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MONTREAL'S SPRING AWAKENING.

The city of Montreal during the winter is one of indoor activity. Big deals involving millions of dollars are put through, while the visitor is waiting to be shown to a magnate. Cheques for three million dollars are signed as easily as the subscription to the daily letter. Two million dollar blocks of bonds are underwritten and disposed of before the man in the street has even an inkling of events. Amalgamations are planned and consummated with a minimum of publicity and a maximum of enterprise. All these things are part of Montreal's daily life. Yet somehow they are allied with the winter season. Every office is a cell of a wonderful business beehive. Of drones, there are none. When ice locks up navigation and gives the city its healthful recreation, Montreal toils chiefly as a city of finance.

Many eyes in the spring look down the river for the first funnel from across the Atlantic. The ice gives way to the bow of the liner. Montreal is transformed. It remains actually a city of finance, but takes on, after a season's rest, the significant title of port. Big deals doubtless are put through just the same; but footsteps are fewer towards certain offices. Commerce holds attention. The navigation season is brief. Man has fought nature with science and ice-breakers, extending as far as possible the time during which ships may arrive and depart. The last steamer to leave Montreal in 1908 left Canada and its Christmas day only a month before that annual celebration. The first vessel to dock came into Montreal last week.

The trade coming to this port last year was not so great as in 1907. Freight rates were low; cargoes often were not easy to obtain. Some extra business came when a large quantity of wheat went to the sea through Montreal. Down the Lachine Canal passed seven million bushels more wheat than in 1907. With a decline in exports there was also a falling off in imports. But then it must be remembered that 1907 was almost a record year, not only for Montreal but for the whole country. An idea of the extent of the port's navigation business can be gathered from the fact that seven hundred and thirty-nine ocean-going vessels linked up to the wharves during the season of 1908. As is well known, the policy of the Harbor Commissioners is continual improvement. Montreal will undoubtedly become one of the best-equipped ports in North America. Whenever a city progresses, its old-time visitors drop out of the calling list. The tonnage at Montreal last year showed a gain of 34,129 over that of 1907. Last season, too, sailing vessels of the sea-going type did not pay Montreal a visit. In 1906 thirty-three of those vessels paid their respects.

While the tramp steamer is scarcely one of the old school, its destination is determined by new opportunities. Montreal had begun to think that the tramp steamer had severed friendly relations. In the season of 1908, heavy exports of low-grade wheat were made to Mediterranean and other European ports. The commercial funnels of the United States previously had this business, but Montreal now competes successfully with all other Atlantic ports. The tramp steamer came in for a large share of the business. While taking away our grain and wheat, deals and pulp, they brought to us sugar from the West Indies, silver sand, plaster, etc., from France; pig iron and coals from Great Britain, and various commodities from the Southern States.

The live stock trade keeps many vessels busy shipping hoofs with animal vitality attached. The outlook for this season is as bright as the past season was actually satisfactory. The total expenditure of the export trade