

build that very much the same style as now—a few things may be better—for £250 to £260; you cannot build that now for another £100. A properly finished four-roomed house costs £350 or £360 at the very least.

35. That is about 25 per cent. more?—Every bit of it. I have in all my contracts a schedule of prices with the rates set down. The tenders are sent in, but only the schedule of the successful tender is opened. I have been looking up a tender of the early “eighties”; the timber, framing, joisting, &c., in 1885 and 1886, including labour and material, was set down at 12s. 6d. and 13s. 6d. per hundred feet. Then it rose up to about £1—the cost of ordinary red-pine frames, joisting, and roofing. Now it is £1 4s. and £1 8s. If you take that, the cost is nearly doubled in that one item. Flooring used to be scheduled at 18s. per hundred feet, and now it is up to £1 8s. and £1 10s.

36. Having gone so closely into the question of the framing and flooring, have you taken the trouble to take out what proportion of the difference belongs to labour and what to the rise in timber?—Of course, when the framing was running up to 14s. the timber was 7s. 6d. per hundred, and is now still about half. The labour runs about half, because it runs 13s. to 14s., and the flooring £1 10s.; flooring was then up to 15s., and it will now run up to £1 10s. Framing was 13s. 6d. for timber delivered in town here, and it now runs up to £1 6s. or £1 8s. The timber is about half the cost, and the labour is the rest.

37. So that you hold that the proportion of the cost of timber to the total cost of a building is about the same ratio now as at that time?—It is. Of course, labour has gone up. In those days carpenters were getting 9s. and less, and a good deal of labour was let by contract, and men were quite willing to take 8s. Now, of course, the wage is 10s., and some builders have to pay more. The builders have other expenses, too, that they did not have then—larger expenses in the matter of scaffolding, which is very expensive now, but it is better.

38. I understand from you that the higher cost of building is not in consequence of the rise in timber—that the price of timber bears the same proportion to the cost of the building as at that time?—Yes.

39. *Mr. Hanan.*] Referring to comparative cost to-day and that which obtained some years ago, is it not a fact that the buildings to-day are of a better class? You have more conveniences indoors—pantries, &c.?—Yes, in the shape of cooking-stoves, and fittings generally of that sort; but that does not account for the cost, because the few poor conveniences you had in those days were more costly then than now. To go back to the cheapest grates, you had to pay £1 or £1 5s.; you can get as good a grate now for 14s. Of course, a great many houses did not have grates. Then the ranges: A large number were imported; now they are locally made, better, more convenient, and not very much dearer.

40. There is also hot- and cold-water service, bathroom, and so on?—You have hot-water service in a great many houses; of course, it is a great improvement.

41. Do not these items add to the cost of a building?—It adds £10 or £15 to a cottage, but it does not account for the great disparity. When it comes to larger buildings it becomes very much more apparent. In the matter of brickwork, for instance, it is very much more costly now than it was; the raw material is more costly.

42. Is it cheaper to build in brick or in wood?—There used to be a larger difference between brick and wooden buildings than now. I reckon that a plain brick building and a plain wooden one has a difference of something like 12 or 14 per cent.

43. Which would you recommend?—Brick. A good brick building of that kind is worth ninety years' life; a wooden building is not worth more than twenty-five years' life. At the end of twenty-five years the upkeep of that building is so expensive that it is practically dead. The upkeep of a brick building may last for a couple of centuries.

44. Then you would recommend the Government to build in brick?—Certainly.

45. If Oregon is imported, to the extent which now obtains, does it mean the destruction of the sawmilling industry?—No.

46. Why?—Because the Oregon we are using in large material—battens and suchlike—is comparatively small as regards amount when compared to the huge quantity of local timber—so much so that it does not account in the first place for the increase. There is an increase going on in all these towns, larger this year than last, and unless you increase the number of sawmills in proportion you cannot say that the whole increase of the importation is taken from the sawmills. There is no necessity for increasing the sawmills that are now established. There is a slackness of the building trade here, but it is only a temporary slackness, and I have no doubt the sawmillers are feeling it the same as anybody else. But to say that because timber is imported they are going to put up their shutters would be ridiculous. You have an opportunity of considering the whole situation and looking to conservation for the future. If you are going to multiply the sawmills, you would be doing the country a huge injury.

47. To increase the duty on Oregon would be a national calamity?—It would be a great mistake. “National calamity” is rather a heavy word.

48. *Mr. Jennings.*] Have you any knowledge of the area of timber in the Dominion?—No.

49. Have you any knowledge of the amount destroyed by fire?—No, but I have seen huge tracts that have been destroyed.

50. I do not mean settlers destroying?—By cutting and burning. I suppose Invercargill has suffered as much as any other district.

51. Have you any knowledge of the artificial seasoning of timber?—Well, we tried it years ago.

52. Anything of the new processes?—We had that process: we had creosote in the sleepers: this is passing the creosote through the timber. I had a little experience in London—Bethel's Works. He was the inventor of the creosote process. There it was simply driven through the ends