

The Monetary Times

Absorbed the INTERCOLONIAL JOURNAL OF COMMERCE, 1860; the TRADE REVIEW, Montreal, 1870; and the JOURNAL OF COMMERCE, Toronto.

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The Monetary Times

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TOLL OF THE RAILWAYS.

When progress means much loss of life it requires some sort of check. America holds two unenviable records. One, the annual amount of its fire loss; the other, the sacrifice of human life on the altar of its railroads. Accidents must sometimes happen, but reasonable precautions may prevent most. In 1897, two hundred and thirteen persons lost their lives on the Canadian railroads. Ten years later, the number had increased to five hundred and eighty-seven.

The large number of accidents on the American roads, compared with the few in Great Britain, is frequently the subject of comment. The English railroads are confined to a small area. To gaze at an intricate maze of track, seen in a hundred places in England, is an object lesson of how to do things. It seems scarcely possible that, with the hundreds of trains running daily over the same tracks, intersecting here, crossing there, held up for an express, shunted into a siding for the passing of a special, so few accidents occur.

Two reasons exist for the dearth of fatalities there. Great care is exercised in every way, and a railroad accident in Great Britain is a serious thing for the railroad. It is not forgotten with the verdict of the jury. The Imperial Board of Trade thoroughly investigates the causes of each accident. If the railroad company is neglectful, the company suffers. If reforms are suggested, the company would find it unwise to refuse to carry out desirable improvements.

Here in Canada we have an area bigger many times than Britain. A multitude of tracks is almost a curiosity. Compared with the British railroads' field of operations, Canada has exceptional opportunities for blotting out an undesirable record, and creating an exemplary one.

Mr. M. J. Butler, Deputy Minister and Chief Engineer of the Department of Railways and Canals, says that the return of accidents on Canadian railways is the dark side of the business of transportation. "The

CONTENTS OF THIS ISSUE

Editorial:	Page.
Toll of the Railways	1625
Fair Finance	1626
Selecting Your Countrymen	1626
Editorial Notes	1626
Banking and Financial:	
Canadian Banking Practice XLVIII.	1628
Peculiar Banking Case	1628
February Bank Statement	1629
Clearing House Returns	1630
Insurance:	
Moral Hazard	1633
Life Insurance in Newfoundland	1649
English Insurance Notes	1650
Miscellaneous	
Some Wheat Figures	1627
Salvage Corps	1627
Canada's Credit Abroad	1632
Public Money:	
Some Ontario Assessments	1642
Special Correspondence:	
Merger in the East, Montreal	1631
British Columbia and Provincial Rights	1639
The Future of the West, Winnipeg	1640
Canadian Interests in London, England	1643

danger accompanying the movement of trains is always very great, and when to this is added negligence and carelessness on the part of both employees and those who suffer, we have the factors which roll up annually a regrettable record of sacrifice. While these accidents are apparently inseparable from railway traffic, they nevertheless are nearly always avoidable. Unless someone blunders, or something breaks, such disasters as usually occur could not happen. The strengthening of equipment, the elimination of risky methods of handling trains, the introduction of safeguards in many forms, and the enforcement of rigid inspection, are all steps in the right direction. These agencies are now being applied with more or less care on practically all our railway lines; and still the waste of life goes on. The following is the record since 1897:—

Year.	Pas-sengers.	Em-ployees.	Others.	Total.
1897	7	76	130	213
1898	5	98	167	270
1899	20	119	145	284
1900	7	123	195	325
1901	16	118	183	317
1902	19	146	165	330
1903	53	186	181	420
1904	25	192	178	395
1905	35	206	227	468
1906	16	139	206	361
1907	70	249	268	587

When viewing this appalling waste of human life, the question naturally arises as to what proportion of these accidents could be avoided. This cannot be accurately determined. Yet into all of them must enter to some degree the element of negligence or culpability. Many are due to defective equipment. Few men will throw away an old pair of boots without a heart pang. Railroad companies treasure the rolling stock which did duty in days gone by.

A circular in respect to defective equipment was sent some time ago by the Railway Commission to all