

For the Boys and Girls

A RUNAWAY TRAIN

BY LOVELL COOMBS.

"Close the door, Alex, or the lamp will blow out!"

The young night operator at the Foothills station laughingly flicked his rain-soaked cap toward the day operator, whom he had just come to relieve.

"Is it raining that hard? You look like a drowned rat for sure," observed Saunders as he reached for his hat and coat. "Why didn't you stay at home and 'phone down? I would have been glad to work for you—maybe!"

"Wait until you are out in it, and you'll not laugh," declared Alex, struggling out of his dripping ulster. "It is the worst storm this spring."

"And wait until you see the fun you are going to have with the wire to-night, and you'll not indulge in an over-abundance of smiles. I haven't had a dot from the despatcher since six o'clock. Had to get clearance for Nineteen around by MQ, and now we've lost them."

"There is someone now," said Alex, as the telegraph instruments began clicking.

"It's somebody west. IC, I think. Yes; Indian Canyon," said Saunders, pausing as he turned to the door.

"What is he after? He certainly can't make himself heard by X if we can't."

"X, X, X," rapidly repeated the scunder, calling Exeter, the despatching office. "X, X, X! Qk!"

Alex and Saunders looked at one another. Several times the operator at Indian Canyon repeated the call, more urgently, then as hurriedly began calling Imken, the next station east of him.

"There must be something wrong," declared Alex, stepping to the instrument table. Saunders followed him.

"IM, IM, IC, Qk! Qk!" clicked the sounder.

"IM, IM—" "I, I, IM," came the response. The two operators at Foothills listened closely.

"A wild string of loaded ore cars just passed here," buzzed the instruments. "Were going forty miles an hour. They'll be down there in no time. If there's anything on the main line get it off. I can't raise X for orders."

The two listening operators exchanged glances of alarm, and anxiously awaited Imken's response. For a moment the sounder made a succession of inarticulate dots, then ticked excitedly. "Yes, yes! OK! OK!" and closed.

"What did he mean by that?" asked Saunders beneath his breath. "That there was something on the main track there?"

"Perhaps a switch engine cutting out ore empties. We'll know in a minute."

The wire again snapped open, and whirred. "I got it off—the yard engine! Just in time! Here they come now! Like thunder! . . . 'There—they're by! Ten of them. All loaded. Going like an avalanche. Lucky thing the yard engine was—"

Sharply the operator at Indian Canyon broke into hurriedly call Terryville, the next station east.

"But the runaways won't pass Terryville, will they?" Alex exclaimed. "Won't the grades between there and Imken pull them up?"

Saunders shook his head. "Ten loaded ore cars travelling at that rate would climb those grades."

"Then they will be down here—and in twenty or thirty minutes! And there's the Accommodation coming from the east," said Alex rapidly, "and we can't reach anyone to stop her!"

Saunders stared. "That's so; I had forgotten her. But what can we do?" he demanded helplessly.

Terryville answered and in strained silence Alex and Saunders awaited his report. The sounder clicked. "Yes, they are coming!" it spelled. "I thought it was thunder. . . . Here they are now! . . . They're past!"

"They'll reach us," gasped Saunders. "What shall we do?"

Alex turned from the table, and as the Indian Canyon operator hastily called Jakes Creek, the last station intervening, began striding up and down the room, thinking rapidly.

If they only had more battery—could make the current in the wire stronger! Immediately on the thought came remembrance of the emergency battery he had made the previous year at Watson Siding. He spun about toward the office water-cooler. But only to utter an exclamation of disappointment. This cooler was of tin—of course, useless for such a purpose.

Hurriedly he began casting about for a substitute. "Billy, think of something we can use to make a big battery jar!" he cried. "To strengthen the wire!"

"A battery? What would we do for

bluestone? I used the last yesterday!"

Alex returned to the table, and threw himself hopelessly into the chair.

At the moment the Jakes Creek operator answered his call, and received the message of warning.

"Say," said Saunders, "perhaps some of the other fellows on the wire have bluestone and the other stuff, and could make a battery!"

Alex uttered a shout. "That's it!" he cried, and springing to the telegraph key, as soon as the wire closed, called Indian Canyon.

"Have you any extra battery material there?" he sent quickly.

"No. Why—" "Abruptly Alex cut him off and called Imken. The Imken operator also responded in the negative. But from Terryville came a prompt "Yes. Why?"

"Have you one of those big stone-ware water-coolers there?"

"Yes, but wh—" "Do you know how to make a battery?"

"No." "Well, listen—" The instrument suddenly failed to respond. A minute passed, and another. Five went by, and Alex sank back in the chair in despair. Undoubtedly the storm had broken the wire somewhere.

"Everything against us!" he declared bitterly. "And the runaways will be down here in fifteen minutes or twenty. What can we do?"

"I can't think of anything but throwing the west switch," said Saunders. "And loaded, and going at the speed they are, they'll make a mess of everything on the siding. But that's the only way I can think of stopping them."

"If there was any way a fellow could get aboard the runaways—" Alex broke off sharply. Would it not be possible to board the runaway train as he and Jack Orr had boarded the engine on the day of the forest fire? Say, from a sand-car?

