

THE BUSINESS SITUATION.

Winnipeg, Friday Afternoon, Dec. 24.

Business with the wholesale houses has been very slow in about every branch with the possible exception of fruits, the holiday trade having been supplied previous to this week. The late sorting trade has not been up to expectations, and the last month or six weeks have shown a limited trade in general lines. Retailers bought freely early in the season, and their purchases then appear to have fully met the consuming requirements of the country. Winnipeg houses have prepared for the spring trade on a larger scale than for years, importations being unusually heavy. The recent failure of a local jobbing firm does not appear to have led to any serious disturbances in the trade, and apparently the customers of the house have been able to arrange their affairs and open new accounts, though of course it will be some little time before the full effect of the failure on the retail trade will be known.

It is reported that some new wholesale houses will be established in Winnipeg. A general survey of the situation would indicate that in nearly every branch, the field is already fully occupied, if not over-supplied, and competition is keen in most lines. The country, of course, is developing, and population increasing, but at the same time, it must be borne in mind that the entire population of the region tributary to Winnipeg is only about 300,000. For this limited population the number of houses now in the field in most lines would appear to be all that the trade will support. In groceries there are five large jobbing houses, besides produce and provision dealers, jobbers handling special lines, such as teas and package goods, and brokers. In hardware and metals there are also five jobbing houses, not including several houses handling stoves, tinware, and other special lines. In dry goods, clothing and kindred lines there are eight or nine old established houses. Other branches are represented in about the same proportion, which would indicate that, on the basis of population, the field is well occupied. Besides the local houses, a large number of eastern houses have agencies here, or send their travellers through the country, making competition very keen in every branch.

WINNIPEG MARKETS

Winnipeg, Friday Afternoon, Dec. 24.

Saturday being a holiday this week our market reports close on Friday, and the paper is issued one day earlier than usual. The same plan will be followed next week, as New Year's holiday also falls on Saturday.

RAW FURS.

A few small lots are coming in, but so far the quantity offering has been light though liberal collection of furs are looked for this season, the weather being favorable for trapping. On another page of this issue will be found a report of the quantity of furs to be offered at the Hudson's Bay Co.'s coming sales in London.

GREEN FRUITS.

The country holiday trade was about supplied by the beginning of the week, but a good business was done up to the close of the week with the city trade. Dealers report that the season has been a good one and their sales show a considerable increase over last year. The lines in the market are much the same as last week and the same remarks made a week ago still applies to oranges. Later arrivals of California lemons are fine quality. Oranges have been easier, but a firmer market is now looked for on account of the frosts in California. Frost was reported three nights in succession, and if the frost has been at all severe it will mean an enormous loss, as it is estimated that five to six million dollars worth of oranges were on the trees. It does not take a very severe frost to utterly destroy oranges. The frost destroys the action of the oil of the rind in the fruit, and in a short time the juice of the orange dries out. Frosted oranges are utterly worthless. If the frost is as severe as reported, higher prices may be looked for, for both oranges and lemons. New dates were reported in last week, but it is said the stock was not now, but well kept old stocks. Stocks of winter pears are nearly cleaned up. Prices are as follows: Mexican oranges, \$1.50 to \$5; navel oranges \$1.50 to \$5; bananas, per bunch, \$3 to \$3.50; California lemons, \$4.50 to \$5.00 a box. Washington and Oregon pears, \$2 to \$2.25 per box; apples, Ontario stock, \$4 to \$4.75 per barrel; southern apples, \$4 to \$4.25 per bbl.; Cape Cod cranberries \$7.50 to \$8 per barrel; sweet potatoes \$5.25 per barrel; Malaga grapes, \$3 per keg for medium, and \$8.50 for heavy weights, Ontario black walnut, 80 lb; coconuts, \$1 per dozen; Sicily filberts, large 11c to 12c per lb; Grenoble walnuts, 13c; figs, fancy eleme, \$1.40 to \$1.50 per 10 lb box, 30 lb boxes 16c; 50 lb. boxes, 17c per lb; dates 7 1-2c per pound; imported celery 50 to 60c per doz.

DRY GOODS.

Travelers are now out with full lines of spring samples. Local houses have made preparations on a large scale for spring business, and the trade will find Winnipeg house, better prepared than ever before to supply their requirements, both as regards quantity and variety. In some lines such as mits, etc., a good trade has been done with Edmonton and also the Crow's Nest construction camps.

FUEL.

Dealers still find it difficult to keep up with their orders for Souris coal, the demand being large, in addition to which some delays have been experienced at the mines as well as in shipping. There are no changes in coal or wood fuel, the tendency of cordwood being easy, if anything. The Winnipeg school board is calling for tenders for cordwood, tenders to be in by December 31.

LUMBER.

Business for present wants is very slow. The feature of interest now is in regard to prices for the spring trade. In this respect the outlook is very strong, and there is almost a certainty that prices will be higher on a good many lines for the spring trade. In fact prices have already been advanced by the British Columbia manufacturers on several lines, including an advance of 25 cents on shingles. There is also talk of some advances on white pine lumber for the spring trade. Winnipeg quotations, have not been advanced on any line yet. There is scarcely anything doing now, and dealers are therefore not in a hurry to follow advances by manufacturers.

Regarding the British Columbia trade, it is well known that the lumber trade on the Pacific coast has been in a most unsatisfactory state for years. Cutting in prices has prevailed there to such an extent that a number of the mills were forced to close. The prices of logs were cut down, wages were cut down, in fact everything about the lumber trade was cut down to a starvation basis. Those remaining in the trade are no doubt beginning to see the folly of carrying on business in this way, and with the general revival in trade at the coast, there are fair prospects for getting the lumber business into better shape. Higher freight rates at the coast and scarcity of vessels has limited the export trade somewhat lately.

GROCERIES.

The local market is quiet, the holiday trade being over. The Ontario packers of canned goods had a meeting at Toronto recently, and from their reports it seems that the situation regarding tomatoes is very firm. It was said that there are only a few packers holding tomatoes now, and they are very strong in their views. Some Toronto jobbers have advanced prices to 95c, and 90c to 95c is quoted at Toronto, while \$1 or more is being talked on tomatoes later on. Some packers reported good sales of goods for export, which is exerting a strong influence on the market. Sugars are firm at the recent advances. Molasses and syrups are firm.

HARDWARE, PAINTS, ETC.

Dealers are stock-taking. Business is dull and prices nominal. No new features reported this week.

GRAIN AND PRODUCE.

WHEAT.—The great feature of interest in wheat is the big "deal" in December wheat in Chicago. This deal is on a gigantic scale and has brought about some very peculiar conditions, such as the carrying to Chicago of enormous quantities of wheat, by parties who were short, to fill contracts. Not only has wheat been taken from Duluth to Chicago, but it has actually been brought westward from eastern lake ports, in defiance of all laws of trade. Of course this has been done at a heavy expense to those who were short, but there was no course open for them but to pocket their losses. The concentration of many million bushels of wheat in the hands of a single interest, as a result of this deal, is a very strong feature in the situation, and one which no doubt advantage will be taken of to further manipulate the market in future options.

The local situation is quiet. There