

pany's shareholders met again last week, when a report for six months was presented. The result of the half year's business has been a reduction of the total mortgage loans, the repayment of mortgage loans exceeding in aggregate the new loans made. The Manitoba business has been increased, however, the rates of interest in that province having continued favorable. More than six per cent. has been earned; the balance over dividend being carried to Property Expense account. It is the experience of this company that the real estate market has been benefited during the half year by the improved conditions of trade and manufacture. and there has been fairly good realization made on properties which it held for sale. Reference is made in the report, as in that of the Freehold, to the coming amalgamation of four city loan companies, of which the London and Ontario is one. Committees of these various companies are holding meetings with the object of arriving at a basis of union. The meetings of the other two companies are to be held next week.

Both the London companies, whose reports appear in our pages to-day, make creditable showings, and the chairmen of both made encouraging addresses. The mortgage loans of the Huron and Erie Company, the cash value of which is now placed at over six millions of dollars, are made exclusively on property in Western Ontario. Renewals and new loans for 1898 reached \$1,500,000. Payments have been well met, the report tells us, and all the real estate the company shows on hand is \$10,800. Throughout the year the demand for money on mortgage has been good, in the experience of this company, but at declining rates of interest. Still the net profits, \$168,762, are a little larger than the previous year's owing mainly to reduction of interest on borrowed money; though if earnings had been at the same ratio on the increased aggregate loans of 1898, net profits would have been \$177,695. Here is where the effect of the decreased interest loaning rate is shown. This average rate was almost exactly 5.9. After paying 9 per cent. dividend, \$30,000 has been added to reserve and \$5,000 applied in reduction of office premises account. The company has decreased its sterling debentures by about \$100,000 during the year, but has increased deposits and Canadian borrowings by \$152,000. There is \$473,000 in cash and cash securities on hand, which is in accordance with a desirable tendency observable among such companies of late to strengthen their cash assets. The president in his address assured the shareholders that the valuation of assets has brought them down to "hard pan," ample allowance having been made wherever there seemed a likelihood of loss. And Mr. Cronyn described the policy of the board as "thorough inspection at first, followed by re-inspection and counter inspection from time to time of all properties mortgaged to the company," a process which, if acted upon by all loan companies, with writing-off accordingly, would do immense good. The showing of the Huron and Erie is an extremely creditable one, and the tenor of the report and of the speeches at the annual meeting is such as to give encouragement and confidence to both proprietors and debenture-holders.

The report of another London mortgage company, the Ontario Loan and Debenture company, bears witness to the reduced lending rate of interest, for its earnings on loans are nearly a half per cent. less than in the previous year. Still it has earned the same dividend and is able to place \$10,000 to reserve. The company's liabilities are lessened by \$200,000, and its outgo for interest is further lessened by a reduction of a quarter per cent. in its borrowing rate. A satisfactory feature is the reduction of some \$21,000 in properties foreclosed and owned and in proper-

ties brought to sale and still unsold. The sum of \$769,889 has been repaid the company during the twelve months, and new loans of \$529,879 made. Reduction of the company's premises from \$72,000 to \$40,000 had been anticipated.

Reference is made by Mr. McClary in his presidential address to the improvement in general conditions during the year, and to the significant fact that farm lands have increased in value, with an improved demand. The prospects of increased immigration and the extension of agriculture, and increased development of the mineral resources of the country, he said, were never more hopeful than at present. He assures his shareholders that the company "will be enabled to pay them one per cent. more than they could obtain by loaning their own money on the same class of securities."

SELLING GOODS TO FRANCE.

It is very strange that with a large energetic and commercial French-speaking population the Dominion of Canada cannot do a considerable trade with France. Many staple products of this country are required for consumption in France—and doubtless many of them are consumed there through British intermediaries, but a direct trade of any considerable importance we do not possess. The blame and the loss are not all on the side of Canada. The French suffer from the lack of better commercial communication with this country. The French consul at Vancouver, B.C., has recently been calling the attention of the Government which he represents to the possibilities of trade with the Canadian Pacific coast, and more especially in regard to the fish trade. He says that the average cargo of tinned salmon for a sailing vessel is about 60,000 cases. Taking the prices fixed for the 1898 season, he reckons that at Vancouver such a cargo would cost about 1,233,000 frs. In Paris the salmon is sold retail about 1 fr. 50 per tin, which would make the value of the cargo 4,820,000 frs., leaving a difference of 3,087,000 frs. "for freight, customs duties, and the profits of the intermediaries." He rallies his compatriots on leaving this business to be conducted by British competitors and others. At the same time he calls attention to the possibility of developing a business in fresh salmon. An experimental shipment in cold storage was made some years ago by a Frenchman established at Vancouver. "As far as New York all went well; but in that town the Transatlantic Companies' vessels were not fitted with refrigerating apparatus and the consignment had to be sold on the spot at a loss." The Germans have already, he says, stolen a march in this direction.

IRON SMELTING IN ONTARIO.

It looks as if we were to have a variety of iron furnaces in Ontario. Let us hope there may be corresponding enterprise in developing our Lake Superior hematite ore beds. In the last Ontario Official Gazette is a very lengthy notice of the incorporation of a concern named the Abbott-Mitchell Iron and Steel Company of Ontario, limited; capital, \$150,000; head office, Belleville; provisional directors, Frank Arthur Mitchell, John Mitchell, Charles Bard, Henry Pringle, Samuel Shaw Lazier and William Abbott. Messrs. Pringle and Lazier are of Belleville, the others belong to Norwich, Connecticut. They propose to make bar and other rolled iron from Marmora and other ore, also puddled bars and Bessemer steel, besides exploring for ore and smelting the same, and have wide powers of purchase and acquisition. This is doubtless the company which was noticed months ago in THE