

THE NATIONAL CAR SEAL CO.

THE old style was to lock up freight cars with padlocks, but this was expensive and a nuisance, for cars went long distances and into the hands of strangers, the locks became lost and broken, and the sum total of expense due to this was enormous. Then the change was made to a simple strip of tin or wire sealed with a lead seal bearing the seal of the road that loaded the car. Every load for a box car means a car seal to be used, and destroyed when the car is opened.

Charles F. Hilker was a traveling salesman for special railroad supplies and in 1886, in Cincinnati, a friend showed Mr. Hilker a well known type of car seal and explained to him the demand for them, and stated that certain parties had spent a fortune devising machinery to make these seals cheaply and that they had reached the end of their string and the affair could probably be gotten at a bargain, and he suggested that Mr. Hilker get it and start the business. Mr. Hilker did so, securing the entire outfit and patents. He started into the seal business, incorporating it as the National Car Seal Co. It was uphill work, the method was far from satisfactory, and money was lost from the start and Mr. Hilker had every good reason for quitting the business. But he stuck to it for two years and finally succeeded in radically changing the system of manufacture. In 1890 the company established its factory in Hamilton and put out upon the market about fifty different styles of car seals. The car seals of this company's manufacture are used by about one hundred and fifty thousand miles of railroad and the seals are selling at

a rate of twelve million seals per year. The capacity is now being increased to two hundred thousand per day. The business is prosperous and all the seals are being sold that can be made. These seals are made by automatic machinery of the most ingenious character, invented and built on the premises of the company.

Early in 1891 the establishment began the manufacture of drill-presses and emery-grinders for general shop use, and these are selling largely, and it is in contemplation to take up the manufacture of bottler's supplies and other specialties.

As an example of what can be done by sticking to a problem and studying it out, it may be stated that in the car seal shop, two years ago, it cost twenty dollars to do work which now costs one dollar.