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By A. G. MORTIMER.

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THE OPENING SEASON

If any value is to be placed on indications, an early and vigorous opening of the lumber trade in lumber is one of the things that may fairly be expected of the near future. We find business starting up on every hand. Orders are beginning to flow in to the distributing markets, and these are but the precursors of the business to result from the flood of inquiries which wholesale lumber merchants have been getting for weeks back. Everywhere there is an anxiety to know about stocks and values—to feel the pulse of trade, and to measure, as far as it can be done, the resources of the country in the way of present supplies. The strong feeling among holders, and the manifest rising tendency of values, contribute to produce a feeling of anxiety among those who are or must be buyers, and to hasten the placing of orders. The situation has all the buoyancy and strength which comes with an advancing market, and whole-ale merchants have all the cheerfulness which comes from such conditions.

In the outlook now spread out to the view of the lumber trades there is one feature that is frequently spoken of, always with more or less apprehension—the possibility of labor disturbances. The present strike along the docks in New York is pointed at as the probable beginning of a disturbance likely to extend into various lines of industry, and by reason of that possibility, forming an element of uncertainty that is necessarily disturbing and annoying. All calculations must be made with this possibility of labor troubles in view, and it must therefore prove a factor, whether it turns out only a bugbear or not. No one will venture an undertaking without regarding it, and without as carefully restricting his enterprise as to avoid, as far as may be, the evil consequences of such disturbances if they come. To plan otherwise than this would be incautious and even dangerous in the extreme, and would be without justification in a management ordinarily careful.

It is not improper to consider, however whether the conditions actually existing may not be such as to warrant a hope, at least of a practical escape from any such upheaval of the labor element as occurred last year. Experience seems to show that strikes are less apt to occur when labor is generally employed than when there is a large contingent of idlers. If this be true, as a principle, there is some encouragement to be got from the fact that labor is pretty likely to have plenty to do during the present season and to that extent may escape the temptation to mischief which is always present when idleness abounds. Then the rate of wages is likely to be fair, and should be satisfactory. That it will be satisfactory, unfortunately does not necessarily follow. But this fact that men are averaging good pay, and stand in no peril of starvation, or of any hardship from insufficient means, will have some influence in keeping them from strikes, which many are beginning to learn are more costly to the working men than to their employers. If it were not for the labor unions, for the demagogues that control them, and for the principle they have established of ordering great strikes for merely revengeful and retaliatory ends, it might be safe to predict comparative immunity from labor uprisings during the present year. But these unlucky facts stand boldly out in the prospect, and make the one great blot on the fair picture that would otherwise present itself.

But even with this possibility of a whirl with the trades unions to interfere with the perfect hopefulness of the outlook,

the expectation of the business man, and especially the lumberman, is justifiably of a busy and profitable season. It will not do to scan too carefully all the dark elements in the problem, and ignore all the bright ones. The chances that the wrong will not come uppermost are at least even, so that in discounting the future half the probability must be given to the other side. The unexampled health of the country in a business way must be given its due weight, and it is not to be forgotten that in especial the lumber business is in a condition of prosperity that has but few parallels in its history. It is to be remembered that there is in first and second hands but a limited supply of stock, and that among retail holders the supplies are proportionately even lighter. It cannot be therefore, but that every foot of dry lumber that is now in pile in the northwest, whether at mill points or in distributing yards, will be required to meet the actual consumptive demand of the spring and early summer. Such stock possesses for this very reason an intrinsic value that should be recognized and appreciated by every holder. Generally it is, and it is this fact that makes the present market so strong, and the rising tendency of prices so pronounced. If the trade does not take advantage of the present conditions, it will make the greatest mistake possible one which the annals of the business have never recorded, and which it is to be hoped there will never be the necessity of placing therein.—*Chicago Lumberman.*

FOREST RESOURCES OF THE NATION.

