

Timber and Oil.

CONDITIONS IN AMERICA.

SOME INTERESTING IMPRESSIONS.

Events are moving rapidly in America, and the observant, critical visitor from there can speak on many interesting subjects. Mr. C. Odlin, of C. and A. Odlin and Co., Ltd., Wellington, returned to New Zealand a few days ago after spending some months in Canada and the States, and his impressions in some phases of American life and industry are instructive.

Affairs in the lumber trade in both the United States and Canada claimed his chief attention. In point of fact, he stated, the lumber trade of the two countries was all more or less American, the enterprising Americans having now control over a majority of the Canadian mills. In June and July of this year the lumber trade was buoyant, due to the vast demands from the East, largely from China and Japan. But in September the bottom began to fall out of the market, and many of the big mills closed down. The object of this seemed to be to restrict trade and hold up prices, rather than to go on cutting and bring down prices. Some of the mills which ceased operations were cutting as much as from 500,000ft. to 600,000ft. per day, and employing about 300 hands. Numbers of men were thrown out of employment, but labour conditions were so vastly different there from here that such trifles as that would not be felt. The men would move out East, to be absorbed in the manufacturing industries there. The prices came down towards the end of September, but shortage of shipping made it difficult to take advantage of this as far as New Zealand and Australia were concerned. There were practically no ships available. Mr. Odlin secured the Union Company's chartered vessel, the *Rona*, for a cargo, but this boat was held up at San Francisco by a strike, the seamen refusing to sail unless they received an additional 25 per cent. in wages because of benzine that was being carried.

Oregon pine could be bought in America to-day at 5 dollars per thousand feet, and freight to New Zealand, when procurable, cost another 35 dollars a thousand, making the landing cost about 70 dollars. "Before the war," said Mr. Odlin, "we used to buy it at from eight to twelve dollars, and pay from 14 to 15 dollars for freight." Then the New Zealand Customs duties added considerably to the expenses. American doors, for instance—some factories were turning out as many as 5,000 a day—had to pay a duty of 10s. each. They were a good article, better perhaps than those made by hand, and were used largely in a cheaper class of cottage in New Zealand. Three-ply panelling, also an American specialty used largely over here, had to pay duty of from 12s. to 15s. per 100 feet. They could be

obtained from Canada at less duty, but Canada's manufactures were negligible.

The American lumber forests, said Mr. Odlin, were really wonderful. "I motored through one redwood forest in California for 150 miles—motored all the way on a concrete road." Our forests here could not compare with them. There was no replanting necessary; the furs replanted themselves. The greatest care, however, was exercised in their preservation, and the utmost precautions were enforced against destruction by devastating fires. "The system they adopt shows the American mind," said Mr. Odlin. "All through the summer aeroplanes wheel overhead, observing for fires, and should any break out extinguishing bombs are dropped. Along the roads and highways are posted conspicuous notices, informing the public that the law empowers the foresters, of whom there are many, to call upon anyone at any time to assist in fighting fires if they occur."

The benzine question was gone into by Mr. Odlin. The oil New Zealand has been mostly receiving is not the most suitable for our climate; it is what is mostly sent to warmer countries. It does not give the best results, said Mr. Odlin, but engenders a certain amount of waste by loss in power. A great deal was to be learned in the oil business: oil mixing was as much a matter for experts as tea-blending. One reason, apart from exchange, for the high cost of benzine out here was the expensive way in which it was necessarily imported. A case of two tins, for instance, allowing for the difference in exchange, cost about 10s. 6d. In America tins of benzine were rarely seen in ordinary use. There, oil was dealt with in bulk. Cars were supplied in bulk from tanks, of which there was numerous provision, and huge motor lorries carrying bulk supplies were always available. In this way cost was reduced. While on this matter, Mr. Odlin remarked that a great slump seemed to have taken place in the motor-car industry. Cars were difficult to sell in America at present. *Evening Post*.

Buildings on the "Mill-cut" System.

A company is being formed at Auckland (says the *Star*) with an initial capital of £50,000, with the object of erecting plants in the various main centres of New Zealand, for the purpose of producing houses and other buildings on the "mill-cut" principle, which, it is claimed, will reduce the cost by at least 25 per cent., and do something to relieve the present scarcity of homes. A great variety of modern and artistic plans will be provided to choose from. One claim that is made for this method is that a house, ready cut, with all joinery and fittings complete, can be erected in one quarter of the time and with one-third the cost for labour. The promoters have given careful study to the Canadian and American systems, which are doing good work according to report.