

THE NERVE OF
FOLEY
& OTHER RAIL-
ROAD STORIES

by
Frank H.
Spearman



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ILLUSTRATED

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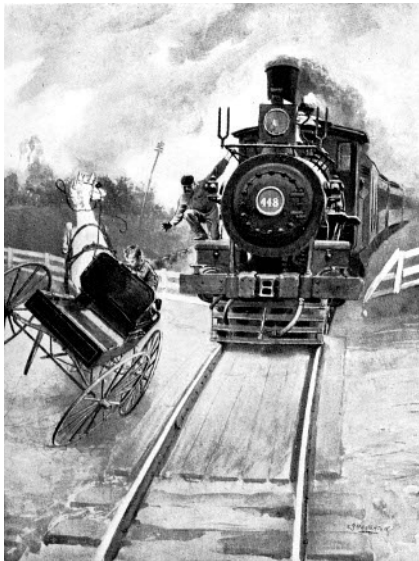
1900

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TO

MY BROTHER



"FOLEY DROPPED DOWN ON

THE STEAM-CHEST AND SWUNG FAR OUT"

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"FOLEY DROPPED DOWN ON THE STEAM-CHEST AND SWUNG FAR OUT"

"THE CAB FOR A PASSING INSTANT ROSE IN THE AIR

"THAT WAS BURNS'S FIRING THAT NIGHT"

"SINCLAIR WAS WHISTLING SHARPLY FOR ORDERS"

The Nerve of Foley

There had been rumors all winter that the engineers were going to strike. Certainly we of the operating department had warning enough. Yet in the railroad life there is always friction in some quarter; the railroad man sleeps like the soldier, with an ear alert—but just the same he sleeps, for with waking comes duty.

Our engineers were good fellows. If they had faults, they were American faults—rashness, a liberality bordering on extravagance, and a headstrong, violent way of reaching conclusions—traits born of ability and self-confidence and developed by prosperity.

One of the best men we had on a locomotive was Andrew Cameron; at the same time he was one of the hardest to manage, because he was young and headstrong. Andy, a big, powerful fellow, ran opposite Felix Kennedy on the Flyer. The fast runs require young men. If you will notice, you will rarely see an old engineer on a fast passenger run; even a young man can stand only a few years of that kind of work. High speed on a locomotive is a question of nerve and endurance—to put it bluntly, a question of flesh and blood.

"You don't think much of this strike, do you, Mr. Reed?" said Andy to me one night.

"Don't think there's going to be any, Andy."

He laughed knowingly.

"What actual grievance have the boys?" I asked.

"The trouble's on the East End," he replied, evasively.

"Is that any reason for calling a thousand men out on this end?"

"If one goes out, they all go."

"Would you go out?"

"Would I? You bet!"

"A man with a home and a wife and a baby boy like yours ought to have more sense."

Getting up to leave, he laughed again confidently. "That's all right. We'll bring you fellows to terms."

"Maybe," I retorted, as he closed the door. But I hadn't the slightest idea they would begin the attempt that night. I was at home and sound asleep when the caller tapped on my window. I threw up the sash; it was pouring rain and dark as a pocket.

"What is it, Barney? A wreck?" I exclaimed.

"Worse than that. Everything's tied up."

"What do you mean?"

"The engineers have struck."

"Struck? What time is it?"

"Half-past three. They went out at three o'clock." Throwing on my clothes, I floundered behind Barney's lantern to the depot. The superintendent was already in his office talking to the master-mechanic.

Bulletins came in every few minutes from various points announcing

trains tied up. Before long we began to hear from the East End. Chicago reported all engineers out; Omaha wired, no trains moving. When the sun rose that morning our entire system, extending through seven States and Territories, was absolutely paralyzed.

It was an astounding situation, but one that must be met. It meant either an ignominious surrender to the engineers or a fight to the death. For our part, we had only to wait for orders. It was just six o'clock when the chief train-dispatcher who was tapping at a key, said:

"Here's something from headquarters."

We crowded close around him. His pen flew across the clip; the message was addressed to all division superintendents. It was short; but at the end of it he wrote a name we rarely saw in our office. It was that of the railroad magnate we knew as "the old man," the president of the system, and his words were few:

"Move the trains."

"Move the trains!" repeated the superintendent. "Yes; but trains can't be moved by pinch-bars nor by main force."

We spent the day arguing with the strikers. They were friendly, but firm. Persuasion, entreaties, threats, we exhausted, and ended just where we began, except that we had lost our tempers. The sun set without the turn of a wheel. The victory of the first day was certainly with the strikers.

Next day it looked pretty blue around the depot. Not a car was moved; the engineers and firemen were a unit. But the wires sung hard all that day and all that night. Just before midnight Chicago wired that No. 1—our big passenger-train, the Denver Flyer—had started out on time, with the superintendent of motive power as engineer and a wiper for fireman. The message came from the second vice-president. He

promised to deliver the train to our division on time the next evening, and he asked, "Can you get it through to Denver?"

We looked at each other. At last all eyes gravitated towards Neighbor, our master-mechanic.

The train-dispatcher was waiting. "What shall I say?" he asked.

The division chief of the motive power was a tremendously big Irishman, with a voice like a fog-horn. Without an instant's hesitation the answer came clear,

"Say 'yes'!"

Every one of us started. It was throwing the gage of battle. Our word had gone out; the division was pledged; the fight was on.

Next evening the strikers, through some mysterious channel, got word that the Flyer was expected. About nine o'clock a crowd of them began to gather round the depot.

It was after one o'clock when No. 1 pulled in and the foreman of the Omaha round-house swung down from the locomotive cab. The strikers clustered around the engine like a swarm of angry bees; but that night, though there was plenty of jeering, there was no actual violence. When they saw Neighbor climb into the cab to take the run west there was a sullen silence.

Next day a committee of strikers, with Andy Cameron, very cavalier, at their head, called on me.

"Mr. Reed," said he, officiously, "we've come to notify you not to run any more trains through here till this strike's settled. The boys won't stand it; that's all." With that he turned on his heel to leave with his following.

"Hold on, Cameron," I replied, raising my hand as I spoke; "that's not

quite all. I suppose you men represent your grievance committee?"

"Yes, sir."

"I happen to represent, in the superintendent's absence, the management of this road. I simply want to say to you, and to your committee, that I take my orders from the president and the general manager—not from you nor anybody you represent. That's all."

Every hour the bitterness increased. We got a few trains through, but we were terribly crippled. As for freight, we made no pretence of moving it. Trainloads of fruit and meat rotted in the yards. The strikers grew more turbulent daily. They beat our new men and crippled our locomotives. Then our troubles with the new men were almost as bad. They burned out our crown sheets; they got mixed up on orders all the time. They ran into open switches and into each other continually, and had us very nearly crazy.

I kept tab on one of the new engineers for a week. He began by backing into a diner so hard that he smashed every dish in the car, and ended by running into a siding a few days later and setting two tanks of oil on fire, that burned up a freight depot. I figured he cost us forty thousand dollars the week he ran. Then he went back to selling windmills.

After this experience I was sitting in my office one evening, when a youngish fellow in a slouch-hat opened the door and stuck his head in.

"What do you want?" I growled.

"Are you Mr. Reed?"

"What do you want?"

"I want to speak to Mr. Reed."

"Well, what is it?"

"Are you Mr. Reed?"

"Confound you, yes! What do you want?"

"Me? I don't want anything. I'm just asking, that's all."

His impudence staggered me so that I took my feet off the desk.

"Heard you were looking for men," he added.

"No," I snapped. "I don't want any men."

"Wouldn't be any show to get on an engine, would there?"

A week earlier I should have risen and fallen on his neck. But there had been others.

"There's a show to get your head broke," I suggested.

"I don't mind that, if I get my time."

"What do you know about running an engine?"

"Run one three years."

"On a threshing-machine?"

"On the Philadelphia and Reading."

"Who sent you in here?"

"Just dropped in."

"Sit down."

I eyed him sharply as he dropped into a chair.

"When did you quit the Philadelphia and Reading?"

"About six months ago."

"Fired?"

"Strike."

I began to get interested. After a few more questions I took him into the superintendent's office. But at the door I thought it well to drop a hint.

"Look here, my friend, if you're a spy you'd better keep out of this. This man would wring your neck as quick as he'd suck an orange. See?"

"Let's tackle him, anyhow," replied the fellow, eying me coolly.

I introduced him to Mr. Lancaster, and left them together. Pretty soon the superintendent came into my office.

"What do you make of him, Reed?" said he.

"What do you make of him?"

Lancaster studied a minute.

"Take him over to the round-house and see what he knows."

I walked over with the new find, chatting warily. When we reached a live engine I told him to look it over. He threw off his coat, picked up a piece of waste, and swung into the cab.

"Run her out to the switch," said I, stepping up myself.

He pinched the throttle, and we steamed slowly out of the house. A minute showed he was at home on an engine.

"Can you handle it?" I asked, as he shut off after backing down to the round-house.

"You use soft coal," he replied, trying the injector. "I'm used to hard.

"This injector is new to me. Guess I can work it, though."

"What did you say your name was?"

"I didn't say."

"What is it?" I asked, curtly.

"Foley."

"Well, Foley, if you have as much sense as you have gall you ought to get along. If you act straight, you'll never want a job again as long as you live. If you don't, you won't want to live very long."

"Got any tobacco?"

"Here, Baxter," said I, turning to the round-house foreman, "this is Foley. Give him a chew, and mark him up to go out on 77 to-night. If he monkeys with anything around the house kill him."

Baxter looked at Foley, and Foley looked at Baxter; and Baxter not getting the tobacco out quick enough, Foley reminded him he was waiting.

We didn't pretend to run freights, but I concluded to try the fellow on one, feeling sure that if he was crooked he would ditch it and skip.

So Foley ran a long string of empties and a car or two of rotten oranges down to Harvard Junction that night, with one of the dispatchers for pilot. Under my orders they had a train made up at the junction for him to bring back to McCloud. They had picked up all the strays in the yards, including half a dozen cars of meat that the local board of health had condemned after it had laid out in the sun for two weeks, and a car of butter we had been shifting around ever since the beginning of the strike.

When the strikers saw the stuff coming in next morning behind Foley

they concluded I had gone crazy.

"What do you think of the track, Foley?" said I.

"Fair," he replied, sitting down on my desk. "Stiff hill down there by Zanesville."

"Any trouble to climb it?" I asked, for I had purposely given him a heavy train.

"Not with that car of butter. If you hold that butter another week it will climb a hill without any engine."

"Can you handle a passenger-train?"

"I guess so."

"I'm going to send you west on No. 1 to-night."

"Then you'll have to give me a fireman. That guy you sent out last night is a lightning-rod-peddler. The dispatcher threw most of the coal."

"I'll go with you myself, Foley. I can give you steam. Can you stand it to double back to-night?"

"I can stand it if you can."

When I walked into the round-house in the evening, with a pair of overalls on, Foley was in the cab getting ready for the run.

Neighbor brought the Flyer in from the East. As soon as he had uncoupled and got out of the way we backed down with the 448. It was the best engine we had left, and, luckily for my back, an easy steamer. Just as we coupled to the mail-car a crowd of strikers swarmed out of the dusk. They were in an ugly mood, and when Andy Cameron and Bat Nicholson sprang up into the cab I saw we were in for trouble.

"Look here, partner," exclaimed Cameron, laying a heavy hand on Foley's shoulder; "you don't want to take this train out, do you? You wouldn't beat honest working-men out of a job?"

"I'm not beating anybody out of a job. If you want to take out this train, take it out. If you don't, get out of this cab."

Cameron was nonplussed. Nicholson, a surly brute, raised his fist menacingly.

"See here, boss," he growled, "we won't stand no scabs on this line."

"Get out of this cab."

"I'll promise you you'll never get out of it alive, my buck, if you ever get into it again," cried Cameron, swinging down. Nicholson followed, muttering angrily. I hoped we were out of the scrape, but, to my consternation, Foley, picking up his oil-can, got right down behind them, and began filling his cups without the least attention to anybody.

Nicholson sprang on him like a tiger. The onslaught was so sudden that they had him under their feet in a minute. I jumped down, and Ben Buckley, the conductor, came running up. Between us we gave the little fellow a life. He squirmed out like a cat, and backed instantly up against the tender.

"One at a time, and come on," he cried, hotly. "If it's ten to one, and on a man's back at that, we'll do it different." With a quick, peculiar movement of his arm he drew a pistol, and, pointing it squarely at Cameron, cried, "Get back!"

I caught a flash of his eye through the blood that streamed down his face. I wouldn't have given a switch-key for the life of the man who crowded him at that minute. But just then Lancaster came up, and before the crowd realized it we had Foley, protesting angrily, back in the cab again.

"For Heaven's sake, pull out of this before there's bloodshed, Foley," I cried; and, nodding to Buckley, Foley opened the choker.

It was a night run and a new track to him. I tried to fire and pilot both, but after Foley suggested once or twice that if I would tend to the coal he would tend to the curves I let him find them—and he found them all. I thought, before we got to Athens. He took big chances in his running, but there was a superb confidence in his bursts of speed which marked the fast runner and the experienced one.

At Athens we had barely two hours to rest before doubling back. I was never tired in my life till I struck the pillow that night, but before I got it warm the caller routed me out again. The East-bound Flyer was on time, or nearly so, and when I got into the cab for the run back, Foley was just coupling on.

"Did you get a nap?" I asked, as we pulled out.

"No; we slipped an eccentric coming up, and I've been under the engine ever since. Say, she's a bird, isn't she? She's all right. I couldn't run her coming up; but I've touched up her valve motion a bit, and I'll get action on her as soon as it's daylight."

"Don't mind getting action on my account, Foley; I'm shy on life insurance."

He laughed.

"You're safe with me. I never killed man, woman, or child in my life. When I do, I quit the cab. Give her plenty of diamonds, if you please," he added, letting her out full.

He gave me the ride of my life; but I hated to show scare, he was so coolly audacious himself. We had but one stop—for water—and after that all down grade. We bowled along as easy as ninepins, but the pace was a hair-raiser. After we passed Arickaree we never touched

a thing but the high joints. The long, heavy train behind us flew round the bluffs once in a while like the tail of a very capricious kite; yet somehow—and that's an engineer's magic—she always lit on the steel.

Day broke ahead, and between breaths I caught the glory of a sunrise on the plains from a locomotive-cab window. When the smoke of the McCloud shops stained the horizon, remembering the ugly threats of the strikers, I left my seat to speak to Foley.

"I think you'd better swing off when you slow up for the yards and cut across to the round-house," I cried, getting close to his ear, for we were on terrific speed. He looked at me inquiringly. "In that way you won't run into Cameron and his crowd at the depot," I added. "I can stop her all right."

He didn't take his eyes off the track. "I'll take the train to the platform," said he.

"Isn't that a crossing cut ahead?" he added, suddenly, as we swung round a fill west of town.

"Yes; and a bad one."

He reached for the whistle and gave the long, warning screams. I set the bell-ringer and stooped to open the furnace door to cool the fire, when—chug!

I flew up against the water-gauges like a coupling-pin. The monster engine reared right up on her head. Scrambling to my feet, I saw the new man clutching the air-lever with both hands, and every wheel on the train was screeching. I jumped to his side and looked over his shoulder. On the crossing just ahead a big white horse, dragging a buggy, plunged and reared frantically. Standing on the buggy seat a baby boy clung bewildered to the lazyback; not another soul in sight. All at once the horse swerved sharply back; the buggy lurched half

over; the lines seemed to be caught around one wheel. The little fellow clung on; but the crazy horse, instead of running, began a hornpipe right between the deadly rails.

I looked at Foley in despair. From the monstrous quivering leaps of the great engine I knew the drivers were in the clutch of the mighty air-brake; but the resistless momentum of the train was none the less sweeping us down at deadly speed on the baby. Between the two tremendous forces the locomotive shivered like a gigantic beast. I shrank back in horror; but the little man at the throttle, throwing the last ounce of air on the burning wheels, leaped from his box with a face transfigured.

"Take her!" he cried, and, never shifting his eyes from the cut, he shot through his open window and darted like a cat along the running-board to the front.

Not a hundred feet separated us from the crossing. I could see the baby's curls blowing in the wind. The horse suddenly leaped from across the track to the side of it; that left the buggy quartering with the rails, but not twelve inches clear. The way the wheels were cramped a single step ahead would throw the hind wheels into the train; a step backward would shove the front wheels into it. It was appalling.

Foley, clinging with one hand to a headlight bracket, dropped down on the steam-chest and swung far out. As the cow-catcher shot past, Foley's long arm dipped into the buggy like the sweep of a connecting-rod, and caught the boy by the breeches. The impetus of our speed threw the child high in the air, but Foley's grip was on the little overalls, and as the youngster bounded back he caught it close. I saw the horse give a leap. It sent the hind wheels into the corner of the baggage-car. There was a crash like the report of a hundred rifles, and the buggy flew in the air. The big horse was thrown fifty feet; but Foley, with a great light in his eyes and the baby boy in his arm, crawled laughing into the cab.

Thinking he would take the engine again, I tried to take the baby. Take it? Well, I think not!

"Hi! there, buster!" shouted the little engineer, wildly; "that's a corking pair of breeches on you, son. I caught the kid right by the seat of the pants," he called over to me, laughing hysterically. "Heavens! little man, I wouldn't 've struck you for all the gold in Alaska. I've got a chunk of a boy in Reading as much like him as a twin brother. What were you doing all alone in that buggy? Whose kid do you suppose it is? What's your name, son?"

At his question I looked at the child again—and I started. I had certainly seen him before; and, had I not, his father's features were too well stamped on the childish face for me to be mistaken.

"Foley," I cried, all amaze, "that's Cameron's boy—little Andy!"

He tossed the baby the higher; he looked the happier; he shouted the louder.

"The deuce it is! Well, son, I'm mighty glad of it." And I certainly was glad.

In fact, mighty glad, as Foley expressed it, when we pulled up at the depot, and I saw Andy Cameron with a wicked look pushing to the front through the threatening crowd. With an ugly growl he made for Foley.

"I've got business with you—you—"

"I've got a little with you, son," retorted Foley, stepping leisurely down from the cab. "I struck a buggy back here at the first cut, and I hear it was yours." Cameron's eyes began to bulge. "I guess the outfit's damaged some—all but the boy. Here, kid," he added, turning for me to hand him the child, "here's your dad."

The instant the youngster caught sight of his parent he set up a yell. Foley, laughing, passed him into his astonished father's arms before the latter could say a word. Just then a boy, running and squeezing through the crowd, cried to Cameron that his horse had run away from the house with the baby in the buggy, and that Mrs. Cameron was having a fit.

Cameron stood like one daft—and the boy catching sight of the baby that instant panted and stared in an idiotic state.

"Andy," said I, getting down and laying a hand on his shoulder, "if these fellows want to kill this man, let them do it alone—you'd better keep out. Only this minute he has saved your boy's life."

The sweat stood out on the big engineer's forehead like dew. I told the story. Cameron tried to speak; but he tried again and again before he could find his voice.

"Mate," he stammered, "you've been through a strike yourself—you know what it means, don't you? But if you've got a baby—" he gripped the boy tighter to his shoulder.

"I have, partner; three of 'em."

"Then you know what this means," said Andy, huskily, putting out his hand to Foley. He gripped the little man's fist hard, and, turning, walked away through the crowd.

Somehow it put a damper on the boys. Bat Nicholson was about the only man left who looked as if he wanted to eat somebody; and Foley, slinging his blouse over his shoulder, walked up to Bat and tapped him on the shoulder.

"Stranger," said he, gently, "could you oblige me with a chew of tobacco?"

Bat glared at him an instant; but Foley's nerve won.

Flushing a bit, Bat stuck his hand into his pocket; took it out; felt hurriedly in the other pocket, and, with some confusion, acknowledged he was short. Felix Kennedy intervened with a slab, and the three men fell at once to talking about the accident.

A long time afterwards some of the striking engineers were taken back, but none of those who had been guilty of actual violence. This barred Andy Cameron, who, though not worse than many others, had been less prudent; and while we all felt sorry for him after the other boys had gone to work, Lancaster repeatedly and positively refused to reinstate him.

Several times, though, I saw Foley and Cameron in confab, and one day up came Foley to the superintendent's office, leading little Andy, in his overalls, by the hand. They went into Lancaster's office together, and the door was shut a long time.

When they came out little Andy had a piece of paper in his hand.

"Hang on to it, son," cautioned Foley; "but you can show it to Mr. Reed if you want to."

The youngster handed me the paper. It was an order directing Andrew Cameron to report to the master-mechanic for service in the morning.

I happened over at the round-house one day nearly a year later, when Foley was showing Cameron a new engine, just in from the East. The two men were become great cronies; that day they fell to talking over the strike.

"There was never but one thing I really laid up against this man," said

Cameron to me.

"What's that?" asked Foley.

"Why, the way you shoved that pistol into my face the first night you took out No. 1."

"I never shoved any pistol into your face." So saying, he stuck his hand into his pocket with the identical motion he used that night of the strike, and levelled at Andy, just as he had done then—a plug of tobacco. "That's all I ever pulled on you, son; I never carried a pistol in my life."

Cameron looked at him, then he turned to me, with a tired expression:

"I've seen a good many men, with a good many kinds of nerve, but I'll be splintered if I ever saw any one man with all kinds of nerve till I struck Foley."

Second Seventy-Seven

It is a bad grade yet. But before the new work was done on the river division, Beverly Hill was a terror to trainmen.

On rainy Sundays old switchmen in the Zanesville yards still tell in their shanties of the night the Blackwood bridge went out and Cameron's stock-train got away on the hill, with the Denver flyer caught at the foot like a rat in a trap.

