

# ENTERPRISE IN THE HOME TIMBER TRADE.

Whatever may be said in disparagement of the home timber trade as a dying industry, we are constantly receiving fresh proofs that it is by no means so played out as many imagine, and neither will it be while men of determined character, striving their utmost to succeed, take a prominent part in fostering it and bringing it up to date. We were recently in Oxfordshire, and being in the neighbourhood visited Mr. Wm. Avery's home timber saw mills at Wheatley, and were very favourably impressed with what we saw there. Born in 1849 at Naphill, near High Wycombe, Mr. Avery has had the practical experience of a strenuous lifetime in the trade, and has accordingly availed himself of the many hard learnt lessons which such an experience would naturally bring to any man so situated. From what he told us, we should gather that his life has been no rosy by-path of comfortable indolence, but a keen struggle upwards, characterised by an unswerving determination to succeed. When quite young he was put to the chair-making trade, at which he worked in his native place until 1880, when he commenced to buy timber on a small scale. Finding business by expectations realised, he extended his in 1883, and fitting down converting machinery timber merchant for continued at Naphill as a to the conclusion that in years, when, coming circumscribed owing to the as scope was too competition from many similar count of keen commediate neighbourhood, he deirms in the imhis business to Wheatley, on theaided to remove between Wycombe and Oxford. G.W. Railway in 1893, in spite of the advice ofThis he did friends, who considered he was taking numerous step, and was placing himself in a much wrong position, as far as competition was concerned, worse but he is nothing if not self-reliant, and he had only matured his plans after well as sidering the pros and cons, he was not to nturned aside from his purpose, and his presence business and position, in more than justifying the clear-sightedness of his judgment, have well rewarded his enterprise.

Upon walking through his yard we found it was extremely well-stocked with all the more

it produces, and as an instance, the following figures represent the measurement of one particular tree recently felled at Denton between



MR. WILLIAM AVERY.

Wycombe and Wheatley. The butt was 36ft. long, 35½in. quarter-girth, equalling 315ft., with 110ft. in the limbs, making a total of 425ft. cube; but Mr. Avery assured us that it was merely a specimen of what could be grown in the district, and that there were many others almost as fine, and some even larger, still growing in the neighbourhood. Some of the elm butts were also of large dimensions, and most of them grew in one or other of the elm-plantiful parks round about Wheatley. The elm in this district is much sought after by chair-makers of High Wycombe, owing to

subject to that injudicious lopping and pruning which so often fatally injures the trees growing in fields and hedge-rows. An element of risk often enters into the purchase of these latter trees, as large boughs may have been lopped off many years previously, and the ends, through lack of proper treatment having decayed right into the heart of the trunk, leave either large cavities or dead knots, which in process of time become grown over and remain undetected until the tree is sawn up.

Mr. Avery, for obvious reasons, is able to successfully compete for direct business with the Wycombe manufacturers, as he has no long carriage on timber in the round to defray, but having his mills right on the spot and adjoining the railway, he can convert straightaway, having the rail carriage on converted goods only to settle for, thus entirely dispensing with the railway questions on the carriage of round timber, which have troubled High Wycombe almost as much as any town in the country. His previous experience as a chair-maker enables him to supply the exact article required without a lot of preliminary and costly experiments, and as he is so practically acquainted with what is wanted, he knows precisely what to buy for the purpose. Nothing but large elm will do for Windsor chair seats, and most of those well-grown butts to be seen in the photos are ultimately destined for them. Elm, however, by no means constitutes the only timber consumed in chair-making, and Mr. Avery also cuts up a considerable quantity of beech, &c., into the requisite scantlings.

But though the Wycombe trade forms an important speciality, it would not do for him to confine himself solely to it, and he therefore cultivates an extensive business in other directions as well. For the last twenty years he has maintained a large trade in supplying firms in London, Bristol and Birmingham with all kinds of carriage, cart, van and wheel-building materials, including oak and elm stocks, oak spokes, ash and other felloes, oak, ash and elm planks, boards, scantlings, &c. The building trades have been very busy during recent years in many of those towns within



A VIEW IN MR. WM. AVERY'S YARD AT WHEATLEY, OXON.

important kinds of home timber in the round, as may be seen from the accompanying photographs. There was a large number of logs of oak, ash, elm, and beech, and many of them were of exceptional size and quality. The locality has long been noted for the large oak

its mildness and general suitability for their best work, qualifications which are more especially noticeable in the park-grown variety. The reason why park elm is preferred before any other exists in the fact that it is usually allowed to develop naturally, and is not so

a radius of twenty miles of Wheatley, and this has meant an opening for all kinds of fencing with home timber, of which he has not been slow to take advantage, and he has also done a good deal in silks and scantlings, for which the demand becomes increasingly heavy. He





ANOTHER VIEW IN MR. AVERY'S YARD AT WHEATLEY, OXON.

also supplies large quantities of scantlings and planking for general purposes too numerous to mention.

