

Muscovite Murmuring Heeded.

The muttered complaints of the Russian people at the heavy tax burdens imposed upon the gold-mining industry have, at last, been heeded, and conferences are being held in St. Petersburg for the purpose of encouraging the working of the mines. Hitherto, the taxation has been so high—about 30 p. c.—that those engaged in mining enterprise could only work under the greatest difficulty. It is now suggested that the tax be reduced by one-half.

An Interesting Case.

An interesting case has just been decided in one of the United States law courts. The owners of a saw-mill in Illinois, which burned last May, sued an insurance company under the following somewhat novel circumstances. The case hinged upon a fine point, as to whether certain parties were agents of the mill owners or of the insurance company. The mill burned upon the date that the policy, which was sent for cancellation, was received through the mails by the agents who had procured the insurance for the mill owners. These agents were insurance agents, but, as they could not place that particular insurance, they had obtained it through other agents. The Court has now decided that agents No. 1 were the agents of the mill owners and not of the insurance company, and hence the policy was still in the hands of the owners when the mill burned.

Braddock Nyle Wanted.

We do not claim for this journal, the largest circulation in the wide world, but we occasionally receive very convincing proof that *THE CHRONICLE* reaches countries that are far off, and that its readers regard it as a capital medium of communication with bankers, insurance managers and prominent business houses all round the civilized world.

In response to a recent advertisement in our columns, among many replies, we have received one from distant Singapore, and last week a subscriber living at Houston, Texas, requested the assistance of *THE CHRONICLE* in making enquiries in all countries where the English language is known, for one, Braddock Nyle, who "is supposed to have lived in Montreal in 1844." Where are you, Nyle?

A Country Store Insurance Question.

The Circuit Court of Frederick County, Maryland, has recently given a decision of some interest to the proprietors of country stores who may be bicycle riders. The plaintiff in the case in question insured a stock of general merchandise for \$500. The stock was burned and, upon the advice of the fire marshal of Maryland State, the interested insurance company contested the claim on the ground that the contents of the store were over-insured. In reciting to the court an inventory of his stock, the plaintiff stated that one article was a bicycle valued at \$30. The

company's lawyer contended that the policy did not cover bicycles, and the court ruled that the plaintiff would have to show that bicycles were a part of the usual stock carried by a country store-keeper.

Charity as an Advertisement.

The magnificent liberality of many of the great trading, financial and other corporations of London has not escaped criticism from some of their greedy shareholders who maintain that contributing to war funds is not the business of a company formed for money-making purposes. But in the effort to stifle the peevish objections of a director of the Assets Realization Company to a contribution to the Patriotic Fund, the chairman of the company, Mr. Biddulph Martin, M.P., justified the subscription on the ground that it was a good advertisement. Although this explanation of the proposed subscription was the only one likely to favorably impress his complaining colleague, Mr. Martin is being subjected to a shower of sarcastic comments on the character of his charity and compassion. One paper is unkind enough to say that, if the company of which this English member of parliament is chairman hoped to get credit for patriotism, and to make its seeming generosity a realisable asset, Mr. Martin has effectually prevented such credit being given.

Prevention of Railway Accidents.

Inventions and suggestions for the prevention of railway accidents are constantly being brought before public notice, and anything that tends to reduce accidents deserves the fullest and most careful attention from the directors and managers of the railway companies of the world. Some recent experiments with the invention of M. Laffas of the Laffas Syndicate, Limited, are thus described by the London "Financial News":—"By the kindness of the directors of the Barry Railway, the apparatus was fitted at several points of their system, and rolling stock and locomotives placed at the disposal of the syndicate. Looking at the plans and specifications of this invention, one is almost inclined to doubt the merits claimed by the inventor; but after seeing it put into actual practice and tested under various circumstances, the most sceptical observer is compelled to admit that M. Laffas has succeeded in solving a great difficulty. One of the features of the invention is its great simplicity. There are no complicated parts to get out of order, and in case of accident it can be repaired by any mechanic. The invention consists of a block, which is placed in the four-foot way, which, when the engine passes over it, comes into contact with a lever which is attached to the engine. This lever immediately opens the vacuum brake and stops the train. The block is connected with a short rail which runs alongside and close to the outside rail. This comes into contact with the wheels of the engine when the block is down, and immediately raises it, so that a following train, on coming to the block, is immediately stopped.