

the interests of trade. Minor changes were made, in addition, and an attempt was made to codify the Act more satisfactorily than previously, although something remains to be done in this particular.

From this short sketch of the development of the Canadian Bank Act it will be seen that great pains have been taken in perfecting it, that hasty or partizan legislation was not favored, and that the approaching revision should be treated in the same spirit. The annals of the Canadian Parliament are full of the waifs and strays of exploded theories which, from time to time some one or other of our budding statesmen has attempted to get adopted in the Canadian system. Disconsolate, yet not without hope, sits the oft-mooted Inspection clause, with Mr. Monk cheering it up. More hopeless flits by a shade of the clause, once promoted by a leading Canadian bank, whereby bank notes should be secured by deposits of Government bonds. This poor shade has probably not a friend to-day. It is a stranger in a strange land. Then there is the Government's own proposal to provide for a fixed reserve of cash, hoisted by its own petard, it having been conclusively proved that a fixed reserve that could not be touched was no reserve at all, except possibly to the liquidators. And far back in the years, around 1884, sits shivering, forgotten, even by the farmer, the old, old proposal to give the farmer cheap money by some hocus pokus with fiat money and possible advances on his land.

We propose in future articles to deal with some of the exploded proposals of amendments to the Canadian Bank Act, as a review of these tatterdemalions may prevent sensible men taking them up again; and finally we contemplate some remarks upon the weak points of the present act and the course that should be taken to eliminate them.

THE HALIFAX BANKING COMPANY.

The minute books of this institution would be interesting reading for the people of the Maritime Provinces who remember the founders of this old institution, established as it was nearly three-quarters of a century ago. It has lived through years of prosperity and adversity, and to-day occupies a very good position among the chartered banks of the Dominion. The profits of the past year amounted to \$50,013.10. In the division of this amount the shareholders received \$35,000, and the Reserve Fund \$25,000. The statement is a most satisfactory one in every particular. The capital of the bank is \$500,000, and its Reserve Fund now amounts to \$400,000.

Correspondence.

We do not hold ourselves responsible for views expressed by correspondents.

LONDON LETTER.

11th January, 1900.

FINANCE.

Give the London Stock Exchange the least chance, and it is as optimistic as the combination of several hundred personifications of Hope can make it. Heaven knows there has been but scant materials for cheerfulness in the financial outlook recently, and yet the position of things on 'Change has materially improved. The monetary situation has been relieved by long delayed consignments of gold to the Bank of England, and just a little more of business in the same direction and the New Year's limited liability promotions will be upon us in full force.

If there had been no war, the output of gold for the year from the Witwatersrand it is believed would have exceeded a hundred million dollars. This would be raised within a radius of twenty-five miles from Johannesburg, and, in fact, more than three-quarters of it would be produced in the twelve mile central section stretching from Knights to the Langlaagte Estate.

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General mercantile prosperity was very marked throughout 1899. In ship-building the output equalled over sixteen hundred thousand tons. Railway, tramway and electric lighting extension has been of a more than usually vigorous nature, especially the electric lighting, which has been put more and more to domestic use.

Building operations have been on an important scale. The iron and steel industries show an increase of thirty million dollars in their years' exports. The coal trade has boomed, and, much to the disgust of the thrifty housewife, retail prices have boomed as well. In the wholesale clothing trade a record year has been registered—the war stimulating demand here considerably. In the leather trade overtime has been universally worked during the last six months.

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And so on, through all the tale of trades and industries almost without exception. The New Year also, notwithstanding the uncertainty of the political outlook and dear money gives promise of a continuance of this prosperity. Of course it must fall over into a slump bye-and-bye, but that is not an imminent danger.

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The movement originated in France by that capable economist, Paul Leroy Beaulier, has provoked much comment across here. The movement I mean is the scheme for a political combination of French holders of Rand shares under the title of the Union des Parteurs Francais des Mines d'Or et de Valeur du Transvaal. Protective organizations are all very well, but a very general opinion just now is that the best thing for any holder of Rand shares to do, who wants to avoid possible further damage in the future, is to sell, and sell quickly.

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The completion of the home railway half-year brings news of most satisfactory traffic. Usually we look for a boom in this market during January, and all round advances have taken place due on this occasion to a large number of small investments. But we are still waiting to hear how the gross revenue looks after those ever-rising working expenses are deducted from it. The earliest declared dividends, those of the Great Central or the Brighton lines, are usually waited for to base estimates upon shewing how gross receipts look when reduced to net revenue.

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Banking amalgamations were numerous in 1899, and just at the very end of December a last one crept through to close the year well. Lloyds Bank took over Vivian Kitson's Torquay Bank a well-established institution, dating back to 1832.

INSURANCE.

Government offices are usually reckoned the tardiest of all organizations in issuing their annual reports, blue-books, etc. Returns relating to 1899 will probably be published somewhere in 1901. The Local Government Board has, for example, just issued its taxation summaries for March, 1899. The Economic Life Assurance Company is the nearest thing to a