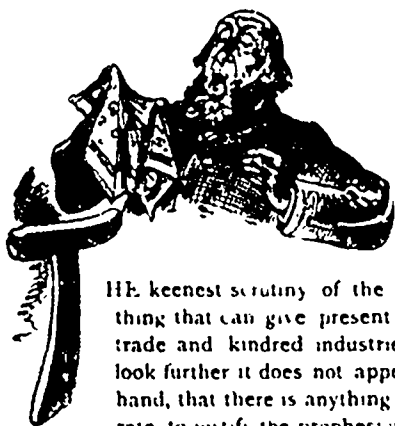




## THE TRADE IN MONTREAL.

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By Our Own Correspondent.  
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His keenest scrutiny of the horizon fails to detect any thing that can give present comfort to the dry goods trade and kindred industries, and even if one could look further it does not appear, from the indications at hand, that there is anything in the near future, at any rate, to justify the prophesying of smooth things. And even if the expectations of the most sanguine are realized during the coming year, it will hardly serve to correct the condition that has prevailed for the past three seasons. Nothing but a miracle could effect this, and in dry goods, at least, the age of miracles is gone. This general statement is based upon well-ascertained facts. The summary of the year's business has been ascertained from inside sources, from which it appears that the best managed and most conservative houses have made, what they call, "no money." Those in which the management was not exceptional have lost and the others have gone to the wall. It is painful to have to state that the end of the failures is not yet, though for the present it would be unfair to specify the next houses that are to fail. The Fourth passed disastrously, but the list of failures does not represent the actual condition. It gives no account of the houses which have thrown themselves upon the banks; of the customers who demanded extensions and those who have made private arrangements with the wholesalers. The largest failures in the district, of which Montreal is the centre, are four. Messrs. John A. Paterson & Co., wholesale millinery and fancy dry goods, St. Helen street, have assigned, with about \$85,000 direct liabilities, out of which \$23,000 are due in Europe. The principal creditors are: James Redmond, Winnipeg, \$10,000; Bank of Montreal, \$10,000; W. D. Matthews, Toronto, \$5,207; Estate E. R. Paterson, \$2,218; Estate J. Paterson, \$1,380; Jas. Walker & Son, Huddersfield, Eng., £834. The Bank of Montreal has also advanced \$56,000 on notes. The firm commenced business in 1851 as Paterson, Kissonck & Co., but Mr. Kissonck retired in 1888. A further change in the partnership took place in January, 1890, and in December of the same year the firm obtained a compromise of 50c. on the dollar, which was paid. A meeting was held on the twelfth, and the statement was found very unsatisfactory to the creditors. The old firm of J. Brown & Son, Craig street, has assigned. The Merchants Bank have advanced \$15,000 on notes, and the other creditors are: Alex. Gibson, Marysville, N.B., \$11,184; Windsor Cotton Co., Windsor, N.S., \$4,400; Dominion Cotton Mills, \$2,401; Estate Jas. Benning, \$1,485; Wm. Parks & Son, St. John's, N.B., \$1,201; Paris Manufacturing Co., Paris, Ont., \$988; Montreal Cotton Co., Valleyfield, \$648; Stormont Cotton Co., Cornwall, \$510. There is no hope of a readjustment of the difficulty on any reasonable terms. P. Hudon, wholesale dry goods, St. Paul street, has suspended with indirect liabilities of about \$200,000 and direct of \$20,000, the Merchants Bank being largely interested. Mills and McDougall, wholesale woollens and tailors' trimmings, have secured a settlement of sixty per cent on \$100,000, and on the McLachlan Bros. estate fifteen actual cents have been declared on the dollar. These do not pretend to exhaust the list, they are, however, the more important ones. There was not a well informed writer in the country who did not, three months ago, sound a warning, that merchants should not be carried away by enthusiasm over a good crop report. They knew their own business best. They shipped goods on pure speculation, they quietly opened new accounts and gave extensions on old ones. Then they expected to see the money flow in. The

money has not started yet. It will not come at all to the merchants at large.