Ben Buckley was only a big boy then, braking on freights; I was dispatching under Alex Campbell on the West End. Ben was a tall, loose-jointed fellow, but gentle as a kitten; legs as long as pinch-bars, yet none too long, running for the Beverly switch that night. His great chum in those days was Andy Cameron. Andy was the youngest engineer on the line. The first time I ever saw them together, Andy, short and chubby as a duck, was dancing around, half dressed, on the roof of the bath-house, trying to get away from Ben, who had the fire-hose below, playing on him with a two-inch stream of ice-water. They were up to some sort of a prank all the time.

June was usually a rush month with us. From the coast we caught the new crop Japan teas and the fall importations of China silks. California still sent her fruits, and Colorado was beginning cattle shipments. From Wyoming came sheep, and from Oregon steers; and all these not merely in car-loads, but in solid trains. At times we were swamped. The overland traffic alone was enough to keep us busy; on top of it came a great movement of grain from Nebraska that

summer, and to crown our troubles a rate war sprang up. Every man, woman, and child east of the Mississippi appeared to have but one object in life—that was to get to California, and to go over our road. The passenger traffic burdened our resources to the last degree.

I was putting on new men every day then. We start them at braking on freights; usually they work for years at that before they get a train. But when a train-dispatcher is short on crews he must have them, and can only press the best material within reach. Ben Buckley had not been braking three months when I called him up one day and asked him if he wanted a train.

"Yes, sir, I'd like one first rate. But you know I haven't been braking very long, Mr. Reed," said he, frankly.

"How long have you been in the train service?"

I spoke brusquely, though I knew, without even looking at my service-card just how long it was.

"Three months, Mr. Reed."

It was right to a day.

"I'll probably have to send you out on 77 this afternoon." I saw him stiffen like a ramrod. "You know we're pretty short," I continued.

"Yes, sir."

"But do you know enough to keep your head on your shoulders and your train on your orders?"

Ben laughed a little. "I think I do. Will there be two sections to-day?"

"They're loading eighteen cars of stock at Ogalalla; if we get any hogs off the Beaver there will be two big sections. I shall mark you up for the first one, anyway, and send you out right behind the flyer. Get your

badge and your punch from Carpenter—and whatever you do, Buckley, don't get rattled."

"No, sir; thank you, Mr. Reed."

But his "thank you" was so pleasant I couldn't altogether ignore it; I compromised with a cough. Perfect courtesy, even in the hands of the awkwardest boy that ever wore his trousers short, is a surprisingly handy thing to disarm gruff people with. Ben was undeniably awkward; his legs were too long, and his trousers decidedly out of touch with his feet; but I turned away with the conviction that in spite of his gawkiness there was something to the boy. That night proved it.

When the flyer pulled in from the West in the afternoon it carried two extra sleepers. In all, eight Pullmans, and every one of them loaded to the ventilators. While the train was changing engines and crews, the excursionists swarmed out of the hot cars to walk up and down the platform. They were from New York, and had a band with them—as jolly a crowd as we ever hauled—and I noticed many boys and girls sprinkled among the grown folks.

As the heavy train pulled slowly out the band played, the women waved handkerchiefs, and the boys shouted themselves hoarse—it was like a holiday, everybody seemed so happy. All I hoped, as I saw the smoke of the engine turn to dust on the horizon, was that I could get them over my division and their lives safely off my hands. For a week we had had heavy rains, and the bridges and track gave us worry.

Half an hour after the flyer left, 77, the fast stock-freight, wound like a great snake around the bluff, after it. Ben Buckley, tall and straight as a pine, stood on the caboose. It was his first train, and he looked as if he felt it.

In the evening I got reports of heavy rains east of us, and after 77

reported "out" of Turner Junction and pulled over the divide towards Beverly, it was storming hard all along the line. By the time they reached the hill Ben had his men out setting brakes—tough work on that kind of a night; but when the big engine struck the bluff the heavy train was well in hand, and it rolled down the long grade as gently as a curtain.

Ben was none too careful, for half-way down the hill they exploded torpedoes. Through the driving storm the tail-lights of the flyer were presently seen. As they pulled carefully ahead, Ben made his way through the mud and rain to the head end and found the passenger-train stalled. Just before them was Blackwood Creek, bank full, and the bridge swinging over the swollen stream like a grape-vine.

At the foot of Beverly Hill there is a siding—a long siding, once used as a sort of cut-off to the upper Zanesville yards. This side track parallels the main track for half a mile, and on this siding Ben, as soon as he saw the situation, drew in with his train so that it lay beside the passenger-train and left the main line clear behind. It then became his duty to guard the track to the rear, where the second section of the stock-train would soon be due.

It was pouring rain and as dark as a pocket. He started his hind-end brakeman back on the run with red lights and torpedoes to warn the second section well up the hill. Then walking across from his caboose, he got under the lee of the hind Pullman sleeper to watch for the expected headlight.

The storm increased in violence. It was not the rain driving in torrents, not the lightning blazing, nor the deafening crashes of thunder, that worried him, but the wind—it blew a gale. In the blare of the lightning he could see the oaks which crowned the bluffs whip like willows in the storm. It swept quartering down the Beverly cut as if it would tear the ties from under the steel. Suddenly he saw, far up in the black sky, a star blazing; it was the headlight of Second Seventy-Seven.

A whistle cut the wind; then another. It was the signal for brakes; the second section was coming down the steep grade. He wondered how far back his man had got with the bombs. Even as he wondered he saw a yellow flash below the headlight; it was the first torpedo. The second section was already well down the top of the hill. Could they hold it to the bottom?

Like an answer came shorter and sharper the whistle for brakes. Ben thought he knew who was on that engine; thought he knew that whistle—for engineers whistle as differently as they talk. He still hoped and believed—knowing who was on the engine—that the brakes would hold the heavy load; but he feared—

A man running up in the rain passed him. Ben shouted and held up his lantern; it was his head brakeman.

"Who's pulling Second Seventy-Seven?" he cried.

"Andy Cameron."

"How many air cars has he got?"

"Six or eight," shouted Ben. "It's the wind, Daley—the wind. Andy can hold her if anybody can. But the wind; did you ever see such a blow?"

Even while he spoke the cry for brakes came a third time on the storm.

A frightened Pullman porter opened the rear door of the sleeper. Five hundred people lay in the excursion train, unconscious of this avalanche rolling down upon them.

The conductor of the flyer ran up to Ben in a panic.

"Buckley, they'll telescope us."

"Can you pull ahead any?"

"The bridge is out."

"Get out your passengers," said Ben's brakeman.

"There's no time," cried the passenger conductor, wildly, running off. He was panic-stricken. The porter tried to speak. He took hold of the brakeman's arm, but his voice died in his throat; fear paralyzed him. Down the wind came Cameron's whistle clamoring now in alarm. It meant the worst, and Ben knew it. The stock-train was running away.

There were plenty of things to do if there was only time; but there was hardly time to think. The passenger crew were running about like men distracted, trying to get the sleeping travellers out. Ben knew they could not possibly reach a tenth of them. In the thought of what it meant, an inspiration came like a flash.

He seized his brakeman by the shoulder. For two weeks the man carried the marks of his hand.

"Daley!" he cried, in a voice like a pistol crack, "get those two stockmen out of our caboose. Quick, man! I'm going to throw Cameron into the cattle."

It was a chance—single, desperate, but yet a chance—the only chance that offered to save the helpless passengers in his charge.

If he could reach the siding switch ahead of the runaway train, he could throw the deadly catapult on the siding and into his own train, and so save the unconscious travellers. Before the words were out of his mouth he started up the track at topmost speed.

The angry wind staggered him. It blew out his lantern, but he flung it away, for he could throw the switch in the dark. A sharp gust tore half his rain-coat from his back; ripping off the rest, he ran on. When the wind took his breath he turned his back and fought for another. Blinding sheets of rain poured on him; water streaming down the

track caught his feet; a slivered tie tripped him, and, falling headlong, the sharp ballast cut his wrists and knees like broken glass. In desperate haste he dashed ahead again; the headlight loomed before him like a mountain of flame. There was light enough now through the sheets of rain that swept down on him, and there ahead, the train almost on it, was the switch.

Could he make it?

A cry from the sleeping children rose in his heart. Another breath, an instant floundering, a slipping leap, and he had it. He pushed the key into the lock, threw the switch and snapped it, and, to make deadly sure, braced himself against the target-rod. Then he looked.

No whistling now; it was past that. He knew the fireman would have jumped. Cameron too? No, not Andy, not if the pit yawned in front of his pilot.

He saw streams of fire flying from many wheels—he felt the glare of a dazzling light—and with a rattling crash the ponies shot into the switch. The bar in his hands rattled as if it would jump from the socket, and, lurching frightfully, the monster took the siding. A flare of lightning lit the cab as it shot past, and he saw Cameron leaning from the cab window, with face of stone, his eyes riveted on the gigantic drivers that threw a sheet of fire from the sanded rails.

"Jump!" screamed Ben, useless as he knew it was. What voice could live in that hell of noise? What man escape from that cab now?

One, two, three, four cars pounded over the split rails in half as many seconds. Ben, running dizzily for life to the right, heard above the roar of the storm and screech of the sliding wheels a ripping, tearing crash, the harsh scrape of escaping steam, the hoarse cries of the wounded cattle. And through the dreadful dark and the fury of the babel the wind howled in a gale and the heavens poured a flood.

Trembling from excitement and exhaustion, Ben staggered down the main track. A man with a lantern ran against him; it was the brakeman who had been back with the torpedoes; he was crying hysterically.

They stumbled over a body. Seizing the lantern, Ben turned the prostrate man over and wiped the mud from his face. Then he held the lantern close, and gave a great cry. It was Andy Cameron—unconscious, true, but soon very much alive, and no worse than badly bruised. How the good God who watches over plucky engineers had thrown him out from the horrible wreckage only He knew. But there Andy lay; and with a lighter heart Ben headed a wrecking crew to begin the task of searching for any who might by fatal chance have been caught in the crash.

And while the trainmen of the freights worked at the wreck the passenger-train was backed slowly—so slowly and so smoothly—up over the switch and past, over the hill and past, and so to Turner Junction, and around by Oxford to Zanesville.

When the sun rose the earth glowed in the freshness of its June shower-bath. The flyer, now many miles from Beverly Hill, was speeding in towards Omaha, and mothers waking their little ones in the berths told them how close death had passed while they slept. The little girls did not quite understand it, though they tried very hard, and were very grateful to That Man, whom they never saw and whom they would never see. But the little boys—never mind the little boys—they understood it, to the youngest urchin on the train, and fifty times their papas had to tell them how far Ben ran and how fast to save their lives. And one little boy—I wish I knew his name—went with his papa to the depot-master at Omaha when the flyer stopped, and gave him his toy watch, and asked him please to give it to That Man who had saved his mamma's life by running so far in the rain, and please to tell him how much obliged he was—if he would be so kind.

So the little toy watch came to our superintendent, and so to me; and

I, sitting at Cameron's bedside, talking the wreck over with Ben, gave it to him; and the big fellow looked as pleased as if it had been a jewelled chronometer; indeed, that was the only medal Ben got.

The truth is we had no gold medals to distribute out on the West End in those days. We gave Ben the best we had, and that was a passenger run. But he is a great fellow among the railroad men. And on stormy nights switchmen in the Zanesville yards, smoking in their shanties, still tell of that night, that storm, and how Ben Buckley threw Second Seventy-Seven at the foot of Beverly Hill.

The Kid Engineer

When the big strike caught us at Zanesville we had one hundred and eighty engineers and firemen on the pay-roll. One hundred and seventy-nine of these men walked out. One fireman—just one—stayed with the company; that was Dad Hamilton.

"Yes," growled Dad, combating the protests of the strikers' committee, "I know it. I belong to your lodge. But I'll tell you now—an' I've told you afore—I ain't goin' to strike on the company so long as Neighbor is master-mechanic on this division. Ain't a-goin' to do it, an' you might as well quit. 'F you jaw here from now till Christmas 'twon't change my mind nar a bit."

And they didn't change it. Through the calm and through the storm—and it stormed hard for a while—Dad Hamilton, whenever we could supply him with an engineer, fired religiously.

No other man in the service could have done it without getting killed; but Dad was old enough to father any man among the strikers. Moreover, he was a giant physically, and eccentric enough to move along through the heat of the crisis indifferent to the abuse of the other men. His gray hairs and his tremendous physical strength saved him from personal violence.

Our master-mechanic, "Neighbor," was another big man—six feet an inch in his stockings, and strong as a draw-bar. Between Neighbor and the old fireman there existed some sort of a bond—a liking, an affinity. Dad Hamilton had fired on our division ten years. There was no promotion for Dad; he could never be an engineer, though only Neighbor knew why. But his job of firing on the river division was sure as long as Neighbor signed the pay-rolls at the round-house.

Hence there was no surprise when the superintendent offered him an engine, just after the strike, that Dad refused to take it.

"I'm a fireman, and Neighbor knows it. I ain't no engineer. I'll make steam for any man you put in the cab with me, but I won't touch a throttle for no man. I laid it down, and I'll never pinch it again—an' no offence t' you, Neighbor, neither."

Thus ended negotiations with Dad on that subject; threats and entreaties were useless. Then, too, in spite of his professed willingness to throw coal for any man we put on his engine, he was continually rowing about the green runners we gave him. From the standpoint of a railroad man they were a tough assortment; for a fellow may be a good painter, or a handy man with a jack-plane, or an expert machinist, even, and yet a failure as an engine-runner.

After we got hold of Foley, Neighbor put him on awhile with Dad, and the grizzled fireman quickly declared that Foley was the only man on the pay-roll who knew how to move a train.

The little chap proved such a remarkable find that I tried hard to get some of his Eastern chums to come out and join him. After a good bit of hustling we did get half a dozen more Reading boys for our new corps of engine-men, but the East-End officials kept all but one of them on their own divisions. That one we got because nobody on the East End wanted him.

"They've crimped the whole bunch, Foley," said I, answering his inquiries. "There's just one fellow reported here—he came in on 5 this morning. Neighbor's had a little talk with him; but he doesn't think much of him. I guess we're out the transportation on that fellow."

"What's his name?" asked Foley. "Is he off the Reading?"

"Claims he is; his name is McNeal—"

"McNeal?" echoed Foley, surprised. "Not Georgie McNeal?"

"I don't know what his first name is; he's nothing but a boy."

"Dark-complexioned fellow?"

"Perhaps you'd call him that; sort of soft-spoken."

"Georgie McNeal, sure's you're born. If you've got him you've got a bird. He ran opposite me between New York and Philadelphia on the limited. I want to see him, right off. If it's Georgie, you're all right."

Foley's talk went a good ways with me any time. When I told Neighbor about it he pricked up his ears. While we were debating, in rushed Foley with the young fellow—the kid—as he called him. Neighbor made another survey of the ground in short order: run a new line, as Foley would have said. The upshot of it was that McNeal was assigned to an engine straightway.

As luck would have it, Neighbor put the boy on the 244 with Dad Hamilton; and Dad proceeded at once to make what Foley termed "a great roar."

"What's the matter?" demanded Neighbor, roughly, when the old fireman complained.

"If you're goin' to pull these trains with boys I guess it's time for me to quit; I'm gettin' pretty old, anyhow."

"What's the matter?" growled Neighbor, still surlier, knowing full well that if the old fellow had a good reason he would have blurted it out at the start.

"Nothin's the matter; only I'd like my time."

"You won't get it," said Neighbor, roughly. "Go back on your run. If McNeal don't behave, report him to me, and he'll get his time."

It was a favorite trick of Neighbor's. Whenever the old fireman got to "bucking" about his engineer, the master-mechanic threatened to discharge the engineer. That settled it; Dad Hamilton wouldn't for the world be the cause of throwing another man out of a job, no matter how little he liked him.

The old fellow went back to work mollified; but it was evident that he and McNeal didn't half get on together. The boy was not much of a talker; yet he did his work well; and Neighbor said, next to Foley, he was the best man we had.

"What's the reason Hamilton and McNeal can't hit it off, Foley?" I asked one night.

"They'll get along all right after a while," predicted Foley. "You know the old man's stubborn as a dun mule, ain't he? The injectors bother Georgie some; they did me. He'll get used to things. But Dad thinks he's green—that's what's the matter. The kid is high-spirited, and seeing the old man's kind of got it in for him he won't ask him anything. Dad's sore about that, too. Georgie won't knuckle to anybody that don't treat him right."

"You'd better tell McNeal to humor the old crank," I suggested; and I believe Foley did so, but it didn't do any good. Sometimes those things have to work themselves out without outside help. In the end this thing did, but in a way none of us looked for.

About a week later Foley came into the office one morning very much excited.

"Did you hear about the boy's getting pounded last night—Georgie McNeal? It's a shame the way these fellows act. Three of the strikers piled on him while he was going into the post-office, and thumped the life out of him. The cowardly hounds, to jump on a man's back that way!"

Foley," said I, "that's the first time they've tackled one of Dad Hamilton's engineers."

"They'd never have done it if they thought there was any danger of Dad's getting after them. They know he doesn't like the boy."

"It's an outrage; but we can't do anything. You know that. Tell McNeal to keep away from the post-office. We'll get his mail for him."

"I told him that this morning. He's in bed, and looks pretty hard. But he won't dodge those fellows. He claims it's a free country," grinned Foley. "But I told him he'd get over that idea if he stuck out this trouble."

It was three days before McNeal was able to report for work, though he received full time just the same. Even then he wasn't fit for duty, but he begged Neighbor for his run until he got it. The strikers were jubilant while the boy was laid up; but just what Dad thought no one could find out. I wanted to tell the old growler what I thought of him, but Foley said it wouldn't do any good, and might do harm, so I held my peace.

One might have thought that the injustice and brutality of the thing would have roused him; but men who have repressed themselves till they are gray-headed don't rise in a hurry to resent a wrong. Dad kept as mute as the Sphinx. When McNeal was ready to go out the old fireman had the 244 shining; but if the pale face of his engineer had any effect on him, he kept it to himself.

As they rattled down the line with a long stock-train that night neither of them referred to the break in their run. Coming back next night the same silence hung over the cab. The only words that passed over the boiler-head were "strickly business," as Dad would say.

At Oxford they were laid out by a Pullman special. It was three o'clock in the morning and raining hard. Under such circumstances an hour

seems all night. At last Dad himself broke the unsupportable silence.

"He'd have waited a good bit longer if he had waited for me to talk," said the boy, telling Foley afterwards.

"Heard you got licked," growled Dad, after tinkering with the fire for the twentieth time.

"I didn't get licked," retorted Georgie; "I got clubbed. I never had a chance to fight."

"These fellows hate to see a boy come out and take a man's job. Can't blame 'em much, neither."

"Whose job did I take?" demanded Georgie, angrily. "Was any one of those cowards that jumped on me in the dark looking for work on this engine?"

There was nothing to say to that. Dad kept still.

"You talk about men," continued the young fellow. "If I am not more of a man than to slug a fellow from behind, the way they slugged me, I'll get off this engine and stay off. If that's what you call men out here I don't want to be a man. I'll go back to Pennsylvania."

"Why didn't you stay there?" growled Dad.

"Why didn't you?"

Without attempting to return the shot, Dad pulled nervously at the chain.

"If I hadn't been fool enough to go out on a strike I might have been running there yet," continued Georgie.

"Ought to have kept away from the post-office," grumbled Dad, after a pause.

"I get a letter twice a week that I think more of than I do of this whole road, and I propose to go to the post-office and get it without asking anybody's permission."

"They'll pound you again."

Georgie looked out into the storm. "Well, why shouldn't they? I've got no friends."

"Got a girl back in Pennsylvania?"

"Yes, I've got a girl there," replied the boy, as the rain tore at the cab window. "I've had a girl there a good while. She's gray-headed and sixty years old—that's my girl—and if she can write letters to me, I can get them out of the post-office without a guardian."

"There she comes," said Dad, as the headlight of the Pullman special shone faint ahead through the mist.

"I'm mighty glad of it," said Georgie, looking at his watch. "Give me steam now, Dad, and I'll get you home in time for a nap before breakfast."

A minute later the special shot over the switch, and the young runner, crowding the pistons a bit, started off the siding. When Dad, looking back for the hind-end brakeman to lock the switch and swing on, called all clear, Georgie pulled her out another notch, and the long train slowly gathered headway up the slippery track.

As the speed increased the young man and the old relapsed into their usual silence. The 244 was always a free steamer, but Georgie put her through her paces without any apology, and it took lots of coal to square the account.

In a few minutes they were pounding along up through the Narrows. The track there follows the high bench between the bluffs, which sheer up on one side, and the river-bed, thirty feet below the grade, on the

other.

It is not an inviting stretch at any time with a big string of gondolas behind. But on a wet night it is the last place on the division where an engineer would want a side-rod to go wrong; and just there and then Georgie's rod went very wrong indeed.

Half-way between centres the big steel bar on his side, dipping then so fast you couldn't have seen it even in daylight, snapped like a stick of licorice. The hind-end ripped up into the cab like the nose of a sword-fish, tearing and smashing with appalling force and fury.

Georgie McNeal's seat burst under him as if a stick of giant-powder had exploded. He was jammed against the cab roof like a link-pin and fell sprawling, while the monster steel flail threshed and tore through the cab with every lightning revolution of the great driver from which it swung.

It was a frightful moment. Anything thought or done must be thought and done at once. It was either to stop that train—and quickly—or to pound along until the 244 jumped the track, and lit in the river, with thirty cars of coal to cover it.

Instantly—so Dad Hamilton afterwards told me—instantly the boy, scrambling to his feet, reached for his throttle—reached for it through a rain of iron blows, and staggered back with his right arm hanging like a broken wing from his shoulder. And back again after it—after the throttle with his left; slipping and creeping carefully this time up the throttle lever until, straining and twisting and dodging, he caught the latch and pushed it tightly home, Dad whistling vigorously the while for brakes.

Relieved of the tremendous head on the cylinder the old engine calmed down enough to let the two men collect themselves. Rapidly as the brakes could do it, the long train was brought up standing, and

Georgie, helped by his fireman, dropped out of the cab, and they set about disconnecting—the engineer with his one arm—the formidable ends of the broken rod.

