

many places, and his appointment to Ottawa at the present rather critical time, would be no small compliment to the Dominion.

Explosion at Place Viger One would think it almost impossible to imagine any brand new type of railway accident upon a serious scale, but the accident at Place Viger station last Friday comes very near to it. A crowd of people standing on the platform, seeing their friends off by the C.P.R. Quebec train, were suddenly blown into the air, by an explosion of Pintsch gas which had accumulated under the platform, through a leak in the pipe used for supplying the cars. The result was a dozen or twenty people seriously injured, most of them having their legs broken, and a good many people badly frightened. Apparently nobody is to blame, the accumulation of conditions which made the accident possible could hardly have been anticipated. The leak did not occur under the platform, but the gas percolated under the frozen surface of the ground until it found a natural reservoir formed by the action of the frost under the platform. A little more or a little less frost might have averted the accident. Even a little more snow might have prevented trouble. The immediate cause was probably the fool habit of throwing down lighted matches—a habit acquired almost exclusively by fools. It is not much trouble to blow out a match after lighting a cigarette, but there are many people who habitually and with a grand air throw their lighted match away; it may be into a wastepaper basket, it may be on to a lady's muslin dress. In the absence of a powder barrel, anything will do. Some noodle probably remembers with a distinct sense of grievance, that the explosion occurred just as he had lighted his cigarette and, with an air of studied grace, thrown the match away.

Premier Asquith on Tariff Reform. In discussing the tariff question at Birkenhead, Mr. Asquith darkened counsel with words.

He threw much ridicule upon the tariff reformers, but not much light upon the subject. He revelled in the time-worn arguments for free-trade, which have done duty since the time of Cobden and sagaciously assumed that the majority of his hearers had no more practical knowledge of the working of protection than he had himself. If the British free-trade orators have forgotten nothing in the last half-century they have certainly learnt nothing. A year or two's residence in Germany, the United States or Canada would rid the British free-trader, who had the misfortune to be born "knowing it all," of many a foolish notion. To judge by such speeches as Mr. Asquith's the apostles of free trade in England know a great deal about protection, "that isn't so." We do not know that free-traders are much worse than

protectionists in drawing extravagant general conclusions from limited experiences. We are all too doctrinaire on these questions. There are at the very least two points of view, from which to regard the tariff question.

Ocean Freight Rates. The Montreal and Toronto Boards of Trade recently issued appeals to all Canadian shipping companies to resist any material freight rate increases on the part of the North Atlantic Westbound Freight Conference—urging that the effect of any such increase must tend to divert to the United States, trade which Canada's tariff preference was designed to encourage with Britain.

The Biggest Merger Story Yet. Another big merger is talked about for Montreal, and the beauty of this big merger is that there is nothing small about it. It includes the Montreal Light, Heat & Power Company, the Montreal Street Railway Company and the Shawinigan Light & Power Company—the omission of the Grand Trunk and the C.P.R. is probably on oversight. It also includes a six-track subway from Notre Dame de Grace to Maisonneuve, and a tunnel under the St. Lawrence to connect with the railways on the south shore.

Insurance Institute of Montreal. The first meeting, during 1910, of the Insurance Institute of Montreal will be held on Monday evening, January 10, in the Ladies' Ordinary, Windsor Hotel. An address on the all-important topic of Fire Waste will be given by Hon. James V. Barry, Insurance Commissioner of the State of Michigan. Col. J. H. Burland will also address the meeting, his subject being: The Tuberculosis Dispensary an Economic Factor in Life Insurance. The musical numbers will be supplied by Miss Kate Hemming, Miss Anita Allen and Mr. James Warner. Ladies are invited to the meeting, and a large audience is hoped for.

Consul-General Drummond. We extend our hearty congratulations to Mr. George E. Drummond upon his appointment as Consul-General for Denmark. His Danish Majesty could not have made a better, or more popular representative in Canada, and we have no doubt that the appointment will tend to facilitate business relations between the two countries.

Lord Strathcona to the Rescue. With characteristic promptitude and generosity Lord Strathcona has cabled \$25,000 to the Typhoid Emergency Hospital fund and has offered to contribute \$100,000 to a substantial citizens' fund for immediate action to eradicate the causes of the epidemic.