

PLAN TO BRIDGE SWITCH YARDS

F. A. Patrick Makes Practical Suggestion—A. H. Comstock Also Has Good Scheme.

The killing of Solomon Siegel at the Fifth avenue west railroad crossing by a Southern Pacific switch engine yesterday morning has aroused a storm of protest against the folly of maintaining a grade crossing at this much traversed point.

A number of minor accidents have occurred at the same crossing and on several occasions tragedies have been narrowly averted. Not only this, but the employees of the Fifth avenue wholesale houses are frequently made idle at work while waiting for long strings of freight cars to back off the crossing and complaints have been made to the Commercial club by passengers who have missed connections with Omaha trains for the same reason.

As a result there is a strong sentiment among the lower Fifth avenue wholesalers in favor of a viaduct. The plan was agitated last winter, but nothing was done.

F. A. Patrick yesterday suggested a plan which would do away with the present dangerous and inconvenient grade crossing.

Was Not Unavoidable.

"The killing of Siegel was not unavoidable," said Mr. Patrick, "for the train crew could have stopped their engine had they seen him. However, I do not think the crew is blamable, as they cannot look both ways at once. If an extra man were maintained on the engine as a lookout, as should be done at such a dangerous spot, he could have warned the engineer in time to prevent the tragedy. But we must expect this sort of thing as long as a heavy traffic is maintained over the crossing. The blame for much of the suggestion at the Fifth avenue crossing rests upon James J. Hill. When the Great Northern freight house was removed from Sixth avenue west and the traffic transferred to the Northern Pacific freight house at Fourth avenue, many of the wholesale interests of the city protested, as we knew it would bring all the Great Northern freight across Fifth avenue, but Mr. Hill persisted in his course. The new freight station, however, will do away with this.

There should be a foot viaduct running across the tracks at Fifth avenue, with gates at the grade crossings to bar pedestrians and thus make them take the viaduct.

Then there should be a viaduct for teams and pedestrians built on Third avenue west to Commerce street, with connections to the Lake avenue viaduct, and with an outlet to the Omaha station. This would take care of the wholesale houses' traffic without the necessity of having to cross the tracks and the same would apply to the foot and team traffic from the Omaha station. It would connect the Fifth avenue wholesale district with the main retail section and accomplish a much desired end in this way.

Think the plan is entirely feasible and at a comparatively small cost it would relieve the present situation, which is a constant menace to human life and a great hindrance to business."

A. H. Comstock's Plan.

A. H. Comstock, vice president of the Eubank-Wells Hardware company, stated yesterday that it was a mistake not to bridge the Fifth avenue crossing. He suggested that a foot viaduct be built over the Fifth avenue tracks inside the Union station building. This would still leave the street open for teams and not be so ugly as a foot bridge built outside the sidewalk. Mr. Comstock examined the surroundings and he is positive that his plan is practical.

Whatever plan is to be pursued, there is a strong demand among the wholesalers and pedestrians to have a bridge built over the Fifth avenue crossing at once. The death of Siegel was the main topic of conversation at the Commercial club yesterday noon and everyone discussing the case agreed that steps should be taken to prevent a recurrence of such an accident.

The practice of the crews in the habit of making flying switches across Fifth avenue has called forth a great deal of criticism, as it is one of the most dangerous practices in connection with the handling of cars. Business men in the district and pedestrians have frequently complained about it, but still the train crews persist in it. It is a violation of the law and also of the rules of the roads and the employees alone are responsible for it.