

learned that she and her husband had taken up land where they were, about five years ago. Previous to that time they had lived in England, and until coming to this country her lord and master had always worn kid gloves, a silk hat, and carried a cane. When I asked where her husband was, she answered that he was employed on the adjoining farm as an ordinary laborer, trying to earn and save enough to take them back to England. It seems that after securing the land, he invested all his surplus cash in expensive implements and poor stock. Not having had any previous experience nor any knowledge of the subject of farming, he made a poor fist of it, and was waiting for the time to come when he could get back to his old home and old associations to warn them not to come to Canada, this land of snow and drouth, and blacklegs.

As the adjoining farm had to be passed through in order to reach Rapid City, I made some general observations, which showed me clearly that the man and not the land, the implements, nor the stock, had caused so lamentable a failure as has just been described. This farm adjoining the one settled on by the poor Englishman was just about perfection. The owner had discovered that the climate was not suited to wheat-raising at one end, but at the other, which was in a different elevation, a fair crop could be harvested each year. Potatoes and other roots were carefully cultivated, and all the farm buildings were kept repaired and clean. In the flat land, near the river, a splendid herd of cattle was grazing. During the continuance of my journey to Rapid City I had time to think over the tale of woe I had just listened to, and it seemed to me that it would be almost a good thing if the poor Englishman could never realize his fond desires, and get back home to slander that splendid part of our Dominion. There is little to be told about Rapid City. It is a small place, situate on both banks of the Little Saskatchewan River, which supplies power for a couple of mills.

Brandon is a good substantial city. Its streets are not as wide as some in Winnipeg and Portage la Prairie, and maybe this will account for the impression I received that Brandon was the busiest of the three. While taking a hurried run through the stores, I found several which were doing business on the departmental-store plan. Doorways had been cut through between each shop, so that after making purchases in a grocery store, one can step through into a dry goods store, and from there to a furniture shop, and so on. One large grocer said he had adopted some of the tactics employed by Toronto department stores, and was sending out catalogues to all the townspeople and farmers thereabout. Passenger trains are infrequent in that Western country, and, being anxious to reach Winnipeg by a certain date, I boarded a freight, a practice which is permitted, and thus completed a trip which I often wish had been extended, and which I hope to cover again.

Toronto, Dec. 28th, 1897.

A.W.L.

SCOTTISH BANKS.

The National Bank of Scotland, which holds its general meeting in Edinburgh to-day (Tuesday) is paying to its shareholders 13 per cent. dividend, and 3 per cent. bonus, total 16 per cent. for the year ending November 1st, 1897, after carrying a large sum to reserve. This is not an unsatisfactory result even in these days of successful banking. Yet it would seem from a work just issued by Mr. A. W. Kerr, on "Scottish Banking During the Period of Published Accounts" (1865 to 1896), that Scottish banks as investments do not, at the present time, offer much inducement to the investor, beyond that of fair security. That is, of course, everything with cautious investors. Those who want to see a little better return for their money, however, even if the security involves some risk, had better look elsewhere. The

average yield of the investments in Scotch banks at present prices of their stock is rather less than that of English institutions. It is 3.64 per cent., taking the average of the ten leading banks of which Mr. Kerr gives statistics.

The average price of Scottish bank stock is £308½, equal to a premium of £208½ per cent. In 1865, the first year in which the accounts were published, the price was only £196 or 96 per cent. premium; so that the credit of these institutions now stands high. In the meantime, however, the average rate of dividend has fallen from 7.6 in 1865 to 6.6 in 1896. Both these rates seem very moderate, but the average is brought down by the low dividends paid by several banks which have experienced considerable vicissitudes, and are keeping their rate of distribution low in order to build up a new reserve. The North of Scotland Bank, for instance, was very severely hit by the failure of the Scottish fisheries in 1887, and the reserve fund was depleted in order to save the bank from insolvency. Other banks were also affected adversely by the same cause.

There are several features connected with Scottish banking which are in a measure peculiar to the financial enterprise of the "North Country." One of these is the "dirty Scotch pound note." This has given Scotland a local paper currency which is popular notwithstanding its objectionable traits. * * * Another feature is the extension of branch banks throughout the country. There were in 1865 no fewer than 1,021 of these, and there are more now; and they give facilities for banking to all the small towns and many of the villages. The example of this system of branches has been followed in England in late years, and most of the London and leading provincial banks have now numerous branches. Yet another special feature of the Scottish system is that of cash credits, or overdrafts, which are commonly allowed even to small tradesmen, on the security of two or more personal guarantors. This system has doubtless rendered banking a more thoroughly popular institution in Scotland than it is in England, where many tradesmen, even though doing a fairly good business, have no banking account at all. In late years, however, there has been considerable extension of both banking facilities and of the recourse had to banks by shopkeepers and other men of business in a small way in the southern kingdom, after the fashion that has longer prevailed among the canny Scots.

