

a very large shrinkage in the aggregate capital invested.

This shrinkage is a continuation of that which was going on during 1876, which resulted in a lessening of values to the extent of about \$3,000,000 in the securities tabulated as compared with the year 1875. It is apparant, therefore, that the wealth of the country has shrunken seriously during the last two or three years in the field of stock investment.

Among bank stocks the heaviest declines are shown by the Toronto, Montreal, Merchants and Consolidated Banks. The first named opened with the year at 175½, and declined steadily to 152 in May, then fluctuated slightly, reaching 150 in November, closing with the year at 140, the low dividend of four per cent. probably causing this latest fall. Bank of Montreal began the year at 183½, declined pretty steadily to 154½ in August, rose through the two succeeding months till it touched 170 in November, closing last week at 159. Consolidated varied from 95½ in January to 78 in December. Merchants, from 89¾ at the first to 69¾ at the last of the year. In the miscellaneous list, Richelieu & Ontario Navigation Co., Royal Canadian Insurance Co., and Montreal Building Association, have declined most heavily.

DISHONESTY PUNISHED.

The proceedings now being carried on in Montreal against the notorious H. Davis and his confederates show that the business community has arisen with stern determination. The object appears now to be to show that forbearance shall no longer be shown to swindlers or their abettors.

The previous performance of the man Davis, wherein the public was the victim and he the jubilant victor, is not forgotten. However much some may have been astounded when Davis recommenced business, yet so jaunty was his recommencement and so soon did he conquer success, that it required some effort of memory to be certain that he was the evil genius in Davis, Welsh & Co. Banks and merchants literally fell into his arms. It is significant that the cashiers of several banks are prominent in urging the punishment of the defaulters to-day, and this is so far well. But, did it never strike these gentlemen that refusal to deal with one whose record was so bad would have shortened his career and averted the disaster he has brought upon many. We are informed that in approaching the banks Davis told each cashier in succession that he was sorry for the loss they had previously sustained by him, but he would make it all right. "Meantime," said this wily schemer, "you can make a deduction now and again from my discounts, which shall apply in reduction of the said previous loss;" and this, it appears, or something

like it, they agreed to. It may not strike them, but it ought, that no legitimate business can stand discount at the rate of from 9 to 12 per cent.

This Davis failed, as Davis, Welsh & Co., and failed discreditably. His assignee could not get any account of large assets in Bills Receivable, etc. As H. Davis & Co., he made, shortly thereafter, a wonderful strike, and though promising to pay ten per cent., never paid a farthing. Merchants and brokers went down, banks were terribly fleeced, and the community "grinned and bore it."

There is consolation in the thought, awakened by the proceedings now being taken, that this sort of thing is to stop. But we fear, judging from previous example, that if the parties now pursuing could only lay their hands on the supposed funds hid away the proceedings would be relaxed and the criminals might turn up a few years later in some worse transaction. This man has repeatedly deceived and swindled the shrewdest men, and the only sure way to avoid loss by him and such as him, is to refuse utterly any transactions with them. Let us hope that in this instance, Messrs. Davis & Co. may receive a part, at least, of the punishment they deserve.

Enough can scarcely be said in condemnation of dealings with such notorious men as Davis, while there are plenty of honest men to do the legitimate trade of the country, with far better records than he, who find it difficult to procure lines of credit. When will our merchants learn to look more closely into the antecedents of inquirers after credit? Capital, or supposed capital is a good thing, but in the hands of an unscrupulous man makes him doubly dangerous. If character entered more largely into the calculations of our wholesale merchants, in dispensing credit, adventurers might find less scope for the exercise of their genius.

COMMERCIAL TRAVELLERS' ASSOCIATIONS.—The yearly meetings of three Canadian bodies of Commercial Travellers have been held within the past few days. The largest, which is entitled the "Dominion," met in Montreal, and elected its officers: Mr. Andrew Robertson, of Messrs. Robertson, Linton & Co., Montreal, president, re-elected; Mr. R. C. Simpson, Secretary. The membership had increased 300 during the year; now numbers 692, and there is a balance on hand of \$4,000. The Commercial Travellers' Association of Canada met on the 28th of December, and elected Mr. James Patterson, of the firm of Messrs. Thomas May & Co., of this city, president, and Mr. W. E. Sanford, of Messrs. Sanford, Vail & Bickley, Hamilton and Toronto, Vice-President. Toronto Vice-Presidents, L. Smyth and J. Bonnick, Montreal Board, Vice-Presidents, S. O. Shorey and E. A. Small. Hamilton Board, Vice-Presidents, W. E. Sanford and J. A. Orr. London Board, Vice-President, George Fleming. Kingston and Guelph have each a director, in the per-

sons of Mr. M. Sutherland and Mr. T. Taylor respectively. The dinner, which was held at the Royal Hotel, Hamilton, was attended by 200. Mr. Riley is secretary of the Association. The Western Travellers' Commercial Association, held its annual meeting in London on 28th ult. It has one hundred and thirty-four members and a surplus of \$307 on hand. Mr. H. D. Long was re-elected President: Messrs. Watson, Laing and Lind, Vice-Presidents, and Mr. Joseph Atkinson, Secretary and Treasurer. A Board of seven directors was elected.

—The late president of the American Popular Life Insurance Company, Dr. Lambert, was on the 20th ult. convicted, after a jury trial, of perjury, in having sworn to a flourishing statement, knowing it to be false, of the affairs of the company, which has since collapsed. This follows closely upon the conviction of Robt. L. Case, president of the Security Life Insurance Company another concern gone into bankruptcy—for having sworn falsely as to the position of his company at the close of 1875. Lambert made a technical defence, which, however, did not avail. Mr. Case, who appears to be a man of good repute, acknowledged that he had sworn to the report without knowing its contents. He considered it apparently a mere matter of form, and confided in the subordinate officers of the company, who handed the report to him to sign. The result of such misplaced and unwarrantable confidence, on the part of the head of a large institution, is, that this old man of sixty-eight years, will likely go to prison. It is to be regretted that the men who made up this false statement are not likewise punished. These convictions will, however, have a good effect, and this sort of careless swearing will be less indulged in.

—A case of considerable importance recently came before the Supreme Court in Halifax. The question involved was whether the promissory notes held by the agency of the Bank of Nova Scotia, in the town of New Glasgow, were personal property and liable to assessment or not. His lordship, the Chief Justice, gave a decision which was concurred in by the whole bench. The effect of which is that promissory notes are personal property and liable to assessment. This decision it appears to us, if carried out, must be found very inconvenient to the banks and detrimental to their interest. We doubt the reasonableness of such a tax.

—We are in receipt of a letter from the agent, at Chatham, of the Standard Fire Insurance which is entirely too long for our columns this week. The writer states that so far as his experience with that company goes, we "had been misinformed when we stated some weeks ago that it was guilty of cutting rates." He also charges the British companies with accepting risks at a lower rate than the Standard. It is certainly bad enough for any company to do business at rates that do not pay. But what is