

RAILWAY ACCIDENTS AND THEIR PREVENTION.

The remarkable epidemic of railway accidents to which we had occasion to refer in our last two issues has not yet died out. During the last month they have continued with more or less frequency, the most serious having been a smash-up which occurred on the Grand Trunk a short distance north of Guelph. A number of cars on the express left the track, without any apparent cause and rolled into the ditch, which was full of icy water. A large number of persons were seriously injured and two children drowned. The coroner's jury, while unable to fix the responsibility, recommends the appointment of a Government inspector, who shall examine into railway accidents, making an inspection of the wreck, condition of the track, etc., as far as possible before the wreck is removed and repairs made. This suggestion seems to be in the right direction, though there would be serious practical difficulties in carrying it out, as it might be impossible for the inspector to reach the spot within a reasonable time.

A collision on the C.P.R. near Cooksville, resulting in the loss of the lives of one or two trainmen, seems to have arisen from a somewhat similar cause to the terrible disaster at Wanstead, namely the placing of an inexperienced telegraph operator in a position of great responsibility. Cheap labor at the telegraph key means, as it does in many other positions, serious loss in the long run, far exceeding the temporary saving, to say nothing of the resultant loss of life.

In England the railways do not use the telegraph for dispatching trains, but are compelled by law to use what is known as the staff system. The system is simply this: At every station there is what is known as a staff master. He has a key to a room containing the tickets or permit cards which allow a conductor of a certain train to go on to the next station. This conductor takes the staff, with the key attached, to the next station, and the train coming the other way brings it back. The staff master is unable to get into the room and consequently cannot give out permit cards for conductors until he has the staff in his possession again. This means that the track is clear. If there are several trains to leave a station they are regulated, so that they run within, perhaps, ten minutes of each other, and the conductor of the last train leaving is given the staff. When it is returned, the staff master can release any other train that may be waiting. In this way no chance is taken with telegraph operators, and there is absolutely no possibility of a collision. The law provides that where a railroad is unable to use the system on account of the amount of traffic on its road, it must put down double tracks. An engineer, now resident in Canada, who worked for the Stockton & Darlington railway over thirty years ago, the staff system being then in use, says the road of a hundred miles of single track was so operated that there was never a life lost by two trains meeting between stations. The only disadvantage is that the system is slower than the telegraphic system used on this side of the ocean, as there must be some delay in changing staffs at every station. This is a trifling reason when we consider the loss of human life involved.

The loss of life among engineers is a serious matter too for the survivors. The Locomotive Engineers' Insurance Society has had an unusual number of assessments during the past four months. The Locomotive and Engineers' Journal for February gave notice of twenty-two engineers killed while on duty, the January number announced seventeen killed and the November and

December issues sixteen in each month. Nearly every man met his death in a collision. Some means will have to be found to put a stop to this wholesale destruction of human life on the railways of this continent. If the companies will not adopt precautions the Government will have to step in and compel them to.

THE COAL COMMISSION AWARD.

The report of the Commission appointed last October, on the recommendation of President Roosevelt, to investigate the circumstances of the great anthracite coal strike, has been presented. In brief the Commission recommends a general increase of wages amounting to in most instances 10 per cent.; a nine hour working day; eight instead of twelve hour shifts and relief from Sunday labor without loss of pay for engineers, firemen and pumpmen; arbitration in case of disputes; a sliding scale by which the miners' wages are increased 1 per cent. for every 10 per cent. increase in price of coal; check weighmen to be paid by the miners; uniform distribution of mine cars and any increase in size of cars to be accompanied by proportionate increase in rate paid per car. There is to be no discrimination by either the mine owners or the miners on account of membership or non membership in a labor union; the present methods of payment for coal mined shall continue unless changed by mutual agreement; concerted effort on the part of the mine workers to limit output except by agreement with operators is forbidden; work is not to be suspended pending settlement of matters referred to arbitration; boycott and violence are condemned; the demand that coal mined be paid for by weight is refused; interposition of the State militia in the coal regions to preserve peace is justified. The commission recommends a stricter enforcement of the laws in relation to the employment of children; and legislation by the Federal and State governments, providing, when the public interests call for it, for compulsory investigation of difficulties, similar to the investigation which this commission has made.

The miners are not satisfied with the award—it could hardly be expected that everyone would be. They are very much disappointed because payment by weight is refused, as this was one of their most important demands. It is to be earnestly hoped, notwithstanding this disappointment, that the effect of the award will be to prevent such another strike as occurred last year, with its disastrous effects upon all classes of industrial pursuit.

An estimate is given of the losses occasioned by the strike. These losses the commissioners estimate as follows:—To the mine owners, \$46,100,000; to the mine employees in wages, \$25,000,000; to the transportation companies, \$26,000,000.

INDEPENDENT TELEPHONES.

We are glad to notice more healthy signs of public attention to the telephone question, which has become for Canada a more serious problem than it is now, or ever was, in the United States. When the Canadian Bell monopoly is defended, and its interests even advocated, by a cabinet minister as was the case when this company's application for an increase of capital came before parliament last year, it is time the people of Canada, and especially those intrusted with the governance of our cities and towns, begin to realize what new tribute will be laid upon them in the near future as fresh power is acquired. The remarkable development of the work