THE BUSINESS SITUATION

Saturday, Dec. 2, 1899.

Western Canada is having an unusually prolonged spell of mild weather, considering the season. There has been practically no winter at all to date, and conditions are still much the same as in the regular fall months. Some light flurries of snow and moderate frosts have been about the only climatic signs this week of the proximity of winter. The results in a commercial and industrial sense of this mildness are varied. Commercial enterprises have been mostly adversely affected, and industrial enterprises have, on the other hand, mostly profited. Sales of seasonable goods are very light, and consumption seems to be, for the most part, holding back until absolute need is experienced. Dealers in perishable commodities, such as meats, etc., which are generally stored frozen in large quantities for the winter, find difficulty in keeping their stocks. Coal is in very light demand. Driving is so bad that farm trade is for the time being largely cut off. Railroad and building operations have, in their turn, been greatly facilitated. There is still a good demand for men for railroad and bush work. Bank clearings have increased less this week than usual, but they are still larger than in any similar week of previous years. The monthly clearings, which are also given this week, show a substantial increase over previous years. The figures will be found elsewhere in this issue.

WINNIPEG MARKETS

Saturday, Dec. 2, 1899.

(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.)

DRY GOODS.

Firmness and advancing prices continue to be the features of the dry goods market. Retailers have bought their stocks recently at much lower prices than they will have to pay another season. Goods sold by jobbers for the fall and sorting trade have generally been at prices much below the basis of the present cost of these goods at the factory. Even for the spring trade many orders have been placed at away below present basis of cost. This is owing to the fact that jobbers had large stocks on hand, bought before the full advance now asked had come into effect, and they have been giving the trade the benefit of these early purchases. When it comes to repeat orders or late purchases, however, jobbers will be obliged to ask sharp advances to cover the increased cost of goods. In fact it is with the greatest difficulty that jobbers can get repeat orders filled at all, regardless of the increased cost. Some British manufacturers have refused to quote prices until after the next series of wool sales, which indicates that they look for a further sharp advance in wools The trade will, therefore, have to prepare for a big advance in dry goods for another season, as well as on repeat orders for the spring trade. An advice received recently reported an advance on one line of cashmere equal to 17c and cashmere hosiery are now costing high, some lines of hosiery having advanced as much as 25 per cent. Shirts are firm and advancing, and repeat orders can hardly be filled at all. Lines of Canadian prints, prices for which are fixed by combine manufacturers, are higher.

FUEL.

The situation as regards coal is reviewed at length elsewhere in this issue. Wood stocks in the city are extremely light owing to the difficulty of getting in supplies. A few cars have been bought this week for immediate delivery. Stocks on hand are mostly held by a few dealers. No relief from this situation can be obtained until it freezes up as men cannot get into the bush while the ground is soft. Coal quotations will be found on our "prices current" page. Wood prices in carlots on track here are now as follows: Tamarac per cord, $4.75; green cut tamarac, $4.25 to $4.75; jackpine per cord, $4 to $4.25; birch, $4.75 to $5; United States oak, $5; Manitoba oak, $4.75; United States maple, $5.25; popular, $3 to $3.25; spruce, $3.25 to $3.50; slabs, $2.85 per cord.

GREEN FRUITS.

