

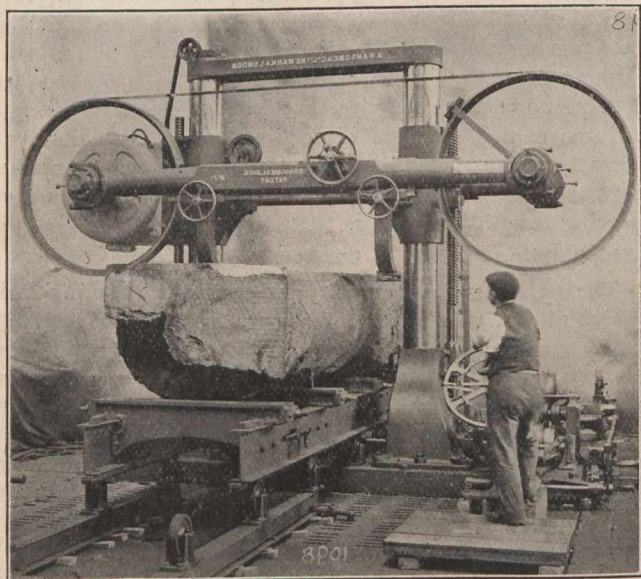
ENGINEERING NEWS FROM GREAT BRITAIN.

(From our Own Correspondent.)

London, August 20th, 1907.

The Wireless Telegraph Convention.

Some indication has leaked out regarding the report of the House of Commons Committee which dealt with the question of whether or no Great Britain should ratify the Radiotelegraphic Convention which was signed in Berlin in the autumn of 1906. It will be remembered that this laid down the principle of free intercommunication between all systems, subject to the right of an signatory power exempting specified stations. A set of regulations were also drawn up under which all stations would have to work. The very strong views expressed by the managing director of the Marconi Company, and also by Mr. Marconi himself, before the committee, made their task a very difficult, not to say delicate one, and it appears that only by a majority of one have they decided to recommend Parliament to ratify the convention. Even so, a protective clause has been put in for the benefit of the Marconi Company, for it is stipulated that in the event of the economy demonstrating that the financial position has been materially effected by the operation of the terms of the

**Electrically Driven Log Band Saw.**

convention, compensation shall be paid on the basis of a three years' computation of the profits derived from British stations.

Electric Power in London.

Since my previous notes on this subject, the electric power supply problem has undergone a complete change, and the way seems to have been cleared once more for private promoters. The bill of the London County Council has been under consideration by a committee of the House of Commons for a week, and the engineering and financial proposals had been discussed by the officials of the council at great length, when, to everybody's surprise, without either asking for further details or hearing the views of the opponents, the chairman of the committee announced that the committee had decided to reject the bill. A draft form of lease was put before the committee, from which it was seen that it was the intention of the County Council to lease the powers of the bill, if they had been obtained, in such a way that a private company would have worked the undertaking upon engineering lines evolved by the Council, and generally under the supervision of the Council. It was an open secret that the promoters of the Administrative County of London and District Electric Power Company were in negotiations with the Council for a lease of the powers of the bill—they themselves all but secured a similar measure in 1905, but the passage of the bill was obstructed in the House by political opponents. The present bill, however, was undoubtedly re-

jected owing to the political feelings of the committee which considered it, for whatever the policy of the Council, it does not appeal to one as quite the thing to place upon the committee a member who had, already in the House, publicly expressed himself as antagonistic to the bill. In this way is London deprived of the advantages of a cheap power supply, which on all sides is admitted as urgent. Next year no doubt companies will submit proposals, and in the present temper of a strong Progressive House of Commons it is quite conceivable that they will all be rejected. In these circumstances it will depend upon whether the leaders of the party can prevail upon the rank and file to allow proposals by companies to go forward. It will thus be seen what a purely political character has been given to an engineering problem of great interest.

England's First Motor Racing Track.

The great Brooklands motor racing track, of which no doubt some notice has already reached Canada, is situated at Weybridge, a few miles out of London. It has a circuit of $3\frac{1}{4}$ miles, and is 100 feet wide. There is said to be seating accommodation for 30,000 people, and standing room for half a million. It has cost \$750,000 to construct. As an engineering feat, there is nothing over here to compare with it—it is said there is nothing comparable in the world—but already it has been demonstrated that there is much about the modern motor car yet to be understood. The first serious use to be made of the track was an attempt to ride 60 miles an hour for 24 hours—the fact that the rider succeeded is immaterial here, but seeing that during the course of the ride the track was torn up in places, it rather shows how little experience there is of this sort of thing, especially when one remembers that the track is concrete 5 inches thick.

Automatic Railway Wagon Couplings.

A committee was appointed some time ago to enquire into railway safety appliances in general, but it has not yet considered the question of automatic couplers. I learn, however, that the chief inspecting officer of railways has recently made an independent investigation into the matter, and has advised that there is good reason to doubt whether the adoption of such appliances would tend appreciably to reduce accidents. The committee above mentioned has been considering the question of "either side" brakes, and I believe the Board of Trade will shortly propose a rule on that subject.

Ferro-Concrete Construction.

In view of the increasing use of ferro-concrete construction for many purposes, a statement by the president of the Local Government Board is of considerable interest. A member of the House of Commons asked for a reason for the Local Government Board requiring loans for such works to be paid off in shorter periods than for ordinary methods of construction, especially in view of the fact that it had been proved both on the Continent and in the United States after many years experience to be durable and fire resisting, and that it was about to be used in the construction of the new General Post Office. From the reply, it appears that the Local Government Board is advised that it is doubtful whether ferro-concrete is a suitable material for permanent constructional works under all conditions, and that there is need for caution in dealing with it; in fact examples of the failure of works so constructed have come under the notice of the Board. The present feeling of the Local Government Board, therefore, is that its use has not always been successful, and the period of short loans now in vogue will be continued.

Railway Rolling Stock Specification.

The Engineering Standards Committee will shortly issue a new specification for railway rolling stock. There have been a number of revisions, of which the following are the principal: In the specification for steel castings the number