
HISTORICAL SKETCH OF A GREAT NEWSPAPER

applied clauses in the Code and the lottery shops and agencies promptly went out of business.

In 1905-6 another illustration of this newspaper's influence was given in the matter of usury and by a fierce campaign against conspicuous usurers. Its action was precipitated through the exposure of the business of a concern called the Canadian Finance Company—a Pittsburg, U.S. company with its Montreal office managed by a man named Max Roth. The business by 1905 had grown to formidable proportions, it advertised extensively and hundreds of poor people were victims of the system while other similar establishments were quick to organize. Interest of 120 per cent. and upwards was enacted, no delay was granted in collection of amounts due or in foreclosure on the bills of sale and many cruelties were practiced.

Max Roth finally became reckless through immunity, used forged telegrams to frighten the simple people he had to deal with and even dared the Star to attack his "lawful" business. The response was quick and to the point. On December 19 appeared an editorial of the most concise character: "There is no business so unspeakably mean as that of the usurer. He is a vampire who preys upon the necessities of the weak. He is a ghoul who robs the wounded on the battlefield of life. Misfortune does not appeal to his sympathy but to his cupidity. When he finds a fellow-being in a corner he does not help him—he plunders him. He is a financial thug who waylays citizens in the dark alleys of poverty and hardship . . . Parliament at its next session should put first upon the programme an effective law against usury." Pictures were published of the agreements between usurers and their victims; on December 21 the former were described as "slaveholders" and told that "a man who takes usury should be sent to penitentiary"; elaborate particulars were given in succeeding issues of the brutalities practised by these concerns and of the experience of the victims; reiterated demands were made for Government action.

The first victory was won when, on December 29, the Attorney-General of Quebec ordered the seizure of Roth's offices and the arrest of the usurer. Before the latter's trial, however,