

## Prominent Topics.

### Rock Island Railway Wreck.

The accident on the Chicago Great Western railway near Marshalltown, Iowa, by which two Rock Island trains were wrecked, forty persons killed and many others injured, was one of the most disastrous on record, and one of the most dreadful in its details. To all present appearances, the accident was caused by a defect in the road-bed. The use of this particular track was necessitated by another accident in itself of little importance. Whether the condition of the line was known and whether reasonable caution under the circumstances was used, ought to be revealed by a thorough and skilful examination of all the evidence available. Judging by experience on this continent, it is too much to hope that there will be any such satisfactory investigation. That there should be such wholesale destruction of human life without the responsibility being brought home to somebody, is one of the scandalous conditions to which the people of the United States and Canada have become reconciled more or less, by being used to it. Nevertheless, these "accidents" are a crime against humanity. It would be in the interest of the railway companies to array themselves solidly with the travelling public and use their great influence to insist upon thorough and competent investigation into all such affairs under government authority. It would not add one cent to their responsibility, and, in the long run, it would tend to reduce greatly the financial losses by which they are the chief sufferers.

### Free Schools.

The Roman Catholic School Commission has decided to abolish the fee of twenty-five cents a month, now charged to pupils attending the schools under its jurisdiction. It is gratifying to learn that the Commission is in a financial position to do without the revenue from the fees, but we are not sure that it is not a mistake to abolish the fees. If the parents get the education of their children for nothing, they will be apt to value it at about the same figure. We would prefer to see the surplus revenue spent in improving the standard of education and in increasing the salaries of the teachers. There is also room for considerable expenditure in providing more and better school accommodation.

### Radio-Activity.

The discoveries in connection with radio-activity suggest that the world is on the threshold of a scientific revelation of the most marvellous character. A few years ago, the existence of radio-activity was not so much as suspected. To-day, it is demonstrated, and there is reason to believe that it is the key to the most mysterious phenomena of the universe. Professor Bragg, of Adelaide University, declares that the radiations from radium are neither solid, liquid, nor gaseous, but yet are matter. That

the particles travel at the rate of 10,000 miles a second and penetrate clear through the atoms of all other matter they encounter. A stone wall offers no obstruction. Light travels with a velocity of somewhere around 192,000 miles a second—but light is not matter. Electricity travels through a copper wire at about 300,000 miles a second—but electricity is not matter. Particles of a material substance travelling at 10,000 miles a second and penetrating through solids, liquids and gasses, are in the light of our present knowledge, the wonder of wonders. There is no more attractive field for investigation than the chemistry of the imponderable agents—light, heat, electricity, magnetism, actinism, sound, and last, but not least, radio-activity. In all but the last named, investigation has been rewarded by practical results of incalculable value. There is every reason to believe that scientific research in the realm of radio-activity will be no less richly rewarded.

Rumours about the health of His Majesty must be received with caution. Naturally reports of any little ailments affecting him, lose nothing in the telling by the sensational press. Much ado is being made over the fact that the King left the Porte St. Martin Theatre in Paris before the performance of Chanteclair was over. If, as alleged, this is really only the second time the King has left a theatre without waiting for the curtain to fall, it is a marvellous record for a pretty frequent theatre-goer. What he must have suffered at times in the splendid isolation of the royal box!

### Responsibility for Fire-Arms.

A court in Hamilton has awarded \$800 damages against the Grafton Clothing Company, to a lady who was shot in the eye by a boy who had received a rifle from the company, as a premium with a suit of clothes. The court held that the company was guilty of negligence in placing the weapon in the hands of a boy.

### British Credit.

There is evidently not much the matter with Great Britain's credit, when in a time in which almost revolutionary conditions prevail and the national finances are being played with most absurdly, the five year Exchequer bonds can be freely placed on the market at a premium. The amount issued was \$105,000,000, and the applications were so numerous that the lists were closed on Monday morning instead of as arranged on Wednesday.

The appointment of Dr. L. H. Chancellor Davidson, to the chancellorship of the diocese of Montreal, is a natural and practically an inevitable promotion. Dr. Davidson has held the office of vice-chancellor and discharged the duties of chancellor during the illness of Dr. Bethune for some years. His qualifications for the office are universally recognized.