

THE BUSINESS SITUATION

Winnipeg, Saturday, Dec. 3.

Reports from the country indicate a decided improvement in business, and city retail merchants have also found trade more active the last week or so. While the season of active business has been later than usual in starting, owing to the late harvest and bad country roads during the fall, the prospects ahead are good. Manitoba farmers have never before held as much grain for sale at as late a date as this. A year ago farmers were practically sold out while this year the bulk of the crop is still to come out. This would indicate that there will be a good, steady trade and easier money market, for some time in the future. While in past years the proceeds from the sale of the crops has come in with a rush, by the custom of marketing the great bulk of the crop within the two months following harvest, this year there will be steady and more prolonged inflow of cash as the crop leaves farmers' hands. The quantity of Manitoba wheat now in sight, including stocks at Fort William and west, is between 6 and 7 million bushels, exclusive of what has been shipped east of Fort William. While the regular lake steamship lines have ceased running and navigation has closed for general traffic, grain is still moving freely, and several charters were made this week to carry wheat east from Fort William. The moderate weather is favorable for a continuance of the lake grain movement. Wheat prices to farmers in the country, however, tend lower, as grain has now to be purchased on a winter basis, as to freights and carrying charges. The fall of snow at the beginning of the week has made good sleighing and been the cause of improvement in business. Bank clearings at Winnipeg show a very heavy increase this week, reaching \$3,264,000, which is the largest week of the season and the first week for one time which exceeds the corresponding period of last year. Bank clearings for November are just two millions under November last year, but 23.4 millions greater than for November, 1896. Land sales for November were not as large as they would have been if the harvest work had not been so delayed by wet weather. November is the heaviest month in the year for land sales, but this year's November sales were less than monthly sales during March to July inclusive. But November sales this year exceeded any month last year except November, which is a good record considering the drawback. Had the crop been turned into cash at as early a date as usual, November land sales this year would have undoubtedly been the largest on record.

WINNIPEG MARKETS

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(All quotations, unless otherwise specified, are wholesale for such quantities as are usually taken by retail dealers, and are subject to the usual reduction on large quantities and to cash discounts.)

FISH.

The supply of fish is liberal and the variety in the market covers a wider range. The close season for Manitoba whitefish ended on Dec. 1st, so that winter fishing on the lakes has now commenced and fresh caught white will soon be in the market to take the place of refrigerator stock.

HARDWARE, AND PAINTS.

Glass holds firm without further change. Some lots of glass for this market were on the lost steamer bound for Montreal. While stocks are not heavy there will probably be sufficient for requirements. Linseed oil is firm. Sheet zinc is held a fraction higher, in sympathy with recent advances east. Horse shoes are held very firm, the tendency being to get 10c more than recent inside quotations.

GROCERIES.

In the line of price changes there is scarcely anything to note this week, the only change in our list being an advance of 15c per bushel on beans. The great bulk of winter stocks are now in, and changes in prices will not be as numerous during the next few weeks as has been the case in the immediate past. New table raisins are now in stock. In nuts no new stock has been received yet, but will be in shortly. The tendency is firm on nuts and prices are likely to run high this season, as stocks are light in several lines. A few new dates have arrived in Eastern markets, via New York, but none have reached here, and any considerable supply of dates is not expected before about the end of the month. The market for teas generally is firm, India teas are said to be advancing in primary markets. The Indian Tea association has published a revised estimate of the crop showing that the production will be about 4,000,000 pound short of the original estimate. Advices from China also report advancing markets for Hysons and Pingsueys. Brazil coffee is higher abroad. Molasses and sugars are very firm in Eastern markets. A further advance in Barbadoes is talked of at Montreal and Toronto. Canned tomatoes were easier in the east last week.

GREEN FRUITS.

California navel oranges are now offering more freely, and those coming forward show very good quality for so early in the season. Mexican oranges are also still arriving. There has been a temporary dearth of California lemons. Apples hold firm. Dealers are not anxious to part with their choice fruit at present prices, as they look for an advance. Bananas are higher, as they can only be handled by express now. Walnuts and almonds are scarce and higher. Prices are: New California navel oranges \$5 to \$5.50, as to size; Mexican oranges \$4.50 to \$5 box; bananas, per bunch, \$3 to \$3.50, as to size; California lemons, nominal; Messina lemons, \$4.50 to \$5 box; Oregon winter Nellie pears, \$2.50 to \$2.75 per box; Ontario apples, ordinary winter stock, \$3.25 to \$3.75 as to quality; fancy apples, \$4 per barrel;

Almeria grapes \$8 a keg; cranberries, Cape Cod, \$8 barrel; sweet potatoes \$5 per bbl.; cocoanuts, \$1 a doz.; Sicily filberts, large, 11 to 12c per pound, Grenoble walnuts, 15c; Tarragona almonds, 16c; peanuts, green, 10c; roasted, 12c; pecans, 14 to 15c; shelled walnuts, 24 1-2 to 26c lb.; strained honey, 8 1-2 to 9c per pound; maple sugar, 11 to 12; apple cider, 35c per gallon in barrels and half barrels; California figs, in boxes of ten bricks, \$2 per box; celery, 40c dozen bunches.

GRAIN AND PRODUCE.

WHEAT—The week has been dull and steady in the wheat markets, with a little more life in them in the last two days. The December deal in the speculative markets seems to have been pretty well provided for, and parties who had bought December wheat in anticipation of a squeeze in the last days of November, had to let go their holdings at lower figures, and the last day of November was marked by decided weakness and lower prices. On the first instant the market seemed to rebound from the previous weakness, as if relieved from some weight, and a lively spurt took place in all markets. However, on the week there is practically no alteration in values. The movement in wheat in the United States is unprecedentedly large, but the demand holds pretty fair pace with the supply. On Thursday alone the clearances of wheat and flour from the American seaboard aggregated 1,633,000 bushels. Such a quantity for one day is enormous. The stock of wheat in public granaries in Liverpool, London, Hull and Glasgow on November 30th was only 1,440,000 bushels, no more than would supply the consumption of the United Kingdom for about two and one half days only. The world's visible supply for the week increased 3,800,000 bushels against 7,032,000 bushels the week previous. Locally the market has been dull and

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