

THE BUSINESS SITUATION

Winnipeg, Saturday, Feb. 25.

Business is increasing in volume as the season advances. Building prospects for this year in the city are excellent. The erection of several more large business blocks has been announced, making a good list of blocks, the erection of which is already assured. This warrants the expectation of a brisk demand for building material and the employment of labor to a considerable extent. Work on the new city waterworks and street improvements will also give employment to a large number of men. The outlook is therefore for a particularly active season in the city. The grain movement has increased considerably, but a large percentage of the grain moving has been off grade stuff, owing to varying degrees of dampness. Out of 251 cars inspected at Winnipeg last week, 140 were "no grade," which means damp or tough grain. There is increasing apprehension as to the keeping quality of a portion of the crop, after warm weather sets in. Many farmers continue to hold their grain for higher prices, though there appears little prospect of any material change in wheat values for some time in the future. Bank clearings at Winnipeg continue in excess of like periods in previous years.

WINNIPEG MARKETS

Winnipeg, Saturday, Feb. 25.

(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.)

BICYCLES.

Evidences are becoming manifest of the opening of a new bicycle season. Prices are very much lower than a year ago. Many of the standard high grade wheels will sell from \$15 to \$20 less than last year. On the cheaper wheels of course such a big cut cannot be made. Cheaper grades of wheels will sell from \$5 to \$15 under last year's prices, according to grade. With this big reduction in the price of standard wheels there will likely be a much larger sale of the better class of wheels, in preference to the buying of cheap wheels, as the difference in prices between the high grade standard wheels and cheap wheels is not now nearly so great as formerly.

BLUESTONE BOOMING.

The big advance and continued strong market for bluestone makes this commodity worthy of further special mention, though it has been twice referred to at length in recent issues of The Commercial. The market continues very firm, due to the big advance in copper, of which bluestone is a by-product. At New York car lots are held at 53-4 to 6c, at which price it could not be sold here at less than 6 1-2 to 7c. Local dealers have been selling out their stocks at ridiculously low prices, compared with the cost to lay down new stocks, and

now it is said stocks in the local market are about exhausted. The demand for bluestone in Manitoba is very large for the spring trade, as the product is largely used here for treating seed grain to prevent smut. A considerable portion of the spring requirements have already been filled, but should the demand continue there will have to be a big advance in the local market, as new supplies will have to be brought in at the increased cost. Winnipeg jobbers had a good chance to make big money on bluestone this season, but they have thrown it away, as they usually do, by refusing to take advantage of the market. Retail dealers who have purchased their supplies of bluestone, should hold for firm prices, as the market warrants their making a good profit on this commodity. If they have to replenish stocks later, they may find that they will have to pay about 6 1-2c for it, instead of 4 to 4 1-2c as ruled for earlier purchases.

FUEL.

The screw was given another turn on anthracite coal this week, prices being advanced 25c at Duluth and Chicago to \$5.25 per ton for stove size, equal to \$8.25 for car lots on track at Winnipeg. Some local dealers, however, still continue to deliver coal in retail quantities to consumers at \$8 per ton, which shows an apparent loss, on the basis of present cost to import, of 25c per ton, in addition to cost of delivering and other business expenses. Other dealers are trying to secure an advance in prices. Of course there is a considerable difference in the quality of different coals. Wood fuel is abundant and easy in price. The Canadian Pacific railway has reduced the freight rate on cordwood, equal to about 25c per cord, which will enable those holding wood on that line to compete to better advantage with the lower priced cordwood which has been coming into the city from points on the new Southeastern railway.

GROCERIES.

The only change in the local market this week relates to tobacco. The little tiff among jobbers in regard to tobacco has been arranged. T. & B. and Prince of Wales have been advanced, but not to where they were before the cutting started. Package and tins have been reduced 1c to 6c, pretty much all through the list. Cable advices have continued to report a firm market for Japan rice. Patna also has advanced and new crop Burma has been reported offered rather sparingly. Dried fruits are advancing, particularly for prunes. Recent advices from Brazil state the coffee crop this year is some 25 per cent. less than last, in which case, with a greater consumption, there may be an advance in prices.

GREEN FRUITS.

Messina lemons have now arrived and the market is now stocked with a good quality of this class of lemons. California lemons are also offering. Apples continue very scarce, several dealers being practically out of stock this week, or confined to a very limited variety. Spies are held at \$5.50 to \$6, the latter figures for anything good. Oranges are easier. Prices are: California navel oranges, \$4.00 to \$4.25 as to size, Mexican oranges, \$3 to \$3.25 per box; bananas, per bunch, large \$3 to \$3.50; medium, \$2.25 to \$2.50; Messina lemons \$4 to \$4.50, as to quality. California lemons, \$4 to \$4.50 per box. Apples, spies, \$5.50 to \$6 barrel. Other varieties obtainable \$4 to \$5 as to

quality. Almeria grapes, nominal; frozen cranberries, \$6.00 per barrel; cranberries, unfrozen, \$6 barrel; coconuts, \$1 a dozen; Sicily filberts, large 11 to 12c per pound; Grenoble walnuts, 15c; Tarragona almonds, 14c; peanuts, green, 10c; roasted, 12c; pecan nuts, 12c lb.; shell-ed walnuts, 24 1-2 to 26c per pound; comb honey, \$2.15 per dozen sections; strained honey, \$1-2 to 9c per pound; maple sugar, 11 to 12c; apple cider, 35c per gallon in barrels and half barrels; California figs, in boxes of ten bricks, \$2 per box; dates, 7 1-2c per pound; celery, 40c per dozen bunches.

HARDWARE.

There are some changes in prices, all in an upward direction. In fact the strong tone of the market for all staple lines continues. In this branch of trade everything seems to be getting into the hands of trusts in the manufacturing department and competition is being crushed out. Along with the formation of trusts there is a considerable speculative element at work which has affected prices on several leading commodities. While prices have generally advanced considerably of late, they are still low on many important staples, compared with what they were a few years ago, for it must be remembered that prices were at a very low ebb before the recent advance. Locally shot is 1-4c higher. Lard oil has advanced 2c, and plaster is 25c per barrel higher.

LUMBER.

Indications point to a good season's trade. The mills are better supplied with lumber for the spring trade than they were a year ago, as they have more lumber in the yards and they also have more logs at hand to begin cutting early in the spring, so that they are therefore, not likely to be tied up as they were last spring on account of inability to secure logs owing to low water. Nothing has been

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