

medically efficient. Secondly, for these ambulances to be of full service, there must be ready means of communication from the streets to the hospitals, where they are stationed. And thirdly, an adequate system of telephones must render communication from numerous telephone offices and from private houses to hospitals so readily accessible as to obviate delay when a street "call" is not near or available. All these provisions are made and are in daily service in towns in America that are far behind London in size and importance. Some approach to them is evident even in cities of our own, where the inhabitants have, at least, realized the necessity for horse ambulances. It is time, then, that the metropolis—even if an adequate telephone system must remain a vague desire—should at least contrive to supply its hospitals with horse ambulances and arrange some means of bringing them to the service of street accidents. That co-operation on the part of hospital authorities would be wanting one cannot suppose. Each arrangement would not only be for the benefit of the public safety, towards which every hospital strives by its very existence to contribute, but would also stimulate in the younger medical men that zeal for skill and knowledge in the treatment of accident and disease which is heightened by nothing so much as by the constant chance of summons to cases of emergency.—"Globe."

### THE CANADIAN BANK ACT.

#### First Article.

#### ITS DEVELOPMENT.

The Bank Act of Canada is regarded, at home and abroad, as one of the best in the world, and particularly adapted for the requirements of the country. In comparison with the National Bank Act of the United States, it is undeniably remarkable, and all financiers across the border who have investigated the currency and banking question are agreed that the Republic will, sooner or later, find it necessary to adopt a very large portion of our system.

The chief reason for the excellence of the Canadian banking system lies in the fact that it is a natural evolution from the requirements of trade, almost unaffected by the partizanship of politics or the mercenary views of impecunious governments. Revisions of the Act have, for the past thirty years, been approached with calmness and deliberation, and the forthcoming revision which is anticipated with the approaching session of Parliament will doubtless continue the precedent, although the failure of La Banque Ville Marie has roused a feeling not conducive to profound judgment, while, to the eternal regret of those who have the interests of the country at heart, the hoarse thunder of party politics is heard over the grave of the defunct institution.

The failure of the Banque Ville Marie is an episode in the history of Canadian banking. It is not, however, a natural outcome of weaknesses in the banking laws of Canada. The bank possessed a special Act which authorized it to possess its own stock, contrary

to the general Bank Act. Such a dangerous Act could not to-day be forced or smuggled through Parliament. The Bank was to all appearances exploited by an organized band of thieves, who, trusting to the senility and consequent incapacity of the General Manager, wrecked the institution, regardless of the laws, severe enough to have daunted ordinary criminals. Even the part which Mr. Weir played in the tragedy, a part which seemingly consisted only in trying to uphold a rotten institution, was subject to the penalties of the Canadian Bank Act, and he is now undergoing punishment for his fault. The failure of La Banque Ville Marie has not revealed any new fault in the Bank Act; it has only thrown a clearer light upon a danger to which attention was directed many years ago by the late Sir Francis Hincks, that of making the bank note a first lien upon the assets without introducing machinery adequate to prevent an over-issue. It may also be thought that the failure suggests the necessity of prescribing some limit as to the age of a general manager. British diplomats, even, with all the wealth of experience that age and years of labor give, are retired before senility, and so also are British officers of the army and navy; the late Sir Provo Wallis, a Canadian, having been the only exception in the navy for many years.

From what can be gathered through public opinion and the views of experts, it is more than probable that the revision of the Bank Act this session will be in some particulars a departure from the unwritten rules under which it was being developed. Novel features are to be anticipated, and the working out of the problems that will arise therefrom will be watched with interest, and perhaps some trepidation. The "Finance Chronicle," has its own views as to the legislation that will be desirable, and will not hesitate to put them forth at the proper time. But in the meantime, that our readers may be prepared to receive the new Bill when brought before the house, and appreciate it at its full value, a short account of the birth and growth of the banking system of Canada will probably be interesting at this juncture.

The first charters of Canadian banks were granted to the Bank of Montreal, the Quebec bank and the bank of Canada, the Royal assent being secured in 1822. These charters show that the Canadian banking system was already well outlined.

The clause restricting the charter to a term of years was inserted, the term being ten years as at present. The officers of the bank were, as now, required to give bonds. The dividends were not to impair the capital, the government was empowered to call for statements under oath, the banks were forbidden to lend on land or mortgages, though they might acquire them as security for debts contracted in the ordinary course of business. And the banks started out on the principle of branches.

The double liability clause was, however, lacking; there was no limit set to the issue of notes, except that contained in the proviso, that the total debts of the