

MEASURING MILL-WORKED STOCK.

(By J. T. Langdon.)

Every different locality has its own peculiar necessity, and must be governed by its own kind of trade. In places where stock boards are run exclusively, it would seem to be no trick to keep run of the work, and you would say a 12-inch 16-foot board split into three or four parts is easy to keep track of, but two 5's and one 6 is the only way we can count it split in three parts, unless we are selling by the car load and put in 187½ 3½-inch strips for a 1,000 feet of stuff; or, if we split four times and make 2½-inch worked stuff, just 250 pieces to the thousand comes out right. When we come to mark it up for the retail trade it comes fair, each strip makes even four feet, while the 3½-inch stuff must be marked two pieces five and one six, as we must mark up enough to make the rough stock hold out good.

In "ye olden time" when stuff was sawed at random lengths and any width, and 20,000 feet put behind a planer with the order to "work eight inches and under," and the first width came out 7½ inches and the last two inches wide, then the man that tallied the stuff had his head and hands full. It was common, then, and is in some places now, to have a "tell tale," and when the stuff was fed in the feeder turned the tell tale to show the number of feet that was in the piece, while the man taking away re-marked it from the tell tale.

For the retail trade it is very common to mark the stock both sides when it is worked into flooring, then the stuff is already marked and always on the rough side. As very little stuff is made into flooring more than 5½ inches wide, and barn boards less than 7½ inches wide, we have for coarse stuff all the widths that are usually found in the trade in these two kinds of stuff, only barn boards are usually planed two sides while flooring is seldom planed but one.

The greatest trouble in tallying comes from running random lengths and widths. If, as I have noticed, we take a lot of this kind of stuff, either southern pine or eastern pine or spruce, we would have to go by the rule of give and take. For example: The six-inch stuff works only 5½ inches wide. This comes easy, for one-half the length of the stuff would be half the number of superficial feet, but when we go down to the 4-inch it is a different thing. For example: Beginning with the shortest merchantable board, 10 feet, it is 55, and this gives four feet seven inches, and the usual way is, where it overruns a half foot, to call it one foot more, so the worked board 10 feet long and finishing five inches wide would be marked 5, while the board 11 feet long and the same width would also be marked 5. The 12-foot lengths are usually marked 5 and 6 alternately. Some mills do not pay any attention to the odd feet and mark the stuff up for 10, 12, 14 and 16-foot lengths, while others stick to the odd feet. Coming down to the narrower widths, as stuff finishing 3½ inches is usually marked 11, 12 and 13 feet mark 4 and 14, 15 and 16-foot lengths mark 5, and so on, each succeeding three feet in length is marked one foot more as 23, 24 and 25 feet long would all be marked 8. The point is, to mark the finished stuff just what the rough stuff is surveyed and marked. It is well enough, however, to keep your eye on the surveyor's mark, for very often it seems as if the surveyor was mixed up, something was in and wit was out. Carloads of stuff going east are seldom marked for any widths of finished stock, as so many pieces of a given width are put in for a thousand feet. This saves the trouble of marking at the mill and the retailer must mark it up himself, or count the pieces, as they very often do where they are sold. I am fully aware that board and timber surveying is too complicated to be fully explained here. The common arithmetic rule of multiplying the length in feet by the width in inches, and dividing by 12, gives only the faintest idea of lumber surveying; yet the rule is correct and everything must go by it.

I give these very few examples to show the principle and do not go into the details of surveying, marking and inspecting. This is a business of itself, and men to do it successfully need to make it a special study and commit to memory like one would the multiplication table, having the lengths and widths all in the head so that when the width and length are

given the contents of the board is known immediately. The surveyor should be as ready to mark the contents of the board and tally, as he would to say twice two are four.

If any one is in the trade and working stuff for a market, he should have cards with the different widths, lengths and thicknesses all figured up. A few of these cards of convenient size cover the whole thing and are very handy, for on them all the odd widths and lengths are carried out, a glance showing how many feet are in the piece. Our own trade, South and North Carolina pine stock exclusively, is all marked as it comes away from the planer, and no attention whatever is paid to what the piece is marked in the rough. The southern pine all comes random lengths to fill some particular order. Then the pieces are counted and no marking is done. We very seldom work anything wider than 3½ inches, except in 1½ and thicker stock, and all our southern pine comes sawed to three and four-inch widths. The other widths 8, 10, 12 and 14 inches, for step plank, and from these widths we can get anything we need, while our sidings from the saw mill furnishes stock for small orders outside of widths above noticed. North Carolina stock comes to us 8, 10, 12 and 14 inches wide, and wide stock for surfacing often goes up to 20, 22 and 24 inches wide. This wide stock we do not saw for matching, the 8, 10 and 12 inch furnishing all the narrow stock. We never re-mark this stock but count so many pieces to the thousand, always counting it so it will not come under what there was in the rough stock. In loading a car for filling an order the number of pieces of each width and length is all the tallying there is done, which saves a great amount of work. This refers only to North Carolina stock. Yellow pine being any length from 10 to 30 feet, must all be marked, at least we always mark it.

It is a very easy matter to make a tally card and the convenience more than pays for the trouble of marking. We get them printed by the thousand, so when one is worn out there are more always at hand. They are, however, used exclusively about the mill: the surveyor and inspector are supposed to be able to do their part without a card, or at least they ought to.

One thing should be borne in mind, that the stuff after it is planed and matched should just hold out to what it was in the rough, *barring* *trimming*.

This subject might be carried much farther, as there are many short cuts in the lumber business that surveyors resort to, which saves many a long row of figures and much calculation.

OUR TRADE WITH BRITAIN.

