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Editor—E. A. JAMES, B.A. Sc.

Business Manager—JAMES J. SALMOND.

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HEAD OFFICE: 62 Church Street, and Court Street, Toronto
TELEPHONE MAIN 7404.

Montreal Office: B 32 Board of Trade Building. T. C. Allum, Business and Editorial Representative. Phone M 2797. L

Winnipeg Office: Room 315, Nanton Building. Phone 8142. G. W. Goodall, Business and Editorial Representative.

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TO OUR READERS.

If you are coming to Toronto, Montreal or Winnipeg and wish to have your mail forwarded the offices of the Canadian Engineer are at your disposal. Have it addressed to our offices and we will take care of it until you call or ask to have it re-directed.

DESPATCHING BY TELEPHONE.

For these many years the effort to install the telephone on railway lines has been unsuccessful. In the earlier days of telephony long distance transmission of sound was unsatisfactory. With the perfecting of the mechanism of the telephone and the introduction of copper conductors long distance messages can be heard distinctly. On the ground of reliability recent experiments prove the telephone the equal of the ordinary telegraph wire with the Morse code. It now remains for the railway operating officials to consider the advantages and disadvantages of the telephone as suitable for their purposes.

Several electric railway lines have used the telephone for train despatching, and with very satisfactory results. On large stretches of construction work the telephone has been used for the handling of construction trains, and as yet the first accident, due to inaccurate telephone despatching, has to be reported. The number of trains passing a given point and the rate of travel on much of this work is as high as the ordinary single track on the main line. The necessity of retaining men at each crossing point and the ease with which men not trained for years in the handling of the key directed successfully the movements of trains was apparent to all who made any study of the question. A month ago the Canadian Pacific installed a telephone system on the line between Montreal and Farnham, Que., and as a piece of mechanism it has worked perfectly.

Not only will the telephone work well, but it will allow of fuller directions and more thorough understanding of the situation by the conductor, operator and despatcher. It will be a comparatively easy matter to secure temporary assistance should the operator, at any point, for any reason fail to report for duty. The superintendent of telegraphs for the C., B. and Q. Railways says:—

“In handling orders the same general methods were observed as with the telegraph, any figures or names of stations occurring in the order being spelled out letter by letter, both in the giving of the order and of all the repetitions, and the name of the conductor on a 31 order is spelt out as well.”

The telephone has the disadvantage that the installation will be much more expensive. This is a serious drawback, but there is another drawback that will be just as difficult to educate railroad men around—that is its want of secrecy. Imagine, if you can, a country station with a sound-proof telephone box. The secrecy that now covers the movements of railway trains, and which is to a large measure desirable, cannot be maintained with a telephone system such as is now in common use. Safety and efficiency is what is required, and whichever system possesses this in the highest degree should be used.

EDITORIAL NOTES.

When the great railways increase their staffs of shop hands it is an encouraging sign, for the roads are barometers of business conditions. The Grand Trunk has resumed “all hands and full time” at its shops in Montreal and St. Thomas, while the C.P.R. at Winnipeg have put their shops on 9½ hours’ time. The