It was a slow, difficult piece of work to do. In spite of their most active efforts the rain chilled them to the marrow. The train-crew gave them as much help as willing hands could, which wasn't much; but by every man doing something they got things fixed, called in their flagmen just before daybreak, and started home. When the sun rose, Georgie, grim and silent, the throttle in his left hand, was urging the old engine along on a dog-trot across the Blackwood flats; and so, limping in on one side, the kid brought his train into the Zanesville yards, with Dad Hamilton unable to make himself helpful enough, unable to show his appreciation of the skill and the grit that the night had disclosed in the kid engineer.

The hostler waiting in the yard sprang into the cab with amazement on his face, and was just in time to lift a limp boy out of the old fireman's arms and help Dad get him to the ground—for Georgie had fainted.

When the 244 reached the shops a few minutes later they photographed that cab. It was the worst case of rod-smashing we had ever seen; and the West-End shops have caught some pretty tough-looking cabs in their day.

The boy who stopped the cyclone and saved his train and crew lay stretched on the lounge in my office waiting for the company surgeon. And old Dad Hamilton—crabbed, irascible old Dad Hamilton—flew around that boy exactly like an excited old rooster: first bringing ice, and then water, and then hot coffee, and then fanning him with a time-table. It was worth a small smash-up to see it.

The one sweep of the rod which caught Georgie's arm had broken it in two places, and he was off duty three months. But it was a novelty to see that boy walk down to the post-office, and hear the strikers

step up and ask how his arm was; and to see old Dad Hamilton tag around Zanesville after him was refreshing. The kid engineer had won his spurs.

The Sky-Scraper

We stood one Sunday morning in a group watching for her to speed around the Narrows. Many locomotives as I have seen and ridden, a new one is always a wonder to me; chokes me up, even, it means so much. I hear men rave over horses, and marvel at it when I think of the iron horse. I hear them chatter of distance, and my mind turns to the annihilator. I hear them brag of ships, and I think of the ship that ploughs the mountains and rivers and plains. And when they talk of speed—what can I think of but her?

As the new engine rolled into the yards my heart beat quicker. Her lines were too imposing to call strong; they were massive, yet so simple you could draw them, like the needle snout of a collie, to a very point.

Every bearing looked precise, every joint looked supple, as she swept magnificently up and checked herself, panting, in front of us.

Foley was in the cab. He had been east on a lay-off, and so happened to bring in the new monster, wild, from the river shops.

She was built in Pennsylvania, but the fellows on the Missouri end of our line thought nothing could ever safely be put into our hands until they had stopped it *en route* and looked it over.

"How does she run, Foley?" asked Neighbor, gloating silently over the toy.

"Cool as an ice-box," said Foley, swinging down. "She's a regular summer resort. Little stiff on the hills yet."

"We'll take that out of her," mused Neighbor, climbing into the cab to

look her over. "Boys, this is up in a balloon," he added, pushing his big head through the cab-window and peering down at the ninety-inch drivers under him.

"I grew dizzy once or twice looking for the ponies," declared Foley, biting off a piece of tobacco as he hitched at his overalls. "She looms like a sky-scraper. Say, Neighbor, I'm to get her myself, ain't I?" asked Foley, with his usual nerve.

"When McNeal gets through with her, yes," returned Neighbor, gruffly, giving her a thimble of steam and trying the air.

"What!" cried Foley, affecting surprise. "You going to give her to the kid?"

"I am," returned the master-mechanic unfeelingly, and he kept his word.

Georgie McNeal, just reporting for work after the session in his cab with the loose end of a connecting-rod, was invited to take out the Sky-Scraper—488, Class H—as she was listed, and Dad Hamilton of course took the scoop to fire her.

"They get everything good that's going," grumbled Foley.

"They are good people," retorted Neighbor. He also assigned a helper to the old fireman. It was a new thing with us then, a fellow with a slice-bar to tickle the grate, and Dad, of course, kicked. He always kicked. If they had raised his salary he would have kicked. Neighbor wasted no words. He simply sent the helper back to wiping until the old fireman should cry enough.

Very likely you know that a new engine must be regularly broken, as a horse is broken, before it is ready for steady hard work. And as Georgie McNeal was not very strong yet, he was appointed to do the breaking.

For two months it was a picnic. Light runs and easy lay-overs. After the smash at the Narrows, Hamilton had sort of taken the kid engineer under his wing; and it was pretty generally understood that any one who elbowed Georgie McNeal must reckon with his doughty old fireman. So the two used to march up and down street together, as much like chums as a very young engineer and a very old fireman possibly could be. They talked together, walked together, and ate together. Foley was as jealous as a cat of Hamilton, because he had brought Georgie out West, and felt a sort of guardian interest in that quarter himself. Really, anybody would love Georgie McNeal; old Dad Hamilton was proof enough of that.

One evening, just after pay-day, I saw the pair in the post-office lobby getting their checks cashed. Presently the two stepped over to the money-order window; a moment later each came away with a money-order.

"Is that where you leave your wealth, Georgie?" I asked, as he came up to speak to me.

"Part of it goes there every month, Mr. Reed," he smiled. "Checks are running light, too, now—eh, Dad?"

"A young fellow like you ought to be putting money away in the bank," said I.

"Well, you see I have a bank back in Pennsylvania—a bank that is now sixty years old, and getting gray-headed. I haven't sent her much since I've been on the relief, so I'm trying to make up a little now for my old mammie."

"Where does yours go, Dad?" I asked.

"Me?" answered the old man, evasively, "I've got a boy back East; getting to be a big one, too. He's in school. When are you going to give us a passenger run with the Sky-Scraper, Neighbor?" asked

Hamilton, turning to the master-mechanic.

"Soon as we get this wheat, up on the high line, out of the way," replied Neighbor. "We haven't half engines enough to move it, and I get a wire about every six hours to move it faster. Every siding's blocked, clear to Belgrade. How many of those sixty-thousand-pound cars can you take over Beverly Hill with your Sky-Scraper?"

He was asking both men. The engineer looked at his chum.

"I reckon maybe thirty-five or forty," said McNeal. "Eh, Dad?"

"Maybe, son," growled Hamilton; "and break my back doing it?"

"I gave you a helper once and you kicked him off the tender," retorted Neighbor.

"Don't want anybody raking ashes for me—not while I'm drawing full time," Dad frowned.

But the upshot of it was that we put the Sky-Scraper at hauling wheat, and within a week she was doing the work of a double-header.

It was May, and a thousand miles east of us, in Chicago, there was trouble in the wheat-pit on the Board of Trade. You would hardly suspect what queer things that wheat scramble gave rise to, affecting Georgie McNeal and old man Hamilton and a lot of other fellows away out on a railroad division on the Western plains; but this was the way of it:

A man sitting in a little office on La Salle Street wrote a few words on a very ordinary-looking sheet of paper, and touched a button. That brought a colored boy, and he took the paper out to a young man who sat at the eastern end of a private wire.

The next thing we knew, orders began to come in hot from the president's office—the president of the road, if you please—to get

that wheat on the high line into Chicago, and to get it there quickly.

Trainmen, elevator-men, superintendents of motive power, were spurred with special orders and special bulletins. Farmers, startled by the great prices offering, hauled night and day. Every old tub we had in the shops and on the scrap was overhauled and hustled into the service. The division danced with excitement. Every bushel of wheat on it must be in Chicago by the morning of May 31st.

For two weeks we worked everything to the limit; the Sky-Scraper led any two engines on the line. Even Dad Hamilton was glad to cry enough, and take a helper. We doubled them every day, and the way the wheat flew over the line towards the lower end of Lake Michigan was appalling to speculators. It was a battle between two commercial giants—and a battle to the death. It shook not alone the country, it shook the world; but that was nothing to us; our orders were simply to move the wheat. And the wheat moved.

The last week found us pretty well cleaned up; but the high price brought grain out of cellars and wells, the buyers said—at least, it brought all the hoarded wheat, and much of the seed wheat, and the 28th day of the month found fifty cars of wheat still in the Zanesville yards. I was at Harvard working on a time-card when the word came, and behind it a special from the general manager, stating there was a thousand dollars premium in it for the company, besides tariff, if we got that wheat into Chicago by Saturday morning.

The train end of it didn't bother me any; it was the motive power that kept us studying. However, we figured that by running McNeal with the Sky-Scraper back wild we could put all the wheat behind her in one train. As it happened, Neighbor was at Harvard, too.

"Can they ever get over Beverly with fifty, Neighbor?" I asked, doubtfully.

"We'll never know till they try it," growled Neighbor. "There's a thousand for the company if they do, that's all. How'll you run them? Give them plenty of sea-room; they'll have to gallop to make it."

Cool and reckless planning, taking the daring chances, straining the flesh and blood, driving the steel loaded to the snapping-point; that was what it meant. But the company wanted results; wanted the prestige, and the premium, too. To gain them we were expected to stretch our little resources to the uttermost.

I studied a minute, then turned to the dispatcher.

"Tell Norman to send them out as second 4; that gives the right of way over every wheel against them. If they can't make it on that kind of schedule, it isn't in the track."

It was extraordinary business, rather, sending a train of wheat through on a passenger schedule, practically, as the second section of our east-bound flyer; but we took hair-lifting chances on the plains.

It was noon when the orders were flashed. At three o'clock No. 4 was due to leave Zanesville. For three hours I kept the wires busy warning all operators and trainmen, even switch-engines and yard-masters, of the wheat special—second 4.

The Flyer, the first section and regular passenger-train, was checked out of Zanesville on time. Second 4, which meant Georgie McNeal, Dad, the Sky-Scraper, and fifty loads of wheat, reported out at 3.10. While we worked on our time-card, Neighbor, in the dispatcher's office across the hall, figured out that the wheat-train would enrich the company just eleven thousand dollars, tolls and premium. "If it doesn't break in two on Beverly Hill," growled Neighbor, with a qualm.

On the dispatcher's sheet, which is a sort of panorama, I watched the big train whirl past station after station, drawing steadily nearer to us, and doing it, the marvel, on full passenger time. It was a great feat,

and Georgie McNeal, whose nerve and brain were guiding the tremendous load, was breaking records with every mile-stone.

They were due in Harvard at nine o'clock. The first 4, our Flyer, pulled in and out on time, meeting 55, the west-bound overland freight, at the second station east of Harvard—Redbud.

Neighbor and I sat with the dispatchers, up in their office, smoking. The wheat-train was now due from the west, and, looking at my watch, I stepped to the western window. Almost immediately I heard the long peculiarly hollow blast of the Sky-Scraper whistling for the upper yard.

"She's coming," I exclaimed.

The boys crowded to the window; but Neighbor happened to glance to the east.

"What's that coming in from the junction, Bailey?" he exclaimed, turning to the local dispatcher. We looked and saw a headlight in the east.

"That's 55."

"Where do they meet?"

"55 takes the long siding in from the junction"—which was two miles east—"and she ought to be on it right now," added the dispatcher, anxiously, looking over the master-mechanic's shoulder.

Neighbor jumped as if a bullet had struck him. "She'll never take a siding to-night. She's coming down the main track. What's her orders?" he demanded, furiously.

"Meeting orders for first 4 at Redbud, second 4 here, 78 at Glencoe. Great Jupiter!" cried the dispatcher, and his face went sick and scared, "they've forgotten second 4."

"They'll think of her a long time dead," roared the master-mechanic, savagely, jumping to the west window. "Throw your red lights! There's the Sky-Scraper now!"

Her head shot that instant around the coal chutes, less than a mile away, and 55 going dead against her. I stood like one palsied, my eyes glued on the burning eye of the big engine. As she whipped past a street arc-light I caught a glimpse of Georgie McNeal's head out of the cab window. He always rode bare-headed if the night was warm, and I knew it was he; but suddenly, like a flash, his head went in. I knew why as well as if my eyes were his eyes and my thoughts his thoughts. He had seen red signals where he had every right to look for white.

But red signals now—to stop *her*—to pull her flat on her haunches like a bronco? Shake a weather flag at a cyclone!

I saw the fire stream from her drivers; I knew they were churning in the sand; I knew he had twenty air cars behind him sliding. What of it?

Two thousand tons were sweeping forward like an avalanche. What did brains or pluck count for now with 55 dancing along like a school-girl right into the teeth of it?

I don't know how the other men felt. As for me, my breath choked in my throat, my knees shook, and a deadly nausea seized me. Unable to avert the horrible blunder, I saw its hideous results.

Darkness hid the worst of the sight; it was the sound that appalled. Children asleep in sod shanties miles from where the two engines reared in awful shock jumped in their cribs at that crash. 55's little engine barely checked the Sky-Scraper. She split it like a banana. She bucked like a frantic horse, and leaped fearfully ahead. There was a blinding explosion, a sudden awful burst of steam; the windows crashed about our ears, and we were dashed to the wall and floor like

lead-pencils. A baggage-truck, whipped up from the platform below, came through the heavy sash and down on the dispatcher's table like a brickbat, and as we scrambled to our feet a shower of wheat suffocated us. The floor heaved; freight-cars slid into the depot like battering-rams. In the height of the confusion an oil-tank in the yard took fire and threw a yellow glare on the ghastly scene.

I saw men get up and fall again to their knees; I was shivering, and wet with sweat. The stairway was crushed into kindling-wood. I climbed out a back window, down on the roof of the freight platform, and so to the ground. There was a running to and fro, useless and aimless; men were beside themselves. They plunged through wheat up to their knees at every step. All at once, above the frantic hissing of the buried Sky-Scraper and the wild calling of the car tinks, I heard the stentorian tones of Neighbor, mounted on a twisted truck, organizing the men at hand into a wrecking-gang. Soon people began running up the yard to where the Sky-Scraper lay, like another Samson, prostrate in the midst of the destruction it had wrought. Foremost among the excited men, covered with dirt and blood, staggered Dad Hamilton.

"Where's McNeal?" cried Neighbor.

Hamilton pointed to the wreck.

"Why didn't he jump?" yelled Neighbor.

Hamilton pointed at the twisted signal-tower; the red light still burned in it.

"You changed the signals on him," he cried, savagely. "What does it mean? We had rights against everything. What does it mean?" he raved, in a frenzy.

Neighbor answered him never a word; he only put his hand on Dad's shoulder.

"Find him first! Find him!" he repeated, with a strain in his voice I never heard till then; and the two giants hurried away together. When I reached the Sky-Scraper, buried in the thick of the smash, roaring like a volcano, the pair were already into the jam like a brace of ferrets, hunting for the engine crews. It seemed an hour, though it was much less, before they found any one; then they brought out 55's fireman. Neighbor found him. But his back was broken. Back again they wormed through twisted trucks, under splintered beams—in and around and over—choked with heat, blinded by steam, shouting as they groped, listening for word or cry or gasp.

Soon we heard Dad's voice in a different cry—one that meant everything; and the wreckers, turning like beavers through a dozen blind trails, gathered all close to the big fireman. He was under a great piece of the cab where none could follow, and he was crying for a bar. They passed him a bar; other men, careless of life and limb, tried to crawl under and in to him, but he warned them back. Who but a man baked twenty years in an engine cab could stand the steam that poured on him where he lay?

Neighbor, just outside, flashing a light, heard the labored strain of his breathing, saw him getting half up, bend to the bar, and saw the iron give like lead in his hands as he pried mightily.

Neighbor heard, and told me long afterwards, how the old man flung the bar away with an imprecation, and cried for one to help him; for a minute meant a life now—the boy lying pinned under the shattered cab was roasting in a jet of live steam. The master-mechanic crept in.

By signs Dad told him what to do, and then, getting on his knees, crawled straight into the dash of the white jet—crawled into it, and got the cab on his shoulders.

Crouching an instant, the giant muscles of his back set in a tremendous effort. The wreckage snapped and groaned, the knotted

legs slowly and painfully straightened, the cab for a passing instant rose in the air, and in that instant Neighbor dragged Georgie McNeal from out the vise of death, and passed him, like a pinch-bar, to the men waiting next behind. Then Neighbor pulled Dad back, blind now and senseless. When they got the old fireman out he made a pitiful struggle to pull himself together. He tried to stand up, but the sweat broke over him and he sank in a heap at Neighbor's feet.



**"THE CAB FOR A PASSING
INSTANT ROSE IN THE AIR"**

That was the saving of Georgie McNeal, and out there they will still tell you about that lift of Dad Hamilton's.

We put him on the cot at the hospital next to his engineer. Georgie, dreadfully bruised and scalded, came on fast in spite of his hurts. But the doctor said Dad had wrenched a tendon in that frightful effort, and he lay there a very sick and very old man long after the young engineer was up and around telling of his experience.

"When we cleared the chutes I saw white signals, I thought," he said to me at Dad's bedside. "I knew we had the right of way over everything. It was a hustle, anyway, on that schedule, Mr. Reed; you know that; an awful hustle, with our load. I never choked her a notch to run the yards; didn't mean to do it with the Junction grade to climb just ahead of us. But I looked out again, and, by hokey! I thought I'd gone crazy, got color-blind—red signals! Of course I thought I must have been wrong the first time I looked. I choked her, I threw the air, I dumped the gravel. Heavens! she never felt it! I couldn't figure how we were wrong, but there was the red light. I yelled, 'Jump, Dad!' and he yelled, 'Jump, son!' Didn't you, Dad?"

"He jumped; but I wasn't ever going to jump and my engine going full against a red lamp. Not much.

"I kind of dodged down behind the head; when she struck it was biff, and she jumped about twenty feet up straight. She didn't? Well, it seemed like it. Then it was biff, biff, biff, one after another. With that train behind her she'd have gone through Beverly Hill. Did you ever buck snow with a rotary, Mr. Reed? Well, that was about it, even to the rolling and heaving. Dad, want to lie down? Le' me get another pillow behind you. Isn't that better? Poor Musgrave!" he added, speaking of the engineer of 55, who was instantly killed. "He and the fireman both. Hard lines; but I'd rather have it that way, I guess, if I was wrong. Eh, Dad?"

Even after Georgie went to work, Dad lay in the hospital. We knew he would never shovel coal again. It cost him his good back to lift Georgie loose, so the surgeon told us; and I could believe it, for when they got the jacks under the cab next morning, and Neighbor told the wrecking-gang that Hamilton alone had lifted it six inches the night before, on his back, the wrecking-boss fairly snorted at the statement; but Hamilton did, just the same.

"Son," muttered Dad, one night to Georgie, sitting with him, "I want you to write a letter for me."

"Sure."

"I've been sending money to my boy back East," explained Dad, feebly. "I told you he's in school."

"I know, Dad."

"I haven't been able to send any since I've been by, but I'm going to send some when I get my relief. Not so much as I used to send. I want you to kind of explain why."

"What's his first name, Dad, and where does he live?"

"It's a lawyer that looks after him—a man that 'tends to my business back there."

"Well, what's his name?"

"Scaylor—Ephraim Scaylor."

"Scaylor?" echoed Georgie, in amazement.

"Yes. Why, do you know him?"

"Why, that's the man mother and I had so much trouble with. I wouldn't write to that man. He's a rascal, Dad."

"What did he ever do to you and your mother?"

"I'll tell you, Dad; though it's a matter I don't talk about much. My father had trouble back there fifteen or sixteen years ago. He was running an engine, and had a wreck; there were some passengers killed. The dispatcher managed to throw the blame on father, and they indicted him for man-slaughter. He pretty near went crazy, and all of a sudden he disappeared, and we never heard of him from that day to this. But this man Scaylor, mother stuck to it, knew something about where father was; only he always denied it."

Trembling like a leaf, Dad raised up on his elbow. "What's your mother's name, son? What's your name?"

Georgie looked confused. "I'll tell you, Dad; there's nothing to be ashamed of. I was foolish enough, I told you once, to go out on a strike with the engineers down there. I was only a kid, and we were all black-listed. So I used my middle name, McNeal; my full name is George McNeal Sinclair."

The old fireman made a painful effort to sit up, to speak, but he choked. His face contracted, and Georgie rose frightened. With a herculean effort the old man raised himself up and grasped Georgie's hands.

"Son," he gasped to the astonished boy, "don't you know me?"

"Of course I know you, Dad. What's the matter with you? Lie down."

"Boy, I'm your own father. My name is David Hamilton Sinclair. I had the trouble—Georgie." He choked up like a child, and Georgie McNeal went white and scared; then he grasped the gray-haired man in his arms.

When I dropped in an hour later they were talking hysterically. Dad was explaining how he had been sending money to Scaylor every

month, and Georgie was contending that neither he nor his mother had ever seen a cent of it. But one great fact overshadowed all the villany that night: father and son were united and happy, and a message had already gone back to the old home from Georgie to his mother, telling her the good news.

"And that indictment was wiped out long ago against father," said Georgie to me; "but that rascal Scaylor kept writing him for money to fight it with and to pay for my schooling—and this was the kind of schooling I was getting all the time. Wouldn't that kill you?"

I couldn't sleep till I had hunted up Neighbor and told him about it; and next morning we wired transportation back for Mrs. Sinclair to come out on.

Less than a week afterwards a gentle little old woman stepped off the Flyer at Zanesville, and into the arms of Georgie Sinclair. A smart rig was in waiting, to which her son hurried her, and they were driven rapidly to the hospital. When they entered the old fireman's room together the nurse softly closed the door behind them.

But when they sent for Neighbor and me, I suppose we were the two biggest fools in the hospital, trying to look unconscious of all we saw in the faces of the group at Dad's bed.

He never got his old strength back, yet Neighbor fixed him out, for all that. The Sky-Scraper, once our pride, was so badly stove that we gave up hope of restoring her for a passenger run. So Neighbor built her over into a sort of a dub engine for short runs, stubs, and so on; and though Dad had vowed long ago, when unjustly condemned, that he would never more touch a throttle, we got him to take the Sky-Scraper and the Acton run.

And when Georgie, who takes the Flyer every other day, is off duty, he climbs into Dad's cab, shoves the old gentleman aside, and shoots

around the yard in the rejuvenated Sky-Scraper at a hair-raising rate of speed.

