

FREE LUMBER THIS TIME.

THE UNITED STATES' TARIFF BILL FINALLY PASSED.—LUMBER ON THE FREE LIST.—CANADIAN AND AMERICAN OPINIONS OF THE CHANGED CONDITIONS.

AFTER many months of Senatorial fighting, in which all the arts of log-rolling known to American politicians, as to no one else, had been brought into operation, the Wilson Bill, or at least something that started out with that label on it, has become law. The bitterest warfare waged against the changes in the bill was that by the sugar trust, and this influence was potential. Outside of the object lesson taught, when that phase of the bill was being put through the house, the people of this country have had no particular interest in sugar. We are not uninterested, however, in a number of the changes that have been made, especially those bearing on the products of the farm, though with these the change has only been a reduction in duties. Lumber is an important addition to the free list. It was early in the contest placed on the free schedule, and though the opposition against the change was very determined in some sections, the general opinion prevailed that if the tariff bill went through at all, lumber would be free. This is now the case.

Southern lumbermen fought loyally in the interests of yellow pine, believing that the introduction of Canadian pine free into the States would affect the sale and prices of that growth of the southern states. Time will show how far these fears of our friends in Tennessee will be realized. A later, and in some respects, more vigorous opposition came from the planing mill men and box manufacturers in Michigan and the Eastern States, when it was resolved that dressed lumber, as well as sawed lumber, should go on the free list. Depending to considerable extent for supplies on the timber of Ontario, the lumber manufacturers of Michigan, Buffalo and Albany, for example, are afraid that they cannot compete with the Canadian lumber manufacturer. We have already intimated in these columns that free lumber would likely lead to the establishment of saw mills and box factories along our north shore by United States owners of Canadian limits. Already some of the saw mill men, to wit, J. W. Howry & Sons, William Peters, and Cutland, Savage & Co., have commenced to operate mills in that district, and now that they can send over the sawed lumber free, as they could before only the logs, no doubt others will commence the erection of mills in Ontario and adopt similar methods.

Business under any conditions is an evolution, and with all the enterprise of this new continent business men move cautiously. It does not seem improbable that the prediction of Mr. Geo. Bertram and other Canadian lumbermen that free lumber will give an unquestioned boom to the manufacture of lumber in this country will materialize, to a measurable extent, in fact. Enabled to place their mills within a stone's throw of the forest product, and with shipping facilities just about as complete for forwarding the manufactured article to its destination, as when in the rough log, it seems reasonable that shrewd business men will avail themselves of these advantages. This much we may accept as sure that if there is an expansion of the saw mill and planing mill business in Canada, as a result of free lumber, the change will take place, because, to use the business parlance of the day, there is money in it.

Already we have given in these columns opinions expressed by United States and Canadian lumbermen when anticipating free lumber. We here follow with various expressions of opinion from representatives of the trade in both countries now that de facto we have free lumber.

THE NEW TARIFF.

The tariff bill, as finally agreed upon by both branches of the United States Congress, and which has now become law, specifies the following free schedule as regards lumber.

Logs, and round timber.
Firewood, handle bolts, heading bolts, stave bolts, and shingle bolts, hop poles, fence posts, railroad ties, ship timbers, and ship planking, not specially provided for in this act.
Timber, hewn and sawed, and timber used for spars and in building wharves.
Timber squared or sided.
Sawed boards, plank, deals, and other lumber rough or dressed.

Hubs for wheels, posts, last blocks, wagon blocks, oar blocks, gun blocks, heading, and all like blocks or sticks, rough, hewn or sawed only.

Pine clapboards.
Spruce clapboards.
Lath.
Pickets and palings.
Shingles.
Staves of wood.

Woods, namely, cedar, lignumvitæ, lancewood, ebony, box, granadilla, mahogany, rosewood, satinwood, and all forms of cabinet woods, in the log, rough or hewn; bamboo and rattan unmanufactured; briar root or briar wood, and similar wood unmanufactured, or not further manufactured than cut into blocks suitable for the articles into which they are intended to be converted; bamboo, reeds, and sticks of partridge, hair wood, pimento, orange, myrtle, and other woods, not otherwise specially provided for in this act, in the rough, or not further manufactured than cut into lengths suitable for sticks for umbrellas, parasols, sun shades, whips or walking canes; and India malacca joints, not further manufactured than cut into suitable lengths for the manufactures into which they are intended to be converted.

The only exception applying to the foregoing schedule as upon the free list is provided for in paragraph 683, in these words: "Provided, that all the articles mentioned in paragraphs 672 to 683 inclusive," [that is, all of the above paragraphs except the last one] "when imported from any country which lays an export duty or imposes discriminating stumpage dues on any of them, shall be subject to the duties existing prior to the passage of this act." In other words, it may sweepingly be stated that the act as finally passed provides for free logs and all kinds of lumber in the ordinary sense, as well as all unmanufactured "cabinet woods" as described in the last paragraph, unless, as is not likely to happen, Canada should levy an export duty or stumpage dues on any of the items enumerated. In that case Canadian lumber would be subject to the provisions of the McKinley bill.

A CANADIAN MILL OWNER SPEAKS.

