TRADE AND COMMERCE

disadvantage, none of them are so suitable as conifers for building and structural purposes. The chief factors tending to limit the use of native timber for building purposes in a country where popular sentiment is greatly in favour of the domestic product, are the great weight of nearly all Australian timbers, the expense and difficulty of securing them and handling them in long lengths and large sizes, the the tendency of all Australian woods to warp and check seriously, the difficulty of working Australian hardwoods as compared with imported soft woods and the large number of species and the extremely mixed character of the forests.

The large number of species in the forest, each requiring different seasoning treatment, has rendered it impossible for the small country mills, which produce almost all the domestic lumber cut, to properly market the timber. Although a few important species appear in several regions, each of the many lumber producing regions possesses a distinct group of species, all of which have been in the past put on the local markets unsorted, unseasoned and roughly manufactured. The consumer has not become familiar with any one species as a standard article. The method of marketing have forced him to look upon the domestic lumber as less reliable and less standardized than the imported softwoods. The unsuitability of the native hardwoods to fill all the needs of the community is well demonstrated in Western Australia. This state, with a population of 250,000 is in the pioneer stages of development. Such centres of population as are not actually within the merchantable forest area have this forest between them and the seaports. Nevertheless the community, one of whose chief industries is the manufacture of lumber, imports annually 60 feet per head per year of European and North American soft woods to be used for mining timbers, flooring, ceiling, freight trucks, rafters, roof battens and joinery. The native woods, though close at hand, and produced regularly in large quantities are unsuitable for many uses, too hard, too heavy, unkind to work, likely to warp or check. Elsewhere in Australia this condition is accentuated, the demands on wood are greater in variety, the native woods are more mixed in character, less efficiently marketed and higher in price in comparison with the imported article.

PREFERENCE FOR IMPORTED WOODS.

The temptation to use Douglas fir and other soft woods is so great, because of their light weight and splendid working qualities, that the workingman, carpenter or builder is always inclined to give them a preference. Thus a hotel built on a timbercovered mountain in Tasmania, miles from a railroad, surrounded by thousands of acres of merchantable native forest was found to have Douglas fir porch pillars, studding and rafters. The dry kiln attached to a native hardwood saw-mill one hundred miles in the interior of the State of Victoria was Douglas fir. Douglas fir entered into the building of the tanks in connection with the Government saw-milling and powellizing works in the karri forests of West Australia. Throughout Australia, on the basis of quality and suitability alone the imported softwoods, chief of which is Douglas fir, are increasing in use in competition with native woods.

Manufacturing and marketing methods, as applied to native woods, are however improving in Australia. The many small mills, only to be classed with Canadian portable or bush mills, which characterized the operations throughout the country are now being gathered up into larger amalgamations, handling lumber in such volume as to justify the sorting out of each important species for the manufacturing and seasoning to which it is best adapted, the installation of better machinery and dry kilns under the systematic marketing of a standard article. This increasing efficiency of the industry originated in the jarrah and karri forests of Western Australia where pure stands of these species extending over large areas simplified the problem. Success in this region is leading to improved manufacturing, seasoning and marketing facilities in Tasmania and Eastern Australia where the problem is rendered more difficult by the large range of species each requiring different treatment.