

Trolley Versus Steam Roads.

We made mention some time ago of the fact that the steam roads in Connecticut were waking up to the extent of the travel they are losing through the extensions of the electric roads, and were endeavoring to retain their grasp on this local traffic by an appeal to the legislature. Such a course would appear ridiculous anywhere but in Connecticut, but as it is annually charged that the Consolidated road has for many years owned the legislature and the best portion of the State, such action on their part was not to be wondered at. They claim they are giving the public all the traveling facilities that are necessary, and on the ground of prior construction should be allowed all the benefits accruing therefrom. Their claim that their service is most thoroughly refuted in the falling off of travel immediately upon the inauguration of other means of communication between the flourishing towns within easy reach of each other, and the magnitude of this change of patronage may be gathered from the following figures, which are taken from the report of President J. M. Hall, of the Consolidated, at a recent hearing before the Railroad Committee of the legislature. Mr. Hall reports the falling off of 50 per cent. of the regular traffic between Norwalk and Rowayton, a loss of 80 per cent. between Bridgeport and Southport, 50 per cent. between New Haven and Woodmont, and between New Haven and West Haven a loss of 70 per cent.; between Wallingford and Meriden there is a difference of 30 per cent.; New Haven and Yalesville comes next with a loss of 45 per cent.; between Meriden and Yalesville there is a falling of 90 per cent.; between Waterbury and Naugatuck 65 per cent., and between Southington and Plantsville the electric roads have gathered in all the traffic, as the New Haven road reports

a loss of 100 per cent. This statement, if it shows the situation as it really is, should prove the strongest possible argument in refutation of

the claim that the steam roads are furnishing, as they say they are all the facilities required. The public are not slow to take advantage of improved methods of rapid transit, and these figures prove conclusively that the electric roads are an improvement. While the action of the railroad officials may be perfectly understood in the light of these developments, and while they are undoubtedly justified in doing all they can to retrieve such losses as are here indicated, it would seem that not even the Connecticut Legislature would voluntarily be guilty of throwing obstructions in the way of rapid transit facilities which are so evidently appreciated by the traveling public. The fact that between the towns of Naugatuck and Waterbury the sale of tickets has fallen off at the rate of 7,000 per month ought to demonstrate to their satisfaction that the service of the steam roads was not what it is claimed to be. There is considerable satisfaction to be obtained, on the other hand, by the managers of inter-urban electric roads from the careful perusal of these figures, as it shows conclusively the business that can be built up between New England towns by a satisfactory electric service.

Making Birch Oil.

The farmers of Connecticut have found a profitable side issue to their farming in gathering birch saplings and branches for the birch-oil distilleries that have been established in that State. There are altogether about to brick mills or distilleries in this country, several of which are located in Connecticut, and they have created such a demand for the black or sugar birch that all farmers owning woodlands producing these trees cultivate them for the annual harvest of branches and saplings. Black birch flourishes in many parts of the country, and if properly attended to annual crops of the twigs and young branches can be gathered without injuring the trees. With the farmers of Connecticut it has become a science and a study to gather the crop without injuring the wood permanently.

The branches have to be gathered when bare of foliage, and they must not measure more than two inches in diameter at the utmost to be saleable at the mills. As the young saplings grow rapidly, the farmers can produce crops very easily by protecting the small growths. The manufacturers of birch oil make a big profit, the oil

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