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# Historical Sketch of A Great Newspaper

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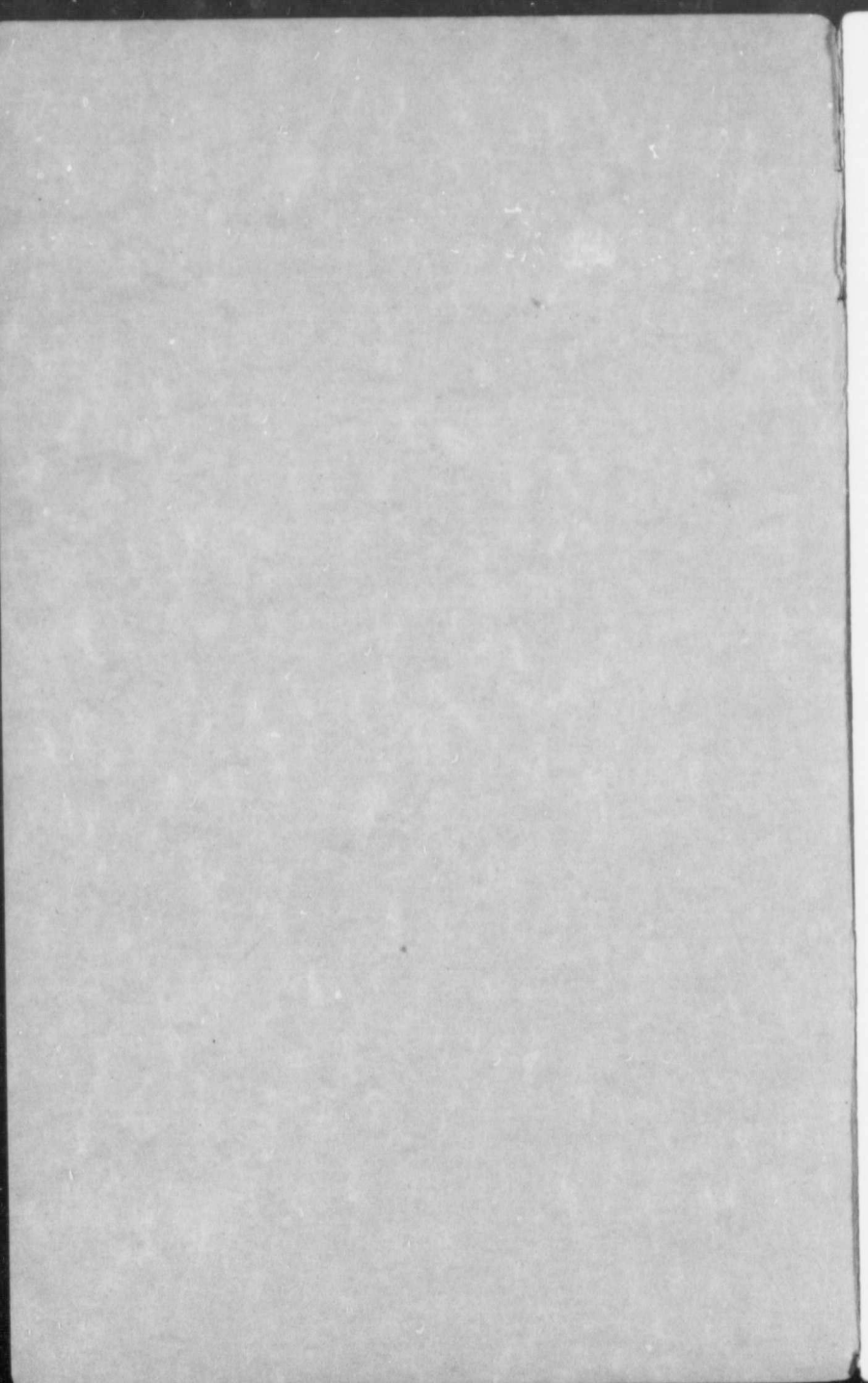
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*By* CASTELL HOPKINS

IN THE CANADIAN ANNUAL REVIEW

- 1910 -



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HISTORICAL SKETCH OF  
A GREAT NEWSPAPER  
∴ *By* CASTELL HOPKINS ∴

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*Issued by*

THE MONTREAL STAR PUBLISHING COMPANY  
LIMITED  
MONTREAL, CANADA

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## Foreword

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THE mere fact that the following sketch has been written by Mr. Hopkins, is a sufficient guarantee that it will not lack in interest.

