

RAILROAD CONDUCTORS.

The New York Express has an article upon railway conductors, which shows up in an interesting manner that the popular idea is ill-founded which considers that the occupation of railway conductors is one of those that men who depend upon the labor of their hands for support, are apt to look to as particularly desirable; a life filled with pleasing incidents, enviable authority, and opportunity for constant enjoyment.

Having taken charge of a train on the point of starting from a terminus, the conductor is supreme in authority upon and over it until it reaches its destination. It is true that the engineer has certain responsibilities of his own, among which is included the matter of "making time," or arriving and leaving intermediate stations in accordance with a fixed schedule, and running the train into the last station at a precise minute previously fixed; but in controlling his movements to meet the requirement he is subject to the action of the conductor, who may seriously interfere with or without just cause, with the engineer's performances. This will be noticed further on. When the conductor gives the signal for starting the train, then and there only must it be put in motion, and if he chooses to stop it in two seconds afterwards, or the lapse of half a minute, or anywhere between stations, neither engineers nor others have the right to thwart his will. He is supposed to know, and unless somebody other than himself has blundered, he does know all important circumstances connected with his running. If excursion trains are out he knows where to look for or pass them; he knows if any engine is "running wild" so as to cross his path; he understands all the points where he may expect, where he ought, in fact, to meet regular trains, and he knows when and where he has a right to the road over which he travels, and under what circumstances to grant it to other trains. He knows just how long he may stop at a station without losing time, and he has a realization of all the endless disputes which may arise either with train or road hands, or passengers, and how to settle them. There are many other things he takes into account which his passengers never dream of, and which his associates on the train feel little or no responsibility about, although they are alert in such affairs as a matter of self-interest. He must tell by his sense of hearing whether all is right, or rather, if anything is wrong, among the wheels or mechanism of the train on which he rides. When he passes over a bad place on the road he knows pretty nearly what makes it bad, and whether it has grown worse since he last passed it, and whether he should give additional warning concerning it at headquarters. Moreover he knows—and this he must not only know, but must not forget—how to be a gentleman, even under the most trying circumstances.

Few people feel as do the conductor and engineer the importance of making time with a train, although most people are ready enough to notice any omission to do this. Supposing a half-minute to be lost at a station, and there are fourteen intermediate stations between termini, it is clear that about seven minutes would be lost in the trip, from this cause alone, supposing only the normal trip rate of speed run by the train. The conductor and engineer ought to be, and generally are, upon pretty good terms, and if time is thus lost the engineer will make it up between stations somewhere, unless, indeed, he has reasons for not doing, which would be likely in some way to be connected with the conductor. Under ordinary circumstances the conductor would not, however, lose a half-minute, or any time at all, at intermediate stations. On some trips, say those on Saturday evening, when people are going home for Sunday, or any special occasions, such as will readily present themselves to the reader, stoppage at stations must be prolonged to accommodate unusual travel, but your really energetic conductor, who knows his business and has a reputation for making time, has a sort of magnetism and persuasive way with him which make people step about lively, and jump off and on the train in a manner business-like, which is not at all dangerous. It is the slow, sluggish conductor who never leaves exactly on time, that is perpetually leaving passengers. Promptness in word and action on the part of a conductor will always insure prompt movement all along the line where he is known.