After a while the old engine got so full of alkali that Georgie gave her a new name—Soda-Water Sal—and it hangs to her yet. We thought the best of her had gone in the Harvard wreck; but there came a time when Dad and Soda-Water Sal showed us we were very much mistaken.

Soda-Water Sal

When the great engine which we called the Sky-Scraper came out of the Zanesville shops, she was rebuilt from pilot to tender.

Our master-mechanic, Neighbor, had an idea, after her terrific collision, that she could not stand heavy main-line passenger runs, so he put her on the Acton cut-off. It was what railroad men call a jerk-water run, whatever that may be; a little jaunt of ten miles across the divide connecting the northern division with the Denver stem. It was just about like running a trolley, and the run was given to Dad Sinclair, for after that lift at Oxford his back was never strong enough to shovel coal, and he had to take an engine or quit railroading.

Thus it happened that after many years he took the throttle once more and ran over, twice a day, as he does yet, from Acton to Willow Creek.

His boy, Georgie Sinclair, the kid engineer, took the run on the Flyer opposite Foley, just as soon as he got well.

Georgie, who was never happy unless he had eight or ten Pullmans behind him, and the right of way over everything between Omaha and Denver, made great sport of his father's little smoking-car and day-coach behind the big engine.

Foley made sport of the remodelled engine. He used to stand by while the old engineer was oiling and ask him whether he thought she could catch a jack-rabbit. "I mean," Foley would say, "if the rabbit was feeling well."

Dad Sinclair took it all grimly and quietly; he had railroaded too long

to care for anybody's chaff. But one day, after the Sky-Scraper had gotten her flues pretty well chalked up with alkali, Foley insisted that she must be renamed.

"I have the only genuine sky-scraper on the West End now myself," declared Foley. He did have a new class H engine, and she was awe-inspiring, in truth. "I don't propose," he continued, "to have her confused with your old tub any longer, Dad."

Dad, oiling his old tub affectionately, answered never a word.

"She's full of soda, isn't she, father?" asked Georgie, standing by.

"Reckon she is, son."

"Full of water, I suppose?"

"Try to keep her that way, son."

"Sal-soda, isn't it, Dad?"

"Now I can't say. As to that—I can't say."

"We'll call her Sal Soda, Georgie," suggested Foley.

"No," interposed Georgie; "stop a bit. I have it. Not Sal Soda, at all—make it Soda-Water Sal."

Then they laughed uproariously; and in the teeth of Dad Sinclair's protests—for he objected at once and vigorously—the queer name stuck to the engine, and sticks yet.

To have seen the great hulking machine you would never have suspected there could be another story left in her. Yet one there was; a story of the wind. As she stood, too, when old man Sinclair took her on the Acton run, she was the best illustration I have ever seen of the adage that one can never tell from the looks of a frog how far it will jump.

Have you ever felt the wind? Not, I think, unless you have lived on the seas or on the plains. People everywhere think the wind blows; but it really blows only on the ocean and on the prairies.

The summer that Dad took the Acton run, it blew for a month steadily. All of one August—hot, dry, merciless; the despair of the farmer and the terror of trainmen.

It was on an August evening, with the gale still sweeping up from the southwest, that Dad came lumbering into Acton with his little trolley train. He had barely pulled up at the platform to unload his passengers when the station-agent, Morris Reynolds, coatless and hatless, rushed up to the engine ahead of the hostler and sprang into the cab. Reynolds was one of the quietest fellows in the service. To see him without coat or hat didn't count for much in such weather; but to see him sallow with fright and almost speechless was enough to stir even old Dad Sinclair.

It was not Dad's habit to ask questions, but he looked at the man in questioning amazement. Reynolds choked and caught at his breath, as he seized the engineer's arm and pointed down the line.

"Dad," he gasped, "three cars of coal standing over there on the second spur blew loose a few minutes ago."

"Where are they?"

"Where are they? Blown through the switch and down the line, forty miles an hour."

The old man grasped the frightened man by the shoulder. "What do you mean? How long ago? When is 1 due? Talk quick, man! What's the matter with you?"

"Not five minutes ago. No. 1 is due here in less than thirty minutes; they'll go into her sure. Dad," cried Reynolds, all in a fright, "what'll I

do? For Heaven's sake do something. I called up Riverton and tried to catch 1, but she'd passed. I was too late. There'll be a wreck, and I'm booked for the penitentiary. What can I do?"

All the while the station-agent, panic-stricken, rattled on Sinclair was looking at his watch—casting it up—charting it all under his thick, gray, grizzled wool, fast as thought could compass.

No. 1 headed for Acton, and her pace was a hustle every mile of the way; three cars of coal blowing down on her, how fast he dared not think; and through it all he was asking himself what day it was. Thursday? Up! Yes, Georgie, his boy, was on the Flyer No. 1. It was his day up. If they met on a curve—

"Uncouple her!" roared Dad Sinclair, in a giant tone.

"What are you going to do?"

"Burns," thundered Dad to his fireman, "give her steam, and quick, boy! Dump in grease, waste, oil, everything! Are you clear there?" he cried, opening the throttle as he looked back.

The old engine, pulling clear of her coaches, quivered as she gathered herself under the steam. She leaped ahead with a swish. The drivers churned in the sand, bit into it with gritting tires, and forged ahead with a suck and a hiss and a roar. Before Reynolds had fairly gathered his wits, Sinclair, leaving his train on the main track in front of the depot, was clattering over the switch after the runaways. The wind was a terror, and they had too good a start. But the way Soda-Water Sal took the gait when she once felt her feet under her made the wrinkled engineer at her throttle set his mouth with the grimness of a gamester. It meant the runaways—and catch them—or the ditch for Soda-Water Sal; and the throbbing old machine seemed to know it, for her nose hung to the steel like the snout of a pointer.

He was a man of a hundred even then—Burns; but nobody knew it,

then. We hadn't thought much about Burns before. He was a tall, lank Irish boy, with an open face and a morning smile. Dad Sinclair took him on because nobody else would have him. Burns was so green that Foley said you couldn't set his name afire. He would, so Foley said, put out a hot box just by blinking at it.

But every man's turn comes once, and it had come for Burns. It was Dick Burns's chance now to show what manner of stuff was bred in his long Irish bones. It was his task to make the steam—if he could—faster than Dad Sinclair could burn it. What use to grip the throttle and scheme if Burns didn't furnish the power, put the life into her heels as she raced the wind—the merciless, restless gale sweeping over the prairie faster than horse could fly before it?

Working smoothly and swiftly into a dizzy whirl, the monstrous drivers took the steel in leaps and bounds. Dad Sinclair, leaning from the cab window, gloatingly watched their gathering speed, pulled the bar up notch after notch, and fed Burns's fire into the old engine's arteries fast and faster than she could throw it into her steel hoofs.

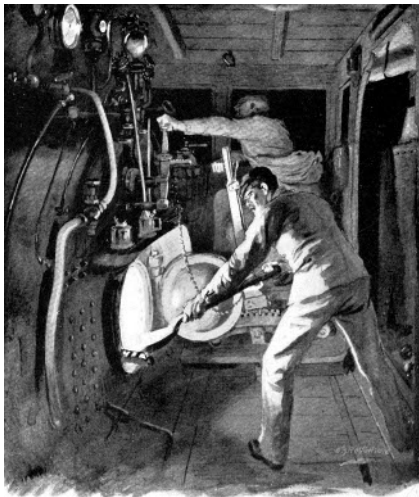
That was the night the West End knew that a greenhorn had cast his chrysalis and stood out a man. Knew that the honor-roll of our frontier division wanted one more name, and that it was big Dick Burns's. Sinclair hung silently desperate to the throttle, his eyes straining into the night ahead, and the face of the long Irish boy, streaked with smut and channelled with sweat, lit every minute with the glare of the furnace as he fed the white-hot blast that leaped and curled and foamed under the crown-sheet of Soda-Water Sal.

There he stooped and sweat and swung, as she slewed and lurched and jerked across the fish-plates. Carefully, nursingly, ceaselessly he pushed the steam-pointer higher, higher, higher on the dial—and that despite the tremendous draughts of Dad's throttle.

Never a glance to the right or the left, to the track or the engineer.

From the coal to the fire, the fire to the water, the water to the gauge, the gauge to the stack, and back again to the coal—that was Burns. Neither eyes nor ears nor muscles for anything but steam.

Such a firing as the West End never saw till that night; such a firing as the old engine never felt in her choking flues till that night; such a firing as Dad Sinclair, king of all West and East End firemen, lifted his hat to—that was Burns's firing that night on Soda-Water Sal; the night she chased the Acton runaways down the line to save Georgie Sinclair and No. 1.



"THAT WAS BURNS'S FIRING THAT NIGHT"

It was a frightful pace—how frightful no one ever knew; neither old man Sinclair nor Dick Burns ever cared. Only, the crew of a freight, side-tracked for the approaching Flyer, saw an engine flying light; knew the hunter and the quarry, for they had seen the runaways shoot by—saw then, a minute after, a star and a streak and a trail of rotten smoke fly down the wind, and she had come and passed and gone.

It was just east of that siding, so Burns and Sinclair always maintained—but it measured ten thousand feet east—that they caught them.

A shout from Dad brought the dripping fireman up standing, and looking ahead he saw in the blaze of their own headlight the string of coalers standing still ahead of them. So it seemed to him, their own speed was so great, and the runaways were almost equalling it. They were making forty miles an hour when they dashed past the paralyzed freight crew.

Without waiting for orders—what orders did such a man need?—without a word, Burns crawled out of his window with a pin, and ran forward on the foot-board, clinging the best he could, as the engine dipped and lurched, climbed down on the cow-catcher, and lifted the pilot-bar to couple. It was a crazy thing to attempt; he was much likelier to get under the pilot than to succeed; yet he tried it.

Then it was that the fine hand of Dad Sinclair came into play. To

temper the speed enough, and just enough; to push her nose just enough, and far enough for Burns to make the draw-bar of the runaway—that was the nicety of the big seamed hands on the throttle and on the air; the very magic of touch which, on a slender bar of steel, could push a hundred tons of flying metal up, and hold it steady in a play of six inches on the teeth of the gale that tore down behind him.

Again and again Burns tried to couple and failed. Sinclair, straining anxiously ahead, caught sight of the headlight of No. 1 rounding O'Fallon's bluffs.

He cried to Burns, and, incredible though it seems, the fireman heard. Above all the infernal din, the tearing of the flanges and the roaring of the wind, Burns heard the cry; it nerved him to a supreme effort. He slipped the eye once more into the draw, and managed to drop his pin. Up went his hand in signal.

Choking the steam, Sinclair threw the brake-shoes flaming against the big drivers. The sand poured on the rails, and with Burns up on the coalers setting brakes, the three great runaways were brought to with a jerk that would have astounded the most reckless scapegraces in the world.

While the plucky fireman crept along the top of the freight-cars to keep from being blown bodily through the air, Sinclair, with every resource that brain and nerve and power could exert, was struggling to overcome the terrible headway of pursuer and pursued, driving now frightfully into the beaming head of No. 1.

With the Johnson bar over and the drivers dancing a gallop backward; with the sand striking fire, and the rails burning under it; with the old Sky-Scraper shivering again in a terrific struggle, and Burns twisting the heads off the brake-rods; with every trick of old Sinclair's cunning, and his boy duplicating every one of them in the

cab of No. 1—still they came together. It was too fearful a momentum to overcome, when minutes mean miles and tons are reckoned by thousands.

They came together; but instead of an appalling wreck—destruction and death—it was only a bump. No. 1 had the speed when they met; and it was a car of coal dumped a bit sudden and a nose on Georgie's engine like a full-back's after a centre rush. The pilot doubled back into the ponies, and the headlight was scoured with nut, pea, and slack; but the stack was hardly bruised.

The minute they struck, Georgie Sinclair, making fast, and, leaping from his cab, ran forward in the dark, panting with rage and excitement. Burns, torch in hand, was himself just jumping down to get forward. His face wore its usual grin, even when Georgie assailed him with a torrent of abuse.

"What do you mean, you red-headed lubber?" he shouted, with much the lungs of his father. "What are you doing switching coal here on the main line?"

In fact, Georgie called the astonished fireman everything he could think of, until his father, who was blundering forward on his side of the engine, hearing the voice, turned, and ran around behind the tender to take a hand himself.

"Mean?" he roared above the blow of his safety. "Mean?" he bellowed in the teeth of the wind. "Mean? Why, you impudent, empty-headed, ungrateful rascal, what do you mean coming around here to abuse a man that's saved you and your train from the scrap?"

And big Dick Burns, standing by with his torch, burst into an Irish laugh, fairly doubled up before the nonplussed boy, and listened with great relish to the excited father and excited son. It was not hard to understand Georgie's amazement and anger at finding Soda-Water

Sal behind three cars of coal half-way between stations on the main line and on his time—and that the fastest time on the division. But what amused Burns most was to see the imperturbable old Dad pitching into his boy with as much spirit as the young man himself showed.

It was because both men were scared out of their wits; scared over their narrow escape from a frightful wreck; from having each killed the other, maybe—the son the father, and the father the son.

For brave men do get scared; don't believe anything else. But between the fright of a coward and the fright of a brave man there is this difference: the coward's scare is apparent before the danger, that of the brave man after it has passed; and Burns laughed with a tremendous mirth, "at th' two o' thim a-jawin'," as he expressed it.

No man on the West End could turn on his pins quicker than Georgie Sinclair, though, if his hastiness misled him. When it all came clear he climbed into the old cab—the cab he himself had once gone against death in—and with stumbling words tried to thank the tall Irishman, who still laughed in the excitement of having won.

And when Neighbor next day, thoughtful and taciturn, heard it all, he very carefully looked Soda-Water Sal all over again.

"Dad," said he, when the boys got through telling it for the last time, "she's a better machine than I thought she was."

"There isn't a better pulling your coaches," maintained Dad Sinclair, stoutly.

"I'll put her on the main line, Dad, and give you the 168 for the cut-off. Hm?"

"The 168 will suit me, Neighbor; any old tub—eh, Foley?" said Dad, turning to the cheeky engineer, who had come up in time to hear most

of the talk. The old fellow had not forgotten Foley's sneer at Soda-Water Sal when he rechristened her. But Foley, too, had changed his mind, and was ready to give in.

"That's quite right, Dad," he acknowledged. "You can get more out of any old tub on the division than the rest of us fellows can get out of a Baldwin consolidated. I mean it, too. It's the best thing I ever heard of. What are you going to do for Burns, Neighbor?" asked Foley, with his usual assurance.

"I was thinking I would give him Soda-Water Sal, and put him on the right side of the cab for a freight run. I reckon he earned it last night."

In a few minutes Foley started off to hunt up Burns.

"See here, Irish," said he, in his off-hand way, "next time you catch a string of runaways just remember to climb up the ladder and set your brakes before you couple; it will save a good deal of wear and tear on the pilot-bar—see? I hear you're going to get a run; don't fall out the window when you get over on the right."

And that's how Burns was made an engineer, and how Soda-Water Sal was rescued from the disgrace of running on the trolley.

The McWilliams Special

It belongs to the Stories That Never Were Told, this of the McWilliams Special. But it happened years ago, and for that matter McWilliams is dead. It wasn't grief that killed him, either; though at one time his grief came uncommonly near killing us.

It is an odd sort of a yarn, too; because one part of it never got to headquarters, and another part of it never got from headquarters.

How, for instance, the mysterious car was ever started from Chicago on such a delirious schedule, how many men in the service know that even yet?

How, for another instance, Sinclair and Francis took the ratty old car reeling into Denver with the glass shrivelled, the paint blistered, the hose burned, and a tire sprung on one of the Five-Nine's drivers—how many headquarters slaves know that?

Our end of the story never went in at all. Never went in because it was not deemed—well, essential to the getting up of the annual report. We could have raised their hair; they could have raised our salaries; but they didn't; we didn't.

In telling this story I would not be misunderstood; ours is not the only line between Chicago and Denver: there are others, I admit it. But there is only one line (all the same) that could have taken the McWilliams Special, as we did, out of Chicago at four in the evening and put it in Denver long before noon the next day.

A communication came from a great La Salle Street banker to the president of our road. Next, the second vice-president heard of it; but

in this way:

"Why have you turned down Peter McWilliams's request for a special to Denver this afternoon?" asked the president.

"He wants too much," came back over the private wire. "We can't do it."

After satisfying himself on this point the president called up La Salle Street.

"Our folks say, Mr. McWilliams, we simply can't do it."

"You must do it."

"When will the car be ready?"

"At three o'clock."

"When must it be in Denver?"

"Ten o'clock to-morrow morning."

The president nearly jumped the wire.

"McWilliams, you're crazy. What on earth do you mean?"

The talk came back so low that the wires hardly caught it. There were occasional outbursts such as, "situation is extremely critical," "grave danger," "acute distress," "must help me out."

But none of this would ever have moved the president had not Peter McWilliams been a bigger man than most corporations; and a personal request from Peter, if he stuck for it, could hardly be refused; and for this he most decidedly stuck.

"I tell you it will turn us upside-down," stormed the president.

"Do you recollect," asked Peter McWilliams, "when your infernal old

pot of a road was busted eight years ago—you were turned inside out then, weren't you? and hung up to dry, weren't you?"

The president did recollect; he could not decently help recollecting. And he recollected how, about that same time, Peter McWilliams had one week taken up for him a matter of two millions floating, with a personal check; and carried it eighteen months without security, when money could not be had in Wall Street on government bonds.

Do you—that is, have you heretofore supposed that a railroad belongs to the stockholders? Not so; it belongs to men like Mr. McWilliams, who own it when they need it. At other times they let the stockholders carry it—until they want it again.

"We'll do what we can, Peter," replied the president, desperately amiable. "Good-bye."

I am giving you only an inkling of how it started. Not a word as to how countless orders were issued, and countless schedules were cancelled. Not a paragraph about numberless trains abandoned *in toto*, and numberless others pulled and hauled and held and annulled. The McWilliams Special in a twinkling tore a great system into great splinters.

It set master-mechanics by the ears and made reckless falsifiers of previously conservative trainmen. It made undying enemies of rival superintendents, and incipient paretics of jolly train-dispatchers. It shivered us from end to end and stem to stern, but it covered 1026 miles of the best steel in the world in rather better than twenty hours and a blaze of glory.

"My word is out," said the president in his message to all superintendents, thirty minutes later. "You will get your division schedule in a few moments. Send no reasons for inability to make it; simply deliver the goods. With your time-report, which comes by Ry.

M. S., I want the names and records of every member of every train-crew and every engine-crew that haul the McWilliams car." Then followed particular injunctions of secrecy; above all, the newspapers must not get it.

But where newspapers are, secrecy can only be hoped for—never attained. In spite of the most elaborate precautions to preserve Peter McWilliams's secret—would you believe it?—the evening papers had half a column—practically the whole thing. Of course they had to guess at some of it, but for a newspaper-story it was pretty correct, just the same. They had, to a minute, the time of the start from Chicago, and hinted broadly that the schedule was a hair-raiser; something to make previous very fast records previous very slow records. And—here in a scoop was the secret—the train was to convey a prominent Chicago capitalist to the bedside of his dying son, Philip McWilliams, in Denver. Further, that hourly bulletins were being wired to the distressed father, and that every effort of science would be put forth to keep the unhappy boy alive until his father could reach Denver on the Special. Lastly, it was hoped by all the evening papers (to fill out the half first column scare) that sunrise would see the anxious parent well on towards the gateway of the Rockies.

Of course the morning papers from the Atlantic to the Pacific had the story repeated—scare-headed, in fact—and the public were laughing at our people's dogged refusal to confirm the report or to be interviewed at all on the subject. The papers had the story, anyway. What did they care for our efforts to screen a private distress which insisted on so paralyzing a time-card for 1026 miles?

When our own, the West End of the schedule, came over the wires there was a universal, a vociferous, kick. Dispatchers, superintendent of motive-power, train-master, everybody, protested. We were given about seven hours to cover 400 miles—the fastest percentage, by-the-way, on the whole run.

"This may be grief for young McWilliams, and for his dad," grumbled the chief dispatcher that evening, as he cribbed the press dispatches going over the wires about the Special, "but the grief is not theirs alone."

Then he made a protest to Chicago. What the answer was none but himself ever knew. It came personal, and he took it personally; but the manner in which he went to work clearing track and making a card for the McWilliams Special showed better speed than the train itself ever attempted—and he kicked no more.

After all the row, it seems incredible, but they never got ready to leave Chicago till four o'clock; and when the McWilliams Special lit into our train system, it was like dropping a mountain-lion into a bunch of steers.

Freights and extras, local passenger-trains even, were used to being side-tracked; but when it came to laying out the Flyers and (I whisper this) the White Mail, and the Manila express, the oil began to sizzle in the journal-boxes. The freight business, the passenger traffic—the mail-schedules of a whole railway system were actually knocked by the McWilliams Special into a cocked hat.

From the minute it cleared Western Avenue it was the only thing talked of. Divisional headquarters and car tink shanties alike were bursting with excitement.

On the West End we had all night to prepare, and at five o'clock next morning every man in the operating department was on edge. At precisely 3.58 A.M. the McWilliams Special stuck its nose into our division, and Foley—pulled off No. 1 with the 466—was heading her dizzy for McCloud. Already the McWilliams had made up thirty-one minutes on the one hour delay in Chicago, and Lincoln threw her into our hands with a sort of "There, now! You fellows—are you any good at all on the West End?" And we thought we were.

Sitting in the dispatcher's office, we tagged her down the line like a swallow. Harvard, Oxford, Zanesville, Ashton—and a thousand people at the McCloud station waited for six o'clock and for Foley's muddy cap to pop through the Blackwood bluffs; watched him stain the valley maples with a stream of white and black, scream at the junction switches, tear and crash through the yards, and slide hissing and panting up under our nose, swing out of his cab, and look at nobody at all but his watch.

