

the amount of dividend to be declared upon the Steel Preferred shares. That the past has been a very lean quarter, is well known, but it is also a fact that the latter part of the quarter gave indications of a very much better business. One quarter's interest and sinking fund requirements are upwards of \$9,000,000. The dividend paid on the Preferred in December called for \$6,482,000, to which should be added allowances for depreciation. At the meeting of directors yesterday, the rate of dividend on the Preferred Stock was made 1½ per cent., the same as that paid in December.

The first shipment of gold to be made this season is for the account of the Royal Bank of Canada, this institution having engaged some \$600,000 for shipment on Thursday, to Paris. Since this engagement was made, rates for exchange have fallen, so that it is very doubtful if any further shipments are made this week. There is still a clashing of interests in the matter of the Panama payment, not on the part of our government, but by recipients, so that there is no telling when this matter will be closed.

The controversy between the Savings Bank Association and the officials of the Chicago Rock Island and Pacific Railway, relative to the recently issued Bonds being stricken from the list of properties in which Savings Banks could lawfully invest, has become very bitter. The gist of the matter is, as admitted by counsel for the company to be, that while he realized that Savings Banks might not purchase the Bonds he wished it still to remain legal for them to do so, because it would then be easier to sell the Bonds in other States. If the security is not a proper one to be taken by Savings Banks, it is certainly not a proper one to be sold to the general investor or on the ground that it is a "Savings Bank Bond."

T. C. DELAVAN

29 Broad Street, New York City.

LONDON LETTER,

London, 24th March, 1904.

FINANCE.

Following close upon the death of Sir Blundell Maple, comes the demise of Mr. Frederick Gordon. Maple was a name to conjure with in the furniture business, and Gordon was pre-eminent in restaurants and hotels. Both men were friends and close business associates. Gordon would build a hotel; Maple would furnish it. Out of their profits, which were almost incalculably great, they took the leading part in the development of West Africa as a gold producer. Their companies secured the best concessions in the Gold Coast Colony and Ashanti, and their companies were about the only honest splashes in that most disastrous mining section. Now it is to be feared that the Ashanti Goldfields, the Ashanti Sansu, the Ashanti Consols, and the rest of the Gordon-Maple group will follow the others of the West African market into a state of suspended animation. West African hour has not come yet.

It is very evident that whilst the steady flow of high-class securities at very low prices continues, there will not be much demand for uncertain mining propositions. Take the offer of Guaranteed Irish Land stock bearing interest at 2¾ per cent. The issue price was 87, whilst the stock has the same Government guarantee as have Consols. A full six months' interest is payable in July, and such a discount is offered to those people, who pay up for their

stock in full, rather than by instalments, that the issue price practically works out at 86, and the actual yield to an investor 3-1.5 per cent., against a yield of 2.9-10 in Consols. Naturally, the Irish Loan was subscribed several times over.

That trade and industry in our Indian Empire are prosperous, is very well shown by the annual report of British banking establishments' operation in India. Take for example, the experience of the National Bank of India. After paying 10 per cent. for many years, the dividend is now raised to 12 per cent. The annual amount placed to reserve has risen from \$200,000 to \$250,000, whilst the net profit, in 1900, was \$485,000, it had grown steadily to \$627,000 last year. Current and deposit accounts rise from \$29,000,000 to \$42,300,000 in four years.

Whilst on banks, it is proper to make a note of the efforts which bankers here are putting forth to pass a bill for the amendment of the Bills of Exchange Act. This is a necessary result of the evil effects of the legal decision in the Gordon case last year. Country bankers, who credit their customers' accounts the same day with the proceeds of crossed cheques, drawn upon banks outside their local district, are now unprotected in case of any misadventure. According to the legal finding, the banker, by doing this very necessary act, constitutes himself a holder for value, and he is, therefore, not entitled to claim the protection of the Bills of Exchange Act.

Investors in this country are again being pestered with the touching literature of the Big Four Consolidated Gold Mines, Ltd., of which one, James Lawler, seems to be the controlling authority. It claims to possess four gold and copper mines in Rossland, British Columbia. Formed in 1899, the company seems to have somehow struggled along until now, paying no dividends, but raising fresh capital from time to time, by means of advertisement and circularizing. Investors here are being warned against the company by all the leading financial critics, and I anticipate that Mr. Fowler's failure to raise more capital this time will be best for British Columbia's mining repute.

INSURANCE.

Several prominent accident insurance companies have held their annual meetings since I last wrote, and from the remarks from the presidential chairs one learns sometimes a good deal more about the trend of business than from the published reports.

For example, the General Accident, of Perth, which is now thirteen years old, finds that competition is keener than ever, and not only from other accident companies, but also from the many mutual associations, which have been brought into operation as a result of the passing of the Workmen's Compensation Act. Further, many large life and fire offices have taken up accident business now, and utterly regardless of the experience of the pure and simple accident concerns, accept business, which are utterly inadequate and must result in a loss.

These remarks apply more particularly to British accident insurance in America, most experts agree that the business is carried on on much more satisfactory lines. Thus, it is that the General, of Perth, can regard with gratification the labours of its American branch. This company now draws an accident and burglary income of \$510,000 from America, and of \$600,000 from the United Kingdom.

The Ocean Accident and Guarantee goes on putting up an enormous income. The figure is now \$5,505,910, and it is claimed that this is a revenue larger than any similar office in the world can boast. The income has more than trebled in seven years. That the amount is less than last, the aggregate for 1902, is explained by the fact that the