The following circular issued by the Chicago Lumberman's Exchange and approved by the Lumber Manufacturers' association of the northwest, has been sent out:

It is desired to enlist your sympathy and assistance in an endeavor to obtain an inventory of the forest resources of the nation. It is a work which can properly be accomplished only by the Forestry Division of the Bureau of Agriculture, and we learn from reliable sources that the amount allotted to that Division from the annual appropriation to the Bureau, is utterly inadequate to accomplish any useful purpose. It is desired that the Division of Forestry should place men in the various states, as rapidly as circumstances will permit, with instructions to ascertain: 1st. The amount of the various kinds of standing timber, classified. 2d. The extent of the improved farming land—with such other useful information as may suggest itself to the Chief of Division.

And why is it desirable that this information should be obtained?

As a nation we are scarcely more than 100 years old, and yet in that time the forests of Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, New York and Pennsylvania have parted entirely with the vast supplies of white pine which once covered their forests, and their good oak is also gone. In these states only hemlock, spruce and hardwood, mainly of second growth, and of a vastly inferior grade as compared with the original timber growth, is to be found. Michigan which but 50 years ago was estimated to contain 150,000,000,000 (one hundred and fifty billion feet), is set down in the census report for 1880 at but 32,000,000,000 feet, while the annual manufacture equals 5,000,000,000 feet. Wisconsin in the same time has been reduced from an original supply fully equal to Michigan, to an estimate of 44,000,000,000 feet in 1880. Minnesota with an original growth of perhaps 30,000,000,000 feet, was in 1880 estimated at but 11,000,000,000 remaining.

These three last named states are supplying lumber at the rate of not far from 10,000,000,000 per year, and if the census estimates were reasonably correct, the year 1890 should show an almost entire extinction of the white pine supply of the northwest.

While perhaps the estimates were far too low, the poorer grade of the supply of each succeeding year is speaking as no figures can do of the fact that the pine supply of the northwest is drawing uncomfortably nigh to a period of utter exhaustion. Of oak, which for many years was a staple production of Michigan, it may truthfully be said that it has disappeared, for a while a large amount of inferior timber suited only for saw logs may yet remain, the seeker after staves and square timber for ship building is compelled to look to other and more remote regions.

The vast timber resources of states further south, as Ohio and Indiana, have been covered over until little is to be found except that which only a few years ago was rejected as of no value. With an average consumption demand equaling 500 feet per capita for the 100,000,000 people of the United States require 30,000,000,000 feet per year of the sawed products of the forests, in addition to their fire wood.

How long the now extensive forests of the south can stand the strain, which (with a smaller population) has so nearly exhausted the once supposed inexhaustible forests of the north is an interesting problem.

Our Canadian neighbors who have been hitherto thought the possessors of unlimited forests of pine have already taken the alarm, and ascertaining that in eight years the timber trade of Montreal had increased from 3,500,000 feet in 1878, to over 100,000,000 feet in 1886, now propose to increase the export duty upon the manufactured product, in order to conserve and protect their forests from speedy extinction. Under these circumstances, is it not for the interest and advantage of every citizen of the United States, be he farmer, merchant, professional man or laborer, that a reliable inventory of the present and still remaining forests resources of the country should be speedily undertaken, in order that with an intelligent appreciation of the facts waste may be prevented and the commercial, agricultural and manufacturing interests of the nation, may, to the fullest extent be benefitted.

It is firmly believed that when the importance of the subject shall be appreciated by our legislators, there will be no delay in providing the bureau of forestry of the United States with ample means for inventuring the timber resources. To this end your influence and vote is requested.

Importance of Thin-Blade Saws.

The Germans use at the present day among their furniture-makers, carpenters and joiners, thirteen different varieties of saws, each one of which has its own peculiar size of the tooth, as well as a different relation of teeth to each other. How important the thin saw-blade is, not only as a means to save power, but also as a means to save wood, can be seen from the following: A log of walnut, four meters long and one meter in diameter, cut into twenty pieces the new horizontal saw frame, saves thirty millimeters of wood when compared with the cutting of the old-fashioned vertical saw. This is equal to a profit of \$9 to \$12. For Germany, where annually 100,000 cubic meters of this wood is used in various industries, this would represent a saving of \$37,500 to \$50,000.

John W. Perry, Lumberman, Coles Island, has assigned.