We made it 5.59 A.M. Central Time. The miles, 136; the minutes, 121. The schedule was beaten—and that with the 136 miles the fastest on the whole 1026. Everybody in town yelled except Foley; he asked for a chew of tobacco, and not getting one handily, bit into his own piece.

While Foley melted his weed George Sinclair stepped out of the superintendent's office—he was done in a black silk shirt, with a blue four-in-hand streaming over his front—stepped out to shake hands with Foley, as one hostler got the 466 out of the way, and another backed down with a new Sky-Scraper, the 509.

But nobody paid much attention to all this. The mob had swarmed around the ratty, old, blind-eyed baggage-car which, with an ordinary way-car, constituted the McWilliams Special.

"Now what does a man with McWilliams's money want to travel special in an old photograph-gallery like that for?" asked Andy Cameron, who was the least bit huffed because he hadn't been marked up for the run himself. "You better take him in a cup of hot coffee, Sinkers," suggested Andy to the lunch-counter boy. "You might get a ten-dollar bill if the old man isn't feeling too badly. What do you hear from Denver, Neighbor?" he asked, turning to the superintendent of motive power. "Is the boy holding out?"

"I'm not worrying about the boy holding out; it's whether the Five-Nine

will hold out."

"Aren't you going to change engines and crews at Arickaree?"

"Not to-day," said Neighbor, grimly; "we haven't time."

Just then Sinkers rushed at the baggage-car with a cup of hot coffee for Mr. McWilliams. Everybody, hoping to get a peep at the capitalist, made way. Sinkers climbed over the train chests which were lashed to the platforms and pounded on the door. He pounded hard, for he hoped and believed that there was something in it. But he might have pounded till his coffee froze for all the impression it made on the sleepy McWilliams.

"Hasn't the man trouble enough without tackling your chiccory?" sang out Felix Kennedy, and the laugh so discouraged Sinkers that he gave over and sneaked away.

At that moment the editor of the local paper came around the depot corner on the run. He was out for an interview, and, as usual, just a trifle late. However, he insisted on boarding the baggage-car to tender his sympathy to McWilliams.

The barricades bothered him, but he mounted them all, and began an emergency pound on the forbidding blind door. Imagine his feelings when the door was gently opened by a sad-eyed man, who opened the ball by shoving a rifle as big as a pinch-bar under the editorial nose.

"My grief, Mr. McWilliams," protested the interviewer, in a trembling voice, "don't imagine I want to hold you up. Our citizens are all peaceable—"

"Get out!"

"Why, man, I'm not even asking for a subscription; I simply want to ten
—"

"Get out!" snapped the man with the gun; and in a foam the newsman climbed down. A curious crowd gathered close to hear an editorial version of the ten commandments revised on the spur of the moment. Felix Kennedy said it was worth going miles to hear. "That's the coldest deal I ever struck on the plains, boys," declared the editor. "Talk about your bereaved parents. If the boy doesn't have a chill when that man reaches him, I miss my guess. He acts to me as if he was afraid his grief would get away before he got to Denver."

Meantime Georgie Sinclair was tying a silk handkerchief around his neck, while Neighbor gave him parting injunctions. As he put up his foot to swing into the cab the boy looked for all the world like a jockey toe in stirrup. Neighbor glanced at his watch.

"Can you make it by eleven o'clock?" he growled.

"Make what?"

"Denver."

"Denver or the ditch, Neighbor," laughed Georgie, testing the air. "Are you right back there, Pat?" he called, as Conductor Francis strode forward to compare the Mountain Time.

"Right and tight, and I call it five-two-thirty now. What have you, Georgie?"

"Five-two-thirty-two," answered Sinclair, leaning from the cab window. "And we're ready."

"Then go!" cried Pat Francis, raising two fingers.

"Go!" echoed Sinclair, and waved a backward smile to the crowd, as the pistons took the push and the escapes wheezed.

A roar went up. The little engineer shook his cap, and with a flirting,

snaking slide, the McWilliams Special drew slipping away between the shining rails for the Rockies.

Just how McWilliams felt we had no means of knowing; but we knew our hearts would not beat freely until his infernal Special should slide safely over the last of the 266 miles which still lay between the distressed man and his unfortunate child.

From McCloud to Ogalalla there is a good bit of twisting and slewing; but looking east from Athens a marble dropped between the rails might roll clear into the Ogalalla yards. It is a sixty-mile grade, the ballast of slag, and the sweetest, springiest bed under steel.

To cover those sixty miles in better than fifty minutes was like picking them off the ponies; and the Five-Nine breasted the Morgan divide, fretting for more hills to climb.

The Five-Nine—for that matter any of the Sky-Scrapers are built to balance ten or a dozen sleepers, and when you run them light they have a fashion of rooting their noses into the track. A modest up-grade just about counters this tendency; but on a slump and a stiff clip and no tail to speak of, you feel as if the drivers were going to buck up on the ponies every once in a while. However, they never do, and Georgie whistled for Scarboro' junction, and 180 miles and two waters, in 198 minutes out of McCloud; and, looking happy, cussed Mr. McWilliams a little, and gave her another hatful of steam.

It is getting down a hill, like the hills of the Mattaback Valley, at such a pace that pounds the track out of shape. The Five-Nine lurched at the curves like a mad woman, shook free with very fury, and if the baggage-car had not been fairly loaded down with the grief of McWilliams, it must have jumped the rails a dozen times in as many minutes.

Indeed, the fireman—it was Jerry MacElroy—twisting and shifting

between the tender and the furnace, looked for the first time grave, and stole a questioning glance from the steam-gauge towards Georgie.

But yet he didn't expect to see the boy, his face set ahead and down the track, straighten so suddenly up, sink in the lever, and close at the instant on the air. Jerry felt her stumble under his feet—caught up like a girl in a skipping-rope—and grabbing a brace looked, like a wise stoker, for his answer out of his window. There far ahead it rose in hot curling clouds of smoke down among the alfalfa meadows and over the sweep of willows along the Mattaback River. The Mattaback bridge was on fire, with the McWilliams Special on one side and Denver on the other.

Jerry MacElroy yelled—the engineer didn't even look around; only whistled an alarm back to Pat Francis, eased her down the grade a bit, like a man reflecting, and watched the smoke and flames that rose to bar the McWilliams Special out of Denver.

The Five-Nine skimmed across the meadows without a break, and pulled up a hundred feet from the burning bridge. It was an old Howe truss, and snapped like popcorn as the flames bit into the rotten shed.

Pat Francis and his brakeman ran forward. Across the river they could see half a dozen section-men chasing wildly about throwing impotent buckets of water on the burning truss.

"We're up against it, Georgie," cried Francis.

"Not if we can get across before the bridge tumbles into the river," returned Sinclair.

"You don't mean you'd try it?"

"Would I? Wouldn't I? You know the orders. That bridge is good for an hour yet. Pat, if you're game, I'll run it."

"Holy smoke," mused Pat Francis, who would have run the river without any bridge at all if so ordered. "They told us to deliver the goods, didn't they?"

"We might as well be starting, Pat," suggested Jerry MacElroy, who deprecated losing good time. "There'll be plenty of time to talk after we get into Denver, or the Mattaback."

"Think quick, Pat," urged Sinclair; his safety was popping murder.

"Back her up, then, and let her go," cried Francis; "I'd just as lief have that baggage-car at the bottom of the river as on my hands any longer."

There was some sharp tooting, then the McWilliams Special backed; backed away across the meadow, halted, and screamed hard enough to wake the dead. Georgie was trying to warn the section-men. At that instant the door of the baggage-car opened and a sharp-featured young man peered out.

"What's the row—what's all this screeching about, conductor?" he asked, as Francis passed.

"Bridge burning ahead there."

"Bridge burning!" he cried, looking nervously forward. "Well, that's a deal. What you going to do about it?"

"Run it. Are you McWilliams?"

"McWilliams? I wish I was for just one minute. I'm one of his clerks."

"Where is he?"

"I left him on La Salle Street yesterday afternoon."

"What's your name?"

"Just plain Ferguson."

"Well, Ferguson, it's none of my business, but as long as we're going to put you into Denver or into the river in about a minute, I'm curious to know what the blazes you're hustling along this way for."

"Me? I've got twelve hundred thousand dollars in gold coin in this car for the Sierra Leone National Bank—that's all. Didn't you know that five big banks there closed their doors yesterday? Worst panic in the United States. That's what I'm here for, and five huskies with me eating and sleeping in this car," continued Ferguson, looking ahead. "You're not going to tackle that bridge, are you?"

"We are, and right off. If there's any of your huskies want to drop out, now's their chance," said Pat Francis, as Sinclair slowed up for his run.

Ferguson called his men. The five with their rifles came cautiously forward.

"Boys," said Ferguson, briefly. "There's a bridge afire ahead. These guys are going to try to run it. It's not in your contract, that kind of a chance. Do you want to get off? I stay with the specie, myself. You can do exactly as you please. Murray, what do you say?" he asked, addressing the leader of the force, who appeared to weigh about two hundred and sixty.

"What do I say?" echoed Murray, with decision, as he looked for a soft place to alight alongside the track. "I say I'll drop out right here. I don't mind train robbers, but I don't tackle a burning bridge—not if I know it," and he jumped off.

"Well, Peaters," asked Ferguson, of the second man, coolly, "do you want to stay?"

"Me?" echoed Peaters, looking ahead at the mass of flame leaping

upward—"me stay? Well, not in a thousand years. You can have my gun, Mr. Ferguson, and send my check to 439 Milwaukee Avenue, if you please. Gentlemen, good-day." And off went Peaters.

And off went every last man of the valorous detectives except one lame fellow, who said he would just as lief be dead as alive anyway, and declared he would stay with Ferguson and die rich!

Sinclair, thinking he might never get another chance, was whistling sharply for orders. Francis, breathless with the news, ran forward.



"SINCLAIR WAS WHISTLING SHARPLY FOR ORDERS"

"Coin? How much? Twelve hundred thousand. Whew!" cried Sinclair. "Swing up, Pat. We're off."

The Five-Nine gathered herself with a spring. Even the engineer's heart quailed as they got headway. He knew his business, and he knew that if only the rails hadn't buckled they were perfectly safe, for the heavy truss would stand a lot of burning before giving way under a

swiftly moving train. Only, as they flew nearer, the blaze rolling up in dense volume looked horribly threatening. After all it was foolhardy, and he felt it; but he was past the stopping now, and he pulled the choker to the limit. It seemed as if she never covered steel so fast. Under the head she now had the crackling bridge was less than five hundred—four hundred—three hundred—two hundred feet, and there was no longer time to think. With a stare, Sinclair shut off. He wanted no push or pull on the track. The McWilliams Special was just a tremendous arrow, shooting through a truss of fire, and half a dozen speechless men on either side of the river waiting for the catastrophe.

Jerry MacElroy crouched low under the gauges. Sinclair jumped from his box and stood with a hand on the throttle and a hand on the air, the glass crashing around his head like hail. A blast of fiery air and flying cinders burned and choked him. The engine, alive with danger, flew like a great monkey along the writhing steel. So quick, so black, so hot the blast, and so terrific the leap, she stuck her nose into clean air before the men in the cab could rise to it.

There was a heave in the middle like the lurch of a sea-sick steamer, and with it the Five-Nine got her paws on cool iron and solid ground, and the Mattaback and the blaze—all except a dozen tongues which licked the cab and the roof of the baggage-car a minute—were behind. Georgie Sinclair, shaking the hot glass out of his hair, looked ahead through his frizzled eyelids and gave her a full head for the western bluffs of the valley; then looked at his watch.

It was the hundred and ninetieth mile-post just at her nose, and the dial read eight o'clock and fifty-five minutes to a second. There was an hour to the good and seventy-six miles and a water to cover; but they were seventy-six of the prettiest miles under ballast anywhere, and the Five-Nine reeled them off like a cylinder-press. Seventy-nine minutes later Sinclair whistled for the Denver yards.

There was a tremendous commotion among the waiting engines. If

there was one there were fifty big locomotives waiting to charivari the McWilliams Special. The wires had told the story in Denver long before, and as the Five-Nine sailed ponderously up the gridiron every mogul, every consolidated, every ten-wheeler, every hog, every switch-bumper, every air-hose screamed an uproarious welcome to Georgie Sinclair and the Sky-Scraper.

They had broken every record from McCloud to Denver, and all knew it; but as the McWilliams Special drew swiftly past, every last man in the yards stared at her cracked, peeled, blistered, haggard looks.

"What the deuce have you bit into?" cried the depot-master, as the Five-Nine swept splendidly up and stopped with her battered eye hard on the depot clock.

"Mattaback bridge is burned; had to crawl over on the stringers," answered Sinclair, coughing up a cinder.

"Where's McWilliams?"

"Back there sitting on his grief, I reckon."

While the crew went up to register, two big four-horse trucks backed up to the baggage-car, and in a minute a dozen men were rolling specie-kegs out of the door, which was smashed in, as being quicker than to tear open the barricades.

Sinclair, MacElroy, and Francis with his brakeman were surrounded by a crowd of railroad men. As they stood answering questions, a big prosperous-looking banker, with black rings under his eyes, pushed in towards them, accompanied by the lame fellow, who had missed the chance of a lifetime to die rich, and by Ferguson, who had told the story.

The banker shook hands with each one of the crews. "You've saved us, boys. We needed it. There's a mob of five thousand of the worst-

scared people in America clamoring at the doors; and, by the eternal, now we're fixed for every one of them. Come up to the bank. I want you to ride right up with the coin, all of you."

It was an uncommonly queer occasion, but an uncommonly enthusiastic one. Fifty policemen made the escort and cleared the way for the trucks to pull up across the sidewalk, so the porters could lug the kegs of gold into the bank before the very eyes of the rattled depositors.

In an hour the run was broken. But when the four railroad men left the bank, after all sorts of hugging by excited directors, they carried not only the blessings of the officials, but each in his vest pocket a check, every one of which discounted the biggest voucher ever drawn on the West End for a month's pay; though I violate no confidence in stating that Georgie Sinclair's was bigger than any two of the others. And this is how it happens that there hangs in the directors' room of the Sierra Leone National a very creditable portrait of the kid engineer.

Besides paying tariff on the specie, the bank paid for a new coat of paint for the McWilliams Special from caboose to pilot. She was the last train across the Mattaback for two weeks.

The Million-Dollar Freight-Train

It was the second month of the strike, and not a pound of freight had been moved; things looked smoky on the West End.

The general superintendent happened to be with us when the news came.

"You can't handle it, boys," said he, nervously. "What you'd better do is to turn it over to the Columbian Pacific."

Our contracting freight agent on the coast at that time was a fellow so erratic that he was nicknamed Crazyhorse. Right in the midst of the strike Crazyhorse wired that he had secured a big silk shipment for New York. We were paralyzed.

We had no engineers, no firemen, and no motive power to speak of. The strikers were pounding our men, wrecking our trains, and giving us the worst of it generally; that is, when we couldn't give it to them. Why the fellow displayed his activity at that particular juncture still remains a mystery. Perhaps he had a grudge against the road; if so, he took an artful revenge. Everybody on the system with ordinary railroad sense knew that our struggle was to keep clear of freight business until we got rid of our strike. Anything valuable or perishable was especially unwelcome.

But the stuff was docked and loaded and consigned in our care before we knew it. After that, a refusal to carry it would be like hoisting the white flag; and that is something which never yet flew on the West End.

"Turn it over to the Columbian," said the general superintendent; but the general superintendent was not looked up to on our division. He hadn't enough sand. Our head was a fighter, and he gave tone to every man under him.

"No," he thundered, bringing down his fist, "not in a thousand years! We'll move it ourselves. Wire Montgomery, the general manager, that we will take care of it. And wire him to fire Crazyhorse—and to do it right off." And before the silk was turned over to us Crazyhorse was looking for another job. It is the only case on record where a freight hustler was discharged for getting business.

There were twelve car-loads; it was insured for eighty-five thousand dollars a car; you can figure how far the title is wrong, but you never can estimate the worry that stuff gave us. It looked as big as twelve million dollars' worth. In fact, one scrub-car tink, with the glory of the West End at heart, had a fight over the amount with a sceptical hostler. He maintained that the actual money value was a hundred and twenty millions; but I give you the figures just as they went over the wire, and they are right.

What bothered us most was that the strikers had the tip almost as soon as we had it. Having friends on every road in the country, they knew as much about our business as we ourselves. The minute it was announced that we should move the silk they were after us. It was a defiance; a last one. If we could move freight—for we were already moving passengers after a fashion—the strike might be well accounted beaten.

Stewart, the leader of the local contingent, together with his followers, got after me at once.

"You don't show much sense, Reed," said he. "You fellows here are breaking your necks to get things moving, and when this strike's over if our boys ask for your discharge they'll get it. This road can't run

without our engineers. We're going to beat you. If you dare try to move this stuff we'll have your scalp when it's over. You'll never get your silk to Zanesville, I'll promise you that. And if you ditch it and make a million dollar loss, you'll get let out anyway, my buck."

"I'm here to obey orders, Stewart," I retorted. What was the use of more? I felt uncomfortable; but we had determined to move the silk. there was nothing more to be said.

When I went over to the round-house and told Neighbor the decision he said never a word, but he looked a great deal. Neighbor's task was to supply the motive power. All that we had, uncrippled, was in the passenger service, because passengers must be moved—must be taken care of first of all. In order to win a strike you must have public opinion on your side.

"Nevertheless, Neighbor," said I, after we had talked a while, "we must move the silk also."

Neighbor studied; then he roared at his foreman.

"Send Bartholomew Mullen here." He spoke with a decision that made me think the business was done. I had never happened, it is true, to hear of Bartholomew Mullen in the department of motive power; but the impression the name gave me was of a monstrous fellow; big as Neighbor, or old man Sankey, or Dad Hamilton.

"I'll put Bartholomew ahead of it," muttered Neighbor, tightly. A boy walked into the office.

"Mr. Garten said you wanted to see me, sir," said he, addressing the master mechanic.

"I do, Bartholomew," responded Neighbor.

The figure in my mind's eye shrunk in a twinkling. Then it occurred to me that it must be this boy's father who was wanted.

"You have been begging for a chance to take out an engine, Bartholomew," began Neighbor, coldly; and I knew it was on.

"Yes, sir."

"You want to get killed, Bartholomew."

Bartholomew smiled, as if the idea was not altogether displeasing.

"How would you like to go pilot to-morrow for McCurdy? You to take the 44 and run as first Seventy-eight. McCurdy will run as second Seventy-eight."

"I know I could run an engine all right," ventured Bartholomew, as if Neighbor were the only one taking the chances in giving him an engine. "I know the track from here to Zanesville. I helped McNeff fire one week."

"Then go home, and go to bed, and be over here at six o'clock to-morrow morning. And sleep sound; for it may be your last chance."

It was plain that the master-mechanic hated to do it; it was simply sheer necessity.

"He's a wiper," mused Neighbor, as Bartholomew walked springily away. "I took him in here sweeping two years ago. He ought to be firing now, but the union held him back; that's why he hates them. He knows more about an engine now than half the lodge. They'd better have let him in," said the master-mechanic, grimly. "He may be the means of breaking their backs yet. If I give him an engine and he runs it, I'll never take him off, union or no union, strike or no strike."

"How old is that boy?" I asked.

"Eighteen; and never a kith or a kin that I know of. Bartholomew Mullen," mused Neighbor, as the slight figure moved across the flat,

"big name—small boy. Well, Bartholomew, you'll know something more by to-morrow night about running an engine, or a whole lot less; that's as it happens. If he gets killed, it's your fault, Reed."

He meant that I was calling on him for men when he absolutely couldn't produce them.

"I heard once," he went on, "about a fellow named Bartholomew being mixed up in a massacree. But I take it he must have been an older man than our Bartholomew—nor his other name wasn't Mullen, neither. I disremember just what it was; but it wasn't Mullen."

"Well, don't say I want to get the boy killed, Neighbor," I protested. "I've plenty to answer for. I'm here to run trains—when there are any to run; that's murder enough for me. You needn't send Bartholomew out on my account."

"Give him a slow schedule and I'll give him orders to jump early, that's all we can do. If the strikers don't ditch him, he'll get through, somehow."

It stuck in my crop—the idea of putting the boy on a pilot engine to take all the dangers ahead of that particular train; but I had a good deal else to think of besides. From the minute the silk got into the McCloud yards we posted double guards around. About twelve o'clock that night we held a council of war, which ended in our running the train into the out freight-house. The result was that by morning we had a new train made up. It consisted of fourteen refrigerator-cars loaded with oranges, which had come in mysteriously the night before. It was announced that the silk would be held for the present and the oranges rushed through. Bright and early the refrigerator-train was run down to the ice-houses and twenty men were put to work icing the oranges. At seven o'clock McCurdy pulled in the local passenger with engine 105. Our plan was to cancel the local and run him right out with the oranges. When he got in he reported the 105

had sprung a tire; it knocked our scheme into a cocked hat.

There was a lantern-jawed conference in the round-house.

"What can you do?" asked the superintendent, in desperation.

"There's only one thing I can do. Put Bartholomew Mullen on it with the 44, and put McCurdy to bed for No. 2 to-night," responded Neighbor.

We were running first in, first out; but we took care to always have somebody for 1 and 2 who at least knew an injector from an air-pump.

It was eight o'clock. I looked into the locomotive stalls. The first—the only—man in sight was Bartholomew Mullen. He was very busy polishing the 44. He had good steam on her, and the old tub was wheezing as if she had the asthma. The 44 was old; she was homely; she was rickety; but Bartholomew Mullen wiped her battered nose as deferentially as if she had been a spick-span, spider-driver, tail-truck mail-racer.

She wasn't much—the 44. But in those days Bartholomew wasn't much; and the 44 was Bartholomew's.

"How is she steaming, Bartholomew?" I sung out; he was right in the middle of her. Looking up, he fingered his waste modestly and blushed through a dab of crude petroleum over his eye.

"Hundred and thirty, sir. She's a terrible free steamer, the old 44; I'm all ready to run her out."