He started to his feet. "Billy, get me a lantern, quick!"

"I'm going for the section-boss, to see if we can't board the runaways from the hand-car," he explained as he began struggling into his rain coat. "I did that once at Bixton—boarded an engine."

"Board it! How?" "Run ahead of it and let it catch us."

Saunders sprang for the lantern and lit it. Alex caught it from him, sprang for the door, and was out and off across the tracks in the direction of the section foreman's cottage. He darted through the gate, ran about to the kitchen, and without ceremony flung open the door. The foreman was at the table, at his supper. He started to his feet.

"Joe, there is a wild ore train coming down from the Canyon," explained Alex breathlessly. "The wire has failed east, and we can't clear the line. Can't we get the jigger out and board the runaways by letting them catch us?"

An instant the section-boss stared. With the promptitude of the old rail-roader he reached for his cap and coat. "Go ahead!" he exclaimed, and together they dashed out to the gate and across the tracks in the direction of the tool-house.

"Where did they start from? How many cars?" asked the foreman as they ran.

"Indian Canyon. Ten, and all loaded."

The section-man whistled. They'll be going twenty-five or thirty miles an hour. We will be taking a big chance. But if we can catch them just over the grade beyond the sandpits I guess we can do it. That will have slackened them. Here we are."

As they halted before the section-house door the boss uttered a cry. "I haven't the key!"

Alex swung the lantern about and discovered a pile of ties. "Smash it," he suggested, and dropped the lantern. One on either side they caught up a tie, swayed back, and hurled it against the door. There was a crash, and the door swung open.

Recovering the lantern, they dashed into the toolhouse, threw from the hand-car its collection of tools, placed the light upon it, ran it out, and swung it on to the rails.

"Do you hear them?" asked Alex as he threw off his coat. The foreman dropped to his knees and placed his ear to the rails. He listened a moment, and sprang to his feet. "Yes! Come on!"

They pushed the handcar into motion, ran it a few yards, and sprang aboard. One on either side, they began pumping up and down with all their strength. Rapidly the car gained speed.

As they neared the station, the door opened and Saunders ran to the edge of the platform. "The wire came OK and I heard Z pass Thirty-three," he shouted, "but couldn't make them hear me. He reported the superintendent's—"

They whirled by, and the rest was lost.

"Did you catch it?" shouted Alex above the roar of the car.

"I think he meant," shouted the foreman as he bobbed up and down, "superintendent's car . . . attached to the Accommodation . . . heard he was coming . . . makes it bad . . . We need every minute. . . and Old Jerry . . . the engineer. . . 'I'll be breaking his neck . . . to bring her . . . through on time! Do you hear . . . runaways yet?"

"No." At increasing speed they rushed on through the darkness, bobbing up and down like jumping-jacks, the little car humbling and screeching, bounding as though it would leap from the rails.

The terrific strain began to tell on Alex. Perspiration broke out on his forehead, his muscles began to burn, and his breath shortened.

"How much farther . . . to the grade?" he panted.

"Here it is now. Six hundred yards to the top."

As they left the resistance of the incline Alex began to weaken and gasp for breath. Grimly, he clenched his teeth, and fought on. At last the section-man suddenly ceased working, and announced, "Here we are. Let up." With a gasp of relief Alex dropped to a sitting position on the side of the car.

"There they come," said the foreman a moment after, listening. Alex heard a sound as of distant thunder.

"How long before they'll be here?" "Five minutes, perhaps. And now, are we going to work this thing?"

"Well, when we boarded the engine at Bixton," explained Alex, getting his breath, "we simply waited at the head of a grade until the train was within about two hundred yards of us, then lit out as hard as we could go. As she bumped us, we jumped for the cowcatcher."

"All right. We'll do the same."

As the foreman spoke, the rain, which had decreased to a drizzle, entirely ceased, and a moment after the

noon appeared. He and Alex at once turned toward the station.

Just beyond was a long black snake-like object shooting along the rails towards them.

The runaway! On it swept over the glistening rails, the rumble quickly increasing to a roar. With an echoing crash it flashed by the station, and on.

Nearer it came, the cars leaping and writhing; roaring, pounding, screeching.

"Ready!" warned the foreman, springing to the ground behind the handcar. Alex joined him, and together, watching over their shoulder, they braced for the shove.

The runaway reached the incline and swept on upward. Anxiously the two at the handcar watched. Would the incline check the train?

"I don't believe they're slowing a bit," said Alex nervously.

"They won't until they are half-way up," declared the section-man. "But, get ready. We can't wait to see!"

"Go!" he cried. They ran the car forward, leaped aboard, and again were pumping with all their might.

For a few moments the roar behind them seemed to decrease. Then suddenly it broke on them afresh as the head of the train swept over the rise.

"Now pull yourself together for an extra spurt when I give the word," shouted the foreman, who manned the forward handles, and faced the rear.

"Then turn about and get ready to jump."

Roaring, screaming, clanking, the runaways thundered down upon them. "Hit it up!" cried the section-man. With every muscle tense they whirled the handles up and down like human engines.

