

THE BUSINESS SITUATION.

Winnipeg, Saturday Afternoon, Dec. 13.

Business with the wholesale houses has been quiet. Sorting trade has not been up to expectations in the various branches. Business appears to have been done this year about a month earlier than usual. The volume of business in October was very large, and this led many to believe that a large sorting trade would be done this season. So far, these expectations have not been realized. It appears now that the requirements of the trade were fully anticipated in the larger orders placed earlier in the season. The explanation of this situation is simple. The harvest was earlier than usual, and under the influence of very favorable weather, farmers were enabled to market a large portion of their crop at a considerably earlier date than in average years. Prices for wheat were high, and they sold freely and quickly turned the grain into cash. Having the money in hand they proceeded at once to lay in their winter supplies of clothing and other necessities, even before the goods were actually required. These requirements having been filled, business slackened up. Country merchants found their stock of winter goods broken into early in the season. They sent in repeat orders freely on this account, and it is just possible that there has been some over-buying, with the expectation that the busy season, which started in so early, would hold out longer. The absence of sorting demand now would indicate that the country is supplied. Earlier in the season wholesale merchants here could not keep their stocks up. All the houses were on the short side in stocks. Now the demand is very slow. Larger stocks of goods for the spring trade are being carried than usual. Collections were also slower. There has been a disposition to push collections harder than usual this season, on the belief that the higher prices for wheat would enable country traders to pay up arrears. This pushing has resulted in one or two failures. While the season on the whole has been a good one, the paying ability of merchants, as well as the consuming ability of the people, has no doubt be over-rated in many cases. Country traders who have been in arrears for years, can hardly be expected to make up in one season, and undue pressure might lead to further assignments of traders who would eventually pull through if given further breathing.

There are few new features in business this week. The weather remained very mild up to Thursday, since which it has been cold. No further clearances from lake ports have been made since Dec. 10, though the river at Port William was open. A severe

storm was reported west this week and railway traffic has been delayed in consequence. Bank clearings at Winnipeg show a considerable increase still over previous years.

WINNIPEG MARKETS.

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FUEL.

A large demand for South coal continues and the mine, have had difficulty in keeping up the supply. An increased train service will be established on the Sour branch railway to handle the coal traffic. Wood fuel is offering freely, at prices quoted in the price list on another page. The city council of Winnipeg is calling for tenders for 50 to 100 cord, of poplar or pine cordwood, tenders to be in by December 28.

FISH.

Oysters are offering at a wide range in values, and vary as widely in quality. The name amounts to little. Some that are called selects are not as good as other brands which are sold as standards. The price, and not the name of the brand, will indicate the quality. If oysters, called selects, are offered at the price of standards, it may be set down that they are only standards in point of quality. The fish companies have had a good trade and the fish held in refrigerator storage have been sold at a good profit, whereas a year ago the large companies were unable to dispose of their stocks.

GROCERIES.

Sugars are firm. Cables have been firm and at New York values have advanced 1-16c on all grades. Canadian refiners reported business brisker and prices were being held very firm. Coffee has recovered some from the recent depression. The belief has gained ground that the decline was greater than the circumstances warranted and a partial recovery has resulted. The Rio crop is not now estimated at as large figures as were first reported. Locally there have been no important changes in the market.

GREEN FRUITS.

A good business in this branch is reported, as country dealers are laying in their holiday trade stocks. Mexican oranges offering are very fine quality. New California navel oranges are now in, but they are green yet and on the sour side, and the Mexicans are the best stock for immediate use. California lemons are showing very fair quality. There is no money for importers on bananas this weather. Now dates have arrived to a limited extent. Cranberries are 50c. per barrel lower. Prices are as follows. Mexican oranges, \$4.50 to \$5; navel oranges \$4.50 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, 8c lb; coconuts, \$1 per dozen; Sicily filberts, large 11c to 12c per lb, Grenoble walnuts, 13c; figs, fancy element, \$1.40 to \$1.50 per 10 lb box, 30 lb boxes 16c; 50 lb. boxes, 17c per lb;

new dates, 7 1/2c per lb., imported celery 50 to 60c per doz.

LEATHER.

Prices are very firm, but local prices have not been advanced, though eastern markets have been higher on some lines.

HARDWARE, PAINTS, ETC.

There are no changes in the local market, but the feeling is very firm, and several advances are expected before the spring movement sets in, notably on glass, white lead and some other lines. Glass has advanced 5c per 50 feet at Montreal and 10c to 20 per box at Toronto. Toronto advices also report an advance of 5c on horse-shoes and 1-4c on manilla rope. An advance of 2-2 to 5 per cent is reported to have been made by manufacturers on black iron pipe on the sizes from 1-2 to 2 inches.

GRAIN AND PRODUCTS.

WHEAT—The markets have been steadier this week and the average tendency has been stronger and higher in leading markets. Locally the situation has been quiet. Deliveries in the country have fallen off. There has been a little business doing on the basis of 88c to 89c for No. 1 hard, afloat Fort William. Yesterday sellers were asking 89c to 89 1/2c, and 88c was the lowest point of the week. Car lots at country points quoted at 77c on a 19 cent freight rate to Fort William No. 2 hard 2-1-2 to 3c under No. 1. There have been no further shipments from Fort William since our last report, though shipments could have been made if boats had been available, as the river remained open for several days after the last boat cleared.

FLOUR—No change has occurred in the flour market here. Eastern advices report stronger market. We quote patents \$2.55 per sack of 98 lbs.; Strong Bakers, \$2.35, second bakers, \$1.90, and XXXX \$1.45. Prices to local dealers here less 5c per sack for net cash.

MILLFEED—The demand is good and prices are firm. Ton lots are held at \$10 for bran and \$12 for shorts, and \$9 per ton less in large lots, and the market is very firm.

GROUND FEED.—Pure grain feed is quoted at 20 to 22c for oats and barley, the outside price for rolled oat feed. Anything under \$20 per ton is inferior mixed mill feed. Corn feed is quoted at \$16 to \$17 per ton. Oil cake \$20 per ton.

CEREALS—The local mills are doing very little and the market is mainly supplied with meal imported from the south. We quote rolled oatmeal at \$1.80 per sack.

OATS—Have been offering at about the same prices as reported last week, namely, 35c to 37c as to quality. The street price to farmers here is 34 to 36c as to quality. In Manitoba country markets 25 to 30c per bushel has been paid to farmers, and the tendency has been earlier. At one of the largest country markets for oats, where 30c had been paid, the price dropped to 28c per bushel of 34 pounds. A reduction of 5c to 41c per 100 pounds, has been made in the freight rate on oats and oatmeal from Ontario points to Winnipeg, but it will not let in eastern oats, as they would cost 37 to 38c to lay down here.

CORN—Corn continues to come in from the south. It can be laid down here at 37 to 38c per bushel of 56 pounds in cars lots on track as to grade. Corn is being sold by the elevator com-