

money invested in banking, in capital and surplus, does not exceed, as a whole, 6 per cent. The net earnings in the year ended June 30, 1897, on the capital and surplus of the national banks, were 5.4 per cent., and in twenty-eight years the average net earnings on the capital and surplus of the national banks have been 7.8 per cent. Since the beginning of the national-bank system 5,095 banks have been organized, of which 3,617 are in operation. There have been only 368 failures among national banks in thirty years, so that more than a thousand banks have liquidated and paid all claims, the inference being that they could not make the business pay."

They could not make the business pay! Surely this quotation from the address of the President of an important association, having a membership of some 3,500 bankers, is another argument in favour of the absorption or amalgamation of the smaller banks now being resorted to in England as a means of improving the prospects of the surviving financial institutions. Perhaps we may again hear reference to increasing competition and diminishing profits at the forthcoming meeting of the Canadian Bankers' Association. President Hendrix also remarked at another stage of his instructive address:—

"One loss eats up the result of a multitude of transactions, and draws in its train days and even nights of care. The banker who never makes a loss may exist, but his existence is doubtful, and his education is incomplete. Moreover, he never has had the pleasure of seeing the dead come to life out of the musty corner of the portfolio of protested bills."

An additional matter of interest in connection with this meeting of American bankers is the somewhat singular selection of Denver as the place to convene at. During the days when Bryan's heresies about free silver were disturbing the business world, Colorado was not a safe or comfortable State for a sensible banker to ventilate his opinions in; but now the inhabitants of Denver are entertaining the "money power" of the country, and seem by their attitude to admit that Bryan's oratorical flight of fancy in which he pictured the crucifixion of labour on a cross of gold, however brilliant as a bit of imagery or rhetorical decoration, was based upon false ideas. Denver is prosperous, and Colorado now produces more gold than any other State in the Union.

Fire-fighting in Turkey.

Even allowing for any possible exaggeration of the defective methods and appliances for fire-fighting in Turkey, the account thereof furnished by a Constantinople correspondent of the *Financial News* is surprising in the extreme. The houses are mostly built of wood, and, when fire starts, activity, except in getting out of the premises, is not commendable or profitable. Two good reasons are advanced in favour of this do-nothing policy in the matter of trying to save one's belongings; anything saved is invariably stolen before it can be removed elsewhere; and for articles shown to have been rescued the insurance companies expect to effect considerable reduction in claims for loss. Under these circumstances, householders usually let every-

thing burn, so as to recover the full amount of insurance. In fact, if this tale from the dominion of the Sultan be true, the Turkish firemen are likely to attract no little attention at the international tournament during the Paris Exhibition of 1900. The scene at a fire in Constantinople is thus described:

"Whenever a fire breaks out signals are hoisted on the Tower of Galata and the Seraskierat Tower in Stamboul indicating the quarter in which the outbreak has occurred, and seven cannon shots are also fired. Then from different directions gangs of men dressed in white athletic costumes rush to the fire, carrying on their shoulders a few diminutive hand pumps. These are the *tolumbajis* or "pump-men;" but they do not set their primitive pumps in action unless they are employed by someone interested in the building. Then some of them may carry water to the scene on their backs in small leathern bags. When any outbreak, however slight, occurs in a European's house, the first thing he does is to secure the doors so as to keep the *tolumbajis* out till the last moment in the hope that he may save the property. Once they get in they make a clean sweep of everything, whether the house is burnt or not. The police render but little assistance in protecting the property."

But the premiums charged by insurance companies doing business in this land of baths, sherbet, veiled women, *rahat lakoum*, *tolumbajis*, and atrocities, are in keeping with the risk; the correspondent of the *News* claiming that he pays seven dollars p.c. on furniture which, under similar circumstances in England, would be insured for sixty to seventy-five cents. However, there seems to be sound reason for the high premium rates if the following additional circumstances of the case in Constantinople be considered:

"The Companies' risk is affected not merely by the chances of fire in the building to which the policy applies, but also in any house in the immediate neighbourhood. They are nearly all built of wood, and if one goes they generally all go. In a recent fire in Stamboul about 200 houses were burned through a lamp upsetting in one of them. It is rare, however, that a fire originates in a European's house. Most of the agents of English Companies in Constantinople are British subjects, but a few are Levantines. Quer charges of complicity with incendiaries have been sometimes made against some of the latter, but the correspondent is of the opinion that the interests of British Companies are well served by the British agents. It is true that there is keen competition among the various Companies, and to a certain extent a cutting of rates. It would be more satisfactory if they could agree upon uniform rates, and it is hoped that the recent conference of insurance agents in that city may bear some fruit. To illustrate this the correspondent relates how he himself was asked by an agent what rate he paid in respect of property insured with another Company. When the agent was told he offered to get his Company to take the risk at one-fourth per cent. less.