NEW YORK POSITION.

Call loans in New York have been steady at 1⅞ to 2 p.c. Time loans are comparatively weak—sixty days, 2¾ to 3 p.c.; ninety days, 3 p.c.; six months, 3½ p.c. The clearing house institutions at New York were successful in increasing their surplus reserves as shown by the Saturday statement. In case of the banks and trust companies the surplus increased $2,330,000—from $23,016,300 to $25,346,-950, as a result of a cash gain of $6,050,000 combined with a loan expansion of $5,100,000. And in case of the banks above the increase of surplus was $718,000, brought about by cash gain of $3,000,000 and loan expansion of $7,050,000.

MODIFIED EXPECTATIONS.

Expectations of an early boom in the iron and steel trade have been somewhat modified in the last week or so. In some lines of iron and steel the prices have shown a tendency to decline owing to the lack of any pressing or active demand. Of course, there is usually a revival or upward movement in the spring in the United States as in Canada—as certain industries come to life on the passing of winter; but observers in North America have been waiting and looking for the general trade revival which was to follow the inauguration of the Wilson-Bryan policies. So far that broad general movement has not been much in evidence. Many think the improvement cannot obtain much importance until the state and federal legislators return to common-sense ideas in regard to business and the corporations. The railways and large industrial corporations are in no condition to give big orders to the basic industries of the country. Many of them have been reduced nearly to impotence largely through the actions and policies of the government. Until their credit is re-established they cannot be expected to buy freely; and until they buy freely there cannot be any industrial or trade boom.

The fortnightly return of idle cars again shows a decrease—the reduction being 29,042. However, in March of every year a reduction is seen here; it is a feature of the spring revival above referred to.

LONDON AND LANCASHIRE LIFE.

The London and Lancashire Life and General Assurance Association, Ltd., of London, England, in order to handle the growing business in Quebec Province and Montreal particularly, has opened a city branch in the new building of the Guarantee Company of North America, 57 Beaver Hall Hill, Montreal.

This branch is under the management of Mr. A. D. Fraser, lately with the Toronto office of the London and Lancashire Life.

The Bank of England continued yesterday its official rate of discount unchanged at 3 p.c.

FIRE INSURANCE IN CANADA, 1913.

THE CHRONICLE having been able to make a number of additions to the figures of the business transacted last year by the fire companies acting under Dominion license, the compilation of their business record is shown again on the following page. Also in the case of the British and the American and other foreign companies, the record is now sufficiently complete to enable an average of loss to be struck with an approach to accuracy. In the case of the British companies (omitting one whose Canadian business is not of very extensive proportions), their net cash received for premiums last year totalled $13,063,985, and they incurred losses of $7,047,814, giving a loss ratio of 53.95. This compares with the following figures for 1912: net cash received for premiums, $12,092,125; losses incurred, $6,161,243, loss ratio 50.95.

The American and French companies (omitting two), report net cash for premiums received last year as $7,372,716, and losses incurred, $3,953,782, giving a loss ratio of 53.63. This compares with the following 1912 figures:—net cash for premiums received, $6,-038,984; losses incurred, $3,032,313; loss ratio, 50.23.

It will be seen that in the cases of both the British and the American and French companies, the loss ratios were three points higher than in 1912. A loss ratio of practically 54 per cent., with 33 or 35 per cent. for expenses, and provision for reserve on unexpired risks does not leave a very large margin of profit.

Our main object in giving the yearly records of the companies is to show the public what it is paying (practically, being taxed) for destruction by fire—a great deal of which cost could easily be saved by precaution and common sense.

Destruction by fire is a positive loss to the community, which no insurance does away with. It is an absolute waste, the insurance being only a tax whereby the loss is distributed over the entire community instead of borne by individual losers.

The improvement of risks and better fire protection thereof will bring down the rates by reducing the losses.

The premium income of the companies must leave a fair margin beyond the expenditure for losses and expenses, otherwise they may as well or better cease doing business.

The London *Review* has unhappily misread some statistics published on this side and makes the astonishing assertion that in Canada in 40 years—between 1870 and 1910—900 joint stock and 542 mutual and other fire companies have failed, reinsured or retired. Competition in the fire business here may be keen, but it is hardly as keen as this, or running a fire company so popular a pastime.