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THE WANSTEAD DISASTER.

The features of this dreadful railway accident of Friday night last are familiar enough now. A fast express on the Grand Trunk main line, No. 5, bound west from London, was given an order by the train despatcher at London to cross at Wanstead an east-bound freight train on the single track line leading to Sarnia tunnel. The operator at Watford Station, next east of Wanstead, misunderstood the order and allowed the fast express to dash through a blinding snow-storm and crash into the freight train. Twenty-eight persons were killed and forty-one wounded.

Where is responsibility to be fixed for such a harrowing loss of life? This is what a coroner's jury at Wyoming has essayed to determine. They decline to allot blame, as between Despatcher Kerr and Station Agent Carson, but say pointedly that the accident could have been averted had the company employed more experienced telegraphers at Kingscourt and Wyoming. Some of the things that came out in evidence may well cause the travelling public anxiety, and

our railway authorities some heart-searching. Here is a station agent, Carson, who has been for thirty years in the employ of the road, an exemplary servant. His regular assistant was taken from him, and for six weeks he had been doing all the work of express agent, baggage master, ticket agent, and telegraph operator at Watford, assisted only by a sixteen year old boy, of trifling experience. Will anyone say that a man so circumstanced was not over-worked?

Again, the evidence of the train-despatcher, Kerr, states that the express might have been stopped had there been a telegraph operator at Wanstead Station. Why was there not a telegraph agent at Wanstead, a station on that single line portion of the Grand Trunk thronged by the enormous traffic east and west through Sarnia tunnel? Is the stripping of stations of necessary men, till one official, on whom depends life and property, is worked fourteen and seventeen hours a day, part of the so-called "economy" of the railway company? If this shocking disaster is a result, there should be some power to put an end to such murderous economy.

Mr. McGuigan considers that this disastrous collision was "simply one of those inexplicable accidents in which the human mind has been lacking." And he further states that "no superior officer of the road is to blame." We are by no means sure that he is right in either contention. The human mind, even of a station agent, cannot well be expected to perform its functions if both body and brain are overworked to exhaustion. How, then, about the human mind of James Tryer, the youthful operator, who had had four days' experience on a railway wire, and for seven minutes listened to an urgent call upon his relay at Kingscourt, before it dawned upon his brain that it was he who was being called? Certainly his "mind" was lacking. Investigation into this collision must be thorough; and the railway must not be allowed to sacrifice the reputation of an old employee, or the safety of railway travel, in the interest of "economy."

MONTREAL HARBOR.

Figures of export trade via Montreal are always of interest to the people of Canada, who have watched with interest the growth of commerce through our St. Lawrence route. We welcome, therefore, the seventh annual record of the export trade of the port, published in pamphlet form by the Gazette of that city. Speaking with reference to 1902 shipping trade, the pamphlet says it has not been considered satisfactory, although the number of vessels and volume of tonnage increased from 742 vessels of 1,388,000 tons, in 1901, to 757 vessels of 1,453,048 tons in 1902. The principal reason for dissatisfaction is that because of high rates of insurance on both cargoes and hulls, and low rates of freight, the business has not been profitable. But worse than the marine insurance rates, in the opinion of the compiler, has been the low freight rates to United States ports, caused by keen competition.

The inward and outward trade of the port showed a decided excess of activity, which is attested by the increase of the wharfage dues from \$196,000, in 1901,