

OUTLOOK OF THE COMING HALF-YEAR

The *Timber Trades Journal* says:—The Board of Trade returns for June were not issued in time to be taken notice of in the present number of the *Timber Trades Journal*, but the expiration of the first six months of the current year, nevertheless, calls for a few remarks as to the aspects of the trade and the indications with which it begins the second half of the year, 1883.

We have already pointed out that the season has been full of contradictions, and we may add that the usual effects have not followed causes with that regular succession which generally enables experience to predict, with tolerable accuracy, how things are going to rule in the immediate future. Take our Liverpool report published last week as an example. With a continuance of moderation in the import trade we naturally look for an improved demand and firmer prices, especially when there is a tendency to rise in the rates of freight. But no, these local advantages appear to be of little or no account in Liverpool, for the report begins by stating that they have "not affected prices to any material degree." It claims some credit for an improvement in the price of spruce deals and birch timber, but the trade in Liverpool must be thankful for small mercies if it is satisfied to see the best sizes and qualities of St. John deals fetching no more at the public sales than £ 7s. 6d., while the highest price to be got for 3x9 did not exceed £7 5s. per Petersburg standard, or at least 5 per cent. below the public sale prices there twelve months ago, and they were understood at that time to be selling badly. It is also intimated that tonnage for the spruce deals ports was not so easily obtained as usual, yet the average price of the deals sold by Messrs. Mackay on the 22nd ult. was not more than £7 2s. 6d. Last year it was made to appear as if the supply of spruce were really falling off, as the shipments from the lower ports fell away considerably in comparison with those of 1881. But it seems to have been not for want of the goods out there so much as buyers on this side, or a paying market to send them to. For, instead of a diminished supply this year, which would be the case if the difficulty lay with the lumberers in getting out the usual quantity, it is seen that shipments up to date are far greater than they were then. In fact, the returns from Miramichi for spruce and pine have more than doubled upon last year at this time, the figures being, for 1883, up to 14th June, 28,364,696 feet super., against 1882, 13,015,096 feet, and it is doubtless the evidence of this fact which keeps down the price on this side. For who will speculate in a material which is already coming forward faster than it is likely to be wanted?

But the sales recorded in the Clyde in the same number present the trade under a far more favorable complexion. Some pine deals, all the way from Oconto, in Wisconsin, fetched, for best sizes—sold by Messrs. Edmiston & Mitchell, at Glasgow, on the 25th ult.—3s. 8d., and even 2s. 9d., per cubic foot, the last price being at the rate of nearly £31 per Petersburg standard; while 2nds, from the same locality, fetched 2s. 9d., or as much as £22 13s. 9d. per Petersburg standard; and 1st ends, 6 to 8 feet, did not go under £24 15s. Even 4th quality regulars went to nearly £10. Norwegian and other batters also fetched fairly remunerative prices, though, coming by way of Grangemouth, they had to pay larger proportionate freights, and this too in the face of a larger importation both at Glasgow and at Grangemouth.

At Greenock, however, things were less promising. Waney board timber at 1s. 10d. per foot cube is a shilling below prices that are not uncommon at Glasgow.

The object is to come at the prevailing tone of the trade in various localities in order to ascertain to which side, for better or for worse, the balance inclines. Now Cardiff has been complaining of dulness in the timber trade throughout the spring; but all at once it turned about and began to look at things in quite a different light, "merchants are clearing out their stocks with more rapidity, and some are again in the market for buying." Again, "the market both for mining timber and pit-prop shows a great deal more animation, and a smart

rise of two or three shillings per load has taken place." This statement is supplemented by an admission that the timber market had been "for some time in a depressed condition," and that the advance would "be welcomed by importers." There is no question of a better state of things now existing at Cardiff than the trading authorities have been previously able to recognise since the season began, and as Cardiff is a kind of local metropolis which gives the cue to an extensive district, a trade revival there reanimates the whole of the south coast of Wales from Newport to New F. ven. We may, therefore, assume that trade on the northern side of the Bristol Channel is in a much more satisfactory state than it has been for some months past.

Crossing over to see what is doing at the great emporiums of the east coast, we get at the following paragraph in our last week's Hull report: "This market is remarkable for its scarcity of Canadian birch, mahogany, and best Quebec pine, and, if holders can be found for these goods, the prices are very high."

