

ANOTHER BIG FAILURE.



SAY that the dry goods trade was surprised when it became known, towards the end of last month, that the firm of John Birrell & Co, of London, Ont., was in financial difficulties, is but feebly expressing it.

The firm had been in business for over 30 years, and was always looked upon as a wealthy and sound concern. A meeting of the western creditors was held in Toronto on April 15th, when a statement of affairs was presented showing liabilities of \$285,000. Of this amount \$153,000 is due to the banks, \$65,000 to English creditors and \$64,000 to Canadian. The assets were placed at \$121,000. An offer was

made on behalf of the firm of 42½ cents cash on the dollar, which the creditors, including the banks, finally accepted. A similar arrangement will likely be made with the other creditors.

Considering the number of wholesale houses who have recently retired from business, or been forced to assign, it would really seem as if the trade had reached that stage of the "survival of the fittest." The remarks of a leading English manufacturer during a crisis about three years ago in his line of business are, we think, very appropriate to the present condition of the dry goods trade. He said: I have no doubt by this time multitudes have at least some faint idea of the theory of "the survival of the fittest." And I am perfectly sure some commercial men think they have a complete understanding of this teaching, still I am forced to the conclusion they only partly comprehend it, and I think in such a case their "little knowledge is a dangerous thing." How do some business men act? Some are ever fighting to increase their output. If there be a demand, I say, "Lay on an increase," but what I would complain of is when a man arrogates to himself that in his trade he is going to do it all. Such an one generally begins by dropping his prices to secure the larger orders. The smaller fry immediately follow suit. Then begins the drooping process which soon gives some a fatal squeeze. This often so inflates Mr. Arrogance that he needs still further increase. He fancies he is the veritable "fittest" and must "survive." He argues to himself, "It is turnover I need, les grandes affaires can only suit me, margin be hanged, if the returns are large enough profit must come." And thus in the enormity of his doings he may aptly overlook the detail, and unconsciously be working without profit. Too soon for him he discovers what almost any child might teach him—100 times 0 is 0, 1,000 times 0 is ditto, and even 10,000 times 0 brings the same result with this difference, the 0 has become so extended that upon the most incipient sign of combustion an explosion takes place which blows Mr. High and Mighty to smash, leaving his unlamented remains to be gathered by Messrs. Settlement & Co., who first of all settle with themselves and then distribute the residue of atoms amongst the sorrowing creditors. I admire genuine development, and when a firm becomes large in a sound and legitimate manner I am ever ready to honor the genius that directs it. But price-cutting for the mere pleasure of a big business I detest. "The survival of the fittest." Do I believe it? Yes, I do; but I would ask a question—"Who is the fittest to survive?" If I may venture an answer, it is this. He is fittest who, by sturdy and steady development of his innate power, becomes a monarch amongst men, who seeks not eminence that he may crush whatever lies beneath him, but whose sole desire of vantage is that he may the better effect a generous disbursement of his powers and sustenance to aid and help the weaker ones around him in the struggle for existence.

Robert Turner, of the late well-known dry goods firm of Turner & Finlay, St. John, N.B., has assigned for the benefit of his creditors. He has been trying to close out his business on account of ill health, and has made the assignment voluntarily, with the expectation that after all creditors are paid a considerable surplus will remain.

After a great many vexatious delays and unforeseen drawbacks the old Gorham woollen mills have been transformed for the manufacture of skin rugs, etc., and present a business-like appearance. Many new machines and contrivances have been constructed, not only facilitating the manufacture of the goods, but enabling the establishment to produce a better quality. Though the Robinson skin rug works have previously won, in competition, a gold medal, six silver medals and one bronze medal, besides 100 first prizes, the goods shipped to Montreal last Saturday were the finest lot they ever manufactured, including some of the latest captivating shades.—Newmarket (Ont.) Era.

FASHION IN SCARF PINS.

William Addison Clarke in the N. Y. Clothier and Furnisher says: There has come to be fixed rules in scarf-pin wearing that may not be transcended without showing a lack of knowledge of the canons of good form. In the irregular scarfings there is a necessity for the scarf-pin. There are in these instances certain portions of the scarf, to be held together and in place. The absence of the scarf-pin under these circumstances would indicate that such an article was not possessed by the wearer of the neck covering, and therefore it were bad judgment to wear such scarfing that should so clearly reveal impecuniosity. The scarf-pin must also be worn with the puff, made-up scarf. There is a place for its insertion, and by seeming to hold it together, it glosses over somewhat the made-up suggestiveness. In the self-tied De Joinville, or its imitation the regulation made-up Stanley, the scarf-pin must pierce the cross-folds at the intersection. In all scarfings the scarf-pin must be placed so that, when seen through the waist-coat opening, it will appear in the centre of that space. To be placed too high in the scarf, too low, or on one side, would destroy the conformity. No matter how irregular the fold may be made, the head of the pin must positively fall in the centre of the scarfing. With the regulation Tuck—palpably made-up scarf that is not an imitation of any knotting that may be made by hand—the scarf pin is stringently tabooed. It has in such a utilization about as much significance as it would if stuck in the middle of a pin-cushion, and indeed about the same effect upon the beholder. With the Four-in-hand, or the Ascot tied in this popular form, which, by the way, makes a full and stunning effect of richness, the scarf-pin must not be inserted in one corner as was permissible when the hipputian pins were worn, nor in the middle of the cross-piece with a trite and mechanical suggestiveness; but in order to come as near as possible the centre of the space seen through the waistcoat opening, and because it appears to get more the flavor of utility in seeming to hold the knot intact—there is the best excuse for inserting it in the middle of the tie just upon the lower edge of the cross-fold.

THE BELL PIANOS AND ORGANS.

That the instruments manufactured by The Bell Organ and Piano Company, of Guelph, Ont., are really a credit to Canada is universally acknowledged. The proportions that the business has assumed are simply enormous and we believe we are safe in saying that they do a much larger trade than any other manufacturer in the Dominion. That the English syndicate, who purchased the concern, are well satisfied with their investment is shown by the report of the annual meeting of the company which appeared in the Financial Times, of London, England, on March 20th. The Chairman, T. W. Boord, M. P., in the course of his address said: "I think you will consider the statement of accounts very satisfactory. The net profit made for the year is in excess of the estimate put forward in the prospectus, and that is a state of affairs which all companies cannot boast of." The trade had been so satisfactory that they had it under consideration whether it would not be expedient to increase the capacity of their factory at Guelph. He referred to the general satisfaction which their customers expressed with their manufactures, among them being the Princess Louise, Marchioness of Lorne. Mr. W. H. Cummings, whose name is prominent in the musical world, said he had taken considerable interest in their instruments, and he was able to say that the work could not be excelled, and he doubted if it could be equalled by any other manufacturer. The work was very superior to anything they got from the continent. He knew from musicians and the trade that there was such confidence expressed in their work that their trade was likely to largely increase. Mr. Hart, one of the auditors, who had personally visited the property at Guelph on several occasions, and had been over the whole of it, said the buildings were of a very sound character, and formed a very handsome block. With regard to the inside arrangements, he could not speak too highly of the system adopted. From the moment that the timber came into the drying rooms to the time that the finished instrument was tested and tuned in the tuning room, everything was most efficient, and he could only congratulate the shareholders on possessing a property of so valuable a character. The chairman, in replying to the usual vote of thanks, said the shareholders were very much indebted to their General Manager at Guelph, Mr. Alexander, and also to their London Manager, Mr. W. J. Bell. A dividend of 10 per cent. on the ordinary shares, and 8 per cent. on the preference shares for the year was declared.