"Who's marked up to fire for you, Bartholomew?"

Bartholomew Mullen looked at me fraternally.

"Neighbor couldn't give me anybody but a wiper," said Bartholomew, in a sort of a wouldn't-that-kill-you tone.

The unconscious arrogance of the boy quite knocked me, so soon

had honors changed his point of view. Last night a despised wiper; at daybreak, an engineer; and his nose in the air at the idea of taking on a wiper for fireman. And all so innocent.

"Would you object, Bartholomew," I suggested, gently, "to a train-master for fireman?"

"I don't—think so, sir."

"Thank you; because I am going down to Zanesville this morning myself and I thought I'd ride with you. Is it all right?"

"Oh yes, sir—if Neighbor doesn't care."

I smiled. He didn't know who Neighbor took orders from; but he thought, evidently, not from me.

"Then run her down to the oranges, Bartholomew, and couple on, and we'll order ourselves out. See?"

The 44 really looked like a baby-carriage when we got her in front of the refrigerators. However, after the necessary preliminaries, we gave a very sporty toot and pulled out; in a few minutes we were sailing down the valley.

For fifty miles we bobbed along with our cargo of iced silk as easy as old shoes; for I need hardly explain that we had packed the silk into the refrigerators to confuse the strikers. The great risk was that they would try to ditch us.

I was watching the track as a mouse would a cat, looking every minute for trouble. We cleared the gumbo cut west of the Beaver at a pretty good clip, in order to make the grade on the other side. The bridge there is hidden in summer by a grove of hackberrys. I had just pulled open to cool her a bit when I noticed how high the backwater was on each side of the track. Suddenly I felt the fill going soft under the drivers—felt the 44 wobble and slew. Bartholomew shut off hard

and threw the air as I sprang to the window. The peaceful little creek ahead looked as angry as the Platte in April water, and the bottoms were a lake.

Somewhere up the valley there had been a cloudburst, for overhead the sun was bright. The Beaver was roaring over its banks and the bridge was out. Bartholomew screamed for brakes; it looked as we were against it—and hard.

A soft track to stop on, a torrent of storm water ahead, and ten hundred thousand dollars' worth of silk behind—not to mention equipment.

I yelled at Bartholomew and motioned for him to jump; my conscience is clear on that point. The 44 was stumbling along, trying, like a drunken man, to hang to the rotten track.

"Bartholomew!" I yelled; but he was head out and looking back at his train, while he jerked frantically at the air lever. I understood: the air wouldn't work; it never will on those old tubs when you need it. The sweat pushed out on me. I was thinking of how much the silk would bring us after a bath in the Beaver. Bartholomew stuck to his levers like a man in a signal-tower, but every second brought us closer to open water. Watching him, intent only on saving his first train—heedless of saving his life—I was really a bit ashamed to jump. While I hesitated, he somehow got the brakes to set; the old 44 bucked like a bronco.

It wasn't too soon. She checked her train nobly at the last, but I saw nothing could keep her from the drink. I caught Bartholomew a terrific slap and again I yelled; then, turning to the gangway, I dropped into the soft mud on my side. The 44 hung low, and it was easy lighting.

Bartholomew sprang from his seat a second later, but his blouse caught in the teeth of the quadrant. He stooped quick as thought, and

peeled the thing over his head. But then he was caught with his hands in the wristbands, and the ponies of 44 tipped over the broken abutment.

Pull as he would, he couldn't get free. The pilot dipped into the torrent slowly; but, losing her balance, the 44 kicked her heels into the air like lightning, and shot with a frightened wheeze plump into the creek, dragging her engineer after her.

The head car stopped on the brink. Running across the track, I looked for Bartholomew. He wasn't there; I knew he must have gone down with his engine.

Throwing off my gloves, I dove just as I stood, close to the tender, which hung half submerged. I am a good bit of a fish under water, but no self-respecting fish would be caught in that yellow mud. I realized, too, the instant I struck the water that I should have dived on the upstream side. The current took me away whirling; when I came up for air I was fifty feet below the pier. I felt it was all up with Bartholomew as I scrambled out; but to my amazement, as I shook my eyes open, the train crew were running forward, and there stood Bartholomew on the track above me looking at the refrigerators. When I got to him he explained to me how he was dragged in and had to tear the sleeves out of his blouse under water to get free.

The surprise is, how little fuss men make about such things when they are busy. It took only five minutes for the conductor to hunt up a coil of wire and a sounder for me, and by the time he got forward with it Bartholomew was half-way up a telegraph-pole to help me cut in on a live wire. Fast as I could I rigged a pony, and began calling the McCloud dispatcher. It was a rocky send, but after no end of pounding I got him, and gave orders for the wrecking-gang and for one more of Neighbor's rapidly decreasing supply of locomotives.

Bartholomew, sitting on a strip of fence which still rose above water,

looked forlorn. To lose the first engine he ever handled, in the Beaver, was tough, and he was evidently speculating on his chances of ever getting another. If there weren't tears in his eyes, there was storm water certainly. But after the relief-engine had pulled what was left of us back six miles to a siding, I made it my first business to explain to Neighbor, nearly beside himself, that Bartholomew was not only not at fault, but that he had actually saved the train by his nerve.

"I'll tell you, Neighbor," I suggested, when we got straightened around, "give us the 109 to go ahead as pilot, and run the stuff around the river division with Foley and the 216."

"What'll you do with No. 6?" growled Neighbor. Six was the local passenger, west.

"Annul it west of McCloud," said I, instantly. "We've got this silk on our hands now, and I'd move it if it tied up every passenger-train on the division. If we can get the infernal stuff through, it will practically beat the strike. If we fail, it will beat the company."

By the time we backed to Newhall Junction, Neighbor had made up his mind my way. Mullen and I climbed into the 109, and Foley with the 216, and none too good a grace, coupled on to the silk, and, flying red signals, we started again for Zanesville over the river division.

Foley was always full of mischief. He had a better engine than ours, anyway, and he took satisfaction the rest of the afternoon in crowding us. Every mile of the way he was on our heels. I was throwing the coal and distinctly remember.

It was after dark when we reached the Beverly Hill, and we took it at a lively pace. The strikers were not on our minds then; it was Foley who bothered.

When the long parallel steel lines of the upper yards spread before us, flashing under the arc-lights, we were away above yard speed.

Running a locomotive into one of those big yards is like shooting a rapid in a canoe. There is a bewildering maze of tracks lighted by red and green lamps to be watched the closest. The hazards are multiplied the minute you pass the throat, and a yard wreck is a dreadful tangle: it makes everybody from road-master to flagmen furious, and not even Bartholomew wanted to face an inquiry on a yard wreck. On the other hand, he couldn't afford to be caught by Foley, who was chasing him out of pure caprice.

I saw the boy holding the throttle at a half and fingering the air anxiously as we jumped through the frogs; but the roughest riding on track so far beats the ties as a cushion that when the 109 suddenly stuck her paws through an open switch we bounced against the roof of the cab like footballs. I grabbed a brace with one hand and with the other reached instinctively across to Bartholomew's side to seize the throttle he held. But as I tried to shut him off he jerked it wide open in spite of me, and turned with lightning in his eye.

"No!" he cried, and his voice rang hard. The 109 took the tremendous shove at her back and leaped like a frightened horse. Away we went across the yard, through the cinders, and over the ties. My teeth have never been the same since. I don't belong on an engine, anyway, and since then I have kept off. At the moment I was convinced that the strain had been too much—that Bartholomew was stark crazy. He sat bouncing clear to the roof and clinging to his levers like a lobster.

But his strategy was dawning on me; in fact, he was pounding it into me. Even the shock and scare of leaving the track and tearing up the yard had not driven from Bartholomew's noddle the most important feature of our situation, which was, above everything, to *keep out of the way of the silk-train*.

I felt every moment more mortified at my attempt to shut him off. I had done the trick of the woman who grabs the reins. It was even better to tear up the yard than to stop for Foley to smash into and scatter the

silk over the coal-chutes. Bartholomew's decision was one of the traits which make the runner: instant perception coupled to instant resolve. The ordinary dub thinks what he should have done to avoid disaster after it is all over; Bartholomew thought before.

On we bumped, across frogs, through switches, over splits, and into target rods, when—and this is the miracle of it all—the 109 got her fore-feet on a split switch, made a contact, and, after a slew or two like a bogged horse, she swung up sweet on the rails again, tender and all. Bartholomew shut off with an under cut that brought us up double and nailed her feet, with the air, right where she stood.

We had left the track, ploughed a hundred feet across the yards, and jumped on to another track. It is the only time I ever heard of its happening anywhere, but I was on the engine with Bartholomew Mullen when it was done.

Foley choked his train the instant he saw our hind lights bobbing. We climbed down and ran back. He had stopped just where we should have stood if I had shut off. Bartholomew ran to the switch to examine it. The contact light, green, still burned like a false beacon; and lucky it did, for it showed the switch had been tampered with and exonerated Bartholomew Mullen completely. The attempt of the strikers to spill the silk right in the yards had only made the reputation of a new engineer. Thirty minutes later the million-dollar train was turned over to the eastern division to wrestle with, and we breathed, all of us, a good bit easier.

Bartholomew Mullen, now a passenger runner, who ranks with Kennedy and Jack Moore and Foley and George Sinclair himself, got a personal letter from the general manager complimenting him on his pretty wit; and he was good enough to say nothing whatever about mine.

We registered that night and went to supper together—Foley,

Jackson, Bartholomew, and I. Afterwards we dropped into the dispatcher's office. Something was coming from McCloud, but the operators, to save their lives, couldn't catch it. I listened a minute; it was Neighbor. Now Neighbor isn't great on dispatching trains. He can make himself understood over the poles, but his sending is like a boy's sawing wood—sort of uneven.

However, though I am not much on running yards, I claim to be able to take the wildest ball that was ever thrown along the wire, and the chair was tendered me at once to catch Neighbor's extraordinary passes at the McCloud key. They came something like this:

To Opr.:

Tell Massacre [that was the word that stuck them all, and I could perceive Neighbor was talking emphatically; he had apparently forgotten Bartholomew's last name and was trying to connect with the one he had disremembered the night before] —tell Massacre [repeated Neighbor] that he is al-l-I right. Tell hi-m I give 'im double mileage for to-day all the way through. And to-morrow he gets the 109 to keep.

Neighb-b-or.

Bucks

"I see a good deal of stuff in print about the engineer," said Callahan dejectedly. "What's the matter with the dispatcher? What's the matter with the man who tells the engineer what to do—and just what to do? How to do it—and exactly how to do it? With the man who sits shut in brick walls and hung in Chinese puzzles, his ear glued to a receiver, and his finger fast to a key, and his eye riveted on a train chart? The man who orders and annuls and stops and starts everything within five hundred miles of him, and holds under his thumb more lives every minute than a brigadier does in a lifetime? For instance," asked Callahan, in his tired way, "what's the matter with Bucks?"

Now, I myself never knew Bucks. He left the West End before I went on. Bucks is second vice-president—which means the boss—of a transcontinental line now, and a very great swell. But no man from the West End who calls on Bucks has to wait for an audience, though bigger men do. They talk of him out there yet. Not of General Superintendent Bucks, which he came to be, nor of General Manager Bucks. On the West End he is just plain Bucks; but Bucks on the West End means a whole lot.

"He saved the company \$300,000 that night the Ogalalla train ran away," mused Callahan. Callahan himself is assistant superintendent now.

"Three hundred thousand dollars is a good deal of money, Callahan," I objected.

"Figure it out yourself. To begin with, fifty passengers' lives—that's \$5000 apiece, isn't it?" Callahan had a cold-blooded way of figuring a passenger's life from the company standpoint. "It would have killed over fifty passengers if the runaway had ever struck 59. There wouldn't have been enough left of 59 to make a decent funeral. Then the equipment, at least \$50,000. But there was a whole lot more than \$300,000 in it for Bucks."

"How so?"

"He told me once that if he hadn't saved 59 that night he would never have signed another order anywhere on any road."

"Why?"

"Why? Because, after it was all over, he found out that his own mother was aboard 59. Didn't you ever hear that? Well, sir, it was Christmas Eve, and the year was 1884."

Christmas Eve everywhere; but on the West End it was just plain December 24th.

"High winds will prevail for ensuing twenty-four hours. Station agents will use extra care to secure cars on sidings; brakemen must use care to avoid being blown from moving trains."

That is about all Bucks said in his bulletins that evening; not a word about Christmas or Merry Christmas. In fact, if Christmas had come to McCloud that night they couldn't have held it twenty-four minutes, much less twenty-four hours; the wind was too high. All the week, all the day, all the night it had blown—a December wind; dry as an August noon, bitter as powdered ice. It was in the early days of our Western railroading, when we had only one fast train on the schedule

—the St. Louis-California Express; and only one fast engine on the division—the 101; and only one man on the whole West End—Bucks.

Bucks was assistant superintendent and master-mechanic and train-master and chief dispatcher and storekeeper—and a bully good fellow. There were some boys in the service; among them, Callahan. Callahan was seventeen, with hair like a sunset, and a mind quick as an air-brake. It was his first year at the key, and he had a night trick under Bucks.

Callahan claims it blew so hard that night that it blew most of the color out of his hair. Sod houses had sprung up like dog-towns in the buffalo grass during the fall. But that day homesteaders crept into dugouts and smothered over buffalo chip fires. Horses and cattle huddled into friendly pockets a little out of the worst of it, or froze mutely in pitiless fence corners on the divides. Sand drove gritting down from the Cheyenne hills like a storm of snow. Streets of the raw prairie towns stared deserted at the sky. Even cowboys kept their ranches, and through the gloom of noon the sun cast a coward shadow. It was a wretched day, and the sun went down with the wind tuning into a gale, and all the boys in bad humor—except Bucks. Not that Bucks couldn't get mad; but it took more than a cyclone to start him.

No. 59, the California Express, was late that night. All the way up the valley the wind caught her quartering. Really the marvel is that out there on the plains such storms didn't blow our toy engines clear off the rails; for that matter they might as well have taken the rails, too, for none of them went over sixty pounds. 59 was due at eleven o'clock; it was half-past twelve when she pulled in and on Callahan's trick. But Bucks hung around the office until she staggered up under the streaked moonlight, as frowsy a looking train as ever choked on alkali.

There was always a crowd down at the station to meet 59; she was

the big arrival of the day at McCloud, even if she didn't get in until eleven o'clock at night. She brought the mail and the express and the landseekers and the travelling men and the strangers generally; so the McCloud livery men and hotel runners and prominent citizens and prominent loafers and the city marshal usually came down to meet her. But it was not so that night. The platform was bare. Not even the hardy chief of police, who was town watch and city marshal all combined, ventured out.

The engineer swung out of his cab with the silence of an abused man. His eyes were full of soda, his ears full of sand, his mustache full of burrs, and his whiskers full of tumble-weeds. The conductor and the brakemen climbed sullenly down, and the baggage-man shoved open his door and slammed a trunk out on the platform without a pretence of sympathy. Then the outgoing crew climbed aboard, and in a hurry. The conductor-elect ran down-stairs from the register, and pulled his cap down hard before he pushed ahead against the wind to give the engineer his copy of the orders as the new engine was coupled up. The fireman pulled the canvas jealously around the cab end. The brakeman ran hurriedly back to examine the air connections, and gave his signal to the conductor; the conductor gave his to the engineer. There were two short, choppy snorts from the 101, and 59 moved out stealthily, evenly, resistlessly into the teeth of the night. In another minute, only her red lamps gleamed up the yard. One man still on the platform watched them recede; it was Bucks.

He came up to the dispatcher's office and sat down. Callahan wondered why he didn't go home and to bed; but Callahan was too good a railroad man to ask questions of a superior. Bucks might have stood on his head on the stove, and it red-hot, without being pursued with inquiries from Callahan. If Bucks chose to sit up out there on the frozen prairies, in a flimsy barn of a station, and with the wind howling murder at twelve o'clock past, and that on Chri—the twenty-fourth of December, it was Bucks's own business.

"I kind of looked for my mother to-night," said he, after Callahan got his orders out of the way for a minute. "Wrote she was coming out pretty soon for a little visit."

"Where does your mother live?"

"Chicago. I sent her transportation two weeks ago. Reckon she thought she'd better stay home for Christmas. Back in God's country they have Christmas just about this time of year. Watch out to-night, Jim. I'm going home. It's a wind for your life."

Callahan was making a meeting-point for two freights when the door closed behind Bucks; he didn't even sing out "Good-night." And as for Merry Chri—well, that had no place on the West End anyhow.

"D-i, D-i, D-i, D-i," came clicking into the room. Callahan wasn't asleep. Once he did sleep over the key. When he told Bucks, he made sure of his time; only he thought Bucks ought to know.

Bucks shook his head pretty hard that time. "It's awful business, Jim. It's murder, you know. It's the penitentiary, if they should convict you. But it's worse than that. If anything happened because you went to sleep over the key, you'd have them on your mind all your life, don't you know—forever. Men—and—and children. That's what I always think about—the children. Maimed and scalded and burned. Jim, if it ever happens again, quit dispatching; get into commercial work; mistakes don't cost life there; don't try to handle trains. If it ever happens with you, you'll kill yourself."

That was all he said; it was enough. And no wonder Callahan loved him.

The wind tore frantically around the station; but everything else was so still. It was one o'clock now, and not a soul about but Callahan. D-i, D-i, J, clicked sharp and fast. "Twelve or fourteen cars passed here—just—now east—running a-a-a-" Callahan sprang up like a flash—

listened. What? R-u-n-n-i-n-g a-w-a-y?

It was the Jackson operator calling; Callahan jumped to the key. "What's that?" he asked, quick as lightning could dash it.

"Twelve or fourteen cars coal passed here, fully forty miles an hour, headed east, driven by the wi—"

That was all J could send, for Ogalalla broke in. Ogalalla is the station just west of Jackson. And with Callahan's copper hair raising higher at every letter, this came from Ogalalla: "Heavy gust caught twelve coal cars on side track, sent them out on main line off down the grade."

They were already past Jackson, eight miles away, headed east, and running down hill. Callahan's eyes turned like hares to the train sheet. 59, going west, was due *that minute* to leave Callendar. From Callendar to Griffin is a twenty-miles' run. There is a station between, but in those days no night operator. The runaway coal-train was then less than thirty miles west of Griffin, coming down a forty-mile grade like a cannon ball. If 59 could be stopped at Callendar, she could be laid by in five minutes, out of the way of the certain destruction ahead of her on the main line. Callahan seized the key, and began calling "Cn." He pounded until the call burned into his fingers. It was an age before Callendar answered; then Callahan's order flew:

"Hold 59. Answer quick."

And Callendar answered: "59 just pulling out of upper yard. Too late to stop her. What's the matter?"

Callahan struck the table with his clinched fist, looked wildly about him, then sprang from the chair, ran to the window, and threw up the sash. The moon shone a bit through the storm of sand, but there was not a soul in sight. There were lights in the round-house a hundred yards across the track. He pulled a revolver—every railroad man out

there carried one those days—and, covering one of the round-house windows, began firing. It was a risk. There was one chance, maybe, to a thousand of his killing a night man. But there were a thousand chances to one that a whole train-load of men and women would be killed inside of thirty minutes if he couldn't get help. He chose a window in the machinists' section, where he knew no one usually went at night. He poured bullets into the unlucky casement as fast as powder could carry them. Reloading rapidly, he watched the round-house door; and, sure enough, almost at once, it was cautiously opened. Then he fired into the air—one, two, three, four, five, six—and he saw a man start for the station on the dead run. He knew, too, by the tremendous sweep of his legs that it was Ole Anderson, the night foreman, the man of all others he wanted.

"Ole," cried the dispatcher, waving his arms frantically as the giant Swede leaped across the track and looked up from the platform below, "go get Bucks. I've got a runaway train going against 59. For your life, Ole, run!"

The big fellow was into the wind with the word. Bucks boarded four blocks away. Callahan, slamming down the window, took the key, and began calling Rowe. Rowe is the first station east of Jackson; it was now the first point at which the runaway coal-train could be headed.

"R-o R-o," he rattled. The operator must have been sitting on the wire, for he answered at once. As fast as Callahan's fingers could talk, he told Rowe the story and gave him orders to get the night agent, who, he knew, must be down to sell tickets for 59, and pile all the ties they could gather across the track to derail the runaway train. Then he began thumping for Kolar, the next station east of Rowe, and the second ahead of the runaways. He pounded and he pounded, and when the man at Kolar answered, Callahan could have sworn he had been asleep—just from the way he talked. Does it seem strange? There are many strange things about a dispatcher's senses. "Send

your night man to west switch house-track, and open for runaway train. Set brakes hard on your empties on siding, to spill runaways if possible. Do anything and everything to keep them from getting by you. Work quick."

Behind Kolar's O.K. came a frantic call from Rowe. "Runaways passed here like a streak. Knocked the ties into toothpicks. Couldn't head them."

Callahan didn't wait to hear any more. He only wiped the sweat from his face. It seemed forever before Kolar spoke again. Then it was only to say: "Runaways went by here before night man could get to switch and open it."

Would Bucks never come? And if he did come, what on earth could stop the runaway train now? They were heading into the worst grade on the West End. It averages one per cent. from Kolar to Griffin, and there we get down off the Cheyenne Hills with a long reverse curve, and drop into the cañon of the Blackwood with a three per cent. grade. Callahan, almost beside himself, threw open a north window to look for Bucks. Two men were flying down Main Street towards the station. He knew them; it was Ole and Bucks.

But Bucks! Never before or since was seen on a street of McCloud such a figure as Bucks, in his trousers and slippers, with his night-shirt free as he sailed down the wind. In another instant he was bounding up the stairs. Callahan told him.

"What have you done?" he panted, throwing himself into the chair. Callahan told him. Bucks held his head in his hands while the boy talked. He turned to the sheet—asked quick for 59.

"She's out of Callendar. I tried hard to stop her. I didn't lose a second; she was gone."