And further on we are told that at West Hartlepool "a very rapid development of activity has been witnessed in this market since our last week's report. As about fifty ships had arrived in the interval this might mean more that a good deal of work was going on in discharging and landing their cargoes. But on this point we are not long left in doubt, for we have the following affirmative explanation: "As regards the demand, an active trade is doing from the ships discharging. Undoubtedly the stocks in the interior of the country are at a very low ebb, as from all the shipments large quantities are going away inland from the quayside." It is seldom that our correspondents commit themselves to circumstantial optimism. Their testimony may therefore be accepted without reservation when they boldly declare an improvement and give a substantial reason for it in the same paragraph. Nor are there wanting equally favorable conditions of the trade in Great Grimsby, which last year was thought to have imported more wood than was good for it in its attempts to contest with Hull for pre-eminence in trade of the Humber. Up to the end of May, Grimsby had not imported anything like half the quantity that it did last year. And what is the cry now? "We are surprised at the small amount of arrivals for the time of the year, and cannot think the weather has been the cause of no more ships coming to port, as we are well aware there is a good demand for all kinds of timber and yellow pine especially. . . . We hope to chronicle a greater amount of arrivals next week."

This representation of the state of trade in Grimsby requires no comment. When a port that was understood only a few weeks back to be overflowing still with its last year's supplies is anxiously looking for further arrivals (and some heavy ships had just been announced too) we need not ask any further questions as to the progress of business there. In the Tyne and the Wear also the reports are favorable, and the shortness of the supply in comparison of the importation of last year is spoken of in both as if there were already, or would shortly be, plenty of room for more.

The Scottish ports on the east coast, from Leith to Aberdeen, seem to be in no want of trade, and in no apprehension of supply exceeding the demand. Nor can we detect anywhere that continuance of dulness in the trade which was so marked in the early months of the year. On the contrary it appears in all directions that there is a considerable revival of business and that the retardation of the spring shipments abroad has had all the beneficial effects at home that we predicted for it.

So much has been said of the spiritless nature of the import trade, and the general dulness prevailing the country, that it seemed desirable to inquire a little more closely into the question and ascertain from recorded facts whether there were any grounds for expecting the latter part of the year to be more propitious for the trade than its beginning.

Nor has the result been unsatisfactory. Without a critical inquiry, from place to place, and giving undue importance to isolated circumstances, it has been considered sufficient to

take the prominent facts recorded by responsible representatives of the trade in some of our chief depots—whose statements are open to contradiction if they are colored with their own peculiar views, and do not fairly record the facts that are taking place in the trade of the port they are speaking of. Of these the reader can form his own judgment. But it seems absurd, in the face of the extracts we have here brought forward, to persist in believing that the timber trade is not in as fairly a thriving condition now as it has been at this time of the year for many seasons past. Whatever may have been the trade of the spring, that of the autumn is likely to restore its equilibrium. Let us hope also that it will render the year, as a whole, one to be remembered, as by no means among those that were unfavorable to this branch of trade, and that important action of the community who have invested their skill and their capital in it.

NEW BRUNSWICK.

The St. John, N. B., correspondent of the *Montreal Gazette* writes as follows:—The Crown lands are the principal source of local revenue which the province possesses, and their management is one of the most onerous tasks of the provincial executive. The usual war between large and small operators goes on, and there is the customary tendency toward waste of lumber on the part of temporary lessees. The late Government, for the purpose of breaking the power of the timber ring to some extent, sold licenses to cut for one year only, thus exposing the operator to competition every year. This regulation was kicked against vigorously by the larger number of operators, who protested that they would be prevented from making necessary improvements, such as the clearing out of streams for driving purposes, if they had no guarantee for more than a year's tenure. The Government remained firm, however, and no disastrous consequence followed the adoption of the short-lease rule. "The big men bought timber berths as usual, and the little men squeezed in between them and secured small areas. I am told by many small operators that the one year regulation has been beneficial to them in many ways. They say that the Jumbos of the business have been more gracious to them, more tolerant of them, and much more disposed to give them sub-contracts on fair terms when there was the possibility of their bidding on the land and operating upon it on their own account. The change of Government was effected, to some extent, by the influence of the lumber kings, and the new men were asked to display their gratitude to the McLeods, Gibsons, Snowballs, Kings and others, by selling ten-year leases of timber berths. The new regulations have just been published, and show an attempt to compromise between the demands of the conflicting interests. Two sets of licenses are: The first is for one year, with the right of renewal for the two following years, which is really a three-year license. The dodge of calling it a one-year license is merely a quibbling attempt to make believe that the one-year principle has not been wholly abandoned. All long-time licenses are practically on the same plan. That is, the holder pays every year, and abandons it when he ceases to find it profitable. After this substitution of the three-year for the one year licenses, which, it is fondly hoped, will not be too displeasing to the small-fry lumbermen; an attempt is made to keep the promise to the ear and break it to the sense in regard to the long licenses that were promised the big fish in reward for campaign services. Five year licenses are offered with the proviso that those who accept them must pay \$1.25 per thousand stumps instead of the eighty cents which holders of the shorter licenses are asked for. This is the largest official joke of the season, but the lumber kings will hardly smile at it or own it. I am safe in predicting that not one five year lease will be asked for or taken on the terms proposed. It is absurd on the face of it to offer such conditions as these to men of business. The Government organs graciously intimate that ten year leases may be offered, the stumpage to be placed at \$1.50, and the mileage reduced. Thus will the campaign promises be kept, after a fashion. If the Government can find anybody to pay \$1.50 per thousand as