Mr. Hopkins is probably the foremost Canadian historian of the day. His name as an author and biographer is familiar in all parts of the Empire.

Mr. Hopkin's principal work at the present time consists in the compilation of his "Canadian Annual Review," a most valuable collection of material bearing on all phases of national life.

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## Historical Sketch of a Great Newspaper



THE origin, struggles, progress, success and policies of a great newspaper make up an ever-interesting and important record. When to these conditions is added the further one of a striking personality behind the enterprise as a business, and within the newspaper as a journalistic force, the historical record is still more attractive. It was two years after Confederation that the Montreal Star was founded by an ambitious young man with a certain shrewdness of disposition, with a few years' experience as a book-keeper and business manager on other papers, with plenty of pluck and something under a hundred dollars in cash capital. Associated with Hugh Graham in this extraordinary undertaking was a brilliant journalistic writer of that day, George T. Lanigan. The first issue of the paper was on January 16th, 1869, under the name of "The Evening Star," the business office was at 64 St. James Street, and the tiny editorial rooms were at 9 Ste. Therese Street; the price was one cent, and the paper had 4 pages of 6 columns each or 24 in all. Of these, 14 were filled with reading matter and 10 devoted to advertising. In 1910 it is still an evening one-cent journal but its proprietor is said to be a millionaire and its size runs from 20 to 36 pages of 8 columns each.

The old buildings in which the paper started are no longer in existence; the conditions in which it was at first published have changed almost absolutely. The Montreal of that day had a population of one hundred thousand, today it is half a million; the property assessment of the city was \$53,000,000, it is now over



*The Montreal Star's First Home*

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\$300,000,000; then it was a slowly growing town amid somewhat sleepy surroundings, today it is still the commercial and financial centre of the Dominion. The Star developed with the City and the nation, Mr. Graham grew with the growth of both. But the struggle at first was one which combines the romance of history with the stern realities of modern life. George Murray, in an article written in 1909, said: "The fight to set that paper on its feet would afford material for a journalistic epic. Before long the two partners differed. Lanigan, backed by a local capitalist, wanted to advocate annexation with the United States, presumably in order to attract attention to the paper. But Graham objected; his father had taught him better than that. So Lanigan withdrew and Graham went on alone. An offer from his principal creditors to give him, as sole proprietor, a clean sheet was refused; and the young proprietor announced

his intention to pay every cent of the overwhelming debt of his paper, with interest. And this he did, but not until he had tasted every experience that comes to the man who insists upon making bricks without straw." Credit at times was very low, as was the circulation. Both, however, grew gradually and steadily.



*The Montreal Star's Second Building*

### Early Successes

In April, 1870, the business office was removed to 89 Little St. James Street, and in August, to 91 St. James St., where it remained

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until April 22, 1874, when 624 Craig Street became the location of the struggle for success. Back of this building was one called the Racquet Court which was torn down and a new building erected and occupied by the Star from 1886 to 1900 when the handsome structure on St. James Street, occupied by the paper of later times, was constructed to meet the growing requirements of the journal. The first success of the young newspaper was in connection with the Franco-Prussian war as to which a forenoon edition was issued with occasional extras; the news service was, in fact, excellent for those days. Ensuing efforts, and numerous they were, were directed by editorial work and in the news and local columns to every kind of local reform and municipal improvement. City government, water supply, gas prices, street cleaning, street-car service, public utilities of various kinds, civic corruption, harbour improvements, and sanitation reform, with other kindred questions were constantly presented upon a high plane of business progressiveness and political cleanness. Young men were given high ideals in municipal, provincial and national life and, as time went on, and Empire unity developed into a working policy or principle that wider ideal was added to the others. In 1877 (April 16), the name of the paper was changed to "The Montreal Star" and from this time, when the preliminary struggles and natural fluctuations of early years were over, the average daily circulation of the journal up to the beginning of 1885 grew as follows:

1877.....	13,200	1881.....	16,209
1878.....	15,668	1882.....	17,424
1879.....	15,087	1883.....	18,823
1880.....	15,305	1884.....	21,341

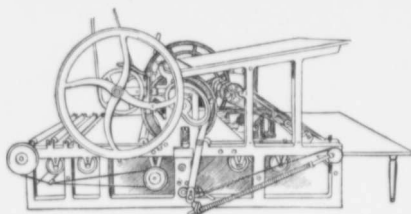
### The Small-pox Epidemic

During 1885 an old-time trouble developed in Montreal to most alarming proportions. Small-pox, owing to popular prejudice among the French-Canadians against vaccination and to an oft-expressed belief by practicing medical men amongst that section of the people that the vaccine supplied for the purpose was not pure, had been frequently epidemic in Montreal,

