

ENGINEER'S OFFICE,

MONCTON, N.B., 15th August, 1879.

SIR,—I have the honour to submit my report of the working of the Engineering Department for the year ending 30th June, 1879.

Track.

Of the 714 miles of track on main line and branches, 690 are laid with steel rails, 13 miles of iron still remaining on the Pictou branch, and 11 on the Shediac branch.

On the latter, one mile of the worst old U rails were replaced by the best old T rails in stock.

On the main line and St. John branch, 43 miles of steel rails were connected with iron fish-plates, and the combined fish-plate and scabbard joint.

Standard steel fish-plates have been imported, and the work of replacing the iron plates and scabbards has been in hand for some time, and is now nearly completed.

Sleepers.

309,094 sleepers were renewed against 156,742 the previous year. The greater part of the track was originally laid on spruce sleepers, the average life of which is about five years. In awarding tenders last year, spruce was rated very low, relatively to princes-pine, tamarack and cedar, so that of the 300,000 purchased, only 3,000 were spruce.

By adopting a better quality of wood the renewals will not be nearly so heavy.

Ballasting.

Thirty-six miles of the old portion of the line between Halifax and St. John, have been ballasted at an expenditure of \$54,841.75, so that now the old line is fully equal to any of the new part north of Moncton.

Sidings.

During the past year additional siding accommodation has been provided to the extent of 20,079 feet, or nearly four miles; of these the most important are:—

	Feet.
One at Halifax.....	526
Two at Young Street Halifax.....	1,309
One at Truro Round House.....	660
One between Truro and Valley Stations... ..	605
One at Smelt Brook, Pictou Branch.....	824
One at Londonderry.....	988
Extension No. 3 Siding, Londonderry.....	976
Four at Amherst.....	4,908
One at Fort Lawrence.....	900

Fencing.

All fencing in cleared parts of the line is now, where necessary, being renewed with cedar poles.

The immediate outlay is somewhat greater, but in the end the cedar will undoubtedly prove the more economical. The repairs to snow sheds and fences have been very heavy for the past year, and will be for the next few years.

A large expenditure is being incurred in raising and repairing snow sheds between Truro and Amherst, to meet the requirements of clause passed last Session amending the Railway Act.