Barely an instant Bucks studied the sheet. Routed out of a sound

sleep after an eight-hour trick, and on such a night, by such a message—the marvel was he could think at all, much less set a trap which should save 59. In twenty minutes from the time Bucks took the key the two trains would be together—could he save the passenger? Callahan didn't believe it.

A sharp, quick call brought Griffin. We had one of the brightest lads on the whole division at Griffin. Callahan, listening, heard Griffin answer. Bucks rattled a question. How the heart hangs on the faint, uncertain tick of a sounder when human lives hang on it!

"Where are your section men?" asked Bucks.

"In bed at the section house."

"Who's with you?"

"Night agent. Sheriff with two cowboy prisoners waiting to take 59."

Before the last word came, Bucks was back at him:

To Opr.:

Ask Sheriff release his prisoners to save passenger-train. Go together to west switch house-track, open, and set it. Smash in section tool-house, get tools. Go to point of house-track curve, cut the rails, and point them to send runaway train from Ogalalla over the bluff into the river.

Bucks.

The words flew off his fingers like sparks, and another message crowded the wire behind it:

To Agt.:

Go to east switch, open, and set for passing-track. Flag 59, and

run her on siding. If can't get 59 into the clear, ditch the runaways.

Bucks.

They look old now. The ink is faded, and the paper is smoked with the fire of fifteen winters and bleached with the sun of fifteen summers. But to this day they hang there in their walnut frames, the original orders, just as Bucks scratched them off. They hang there in the dispatchers' offices in the new depot. But in their present swell surroundings Bucks wouldn't know them. It was Harvey Reynolds who took them off the other end of the wire—a boy in a thousand for that night and that minute. The instant the words flashed into the room he instructed the agent, grabbed an axe, and dashed out into the waiting-room, where the sheriff, Ed Banks, sat with his prisoners, the cowboys.

"Ed," cried Harvey, "there's a runaway train from Ogalalla coming down the line in the wind. If we can't trap it here, it'll knock 59 into kindling-wood. Turn the boys loose, Ed, and save the passenger-train. Boys, show the man and square yourselves right now. I don't know what you're here for; but I believe it's to save 59. Will you help?"

The three men sprang to their feet; Ed

Banks slipped the handcuffs off in a trice. "Never mind the rest of it. Save the passenger-train first," he roared. Everybody from Ogalalla to Omaha knew Ed Banks.

"Which way? How?" cried the cowboys, in a lather of excitement.

Harvey Reynolds, beckoning as he ran, rushed out the door and up the track, his posse at his heels, stumbling into the gale like lunatics.

"Smash in the tool-house door," panted Harvey as they neared it.

Ed Banks seized the axe from his hands and took command as

naturally as Dewey.

"Pick up that tie and ram her," he cried, pointing to the door. "All together—now."

Harvey and the cowboys splintered the panel in a twinkling, and Banks, with a few clean strokes, cut an opening. The cowboys jumping together, ran in and began fishing for tools in the dark. One got hold of a wrench; the other, a pick. Harvey caught up a clawbar, and Banks grabbed a spike-maul. In a bunch they ran for the point of the curve on the house-track. It lies there close to the verge of a limestone bluff that looms up fifty feet above the river.

But it is one thing to order a contact opened, and another and very different thing to open it, at two in the morning on December twenty-fifth, by men who know no more about track-cutting than about logarithms. Side by side and shoulder to shoulder the man of the law and the men out of the law, the rough-riders and the railroad boy, pried and wrenched and clawed and struggled with the steel. While Harvey and Banks clawed at the spikes the cowboys wrestled with the nuts on the bolts of the fish-plates. It was a baffle. The nuts wouldn't twist, the spikes stuck like piles, sweat covered the assailants, Harvey went into a frenzy. "Boys, we must work faster," he cried, tugging at the frosty spikes; but flesh and blood could do no more.

"There they come—there's the runaway train—do you hear it? I'm going to open the switch, anyhow," Harvey shouted, starting up the track. "Save yourselves."

Heedless of the warning, Banks struggled with the plate-bolts in a silent fury. Suddenly he sprang to his feet. "Give me the maul!" he cried.

Raising the heavy tool like a tack-hammer he landed heavily on the

bolt nuts; once, and again; and they flew in a stream like bullets over the bluff. The taller cowboy, bending close on his knees, raised a yell. The plates had given. Springing to the other rail, Banks stripped the bolts even after the mad train had shot into the gorge above them. They drove the pick under the loosened steel, and with a pry that bent the clawbar and a yell that reached Harvey, trembling at the switch they tore away the stubborn contact, and pointed the rails over the precipice.

The shriek of a locomotive whistle cut the wind. Looking east, Harvey had been watching 59's headlight. She was pulling in on the siding. He still held the switch open to send the runaways into the trap Bucks had set, if the passenger-train failed to get into the clear; but there was a minute yet—a bare sixty seconds—and Harvey had no idea of dumping ten thousand dollars' worth of equipment into the river unless he had to.

Suddenly, up went the safety signals from the east end. The 101 was coughing noisily up the passing-track—the line was clear. Banks and the cowboys, waiting breathless, saw Harvey with a determined lurch close the main-line contact.

In the next breath the coalers, with the sweep of the gale in their frightful velocity, smashed over the switch and on. A rattling whirl of ballast and a dizzy clatter of noise, and before the frightened crew of 59 could see what was against them, the runaway train was passed—gone!

"I wasn't going to stop here to-night," muttered the engineer, as he stood with the conductor over Harvey's shoulder at the operator's desk a minute later and wiped the chill from his forehead with a piece of waste. "We'd have met them in the cañon."

Harvey was reporting to Bucks. Callahan heard it coming: "Rails cut, but 59 safe. Runaways went by here fully seventy miles an hour."

It was easy after that. Griffin is the foot of the grade; from there on, the runaway train had a hill to climb. Bucks had held 250, the local passenger, side-tracked at Davis, thirty miles farther east. Sped by the wind, the runaways passed Davis, though not at half their highest speed. An instant later, 250's engine was cut loose, and started after them like a scared collie. Three miles east of Davis they were overhauled by the light engine. The fireman, Donahue, crawled out of the cab window, along the foot-rail, and down on the pilot, caught the ladder of the first car, and, running up, crept along to the leader and began setting brakes. Ten minutes later they were brought back in triumph to Davis.

When the multitude of orders was out of the way, Bucks wired Ed Banks to bring his cowboys down to McCloud on 60. 60 was the east-bound passenger due at McCloud at 5.30 A.M. It turned out that the cowboys had been arrested for lassoing a Norwegian homesteader who had cut their wire. It was not a heinous offence, and after it was straightened out by the intervention of Bucks—who was the whole thing then—they were given jobs lassoing sugar barrels in the train service. One of them, the tall fellow, is a passenger conductor on the high line yet.

It was three o'clock that morning—the twenty-fifth of December in small letters, on the West End—before they got things decently straightened out: there was so much to do—orders to make and reports to take. Bucks, still on the key in his flowing robes and tumbling hair, sent and took them all. Then he turned the seat over to Callahan, and getting up for the first time in two hours, dropped into another chair.

The very first thing Callahan received was a personal from Pat Francis, at Ogalalla, conductor of 59. It was for Bucks:

Your mother is aboard 59. She was carried by McCloud in the

Denver sleeper. Sending her back to you on 60. Merry Christmas.

It came off the wire fast. Callahan, taking it, didn't think Bucks heard; though it's probable he did hear. Anyway, Callahan threw the clip over towards him with a laugh.

"Look there, old man. There's your mother coming, after all your kicking—carried by on 59."

As the boy turned he saw the big dispatcher's head sink between his arms on the table. Callahan sprang to his side; but Bucks had fainted.

Sankey's Double Header

The oldest man in the train service didn't pretend to say how long Sankey had worked for the company.

Pat Francis was a very old conductor; but old man Sankey was a veteran when Pat Francis began braking. Sankey ran a passenger-train when Jimmie Brady was running—and Jimmie afterwards enlisted and was killed in the Custer fight.

There was an odd tradition about Sankey's name. He was a tall, swarthy fellow, and carried the blood of a Sioux chief in his veins. It was in the time of the Black Hills excitement, when railroad men struck by the gold fever were abandoning their trains, even at way-stations, and striking across the divide for Clark's crossing. Men to run the trains were hard to get, and Tom Porter, train-master, was putting in every man he could pick up, without reference to age or color.

Porter—he died at Julesburg afterwards—was a great jollier, and he wasn't afraid of anybody on earth.

One day a war-party of Sioux clattered into town. They tore around like a storm, and threatened to scalp everything, even to the local tickets. The head braves dashed in on Tom Porter, sitting in the dispatcher's office up-stairs. The dispatcher was hiding under a loose plank in the baggage-room floor; Tom, being bald as a sand-hill, considered himself exempt from scalping-parties. He was working a game of solitaire when they bore down on him, and interested them at once. That led to a parley, which ended in Porter's hiring the whole band to brake on freight-trains. Old man Sankey is said to have been one of that original war-party.

Now this is merely a caboose story—told on winter nights when trainmen get stalled in the snow drifting down from the Sioux country. But what follows is better attested.

Sankey, to start with, had a peculiar name. An unpronounceable, unspellable, unmanageable name. I never heard it; so I can't give it. It was as hard to catch as an Indian cur, and that name made more trouble on the pay-rolls than all the other names put together. Nobody at headquarters could handle it; it was never turned in twice alike, and they were always writing Tom Porter about the thing. Tom explained several times that it was Sitting Bull's ambassador who was drawing that money, and that he usually signed the pay-roll with a tomahawk. But nobody at Omaha ever knew how to take a joke.

The first time Tom went down he was called in very solemnly to explain again about the name; and being in a hurry, and very tired of the whole business, Tom spluttered:

"Hang it, don't bother me any more about that name. If you can't read it, make it Sankey, and be done with it."

They took Tom at his word. They actually did make it Sankey; and that's how our oldest conductor came to bear the name of the famous singer. And more I may say: good name as it was—and is—the Sioux never disgraced it.

Probably every old traveller on the system knew Sankey. He was not only always ready to answer questions, but, what is much more, always ready to answer the same question twice: it is that which makes conductors gray-headed and spoils their chances for heaven—answering the same questions over and over again. Children were apt to be a bit startled at first sight of Sankey—he was so dark. But he had a very quiet smile, that always made them friends after the second trip through the sleepers, and they sometimes ran about

asking for him after he had left the train.

Of late years—and it is this that hurts—these very same children, grown ever so much bigger, and riding again to or from California or Japan or Australia, will ask when they reach the West End about the Indian conductor.

But the conductors who now run the overland trains pause at the question, checking over the date limits on the margins of the coupon tickets, and, handing the envelopes back, will look at the children and say, slowly, "He isn't running any more."

If you have ever gone over our line to the mountains or to the coast you may remember at McCloud, where they change engines and set the diner in or out, the pretty little green park to the east of the depot with a row of catalpa-trees along the platform line. It looks like a glass of spring water.

If it happened to be Sankey's run and a regular West End day, sunny and delightful, you would be sure to see standing under the catalpas a shy, dark-skinned girl of fourteen or fifteen years, silently watching the preparations for the departure of the Overland.

And after the new engine had been backed, champing down, and harnessed to its long string of vestibuled sleepers; after the air hose had been connected and the air valves examined; after the engineer had swung out of his cab, filled his cups, and swung in again; after the fireman and his helper had disposed of their slice-bar and shovel, and given the tender a final sprinkle, and the conductor had walked leisurely forward, compared time with the engineer, and cried, "All Abo-o-o-ard!"

Then, as your coach moved slowly ahead, you might notice under the

receding catalpas the little girl waving a parasol, or a handkerchief, at the outgoing train—that is, at conductor Sankey; for she was his daughter, Neeta Sankey. Her mother was Spanish, and died when Neeta was a wee bit. Neeta and the Limited were Sankey's whole world.

When Georgie Sinclair began pulling the Limited, running west opposite Foley, he struck up a great friendship with Sankey. Sankey, though he was hard to start, was full of early-day stories. Georgie, it seemed, had the faculty of getting him to talk; perhaps because when he was pulling Sankey's train he made extraordinary efforts to keep on time—time was a hobby with Sankey. Foley said he was so careful of it that when he was off duty he let his watch stop just to save time.

Sankey loved to breast the winds and the floods and the snows, and if he could get home pretty near on schedule, with everybody else late, he was happy; and in respect of that, as Sankey used to say, Georgie Sinclair could come nearer gratifying Sankey's ambition than any runner we had.

Even the firemen used to observe that the young engineer, always neat, looked still neater the days that he took out Sankey's train. By-and-by there was an introduction under the catalpas; after that it was noticed that Georgie began wearing gloves on the engine—not kid gloves, but yellow dogskin—and black silk shirts; he bought them in Denver.

Then—an odd way engineers have of paying compliments—when Georgie pulled into town on No. 2, if it was Sankey's train, the big skyscraper would give a short, hoarse scream, a most peculiar note, just as they drew past Sankey's house, which stood on the brow of the hill west of the yards. Then Neeta would know that No. 2 and her father, and naturally Mr. Sinclair, were in again, and all safe and sound.

When the railway trainmen held their division fair at McCloud, there was a lantern to be voted to the most popular conductor—a gold-plated lantern with a green curtain in the globe. Cal Stewart and Ben Doton, who were very swell conductors, and great rivals, were the favorites, and had the town divided over their chances for winning it.

But during the last moments Georgia Sinclair stepped up to the booth and cast a storm of votes for old man Sankey. Doton's friends and Stewart's laughed at first, but Sankey's votes kept pouring in amazingly. The favorites grew frightened; they pooled their issues by throwing Stewart's vote to Doton; but it wouldn't do. Georgie Sinclair, with a crowd of engineers—Cameron, Moore, Foley, Bat Mullen, and Burns—came back at them with such a swing that in the final round up they fairly swamped Doton. Sankey took the lantern by a thousand votes, but I understood it cost Georgie and his friends a pot of money.

Sankey said all the time he didn't want the lantern, but, just the same, he always carried that particular lantern, with his full name, Sylvester Sankey, ground into the glass just below the green mantle. Pretty soon—Neeta being then eighteen—it was rumored that Sinclair was engaged to Miss Sankey—was going to marry her. And marry her he did; though that was not until after the wreck in the Blackwood gorge, the time of the Big Snow.

It goes yet by just that name on the West End; for never was such a winter and such a snow known on the plains and in the mountains. One train on the northern division was stalled six weeks that winter, and one whole coach was chopped up for kindling-wood.

But the great and desperate effort of the company was to hold open the main line, the artery which connected the two coasts. It was a hard winter on trainmen. Week after week the snow kept falling and blowing. The trick was not to clear the line; it was to keep it clear. Every day we sent out trains with the fear we should not see them again for a week.

Freight we didn't pretend to move; local passenger business had to be abandoned. Coal, to keep our engines and our towns supplied, we were obliged to carry, and after that all the brains and the muscle and the motive-power were centred on keeping 1 and 2, our through passenger-trains, running.

Our trainmen worked like Americans; there were no cowards on our rolls. But after too long a strain men become exhausted, benumbed, indifferent—reckless even. The nerves give out, and will power seems to halt on indecision—but decision is the life of the fast train.

None of our conductors stood the hopeless fight like Sankey. Sankey was patient, taciturn, untiring, and, in a conflict with the elements, ferocious. All the fighting-blood of his ancestors seemed to course again in that struggle with the winter king. I can see him yet, on bitter days, standing alongside the track, in a heavy pea-jacket and Napoleon boots, a sealskin cap drawn snugly over his straight, black hair, watching, ordering, signalling, while No. 1, with its frost-bitten sleepers behind a rotary, struggled to buck through the ten and twenty foot cuts, which lay bankful of snow west of McCloud.

Not until April did it begin to look as if we should win out. A dozen times the line was all but choked on us. And then, when snow-ploughs were disabled and train crews desperate, there came a storm that discounted the worst blizzard of the winter. As the reports rolled in on the morning of the 5th, growing worse as they grew thicker, Neighbor, dragged out, played out, mentally and physically, threw up his hands. The 6th it snowed all day, and on Saturday morning the section men reported thirty feet in the Blackwood cañon.

It was six o'clock when we got the word, and daylight before we got the rotary against it. They bucked away till noon with discouraging results, and came in with their gear smashed and a driving-rod fractured. It looked as if we were beaten.

No. 1 got into McCloud eighteen hours late; it was Sankey's and Sinclair's run west.

There was a long council in the round-house. The rotary was knocked out; coal was running low in the chutes. If the line wasn't kept open for the coal from the mountains it was plain we should be tied until we could ship it from Iowa or Missouri. West of Medicine Pole there was another big rotary working east, with plenty of coal behind her, but she was reported stuck fast in the Cheyenne Hills.

Foley made suggestions and Dad Sinclair made suggestions. Everybody had a suggestion left; the trouble was, Neighbor said, they didn't amount to anything, or were impossible.

"It's a dead block, boys," announced Neighbor, sullenly, after everybody had done. "We are beaten unless we can get No. 1 through to-day. Look there; by the holy poker it's snowing again!"

The air was dark in a minute with whirling clouds. Men turned to the windows and quit talking; every fellow felt the same—at least, all but one. Sankey, sitting back of the stove, was making tracings on his overalls with a piece of chalk.

"You might as well unload your passengers, Sankey," said Neighbor. "You'll never get 'em through this winter."

And it was then that Sankey proposed his Double Header.

He devised a snow-plough which combined in one monster ram about all the good material we had left, and submitted the scheme to Neighbor. Neighbor studied it and hacked at it all he could, and brought it over to the office. It was like staking everything on the last cast of the dice, but we were in the state of mind which precedes a desperate venture. It was talked over for an hour, and orders were finally given by the superintendent to rig up the Double Header and get against the snow as quick as it could be made ready.

All that day and most of the night Neighbor worked twenty men on Sankey's device. By Sunday morning it was in such shape that we began to take heart.

"If she don't get through she'll get back again, and that's what most of 'em don't do," growled Neighbor, as he and Sankey showed the new ram to the engineers.

They had taken the 566, George Sinclair's engine, for one head, and Burns's 497 for the other. Behind these were Kennedy with the 314 and Cameron with the 296. The engines were set in pairs, headed each way, and buckled up like pack-mules. Over the pilots and stacks of the head engines rose the tremendous ploughs which were to tackle the toughest drifts ever recorded, before or since, on the West End. The ram was designed to work both ways. Under the coal each tender was loaded with pig-iron.

The beleaguered passengers on No. 1, side-tracked in the yards, watched the preparations Sankey was making to clear the line. Every amateur on the train had his camera snapping at the ram. The town, gathered in a single great mob, looked silently on, and listened to the frosty notes of the sky-scrapers as they went through their preliminary manoeuvres. Just as the final word was given by Sankey, in charge, the sun burst through the fleecy clouds, and a wild cheer followed the ram out of the western yard—it was good-luck to see the sun again.

Little Neeta, up on the hill, must have seen them as they pulled out; surely she heard the choppy, ice-bitten screech of the 566; that was never forgotten whether the service was special or regular. Besides, the head cab of the ram carried this time not only Georgie Sinclair but her father as well. Sankey could handle a slice-bar as well as a punch, and rode on the head engine, where, if anywhere, the big chances hovered. What he was not capable of in the train service we never knew, because he was stronger than any emergency that ever

confronted him.

Bucking snow is principally brute force; there is little coaxing. Just west of the bluffs, like code signals between a fleet of cruisers, there was a volley of sharp tooting, and in a minute the four ponderous engines, two of them in the back motion, fires white and throats bursting, steamed wildly into the cañon.

Six hundred feet from the first cut Sinclair's whistle signalled again; Burns and Cameron and Kennedy answered, and then, literally turning the monster ram loose against the dazzling mountain, the crews settled themselves for the shock.

At such a moment there is nothing to be done. If anything goes wrong eternity is too close to consider. There comes a muffled drumming on the steam-chests—a stagger and a terrific impact—and then the recoil like the stroke of a trip-hammer. The snow shoots into the air fifty feet, and the wind carries a cloud of fleecy confusion over the ram and out of the cut. The cabs were buried in white, and the great steel frames of the engines sprung like knitting-needles under the frightful blow.

Pausing for hardly a breath, the signalling again began. Then the backing; up and up and up the line; and again the massive machines were hurled screaming into the cut.

"You're getting there, Georgie," exclaimed Sankey, when the rolling and lurching had stopped. No one else could tell a thing about it, for it was snow and snow and snow; above and behind, and ahead and beneath. Sinclair coughed the flakes out of his eyes and nose and mouth like a baffled collie. He looked doubtful of the claim until the mist had blown clear and the quivering monsters were again recalled for a dash. Then it was plain that Sankey's instinct was right; they were gaining.

Again they went in, lifting a very avalanche over the stacks, packing the banks of the cut with walls hard as ice. Again as the drivers stuck they raced in a frenzy, and into the shriek of the wind went the unearthly scrape of the overloaded safeties.

Slowly and sullenly the machines were backed again.

"She's doing the work, Georgie," cried Sankey. "For that kind of a cut she's as good as a rotary. Look everything over now while I go back and see how the boys are standing it. Then we'll give her one more, and give it the hardest kind."

And they did give her one more—and another. Men at Santiago put up no stouter fight than they made that Sunday morning in the cañon of the Blackwood. Once and twice more they went in. And the second time the bumping drummed more deeply; the drivers held, pushed, panted, and gained against the white wall—heaved and stumbled ahead—and with a yell from Sinclair and Sankey and the fireman, the Double Header shot her nose into the clear over the Blackwood gorge. As engine after engine flew past the divided walls, each cab took up the cry—it was the wildest shout that ever crowned victory.

Through they went and half-way across the bridge before they could check their monster catapult. Then at a half-full they shot it back at the cut—it worked as well one way as the other.

"The thing is done," declared Sankey. Then they got into position up the line for a final shoot to clean the eastern cut and to get the head for a dash across the bridge into the west end of the cañon, where lay another mountain of snow to split.