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*An Early Press*

notably in the years between 1872-1881 when the deaths totaled 4,911. In 1885 the disease developed again and spread rapidly. The deaths numbered 6 in April, 46 in July, and 45 in the next two weeks

of August. On August 15 the *Star* drew attention to the situation in four columns of urgent description, pointed out the conditions surrounding the previous epidemics and declared that the 400 cases then existing in the City indicated another and a severe one. Vaccination was advocated and pressed upon the people by every means which a newspaper, really in earnest, can employ; an editorial on the twenty-second showed the vital necessity of a proper isolation hospital; four days later and on many succeeding occasions the *Star* urged the passing of Civic by-laws for (1) the compulsory vaccination of infants; (2) an efficient system of sanitary inspection; (3) the re-organization of the Board of Health; (4) a compulsory system of birth registration.

The inertia of the authorities and of the people was hard to break down, but Mr. Graham fought personally as well as through his paper for the interests of a City which were now being affected by the injury to its reputation abroad as well as by the danger to its citizens. He led a large and prominent deputation to the City Hall and was appointed, with six others, on a Civic Health Committee which undertook a vigorous campaign for vaccination and isolation, backed up at every point by the pressure of the *Star* upon public opinion. A mass-meeting of citizens was held and resolutions passed in favor of suitable hospital accommodations and other requirements; Bishop Fabre was persuaded to issue a Pastoral letter pointing out the necessity of such action; failing to obtain by ordinary means the use of their buildings, from the Exhibition authorities, as an Isolation Hospital, Mr. Graham got a requisition to call out the troops and himself took possession and turned the great



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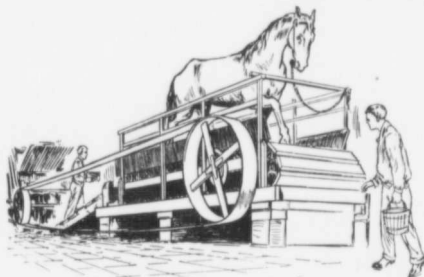
structure into public service for the patients who were now dying at the rate of a hundred a week. The deaths in the month ending September 22 had been 524 and the total to that date 838. For the week ending October 30 the total was 354 and for the next week 302, while by November 13 the general total was 2,816. But the campaign of the paper and of Mr. Graham, backed up by intelligent citizens, now had its effect and the back of the epidemic was broken before the end of the year.

### The Fresh-air Fund

In 1887 the Star initiated, and Mr. Graham personally organized, a Fresh-air Fund by which, in this year and for each succeeding year, sums of money were collected—totalling \$93,367 on December 31, 1910—for the purpose of giving working mothers and poor children a glimpse of country life and a bit of country health. More than 100,000 women and children were thus helped and, finally, a large summer home and grounds were personally provided by Mr. Graham.

### The Pick and Shovel Brigade

During the following year a unique incident occurred in connection with accumulations of ice and snow and winter-filth which had made the streets of Montreal impassable, stopped the street-car busses of that period, and buried the street-car tracks. After repeatedly urging the City Council to action, the Star, on April 7, 1888, published the following: "The Star wants 500 men, with 200 picks and 300 shovels, together with 200 cartage sleighs, to commence operations in clearing the streets of Montreal. Apply at the Star Office on Monday." In an editorial, the newspaper



*The Star's First Power Plant*

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promised to advance the money for the work, and announced that a mandamus would be taken out against the City Surveyor and Aldermen. This was on a Saturday, and on Monday the Star's Pick and Shovel Brigade was formed; hundreds more than the number mentioned came forward, including all classes of the community. Legislative councillors, merchants and professional men worked side by side in a voluntary capacity. Emergency meetings of the City Council were at once held and, stirred into action, the Civic authorities continued the work commenced by the Pick and Shovel Brigade; the streets were cleared, traffic was opened up, and the work of the City resumed.

