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Transvaal Gold Production. The output of the Rand mines continues so large there is every certainty of the total for this year being about \$112,500,000 against \$80,270,000 in 1904, and \$52,000,000 in 1903.

The controversy over the introduction of Chinese into the Transvaal to work in the mines still continues alive in political circles in England, but as a practical business question it has little interest.

Remarkable Arson Case. One of the most remarkable trials of a person accused of incendiarism has just ended in the conviction of John W. Priestly, charged with having set fire to the woollen mill of C. R. Shimer, Camden, N.J. His own plant was burnt some years ago, and he had collected some \$200,000 on other properties from insurance companies. A claim he had made against the Travellers' Insurance Company was paid, but he was compelled to return the money owing to a fraud having been committed to secure it. What interest he had in causing the Shimer mill to be burnt was not disclosed. His defence was, that he had accidentally dropped a lighted match amongst some inflammable materials. The mill was insured of \$43,000, and the owner's finances were in bad condition. There is a mystery about this case, which suggests the desirability of a very searching enquiry.

What Britishers Spend in Drink and Tobacco. The lessened consumption of alcoholic beverages in Great Britain this year is hailed with great satisfaction, especially as the conditions were favourable for an increase, as trade, on the whole, has been improved and the artisan classes have had more to spend, or, shall we say, waste. For the past 9 months the quantities retained for home consumption have been as follows, as quoted in the "London Economist":

	1905.	1904.	
Beer (barrels).....	24,976,622	25,676,598	- 699,964
Home-made spirits (gals).....	22,750,600	23,546,388	- 789,788
Foreign spirits (gals).....	4,333,630	4,842,353	- 508,723
Wine (gals).....	8,488,328	8,659,620	- 171,292
Tea (lbs).....	189,509,151	191,960,061	- 2,450,910
Tobacco (lbs.)			
Unmanufactured..	63,707,308	61,489,281	+ 2,218,027
Manufactured.....	1,636,746	1,739,274	- 102,528

United States Railway Development. The statistical introduction to "Poor's Manual of the Railroads of the United States" for the current year gives the total length of the lines at the end of 1904 as 212,349 miles, a net increase of 5,014 miles as compared with 1903. Of this increase 1,716 miles were accounted for by new construction in the South-Western States. In dealing with the results of the working, however, 213,204 miles are included, and the comparison with 1903 is as follows:—

	1904.	1903.	Increase.
Mileage.....	213,294	204,725	8,569
	\$	\$	\$
Gross earnings.....	1,977,628,713	1,908,857,826	68,780,887
Operating expenses... ..	1,338,388,686	1,316,349,314	22,039,372
Net earnings.....	639,240,027	592,508,512	46,731,515
Other receipts.....	81,357,891	89,485,484	*8,127,593
Total revenue....	720,597,918	681,993,996	38,603,922
Interest, rentals and miscellaneous payments from income.	439,591,785	395,564,761	44,027,024
Balance.....	281,006,133	286,429,235	*5,413,102
Dividends.....	188,386,093	164,549,147	23,836,946
Surplus.....	92,620,040	121,880,088	*29,260,048
*Decrease.			

In view of the fact that during a portion of last year the railways were suffering from a falling off in traffic, and that working expenses at the same time showed decided expansion, the "Economist" regards these results as satisfactory. There was an increase in net earnings of over \$46,000,000, though the total revenue was only \$38,000,000 greater than