The market is quiet and movement much curtailed. Holiday business is being looked forward to with expectations that it will be the largest yet. Mexican oranges are easier, in expectation of early arrivals of California stocks. The market for winter apples continues in the unsatisfactory state noted a week ago. Auction sales of so-called choice stock are being held regularly, and it is estimated that as many as 500 barrels per week are being thus sold at prices ranging from $2.50 per barrel downwards It is needless to say that while these sales continue there is but little demand for apples being held for sale in the regular way. The keeping quality of much of the stock being sold at auction is poor. Complaints of the keeping qualities of this season's apples seem to be general. British importers have been badly disappointed in the quality of their receipts from both Canada and the United States and complaints are being heard from all parts of the continent. The apples looked nice when packed, but do not seem to be holding up to quality at all. We quote prices here as follows:—California naval oranges, $5 to $5.50, do. seedlings, $4.25 to $4.75; Mexican oranges, $4.50; lemons, new Californias, per box, $5.00 to $5.50; bananas, per bunch, $2.25; apples, winter, $3.50 per bbl.; snow apples fancy, $4 per barrel; Malaga grapes, in kegs, per keg, $7.50; cranberries per barrel, $7.25; cocoanuts, per dozen, 80c; Grenoble walnuts, 14c, Tarragona almonds, 15c; peanuts, green, 9 to 10c; roasted, 12c; pecan nuts, 13c per lb.; chestnuts, 15c; hickory nuts, 10c per lb.; maple sugar, per lb., 11c; apple cider, 35c per gallon in barrels and half barrels; fruit cider put up in 20 and 30 gallon kegs, per gallon, 40c; figs, in boxes, 7c lb.; new California layer figs in 10 lb. boxes, $1.60 to $1.75; new Smyrnas in glove boxes $2 per doz. in 10-lb. boxes $1.75 per box, and in 30-lb. boxes 20c lb.; dates 7c per lb.; sweet potatoes, per barrel, $5; honey, in 1 lb. glass jars, per dozen jars, $2.50; Spanish onions, $1.25 per crate; American red onions, 2c per lb.

GROCERIES.

The changes in the grocery market this week are mostly of minor importance. Trade has been quieter in consequence of the bad state of country roads Prices are firm on all staple lines and any changes are in the direction of advances. Canned tomatoes have been raised to $2.25 to $2.30, which is 5c higher than a week ago. These are costing $1.10 in Ontario now. Canned meats are costing more at packing centres than heretofore and while there has been no change here as yet owing to the fact that stocks in jobbers hands to-day were bought at the lower prices the advances are sure to be followed when further supplies have to be obtained, which will be soon. Green Rio coffee has again advanced and is now 1-2c higher than last week's quotations with every likelihood of going still higher. This is due not so much to shortage in supply as to increase in consumption which has been very noticeable this year. New Sultana raisins are now in stock and selling at from 10 1-2 to 11c per pound. They are of nice quality. Raisins have disclosed still further strength this week. Fine off stalk goods are particularly firm and almost entirely out of first hands. To bring them in now at prices quoted east would cost about $2.00, while layers would cost about $2.10 to $2.15. The tendency is to go still higher. California raisins are quite beyond reach at present as 3 crown muscatels would cost 9 to 9 1-4c to lay down. Apricots are firmer and are now worth 17 1-2 to 18c here.

HARDWARE.

The market is without change this week. Notwithstanding the small movement of business at country points due to bad roads, etc., there is considerable demand for seasonable lines of hardware.

IMPLEMENTS.

Salesmen for all the leading concerns are now on the road for spring orders, and reports so far are very satisfactory. Bad roads are making it difficult to get around, and progress made so far is smaller on this account. The demand for sleighs and cutters, in a retail way, has not commenced yet. The effect on business of the advanced prices for next year's goods is hardly measurable, yet, but is not expected to be serious. Some Winnipeg dealers are stock-taking, and the rest will follow this month.

PAINTS, OILS AND GLASS.

Prices remain unchanged, although both linseed oil and turpentine prices are higher in the east. It is believed that these will advance here in a few days. White lead will also be advanced shortly as at present factory prices it is worth $7.25 laid down in Winnipeg.

SCRAP.

Accumulations of metal scrap have been shipped this week to consuming markets and dealers have been busy with these shipments. While there does not seem to be any falling off in the consumptive demand there is an easier tendency in the market for scrap metals. The iron market is perhaps showing the most signs of weakness. The Boston market is reported dull. Present prices are likely to be shaded a little. Rags are the only commodity which display signs of strength. These are likely to go higher at consuming points. We quote prices here as follows. No. 1 cast iron free from wrought and malleable, $14 per ton; No. 1 stove plate, $5 per