

LESSENERD TRAFFIC THROUGH OUR SAULT CANAL.

Official returns furnished to the Department of Railways and Canals indicate a considerable falling off in the business of the upper lakes this season. The traffic through the Canadian canal at Sault Ste. Marie is not half what it was up to this time last year. Fleets of the largest vessels on the lakes are laid up for the present season, there being no business to keep them engaged. Besides this the Canadian canal has suffered a falling off in receipts from the completion of improvements on the American side, which, during their progress, had the effect of driving all the trade into our channel. The American canal returns show, however, the same decline as the Canadian, which is almost certain to continue till the close of the present season. In the month of April 32 vessels passed through the Canadian Soo, with 22,065 tons of freight; in May, 397 vessels of 295,449 tonnage, and bearing 336,745 tons of freight, and in June, 686 vessels, with tonnage of 612,255 tons and freight to the extent of 667,258 tons. The total up to the end of June was therefore 1,097 vessels of 929,769 tonnage, and carrying 1,015,253 tons of freight between Superior and the lower lakes.

DIAMOND JUBILEE LITERATURE.

In all that has been written concerning the Diamond Jubilee, the personality of the woman who has outlived almost every man or woman old enough to remember intelligently the time when she ascended England's throne, has been kept most prominent. Only incidentally, with one or two exceptions, have the great historic, political, social, scientific, educational, religious, and literary characters and characteristics of the past sixty years been dealt with. The articles by William T. Stead in the Review of Reviews, by Thos. F. Bayard in the Century Magazine, by H. D. Trail, J. Henniker Heaton, W. E. Bear and E. Salmon in the Fortnightly Review, by Sir Richard Temple, M. de Pressense, and Theodore Barth in Cosmopolis (all in June issues) are worthy of close study. Speaking of the personality of the Queen and the far-reaching family influence of the Royal Family in European politics, M. Pressense says:

"Imagine what this aged lady, so modest in appearance, who is drawn about in her grounds at a walking pace in a donkey carriage, can say to herself: 'My son will reign one day over the United Kingdom; my grandson is Emperor of Germany and King of Prussia; one of my granddaughters is Empress of Russia; I have a son who reigns over the modest duchy of Saxe-Coburg Gotha; one of my daughters was Empress of Germany; one of my grandsons is Grand Duke of Hesse; I have granddaughters who will reign over Roumania and Greece; the King of the Belgians and the King of Portugal are my cousins; all Germany is full of my offshoots and of their allies, and outside of the Catholic dynasties of Austro-Hungary, of Italy, of Spain, and the Bourbons of France, there is not a royal house which does not lift its eyes toward me as towards the venerable mother and source of this inexhaustible stream of majesties and highnesses.'"

All persons of culture will go back, when sounds of Jubilee have died away, to the interesting pages of Justin McCarthy, in which he gives his frank account of such political contemporaries as Balfour, Bright, Chamberlain, Dilke, Gladstone, Harcourt, Jameson, Labouchere, Lowe, the two Morleys, Parnell, Peel, Rhodes, Rosebery, and General Wolseley, and such men of letters and art as Browning, Freeman, George Eliot, Lord Leighton, Madox Brown, Cardinal Manning, Mill, Morris, Rossetti, Stevenson, Swinburne, Tennyson, and many others, with all of whom he came in personal contact.

"The Private Life of the Queen," by a

member of the royal household (Appleton), differs from all the other books of which the Sovereign of England is the subject. "My intention," this writer says, "is merely to paint a family portrait of a dear old lady who, were she the chateleine of a country house, or the school-mistress of a primitive country village, would be admired and loved by her neighbors in the parish for her wisdom and good works, and by her family and servants as a good mother and mistress. The wall and pictures will faithfully reproduce the patterns familiar to her in her own private rooms; the pictures will be those which she has gathered round her as mementos in her privacy of all she holds worthy in the past and present, and the accessories will be exact replicas of those of which she makes daily use."—Literary News.

AMERICAN LUMBER MARKETS.

Advices from Kansas City, Missouri, to the North-Western Lumberman, June 22nd, say: The lumber situation in this section is brightening every day, and as the season advances with continued favorable crop conditions all over this territory, the lumbermen have reason to feel encouraged.

The cypress trade has been worked more thoroughly in this section this season than heretofore, and the wholesalers here who handle this stock say they are having a good demand. The dealers are using more common cypress for fencing, etc., than ever before, and it is also in good demand for flooring, siding, finish, etc. The outlook for fall trade is good, and the cypress men expect to put lots of cypress into this territory this fall.

