



I RECENTLY met a dealer who was a bold advocate of uniform inspection rules for the grading of hardwood lumber. In relating his experiences to show the necessity of such rules, he pointed out one case fresh in mind. A certain manufacturer had some hardwood lumber for sale, and the dealer visited the mill for the purpose of inspecting the stock and making an offer for it. When some boards with heart in the centre were reached, he proceeded to class them as culls, in accordance with the inspection adopted in the Eastern States, which distinctly states that all lumber containing heart defects must be classified as culls. To this the manufacturer took exception, contending that certain local industries accepted such boards as common, measuring out the strip in the centre containing the heart and rejecting it entirely. While the dealer pointed out that this was not the proper inspection, he had no authorized rules to prove his position, and was therefore somewhat at a disadvantage. He states that when lumber is shipped for inspection upon delivery, he frequently finds that the mill man has not been accustomed to selling upon any proper system of rules, and in cases where disputes over inspection arise, there are no standard rules which can be referred to to facilitate a settlement. His opinion is that if hardwood manufacturers would properly grade their lumber, they would in the end receive greater returns and would be saved the annoyance of many disputes such as now arise. Even if certain buyers continued to buy upon their own inspection, and the rules were not generally adopted, they would at least be of advantage in the way of providing proper rules as an authority to which to refer. The trouble, he thinks, with all rules in existence to-day, is that they are not explicit enough.

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In the Maritime provinces of Canada, and also in the state of Maine, there has been growing up for some time a new industry; more correctly speaking, perhaps, not a new one, but an old one assuming larger proportions. It is that of spruce gum gathering. Years ago the country lad who went into the city was highly indignant when called after by the small boy, "Johnny" from the country, with his pockets full of gum. Literally, this was true then, "Johnny" usually having a few chunks with which to treat his friends. Now, however, many persons are engaged in this pursuit. There is a large market for the product, notwithstanding that the prejudice against gum chewing far outweighs anything that might be said in its favor. The gum picker usually goes into the woods with the lumbermen in December, and makes his home at the lumber camp. Before doing so, he provides himself with a ladder and a knife with a long blade. This is all the outfit required, excepting that, perhaps, when the snow is deep, use is made of snowshoes. The spruces usually are without branches at the base, and instead of climbing the

trunks the ladder is used. Of course, the ladder could be made in the woods, but spare time is employed doing this before entering the forest. Once there, the picker finds plenty to do. He rises early from his bunk, and it is not very late in the afternoon when "the shadows of evening fall," and then his day's work is done; but the employment makes him quite tired and ready to retire early. Each day his work takes him farther from the camp, but, in truth, he need not be far away at any time, gum-bearing trees being all around. If the picker has had good success, he has made a fair day's pay. Spruce gum is sold at wholesale from 60 cents to \$1 a pound, according to quality; and as it is not uncommon to gather from three to five pounds during the day, it can be seen that the work nets him a tidy income, the cost of living at the camp being comparatively small. The lumbermen, too, find time Sundays to turn their hands to this work. It is the custom then to go in a party of a dozen or more to where the logs are "browed." Here it is possible, with the aid of a peevie, to get at the gum more readily. The wholesale druggists in New York, Boston, and some of the other large cities, are the largest purchasers. Some of these firms employ pickers, while others depend on agents to purchase their supply. In the cities mentioned, spruce gum retails for about 16 cents an ounce. When the crop is being harvested, the dealers have difficulty in keeping pace with the demand. The other day a New York firm sent an order for a ton. Their agent was unable to fill the order, but sent all he had on hand some 300 pounds assuring his customer that he would be able to fill the balance of the order in a short time.

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It is always interesting to compare the customs in Canada with those prevailing in other countries, but particularly in Great Britain, to which country, it might be said, we look for counsel and instruction. A gentleman from England closely associated with the lumber trade who has recently travelled through Canada and the United States, in a letter to the scribe, comments on his trip, and for the benefit of readers of this page, I will give his concluding remarks, from which some ideas may be gathered. He writes: "I found trade good everywhere in lumber, and have visited quite a number of box and case-making manufactories both in Canada and the United States. The courtesy and kindly interest shown to me on all sides will always conduce to very pleasant recollections and memories of my first visit to Canada and the States. I am taking back a few machines and labor-saving contrivances, which are more in evidence here than in England. Generally, however, owing to the greater advertising facilities of recent years, I have not found very many machines of whose merits I was not already acquainted, but I have been much struck with the intense energy evinced by all on this side of the water, greater in the States, and existing in a lesser degree in Canada also. Doubtless to this must be attributed much of the wonderful advances made here during the last twenty or thirty years. In the matter of lumber, I was struck with the fact that while in England we mostly deal with lumber in the form of planks, deals and battens, in Canada and the States it is almost all in the form of boards. Owing to your mills

sacrificing quality to quantity, these boards are generally too roughly sawn to suit the English market, and to this in part I attribute the difference that exists in this respect. The extra labor of handling boards over deals and battens is offset here by great attention to labor-saving devices, while the advantage in the quicker drying is very obvious. In view of the preference given here for sawing the lumber into boards at the mills, with a little more care in the accuracy in size and chances of saving therefrom, I should not be surprised if the exports of the future tended more toward boards and less of deals, battens, etc."

TO PREVENT SHRINKING OF FLOORS.

A WRITER on the above subject in the Mississippi Valley Lumberman says:

"The flooring mostly used for homes is oak and birch. Maple is used almost exclusively for stores and office buildings. As to which one of these woods is most liable to shrink when used on the floor I don't really know. Birch has the general reputation of freely contracting, and many think that maple being so hard and close grained will not shrink; but in my experience I have had some cases the equal reverse of this. I believe, however, that if extra care were exercised in keeping maple flooring from contact with the moisture in the air it would not shrink. The manufacture of maple flooring has been figured down to a science. I have a lot of No. 2 that has just come in. It is from 4 to 16 feet in length, and a few years ago it would have passed muster as No. 1 clear. The end matching permits the use of short lengths without serious detriment to the floor. This lot seems to have been kept in good condition and to be thoroughly dry. I have seen cars containing maple flooring that were open to the weather and pretty well soaked with rain. Some dealers store their stock in open sheds too, and I am only surprised that under such circumstances it proves as satisfactory as it does. Maple flooring is never put through a dry kiln after it leaves the factory and is often not laid for many months after it is manufactured. Oak and birch flooring on the contrary are usually not made until the order is secured. Many carpenters think it necessary to take such flooring smoking hot from the dry kiln and lay it down before it is fairly cool. This is a mistake. All lumber after being kiln dried should be allowed to stand some time before being used. After coming from the kiln all wood will naturally absorb a certain amount of moisture from the air. This will expand it somewhat, but if allowed to remain in a dry place some days it will again contract and become very durable in staying qualities. Most of the sash and door factories appreciate this fact and act accordingly.

ONE DOLLAR.

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