"Look the machines over close, boys," said Sankey to the engineers. "If nothing's sprung we'll take a full head across the gorge—the bridge will carry anything—and buck the west cut. Then after we get No. 1 through this afternoon Neighbor can get his baby cabs in here and

keep 'em chasing all night; but it's done snowing," he added, looking into the leaden sky.

He had everything figured out for the master-mechanic—the shrewd, kindly old man. There's no man on earth like a good Indian; and for that matter none like a bad one. Sankey knew by a military instinct just what had to be done and how to do it. If he had lived he was to have been assistant superintendent. That was the word which leaked from headquarters after he got killed.

And with a volley of jokes between the cabs, and a laughing and a yelling between toots, down went Sankey's Double Header again into the Blackwood gorge.

At the same moment, by an awful misunderstanding of orders, down came the big rotary from the West End with a dozen cars of coal behind it. Mile after mile it had wormed east towards Sankey's ram, burrowed through the western cut of the Blackwood, crashed through the drift Sankey was aiming for, and whirled then out into the open, dead against him, at forty miles an hour. Each train, in order to make the grade and the blockade, was straining the cylinders.

Through the swirling snow which half hid the bridge and swept between the rushing ploughs Sinclair saw them coming—he yelled. Sankey saw them a fraction of a second later, and while Sinclair struggled with the throttle and the air, Sankey gave the alarm through the whistle to the poor fellows in the blind pockets behind. But the track was at the worst. Where there was no snow there were whiskers; oil itself couldn't have been worse to stop on. It was the old and deadly peril of fighting blockades from both ends on a single track.

The great rams of steel and fire had done their work, and with their common enemy overcome they dashed at each other frenzied across the Blackwood gorge.

The fireman at the first cry shot out the side. Sankey yelled at Sinclair to jump. But George shook his head: he never would jump. Without hesitating an instant, Sankey caught him in his arms, tore him from the levers, planted a mighty foot, and hurled Sinclair like a block of coal through the gangway out into the gorge. The other cabs were already emptied; but the instant's delay in front cost Sankey's life. Before he could turn the rotary crashed into the 566. They reared like mountain lions, and pitched headlong into the gorge; Sankey went under them.

He could have saved himself; he chose to save George. There wasn't time to do both; he had to choose and he chose instinctively. Did he, maybe, think in that flash of Neeta and of whom she needed most—of a young and a stalwart protector better than an old and a failing one? I do not know; I know only what he did.

Every one who jumped got clear. Sinclair lit in twenty feet of snow, and they pulled him out with a rope; he wasn't scratched; even the bridge was not badly strained. No. 1 pulled over it next day. Sankey was right: there was no more snow; not enough to hide the dead

engines on the rocks: the line was open.

There never was a funeral in McCloud like Sankey's. George Sinclair and Neeta followed together; and of mourners there were as many as there were people. Every engine on the division carried black for thirty days.

His contrivance for fighting snow has never yet been beaten on the high line. It is perilous to go against a drift behind it—something has to give.

But it gets there—as Sankey got there—always; and in time of blockade and desperation on the West End they still send out Sankey's Double Header; though Sankey—so the conductors tell the children, travelling east or travelling west—Sankey isn't running any more.

Siclone Clark

"There goes a fellow that walks like Siclone Clark," exclaimed Duck Middleton. Duck was sitting in the train-master's office with a group of engineers. He was one of the black-listed strikers, and runs an engine now down on the Santa Fé. But at long intervals Duck gets back to revisit the scenes of his early triumphs. The men who surrounded him were once at deadly odds with Duck and his chums, though now the ancient enmities seem forgotten, and Duck—the once ferocious Duck—sits occasionally among the new men and gossips about early days on the West End.

"Do you remember Siclone, Reed?" asked Duck, calling to me in the private office.

"Remember him?" I echoed. "Did anybody who ever knew Siclone forget him?"

"I fired passenger for Siclone twenty years ago," resumed Duck. "He walked just like that fellow; only he was quicker. I reckon you fellows don't know what a snap you have here now," he continued addressing the men around him. "Track fenced; ninety-pound rails; steel bridges; stone culverts; slag ballast; sky-scrappers. No wonder you get chances to haul such nobs as Lilioukalani and Schley and Dewey, and cut out ninety miles an hour on tangents.

"When I was firing for Siclone the road-bed was just off the scrapers; the dumps were soft; pile bridges; paper culverts; fifty-six-pound rails; not a fence west of Buffalo gap, and the plains black with Texas steers. We never closed our cylinder cocks; the hiss of the steam frightened the cattle worse than the whistle, and we never knew when we were going to find a bunch of critters on the track.

"The first winter I came out was great for snow, and I was a tenderfoot. The cuts made good wind-breaks, and whenever there was a norther they were chuck full of cattle. Every time a train ploughed through the snow it made a path on the track. Whenever the steers wanted to move they would take the middle of the track single file, and string out mile after mile. Talk about fast schedules and ninety miles an hour. You had to poke along with your cylinders spitting, and just whistle and yell—sort of blow them off into the snow-drifts.

"One day Siclone and I were going west on 59, and we were late; for that matter we were always late. Simpson coming against us on 60 had caught a bunch of cattle in the rock-cut, just west of the Sappie, and killed a couple. When we got there there must have been a thousand head of steers mousing around the dead ones. Siclone—he used to be a cowboy, you know—Siclone said they were holding a wake. At any rate, they were still coming from every direction and as far as you could see.

"'Hold on, Siclone, and I'll chase them out,' I said.

"'That's the stuff, Duck,' says he. 'Get after them and see what you can do.' He looked kind of queer, but I never thought anything. I picked up a jack-bar and started up the track.

"The first fellow I tackled looked lazy, but he started full quick when I hit him. Then he turned around to inspect me, and I noticed his horns were the broad-gauge variety. While I whacked another the first one put his head down and began to snort and paw the ties; then they all began to bellow at once; it looked smoky. I dropped the jack-bar and started for the engine, and about fifty of them started for me.

"I never had an idea steers could run so; you could have played checkers on my heels all the way back. If Siclone hadn't come out and

jollied them, I'd never have got back in the world. I just jumped the pilot and went clear over against the boiler-head. Siclone claimed I tried to climb the smoke-stack; but he was excited. Anyway, he stood out there with a shovel and kept the whole bunch off me. I thought they would kill him; but I never tried to chase range steers on foot again.

"In the spring we got the rains; not like you get now, but cloud-bursts. The section men were good fellows, only sometimes we would get into a storm miles from a section gang and strike a place where we couldn't see a thing.

"Then Siclone would stop the train, take a bar, and get down ahead and sound the road-bed. Many and many a wash-out he struck that way which would have wrecked our train and wound up our ball of yarn in a minute. Often and often Siclone would go into his division without a dry thread on him.

"Those were different days," mused the grizzled striker. "The old boys are scattered now all over this broad land. The strike did it; and you fellows have the snap. But what I wonder, often and often, is whether Siclone is really alive or not."

Siclone Clark was one of the two cowboys who helped Harvey Reynolds and Ed Banks save 59 at Griffin the night the coal-train ran down from Ogalalla. They were both taken into the service; Siclone, after a while, went to wiping.

When Bucks asked his name, Siclone answered, "S. Clark."

"What's your full name?" asked Bucks.

"S. Clark."

"But what does S. stand for?" persisted Bucks.

"Stands for Cyclone, I reckon; don't it?" retorted the cowboy, with some annoyance.

It was not usual in those days on the plains to press a man too closely about his name. There might be reasons why it would not be esteemed courteous.

"I reckon it do," replied Bucks, dropping into Siclone's grammar; and without a quiver he registered the new man as Siclone Clark; and his checks always read that way. The name seemed to fit; he adopted it without any objection; and, after everybody came to know him, it fitted so well that Bucks was believed to have second sight when he named the hair-brained fireman. He could get up a storm quicker than any man on the division, and, if he felt so disposed, stop one quicker.

In spite of his eccentricities, which were many, and his headstrong way of doing some things, Siclone Clark was a good engineer, and deserved a better fate than the one that befell him. Though—who can tell?—it may have been just to his liking.

The strike was the worst thing that ever happened to Siclone. He was one of those big-hearted, violent fellows who went into it loaded with enthusiasm. He had nothing to gain by it; at least, nothing to speak of. But the idea that somebody on the East End needed their help led men like Siclone in; and they thought it a cinch that the company would have to take them all back.

The consequence was that, when we staggered along without them, men like Siclone, easily aroused, naturally of violent passions, and with no self-restraint, stopped at nothing to cripple the service. And they looked on the men who took their places as entitled neither to liberty nor life.

When our new men began coming from the Reading to replace the

strikers, every one wondered who would get Siclone Clark's engine, the 313. Siclone had gently sworn to kill the first man who took out the 313—and bar nobody.

Whatever others thought of Siclone's vaporings, they counted for a good deal on the West End; nobody wanted trouble with him.

Even Neighbor, who feared no man, sort of let the 313 lay in her stall as long as possible, after the trouble began.

Nothing was said about it. Threats cannot be taken cognizance of officially; we were bombarded with threats all the time; they had long since ceased to move us. Yet Siclone's engine stayed in the round-house.

Then, after Foley and McTerza and Sinclair, came Fitzpatrick from the East. McTerza was put on the mails, and, coming down one day on the White Flyer, he blew a cylinder-head out of the 416.

Fitzpatrick was waiting to take her out when she came stumping in on one pair of drivers—for we were using engines worse than horseflesh then. But of course the 416 was put out. The only gig left in the house was the 313.

I imagine Neighbor felt the finger of fate in it. The mail had to go. The time had come for the 313; he ordered her fired.

"The man that ran this engine swore he would kill the man that took her out," said Neighbor, sort of incidentally, as Fitz stood by waiting for her to steam.

"I suppose that means me," said Fitzpatrick.

"I suppose it does."

"Whose engine is it?"

"Siclone Clark's."

Fitzpatrick shifted to the other leg.

"Did he say what I would be doing while this was going on?"

Something in Fitzpatrick's manner made Neighbor laugh. Other things crowded in and no more was said.

No more was thought in fact. The 313 rolled as kindly for Fitzpatrick as for Siclone Clark, and the new engineer, a quiet fellow like Foley, only a good bit heavier, went on and off her with never a word for anybody.

One day Fitzpatrick dropped into a barber shop to get shaved. In the next chair lay Siclone Clark. Siclone got through first, and, stepping over to the table to get his hat, picked up Fitzpatrick's, by mistake, and walked out with it. He discovered his change just as Fitz got out of his chair. Siclone came back, replaced the hat on the table—it had Fitzpatrick's name pasted in the crown—took up his own hat, and, as Fitz reached for his, looked at him.

Everyone in the shop caught their breaths.

"Is your name Fitzpatrick?"

"Yes, sir."

"Mine is Clark."

Fitzpatrick put on his hat.

"You're running the 313, I believe?" continued Siclone.

"Yes, sir."

"That's my engine."

"I thought it belonged to the company."

"Maybe it does; but I've agreed to kill the man that takes her out before this trouble is settled," said Siclone, amiably.

Fitzpatrick met him steadily. "If you'll let me know when it takes place, I'll try and be there."

"I don't jump on any man without fair warning; any of the boys will tell you that," continued Siclone. "Maybe you didn't know my word was out?"

Fitzpatrick hesitated. "I'm not looking for trouble with any man," he replied, guardedly. "But since you're disposed to be fair about notice, it's only fair to you to say that I did know your word was out."

"Still you took her?"

"It was my orders."

"My word is out; the boys know it is good. I don't jump any man without fair warning. I know you now, Fitzpatrick, and the next time I see you, look out," and without more ado Siclone walked out of the shop greatly to the relief of the barber, if not of Fitz.

Fitzpatrick may have wiped a little sweat from his face; but he said nothing—only walked down to the round-house and took out the 313 as usual for his run.

A week passed before the two men met again. One night Siclone with a crowd of the strikers ran into half a dozen of the new men, Fitzpatrick among them, and there was a riot. It was Siclone's time to carry out his intention, for Fitzpatrick would have scorned to try to get away. No tree ever breasted a tornado more sturdily than the Irish engineer withstood Siclone; but when Ed Banks got there with his wrecking crew and straightened things out, Fitzpatrick was picked up for dead. That night Siclone disappeared.

Warrants were gotten out and searchers put after him; yet nobody

could or would apprehend him. It was generally understood that the sudden disappearance was one of Siclone's freaks. If the ex-cowboy had so determined he would not have hidden to keep out of anybody's way. I have sometimes pondered whether shame hadn't something to do with it. His tremendous physical strength was fit for so much better things than beating other men that maybe he, himself, sort of realized it after the storm had passed.

Down east of the depot grounds at McCloud stands, or stood, a great barnlike hotel, built in boom days, and long a favorite resting-place for invalids and travellers en route to California by easy stages. It was nicknamed the barracks. Many railroad men boarded there, and the new engineers liked it because it was close to the round-house and away from the strikers.

Fitzpatrick, without a whine or a complaint, was put to bed in the barracks, and Holmes Kay, one of our staff surgeons, was given charge of the case; a trained nurse was provided besides. Nobody thought the injured man would live. But after every care was given him, we turned our attention to the troublesome task of operating the road.

The 313, whether it happened so, or whether Neighbor thought it well to drop the disputed machine temporarily, was not taken out again for three weeks. She was looked on as a hoodoo, and nobody wanted her. Foley refused point-blank one day to take her, claiming that he had troubles of his own. Then, one day, something happened to McTerza's engine; we were stranded for a locomotive, and the 313 was brought out for McTerza; he didn't like it a bit.

Meantime nothing had been seen or heard of Siclone. That, in fact, was the reason Neighbor urged for using his engine; but it seemed as if every time the 313 went out it brought out Siclone, not to speak of worse things.

That morning about three o'clock the unlucky engine was coupled on

to the White Flyer. The night boy at the barracks always got up a hot lunch for the incoming and outgoing crews on the mail run, and that morning when he was through he forgot to turn off the lamp under his coffee-tank. It overheated the counter, and in a few minutes the wood-work was ablaze. If the frightened boy had emptied the coffee on the counter he could have put the fire out; but instead he ran out to give the alarm, and started up-stairs to arouse the guests.

There were at least fifty people asleep in the house, travelling and railway men. Being a wooden building it was a quick prey, and in an incredibly short time the flames were leaping through the second-story windows.

When I got down men were jumping in every direction from the burning hotel. Railroaders swarmed around, busy with schemes for getting the people out, for none are more quick-witted in time of panic. Short as the opportunity was there were many pretty rescues, until the flames, shooting up, cut off the stairs, and left the helpers nothing for it but to stand and watch the destruction of the long, rambling building. Half a dozen of us looked from the dispatchers' offices in the second story of the depot. We had agreed that the people were all out, when Foley below gave a cry and pointed to the south gable. Away up under the eaves at the third-story window we saw a face—it was Fitzpatrick.

Everybody had forgotten Fitzpatrick and his nurse. Behind, as the flames lighted the opening, we could see the nurse struggling to get him to the window. It was plain that the engineer was in no condition to help himself; the two men were in deadly peril; a great cry went up.

The crowd swarmed like ants around to the south end; a dozen men called for ladders; but there were no ladders. They called for volunteers to go in after the two men; but the stairs were long since a furnace. There were men in plenty to take any kind of chance, however slight, but no chance offered.

The nurse ran to and from the window, seeking a loop-hole for escape. Fitzpatrick dragged himself higher on the casement to get out of the smoke which rolled over him in choking bursts, and looked down on the crowd. They begged him to jump—held out their arms frantically. The two men again side by side waved a hand; it looked like a farewell. There was no calling from them, no appeal. The nurse would not desert his charge, and we saw it all.

Suddenly there was a cry below, keener than the confused shouting of the crowd, and one running forward parted the men at the front and, clearing the fence, jumped into the yard under the burning gable.

Before people recognized him a lariat was swinging over his head—it was Siclone Clark. The rope left his arm like a slung-shot and flew straight at Fitzpatrick. Not seeing, or confused, he missed it, and the rope, with a groan from the crowd, settled back. The agile cowboy caught it again into a loop and shot it upward, that time fairly over Fitzpatrick's head.

"Make fast!" roared Siclone. Fitzpatrick shouted back, and the two men above drew taut. Hand over hand Siclone Clark crept up, like a monkey, bracing his feet against the smoking clapboards, edging away from the vomiting windows, swinging on the single strand of horse-hair, and followed by a hundred prayers unsaid.

Men who didn't know what tears were tried to cry out to keep the choking from their throats. It seemed an age before he covered the last five feet, and the men above caught frantically at his hands.

Drawing himself over the casement, he was lost with them a moment; then, from behind a burst of smoke, they saw him rigging a maverick saddle on Fitzpatrick; saw Fitzpatrick lifted by Clark and the nurse over the sill, lowered like a wooden tie, whirling and swinging, down into twenty arms below. Before the trainmen had got the engineer loose, the nurse, following, slid like a cat down the incline; but not an

instant too soon. A tongue of flame lit the gable from below and licked the horse-hair up into a curling, frizzling thread; and Siclone stood alone in the upper casement.

It seemed for the moment he stood there the crowd would go mad. The shock and the shouting seemed to confuse him; it may have been the hot air took his breath. They yelled to him to jump; but he swayed uncertainly. Once, an instant after that, he was seen to look down; then he drew back from the casement. I never saw him again.

The flames wrapped the building in a yellow fury; by daylight the big barracks were a smouldering pile of ruins. So little water was thrown that it was nearly nightfall before we could get into the wreck. The tragedy had blotted out the feud between the strikers and the new men. Side by side they worked, as side by side Siclone and Fitzpatrick had stood in the morning, striving to uncover the mystery of the missing man. Next day twice as many men were in the ruins.

Fitzpatrick, while we were searching, called continually for Siclone Clark. We didn't tell him the truth; indeed, we didn't know it; nor do we yet know it. Every brace, every beam, every brick was taken from the charred pile. Every foot of cinders, every handful of ashes sifted; but of a human being the searchers found never a trace. Not a bone, not a key, not a knife, not a button which could be identified as his. Like the smoke which swallowed him up, he had disappeared completely and forever.

Is he alive? I cannot tell.

But this I know.

Years afterwards Sidney Blair, head of our engineering department,

was running a line, looking then, as we are looking yet, for a coast outlet.

He took only a flying camp with him, travelling in the lightest kind of order, camping often with the cattlemen he ran across.

One night, away down in the Panhandle, they fell in with an outfit driving a bunch of steers up the Yellow Grass trail. Blair noted that the foreman was a character. A man of few words, but of great muscular strength; and, moreover, frightfully scarred.

He was silent and inclined to be morose at first, but after he learned Blair was from McCloud he unbent a bit, and after a time began asking questions which indicated a surprising familiarity with the northern country and with our road. In particular, this man asked what had become of Bucks, and, when told what a big railroad man he had grown, asserted, with a sudden bitterness and without in any way leading up to it, that with Bucks on the West End there never would have been a strike.

Sitting at their camp-fire while their crews mingled, Blair noticed in the flicker of the blaze how seamed the throat and breast of the cattleman were; even his sinewy forearms were drawn out of shape. He asked, too, whether Blair recollected the night the barracks burned; but Blair at that time was east of the river, and so explained, though he related to the cowboy incidents of the fire which he had heard, among others the story of Fitzpatrick and Siclone Clark.

"And Fitzpatrick is alive and Siclone is dead," said Blair, in conclusion. But the cowboy disputed him.

"You mean Clark is alive and Fitzpatrick is dead," said he.

"No," contended Sidney, "Fitzpatrick is running an engine up there now. I saw him within three months." But the cowboy was loath to conviction.

Next morning their trails forked. The foreman seemed disinclined to part from the surveyors, and while the bunch was starting he rode a long way with Blair, talking in a random way. Then, suddenly wheeling, he waved a good-bye with his heavy Stetson and, galloping hard, was soon lost to the north in the ruts of the Yellow Grass.

When Blair came in he told Neighbor and me about it. Blair had never seen Siclone Clark, and so was no judge as to his identity; but Neighbor believes yet that Blair camped that night way down in the Panhandle with no other than the cowboy engineer.

Once again, that only two years ago, something came back to us.

Holmes Kay, one of our staff of surgeons, the man, in fact, who took care of Fitzpatrick, enlisted in Illinois and went with the First to Cuba. They got in front of Santiago just after the hard fighting of July 1st, and Holmes was detailed for hospital work among Roosevelt's men, who had suffered severely the day before.

One of the wounded, a sergeant, had sustained a gunshot wound in the jaw, and in the confusion had received scant attention. Kay took hold of him. He was a cowboy, like most of the rough-riders, and after his jaw was dressed Kay made some remark about the hot fire they had been through before the block-house.

"I've been through a hotter before I ever saw Cuba," answered the rough-rider, as well as he could through his bandages. The remark directed Kay's attention to the condition of his breast and neck, which were a mass of scars.

"Where are you from?" asked Holmes.

"Everywhere."

"Where did you get burned that way?"

"Out on the plains."

"How?"

But the poor fellow went off into a delirium, and to the surgeon's amazement began repeating train orders. Kay was paralyzed at the way he talked our lingo—and a cowboy. When he left the wounded man for the night he resolved to question him more closely the next day; but the next day orders came to rejoin his regiment at the trenches. The surrender shifted things about, and Kay, though he made repeated inquiry, never saw the man again.

Neighbor, when he heard the story, was only confirmed in his belief that the rough-rider was Siclone Clark. I give you the tales as they came to me, and for what you may make of them.

I myself believe that if Siclone Clark is still alive he will one day yet come back to where he was best known and, in spite of his faults, best liked. They talk of him out there as they do of old man Sankey.

I say I believe if he lives he will one day come back. The day he does will be a great day in McCloud. On that day Fitzpatrick will have to take down the little tablet which he placed in the brick façade of the hotel which now stands on the site of the old barracks. For, as that tablet now stands, it is sacred to the memory of Siclone Clark.

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