Scottish banking has had its ups and downs: its good and bad years. The latter seem unfortunately to have predominated. Mr. Kerr states that only thirteen out of the thirty years of which he gives a survey can be chronicled as good. The Glasgow Bank failure shook the credit of Scottish Banking to its foundation for many years. The fishery failure of ten years ago also injured it. Yet at the present time the Scottish people seem to have the utmost confidence in their banks. These establishments do not treat depositors very liberally. Their rate of interest on fixed deposits has come down from 4½ per cent. to an average of 1.93 per cent.; they allow no interest on current accounts. Yet between 1865 and 1896 the amount to the credit of depositors has been augmented by £38,555,944, or 67 per cent. In the same time the reserves have risen £31,561,800 or 148 per cent., and now represent 48 per cent. of the banks' liabilities. The total capital of the Scotch banks was put last year at £9,302,000, and their reserve fund at £5,889,473, which indicates a very strong position. Of course these figures apply only to the banks which publish accounts, not to private banking businesses.

Mr. Kerr seems to think that Scottish banks will soon partake more of the character of investment companies than of banks. But the figures do not seem to bear out that conclusion. The extent to

which the banks are used by depositors, who practically derive no advantage in the shape of interest from the spare funds placed in them, testifies to the faith of the Scottish people in their banks, as safe custodians of the cash for which they have temporarily no more profitable use. But apart from this, the facilities offered by the Scottish banks to traders of all grades are very considerable, and are widely appreciated and used. This surely is one of the most legitimate forms and functions of banking. The fact that the Scottish banks are beginning to find a difficulty in the profitable utilization of their balances, and on that account have reduced their deposit interest practically to nil, is only another illustration of the plethora of capital from which the commercial and financial world generally is suffering. Despite this difficulty, and despite the fact that the increase of profit has not been commensurate with the extension of branches or the volume of business, Scottish banks are, on the whole, sound and prosperous institutions. Though yielding so modest a percentage at present prices, their stock is well worth purchasing as a permanent investment by those who are content with small interest and good security.—*London Shareholder*.

ONE OF THE LESSONS OF LIFE.

It is well to profit by the unfortunate experiences of others, and that many are continually doing so is illustrated by the case of a business man which recently came to our attention. As he one morning was seated in his office the door opened, and looking up he saw before him a female book agent. The frown of annoyance which had instantly gathered disappeared as he perceived the sweet yet sad expression of the young woman. With half reluctance he dismissed her, and as she turned away he added: "A girl like you ought to marry and have some good man take care of you. 'I was married,' she replied, her face brightening only to again fill with sadness, 'but I am alone now with my baby. My husband just as he was getting nicely fixed died. Heaven knows that I hope no other woman will have to endure what I have since then.' She turned abruptly and went forth again into the cold world. But shall we say her visit that day went for naught? No! It saved another mother from perhaps similar distress, as that man, one of the class who was always disposed to take chances, was before long himself taken away from his family—but not uninsured. Later on the same day the young woman called he sought insurance from an agent he had often repelled.—*United States Review*.

—She (at the desk)—Dear, please tell me how to spell costume. I'm writing to mother about my lovely new gown. "Well, are you ready?" "Yes." "C-o-s-t, cost"—"Yes." "T-u—to." "Well?" "M-e, me—\$65, as yet unpaid." "You're a wretch."

—A new royal yacht is to be built for Queen Victoria, to replace the now antiquated paddle steamer "Victoria and Albert," which has carried royalty for many years. The new yacht is to cost \$1,000,000. She will have a speed of 21 knots. Only two guns will be in her battery and they are intended mainly for saluting purposes.

—Paris has about 600,000 electric lights, and London twice as many. More than half of Berlin's streets are now lighted with a gas glow-light, perfectly white, and five times as powerful as the old flame, and the lamps are being placed rapidly in the other streets, and the city, with a consumption of 10,000,000 cubic meters of gas, will have fivefold the light heretofore obtained from 17,000,000. The 10,000,000 oil lamps burned nightly in England cause 300 deaths annually, and 165 fires yearly in London alone.