### The India Famine Fund

During the next decade the Star continued its work in many directions. Politically independent, emphatically moral in tone, moderate in argument except when roused by some issue immediately vital to the people, standing for much that was best in the public thought of Canada, it grew steadily in popular favor, increased its influence from that of a purely local newspaper to one of national importance and obtained a growing measure of acceptance with advertisers elsewhere than in Montreal as well as amongst subscribers all over Canada. An illustration of the paper's standing in this latter respect, and also of its widespread influence, was shown in 1897 when it made a public appeal to Canadians to contribute funds in support of the measures being taken by the British authorities and individual initiative, to aid millions who were suffering from plague and famine in India. On January 16 it was announced that 100 deaths were occurring daily in Bombay, alone, from the plague and that 2,592 deaths had already taken place while, over immense areas, people were without food owing to crop failures. Sir A. C. Lyall, Chief Commissioner in the Central Provinces, reported great preparations to meet the famine conditions and

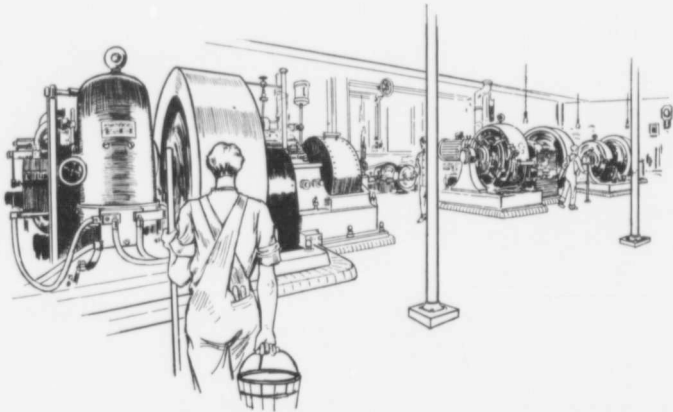
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the probability that they would last well into August and necessitate the feeding of 3,000,000 people at the worst period. During the first week in January 1,200,000 persons were already in receipt of Government relief.

On January 20 the Star started its India Famine Fund with a front page signed by Bishop Bond, Dean Carmichael, Rev. Dr. A. B. McKay, Rev. J. Edgar Hill, Rev. Dr. S. P. Rose and many others of varied degrees of prominence and opinion: "We, the undersigned, realizing the dreadful character of the famine and plague in India, and knowing from the history of these scourges, that the consequences must be borne by millions of human beings, many of whom are in no way responsible for the initiation of the calamity, do most heartily endorse the movement for raising a Relief Fund." Sir Wilfrid Laurier wrote endorsing this suggestion to aid "our fellow British subjects" in India and enclosed \$100. On the following day an editorial in the newspaper stated that "the enthusiasm with which representative Canadians greet the opportunity to assist in a systematic way in fighting the famine and the plague in India must make optimists of us all on the subjects of human charity and British unity."



*The Star's Present Power Plant is sufficient to light many a good-sized town*

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The popular reception of this appeal must have surprised even the Proprietor of the paper. Ottawa organized a committee and the Governor-General (Lord Aberdeen) became Honorary Receiver of the Star's fund with Mayor R. Wilson-Smith as Hon.-Treasurer in Montreal.

Telegrams of endorsement came from the Lieut.-Governors and Premiers of the Provinces, the Bishops, and clergy, and leading citizens, and promised help from many newspaper editors. On January 31 a notable editorial appeared in recognition of the reception thus accorded the proposal: "That Canadian sympathy is always quick to go out to British calamity in any way is now being shown in practical fashion by the ready response of our people to the bitter cry from India. We can honestly take this as a comfort to our hearts when we think of the vast value of the Empire to us. British unity is a paying policy for all concerned." An inquiry at this time brought a cablegram from India describing the situation as one of "horrible gloom"; and statements published showed the area affected by famine to be 164,000 square miles with 36,000,000 population. By February 9 a cheque was sent to the Governor-General and then to Calcutta for \$30,000. A few of the large subscribers were :

Hon. L. J. Forget	Montreal Street Railway ...\$250
(for Stock Exchange) ...\$535	Banque Ville-Marie ..... 200
Bank of Montreal ..... 5,000	Quebec Bank ..... 500
Merchants Bank of Canada, 1,500	R. G. Reid ..... 250
Molsons Bank ..... 750	James Ross ..... 500
R. Wilson-Smith ..... 250	Lake of the Woods Milling
Hugh Graham ..... 500	Company ..... 250
Canadian Pacific Railway.. 1,000	Grand Trunk Railway ..... 500
Bank of British North	Guarantee Company of North
America ..... 500	America ..... 250
Sun Life Assurance Company, 500	Mayor of Victoria, B. C.... 214

