



I IMAGINE that I am not the only individual who has more than once since the opening of the new year asked himself the question: "What is the meaning of the long list of business failures we see chronicled week by week in the newspapers? Does it mean that, instead of experiencing improved conditions, as many have told us we shall, things are going from bad to worse?" After having revolved this question in my mind for a month or more without being able to arrive at a satisfactory solution, I fired it without warning at the manager of one of our leading banks, whom I chanced the other day to meet. His answer was reassuring, and therefore I have thought it advisable to quote it here. He said, "I think this batch of failures is the last we shall see for some time to come. It is, I think, the wind-up of that class of people who were caught without sufficient capital in the recent commercial depression. Without the means to weather the storm, they have one after another gone to the wall. I think, as I have said, that we are now seeing the last of them. So far as my observation goes, I am led to believe that the business situation is undoubtedly improving, and those who have managed to pull through the gale may now expect smoother sailing." So mote it be.

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Slow trade conditions, such have prevailed in the lumber business during the past year or two, if of no other advantage, certainly cause men to think. I have recently been wondering what is to be the future of white pine in Ontario, and must confess to being somewhat puzzled on the subject. While talking along this line a few days ago, Mr. J. H. Eyer, lumber merchant, of Toronto, remarked to me: "It appears to me that white pine, which was some years ago the rich man's lumber, is now the poor man's lumber. What I mean by this is, that hardwoods are to some extent replacing white pine in the construction of many of our best buildings. And as to prices, I would not be surprised if a further decline should take place, as I do not believe we have struck rock bottom yet. Why, Michigan is full of lumber, while at Duluth I hear there are three hundred million feet. But we are becoming quite familiar with hard times, and are learning to regulate our expenses accordingly." I do not hold quite as pessimistic a view of white pine prospects as Mr. Eyer, but nevertheless, it certainly would seem that when prices for pine reached the point where a living profit was made, tariff changes, slow building operations, keen competition, or some other drawback, prevented the possibility of any further advance.

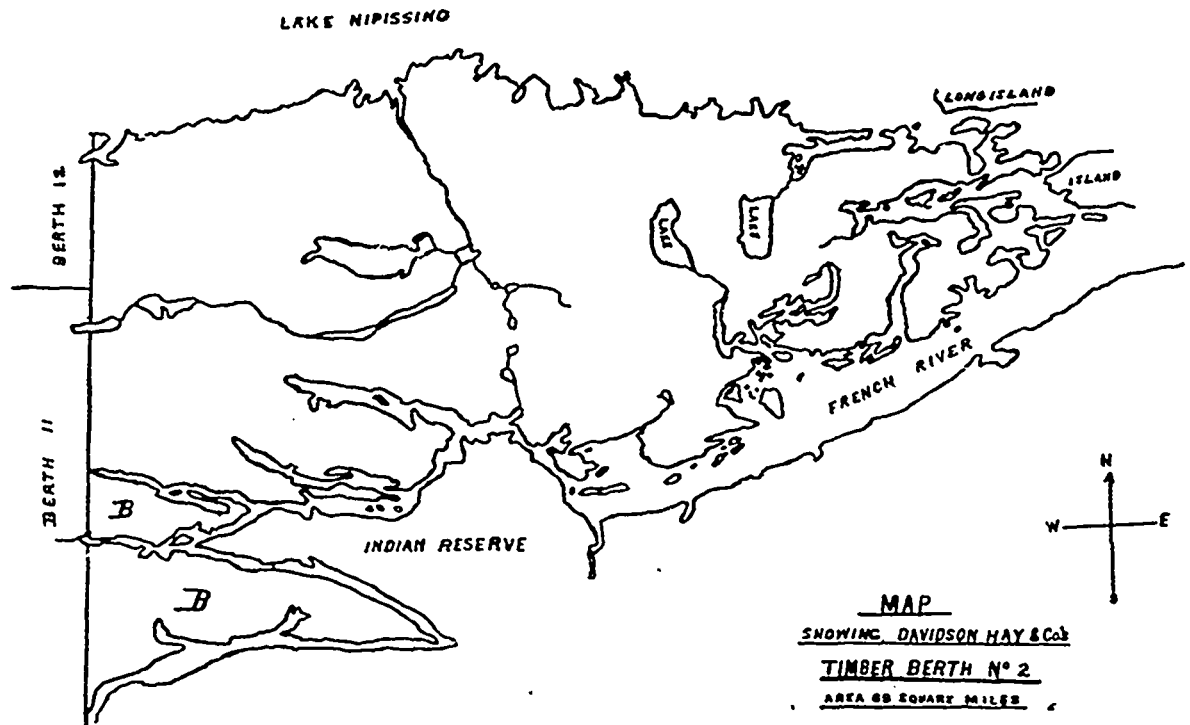
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Messrs. Clark Bros., of Digby, N. S., are extensive lumber exporters, one of their markets being in Cuba. When asked what effect the war had upon trade in that country, one of the firm said: "So far as we are concerned, we find very little difference as yet on lumber in a direct way.

