

time! and straight away went our friend to insure capital and interest with one of Lloyd's members after depositing the whole of his life's savings with his bank. When the crash came what merry chuckles must have been heard in at least one home that night:

We have all heard the phrase "as safe as the bank" so many times, and have grown up in the idea of the bank's stability, that it will probably be a surprise to many people to hear that crises of one sort or another have been only too frequent throughout the bank's history.

Attacks from without, civil commotions of varying degrees of seriousness, have given rise at different times to no small amount of anxiety. Threats of violence were generally met in anticipation, that in 1715 giving rise to the passing of the Riot Act.

In 1722 the Jacobites gave trouble, but with the arrest of the principal conspirators with whom was associated Bp. Atterbury, of Rochester, the trouble subsided, and the military defenders of the bank were not called into action. The Gordon Riots assumed a more serious aspect, and the defence of the bank occasioned considerable loss of life. What threatened, however, to be of a much more serious character was the Chartist rising in 1848.

Demonstrations in sympathy were to be held all over the country, and gave some justification for the general alarm. No one knew what the future had in its keeping. The Government of the day took fright, and to the Duke of Wellington was entrusted the safety of London. "Specials" were enrolled, and the military reinforced by all the means available. The bank was the object of special attention, a company of Engineers from Woolwich being quartered within its walls, and the building put into a state of defence.

At the time of the threatened attack there were present in the bank 200 bayonets, composed of the Guards, an officer of the Royal Engineers, 30 sappers and miners, besides some pensioners and officers of the bank. In addition, something like 600 special constables were held in readiness. It was on the point of my tongue to say all for nothing, but it would be more correct to say that commonsense prevailed in the presence of overwhelming force, the Chartists dispersing without challenging the powers of the day.

South Sea Bubble.

PANICS, too, disturbed the even course of business on many occasions, in the history of the bank. The frequency of these panics and crises (the first of which was but a short two years after the commencement of the bank's activities), is only too evident. The formation of the South Sea Company is not without interest at this stage, coming as it did into active competition with the bank. The idea of the company was to take over the debts of the State for profit on terms into which I need not go now. The bank made a better offer to the Government, but lost in its endeavour to monopolise this business—very fortunately for the bank.

Curiously enough, this promotion gave a great impetus to the speculative spirit; the South Sea Company's stock rising to a premium of as much as 1330 per cent. A fearful rage for speculation followed. Companies for all and every conceivable (as well as inconceivable) purpose were promoted, among which were (quoting from a list of about 180 new companies):—

Pollingtons for melting sawdust and shavings into deal boards of any length.

Fattening hogs.

Poppy oil.

Curing of broken-winded horses and mares.

Curing of lunatic persons.

Importing negroes.

Importing asses from Spain (as though there weren't enough).

For the extracting of silver from lead.

The inevitable result of this mad speculation followed, and the South Sea Company, sound as it was originally, collapsed, bringing down in its train many whose only fault was over-optimism. Fortunate, indeed, was the bank. Its failure to compete successfully with the now defunct South Sea Company proved to be its salvation.

Frauds and Forgeries.

IN thumbing the pages of Mr. Acres' book on the bank, one is surprised at the frequency of the occurrence of frauds and forgeries both from without and within the bank, the latter during a period now happily remote. The threat of death by hanging or transportation to Botany Bay does not seem to have been a sufficient deterrent.

What was probably one of the biggest frauds perpetrated on the bank took place in 1803 by a prominent member of the staff—no less a person than the deputy cashier, who in the ordinary course of events would have succeeded to the position of chief cashier. Speculation had resulted in heavy losses, and it required a sum between a quarter and half a million pounds to pay his debts. Embezzlement followed, but, thanks to counsel, the prisoner was acquitted. He was afterwards tried on a more trivial phase of the same offence, found guilty and sentenced to death, the sentence, for some unknown reason, being commuted to imprisonment. After 16 years in prison he appears to have been liberated on condition that he left the country.

A forger who gave the bank a considerable amount of trouble was known as "Old Patch," who used the services of another man to present his forgeries. The man (the understudy) was detected and found guilty, but was released from prison and compensated, as the forgeries of which he had been held guilty continued to be received at the bank after his imprisonment.

The real forger, however, did not continue for long, and finding his game up, committed suicide and was buried as a suicide at some cross-road with a stake through his body, according to the custom of the day.

