

whose population is only one-twelfth as large, the expenses of doing business are, in proportion, very considerably larger. The manufacturers claim that any increased profit for the wholesale dealers would have to come out of the pockets of the retailers, a state of things which they believe should be fought against. Meanwhile, a great deal of vigorous discussion is being indulged in by those interested in the manufacture of patent medicines and by others; dire threats are made, indeed, as to what will happen, under the Canadian anti-combine laws, to those guilty of carrying on a boycott against any particular firm's make of goods. For our own part, so far as we can see, the whole matter hinges upon the right of any man to do business or to refuse to do business at the rate of profit which to him seems desirable. A business firm has the generally recognized privilege of refusing to deal in an article which is looked upon as not sufficiently unprofitable or upon which it is impossible to make sufficient to offset the expense and trouble.

THE UNITED STATES STEEL SHRINKAGE.

The directors of the United States Steel Corporation have passed the dividend on common stock, but have declared the regular quarterly dividend of $1\frac{3}{4}$ per cent. on the preferred stock, payable on February 15th. The net earnings of the company for the quarter ending December 31st were reported as follows: \$14,845,042, against \$31,985,759 for the same period in 1902. For the whole year, too, the shrinkage was very large. Net earnings for the year aggregated \$108,979,012, as against \$133,308,763 in 1902, and \$105,947,160 in the first nine months after the corporation was organized. The net balance, after appropriations for sinking fund, bonds of subsidiary companies, depreciation, improvements and construction, and interest on the regular bonds, as well as sinking funds, have been deducted, is \$60,824,380, as against \$90,306,524 in 1902. The undivided profits, or surplus, for last year aggregate \$11,962,645, which is less by \$22,291,012 than in 1902. This is partly accounted for by the charging off for depreciation in inventory valuations and adjustment for sundry accounts of \$5,750,000, which was not done before. On December 31st last the company's unfilled orders aggregated 3,215,123 tons, as against 5,347,253 on the same day in 1902.

CUSTOMS REVENUES.

There is no lack of encouragement to the Finance Minister in the yield of revenue, which the tariff has made to the Dominion coffers this year. The customs revenue of the Dominion for the six months ending Dec. 31 was \$20,653,761, a large increase over same period last year. At the two principal ports, Montreal and Toronto, the customs revenues have been the largest ever collected. At Montreal the figures exceed those of 1902, by rather more than a million and a half of dollars. We present the Montreal figures by months:

January	\$ 883,292 38
February	896,589 40
March	976,310 78
April	793,075 90
May	970,758 03
June	1,246,533 40
July	1,305,460 87
August	1,186,775 15
September	1,188,291 42
October	1,068,792 11
November	1,040,103 34
December	989,844 63

Total \$12,545,827 41

At Toronto, also, the year 1903 witnessed the largest collections ever made by the custom house. For the whole twelve months the collections total \$7,675,000, as against

\$6,468,844 in 1902, an increase of more than a million. The entries for 1903 aggregate 120,209, and those for 1902, 109,516. Upwards of twenty millions of dollars has been added to the revenue of the Dominion Government by the custom houses of these two cities during 1903.

AFFAIRS IN MONTREAL.

To write a newsy or interesting letter at such a time as this, after a week of seasonable dissipation, is quite a task for a somewhat befogged brain, so if the matter furnished is not up to the mark, Mr. Editor, you yourself must be held partly responsible, since you were so insistent upon having a Montreal letter this week. Besides this, the cold weather we have been having of late is enough to chill all effort, and even hot Scotchies do not suffice to thaw out the springs of imagination. Just imagine the thermometer hovering around 10 degrees below zero since Christmas night, and going down on Monday and Tuesday to 23 below, with a wind that cuts like a razor. Fortunate it is, indeed, that there is no coal famine, such as existed this time a year ago, but as it is, the suffering among the poor has been very great. The poor cabbies are finding few fares these days, for everybody prefers to abide as close as possible to his own fireside, and the women folks obliged to go even a block or two to do necessary household shopping, return with faces white and stiff as marble.

It is a cold time even for the politicians, and bold, indeed, would be the Premier who would fix a general election for such a season as this, judging from the remarks I have heard made by even the most enthusiastic political campaigners and stump orators. Election talk, however, has quieted down during the last week or two, though more or less work is being done in a quiet way towards the not-far-off struggle. The most notable event in this direction is the nomination of Mr. Herbert B. Ames as the Conservative candidate for St. Antoine division in this city, one of the wealthiest and most influential constituencies in the Dominion. Mr. Ames is a son of the late E. F. Ames, who, half a century ago, founded the leading wholesale boot and shoe business now conducted by the Ames-Holden Co., Limited, with branches at St. Hyacinthe, St. John, N.B., Toronto, Winnipeg, and Victoria, B.C. He served a business apprenticeship with the old firm of Ames-Holden & Co., but after the death of his father he withdrew from active business, and has since devoted his attention to studying the principles of good government, both municipal and parliamentary. A dozen years ago he was the principal mover in the organization of the Volunteer Electoral League, formed for the purpose of suppressing the reign of bribery and telegraphing votes, through which the boodling element controlled the City Council. A few years later he was induced to run as alderman for St. Antoine Ward, being returned by a majority of over 1,250 votes, and he has continued to hold the seat with great credit to himself, devoting all his energies to the introduction of clean, businesslike methods, and in following out this line he has met with a large measure of success. He has also been the means of inducing men of high personal and business standing to take a more active interest in municipal affairs, and in this has earned the gratitude of the tax-paying community. Mr. Ames has not hidden the fact that he has aspirations towards Parliamentary honors, but in his case this can only be regarded as a very laudable ambition. Possessed of independent means, an indefatigable spirit of work, and abilities beyond the average, which he is prepared to devote entirely to his country, he is regarded as an ideal candidate. His sympathies are Conservative, and the Liberals have nominated in opposition Mr. Peter Lyall, the well known contractor, who will prove a foe man worthy of his steel. Mr. Lyall is of the Alexander Mackenzie stamp. Like the late Hon. Alexander, he began life as a working stone mason, and by dogged Scotch perseverance, and the observance of honorable business methods, he has worked himself up to the very front rank of successful men in his line. The immense Montreal Cotton Mills, at Valleyfield, the great and picturesque pile of the Royal Victoria Hospital, the Canada Life building, on Bleury