Like all merchants carrying on an extensive elm trade, he finds himself saddled with many odd pieces too small for the larger items of his business, but, believing in economy, he utilises the whole of these, when suitable, for making up into tin-plate boxes for Wales, and although the prices for these boxes are very finely cut, he states it answers his purpose, as he not only realises something for his timber, but at the same time clears his mills of what would otherwise be an alarming and useless accumulation.

successfully grapple with the problem of existence under acute competition is to be fully equipped with the most efficient labour and time saving appliances. His most pronounced step in developing this idea has been the putting down recently of one of Kirchner's large patent horizontal band mills, of which we are reproducing two photos showing it at work. The capabilities of this machine are really astounding, and while we were in the mill we witnessed the extraordinary and almost incredible rapidity with which it sliced up two large logs of elm into boards. One of these logs was a tough burred specimen, but this made no apparent difference to the speed of

or five minutes of this was lost, as no crane was available). The actual time occupied for each cut was only one minute, and the total amount of sawing done was 850ft. super.

The putting down of a machine having such an enormous capacity may fairly be described as almost a new departure in the home timber trade, and it marks the opening of another era for merchants engaged in this business, as, given sufficient work to keep it constantly occupied, it must tend to place them in a position to defy all competition from foreign timber of a similar nature to their own, on account of the immense lessening of the cost of production which has hitherto been such a



A STORAGE CORNER IN MR. AVERY'S YARD AT WHEATLEY, OXON.

On going through the mills we could not fail to observe that Mr. Avery has conclusively grasped the three fundamental principles conducing to present day success—economy and efficiency, combined with enterprise. He has seen the danger of too doggedly adhering to antiquated methods, and his practical experience has taught him that the only way to

the cut, nor to the surface left on the boards, which could only be surpassed in smoothness by a planing machine. The other log was 30ft. long by 36in. diameter at the butt end, and there was only a very slight taper throughout the whole length. Including the return motion of the travelling carriage, fifteen cuts were made in less than half an hour (and four

serious item to consider, and has often in itself effectually barred home timber from the market.

There is, of course, more than one design of horizontal band mill in existence, but judging from what we ourselves have seen, Kirchner's patent band mill is strikingly original. The great feature of the machine is that it cuts with the top part of the blade

bench, that is if the boards had held up to their specified thickness after cutting. The value of the timber thus saved is enormous, and not only pays for the whole of the sawing, but would leave a margin in addition. If this is the saving in less than half an hour, we leave our readers to estimate what it would be in a day, or in a year, particularly if expensive timber, such as mahogany, is being cut. To perform the work of cutting this 850ft. super. of elm, which was done by the horizontal log saw well within the half hour, an early type horizontal reciprocating frame saw would require at least one day, and hundreds of timber merchants are still using these saws. One of Kirchner's modern high-speed horizontal log frames would have occupied about five hours, while an upright timber frame would have taken just about three hours. The advantages, therefore, of the band mill are too preponderant to need further comment.

We have already spoken of the quality of the cutting, and to emphasize this we may mention that one of these machines was supplied to Rushforth & Son, mahogany merchants, of Bradford. These gentlemen had grave doubts as to the success of the machine, as their trade consists almost exclusively of mahogany and walnut, and their customers are chiefly cabinet makers. But since the machine was supplied they have stopped their various reciprocating saws entirely, and we hear that the quality of the cutting is first rate, and all that is required for their trade.

The working of this band mill is not at all as complicated as many imagine, and Mr. Avery's son, aged 17 years, manages it entirely, and has it under complete control, but at the same time, we should like to say he is quite "a chip of the old block."



MR. AVERY AND THE MILL STAFF.

