

CHEAPER FUEL.

The reduction in the price of wood which has been going on in Winnipeg for the last two weeks, is only the natural outcome of a policy of carrying the market on the part of the dealers, with the intention of holding up prices in opposition to the natural law of supply and demand. During last winter famine prices were reached in a number of local products, notably wood and hay, and it is but natural, that an expectation of a return of these should linger in the minds of those who were interested in high prices, and events have so turned as to seriously disappoint this class.

Among the many effects of the collapse of the real estate boom of last winter and spring, was the compulsion of promiscuous speculators to look for other sources of investment and to the credit of some of these unsettled individuals be it said, that they employed their spare funds towards the development of local products in lines where the expense of plant and machinery were light. The two commodities we have mentioned, wood and hay, attracted considerable attention. Those who went into hay cutting were not likely to be more successful than those who went into wood cutting, but prairie fires helped them out to some extent, and although they have no chance of reaching the famine prices of last spring, there is not much chance of a glut of the local hay market. In wood speculators have fared worse. Heavy cutting operations have been carried on by the regular wood dealers, and the enormous quantity of wood which the C. P. R. have discarded in favor of coal has also been thrown upon the market, thus completing the glut, and completely crushing the last hopes of a profit to the speculative operators.

It does seem strange that the regular wood contractors did not fore-see this state of affairs some months ago. Through the fall and early winter their inexorable figures were \$7 to 7.50 for poplar and \$9 for tamarac, and the fact that a reduction in coal might affect their business never seemed to enter their minds. A reduction of \$1 a cord would have caused many to have contracted for wood instead of coal for their winter's fuel, and made the demand for the former much greater. There can be no doubt, but the proportion of coal to wood fuel in Winnipeg is much greater this winter than last, and

the holding up of wood prices early in the season has had much to do with this fact. The city of Winnipeg is now in the position of having a glutted wood market, and reduced demand for wood, and matters are so fortunately arranged for the consumers, that coal dealers cannot advance prices either. A reaction will doubtless set in next season, and the supply of wood will be much shorter, but coal via Thunder Bay will then be reaching the city and a corner on fuel would be rather a difficult undertaking to carry out. At present there is every prospect of wood retailing in the city at \$5 a cord, and the fact takes a great amount of bitterness out of the blast of "Old Boreas."

The wood glut is another sample of the folly of trying to hold up an over-crowded market, a folly which sharper men than the wood dealers of Winnipeg have been guilty of. But it has another lesson, and that appeals to a certain class who imagine that there is a fortune in shipping any class of goods to a Winnipeg market. Even the omniferous maw of the Manitoba capital can be over-satiated, and not a few are finding this fact out to their cost. There is some excuse for shippers at a distance mistaking the tendencies and capacity of the market here for goods which have to be imported, but it does seem sheer folly for speculators to calculate upon famine prices for such products as cord wood and hay, which nature has provided in such plenty at the very gates of the city.

Winnipeg Wholesale Trade.

AGRICULTURAL MACHINERY, CARRIAGES, ETC.

In agricultural machinery itself, the trade during the week has been very light. A few actual sales of plows to country retailers being all the transactions. The central houses in the city are beginning to receive some goods for spring trade, and heavy consignments are now on the way to this city. Some few consignments have been sent to branch warehouses during the week, and the stocking up of these will be commenced early this season so as to avoid the mistakes caused last spring by the break up. In sleighs and cutters there has been considerable business done, but the bulk of that trade is over for the season, and only immediate wants are what retailers buy for.

BOOTS AND SHOES.

This branch of trade is anything but active at present. A few orders for sorts have come in during the week, but the winter's trade is virtually over, and no goods of any account will be handled for a month to come. Orders for spring goods have been taken during the week or delivery in February, but none of the whole-

sale dealers have received any quantity of their spring stock, although heavy consignments are on their way and will arrive inside of a few weeks. Collections are reported reasonably good, and there is a general feeling of satisfaction with the season's trade now past.

CLOTHING.

During the week there has been quite a number of orders for sorts in this line of business, but trade may be said to be rather quiet. Some orders for spring goods have come in during the week, and quite a share of spring stock is now on its way to the city. Some wholesale men are about to start for eastern markets to finish purchases. A quiet spell is expected for a few weeks, but with the opening of the year the bustle of receiving new goods will commence. Stocks are low at present, and the work of ballancing up for the season is going on.

CROCKERY AND GLASS WARE.

Everything is bustle in this line of business, and the week has been one of great activity. The trade in fancy goods for the holiday season has been heavy. Staple goods are also in steady demand in both city and country, and a hopeful feeling pervades the trade. Quite a number of opening orders from new points have been received during the week, and the area of operations is steadily widening.

DRY GOODS.

There is a very quiet feeling in this branch of business, and the trade of the past week has been very limited indeed. The temporary activity of two weeks ago has subsided, and some houses feel slightly disappointed. At the trade in sorts has fallen away so suddenly. Both from city and country the demand is very slow, and a lull of a few weeks is generally expected. A few orders for spring goods for future delivery have been received, but even in these lines the trade done is very limited. Collections are reported only fair, and a considerable improvement is looked for as the new year opens up. The quiet feeling is more extreme than was anticipated, but houses were doubtless basing their calculations upon the rushing trade which has been done during the fall and early winter, which will account for the disappointment of a few.

DRUGS AND CHEMICALS.

A good steady business kept up in this branch until a few days ago, when a quietness set in and has since continued. Travellers have started out within a week, and returns from them are expected to liven matters up during the present week. There have been no noteworthy change in the prices of any class of goods, and no unusual demand in any special lines. Although a quietness prevails the trade is in a very healthy state, and collections are reported reasonably good. The feeling of the trade is decidedly hopeful.

FANCY GOODS AND SMALLWARES.

The reports of the week from this branch of trade are of the most encouraging description, and are quite in contrast with the dull feeling in other branches. The city trade is specially active, while a steady demand comes from the country. Houses are pushed to get out orders in fancy goods for the holiday trade, and in