

account for ; and, what is a seriously dark feature for the firm, a number of pages of one of the ledgers are missing, having been torn out. What the transactions are which are sought to be concealed by this iniquitous proceeding can only be surmised at present. But it may be not impossible to ferret them out. It will be well, in a way, if nothing worse was done than selling goods at auction for less than cost. Certainly, the facilities have not been wanting for warehousing merchandise and getting advances upon it—a method of “raising the wind” which overproduction and over-importing has made alarmingly common of late.

Some glaring cases of underselling are laid to the charge of this firm during 1889 or 1890. A line of tweeds made by a mill in western Ontario and invoiced to Mackenzie & Hamilton at 90 cents per yard, was sold by them to a Toronto retailer for 75 cents the yard, and other transactions involving a straight loss are instanced to us. Besides this shameful waste, the firm is alleged to have made a statement to the Merchants Bank of Canada in December, 1889, that they had a large surplus; and about June, 1890, say four months before they suspended, they assured Mr. Wallace Millichamp that they had \$16,000 to the good.

“This is a shameful exhibit,” many will be ready to say; “persons who will do what these debtors have done, and will then mutilate their books to conceal we know not what, should be punished.” So they should. But what of the culpability of those who, without due enquiry, helped such a firm to extend its business while not properly equipped? It began business with no cash capital; the books showed this. For two years no personal account was kept. In 1885, when buying \$22,000 worth of goods a month, it only professed on paper \$6,000 capital, and its book-keeping even then was faulty. In forty-one months ended with 1888 it only made \$231. Then came the underselling and the other grievances now being unearthed. Is it proper that credit to such an extent as is here indicated should be given while those who give it have only a guess on which to base their advances? In old-fashioned times, which are now contemned, creditors had the right, and used it too, to see the books of those whom they credited. Worse for them if we have outgrown these times.

NATURAL GAS PANIC.

The village of Ruthven, near Kingsville, in the county of Essex, has a gas well, and several dwellings in the village use natural gas both as fuel and as an illuminant. Some distance from the well is a regulator which is supposed to regulate the flow of gas in the main pipe on the village street. This pipe is one inch in diameter, and with it are connected several smaller pipes through which the gas enters dwelling-houses. On the night of the 6th January, Mr. Bolton, station agent of the Walkerville railroad, whose family were fortunately from home that night, was awakened about one a. m. by an intense heat in his bedroom, on the second floor. He at once got

up, and on opening the stairway door found that the lower part of the house was on fire—the two stoves being red-hot. He managed to get out of the house, but in doing so the soles of his feet were badly burned. The fire was caused by an unusual pressure of the gas. Before going to bed Mr. Bolton had examined his stoves, and left what he considered a safe blaze in both of them. The regulator on the main pipe is supposed not to allow a greater quantity of gas to escape than can with safety be admitted into the houses in which the gas is used. On the night in question the house containing the regulator was blown into atoms.

Mr. Bolton had no permit for the use of natural gas from the company in which he was insured, consequently he was using it at his own risk. The permit contains certain conditions that must be observed in the use of this gas, and had the proper precautions been taken in this case, it is not likely that the fire would have occurred. Four other persons whose houses are connected by pipes to the same main, found their stoves red hot too, but managed to save them from burning by turning off the gas. The panic caused by this fire led to an immediate demand for natural gas permits from the insurance companies.

It will be seen from this circumstance that great care must be observed in the use of this gas. The chief danger arises from unequal pressure from the gas well; and unless the precautions which experience in Pittsburg and other places has shown to be necessary in connection with the use of natural gas are strictly observed, accidents such as we have described will inevitably occur.

In Findlay, Ohio, a terrible accident befell, on the 18th inst., in the dining room of the Hotel Marion in that town. It was discovered that there was a leak somewhere in the pipes which supplied natural gas to the hotel, and the proprietor of the house was at work with three plumbers trying to locate the leak. While this was being done, one of the dining room girls, in sweeping the room, stepped on a match, which ignited, and immediately a fearful explosion took place, wrecking the building, instantly killing two female servants and maiming several others. Had the explosion occurred a few minutes later the loss of life would have been appalling, for about 100 guests were waiting in adjoining rooms to be called to dinner.

