

Our Native Timbers - Turpentine, &c.

Sir, - In your issue of the 6th instant you have an article on our native timbers written by Mr. Donavon, in which he gives a description of the turpentine wood and recommends it for building and other purposes as one of the best woods we have. If so, how comes it that turpentine has been a prohibited wood throughout the colonies by architects and builders? In 1857 I put a log of this wood on to my pit to cut a few flooring boards for my verandah, intending to cut the rest into scantling and joists: and my mate and I often cursed our folly for being led away by appearances (as it looked such a fine tree, and lay right at the foot of our skids), for it was impossible to keep the saw sharp owing to the gummy nature of the timber. I had greater cause than this though to repent using them; before the boards had been down a month I had adsed all the edges off between the joists, and soon after had to replace them by putting in others of spotted gum.

Mr. Donavon says it is a good splitting timber, and that any old bushman will bear him out. Well, Sir, I have been forty years engaged amongst timbers in splitting, fencing, sawing, building, bridging, boat-building—in fact, using timber in every way that bushmen have to do at times, but I never yet got a turpentine log to do as he describes. As for backing-off to split posts, rails, or palings—I think one would need have the patience of Job. In 1843 my father contracted with a Mr. Croft, of Balmain, for the supply of timber to repair the Shamrock steamer, and submitted some turpentine planks to him (Mr. Croft) for approval, but he would not take them on any account; they were for the floats for the wheels of the steamer. During the construction of the viaduct at Honeyuckle Point, Newcastle (N.S.W.), a turpentine pile was attempted to be driven, but after a few blows it broke short off. On the coal and copper company's line at Red Head, Mr. Morgan, the engineer, refused to allow it to be used for stringers and also for framing for the tunnel. Mr. Donavon says it is a good wood for the saw-mills. About three years ago I saw a log 20ft. long and 2ft. through cut at the Mungar saw-mills, the whole of which had to be cast into the waste heap, and the saws after cutting it looked as though they had been on a grindstone. None of our hard woods suffer more from exposure to the weather than turpentine, none are less adapted to carry a weight; I care not what weight is put upon it if the sun and weather act on it it will twist and warp—so much so that it has been condemned by all architects and engineers throughout New South Wales. At Brisbane Water, whence Sydney draws the greater part of its timber supply, and where turpentine grows in abundance, none has ever been cut. I have had to fell trees 2ft. and 3ft. through, and 40ft. or 50ft. long, in order to get at other timber, but would never think of cutting an old turkey.

White ants are not so destructive to this timber as they are to others; at the same time it is no uncommon thing to see them in it. If fallen in a damp place and the bark left on, the wood soon decays. It and white gum are the two worst timbers we have.

For general purposes none surpasses spotted gum, whether for house, ship, or other buildings; for rails and for tramways none equals it—always keeping clear of the sap. Red-gum, or what is

keeping clear of the sap. Red-gum, or what is called here blue-gum, is an excellent timber for the ground; perhaps none better. In 1858 or 1859 I contracted to erect a temporary bridge over the Picton Creek (N.S.W.), 80ft. of the old one having been washed away. I was allowed by Mr. Moggridge to use any of the old timber that was sound, and all the stringers were taken from the old bridge, which had been built entirely of red gum, and had been in use thirty-five years, and put into the new one. The timbers proved as sound as when they were first used, and within one month after the completion of the work a traction-engine with waggons and load, weighing sixty tons, passed over the bridge, the whole of the weight being on it at one time.

There are other timbers equally good for different purposes. In conclusion I would remark that no part of the colonies that I have been in can equal this district for the purity of its spotted-gum; borers attack it less here than elsewhere too, I have noticed. Ironbark and red-gum are equally good. Our other hardwoods are not up to much.

Maryborough, July 17.

S. SIVTER.

FRANCES POWER COBBE has a very interesting essay on "Unconscious Cerebration." Some matter that has engrossed our attention has been dismissed from the mind, and subsequently, in an endeavor to recall the transaction, circumstance, or whatever it may be, some trivial portion of it has escaped our memory. It may be a name or some insignificant item that baffles all attempts at recollection, but the thing seems to hover about our consciousness while eluding all attempts to definitely grasp it, playing hide-and-seek with our faculty of memory, till, having become a mental Will o' the Wisp, we renounce the wearying gymnastics the attempt to recover it costs us, and give it up. Then some day, and under circumstances that could by no possibility suggest the missing trifle, it suddenly flashes on us; showing that, though conscious effort has long ceased, some unknown agent has, unconsciously to ourselves, been groping about in the dark places of our memory, and getting sudden hold of the lost property has presented it for our astonishment. We have always been much impressed with the oddity of this phenomenon, which is continually occurring to myself, and have never doubted that it is an experience common to everyone. We suppose the same laws and forces that govern the brain of the individual hold their sway over the collective national brain. Parliament, as the deliberating organ of our body politic, may be supposed to typify the brain of the nation, and the beautiful example it has just exhibited of "unconscious cerebration" will much interest Miss Cobbe. The more so, of course, from the fact of its workings being more capable of observation than the occult process in the individual. The Ministry, as the exponents of this thinking machine, are responsible for the ideas it evolves, and it was most annoying that so important a matter as a large loan should, after being carefully considered, have suddenly given them the slip, and baffled all attempts at recapture. But, fortunately, the unseen agent was at work, searching all the dusty corners of the Legislative Assembly, and when suddenly Mr. M'Ilwraith, pouncing upon the lost idea, nobly presents it

th pouncing upon the lost idea, nobly presents it
to the owners, in the first flush of joy they can
hardly believe it is their own lost treasure, till
an examination of details shows there is no mis-
take about it. Immigration, so much. Yes.
Harbors and rivers, so much. Yes, yes. Branch
railways. Yes, yes, yes! Not another word.
It is our lost property. We identify it now
without difficulty. Thanks, noble friend!—
"Specialities," in the *Queenslander*.