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## A Cold Winter.

The present winter has so far made a fine record for frigidity, and some persons who are no longer in the freshness of their youth have been heard to remark that the present is the coldest winter they have ever known. It is not improbable however that persons with good memories can recall other winters which would hold their own for cold with that of 1904. According to the Lewiston, Me., *Journal* the winter of 1861 was particularly severe in that State and other parts of New England. That paper says: "The winter of 1861 was noted for being one of the coldest, and, in fact, it was the coldest, one in the century. The coldest day of the winter was Friday, Feb. 25, and is known as cold Friday. There had been a heavy snow storm of light, fine snow. It cleared off cold and the wind blew a perfect gale, thus making the cold more fearful. The air was filled with snow so thick one could see only a rod or two in any direction. Men who were obliged to be on the road perished and were found frozen as hard as marble statues. A very few travellers survived the ordeal. But few had thermometers in those days to tell how cold it really was, but what few there were registered 40 to 50 below zero in Androscoggin, and in Arundel county it was even lower. Penobscot Bay was frozen over so solid that Sam Randall, of Vinalhaven, took a horse and sleigh and, together with the Hon. Martin Kiff, who was the representative to the Legislature for Vinalhaven, cruised from Vinalhaven to North Haven, then to Saddle Island, then to Camden and thence across country to Augusta, where he left Kiff and returned to Vinalhaven again safely. Portland Harbor and Boston Harbor were frozen over solid. Thousands of the Boston people availed themselves of the fact and the ice on the harbor was covered with skaters. People who remember the cold Friday smile when they hear people telling how cold it is when we have a little zero weather."

## George Francis Train.

Those who had known of the late George Francis Train only in connection with the eccentricities and vagaries of his later life may have been surprised to learn of the business activity which characterized his earlier years. In reference to this singular man *The Outlook* says: "The line which separates insanity pure and simple from excessive eccentricity is a fine one, and it might be hard to decide on which side to place the singular personality of George Francis Train, who was wont at one time to call himself the sanest man alive, at others, 'the greatest crank' in the world. The mere fact that he did recognize his own megalomania or exuberant egotism shows conclusively that his mind had its sane side. No one can read his remarkable autobiography, a fair sized book, dictated in 36 hours, it is said, without admitting that in some points he was, as he was fond of asserting, ahead of the times. A condensed autobiography "boiled down in two hundred words," asserts, among other things that he had supported himself since babyhood, had been a farmer at fourteen, was at twenty manager of a great shipping firm with an income of \$10,000, built famous clipper ships, started forty choppers to California in '49, introduced the street railway into England, built the first Pacific railway, organized the first Trust, the Cr dit Mobilier, owned 5,000 lots in Omaha now worth thirty millions, organized the French Commune, three times made the shortest record trip around the globe, and had been "fifteen times in jail without a crime? With all allowance for his egotistical exaggeration, there is still some truth in his characterization of himself as "reformer, agitator, revolutionist, evolutionist, psychologist, financier, builder of railways, linguist and Globe trotter." A student of psychology can easily find in the biography the time when intolerable egotism gained ascendancy over what was really a genius for audacious and large undertakings. Everyone knows of Mr. Train's vagaries of late years—his almost absurd self-nomination for the Presidency; his storing up of psychic force by refusing for years to talk to adults or let anyone touch him (he used solemnly to shake hands with himself on being introduced) his custom of sitting bare headed in Madison Square with his friends the children and the birds, and his residence in the Mills Hotel in a twenty cent room, although his relatives were always glad to make a home for him—he used to say he liked to be with the poor people because they told the truth and were honest. The dedication to his autobiography shows George Francis Train at his best: "To the

children and to the children's children in this and all lands who love and believe in me because they know I love and believe in them."

The report of the Royal Commission, known as the Lord Escher Commission, which was appointed last November to advise the Imperial Government concerning the creation of a board for the administration of the War Office has been issued. This Report, the *London Times* characterizes as the most important state document issued during the present generation. Upon the recommendation of the Commission and with the approval of the King, the Government has decided to appoint an army council similar to the Admiralty, to abolish the office of Commander-in-chief of the army and to create a new post, that of Inspector-General, whose principal duty will be to inspect and report on the efficiency of the military forces. The report points out the necessity of greater permanence in the defence committee in order to insure a continuous policy, and it suggests the addition to the existing defence committee of a permanent Secretary, holding office for five years, two naval officers selected by the Admiralty, two military officers chosen by the Viceroy of India, and if possible other colonial representatives holding office for two years. With regard to the War Office the commission suggests that the Secretary of State for War be placed in the same position as the first Lord of the Admiralty, directly responsible to the Crown and to Parliament. The constitution of the army council aims at decentralization, the individual members of the council being entrusted with different branches, such as armament, supply, finance, etc. In this connection the report remarks significantly: "New measures demand new men; we therefore attach special importance to the appointment of military members not hitherto closely connected with existing methods, and who therefore are not likely to be embarrassed by the traditions of a system which is to be radically changed." The Commission considers the abolition of the post of Commander-in-Chief to be imperative, and it urges the divorce of the administrative from the executive department. The Inspector-General is to be appointed for five years. He will report upon actual facts without expressing opinions on policies.

