

ALASKA'S GREAT COAL PROBLEM.

LOCAL NEED SAID TO BE ACUTE

E. C. Hawkins, Engineer in Charge of the Copper River and Northwestern Railroad, Throws Light Upon an Absurd Situation—Paying \$14 a Ton For Coal When It Can Be Mined in the Territory For \$1.50.

Because Alaskans cannot mine any of their own excellent coal by reason of the conservation order of President Roosevelt they are being forced to make heavy drafts on the timber reserve, according to E. C. Hawkins, engineer in charge of the new Copper River and Northwestern railroad, who has just reached New York to make his annual report to the company.

Mr. Hawkins is the engineer who built the remarkable White Pass and Yukon road, an achievement second only to the one he has now half finished for the Morgan-Guggenheim syndicate. He has some most interesting things to say about the conditions in the northland that have recently been attracting public attention.

"The local need for our own coal is acute," said Mr. Hawkins. "We feel it especially in our road construction, but every one else feels it too. People must keep warm in Alaska, as elsewhere, and it needs much fuel to do it in winter. We pay \$14 a ton for British Columbia soft coal to use on the railroad, and it certainly costs the small consumer no less. Even this has been unobtainable at times, and we recently faced the necessity of putting a large force to work cutting timber for firewood to be used in keeping our five caisson and pier pumps going and running the work engines. At that we found it at times almost impossible to keep steam in our boilers, though the safety of much construction and even of lives depended on it. With an almost inexhaustible store of coal within a few miles of our tracks we should be getting it for about \$1.50 a ton instead of \$14. Certainly without adequate fuel supply the opening of Alaska with railroads is going to be very slow. It cannot be otherwise. And transportation development is the greatest need of that wonderfully rich territory.

The New Copper Region.
"Nevertheless, the Copper River and Northwestern is being forced ahead as rapidly as possible. By the 1st of next July it will have reached the mouth of the Chitina river, 138 miles inland. This means that the great Kotsina-Chitina copper region—probably the richest in the world, but so far almost unexplored—will be easily accessible to miners and prospectors next summer, an event that Alaska is awaiting eagerly. This, practically the opening of a new region for ingress and egress, has hitherto been most difficult. The development of this territory means a large and continuous production of wealth for generations not in one spot, but over a large area.

"The road is now carried to the mouth of the Tlekel river, 102 miles from Cordova, our terminus at tidewater. In this stretch there is only one break—at Mile 49, where the line crosses the Copper river between the two active glaciers, Childs and Miles.

"It has been necessary at this point to build a 1,000 foot bridge of unprecedented strength and construction to resist the ice flows. Just above the bridge is a lakelike widening of the river into which the three mile front of Childs glacier volleys great bergs all summer long. In winter this lake is frozen several feet deep. At the present time we are running trains over the ice on temporary tracks, so that track will be continuous to the end of the line until the spring breakup. The three bridge piers have had a severe test this summer. The ice flow, as can be imagined, is tremendous. The river is deep and swift and the force of the big bergs afloat on it nothing short of terrific. To resist this we have sunk our piers forty to sixty feet to bedrock, building them of solid concrete, re-enforced by heavy steel rails set upright a foot apart in the concrete. The piers are further protected by the heaviest kind of concrete and steel guards, also sunk to bedrock, and are set where there are bars in the river that deflect the biggest of the bergs. They are ninety feet through from end to end.

Bridge Building in Alaska.
"The steel superstructure of the bridge we hope to have in place early next fall, by which time the line will be well on its way eastward up the Chitina to the copper mines. This is to be the first branch of the road completed, and it should be open from the eastern to the southern terminus about one year from now.

"Another branch beginning at Mile 88 of the main line on the Copper river and running about forty-eight miles to the Bering river coal fields is surveyed, and a good deal of the roadbed is built. This branch could be built in a short time and the Alaskan coal made available for our Alaskan road and the people of the territory without further delay.

"Beyond the end of the present length of track at Tlekel the line runs through Woods canyon for twenty miles. This gorge is exceedingly wild, with almost perpendicular sides for considerable stretches. This necessitates almost continuous rock work, and this is about the only kind of construction we are able to continue on the road during the winter. From 600 to 1,500 men will be kept in the canyon all this winter, and as soon as possible to the spring, 2,000 more will be added to the force. Beyond the mouth of the Chitina construction is moderately easy for the Alaskan coast, which presents more and more obstacles to railroad construction than any part of the world I know. At the Chitina, however, the Copper river must be bridged for the third time within a hundred miles."

DESPONDENT MAN BLOWS OUT BRAINS

"If I fail in this attempt, for God's sake give me chloroform and put me out of my misery."
At 10 o'clock this morning, John Christenson, aged 50 years, who for the past year has been employed as a janitor at the Auspland Drug company at 119 North Sixth street, blew off the top of his head with a huge revolver, says the Journal. He committed the deed in the basement of the store and when clerks rushed in to the basement they found the man lying in a pool of blood on the floor with a large bottle of chloroform at his side, with the above note on a tag tied to the neck of the bottle, in one hand, and the smoking gun in the other.

The man had been of a despondent frame of mind for more than a year and had asked time and again that the clerks at the drug store where he had been employed in the last year give him poison. During the past week he had been very depressed over an illness and today he purchased

the gun, with which he committed suicide.

It is believed that the man had about \$2100, and in a will that was found in his room at 390 Gilsan street he left his money to be used by the city to clean up the bawdy houses of Portland.

The following is the note: "I wish to give \$1000 to the party that within one year from date can make the city government of Portland compel houses of ill repute now being run as furnished rooms to have proper signs—verily they are hotbeds of disease."

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