As this gas is now used in Welland, Kingsville and other places in Canada, the Canadian Fire Underwriters' Association have adopted the rules and regulations in force in Pittsburg and Buffalo, which we give below. It is to be hoped, therefore, that no person will use this gas in any building except under the conditions that will render its use safe.

The conditions adopted by the Canadian Fire Underwriters' Association, 3rd December, 1890, respecting the introduction and use of natural gas in manufacturing establishments, are these:

1st. That when gas is to be introduced into any premises, a regulator shall be placed as remote as possible from building, by which the pressure shall be reduced to not exceeding two pounds.

2nd. A safety valve shall be placed between the Governor or Regulator and buildings,

which will blow off when the pressure exceeds two pounds.

3rd. A Mercury Gauge must be placed inside of buildings which will indicate the exact pressure in the pipes.

4th. All pipes leading from the Regulator, and into the mills, shall be of as large diameter as possible; on entering building shall be elevated and carried over-head, and above all furnaces and boilers.

5th. Pipes, Valves and Fittings shall be carefully inspected when the work is completed, and reported upon before the privilege is given to use Natural Gas.

RULES FOR DWELLINGS.

Natural Gas for Fuel may be used under the following conditions:

All pipes and fittings must be tested to a pressure of 10 pounds to the square inch, and a certificate of such test furnished to the consumer. A pressure Regulator must be placed on service pipe, and so set that the pressure at which the gas is used shall not exceed 4 ounces to the square inch.

A charge of 25 cents to building rate is made in all cases where the Regulator is omitted.

Gas should not be burned at night, unless the fires are all turned down low.

MERCANTILE BUILDINGS.

Pipes and fittings to be tested same as in dwellings, and provided with Regulator, pressure not to exceed 4 ounces.

All fires must be turned off at night, unless a competent man is left in charge. When this rule is not observed, a charge of 25 cents must be added to building rate.

In addition to these there are numerous suggestions made by the Board to plumbers and gasfitters who are fitting up buildings for Natural Gas. For these we have not room to day.

MONTREAL CLEARING HOUSE—THE YEAR'S WORK.

The transactions of the Montreal Clearing House for the past year show a pretty steady increase over 1889, month by month—the exceptions being January, February, and October—and an aggregate increase from \$454,528,000 in 1889 to \$473,984,000 in 1890, or close upon five per cent. A meeting of the bank managers of the city was held at the Merchants Bank of Canada one day last week in connection with the Clearing House. There were present: Mr. Macdougall, Quebec Bank; Mr. Crombie, Bank of Commerce; Mr. Penfold, British Bank; Mr. Garand, Banque Ville Marie; Mr. Brunet, Banque Nationale; Mr. Pendergast, Banque d'Hochelaga; Mr. Balfour, Union Bank; Mr. Macdonald, Bank of Nova Scotia; Mr. Gault, Merchants Bank; Mr. de Martigny, Banque Jacques Cartier. Mr. Macdougall occupied the chair and Mr. Gault acted as secretary. The report submitted stated that during the year just past the Clearing House had performed all that was expected of it, had worked along quietly and without the least obstacle having arisen. The plan of each bank taking charge for a month succeeded well, as also the manner of settling at the Bank of Montreal. The following table shows the total amounts cleared in each month of the two years the Clearing House has been in operation:—

	1889.	1890.
January	\$36,800,000	\$34,307,000
February	32,197,000	31,910,000
March	33,009,000	33,590,000
April	33,742,000	34,154,000
May	37,002,000	42,174,000
June	38,438,000	41,318,000
July	40,599,000	42,232,000
August	38,396,000	41,683,000
September	38,875,000	44,667,000
October	46,483,000	48,640,000