THE BUSINESS BAROMETER.

As Index to the Condition of Trade Generally.

MORE ACTIVITY IN SOME LINES.

Wholesale Business Better Than Expected—Increase in the Export Trade—Canned Goods.

Office of The Post,
Houston, Monday, January 18.

Wholesale branches of business began the week with increased activity and local jobbers had many good orders to fill. Country merchants have finished taking stock and as a rule find last year's business better than expected. The weather has been against retail trade, and seasonable goods have been in limited demand. Dry goods and clothing dealers are anxious for the return of winter in order that clearance sales of heavy goods may induce purchases. For the last two or three weeks it has been difficult to determine what classes of bargains to offer consumers, and spring in midwinter has been found somewhat of a drawback in trade.

The general situation in financial and commercial circles shows considerable improvement and good crops in 1897 promise happy results. The inactivity prevailing early in January has been succeeded by a sentiment of confidence, and the past week showed a better feeling in the industrial situation. It is freely predicted that the long period of depression will soon end and that some of remaining prosperity are already visible to the keen watcher. Capital is still cautious, however, and though money is plentiful it is not yet seeking investment in a manner to convince the public with a full renewal of confidence.

Exports of Domestic Products.

Those who are accustomed to consult the commercial barometer are calling attention to the wonderful increase in United States exports as one of the best signs of returning prosperity. During the last twelve months (1896) the exports of cotton, breadstuffs, mineral oils and animal and vegetable products reached the extraordinary value of $[illegible] against $[illegible] in 1895. This not only means a condition of the foreign exchanges extraordinarily in our favor, it equally means a valuable relief to our farming and planting population which should have its effect upon the country trade of the ensuing new year.

The following gives a summary of the exports for 1896 as compared with preceding years:

	1896.	1895.
Breadstuffs, dollars	[illegible]	[illegible]
Cotton, bales	[illegible]	[illegible]
Cotton, pounds	[illegible]	[illegible]
Cotton, dollars	[illegible]	[illegible]
Mineral oils, gallons	[illegible]	[illegible]
Mineral oils, dollars	[illegible]	[illegible]
Cattle, head	[illegible]	[illegible]
Provisions, dollars	[illegible]	[illegible]
Total, dollars	[illegible]	[illegible]
Total, 1894		[illegible]
Total, 1893		[illegible]

California Oranges.

In its review of the orange market the California Fruit Grower says in a late issue: "The market is fairly supplied with oranges of good color and market for the demand is quite light and unsatisfactory. Dealers are holding their prices for choice fruit. Many Christmas stocks of overland have been kept owing to the or no Eastern demand. Shipments for the season to December 27 amount to [illegible] as against [illegible] cars for same period in 1895. California oranges are meeting with an active competition from oranges from all parts of the world.

Several packers in Southern California have closed their packing houses for the present, owing to the fruit being damaged and overstocked conditions of all the Eastern and Western markets. Means has supplied the large Western markets with fruit for fifty days a week for two or three months past, but their season is about over."

Canned Goods.

The general feeling prevailing in the canned goods market is one of improvement. In most lines the demand is at least fairly good, prices are well maintained throughout the list and the movement is generally of satisfactory proportions.

Tomatoes are moving with an active enquiry and prices are firmly maintained in all markets both East and West. Indian tomatoes are commanding higher prices. The weekly in hands of packers are now really nothing. The pack of this year was not heavy and as the demand has been fairly steady a scarcity is already beginning to be felt. Prices are up 15 cents per dozen, with further advances not at all unlikely.

Sardines are quite active and prices are firm. Cove oysters are stronger at time and in good demand.

Eggs and Poultry.

The colder weather gave a better tone to the egg market today and higher prices were secured. Saturday's sales were at 16c, but the market needed at 18c this morning and later in the day advanced to 20c. The majority of the sales were at 19c, however, with no appreciation of an immediate decline.

The scarcity of poultry is running commission men, especially as prices have now reached a level that should induce shipments. Good young chickens sell at $3.00@3.50 per dozen, and small broilers easily brings $2.50. Beside Christmas it was difficult to dispose of chickens at any price, but for the last two or three weeks the supply has not been equal to the demand. Turkeys were better sale this morning and brought very fair prices.

Trade Notes.

South Texas cauliflower is now on the local market daily.

Shipments of country produce have decreased since the holidays.

Corn declined in the speculative markets today, May deliveries selling down to 24½c at Chicago.

The decline in wheat recently has caused some mills to lower prices on flour, though good milling wheat is scarce.

J. Hucker of the firm of J. Hucker & Co., who was quite sick all last week, is slowly improving.

The market for dried fruits is quite active. With the exception of prunes the feeling is a strong one throughout the list, as from now on the demand for this class of goods will increase.

