

BANK OF BRITISH NORTH AMERICA.

The yearly general meeting of this bank was held on Tuesday, March 7th, at the offices of the corporation, 3 Clement's-lane, Lombard street, E.C., London, Eng., Mr. Richard H. Glyn presiding.

The secretary (Mr. A. G. Wallis) read the notice convening the meeting.

Report of the directors to the proprietors, at their sixty-third yearly general meeting was then submitted.

REPORT.

The court of directors submits the accompanying balance sheet to the 31st December last.

It will be seen that the profits for the half-year, including £7,489 17s. 8d., brought forward from last account, amount to £45,804 4s. 6d., out of which the directors have now to report the declaration of a dividend of 25s. per share, payable, free of income tax, on the 7th April next, making a distribution of 5 per cent. for the year 1898, and the addition of £15,000 to the reserve fund, leaving a balance of £5,036 13s. 8d. to be carried forward.

The dividend warrants will be remitted to the proprietors on the 6th April next.

The following appropriations from the profit and loss account have been made for the benefit of the staff, viz.:

To the Officers' Widows' and Orphans' fund£430 17s. 7d.
To the Officers' Life Insurance fund£336 13s. 3d.
London, 24th February, 1899.

BALANCE SHEET 31ST DECEMBER, 1898.

Dr.

	£.	s.	d.
To capital	1,000,000	0	0
20,000 shares of £50 each fully paid.			
Reserve fund	300,000	0	0
Deposits and current accounts	2,583,243	10	8
Notes in circulation	308,108	6	1
Bills payable and other liabilities	1,405,944	2	5
Rebate account	11,649	2	5
Profit and loss account—			
Balance brought forward from 30th June, 1898	£32,489	17	8
Dividend paid 7th October, 1898	25,000	0	0
	£ 7,489	17	8
Net profit for the half-year ending this date, after deducting all current charges, and providing for bad and doubtful debts ...	£38,314	6	10
	£45,804	4	6
Deduct: Transferred to reserve fund £15,000; transferred to Officers' Widows' and Orphans' fund, £430 17s. 7d.; transferred to Officers' Life Insurance fund, £336 13s. 3d.	£15,767	10	10
Balance available for April dividend	30,036	13	8
	£5,638,981	15	3

Cr.

	£.	s.	d.
By cash and specie at bankers and in hand ..	£ 645,384	19	5
Cash at call and short notice	1,006,391	5	0
	1,651,776	4	5
By Investments—			
Consols, £150,000 @ 90	135,000	0	0
Other securities	63,856	2	8
	198,856	2	8
Bills receivable, loans on security, and other accounts	3,672,529	16	1
Bank premises, etc., in London and at the branches	115,819	12	1
	£5,638,981	15	3

We have examined the above balance sheet with the books in London, and the certified returns from the branches, and find it to present a true statement of the bank's affairs.

EDWIN WATERHOUSE,
GEORGE SNEATH,

Auditors.

Of the firm of Price, Waterhouse & Co., Chartered Accountants.

London, 22nd February, 1899.

The chairman said: Gentlemen, before I formally move the adoption of the report and accounts, I propose, as usual, to make a few remarks. I read in one of our leading daily financial papers the other day this remark: "One naturally looks to the report of the Bank of British North America for evidence corroborating other signs of prosperity in Canada." I think that is more or less of a compliment, and not an undeserved one, because certainly we are so closely connected with the trade of Canada that our balance-sheets do reflect largely the prosperity or otherwise of the trade of that country; and on this occasion it certainly reflects the expansion which we all know has taken place during the year that has just gone by. If you will compare our balance sheet up to the 31st December, 1898, with that of 1897, you will find the figures are very much larger. The totals for 1898 are £5,639,000, against £5,130,000, or over half a million larger. And there is an increase in almost all the items. The deposit and current accounts have risen from £2,310,000 to £2,583,000; the notes in circulation from £253,000 to £308,000; the bills payable and other liabilities from £1,242,000 to £1,406,000. On the other side we have a very large amount of cash at bankers and at call and short notice; in fact, it is £1,651,000, against £917,000. That, of course, depends very much upon when you strike your balance sheet; it may be more or less on any particular date. The bills receivable are slightly lower. The profit for the year ending 31st December, compared with the similar period last year, is £38,000, against £31,000.

The business, as I have already said, has expanded, and the trade in Canada seems from all accounts likely to continue very good for some little while to come at any rate. There is not much for me to tell you about the Eastern branches. The competition there is, as it always has been, very keen, but we can thoroughly well hold our own; and we have added to these branches by opening one at a place called Midland, which is at the south-east end of Georgian Bay, and is

apparently a very rising place. It has a magnificent harbor—so good that ships drawing 20 feet of water can come up to the wharves, and it is said that if necessary that depth could be increased. It is not a great way off Toronto, and the banking business there has been done mostly with Toronto. We hope that by giving facilities to customers on the spot, we shall be able to start a very successful branch. The chief trade of the place is lumber; it is the centre of the lumber district; but there are also two elevators and a grist mill, and it is contemplated by the people there to start a line of steamers to Duluth. As regards the branches in the west—by which I mean the far west—Mr. Hoare, from this chair last September, gave you an interesting account of our opening at Dawson City, and explained to you that we did that with a certain amount of hesitation. I am glad to say that the returns, as far as we have them, are quite as satisfactory as we expected, and it is more than probable that we shall not have to appropriate that amount which he pointed out to you we had thought it necessary to set aside, in view of the very uncertain expenses of opening a branch there. We have a wooden building in Dawson City, and I have been told by one who has seen it that it is probably the best of its sort for the purpose; but we came very nearly being burned out the other day. There was a huge conflagration, and the fire, I believe, came within about four houses of our building. Thanks, however, to the energy of that very well-known Canadian police force, it was stopped, and we were saved what would have been a great inconvenience. I need hardly say that the bank is very much indebted to the force for the energy they showed in putting a stop to the fire.

The manager at Dawson City reports hopefully. Of course, everybody admits that there is a great deal of gold in that place, and the real question is how long it is going to last—how long it will take to get it out. The present means are no doubt of a primitive character, but I should think it is likely that before very long the energy of the Canadians will give us much easier means of access into that part of the world by which machinery of the most approved description may be taken in at a reasonable price; and then we shall be better able to judge as to the wealth of the country or otherwise. But all accounts seem to agree that there is a vast amount of gold there. You heard at the last meeting that we had made arrangements to close the branch at Sandon. Since then we have closed the branch at Slocan City, which turned out a failure. Most of the inhabitants left, and it was necessary for us to go as well. We have since opened branches at two places—Greenwood and Ashcroft. As you have been told before, in opening these branches we incur very little expense; it is a tentative sort of business. In opening at a mining camp you have to take your chance of what happens, and the great point is not to spend much money in going there.

I will go back, just for one moment, and show you how we have divided the profits. Including £7,489 17s. 8d. brought forward from the last account, we have to deal with £45,804 4s. 6d. We have provided for the officers' widows' and orphans' fund £430 17s. 7d., and for the officers' life insurance fund, £336 13s. 3d., which provision you have always approved, and always will, I hope. Then we have declared a dividend of 25s. a share, free of income-tax, which makes a distribution of 5 per cent. for the year, and we have added £15,000 to the reserve fund—which I think you will also approve—bringing that fund up to £300,000. That leaves us with £5,036 13s. 8d. to carry forward, I should just like to say