

Before moving the adoption of the report the President asked the General Manager to address the shareholders:

GENERAL MANAGER'S ADDRESS.

The statement presented to you to-day is a striking illustration of our policy during the year. The net profits amounted to \$2,352,035, or 8.25 per cent., upon the moneys which belong to the shareholders of the Bank, that is, upon the total paid-up Capital and Rest. This is a decrease of \$316,197 from the figures of the preceding financial year, but under the conditions which have prevailed since we last met, we trust that you will consider the result satisfactory, especially as we have been able to continue the payment of the usual dividend of 10 per cent. per annum and of two semi-annual bonuses of 1 per cent. each, a total of 12 per cent. We have, as usual, appropriated \$80,000 for the Officers' Pension Fund, and after paying the war tax of 1 per cent. upon our note circulation, amounting to \$122,906, subscribing \$5,000 to the British Red Cross Fund, and reserving as a special appropriation the sum of \$1,000,000 against possible further depreciation in the values of the stocks, bonds and similar securities owned by the Bank, we have been able to carry forward \$461,892 at the credit of Profit and Loss Account.

AN ADDITIONAL PRECAUTION.

It is the time-honored custom and wise precaution of every general manager of a Canadian bank upon first assuming the responsibilities of his position to assure himself that each individual asset of his bank represents the value assigned to it in its books and published statements. Upon undertaking this important duty, I found that the conditions brought into being by the war, and particularly the restrictions placed upon the leading security markets of the world, had made the task one of unusual difficulty. The hazards of war have not only seriously lowered the prices of all securities, but they have introduced an element of doubt into existing values which it is difficult to allow for in dollars and cents. As a matter of additional precaution, therefore, we have taken the step of reserving out of Profit and Loss Account, as a special provision against these contingencies, the sum of \$1,000,000. After the war has been successfully prosecuted to a close, it is probable that some, if not all, of this amount will come back sooner or later into profits.

NO UNNECESSARY EXPENDITURES.

Our Bank Premises Account, as well as the accounts of Real Estate owned and mortgages held, remain practically stationary, the generally unsettled condition of affairs not having warranted our undertaking any expenditure on new premises which did not appear to be absolutely necessary. The small increase of \$52,631 shown in Premises Account represents purchases of promising locations for new branches and of permanent sites for long-established branches, such as Belleville and Parkhill, and for others, the business of which will eventually warrant the erection of a permanent building. We dealt with this matter fully in our report of last year, and for the reason therein set out we feel that no further appropriation is necessary, the figures shown in our balance sheet being well below the limit of 50 per cent. of the actual value, as has been our policy with respect to this particular asset.

The note circulation stands in the balance sheet at \$16,397,907, an increase of \$1,455,350 as compared with the figures of a year ago, and only a few thousand dollars short of the record figures of 1912. This is due to the demands made upon us for moving the large grain crops of the country. The issue of notes in excess of the paid-up capital of the Bank under the emergency provision of the Bank Act began on October 16th, and the movement reached its height for the time being on November 20th, at which date the circulation stood at \$17,084,598. The lowest level recorded during the year was reached in the month of April. The deposits of the Bank show a satisfactory increase, distributed under every heading, the total increase being slightly over \$13,000,000. Bills Payable again show a considerable decrease, the figures being \$1,501,442 as against \$3,924,151 a year ago, or a decrease of \$2,422,703, due largely to the effect of the war upon our foreign exchange business and to the unsatisfactory conditions which have prevailed in the exchange markets during the year.

STRONG CASH RESERVES.

In view of the general situation we have thought it prudent to keep strong in cash reserves, particularly in

gold, the medium for the settlement of international obligations, and that it might be the more readily available for such purposes we have carried an unusually large proportion of our holdings at points outside of Canada. Our total holdings of coin and legal tender are \$39,901,993. If to this amount we add the balances due us by other banks and correspondents our holdings of government and municipal bonds and stocks, and call and short loans, our liquid assets amount to \$101,173,357, or 47.62 per cent. of our liabilities to the public.

CURRENT LOANS INCREASE.

Total Current Loans show an increase of \$2,037,254, more than accounted for by an increase of \$3,704,464 in Call and Short Loans due to the policy of keeping our assets in the most liquid shape possible during the unstable conditions which are the outcome of the war. The fact that our loans show an increase despite the shrinkage which has taken place in general business, bears witness to our earnest efforts to assist the business community to the utmost of our ability consistent with prudence, and should be sufficient answer to those persons who assert in the press and on the public platform that the banks have failed to provide the necessary financial assistance for the commerce of the country. There are some who go further, and by quoting the figures of Canadian bank deposits without setting alongside these figures those of the loans, mislead the public and cause them to look upon the banks as enemies to the public welfare. To all such, I say, the figures of our balance sheet are sufficient answer. There has been a reduction of \$7,935,233, or over 37 per cent., in the total of securities held, occurring principally in those classed as railway and other bonds, debentures and stocks. In view of the extent to which we have been, and are still likely to be, called upon to assist in the various measures taken to finance the war, it seemed wise to take every reasonable opportunity of realizing upon our holdings of securities. Total assets show an increase of \$5,057,441, which may be considered very satisfactory growth under the conditions which have prevailed.

TURNOVER OF \$15,000,000,000.

Our records show that on the average we handle every dollar of our assets over 60 times a year, so that the figures at which they stand indicate a turnover of 15 billions of dollars during the year. In return for the immense labor and heavy responsibility involved in handling this huge sum, we have earned slightly more than one-and-a-half cents on every hundred dollars.

Before passing on to deal with other matters, I should like to refer briefly to our policy in the matter of dividends. At the annual meeting in 1914 the hope was expressed that we should be able to maintain payments upon the basis which has been adopted during the last two years. At this time there was, of course, no European war in prospect, and while it will be our earnest effort to maintain the earning power of the Bank upon a level which will render possible a continuation of the present rate of distribution, it is well to remember that the end of the war is not yet in sight, and that no one can predict what changes it may bring when it does come. Our policy, therefore, during present conditions will be based upon weightier considerations than the mere earning of dividends, and in this I am sure that we shall have your hearty support.

Our shareholders number 194 more than a year ago, a moderate increase, but one which reflects a movement in the direction of distributing the stock over a wider area, which is in the interests of both the Bank and its stock-owners.

As stated last year, the business of our City of Mexico branch has been ably managed, and on the whole it has been profitable. We have made no losses, and our loans have either been liquidated or fully provided for. The capital necessary for our operations has been supplied entirely by our local deposits. Full provision has also been made for depreciation in the value of such Mexican securities as remain on our books. Our standing in Mexico is particularly high, and the foundations have been laid for a large and prosperous business when that country returns to settled conditions. In the meantime we are holding the ground with a considerably reduced, although sufficient staff.

In the opening of new branches there has been little done during the year, due principally to the inactivity of gen-

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