The market is uncertain, and we make it a point to be sure of our bearings before we start. But we are finding a difference in the way freights are affected. It is becoming hard to pick up a profitable return freight. We have a letter now, six days old, from our captain in port, in which he says he can see the fields of cane burning as he looks from his vessel. This, of course, is taking some of the profits off the business, and the end is not yet. We also ship largely to the West Indies, but are working into the South American markets. We have of late years shipped quite extensively to Argentine, and will also this season. A great deal depends upon how matters in Cuba will end."

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As a rule, things in this world even themselves up pretty fairly, if they are given time enough in which to do it. A case in point is the present condition and prospects of the shingle trade. For several years things went from bad to worse with the shingle manufacturers, until finally the point was reached when everybody admitted that the bottom had completely fallen out of the busi-



ness. Nobody seemed to want shingles no matter what the price at which they were offered, and just here let me remark that in not a few cases they were offered at next to nothing. The British Columbia shingles found their way into eastern Ontario, and added greatly to the embarrassment of the local manufacturers. Then the time came when prices got so low that shingles could not be sold here at a profit. As a result of this condition of affairs the local manufacturer "shut up shop," and his British Columbia competitor greatly reduced his output. What shingles were required were supplied from stocks on hand. These have now been reduced by the local and foreign demand to such a point as to force prices upwards, and once more the shingle manufacturer feels that he has something to live for other than to pay interest on idle plant.

The boiler in Wm. Curtis' saw mill near Waterdown, Ont., exploded recently, causing considerable damage to property, and fatal injuries to Thomas Smiley. The boiler had been guaranteed to carry 120 pounds of steam, but when the explosion occurred the pressure is said to have been only 75 pounds. The mill was badly wrecked.

DAVIDSON, HAY & CO'S TIMBER SALE.

UPWARDS of fifty persons were present at Suckling & Co.'s warerooms in Toronto on the 23rd ultimo, when the entire timber limits and saw mill property of Messrs. Davidson, Hay & Co. were offered for sale by auction. Among these were noticed several prominent lumbermen who might reasonably be considered probable buyers. The property offered consisted of timber berth No. 2, containing 68 square miles of timber limits, on Lake Nipissing and French river, the location of which may be clearly seen by the accompanying map, a steam saw mill, an electric light plant, about 3,000 white and red pine saw logs, steamers, boom chains and boom timber, bush plant, etc.

The timber berth was divided into two sections, A and B, the latter being first offered. It contained 7½ square miles, or 4,710 acres, of virgin pine. The bidding was started at \$10,000, and after some slight competition finally reached \$27,000. This figure was considerably below the reserve bid, consequently the limit was withdrawn.

Section A was then offered. It contained 60½ square miles, and is heavily timbered with pine, hardwood and pulp wood. An estimate of the pulp wood thereon places the amount at 105,000 cords. For this limit, although admittedly a valuable one, no one could be induced to make an offer, and it became apparent that few anxious purchasers were present.

The balance of the property was placed in the market with the same result, no bids being received, and the sale was foreclosed without a purchaser being found for any of the property.

The result of the sale would seem to evidence an indisposition on the part of lumbermen to invest in timber limits at the present time. This may be attributable to the unsatisfactory condition of the lumber trade for the past few years; or it may be that the approach of a general election and the possibility of a change of government is having its effect.

Mr. E. C. Grant, of the Ottawa Lumber Co., was a guest of the Tonawanda Lumber Co. at the annual meeting of the Wholesalers' Association of the United States, which was held recently at Saginaw, Mich.