By February 19 the total had reached \$33,000, by March 8 it was \$40,000, a week later it was \$45,000, on March 19 \$48,000 and, at the official closing of the fund on April 16, the amount received was \$53,171. Money continued to come in, however, and eventually the total was \$55,115. An interesting feature of

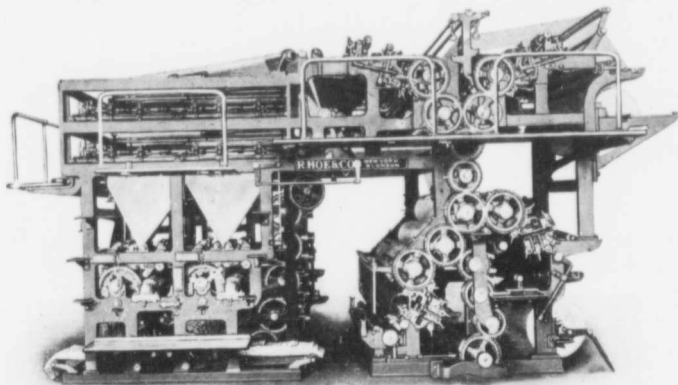
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this event was the way in which the paper was able to reach and appeal to all kinds and conditions of people in every part and corner of this country. By February 4, fifty-two churches had sent in subscriptions including every creed from the Roman Catholic to the Baptist. The further place and work of the churches in the matter covered the whole Dominion and included every denomination. Then the High and Public Schools took hold, the Fraternal Orders followed suit, Church Societies such as the King's Daughters and Epworth League and Christian Endeavour aided, public bodies like the Orange Lodges did their part. It was a realistic picture of the influence for good which a newspaper may wield when energetically directed. As an illustration of how a courageous and popular policy may also affect the practical and commercial success of a newspaper the following figures of average daily circulation during the years from 1885 to 1900, inclusive, may be given here :

1885.. 24,778	1889.. 28,160	1893.. 37,307	1897.. 45,909
1886.. 25,695	1890.. 29,855	1894.. 38,886	1898.. 49,941
1887.. 26,263	1891.. 32,019	1895.. 41,541	1899.. 51,752
1888.. 27,660	1892.. 33,159	1896.. 45,499	1900.. 57,785



*Hoe Sextuple Press. - Capacity, 24,000 Twenty-four Page Stars an Hour*

### The South-African War

The last two years mentioned were associated with one of the most important incidents in the history of the Star and one which has a great place in the National and Imperial records of the Dominion. On October 5, 1899, when war with the Transvaal became imminent—coupled with obvious complications in Europe which made a great international conflict possible—the Star declared editorially that the Canadian Government's inaction was disgraceful and on the following day specifically urged the immediate sending of a large contingent of troops from the Dominion. The response was an avalanche of telegrams, letters and messages, urging action and in many cases volunteering personally for the front. At the same time (October 5), Sir Charles Tupper, leader of the Opposition, telegraphed the Premier as follows: "I hope you will send a contingent of Canadian volunteers to aid England in the Transvaal. I know it will be warmly welcomed by the British

Government, be of great service to Canada, and promote the unity of the Empire. A friend of mine will insure the lives and limbs at his own expense to a million dollars and I will heartily support in Parliament your action in this matter."

On October 9-10-11, in reply to an inquiry addressed to Canadian Mayors, Militia Officers and others, the Star published hundreds of telegrams and whole pages of messages which demanded prompt Government action. The press of the country had meanwhile taken the matter up and on October 11 it was announced that a contin-



*The Montreal Star Offices, London, Eng.*

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gent of 1,000 would go at once—despite the Premier's initial statement that Parliament would first have to be called and the publicly expressed objections of Mr. Tarte, his Minister of Public Works.

The Star then took up the question of paying the expenses of these and other troops who might go to the front. They should, if declared, be equipped and despatched and maintained at the expense of Canada and, on the thirteenth, editorially described the Government as "Cowards in Council" for not taking decisive action along this line. Its general position was stated on the sixteenth: "Canada is now and long has been big enough and strong enough to bear her share of the entire responsibilities of the Empire." Meanwhile great public interest had been felt in the statement that a friend of Sir C. Tupper had volunteered to insure the lives of the troops. The name was not made known and it only transpired years afterwards that Mr. Hugh Graham was the donor of the large sum of money which must have been required for premiums. On October 14, the Opposition Leader wrote to Sir Wilfrid Laurier confirming his previous telegram and added: "The offer of the gentleman to whom I have referred in my telegram, and whose means are ample for the purpose, to provide an insurance to the extent of one million dollars to meet any casualties that may occur will greatly lessen the expenditure involved on the part of the Dominion."