A fraud involving the loss to the bank of about a quarter of a million was perpetrated in 1824 by Henry Fauntleroy, a partner in a banking house. The frauds had extended over a period of nine years, and had been accomplished by the transfer of stock from his customers' names on forged powers of attorney. Not all the efforts of his friends could save him from the gibbet, where he paid the penalty of his crime.

The Bank of England

(Continued from page 6.)

Bank Notes and Frauds.

BANKNOTES appear to have lent themselves to being forged with ease, and no efforts were spared by the bank to devise a note which could not be copied. Prior to 1725 the punishment for forgery was imprisonment or the pillory, for in 1695 we read four men were fined considerable sums and stood in the pillory for cheating the Bank of England. But this did not prove sufficient deterrent, and the death penalty was imposed in the hope that the forger's activities would be checked. It fell out otherwise, however, and the directors were driven



Wilfred Kershaw,

bass, who will sing a selection of solos from 4YA on Wednesday, February 1.

—Zenith, photo.

to other methods to protect their notes from the forger.

In this connection a curious story is told. In 1722 a forger who was under sentence in Newgate Prison was visited by one of the bank cashiers, who sought information as to how the paper could be improved. The forger most obligingly gave some valuable advice in the matter, but his disinterested advice did not save him from transportation.

Investigators.

DURING the time of the prevalence of considerable numbers of forgeries, several of the clerks were appointed to investigate the forgeries with a view to securing arrests and prosecution. These men, known as investigators, made some awkward mistakes at times and were frequently taken to task by their directors, notably the investigator who, it was discovered, was concerned in a linen, drapery and pawn-broking business and that he was the partner in a business with a woman who had been convicted for uttering forged notes and counterfeit coin! It is hardly surprising that his term of usefulness to the bank was terminated.

But the story of George Morland, the painter, is probably the best worth telling; it is taken from Cunningham's "Lives of the Most Eminent British Painters," as recounted by Acres:—

"On one occasion he (i.e., Morland) hid himself in Hackney, where his anxious looks and secluded manner of life induced some of his charitable neighbours to believe him a maker of forged notes. The directors of the bank dispatched two of their most dexterous emissaries to inquire, reconnoitre, search, and seize. These men arrived and began to draw lines of circumvallation round the painter's retreat; he was not, however, to be surprised; mistaking those agents of evil men for bailiffs, he escaped from behind as they approached in front, fled into Hoston and never halted until he had hidden himself in London. Nothing was found to justify suspicion, and when Mrs. Morland, who was his companion in his retreat, told them who her husband was, and showed them some unfinished pictures, they made such a report to the bank that the directors presented him with a couple of bank notes of £20 each by way of compensation for the alarm they had given him."

The Old Lady of Threadneedle St.

IN spite of all these attacks from without and within—and their story could be continued probably much beyond your powers of endurance—the old lady of Threadneedle Street has survived the stress of the times, emerging, after nearly two and a half centuries, to command the affection of the race to which we are privileged to belong and the respect of the whole civilised world.

War Memorial.

I REFERRED, in opening this chat, to the Bank's war memorial.

To quote from Robert Browning, whose father and grandfather both had been in the service of the Bank, it was to commemorate:

*One who never turned his back, but
marched breast forward,
Never doubted clouds would break,
Never dreamed though right were
worsted wrong would triumph,
He'd, we fall to rise, are baffled to fight
better,
Sleep to wake.*

The Garden.

THERE is in the Bank garden, once the churchyard of the ancient parish of Saint Christopher le Stocks, with the old lime tree the nesting-place of the wood pigeon, is the statue cast in bronze—a life size figure of St. Christopher. The sculptor has represented him after the passage of the stream, coming up the further bank with the physical strain of crossing manifest in his limbs and panting mouth. His face is wreathed in a smile at the joy of his victory and his eyes and lips express the awe and wonder with which he looks up to the mysterious child upon his shoulder and realises that the reward for all his service is after all only a cross—the cross of sacrifice held out before him in the infant's hand.

Continuing my quotation from the special memorial number of the staff magazine, the inscription on the statue reads:—

To the comrades who at duty's call crossed the dark waters to the further shore, 1914-1919.

The whole is mounted on a pedestal of Portland stone, bearing on its sides the names of 71 members of the staff who gave their lives in the Great War.