It is quite true the harvests were unusually large—that there was a real overproduction; it is none the less true that it will go into the gulf that has been yawning for it for three years. The implement dealers had become desperate, the money lenders were threatening to foreclose, and these had first to be satisfied. The returns of the harvest were delayed on account of the weather, which permitted the farmers to remain in the fields, and prevented them from threshing their grain and marketing their produce. But even when frost put an end to their ploughing the roads were unpassable for want of snow, and that condition prevails up to the present moment. The crop has been largely frittered away in paying old and pressing accounts and very little remains for future purchases. On the other hand the fall ploughing and winter seeding will be a favorable factor in the future. The unusual mildness of the weather was positive in its harmfulness as well as negative for good, and in many cases the stocks of winter goods are unbroken. If people will not buy winter clothing before the first of the year, they will not buy at all. The holidays caused some stir, but it was chiefly in toys, sweets and notions; they did not affect the bulk of the dry goods trade. Besides the want of activity in heavy woollens, the unbroken stocks will meet the travellers in the face when they go to solicit orders for next fall's trade. Even if winter weather were now to set in, the trade would not be much helped, as the season is so far advanced. To follow the course of the markets and define it from day to day easily keeps one from becoming over sanguine, and while in this strain there are three things to be adverted to: the cancelling of orders, the dishonoring of drafts, and long credits. Even though all that has been said by the present writer has been said repeatedly in the last ten years, it appears to have had not the smallest effect. The average retailer would probably change his account if it were hinted that an order, even if written in duplicate, meant anything in the contract line, and he cancels orders on the smallest pretext, even for a fractional advantage promised by the traveller of a rival house. But wholesalers are so apathetic about selling they do not complain, since they have been saved from loss, while they have been deprived of profit. The practice of allowing a draft to be dishonored is more than a commercial delinquency, it is a nefarious practice, and harasses the merchant almost as much as a positive refusal to pay. In many quarters there is an utter disregard to the obligation of meeting a draft, even by men who pretend to a fair range of credit. When a merchant is notified that a draft will be made upon him on a specified date, according to the terms of purchase, and he does not reply to the notification, he tacitly admits that it will be cared for, and if he allows it to be returned, though he gains some time, he loses by the infraction of business methods and is pursuing a course which in the end must prove disastrous. The third evil is long credits. The custom of accepting paper dated six, nine, and with renewals even twelve months, is closely connected with financial disaster. It leads to carelessness on the part of retailers, and the evil accumulates till the wholesale houses can bear the strain no longer and the crash comes.

## OBITUARY.

Mr. Dennis O'Connor, one of the best known fur merchants of Toronto, died suddenly on the evening of December 29th. He was entertaining a friend, Mr. Shea, at his home, No. 64 Hazelton avenue, when he was suddenly seized with heart failure. At 11 o'clock he was dead, although during the earlier part of the evening he had felt in excellent health. Mr. O'Connor was 52 years of age and leaves a sorrowing widow and seven children to mourn his untimely end. Two weeks ago Mr. O'Connor became a member of Council Cairnsmore, I. O. F. No. 432. He had never been called upon to pay a death assessment, but his heirs will receive \$2,000.

The citizens of St. John, N. B., were shocked on January 3rd, to hear of the sudden death of T. A. Daniel, head of the firm of Daniel & Boyd, one of the oldest wholesale dry goods houses, if not the oldest house, in the city. Mr. Daniel went into business in 1838, and in 1851 took into partnership Mr., now Senator, Boyd. A few weeks ago the firm was reorganized as a limited liability company, taking in some young men who have been in the employ of the house. The firm of Daniel & Boyd has an almost continental reputation for integrity and honorable dealing. Mr. Daniel leaves three sons. One is the rector of Port Hope, Ont., another is an Episcopal clergyman in Prince Edward Island, the third is head of the firm of Daniel & Robertson, of St. John. One daughter is the wife of Archdeacon Jones of Windsor, and another is the wife of S. Schofield of St. John. Mr. Daniel was president of the Auxiliary Bible Society, and either president or director of half a dozen other religious or benevolent societies.