A correspondent of the same paper, named Geo. Prentiss, writes as follows from a point in the State of Mississippi, to illustrate the market:

"It is a case of under-consumption—not over-production. Let me give you an instance as related to me by a customer, who asked me to delay shipping a number of cars of cypress. There is a saloon over by that rolling mill; when the works are in full blast that saloon sells 14 barrels of beer a day. Now the mill runs only a part of the time, the men have but little money, and that saloon sells two barrels of beer a day; the brewers do not need new tanks, and give us no orders, and we don't want that cypress shipped. Our stock of cypress is low, and if orders should come in on us as they do in fairly good times, we would want 10 or 15 car loads of cypress as quick as you could get them to us."

REDUCED BANKING PROFITS.

Smaller banking profits are the natural results of the increase of competition and the continued growth of the volume of capital seeking profitable investment. The report of the Comptroller of the Currency for the year 1896 shows that there has been a falling off in the rate of dividends paid by the national banks for many years past. In the year ending March 1, 1870, dividends reached the highest point ever paid to the stockholders of the national banks. For that year the dividends paid averaged 10.5 per cent. of capital. In 1894 they sank to the minimum of 6.8 per cent. For the year 1896 the average rate of dividends to capital was 6.9 per cent., and if based on capital and surplus, only five per cent.

The investigation of the dividend statistics shows that the profits on National Bank stock have been steadily decreasing, and that the total surplus of the National Banks is also growing less.

This falling off in profits since the panic of 1893 was to have been expected and may be partly accounted for by the general depression in business. But this is not the only reason. Even if business revives it will not be in the power of the banks to restore the high profits that prevailed in 1870 and for some years after.

The increase in the wealth of the country has made it comparatively easy for any bank established in a community of average prosperity to obtain a reasonable line of deposits,

but when these are obtained it is much more difficult to loan them to advantage. To retain them, the banks have to perform without remuneration many services for their customers which at one time yielded a profit to the institution. They have also to pay interest on many lines of deposits that were formerly exempt from this charge. The National Banks further derive very little, if any, profit from circulation.

The chief cause of these disadvantages is the competition that now prevails in the banking business, and which if it continues to increase must surely drive many of the weaker banks out of business. This competition is what forms the main burden of the complaints that are heard from bankers at all the meetings of banking associations. One delegate brings up the subject of the unprofitableness of handling what are known as country checks, but when some remedy for this burden is sought, it is found that nothing will prove effectual as long as this bugbear of competition still remains. No agreement as to the uniform treatment of these checks is found feasible, because each bank fears that it may lose patronage and prestige if it adopts the custom of charging customers for making collections. A bank dare not give up the practice of paying interest on deposits, because it is well known that the customer can easily find another bank which will pay interest for the same account. Many failures can be traced to this desire to show as large a line of deposits as possible, even if profit has to be sacrificed to retain them, or even if the accommodation given to retain the custom is unwise and dangerous to the bank. In good times this competition is not felt so seriously, but in times of depression every bank must suffer from its effects to some extent.

It is not difficult to recognize this cause, but to discover a remedy and make it effectual is something that will tax the highest powers of the banking community. If no united effort is made and things are permitted to drift, it is probable that many banks will in the end find it necessary to go into voluntary liquidation. Nor is it easy to see just how united action can be taken. The stronger banks do not desire nor are they able to undertake to carry out reforms to benefit competitors. The probability is that the effects of continued competition in banking circles will be in the long run counteracted by more economical methods, by the consolidation of capital, and by taking up lines of business not now undertaken. The National and some of the State banks most hampered by legal restrictions will no doubt secure alterations in their powers either by legislation or by changing their character. If Congress sees fit to enlarge the privileges under the national banking laws, it will give relief in some directions. There is business to be done in the country by the extension of banking facilities, but most of the banks have always done business of so local a character that they do not seem capable of using their means in any but the old ruts to which they have always been accustomed. These regular lines of business, too, will grow as prosperity returns to the general public.

In fact banking capital is just now rather too abundant than otherwise, and yet its unequal distribution makes it seem scarce in some parts of the country, and unprofitable from lack of employment in other sections. There has in some respects been a lack of enterprise among bankers in looking up new uses for the means at their disposal. Nor have any of the suggestions yet made seemed to reach the root of the difficulty. There is certainly a lack of homogeneity in the banking methods, when in some localities there seems to be a plethora of banking facilities and in others a dearth. There is as much room in the United States for new development of enterprise as there has ever been, but bankers have in the past always played a waiting game. Less than any other class controlling capital have they been compelled heretofore to resort to the methods commonly employed for drumming up business. In fact there has been a great inertia among bankers in looking up new and profitable methods for the employment of capital.—The Bankers' Magazine.

—The largest amount paid for telegraph fees in one week by one firm was when the Times paid \$30,000 for the cable service from Buenos Ayres during the revolution. This was for one week's despatches.