

THE DEMAND FOR OAK.

Ten years ago it would hardly have been admitted by dealers who handled Michigan and Indiana oak that in a decade there would be a thinning out of the "monarchs" of the forest that a scarcity would be felt. Oak was in too great abundance in some sections of those states to suit the fancy of the owners of the land upon which it grew. Much of it was cut simply to get it out of the way, and the owners of it thought they were fortunate if they could sell it to mill men who would cut it, and thus, themselves, be saved that trouble. There was less call for it then than now. As the building of railroads has increased, the demand for oak increased proportionately, until now the once great oak states, Michigan and Indiana, can not justly lay claim to being called such. Oak in those states has not boomed in price like walnut—it is not an excessive price that bars a supply—but heavy contractors are looking elsewhere for it for the very reason that they are obliged to. There is a large amount of Tennessee and Kentucky oak, upon which heavy freight rates are paid, distributed from the Chicago market, and the amount coming forward from those states will increase year by year.

Fashion has little to do with the use of oak. From the start it has demanded to be used, and it holds its place with a grip as strong as the wood itself. The two kinds of pine may jostle each other; whitewood may take the place of white pine; walnut may be crowded out by the other kinds of hardwood, and often by soft woods; in fact, most of the woods, in their uses, are subject to the caprice of taste, but oak stands sturdily by and refuses to yield. For cars, staves, agricultural implements, for a hundred and one things, in fact, it must be had. The discovery of forests of other woods does not affect its value. There has never yet been any material discovered or invented that will take its place, and we feel tolerably safe when we say there never will be. It is one of the few indispensable woods.

We doubt if to-day there is a market in the world that is not demanding good oak. Throughout the foreign countries the call is so large that it cannot be filled. English car builders are buying car sills on track in Canada, and their operations would be extended to the States if they could find responsible parties with whom to make contracts. The inspection is severe, and that stands in the way of the American manufacturer, for, as a rule, he does not like to be bound by specific specifications. He delights to take a go-as-you-please gait and the result is that his lumber often is not up to the requirements of the purchaser. The exact methods of the white pine manufacturers of the Northwest he has not learned.

The oak of Arkansas, Mississippi, Tennessee and Kentucky will in large part, in the shape of timber and staves, find its way to southern ports, and thence to Europe. On the Mississippi river and its tributaries the stave business is picking up, and with cheap water transportation to New Orleans, the business will not only be a large one, but it ought to be very profitable. On the same rivers the getting out of oak timber for the foreign market will become a large business, spurred on by northern push and capital. Alabama, we believe, is yet destined to send a good deal of oak abroad. Some of the English dealers object to the oak of that state, but they must overcome some of their objections, for to get all the oak they want from Canada and Michigan is out of the question. There is certainly no tougher oak than grows in the South, and this quality is the one needed.

Red oak, a few years ago thought to be worthless, is no longer despised. Its value has become known, and the uses to which it will be put will increase. That the manufacture of it into staves for the West India market will grow into an important industry admits of little question. Taking everything in consideration, the owner of oak stumpage ought not to feel that he has a very big elephant on his hands.—*Northwestern Lumberman.*

THE St. John Telegraph learns that the Government of New Brunswick is preparing to have the province represented at the Forestry Exhibition in Edinburgh next year.

THE LUMBER TRADE OF RIGA.

From an article in *Le Marchand de Bois* on the lumber trade of Riga, Russia, we take the following: Of the ports of the Baltic provinces, Riga exports more lumber and timber than all the others, consequently a statement of the amount of this trade done at Riga will give some idea of the extent of the lumber trade of Russia in Europe. The details of the exports of Riga for a series of years from 1871 to 1882, are taken from a recent official document issued from the bureau of commerce. The timber and lumber reaches Riga by the Duna and its tributaries and comes from the provinces of Lovonia, Esthonia, Courland, Mahiton, Minsk, and Sithuanic. Notwithstanding the extensive devastation of the forests, carried on with no assurance of their renewal, the vast forests which formerly covered these provinces yet contain large reserves of timber of the best quality, but their continued depletion with no provisions made for their future restoration should give serious apprehension. The transportation of the wood from the forests to the rivers, which is made by log waggons during the snow and frosts of the winter season is attended with increased difficulties and costs when the winters are usually rainy, which are quite common; and the transportation by water is also difficult on account of the shallowness of the waters and strength of currents; and, additional to this it is peculiarly difficult to safely run the rafts which are constructed to suit the special navigation of the streams. The large timbers are bound together and form the raft proper. On these are then placed laths, staves, clapboards, etc. It is said the manufactured stuffs brought to market in this way are limited in quantity. This is to be regretted as persons who are acquainted with the interior of Russia state that it would be much to the interest of the proprietors if they would put more on their places in the interior the greater portion of the flooring, laths, deals, scantling, etc., as it is well known that large quantities of timber useful for these purposes are left to rot. It is also stated that the debris left by the loggers in the pine forests might be profitably distilled; but to bring about such necessary improvements and progress, the interior must have the benefit of better methods of communication with the markets than by the inefficient and tedious rafting system.