stumpage, on condition of having a ten year lease, it will be perfectly justified in adopting the long lease-principle, but I do not believe any such men are to be found—that is, if the lands are sold according to custom, subject to the payment of an upset price of \$8 per square mile yearly. The hemlock bark policy of the new Surveyor General has proved so unsatisfactory that the Government organs are meanly laying the blame of its oppressive character on the scalers. The new regulations require payment of stumpage, in addition to the bark tax, on all the logs that are peeled, without regard to their fitness for sawing, and, as a very large percentage of the logs is perfectly useless for any purpose, the regulation is peculiarly oppressive. There has been, I know, a great deal of merchantable hemlock left in the woods to rot, after having been stripped of the bark, and the regulation was, no doubt, inspired by a desire to remedy this evil, but it should have discriminated between merchantable and useless logs. This is a great hemlock country, and an immense business is done in the shipping of bark and the manufacture of bark extract. The latter industry, though of recent origin, has developed into large proportions, and anything which should cripple it would be a provincial loss of no small magnitude. The Messrs. J. & J. Miller & Co., whose head offices are in London, and who have extract factories in Hungary and Quebec, have the most extensive works of this kind in New Brunswick, the chief of which is on the Miramichi, where they keep two or three small steamers almost constantly employed in towing bark scows to the factory and loads of extract to the railway station. They are genial, enterprising gentlemen, very popular with the large communities they afford so much employment to, and the Government must soon see the necessity of amending the regulations which interfere so much with their business. The true hemlock policy, in the opinion of those who have given the subject much thought is the placing of an export duty on the bark, so as to encourage its manufacture into extract or leather before exportation.

YOUNG'S POINT.

From Our Own Correspondent.

THE FASTEST TIME ON RECORD.—Thirty thousand logs belonging to Messrs. H. B. Rathbun & Son were brought from the head of Stony Lake to Young's Point in six days by the well-known foreman, Robert Horan, and from Mount Julien to Young's Point with thirty thousand ties with a hand capsin and fourteen men in three days. This is river driving extraordinary.

JULIUS'S LANDING MILL.—The saw mill lately burned down owned by Mr. Hull, of Lakefield, is, it is said, to be rebuilt this fall. Its destruction by fire was a great loss to the settlers in and around that section of Burleigh.

THE DRIVES.—There are no less than five large drives between here and Lakefield. That of Messrs. Rathbun & Son has been occupying the entire river from Lakefield to Rice Lake for the last three weeks, and very likely there will be some fun before they complete their entire lot of logs, as some of the drives behind them are determined to have their logs run to their respective mills without any more delay. One or two foremen having already made threats to run into them and get mixed up, and sort out at Harwood. The first to run to Lakefield is Mr. Chalmers' drive of logs, P. Cassidy, foreman, en route to Hilliard's mills. Ulyott & Saddle have two large drives, Jno. Barr and F. Ball, foremen, en route to Harwood mills. Messrs. R. & G. Strickland also have a drive en route to Lakefield mills. There are four more drives behind those enumerated to pass through here, which will complete the season's work. It is to be hoped all will be run over here before the A. C. A. begin their camp in August.

A Good Example.

The *Quebec Chronicle* says:—It is with pleasure we notice that the Ontario Government, following the example of several States in the Union, and perhaps quickened to action by the steps taken by the Quebec Ministry, has turned its attention to the important subject of Forestry so far as that science relates to the conservation and propagation of trees,