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Watching the Ties and Rails.

PRESERVATION OF TIES

**MATTER HAS BECOME IMPOR-
TANT TO RAILROADS.**

Chemicals Called to Aid in Lengthening the Life of Indispensable Unit of Operation—How the Work is Done.

The tree question is of serious import to the railroads of the country. Our forests have for many years been stripped of their trees at an alarming rate, and as a consequence the price of logs in the rough and lumber, dressed and undressed, has advanced by leaps and bounds. Some of the railroads have endeavored to meet the situation by planting trees along the right of way, but with indifferent success. Many of them have to buy ties from along the lines of other roads, but up to the present time the Baltimore & Ohio has been able to secure a sufficiency along its own route, not however, at anything like the favorable prices which obtained ten or fifteen years ago. Hence the motive in conserving the timber belts by practicing greater economy in the uses thereof, and to preserve by the injection of chemicals that which they are forced to buy.

The annual requirements of the Baltimore & Ohio for renewals alone are 2,500,000 ties, which involve for this one item of track maintenance an expenditure of approximately \$1,500,000 a year for the material delivered at the nearest siding to the woods from which it is cut. The tie par excellence is of white oak, but the red oak family is largely used and the preservation system used at Green Spring, Md., enables the company to employ large quantities of pine, beech, gum, maple, elm and ash. These latter woods have hitherto been considered too fragile and the period of their longevity too brief to warrant employment, especially under heavy traffic. For in grouting ties, matter of frequent removals and replacements, due to early decay, involved an enormous outlay for labor account. Now, however, all of the woods named can be, and are being, successfully and economically used by the Baltimore & Ohio.

The treatment given ties at Green Spring is what is known as the Card process, named after the inventor. The ingredients of the composition in which the wood is saturated are zinc chloride and coal tar creosote. The average quantity absorbed is half a pound of zinc chloride and three pounds of creosote per cubic foot of timber. The cost of treatment is about twenty-five cents a tie, inclusive of labor, composition, depreciation of plant and interest on the investment. The average life of a red oak tie is about eight years, and its initial cost is in the neighborhood of sixty cents. The treated tie costing 85 cents complete will last from fifteen to twenty years.

The Green Spring plant has a capacity of 100,000 treated ties per month, working 24 hours a day. Its principal feature consists of two huge cylindrical retorts, each 132 feet long and seven feet in diameter. They are equipped with heating coils and perforated pipes, and are built of steel plates three-quarters of an inch thick with a working pressure of 175 pounds to the square inch. In these retorts is accomplished the actual work of tie preservation. The ties are loaded on steel tram cars, which are run into the retorts, in the bottom of which are laid permanent tracks of 30-inch gauge. Each retort will contain eight trams bearing 325 ties. When placed and the retorts sealed, the zinc-creosote solution at a temperature of 190 degrees is passed into the cylinders by gravity from two steel tanks with a holding capacity of 68,000 gallons each, through a ten-inch supply pipe.

Centrifugal pumps are then set in motion to keep the solution in a constant state of agitation in order to effect a uniform absorption by proportion of each chemical by the timber. A gauge on the solution tank indicates when the desired amount of absorption has been attained, which is accomplished in about six hours. The solution remaining in the retorts

is then forced back into the supply tank by compressed air and the trams drawn, their places immediately being taken by another train. When the ties have sufficiently cooled (which takes place very quickly), they are transferred from the trams to railroad cars and forwarded to sections on the line where needed.

BUILDING LINES IN ALASKA

Calls for Engineering Skill That Rivals That Displayed by Engineers of Panama Canal.

"When the historian of the ages writes the story of the Panama canal, he will doubtless include that great work among the wonders of the modern world, but I doubt if the building of the canal is greater than the construction of the Alaskan railroads will be," said Col. W. P. Richardson, the "road builder" of Alaska, while on a visit to Washington. "The construction of the Panama canal has been a wonderful work, and the engineers, the sanitary officers, and operators deserve all the credit that can be given them; but after all, the building of the canal was merely a big engineering construction and sanitary undertaking. The men who built the canal knew they had to cut through tons of earth and clean up the country and solve engineering problems as they went along.

"Up in Alaska it is an entirely different undertaking. The mere building of railroads would not be a difficult task, but the construction of the Alaskan railroads involves not only the surveying of lines, the laying of ties, and the building of roadbeds, but it means the development of an unknown country. Alaska is unknown, except superficially. The building of railroads is a big job, but the construction work is only the beginning, and, in my opinion, when the railroads of Alaska have been completed, under government supervision, ownership, or otherwise, the historian will write that the job was a big, if not bigger, than the building of the Panama canal."

Rich Land Unexplored.

Andros island, among the Bahamas, is 90 miles in length and 20 to 40 miles in breadth, and most of its extensive area has never been explored. It is an unbroken wilderness, inhabited solely by about 3,500 negroes. It has great forests, seldom penetrated by white men, of mahogany, mastic, ebony, logwood and cedar; swamps, creeks and bayous teeming with wild fowl, including the flamingo, which is found here in vast numbers. No real effort has been made to exploit its resources. It is said to be the only one of the Bahamas which has running streams of water, and is surrounded by a series of barrier reefs, which provide sheltered waters ideal for yachting. It is a splendid field for the sports man.

Brave Deed of Fireman.

A five-year-old girl had a narrow escape from death on the track of the Houston & Texas Central railroad at Corsicana, Tex. The child was walking along the track of the road directly in front of the switch engine. When discovered by the train men they were within a few feet of the little girl, and the whistle blew and the child seemed not to hear it. The fireman stepped to the foot board, reached around the drawhead, caught the child and threw her from the track and the engineer caught her and lifted her out of danger. When the fireman took hold of the child the engine was within six inches of her.

No Business for Railroad Line.

A remarkable instance of railroad building where no traffic was to be obtained is found in Scotland, in the Paisley and Barrhead line. It was authorized by parliament in 1897 and was finally completed. From the day of its completion to the present not a single train has ever run over the line.

Ornamented Fly Trap.

With an eye to the artistic a Connecticut inventor has patented a fly trap in the form of a vase for artificial flowers, flies being attracted to a liquid poison in its base.

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