The high prices of wheat have resulted in many Northern millers mixing corn meal with their wheat in making flour. It is said that 8 per cent of corn can be used without detection.

The stock of all descriptions of domestic mackerel is claimed to be much lighter than usual at this time of the year, but the demand is scarcely up to the average and as a result prices are unsettled.

HOUSTON PRICE CURRENT.

Those quotations are revised daily and their correctness can be relied upon. The prices are those ruling in the Houston wholesale markets:

AXLE GREASE—Diamond, $2.75 per gross; Frazier, in tin boxes, $5.00 per gross; Golden, eight per dozen boxes; castor oil, [illegible]; Axeline, 1 lb tin, $1.00 per dozen.

AMMUNITION—Powder, per keg, $2.50@4.50; blasting powder, $3.65 per keg; agents' price, drop shot, per sack, $1.20@1.30; buck, $1.60@1.70.

BACON—Short clear, boxed, 5½@5¾c; 10 sacks 4c less; breakfast, 6½@6¾c; dry salt, 5¼@5½c; New York salt bellies, 6½@6¾c; Western salt bellies, 6c; smoked bellies, 6¾@7c.

BAGGING AND TIES—Carload lots, f. o. b., Houston or Galveston: Bagging, 2 lb 6c; 2¼ lb, 6½c; 2½ lb, 7c. Ties, Arrow, 50c; Delta, 50c. In small lots from store, bagging 1c per yard higher; ties, 5c per bundle higher.

BAKING POWDER—Apex, 1 P., $1.00, ½ lb, $1.25, ¼ lb, 75c; Victor, 1 lb, per doz., $1.00; ½ lb, 75c; ¼ lb, 45c; Ibex (the Ibex), 1 lb per doz., $1.40; ½ lb, $2.25; ¼ lb, 80c; K. C., 12 oz. cans, $1.00 per doz. Price's, 16 oz., $1.50 per doz. Royal, 16 oz., $1.80. Don Tom, 16 oz., No. 10 oz., 90c; 6 oz., 40c.

CANNED FRUIT—Per dozen: Strawberries, $1.60; pineapples, Standard $1.60@1.80; extra fine, $2.25; seconds, $1.35; pears, standard, $1.60; Clingstone (Bartlett) pears, 2 lb, $1.60@1.80; 2½ lb, $1.60@1.85; peaches, standard, 2 lb, $1.60@1.80; seconds, 2 lb, $1.30@1.40; 2½ lb standard, $1.80@2.00; 3 lb standard, $2.25@2.50; 2 lb pie peaches, 75@80c; 2 lb pie peaches, extra, $1.00; blackberries, 80@90c; 2 lb standard apples, 70@80c.

CALIFORNIA CANNED FRUITS—Standard grade, 2½ lb cans: Peaches, $1.60@1.80 per dozen; apricots, $1.60@1.80; pears, $1.60@1.70; egg plums, $1.60@1.80; green gages, $1.60@1.80; nectarines, $1.60@1.80; black cherries, $1.60@1.80; white cherries, $1.60@1.80; Bing cherries, $1.60@1.80.

CANDY—Pails stick candy, 8c; assorted, 9c; fancy mixed in pails, 10c.

CANNED VEGETABLES—Marrowfat peas, $0.90@1.00; Lima beans, $0.90@1.00; string beans, 80@90c; corn, $0.80@1.10; tomatoes, 2 lb, 65@80c; seconds, 90c; 3 lb, 90c; 2½ lb kidney beans, 2 lb, 80@90c.

CANNED MEATS—Roast beef, 1 lb, $1.10; 2 lb, $1.75@2.25; 3 lb corned beef, 2 dozen, $3.00@3.50; 1 lb lunch tongue, 1 dozen, $1.40@1.50; 1 lb Oxford sausage, 2 dozen, $1.25; Frankfort sausages, 1 lb, $1.00; 2 lb potted ham, 1 dozen, $1.25; ¼ lb deviled ham, 1 dozen, $0.60; ½ lb deviled ham, 1 dozen, $1.00.

CANDLES—Granite 6s and 8s, 7@8c; 10 oz paraffine assorted colors, 9@10c; Kant-sweat, 8@9c.

COFFEE—Rio and Coffees: Fair, 19@20c; prime, 20@21c; choice, 22@23c; fancy, 24@25c. Peaberry, 19@20c. Roasted coffee—Arbuckle, in 100 lb case, $19.00; less in commission. In 50 lb cases, $19.50. Mocha and Java, fancy blend, 30c.

FLOUR—Carload lots: Tidal Wave, $3.75; Sea Foam, extra roller patent, $3.65; Sea Foam, $3.55; Houston Roller Mills, $3.65; Queen Anne, $3.50; Peerless, $3.40; Queen Ann, $3.25; Houston Mills, $3.25; Queen Ann, $3.25