The rafts are formed on the ice before it begins to break up in order that advantage may be taken of the first rising of the waters. When this occurs the rafts usually arrive at Riga from eight to fifteen days thereafter.

During the period above mentioned from 1871 to 1882, there were exported from Riga 87,377,512 pieces of timber and lumber, or an average of 7,281,456 pieces per annum. The progress made in this trade since 1871 is shown by the fact that in that year only 4,542,155 pieces were exported; whereas, in 1882, 9,184,199 pieces were exported.

The total value, in silver, of the wood exported in that time was 122,342,708 roubles (\$91,750,000); a yearly average of 10,195,225 roubles (\$7,646,000). The value of the exports of 1882 was placed at 12,911,072 roubles (\$9,683,000). A silver rouble is worth about 75 cents.

Of the leading articles exported during the twelve years, were in pieces, 3,651,095 staves and clapboards; 30,382,666 sleepers. 49,491,155 posts and flooring. With the exception of 47,769 pieces shipped to Africa, the whole amount was cleared for European ports. England received 58.7 per cent of the total exports; Holland 14.1; Germany 10.1; France 5.6; Belgium 5. and Portugal 2.2 per cent. The balance was taken by Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Spain and Italy. During the year 1882 the average charges, per St. Petersburg standard, to French ports were as follows: Dunkirk, Boulogne and Dieppe \$9 to \$9.50; to Havre, Honfleur and Rouen, \$10.50@ \$11.50.

On the whole the timber and lumber trade of Riga, for the past several years, has made notable progress, and the movement in 1882 was especially favorable. The trade of France with this port, though not near so heavy as it is with Norway, yet it is of no mean importance as the transactions for 1882 reached the sum of about \$835,000, and is susceptible of considerable expansion.

THE ADIRONDACK FORESTS.

The forest region popularly known as the Adirondack wilderness extends over a territory of nearly 2,600 square miles, including within its limits large areas of swamp, lake, and bare mountain tops. Nearly 1,000 square miles of this territory are probably already owned by the State of New York, which has gradually become possessed of the lands through the failure of former owners to pay taxes upon them.

It has long been the custom among owners of Adirondack forest property to cut off the forests as rapidly as a market could be found for the logs, and then abandon the worthless land to the State. It follows that the State lands are not in one or more large, compact bodies, but are widely scattered throughout the wilderness, and are not now covered with any considerable forest growth. The possessions of the State, therefore, great as they are in the aggregate, cannot at present greatly influence the water supply of the upper Hudson basin. In spite of the fires, however, which have swept over such portions of the wilderness as now belong to the State, destroying what little fertility the soil once possessed, forests will grow up again upon these lands in the natural course of events. Years, however, must elapse before these new forests, even if successfully protected from further damage by fire, can be expected to exert any considerable influence upon the water supply of the State.

The law which prohibits the sale of any portion of these lands is a step in the right direction. It is only a step however. In order to insure a permanent flow of water from the northern part of the State, the whole Adirondack region must be preserved in perpetual forest. As long as bodies of timber, the property of private individuals, remain scattered among the State lands, it will be hopeless to undertake the preservation of the detached portions of the forest belonging to the state. Fire follows the axe of the lumberman, and nothing can prevent the spread of fire from private to public lands. If the private owners of the forest in the Adirondack region continue the lumbering operations now projected, the destruction of the entire wilderness is inevitable. The fires, which will find abundant material in the dry tops and branches of trees scattered by the lumbermen about their camps, will sweep year after year over the entire territory now occupied by the northern woods, gradually converting it into a barren desert, incapable of producing again even the most insignificant forests, until the growth and decay of generations of humble plants shall have returned to it some portion of its lost fertility. Nature heals such wounds made upon the earth's surface very slowly even in a climate of our own, and centuries, perhaps, will elapse before the forests of northern New York, once thoroughly destroyed by fire, can be made to flourish again. During such a transition period, possibly extending through centuries the Erie Canal will remain useless for the want of water; the upper Hudson will no longer be a navigable stream; towns and villages now rich and prosperous will be deserted; and the commerce of a mighty nation will be diverted from its natural channels.