## Fatalities

### on Canadian

### Railways.

Very serious disasters are happily infrequent upon Canadian Railways and the loss of life among passengers is comparatively small. Within a few months a single wreck upon a United States Railway has resulted in a larger number of fatalities than have occurred in connection with all the railways of Canada during a whole year. It is to be observed however that the loss of life among railway employes is more than three times as large as the fatalities among passengers, and the fatalities among those who were neither employes nor passengers—persons run over at crossings, etc.—is nearly as large as those among the employes of the road. According to returns from the various railway lines of Canada compiled by the Department of Railways the fatalities in connection with the steam railways on the Dominion was 459. Of these 53 were passengers, 186 employes and 181 others. The deaths on the electric lines totalled eight passengers, seven employes and twenty-three others, for the year ending June 30, 1903. In the previous twelve months the returns show 330 persons killed on the steam roads, as follows: Nineteen passengers, 146 employes and 165 others. The electric lines were responsible for the deaths of eight passengers. It is evident that railroading continues to be a perilous occupation for brakemen, and the number of fatal accidents occurring at railway crossings is comparatively large. There is we are informed a clause in the new Railway Act which gives the Board of Railway Commissioners all the authority they will require to see that reasonable safeguards are taken to protect the travelling public and those employed in the operation of trains, and to ensure the punishment of persons whose criminal negligence or blundering is responsible for these occurrences.

## A Bad Wreck on the I. C. R.

The wreck which occurred on the Intercolonial on Wednesday morning of last week, between Millford and Shubenacadie stations is one of the most serious in the history of rail-

roading in the Maritime Provinces. It resulted in the loss of two lives and the more or less serious injury of some thirty-five others. Of the forty persons who made up the list of passengers and the train crew, only four escaped without injury. Considering the circumstances it is indeed most wonderful that the number of the dead and severely injured should not be very much larger. The wrecked train was number 25—generally known as the C. P. R.—which leaves Halifax at 8.45 to connect with the C. P. R. train which leaves St. John for the West in the evening. The train which was made up of an engine and five cars—a baggage, a postal, a second class, a first class and a Pullman—was in charge of Conductor Robert Duncan, with John Ross as driver, and was running smoothly at the rate of about 35 or 40 miles an hour, when suddenly one of the cars left the rails, causing the others to follow, and the whole five were rolled over and over down a fifty foot embankment, while the engine, the coupling having given way, remained on the track. There are differences of opinion as to whether it was the second class or first class coach which first left the track. The cause of the disaster also appears to be something of a mystery, but the prevailing opinion appears to be that it was caused by the dropping of some part of the undergear of the coach which first left the rails. The deaths which resulted from the disaster were those of Mrs. John Glassey of Halifax who was in the first class car and was almost instantly killed, and Conductor Duncan who was crushed between trunks and chests in the baggage car as it rolled over, and died of his injuries after fifteen hours of suffering. Conductor Duncan had been for nearly half a century in the railway service, and few conductors on the road were better known or more highly respected. The passengers and the trainmen who escaped with their lives had a thrilling experience, as can easily be imagined from the fact that some of the cars turned over twice in their descent and landed bottom up. A few were quite seriously injured, but it is marvellous to say that most of them escaped with a severe shaking up and comparatively slight injuries. The damage to the rolling stock was of course heavy as the cars were practically demolished.

## British Politics.

The British Parliament was opened by the King in person on Tuesday, Feby. 2. The allusions to public affairs in the speech from the throne were not for the most part of special importance. Respecting the situation in the Far East, the King said:—"I have watched with concern the course of the negotiations between the Governments of Japan and Russia in regard to their respective interests in China and Korea, a disturbance of the peace in those regions could not but have deplorable consequences. Any assistance which my Government can usefully render towards the promotion of a pacific solution will be gladly afforded." The indications are that the session will be a tempestuous one, and doubts are expressed as to the ability of the Government ship to outride the storm. In the absence of Premier Balfour, through an attack of influenza, the leadership of the House devolved on Mr. Austen Chamberlain, Chancellor of the Exchequer. In the course of the debate on the address in reply to the speech from the throne, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, the Liberal leader, delivered a trenchant criticism of the Government's policy, severely arraiging the Government's attitude on the fiscal question and announcing that Mr. John Morley would in a few days introduce a most comprehensive amendment involving the whole situation. Mr. Austen Chamberlain, in his capacity of leader of the House, replied to the criticisms upon the Government. The position was an embarrassing one for him as much of the criticism was directed against his father, the Hon. Joseph Chamberlain who occupied a seat among the private members. It is not surprising therefore if Mr. Austen Chamberlain's speech on the occasion was not up to the standard of his recognized ability and the defence of the Government was regarded as weak and ineffective. John Redmond, leader of the Irish Nationalists, has voiced the uncompromising demand of the party for home rule. So far from being satisfied with any concessions short of this, they will but use the strength thus attained to, push forward with greater energy to their final goal. Irishmen, Mr. Redmond declares, would rather rule themselves badly than to be ruled well by others.