

CAUSES OF FAILURE.

We have seen it stated somewhere that ninety-five out of every one-hundred merchants who start in business in this country, fail before they finish their career. The cause of so many failures is a topic of every day conversation among both wholesale and retail men, and one which is frequently commented on wherever meetings of merchants are held for the purpose of discussing subjects pertaining to the welfare of trade. Efforts have been made to form associations in a number of our leading towns and villages to protect solvent traders from the unnatural state into which trade is thrown through the too frequent occurrence of failures. Attempts have been made to devise methods for the disposal of bankrupt stocks, in such a way that the business of merchants trying to pay 100 cents on the dollar will not suffer from the slaughtering of these goods, and pressure has been brought to bear on wholesale houses by their customers to prevent the giving of compromises to insolvents; but no scheme has yet been promulgated that will prove an effectual remedy for the evil; the man is yet unborn who can prescribe a sure specific for the disease.

Conversing, one day, on this subject with a Scotchman who had reached the age of three score and ten, and who had successfully carried on business for nearly half a century, he remarked in a broad Doric accent, "Any business will pay that is properly attended to." Some men do not attend properly to their business, because, through want of sufficient training, they do not thoroughly understand the business in which they are engaged. They are storekeepers when they should be only clerks, others have had sufficient training, but through carelessness or culpable neglect, let the dry rot get hold of their affairs.

The facilities for young men of very little experience getting into business, are viewed with surprise by level-headed business men who have to fight against such competition, and it is generally believed that the wholesale houses are mainly to blame in this matter for making credit so cheap. If the principals of some of these houses would take an occasional trip through the country, they would be surprised to see some of the places and some of the hands into which their goods had gone. Mercantile agencies and commercial travellers have done away with the good old-fashioned custom of interviewing the senior partner in the wholesale warehouse and understanding his position before a country merchant could open an account. When orders come in nowadays they are usually filled on the strength of reports received from these two modern sources, little being known about the character or ability of the customer.

The commercial traveller has to make up his book so that it will foot up a respectable amount at the end of the year, for his salary

depends on it. Therefore, when his sales are falling behind he has a confidential chat with some apparently smart but inexperienced young man who is clerking for one of his customers whose orders are not as liberal as they used to be. The young man can raise some ready cash to make a payment on his first purchase, and the commercial traveller pockets a good order, saying to himself (for he is a very wise man), I will watch this account, and when it begins to go behind I will get the firm to shut down. The caution may be given in time for the firm to shut down and save themselves, if the traveller finds his sales large enough in other places for his book to stand the loss of this account, but in the end some one gets stuck, and the trade of that locality becomes demoralised through the slaughtering of the bankrupt stock by a speculator, or by the insolvent himself in his efforts to meet his composition notes.

We are proud of our educational institutions, and speak with enthusiasm of the position this young country takes among the nations of the earth as an educator of youth, but we doubt if the young men of to-day fully realise the benefits their fathers have conferred on them by placing this country in a position to grant such a generous education. How often we find the sons of the "bone and sinew of the country" eager to follow what they consider a genteel occupation! The liberal education they have received makes them somewhat ashamed of the old folks at home, with their homely ways and untutored conversation. What a life of anxiety and trouble many of these farmers' sons would be spared if they could only realize that there is no more honorable or independent occupation than that of a tiller of the soil, and that a well-cultivated mind can find full scope by studying the rotation of crops, the rearing of the best breeds of live stock, the climatic changes, the soil itself, and everything that is calculated to raise the life of a farmer to the position of that of our most enterprising and intellectual men. The next generation will see the advantages of an agricultural life if this does not, and the time is not far distant when there will be an exodus of the sons of merchants and manufacturers from our overcrowded towns and cities to the rural districts to become cultivators of the soil.

Unfortunately at the present time the young man from the country has an ambition to wear better clothes than he can on the farm, to have the spending of a larger sum per annum than the paternal allowance, and to see a little life with the boys. When he visits the neighboring town or village he sees smart young men behind the counters of the stores, some of them possibly sons of neighbors, wearing neat-fitting suits of the latest cut, and the freshest novelties in neckties and collars. At dinner time at the hotel he meets a friend who is a clerk, and by him is introduced to a commercial traveller from

whom he hears the latest yarn, is treated to a glass of wine and a cigar, has a good time for half an hour, then wends his way homeward, dreaming that fate has designed him for something better than following the plough. So he worries the old man to bring his influence to bear on some merchant to get him a situation. Without much difficulty the situation is got, and after spending three or four years behind the counter he begins to think he has learned all that is worth knowing about the business, that his employer is an old fogey with antiquated ideas completely behind the age, and that the majority of the customers are ready to follow him should he start in business for himself. He pays a visit to the old homestead, and describes to his parents the glowing prospects that are before him if he only had \$1,000 or \$2,000. The father shakes his head and tells him how hard he had to work to make the two ends meet and save a little every year to lift the mortgage off the farm, but the son's plausible story is too much for the mother, who is fond of her boy and wishes to see him of some importance in the world. So the farm is once more mortgaged, and the young man meets his friend the commercial traveller, who has a new batch of funny stories to pour into his delighted ear, a liberal order for goods is given, and a new business is started in some place already overcrowded. It booms for a time because there are always a number of people in every community ready to patronize a new store, but the balance sheet at the end of the year does not show the expected profits, and in nearly all such cases it is just a question of time. Sooner or later the assignee will take possession, and another bankrupt stock will be thrown on the market.

[TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.]

CANADIAN TURKEYS IN ENGLAND.

Writes the London correspondent of the Edinburgh Scotsman on December 18:— "Owing to the McKinley tariff, which has had the effect of restricting the very large market for Canadian turkeys and geese in the United States, an endeavor is being made to open up a trade in these commodities with the mother country. I saw the first consignment that arrived in Leadenhall market to-day, and am told that they have sold readily at prices which compare favorably with those given for English, Irish and continental turkeys. They came over unpicked, and are rather small, averaging only from 10 to 14 lbs. Their flavor is different from our farm-fed birds, being more like game. This arises from the fact that the Canadian turkey is a cross between the wild and domesticated bird, and is fed on natural rather than artificial food. I learn that the birds have been tried at some of the leading hotels, and have given much satisfaction. Altogether the experimental shipment is regarded as being a success, and it will in all probability be followed by others in the early part of the new year, when British birds become scarcer.