The business done in the timber trade of the Mersey ports for the year 1889 has been the largest on record. With scarcely a single exception the principal articles of importation show a large increase over any previous period. Roughly speaking, the importation of the chief kinds of square timber of all sorts has been 58 per cent. over that of 1888, and 70 per cent. over that of 1887, whilst that of deals, spruce, pine and redwood, flooring, etc., has been 36 per cent. over that of 1887. The stock of all kinds of square timber on hand at Liverpool at the close of the year amounted to no less a quantity than 2,619,000 cubic feet, and of all kinds of deals, boards, flooring, etc., 37,355 St. Petersburg standards, making a total in the aggregate of 8,782,000 cubic feet. The *Timber Trades Journal* in reviewing the trade of that port with British North America says there is hardly a single description of timber, whether in the log or manufactured into deals, boards or other forms, which has not been imported in larger quantities than ever before known. All the shipping ports in the Dominion of Canada have had their fair share of the large increase in business, and in the high prices they have received for their lumber. It would be too much to expect that after such a good season as the last must have been to the Canadian lumber interests, they would stay their hands awhile and get out only what the markets are likely to bear without loss, or until our stocks are reduced to a more moderate compass. But we trust that the quantity to come forward of either timber or deals will be moderate for the ensuing season.

YELLOW PINE TIMBER.—The import from Quebec of waney and square pine logs for the past season reaches nearly 1,950,000 cubic feet, from St. John, N. B., 19,000 cubic feet, and from other ports 53,000, making in the aggregate 2,022,000 cubic feet. This is 33 per cent. more

than last year, and 55 per cent. more than the previous one. It is true we have had a largely increased consumption, but not sufficient to equalize these liberal supplies. This leaves us with a stock on hand of 573,000 cubic feet, a little more than double the quantity held here last year at this time, and composed of about 350,000 cubic feet of square and 200,000 cubic feet waney boardwood.

The import has been chiefly on contract, though some parcels have been consigned for sale on this side. Generally speaking the bulk of the shipments have maintained the reputation of the various shippers, but some have been inferior, and differences have had to be adjusted between shipper and importer.

RED PINE TIMBER.—This wood has been imported to about the same extent as last year, viz., 53,000 cubic feet, but excepting for special purposes, it is now but little used. Even with the above moderate quantity the stock on hand is 50 per cent. more than last year.

OAK.—The supply of oak in all its forms, and from all sources, has been nearly 2,000,000 cubic feet during the year but the consumption has been correspondingly large. The demand from the railways and waggon works for rolling stock has been continuous throughout the year, and in consequence of this the stock has not been materially increased. Prices for good wood have been steady, but inferior wood could only be placed with tempting figures. The stock stands at 373,000 cubic feet, viz: 195,000 ft. of logs and ft. 178,000 waggon scantling.

ELM.—The import has been nearly double that of last year, and has nearly all been on contract. The consumption has been large, viz: 115,000 cubic feet, leaving us with a fairly moderate stock of 53,000 cubic feet, which will probably be quite sufficient to meet all requirements until next season's wood arrives.

ASH.—This wood has come forward as freely as it did last year, the import alike being 82,000 feet. It has been in good request, however, and the stock is only about 20,000 cubic feet. This, however, will be found quite ample.

BIRCH.—At the opening of the season the stock was moderate, and this wood being in strong request, high prices were obtainable for both logs and planks. The importation during the summer and autumn months quite overran the consumption, and prices receded rapidly. In spite, however, of the lower range of values, the demand was not stimulated, and we end the season with a stock of 265,000 cubic feet, more than four times the quantity held here last year.

GUMWOOD, once known as satin walnut, is hardly ever now spoken of, and it can only be sold at very low prices commensurate with its demerits. The last sale was at about 16d. to 18d. per cubic foot.

LANCEWOOD SPARS.—The import has been moderate, and with a fair demand existing good prices have recently been obtained. The stock on hand is only about 300 pieces.

QUEBEC PINE AND SPRUCE DEALS, BOARDS, &c.—In these goods we have had an excessive importation, it being nearly 50 per cent. above that of last year, and had it not been for the flourishing state of trade in the north we should have been in a sad plight. The total quantity of these goods imported was 37,957 St. Petersburg standards. Much of this was forced off at little or no margin of profit, to save additional expense of storage and accruing interest. Owing to this the stock is not excessively large, though nearly double that of this time last year, viz., 10,149 St. Petersburg standards, of which, however, 1,133 standards are spruce and 5,016 standards pine. The demand latterly has been very moderate, consumers being already well provided for, so that we shall be well off for these goods until the next spring arrivals come to hand.

NEW BRUNSWICK AND NOVA SCOTIA SPRUCE DEALS.—We commenced the year with a moderate stock of 7,620 standards, which was reduced, by the end of May, to 3,682 standards. The business outlook was promising, and contracts for these goods were made early in the season at £7 15s. to £8 per standard c.i.f.; but as the season progressed the market receded, and St. John, N. B. shipment in June had dropped to £7 12s. 6d. per standard c.i.f., with inferior shipments at a corresponding reduction. A further decline was experienced in August and September for large steamer cargoes, which were sold at £7 10s. per standard c.i.f., at about which price these goods have remained. It is freely stated that there are few, if any, spruce deals remaining unshipped at any of the lower ports, and that the stock in St. John, N. B., is exceedingly light. Should this be the fact, then the stock in hand to-day, say 18,932 St. Petersburg standards, may not be too large to supply the wants of the market until the new season's goods arrive. This would naturally be late, as it would consist of this winter's cut. These and similar statements, have so often been made before, and so often proved to be unfounded, that we simply