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VENTILATING RAILWAY TUNNELS.

THE SOUTH COAST COMPLAINTS.

The Secretary for Railways, Mr. H. M'Lachlan, has forwarded to the Premier a report in connection with the scalding of several enginemen in the Helensburgh Tunnel, on the South Coast railway.

The first of the occurrences took place on October 31, when a driver and a fireman were affected by the hot air in the tunnel, and on November 10, when another driver also suffered from the same cause. The only explanation of these cases appears to be that when a strong southerly wind is blowing the northern end of the tunnel may become charged with hot air, while the escape of steam from the engine is blown ahead, and adds to the charging of the air with steam.

The matter has been remedied by running lighter trains through the tunnel, so as to get through more expeditiously. With the quicker and lighter passenger trains there is practically no likelihood of trouble.

"The larger question is opened up of providing some permanent improvement in regard to the ventilation of the tunnels on the South Coast line," Mr. M'Lachlan proceeds.

"The location of the railway renders the working peculiarly difficult in regard to ventilation, and for years past the question has engaged consideration as to whether some mechanical means could not be adopted which would meet the difficulty, but so far no satisfactory scheme has been involved. The risk is a comparatively slight one, as, notwithstanding the enormous number of passengers who have been carried through the tunnel and the tons of goods which have been hauled or 18 years, there has been no accident. No previous cases of scalding have been reported in connection with the Helensburgh Tunnel. "The matter is being looked at in a larger

way by giving consideration to the question of making a deviation or duplication of the line, either by widening the present way, or by constructing a second road outside the tunnels, and using the present tunnelled line on the down Journey, where the grade would be with the load. The question is, however, largely one of cost, but this will be ascertained, and the matter receive mature consideration.

"In regard to the Glenbrook Tunnel, the question of ventilation is also an important one, although it is only, a single line tunnel, and the distance is not so great as on the South Coast line. There is, however, a necessity for the duplication of the Western line on this section, and it is proposed to

carry the second line along an easier grade, and use it for the down journey traffic, the Glenbrook Tunnel line being, used for up trains only, where the grade is favourable

to the load and the tunnel working is not surrounded with any difficulty in regard to ventilation."