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## The Canadian Engineer.

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### CONTENTS OF THIS NUMBER :

	PAGE		PAGE
American Patents .....	226	Kane-Pennington Motor.....	206-207
Answers to Correspondents .....	219	Kerosene Motors .....	212
Boilers, Steam .....	213	Literary Notes .....	217
Boilers, Facts about .....	209	Manufacturing, Success in .....	197
Breakwater Construction .....	203	Metal Imports.....	218
Cable-making Machinery .....	218	Mining Matters .....	223
Can. Ass'n of Stationary Engineers .....	216	Moto cycles.....	201-206 207-215
Case's Propeller Wheel .....	208	McDaniel Steam Trap.....	218
Cement Testing.....	205	Naval Construction .....	206
Combustion .....	198	Ottawa, Arnprior & Parry Sound Ry .....	226
Concrete Construction.....	201	Ont. Ass'n Stationary Engineers.....	218
Deep Waterways Commission .....	206-214	Patent Review .....	226
Electric Flashes .....	224	Personal .....	225
Feed Water for Boilers .....	213	Railway and Marine.....	221
Grand Trunk Railway.....	213	Sergeant, L. J. ....	213
Hays, Chas M .....	214	Smelting Works at Hamilton .....	214
Hamilton Smelting Works.....	214	Steam Trap, McDaniel's .....	218
Heating Systems, Am. vs. English .....	206	Steam Boilers .....	212
Horseless Vehicles .....	201-206-215	Winnipeg River Dam .....	212
Indicator Device .....	209	Wonderful Power Development .....	207
Industrial Notes.....	219		

For THE CANADIAN ENGINEER.

### SUCCESS OR FAILURE IN MANUFACTURING.

BY G. P. CLAPP, SUPERINTENDENT, PILLOW & HERSEY  
MANUFACTURING CO., MONTREAL.

With an experience of thirty years as superintendent of various manufacturing concerns in the United States and Canada, I think I am entitled to consideration when I say a large percentage of manufacturers and superintendents are sadly deficient in the qualifications necessary for the successful prosecution of manufacturing enterprises. Lack of judgment and a practical knowledge of the business engaged in, is more prevalent than is generally understood. The manufacturer who is at the mercy of an incompetent superintendent, will not usually succeed. Neither can the manager expect to fill his position with any hope of success, if he depends upon his employes for the practical knowledge necessary for the various processes of manufacturing.

Many employers have an idea that the prosperity of the business depends upon screwing down the wages of the men to the last degree of starvation prices. Beyond a certain point this is a suicidal mistake, and the result is found in incompetent operatives, inferior goods, discontented help, and strikes and failure. In my long experience I have always found that it pays better to select steady, reliable men, and pay them wages that will insure long and faithful service. Some employers seem to think all they have to do is to pick up any kind of help, at prices below the market value, and the business must surely pay. A greater fallacy was never indulged in. When taking charge of various establishments, I have found men working at prices from ten to twenty-five per cent. below the established

market rates; inferior, slovenly work, and an output much below the average requirements was the result. In many instances two and three men of this class have been discharged, and one good man put on to do the same amount of work, at a slight advance over the prevailing price of labor, and the consequence has been cheaper and better goods, satisfied help, and prosperity.

Good men are willing to work hard for good pay, and they will usually remain long enough to make themselves as useful as any two ordinary cheap men. Help that is constantly going and coming is the most ruinous of all, and the employer is greatly to blame for this evil, from the fact that men are selected, not for their intelligence, sobriety and knowledge of the work required of them, but because they can be got cheaply. This is a very unwise proceeding, as well as an injustice to deserving labor. Inferior, unworthy men are given the preference, and the manufacturer fails to see the disastrous effect it has upon his business. Men only fit for the most ordinary labor are required to operate complicated machinery, and put in positions where great care and natural ability are absolutely necessary. Then the employer wonders why his business seems to be going to the dogs. In these days of close competition and small profits, steady, intelligent, industrious labor that will turn out the largest quantity of good work on the least expenditure of capital, is necessary for any concern that expects to succeed. And I claim that well-paid competent labor is the most profitable help to employ. Some employers prefer cheap superintendents and foremen. There may be but a few dollars at stake between a capable and an inferior man, but the employer thinks the cheap man is good enough, and hires him with the idea of saving money, but somehow the business don't seem to prosper. Less money is being paid for superintendence, foremen and labor than his neighbors are paying; surely the business should pay, but it don't. What is the secret of the matter? Simply this. The employer hasn't the judgment nor the ability necessary to stand at the head of any manufacturing industry; he has simply mistaken his calling, and should be under the control of some one qualified to manage the business successfully. The percentage of employers of this character is much larger than is generally understood. The manufacturer is not generally in a position to judge the merits of his employes; he has no time to look into the details of the mechanical routine of the work, and trusts entirely to his manager. This is all right, providing the manager is a competent man; but the business must be run on a cheap scale, and the manager is a very cheap man, consequently a cheap quality of goods and a limited output is the result. Much depends upon the judgment and ability of the superintendent. He should be free from prejudice and undue personal pride. The interests of his employers should be his first consideration, and his own convenience should be the last. Some men will discharge the most competent and profitable men on the premises, through prejudice or some fancied slight to their dignity. New men are secured and the company suffers