A representative of the LUMBERMAN talked with Mr. Campbell, of the Muskoka Mill and Lumber Co., a few days ago relative to the results that were likely to come to Canadian lumber interests, seeing that lumber had been made free in the United States tariff. "The change will certainly be a good one for Canada," said Mr. Campbell. "Our lumber interests in every way will be strengthened. As everyone, who has studied the question, is aware it has been next to impossible to do any business—more than a hand-to-mouth business—in lumber during the past year. Nothing else could have been expected, as United States lumbermen were not disposed to invest in either timber limits or lumber in Canada, not knowing what would be the issue of the tariff. Now that that question is settled lumber values in Canada will become firm. We are seeing how this is operating just since the bill has passed the House, as United States land lookers are now inspecting limits throughout the province and prices will stand about as they did two years ago." As large saw-millers themselves I was anxious to obtain Mr. Campbell's views of the likely effect of a change in the tariff on the saw mill and planing mill business in Canada, and my next query was in that direction. "It seems to me quite clear," replied Mr. Campbell, "that there will be a revival of saw mill interests in Ontario. In fact in anticipation of free lumber this has already taken place, and as you know, several United States lumbermen, who own limits in Canada, have already purchased saw mills in this country and will saw a certain portion of their product here. Other changes in this direction will likely follow. We have parties to-day negotiating for the purchase of our Muskoka mill. I apprehend that United States owners of Canadian limits will find it profitable, not only to saw their lumber here, as they now propose to do, but in any section where the shipping facilities are satisfactory, that they will also erect planing mills and box factories and ship dressed lumber into the markets of the eastern states. Our own saw mill men will, no doubt, find it advantageous to add planing mills to their saw mills." As to the effect of the change upon the exporting of logs to the United States, Mr. Campbell did not think that any noticeable change would take place in this direction immediately. A year later one would be able to speak in more positive terms on this point. "The spruce interests of the Dominion" continued Mr. Campbell, "will receive a considerable impetus from the change. As you know the duty on spruce lumber has been \$2.00, which at the way prices have

been running lately, has been practically a prohibitory tariff to anyone who desired to do trade with a profit. Our firm has confidence enough in the future development of spruce, in New Brunswick, to have become purchasers of about 300 miles of limits. I believe also that the British Columbia lumber interests will be greatly stimulated by free lumber, and we are to-day investing in limits in that province as an earnest of our belief. This gain there may not come immediately, for lumber matters in the Washington territory are terribly demoralized, but time will remove this trouble."

OPINIONS OF A WELL-KNOWN CANADIAN WHOLESALER.

"We are certainly hoping," said Mr. Donogh, Donogh & Oliver, Toronto, "that the result of free lumber will be that the lumber industry in Canada will show signs of revival. There is indeed much need for it, for the past year has been one of exceptional depression. I asked Mr. Donogh if he anticipated, that in addition to an expansion of business with the United States in sawed lumber, which is pretty generally taken for granted, that there would also be a development in the direction of an enlargement of our planing mills and box factories. "We are hoping that this will be the case," was Mr. Donogh's reply. "Of course it is hard yet to tell how anything will shape." "It is to be remembered," joined in Mr. Oliver, "that at this date the bill has not been actually signed by the president, and I am not so sure he will sign it." "However, taking it for granted that it will go through all right," continued Mr. Donogh, "we have reason to expect that there will be a considerable quantity of dressed lumber shipped from here to the States. It ought to pay our saw mill men to add to their equipment planing mills with the necessary sidings for a shipping business and send forward the dressed lumber direct into the markets of the eastern states. Time will tell all this. My disposition you see is to speak guardedly, for the depression has been severe enough to make it appear likely that a revival can hardly come all with a rush."

WILL NOT DO MILLS GOOD THIS YEAR.

Mr. Geo. Cormack, the well-known lumberman, of Whitby, Ont., says: "By the removal of the duty on lumber I think it will help the lumber industry of Canada and I also think it will have a tendency to stop the exportation of logs to the United States to a certain extent. I expect we will see mills running again that have been closed down and that it will induce Americans to erect new mills here in Canada, which has already been done by some. I also think it will lead to the erection of planing mills and box factories in connection with the mills, but I hardly think the Tonawanda and Michigan people would transfer their planing mills and box factories over into Canada, for the reason that there is no certainty how long the duty will remain off as there may be another change in another election. I do not think the removal of the duty will do us much good this year as it has hung fire so far that it is too late in the season to do much good, but it will help things for next year."

A CANADIAN VIEW.

A prominent Canadian lumberman when spoken to on the question a day or two after the passing of the tariff bill had been reported as an actuality said: "We in the business here have no fear as to the result of the change. There is no prospect of the Dominion Government putting an export duty on saw logs or any other products of the forest. What it really amounts to is that the Canadian lumbermen will get a free market for his logs and for his deals if he wants to do his own cutting."

A BOON TO CANADIAN LUMBERMEN.

John I. Davidson, ex-president of the Toronto Board of Trade, and who is largely interested in the lumbering industry, said: "Free lumber will be a boon to Canadian lumbermen, and should tend to the betterment of the lumbering industry in Canada. He hoped that the owners of timber limits in Ontario would cease exporting their logs when they could be sawn into lumber on the spot and then exported free of duty. Decidedly, he thought the slumbering lumbering industries of Canada should be awakened into full life. The restrictions were entirely removed, and there was nothing to betoken a retraction."