

In all these signs of decline may be witnessed the influence of newer competitive forces, and some of our iron and steel makers are beginning to listen to the voice of the newer time. The Wardall Steel Company, for example, has moved its steel plant and consolidated all its resources at a point where loading and discharging can be carried on easily and expeditiously, and where rapid railway communication can be obtained.

Turning to a subject where it is generally claimed and admitted that Old England has achieved a commercial victory, viz., the successful settlement of the Tobacco War, it is surprising how secretly and quietly all the preliminary negotiations for peace were carried through. The meetings of Mr. Duke and his friends with the directors of the Imperial Tobacco Company took place at Chester and in the Canon Street Hotel, and yet not a hint or idea became public until everything was signed, sealed and delivered.

Markets continue most depressing, and there is very little demand either for speculative investment stocks. The chief topic is the break in American, which came just in time to help two or three big firms of outside brokers, dealing on the "cover" system, out of a hole.

The greatest speculative centre of all, the South African mining market, is naturally dependent a good deal on what are to be the precise fiscal obligations to be borne by the new colonies. Upon vague suggestions as to taxation, many people, both here and on the Rand, are making a huge fuss. Their attitude of protest against imaginary taxation is obviously unreasonable. No one can yet possibly tell what contribution the Transvaal will make to the cost of the war and its consequences.

INSURANCE.

Whatever grounds there may have been for the rumours spread about the Eagle Insurance Company some months ago there is nothing at all calculated to arouse suspicion in the good annual report recently furnished. The year dealt with is the fourth of the current quinquennium.

For a long time the Eagle was disinclined to change its old-fashioned methods, but, latterly, there has been an infusion of new ideas into the management and the gradual shrinkage of the premium income looks like being checked at last.

Expenses of administration take only 16¼ per cent. of the premium income against 17¼ per cent. for 1900.

Last year's wrecks were, taking general results into account, less damaging to Lloyds than the average of recent years. Strandings and casualties are responsible for 42 per cent. of the losses, condemnation, breaking up, etc., accounting for a further 19 per cent. Collisions take up 13½ per cent., and abandonment for various reasons about 12 per cent.

Servants of life assurance companies are in almost every case men of complete and high integrity. Therefore, the appearance last week of a late London Assurance Company bookkeeper before the Lord Mayor's Court, for alleged falsification of the Company's book, is an exceptional circumstance. He was committed for trial.

NEW YORK STOCK LETTER.

Office of Cummings & Co., 20 Broad St., New York City.
New York, October 15, 1902.

Attention during the past week has been centered upon the two topics; the strike and money. The former has grown from trouble between two parties until it has become a national question known, and felt in almost every household in the land. The proposition made by the operators to the miners for settlement of the difficulty, is fair and proper, and should be accepted by the miners. If it is not so accepted, it is proof that the miners are not acting in good faith, and the only thing to be done is to clear the

country of the malcontents and let those work, who will, and fully protect them in so doing. This is the view that we have reason to believe that the Chief Executive will take, and, therefore, the end of this trouble cannot be very far off. The resumption of mining and the re-establishment of traffic conditions will mean an enormous increase in the business of all roads for many months to come, for stocks of coal in all quarters have practically been cleaned out, and after the first necessities are relieved the re-stocking of yards and bins must be undertaken. The outlook, therefore, for the maintenance of earnings by the various roads is very bright indeed, with the present employment of the rolling stock, it is not unlikely the carrying companies will experience considerable difficulty in obtaining sufficient cars with which to do the business which is now in sight. With such a prospect as to earnings, it is not difficult to understand the quick recovery of the stock market from the low prices made a few days since. It must not be supposed, however, that a bull market is in sight, for it is not, and cannot be, until the monetary situation changes for the better, while there has been in this market no little manipulation regarding the rates for money, natural conditions do not warrant the extension of credits at this time. One of the most serious facts during the past ten days has been the strength of the foreign Exchange market in the face of continued high rates for money, and the only conclusions which can be deduced from this is that a considerable amount of foreign capital has been recalled.

Another factor in this case has been the largely increased volume of imports and the decrease in exports during the past few months. This condition, however, is likely to experience a material change in the very near future. The Government crop report issued last Friday gives the assurance that a corn crop will be harvested of greater volume than any previous season has produced, amounting to fully 2,350,000,000 bushels, and that the record for oats, little short of 1,000,000,000 bushels, will also be unprecedented in the history of the country; the yield for wheat will, most likely be about 620,000,000, while of cotton, there will also be a large crop, this staple and the cereals should very soon begin to move seaward, and when they do will have a very decided influence in reducing the rate of Exchange to a point where it is not unlikely that the importation of gold will be inaugurated. In the meantime, however, the rates for money are not likely to get below the legal rate, especially as payments on account of the New Baltimore and Ohio stock to the extent of \$2,000,000, will have to be made between October 17 and 24, and between October 20 and November 1st \$27,000,000 will be due on the new Pennsylvania stock. So, while the condition of the New York Banks is undoubtedly considerably better than appeared from the statement issued last Saturday, it does not warrant them in expanding the loan account.

Reports from the iron trade are to the effect that the production of pig iron and steel billets is still considerably short of the country's requirements, importations continue on a large scale. Deliveries on contracts of domestic iron are much in arrears. The condition of this trade, which has always been considered the industrial barometer of the country is some indication of the wonderful business now being done, and which, so far, gives no evidence whatever of slackening, but on the contrary gives promise of continuing for some time to come.

In corroboration of this the returns from the Post Office Department show that the largest increase in postal business in the history of the Department is shown in the reports for September, 1902.

The report given out by Reading Company for the year ending June 30, is a most interesting document, and shows that the net addition for the year to the total surplus of the three companies was \$1,374,890.91, making the total surplus