As a necessary supplement to the band mill, Mr. Avery has had an automatic saw sharpening machine put down which effectively prepares the band saws to follow one another, according as they become dull, so that as little cessation of work as possible, required by their

changing, takes place. In conclusion, we must congratulate him upon the enterprising example he is showing the rest of the home timber trade, many members of which, no doubt, will soon be following his excellent initiative.

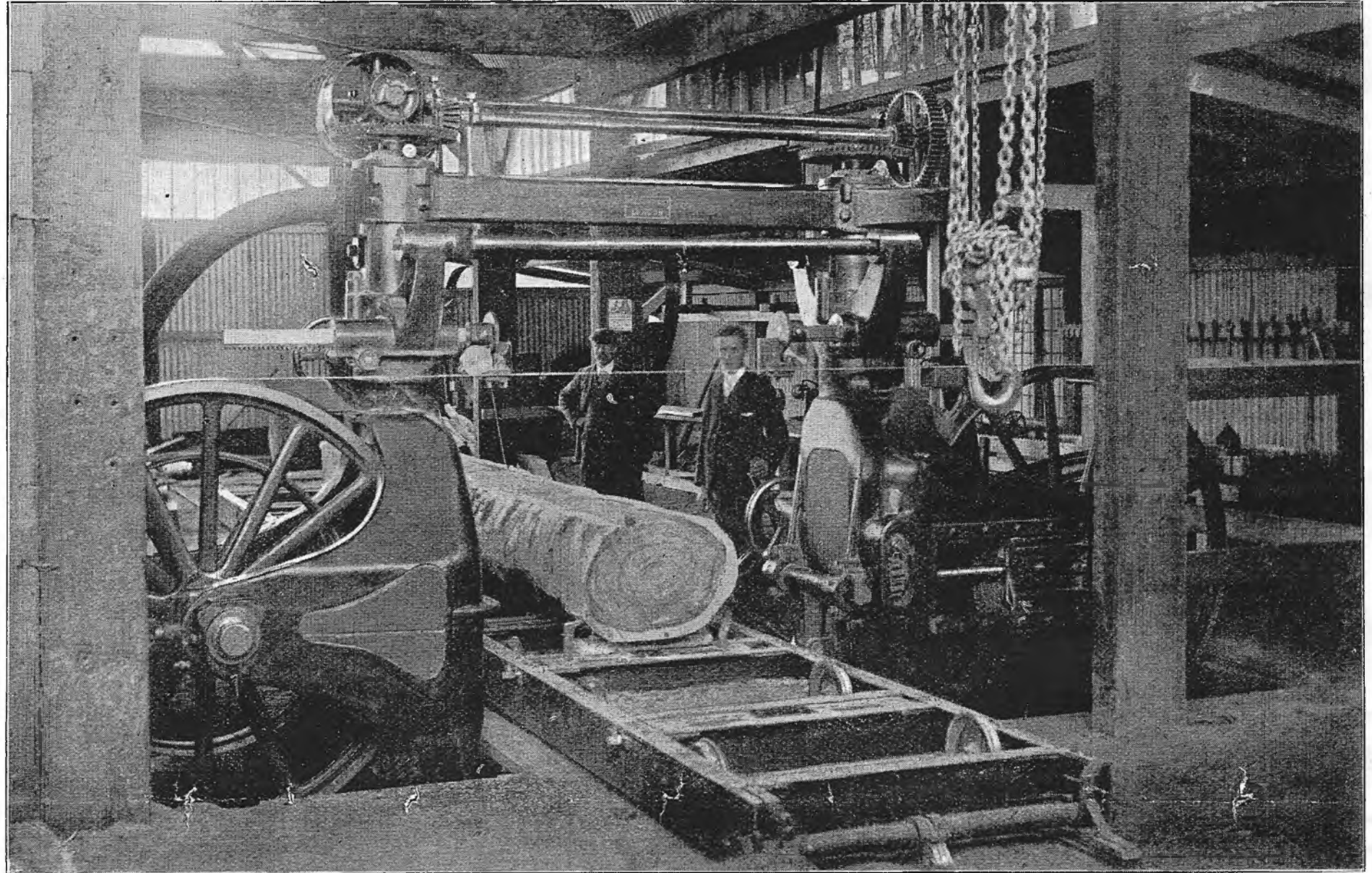


New technology at William Avery's saw mill ~ ~ ~

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KIRCHNER & CO'S NEW HORIZONTAL BAND LOG MILL.

Donated - Marjorie Avery