"Let go! Turn round!"

Alex sprang back from the flying handles, and faced about. The foreman edged by them and joined him.

Nearer, towering over them, rushed the leading ore car.

"Jump high and grab hard," shouted the foreman. "You take the brake-rod. I can't reach the top."

"Ready! Jump!"

With a bound they went into the air, and the great car flung itself at them. Both reached their objectives, and hung on desperately. For a few moments it seemed the leaping car would shake them off. They got their feet on the brake-beam, and in another moment had tumbled headlong over the low end upon the rough surface of ore.

Alex sank down in a heap, gasping. The seasoned section-man, however, was on his feet in an instant and at the nearby hand-brake. He tightened it, and scrambled back over the bounding car to the next.

Ten minutes later, screeching and groaning as though in protest, the runaways came to a final stop.

Another ten minutes, and the engineer of the Accommodation suddenly threw on the air as he rounded a curve to discover a lantern swinging across the rails ahead of him.

"Hello there, Jerry! Say, you're getting too slow for a passenger run," said the section foreman humorously as he approached the astonished engineer. "We're going to put you back pushing ore cars. There's a string here just ahead of you."

When he had explained the engineer dropped down from his cab to grasp Alex's hand. "Oh, it was more the foreman than I," Alex declared. "I couldn't have worked it alone."

A moment later the superintendent appeared. "Why, let me see," he exclaimed on seeing Alex. "Are you not the lad I helped fix up an emergency battery at Watson Siding last spring? My boy, young as you are, my name's not Cameron if I don't see that you have a try-out at the division office before the month is out," he announced decisively. "We need men there with a head like yours."



With The Boy Scouts

A Story of Scouting—Con'd.

Nor does the boy who risks his life lack for recognition. To his surprise he receives a bronze or silver medal from Headquarters, and a letter which means even more. Perhaps, if his bravery has been particularly remarkable, as was that of a Scout in Cobalt, Ont., the whole community turns out to see the Mayor pin it on his jacket.

He is a sixteen-year-old boy, the Ontario Honor Scout, but all the year has been studying Scouting without missing a meeting. Like other members of his troop, he was rushing around the little silver mining town, doing what he could to help with relief work at the time the great Temiskaming forest fire was roaring almost at the northern entrance to the town, when he learned that a special train was to be sent to North Cobalt to endeavor to bring to safety some hundreds of people who had been all but trapped there by the fire demon. Running to the railway yards he found that the regular fireman for the only available locomotive was missing and no one was on hand to take his place. Immediately the Scout offered his services, climbed into the cab before they were accepted, and helped the engineer away with the train.

The Scout was so young that the work of stoking the big fire box was too much for him, so he took the engineer's place at the throttle while the driver used the shovel. The trip was a most dangerous one, as great clouds of smoke made it impossible to see any distance ahead of the engine. In places telegraph lines were down across the tracks, and some of the railway ties were burning. North Cobalt was reached without mishap. More than a hundred people were crowded to the train, and the Scout and the engineer ran it back again to Cobalt and to safety.

Of course, all Scouts haven't a chance to be such spectacular heroes, but they go right ahead with their everyday life in the same spirit of bravery. It means as great a sacrifice to some to give up a "hike" in order to help mother with the dishes, or to close his ears to the whistle of his patrol, when a garden is to be weeded. Some city boys must watch themselves constantly to guard against the profanity they learn almost unconsciously and hear all about them, or must grit their teeth when they hear the jeers occasioned by refusing the cigarette offered by a one time idol.

Some adults forget how sensitive a boy is to ridicule, how he hates to be thought different from other fellows. Others are so partial that they encourage their sons to selfishness and lack of consideration for others. Both boys'ish faults are met by the Scout training, which teaches the boy not to be afraid to do what seems right to them, and always to remember that a Scout is a brother to every other Scout and a friend to all the world.

To-morrow.

He was going to be all that a mortal should be

To-morrow. No one should be kinder or braver than he

To-morrow. A friend who was troubled and weary he knew.

To-morrow. Who'd be glad of a lift and who needed it, too;

To-morrow. On him he would call and see what he could do

To-morrow. Each morning he stacked up the letters he'd write

To-morrow. And thought of the folks he would fill with delight

To-morrow. It was too bad, indeed, he was busy to-day;

To-morrow. And hadn't a minute to stop on his way;

To-morrow. More time he would have to give others, he'd say.

To-morrow. The greatest of workers this man would have been

To-morrow. The world would have known him had he ever seen

To-morrow. But the fact is he died and he faded from view.

To-morrow. And all that he left here when living was through

To-morrow. Was a mountain of things he intended to do

To-morrow. From "A Heap o' Living," by Edgar A. Guest.



WHY THE WEST IS SMILING

A scene on a prairie farm, which is repeated thousands of times throughout the west, showing the grain stacked and waiting for threshing. Canada this year has the largest crop in her history, 470,000,000 bushels, just thirty million short of the half billion mark. The bountiful harvest spells prosperity for the entire Dominion.

"A battery? What would we do for