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—The fatalities of the past month, such as the boiler explosion at Newmarket, Ont., by which two men were killed and a number injured, and the numerous other fatal accidents to those handling electrical machinery, acetylene gas, and other apparatus, point to the need of Canadian legislation of a comprehensive kind, applying to all provinces alike. No better model could be taken than the act in force in Great Britain, and summarized some time ago in the Canadian Engineer, and a good thing would be done if a conference of the Provincial and Dominion Governments could be arranged for the purpose of relegating the legislation to the Dominion Parliament to secure uniformity in the law and economy in its administration. Under the British law no restrictions are put upon either the makers or users of machinery, but the onus of an accident is placed upon the person or company found to be at fault. This result is obtained by a commission having the powers of a court. If the owner of machinery is adjudged guilty of negligence, the judgment of the court is taken as the basis of any action for damages which a sufferer by the accident may bring. Thus the responsibility is placed exactly where it belongs, and the result is that there are fewer accidents in Great Britain in proportion to the machinery used than in any country in the world.

As to the Newmarket boiler explosion, it will probably never be certainly known why the boiler failed. The boiler was a 66-inch one, and had a double rivetted lap joint, and it was on one of these lines of rivets that the fracture occurred. In the expansion and contraction of the shell, the portion having this lap would yield less than where the plate was single, consequently the greatest strain would be along one or other of these lines of rivets, and moreover this lap was below the line of average water level, and this gave the explosion greater force. The lessons to boiler makers would appear to be, first, that a double strapped, butt joint affording a more perfect curve to the plate, and therefore causing less strain by expansion and contraction, gives a safer boiler; and second, that the joints should be placed above the water line, thus minimizing the damage should an explosion occur at the joint.

—According to the report of the special commissioner sent by the British Government to investigate the prospects for trade in South Africa, that country bids fair to become Great Britain's largest customer by the end of the current year, its imports having increased 250 per cent. in ten years. There has been a strong prepossession in favor of British goods since the war, even when they cost more than others. The most serious competitors are the United States, Germany, Belgium and Switzerland. The American competition is most perceptible in mining, agricultural, and electrical machinery; appliances, tools, fencing wire and furniture. This competition is materially aided by the low freights for which rival British steamship carry cargoes from New York to South Africa; also by the presence of American engineers at the mines, who favor United States machinery. The Commissioner also calls attention to the lack of vigor and enterprise on the part of the British manufacturers, especially those in the engineering trade, and he lays emphasis on the superiority of American descriptive catalogues, and the accessibility and bonhomie of American agents compared with the reserve of the British agents. The report also states that it is only American competition which the British have to fear. There is a moral in all this for the Canadian manufacturer; and with the preference now in operation in favor of British and Canadian goods, it will be our own fault if Canada does not loom large in the trade of South Africa henceforth.

—New Zealand has not been long in enjoining the policy of Mr. Chamberlain in a practical way, by adopting a new tariff giving the British Empire a trade preference over outside countries, and thereby following Canada's example in the effort to create a closer commercial union within the Empire. By the Preferential Trade Bill, which came into operation on November 20th, the following articles, while free to the British Empire, must pay a duty of 20 per cent., when from foreign countries: Bicycle parts, gas engines, gum boots, iron and steel cordage; sheet, bolt and bar iron; printing paper, steel rails, sail cloth, canvas, and duck;