

and base-boards on side walls, and generally wrenching the whole interior of the house out of shape. If the lower joists shrink a half inch, the partitions and the centre of the next floor drop to meet the shrinkage; then if the joists in the second floor shrink in the same proportion, the displacement in the second floor will be something very disagreeable, as many a householder has experienced. Joists, well piled, and held over for a year, shrink but very little afterwards, and their value during the year will have increased much more than the interest on their first cost and the cost of piling and extra handling. The reputation of many a good builder has been ruined because of his being obliged to make use of unseasoned materials. A few dollars judiciously invested in a good assortment of lumber will always return to the investor a solid remuneration for his outlay.

Fences.

THE picket fence is rapidly passing away so far as cities and towns are concerned, as iron and stone and bricks, in one shape or another, have almost superseded it. In village or country, however, the wooden fence still holds its own, and the house-builder in these places has frequently to wrestle with the wooden fence post and the multi-formed picket. Much has been written as to the proper way to put a fence post in the ground so as to get the longest period of usefulness from it. Our experience is that a post inserted in the ground with its top end of growth down will last from 15 to 20 per cent. longer than if put into the ground with the butt down. There are good reasons for this, but it would take up too much space to give them; one reason, however, may answer for the others—timber and branches of trees all grow upwards out of the main body, and the grain of the wood is more open where the timber grew out; this being the case, the water can readily find its way into the timber by way of the open pores that stand out to the weather. If, on the other hand, these openings are turned mouths downwards, as would be the case if the post were set butt upwards, the water during a rainstorm would run off altogether, or remain on the surface of the post until evaporated by the heat of the sun. Fence posts out of which damp is kept will last many years longer than when exposed to the weather. Another thing about a picket fence that shortens its life very materially is the manner in which the lower end of the picket butts a water-table or ribbon piece. A picket should never butt anything below; the spaces between the pickets should be left open, so that water can get away and air circulate freely through every possible space. Notching the rails for the insertion of pickets is a bad practice, so also is boring holes in rails to receive round pickets. These methods increase the chances of water getting into the centre of the rails, thereby causing early rotting. Multi-form pickets, machine or hand-made, should be eschewed; they are in bad taste, weak, and offer more opportunities for decay than do plain pickets. Indeed, no wooden fence made conforms to good taste in a greater degree than one formed with plain flat pickets with pointed tops; the next best in order being a square picket fence, with the tops of pickets covered with a toad-back rail and moulding. In all cases of picket fences, it is better to nail the waist-band and base-board on to the face of the pickets, leaving an opening between the pickets, rail and base-board. When possible, the rails should be painted—at least one coat—before the pickets are nailed

in place. This will preserve the rail and picket at their junction from rapid decay.

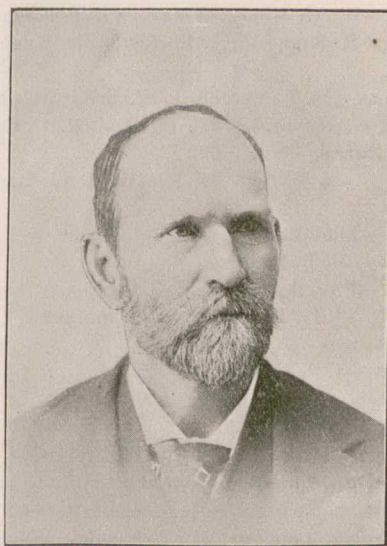
PROMINENT CANADIAN CONTRACTORS.

V.

MR. J. N. GIBB, of Wallaceburg, Ont., whose portrait appears on this page, is well known in Western Ontario as a successful public contractor. Mr. Gibb is a native Canadian, having been born in the County of Elgin in 1843. He has had a varied business experience, having been connected in his earlier years, with ranching, the lumber business, store-keeping, and gold mining.

In 1886 he entered the contracting business, for which he was well adapted, being possessed of a mechanical turn of mind, and having the ability to devise original methods of successfully carrying out difficult undertakings, a quality of the highest value to a contractor.

Mr. Gibb is the inventor and builder of several contracting appliances—one of which is a self-propelling



MR. J. N. GIBB.

pile driver, having two small paddle wheels which are worked by a bicycle gear from a driving shaft; another, a steam machine for cutting off piles at any depth below water; and a third, for boring and bolting timbers in any depth of water.

Among the important works completed by Mr. Gibb may be mentioned the Erie and Huron docks at Court-right, ferry slip at Sarnia (for which he likewise drew the plans), several steel bridges in the county of Kent, which are said to be the only bridges in Canada resting on steel pile foundations.

Mr. Gibb is at present engaged on the construction of a wharf 321 feet in length for the Bushnell Oil Co., at Sarnia, Ont. He is ever on the look-out for improvements, and is highly esteemed for his enterprise and probity of character.

The employees of the Gurney Foundry Company, Toronto, held their annual picnic to Oshawa on Saturday, the 10th inst., per steamer Garden City. On arriving at the wharf the excursionists took the electric cars for Prospect Park, about three miles from the lake shore. Complete arrangements had been made for refreshments, sports, etc., and an enjoyable time was spent. Mr. Edward Gurney, the president of the company, Mr. Carrick, manager, Mr. Alcock, secretary-treasurer, and Mr. Cromwell Gurney were on hand, and took an active interest in the events.