

THE BUSINESS SITUATION

Winnipeg, Saturday, Jan. 22.

Indications of the spring movement are beginning to be discernible in some lines. Wholesale trade, speaking generally, is quiet and orders for present requirements are for small amounts. Fairly liberal orders have been booked for spring shipment. The shipment of spring goods has begun to a limited extent in clothing, boots and shoes and such lines. In harness and leather goods business is the most active for immediate wants. The fuel trade has been quiet on account of mild weather. Prices have been advanced on white pine lumber at the mills, about 50 cents per thousand feet. Uncertainty in regard to possible tariff changes at the coming meeting of parliament is a slightly disturbing feature, with particular reference to binder twine. The tariff on fence wire is also a cause of uncertainty, owing to the variety of meanings which may be taken from the different clauses covering the wire duties. The grain trade is very dull. The reduction in the duty on flour is being felt quite severely by Manitoba millers in competing for the trade of Pacific coast points and the Klondike, owing to the more favorable position of millers at United States Pacific coast points for handling the Canadian coast and Klondike flour trade. Barb wire, an important staple used almost exclusively for fencing in the prairie country, is now offering at the lowest prices ever quoted here, owing to the removal of the duty on January 1. As usual at this time of year, the failure list has increased some during the past couple of weeks, but the few failures reported have all been small affairs, with the exception of the Henderson failure at Carberry, which is of moderate proportions for a country trader. Parties are arriving in the city en route to the Klondike, but they do not do much outfitting here. Bank clearings, though much lighter than they were a short time ago, still show a considerable gain over previous years.

WINNIPEG MARKETS

Winnipeg, Saturday Afternoon, Jan. 22.

DRUGS.

Business is quiet in this branch, and locally there is no change in quotations, which will be found on another page. Two or three commodities are unsettled in price, including iodine and quinine. These articles are fluctuating in value and their future is uncertain. Advances are expected shortly as to the season's production of Norwegian cod liver oil, and until these are received the tenor of cod liver oil prices will be uncertain. Glycerine is very firm abroad, late advices reporting an advance of \$15 per ton.

FISH.

A good many round frozen fish are being hauled in from the lakes and offered on the street market by peddlers in consequence of which prices for Manitoba lake fish are about 1-2c lower. Haddies are also 1-2 to 1c lower, and are offering now at very low prices. Fresh sea fish are about the same. Smelts are 1c lower, but other lines are unchanged. Fresh bloaters are coming in.

FUEL.

Prices for fuel remain the same. Cordwood is offering freely, and poplar wood is easier, \$2.75 per cord now because of the outside price for carlots on track here. Other kinds of wood are unchanged. Complaint is made that the tamarac wood coming into the city over the new Dauphin road, contains a considerable quantity of spruce, which latter is regarded as poor fuel, hardly equal to good poplar. The mild weather has materially reduced the consumption of coal, but notwithstanding this fact, the output of the native Souris mines has been much the largest since these mines were opened, the increase in the output to date being estimated at over 50 per cent. It is rumored that a Nova Scotia syndicate contemplate purchasing the Souris mines.

GROCERIES.

Business is quiet. Orders being received at present from the country are mostly for small quantities. Advances from outside markets this week report higher prices for Sultana raisins, strong markets for rice on account of the shortage of the Japan crop, and firm tea markets, particularly for Japans. The local market has not followed the full advance at other markets recently on many staple lines. Tomatoes, for instance, though higher here, are much below a parity with Eastern markets. Jobbing prices at Toronto and Montreal on tomatoes are quoted at \$1.10 to \$1.25 per dozen, or \$2.20 to \$2.50 per case. Add freight charges of 62c per case, would make the cost \$2.82 to \$3.12 laid down in Winnipeg, compared with Winnipeg prices of \$2.50 to \$2.75 per case.

LEATHER AND HARNESS.

The leather markets are very strong everywhere. Advances from the east continue to report advances in leather and manufactures of leather. The latest was an advance of 10c on hemlock harness leather. Our telegraphic report from Toronto a couple of weeks ago also reported an advance on harness. It is said that this advance will amount to as much as 12 1-2 to 15 per cent on some lines. Harness leather has been particularly strong and the sharpest advances have been on this class of leather. In this market harness leather has been advanced 2c to 3c, altogether, a further advance of 1c having recently gone into effect. Harness, saddles, collars, etc., have been advanced in proportion, or equal to \$2.50 to \$3.50 on ordinary team harness, according to quality, on wholesale prices. Business is already quite active in the harness trade and quite a number of orders to fit out parties for the Klondike have been received, including combination harness, saddles, pack saddles, hobbles, sleeping bags, repair outfits, etc.

LUMBER.

Some new business is doing all the time, though dealers do not expect much at this season of the year.

Farmers who intend building next summer, however, are hauling their lumber while they have slighting and spare time. There is more of this doing than usual this winter, which would indicate good prospects for next year. Dealers are getting in stocks for the spring trade. It is said that lumber will dry very much quicker in the yards here or throughout the province than at the Lake of the Woods mills. One reason for this, no doubt, is, that the lumber is not in such large piles, and is more subject to wind and air. The climate of the prairie is also more drying than down at the lake. In the case of green lumber, it is therefore, an advantage to have it delivered at the yards some time before it is required. It is claimed lumber will dry as much in one month in the prairie yards, as it will in three months at the lake mills. Winnipeg dealers are working on the old price lists yet, and they have not advanced prices in sympathy with the advances in British Columbia, as well as in white pine lumber. A good many red cedar shingles are being delivered to dealers, on purchases made for future delivery before the recent advance of 25c on shingles. The advance on white pine lumber, which recently went into effect at the mills, ranges from 50c to \$1 per M, the advance on most lines being 50c. Timber, 6x6, is advanced 50c, and 2 and 3 inch common dimension is advanced the same amount. There is an advance of 50c on boards, except on 2nd common stock boards, which remain the same. Shiplap is also marked up 50c. Flooring, ceiling and siding is up 50c, except 4th flooring, ceiling and siding, which latter grade has been advanced \$1 per M. This makes a pretty general advance of 50c on lumber, except the 4th grades, of flooring, etc., which show a greater advance. Finishing lumber, mouldings, lath, etc., are unchanged. With this advance at the mills, it is, of course, an advantage for those who contemplate building to get their lumber at once, before the retail yards issue new lists. It is not likely the Winnipeg dealers will issue a new list before the meeting of the association in February. Price lists received here from Minnesota dealers show advances of 50c to \$1 on white pine.

HARDWARE, PAINTS, ETC.

While this is the dull season, there is a little doing, and a few orders for spring supplies from the far west are beginning to come in. Orders from British Columbia points come in much earlier than from Manitoba. The feature attracting most attention in the trade at present is the duties on fence wire. There seems to be something of a muddle in the matter of the tariff on fence wire. The fact that barb wire was placed on the free list on January 1 last, led most people in the trade to suppose that plain twisted wire, which is also used largely for fencing, would also come in free. That appears not to be the case. Clause 263 of the tariff act provides that "barbed wire, and galvanized wire for fencing, numbers 9, 12 and 15 gauge," shall remain as free after January 1, 1898. This simply covers barb wire and three sizes of galvanized wire for fencing. Many supposed that the words "galvanized wire for fencing" would include plain twisted wire, but the connection shows that it refers only to the three sizes of plain wire mentioned. Clause 263 fixes a duty of 15 per cent on "wire fencing of iron or steel," not