The policy of prompt, efficient and ample aid to the Empire in the time of war or stress was maintained throughout the South-African struggle while a Children's Patriotic Fund was also established to aid the families of British soldiers killed or injured in the war. To this 150,000 children subscribed through the columns of the Star. Incidentally, the whole matter put this Montreal journal in a very clear light as having national influence, as being more than a local or provincial paper, as being, in reality, an Imperial factor. During the following decade this policy was developed along lines of closer Imperial unity in Council and commerce, in tariffs and transportation, in naval and military organization, in cable systems and press

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relationship. This latter element was further indicated by the knighthood which came to Mr. Graham in 1908 and the chorus of approval which was expressed by the newspapers of Canada while it was strengthened by the prominent part which Sir Hugh took at the Imperial Press conference of 1909 as representing the Montreal Star.

### Local Campaigns

St. James Methodist Church—Crusade against Lotteries and Usurers—  
Montreal General Hospital—C. D. Sheldon

Meantime the Star had continued its policy of helping good causes and trying to destroy local evils. In 1898 it came to the rescue of an historic church building in Montreal which was threatened by the foreclosure of a mortgage—St. James Methodist Church. A public appeal was made on November 17 and in a very short time enough was raised to clear the church of its burden. In 1890 a crusade was initiated against lotteries. Under a great straining of the clause in the Criminal Code by which the raffling of small articles at bazaars for charitable purposes and drawings at art unions were permitted, there had grown up in Montreal scores of professional lotteries with thousands of ticket agencies. Drawings were openly held twice a day. The Star decided to organize a crusade against them and on April 19 it editorially summarized the situation as follows: "Out of every \$100,000 expended in tickets in a certain lottery only \$15,000 were returned to the public in prizes. It is strange that people should need to be protected by law from going into such business as this; but thousands of Montreal families are being impoverished at the present time by these lotteries. Of course, the victims belong to the least intelligent classes and are quite incapable of forming any idea of the tremendous odds against them in the game. Some of these lotteries are controlled by very prominent and wealthy citizens." Senator R. Dandurand was amongst the first of the public men to espouse the anti-lottery crusade; the fight was sternly carried on and at the next Parliamentary Session an amendment was passed repealing the mis-



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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,

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he broke bail and fled the country. The next point was to get Federal Government action and legislation—something for which M. J. F. Quinn, M.P., in 1897, Senator Dandurand in 1899, and J. A. C. Madore, M.P., in 1901 had strived. The campaign was continued in the columns of the paper through 1906; interviews were published continuously from men of religious, educational, business, moral and public standing; attacks were made upon other and similar financial sharks in the city; a great petition was originated and circulated by the Star asking Parliament to pass a law making this system illegal and impossible; public opinion was thoroughly aroused and Parliament stirred up. On July 13, 1906, a Money-lenders' Act was passed which embodied clauses relieving the present victims of the system and protecting the borrower in future. The Star at once opened a Bureau of Information and started to instruct the public as to the new law and the best way of dealing with or avoiding altogether the net of the usurer.

A movement was next aided by the newspaper which looked to the strengthening of the Montreal General Hospital; On May 20, 1908, a fund was initiated in aid of the Sick Children's Hospital and the collections amounted to over \$25,000; in 1910 the action taken by the Star against C. D. Sheldon, the "financial broker" who took \$1,000,000 out of the people of Montreal was instrumental in (1) compelling him to give up and flee the country; (2) through the offer of a \$10,000 reward was instrumental in having him captured and brought back to trial. So the record might be continued as affecting in a myriad directions the social, moral, political and practical welfare of the people. But enough has been described to explain the rise of this newspaper from days of struggle to days of historic influence and obvious success. Let the figures of average daily circulation in 1901-11 speak finally in this connection:

1901.....	55,991	1906.....	60,952
1902.....	55,081	1907.....	62,837
1903.....	55,127	1908.....	67,104
1904.....	56,786	1909.....	69,301
1905.....	58,124	1910.....	74,874
	1911.....		80,000

The Home of  
Canada's Greatest Newspaper



The Montreal Star Building

St. James Street

Montreal, - Canada



*Watching the Montreal Star Bulletins*

