ramifications and is subject to so many different forces, near and remote, that the mere passing of a tariff bill is often a small factor in determining the price. Take, for example, the Wilson bill, which was passed in 1894 and gave Canadian lumber free entry into the United States; it was naturally supposed that it would be a great boon to Canadian producers; whereas

in the years immediately following, lumber, even with the benefit of free entry into that country, was sold lower than it had been at any time for nearly twenty years. The international problem of the lumber and log trade is not so difficult a matter after all. It will be remembered that an agreement was reached between Sir John Macdonald and Mr. Blaine in 1890, that in consideration of the American government reducing their duty on lumber to \$1 per thousand feet, Canada would abolish her export duty on logs. This was done by the McKinley bill in the United States and by order-in-council for Canada, and the state of things continued until 1894, when the American government placed lumber and most forest products on their free list.

When Mr. McKinley was elected President, with his high tariff policy, the lumbermen of the United States lost no time in demanding that the old duty on lumber should be restored; this was accomplished by the Dingley bill last summer, and no Canadian has offered an objection, considering it entirely a matter to be dealt with by the United States. But meantime affairs in Michigan had changed; a number of mill owners had cut out their holdings of pine, had purchased standing timber in Canada, and were floating over large quantities of logs to supply their mills. They were naturally afraid that now a duty had been again imposed on lumber, the Dominion government would revert to their old policy of placing an export duty on logs to even up matters; so with that astuteness for which they are famous, they sought to outwit their slow-moving Canadian neighbors, and make it impossible for them to again place an export duty on logs, by adding to the duty on lumber the amount of whatever export duty might be imposed by the Dominion government. This was intended to work beautifully, and place the remaining white pine in the Georgian Bay district entirely at their disposal. Like a great many more people, however, who are too clever, they have been caught in their own trap, and after this season's logs are disposed of, they will either have to stop cutting or move their mills over to the Canadian side.

The policy of the Ontario government by which the export of logs will be stopped has the approval of a large majority of the manufacturers, both of pine and hardwood. What the effect may be on future prices it is, of course, difficult to foretell; meantime common lumber and mill culls of white pine have already advanced sufficient to pay the duty and give Canadian sellers nearly as high a price as could be obtained last spring. Good lumber can always find a market either abroad or in the United States, where the duty on high grades is of little consequence. Hardwood is to-day a better price and in better demand than it has been for years.

It may be said further, that anything that will help to curtail the undue haste with which our forests were being cut down of late years, and give the younger growth a chance to mature, will be of permanent benefit to the province. We have still a large area of untouched white pine, mixed with hardwoods, which we need be in no hurry to cut; it will all be wanted and at a good price.

In conversation with lumbermen generally, we find them quite satisfied with the recent legis-

lation, and not at all disposed to make any overtures to their confreres in the United States, but rather to meet hostile legislation by what is necessary to protect their own interests. We may therefore look forward with some complaisance to what the future has in store for us, feeling certain that the ownership of forests on this continent is a position of advantage which we occupy and should seek carefully to retain.

DEVELOPMENT OF OUR EXPORT TRADE.

Lumbermen in all parts of the Dominion are encouraged by the prospects for foreign trade. Greater attention is now directed to the wood products of Canada than ever before. This is in a measure due to the action of the Dominion government in sending special trade commissioners to foreign countries to report upon the possibilities of finding a market for our goods. These commissioners, almost without an exception, have reported that they found a general disposition in favor of dealing with Canada, and that it would require only persistent effort on the part of our manufacturers to capture a fair share of the trade. The Government and its agents, the commissioners, having fulfilled their duty, it remains for the manufacturers to profit by the advice which has been given.

Are the lumber manufacturers of this country exerting their utmost efforts to develop the foreign trade? When we say "foreign trade," we do not include the United States, which though our nearest market, is yet one of the most unsatisfactory, owing to frequently recurring tariff disturbances.

Some might point to the fact that our foreign trade is increasing annually as an evidence that no opportunities are being neglected. But it must also be said that foreign buyers have met the manufacturers more than half way. Were it not for the desire on the part of foreign houses to secure Canadian lumber, we believe we are within the limit of truth in saying that the volume of our trade in this direction would be of smaller proportions. No united effort on the part of lumbermen has been made to secure accurate information regarding the requirements of many of the markets, and to place this information in the hands of the trade generally. The particulars furnished by commercial agents are necessarily lacking in details, and steps should be taken by the manufacturers themselves to supplement them.

The sending of a representative to foreign countries to study the markets and negotiate for shipments would probably entail an expenditure greater than many of our manufacturers would feel disposed to risk. More especially would this apply to our hardwood manufacturers. A proposition looking towards some united effort ought, therefore, to be considered.

Such a step was discussed at a recent meeting of the Furniture Manufacturers' Association of Ontario. Some of the members pointed out that they had already more orders for furniture from Great Britain than could be turned out in their factories, and a committee was appointed to deal with the matter. It is probable that a large company will be formed to control the export furniture trade, and that a representative will be sent to England to promote its interests. Could not the lumbermen, with advantage, copy the example of the furniture men in this matter?