If it is desirable to prevent such far-reaching calamities, no half-way measures should be adopted. If our water supply is to be maintained, the state must speedily acquire control of the whole Adirondack wilderness, and govern it in a manner to insure it against the danger of total destruction by fire. Nothing short of entire, absolute control can produce the desired results. The Erie Canal and the Hudson River cannot be placed beyond danger by any ill-considered measure or the makeshifts of mistaken economy.—*N. Y. Sun.*

GIGANTIC FAILURE.

MONTREAL, Nov. 21.—The news of the suspension of the oldest lumber firm in Canada, established over seventy-five years, struck financial circles here to-day as if a thunderbolt had fallen within their midst. No one could believe at first that the house of John Sharples, Son & Co., of Quebec, that had never in its long career been embarrassed, should be in financial trouble with half a million dollars liabilities. It was more than astounding, yet it was true. The cause of the sudden embarrassment arises

out of the failure of the firm's agents in London and the downward turn of the English market for spruce deals, of which they have a quarter of a million dollars' worth awaiting sale in Liverpool and London. It appears that the English market has depreciated 20 per cent standard for the spruce, and if the house was compelled to sell the loss would be enormous, whilst by waiting some time the market is bound to return to its normal condition, and they would come out all right. The firm has shown the Merchants', the Union of Lower Canada, and the Quebec banks a statement with an estimated surplus of \$90,000 of assets over liabilities, and asked for an extension, which was readily granted by all the banks interested to-day.

Mr. Charles Sharples retired in 1870, when the present firm was established, being composed of Mr. John Sharples, of Quebec, and Mr. George Oswald. Mr. Sharples died leaving a fortune of a quarter of a million of dollars, which was divided among his wife and family, and a large portion of which was invested in the present firm. The stock of the Union Bank, which is most largely interested, fell ten per cent this afternoon. It is expected that more lumber firms in Quebec, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia will have to succumb, as the English market is very depressed at present.—*Mail.*

LATER.

The Montreal correspondent of the *Mail*, writing under date Nov. 22nd, says:—Although commerce is dull here at present, yet business men and banks are cheerful, and take a sanguine view of matters coming out all right. It is true there is a shortage in the winter wheat crop, and that the lumber market abroad was against exporters, but these misfortunes must be borne. In an interview with a leading banker to-day, whose bank is interested in the failure of the old firm of Sharples, Son & Co., of Quebec, he assured me that a better or more satisfactory statement he had never seen presented to creditors in his career than had been furnished. At least 60 per cent of the assets can be realized at once. The firm is only asking three months extension, and my informant hazarded the opinion I heard expressed by a leading merchant this morning that the extension would never have happened only to get rid of a partner in England whose social habits were such as to prevent their great business being looked after and pushed as vigorously as they required. One of the brothers has started already for Liverpool to take the management there. The liabilities are distributed among the following banks:—Union, \$140,000; Nationale, \$10,000; Quebec, \$35,000; Merchants', \$10,000. Added to this is the family claim, estimated at \$110,000, which is not expected to be pressed. The firm's losses in England are reported to be very heavy.

SAVE THE FORESTS

Our esteemed contemporary, the *Sun*, calls upon its associates of the press to come up and help save the forests of the country. We respond with pleasure. We welcome the light of the *Sun* on this point, and are willing to help get up a blaze on the subject. The importance of our forests cannot be overestimated. Their money value is enormous. The raw materials they yield—lumber, fuel, bark, etc.—are worth \$800,000,000. No other single crop equals the forest crop in value. Two millions of working men are employed in harvesting this crop and working upon it. But the money value of the forests of the country, as shown by their annual products, is small when compared with their value as the great modifiers and equalizers of temperature and moisture. It is an unquestioned fact that, at the present rate of destruction, our great preserves of valuable timber will all pass out of existence within a few years unless some means are taken to moderate the consumption. It is equally true that the destruction of the forests is hastened by the waste of careless proprietors and by the failure of the Government to protect those still in its possession. There is not a great deal that can be done by law to preserve our forests, but there is something, and it should be done without delay, while we have left some forests to protect.

We have spoken of the duty on lumber—that should be taken off at once. We ought to,