No. 514

Jan. 2

A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

By Dr. Charles F. Brooks
of Clark University

SNOW IN RAILROADING

Snow is one of the worst worries of the railroad man. A heavy fall of wet snow may add more than a ton to each car of a train - quite an additional handicap when the right of way is more or less blocked and the rails slippery. Where snowfall is moderate, the tracks may usually be cleared with simple push plows. But for snow several feet deep, such as occasionally occurs in the northern United States and in Canada, and is the rule in the Sierra Nevadas and Cascades, powerful rotary plows are required. To prevent snow from collecting on the tracks, snow fences, hedges, or a row of trees are frequently employed to break the strength of the wind. Drifts then form behind these defences rather than on the tracks. In high mountain regions snow fences are not sufficient protection and snow sheds must be constructed over the track - although they do not improve the view for the summer traveller. The Overland Route of the Southern Pacificihas 32 miles of such snowsheds. Roofs of wooden sheds will usually sustain snow 16 feet deep; even so they sometimes collapse, while fire is another menace to the sheds,which increases the expense of maintenance.

In city terminals snow and ice accumulations are responsible for countless inconveniences, the freezing of switches, signals and turntables, and even the freezing of coal into the bottom of coal cars. To facilitate the unloading of coal hopper cars are sometimes run into steaming sheds to thaw the load.

(TOMORROW: Where Signs Fail)

All rights reserved by Science Service

SCIENCE SERVICE,
B and 21st Sts.,
Washington, D.C.