duction of the rate of interest. In later years, to go no further back than 1909 and 1910, the difference in price between these dates and the earlier ones recorded has been sufficient in itself to cause much financial difficulty, while the price in 1911 opens out very serious questions. The low price of Consols and the apprehension that they may fall lower still has exercised a very serious influence on business at the present time.

The failure of the Birkbeck Bank, continues the writer, was certainly largely brought about by this circumstance. There are other institutions of the same character, very respectably managed, and supported by honorable and businesslike people, who have based their calculations on the belief that Consols would remain much on the same level as in former years. The income received from them is as secure as any in the world, but the drop in the value has weighed heavily on the earning power of banks and other institutions such as assurance offices, which hold their reserves in Government stocks. Thus banks alone have probably written off something like £10,000,000 during the last eight years from the value of their Government securities, and their power of making additions to their capitals and reserves, which it is always advisable to maintain, has been greatly curtailed thereby.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT.

Sir Inglis considers that interest at 2½ p.c. per annum does not at the present time offer a sufficiently powerful inducement to purchasers to hold the stock and to buy it in sufficient amounts to keep it at anything like par. He thinks also that a scheme of re-conversion to 3 p.c. is impossible, and that the effect of the small bonds, which have been proposed, would be but small. He consider that useful hints may be obtained by a study of what has been done in France, which has a public debt considerably heavier in proportion to the numbers of the population than that of the United Kingdom. The subdivision of the holding is very extraordinary. It is the largest national debt in the world, and it is also held by the largest number of persons and in the smallest sums. This has, no doubt, a considerable influence on the market price, but a great influence is also doubtless exerted, says Sir Inglis, by the fact that a large part is gradually being redeemed in a regular and systematic manner.

Efforts to make a serious reduction in the debt commenced about the year 1879, when the amount it was desired to redeem was divided into 175 classes or, as they were termed, "series." Since about that time the sum of 24,914,500 francs (£996,580) has been steadily applied annually to the reduction of the redeemable portion of the debt, with the result that the redeemable debt has already been reduced to about £140,000,000 and will be altogether paid off by 1953.

Thus, at the commencement of the operation stock representing about £1,000,000 sterling was paid off yearly. This rate of reduction continued up to the year 1908, after which year the progress became more rapid, the dividends released being added in, and £2,000,000 was to be paid off annually up to the year 1925, inclusive. After that date the rate of reduction is to increase further.

MR. PLUMMER ON STEEL CORPORATION PROSPECTS.

Mr. J. H. Plummer, president of the Dominion Steel Corporation, in an interview at Toronto, said that everything in the way of practical work at the steel works and collieries was proceeding satisfactorily. The new work was being actively pushed and except where delayed by difficulty in getting materials from contractors, good progress was being made. On the question of future dividends, Mr. Plummer declined to express an opinion. That matter must be decided by the directors from time to time, according to their best judgment, he said. "The statements as to the company's earnings, which have recently appeared in eastern newspapers, were without authority and not in keeping with the conditions which were frankly and fully explained to the shareholders at the last meeting. It is impossible to forecast with any precision the earnings of the properties under the unusual conditions now existing, which are likely to influence operations until after the close of the present fiscal year, March 31," said Mr. Plummer. "The prospects are that, barring accident, there will be earnings equal to four per cent. on the stock of the corporation, but to expect much more, if there is no bounty on wire rods and no profitable present outlet for the product heretofore marketed in that form, would be unreasonable, especially in view of the extreme dullness of trade in the United States and on the continent of Europe, which necessarily affects prices." Mr. Plummer expressed the same confidence as ever in the future of the properties. This, he says, is shared by the staff, who are making every effort to bridge over the present unsatisfactory conditions as rapidly as possible, with the minimum of disadvantage meantime to the interests they serve,

At the last annual meeting, Mr. Plummer told the shareholders that unless the bounty was renewed the rod mill could not be fully operated, and for July and August together the quantity made was but 5,893 tons against an average of 8,290 tons in each of the three preceding months. "The tonnage made is sufficient to keep the organization intact," said Mr. Plummer, "but is not otherwise very profitable."

IMPORTANT CHANGES IN HOME LIFE'S DIRECTORATE.

It is now stated that at a recent meeting of the directors of the Home Life Association of Canada, at Toronto, Hon. J. R. Stratton (president) and others of the directors resigned, the folowing being elected as their successors and appointed to the several offices named:—Mr. H. Pollman Evans, president, Mr. H. Symons, K.C., and Dr. George E. Millichamp, vice-presidents, and Mr. W. H. Carrie. Mr. J. K. McCutcheon continues in the position of managing director and Mr. A. J. Walker as secretary. It is said to be the present intention to continue the company as it has been conducted heretofore.