There are few cases wherein a passenger is warranted in pulling the cord which runs through the whole length of a passenger train, since such proceeding stops the train as speedily as possible, and if the practice should become general, or was of frequent occurrence, great confusion would result. As a rule, this bell-cord is entirely under the control of the conductor, and should be used only by him or with his sanction. To be sure, if one saw a person fall from a platform, or found the car to be on fire, or was cognizant of some circumstance of equal importance, pulling the rope would be justifiable, and ensure would not be likely to follow where reasonable persons were interested. But the action may not be unaccompanied by extreme peril, and that without the help of the person stopping the train, as the following will illustrate: On the Old Colony Road, during the time when the steamboat express train left Boston for Fall River at 5:30 p.m., a train bound for Plymouth, from Boston, rolled into the depot at South Braintree about 5 o'clock, on time and all right. Due about the same time, but on this occasion a few minutes later, the train from Cape Cod, bound for Boston, rolled in on the other side of the same depot. The two trains usually waited for an interchange of mails and passengers, the operation being performed in a very short time. It was Saturday night, and as has been said, the Cape was just a little late. The steamboat express was within a minute or two of being due, but always there on time. The Plymouth train stood upon the roadway over which the express would have to pass, and the latter made no stop, nor even slackened speed. Immediately after leaving the depot the Plymouth train would branch off to the left and take another track, leaving all clear for the express to go down the same road over which the Cape train had just come. The conductor of the Plymouth train gave the signal to his engineer when he knew he ought no longer stand there, although he had ample time to get his train clear off in season. The train was eleven cars, or something over 500 feet long. It started and had cleared half its length upon its own track when bell-cord was jerked, and the train was stopped as speedily as possible. Fully one-half the cars were now directly in the track of the coming express, which would not be able to see them until it was upon them, and the express was due in a few seconds. The conductor had not pulled the cord; he did not know who had. He was fully impressed with the importance of the situation, but what should he do? For all he knew, in the darkness, half a dozen women or children were under the wheels of his train, or some of his cars were off the track, and he jumped upon the depot platform and called aloud to know who had stopped his train. "I did," replied a gentlemanly season ticket-holder, who stood upon a car platform. "What is the matter?" The lives of all on board the two trains had been put in peril that a negro girl who had arrived on the Cape and wished to take the Plymouth might be gratified. She had become bewildered in the darkness, and was wandering around in that way when the train started. In a second of time the train was again in motion, cleared the track, the headlight of the express appeared rounding the curve, and it rushed past into the darkness, its passengers all unconscious of the danger which had been so near them.

A PROMOTION.

A boot-black, seeming ready to burst into tears every moment, was yesterday seated in the sun at the post-office, and a good-hearted lawyer chucked him under the chin and asked if his regular fall season for chills had arrived.

"I kinder feel like having chills, and I kinder feel sad in my thought," was the reply. "Any of the folks sick?" "Not as I know of."

"Perhaps the sight of falling leaves and other evidences of the dying year affect you," observed the lawyer. "Mebbe they does, and mebbe it's cause I lent a boy ten cents Saturday night."

"But won't he pay it back?" "I dunno. He went out hunting Sunday, and I've got a feelin' that he went to shoot at a crow, and the crow flew, and the gun went off, and the muzzler kicked around, and the breech flew up, and all the shot hit Dick in the stumix. If he got shot and taking on, that no one will think to ask me if he owed me ten cents."

"Will this relieve your mind?" asked the lawyer as he passed over a dime.

"Well, not quite, sir, but it'll sort o' reconcile me to takin' mere chances on Dick's hittin' the crow instead of himself."

STARTING A BOY.

A homesome-looking boy was yesterday hanging around a wood-yard in the northern part of the city, when the owner of the yard, having both charity and philanthropy for boys with tears in their eyes, asked the lad why he didn't peddle apples or do something to earn a few shillings. The boy replied that he had no capital, and under what circumstances to grant it to other trains. He knows just how long he may stop at a station without losing time, and he has a realization of all the endless disputes which may arise either with train or road hands, or passengers, and how to settle them. There are many other things he takes into account which his passengers never dream of, and which his associates on the train feel little or no responsibility about, although they are alert in such affairs as a matter of self-interest.

"Now, my boy, I am going to start you in life. Take this nickel and go and make a purchase of something or other. I'll buy it of you for ten cents, no matter what it is. Come, now, let's see what sort of a business lead you have on you."

The boy took the nickel and went off, but in ten minutes was back with a gallon jug which he had purchased with the nickel. "Well, you are a keener," replied the man. "I never saw one of those sold for less than fifteen cents to any one. I want such a jug, and here's its fair price. Go now and lay out your fifteen cents in apples, and I'll buy half your stock."

The boy did not return. Perhaps he fell in to a sewer somewhere; but you can't make the wood-yard man believe so. When he lifted the jug from under the table where the boy had carefully placed it he found a hole in the bottom large enough to let in a black and tan terrier.

SHE SAW

A tacky sort of a boy stood in front of a house on Sprout street yesterday for a full quarter of an hour, gently rubbing his sore heel against the fence-pickets and thinking deeply, but there was a well-counterited look of alarm on his face as his vigorous pull at the bell got the woman of the house to the door.

"What is it?" she asked, as he looked this way, and that, and danced around.

"Put down yer winders—bolt yer doors—yard all full of lions!" he replied as he skipped for the gate.

She uttered a little scream and disappeared, and for half an hour that house was as tightly closed as a post-office box on the upper tier. Then the woman cautiously put her head out, gazed around, grew bolder and finally appeared in the front yard. She looked about her, her chin trembling a little, but by degrees a peculiar look stole over her face.

"Yes—um—I see!" she snipped as she turned to go in. "The boy saw these tiger lilies and played a game on me. Um—I see!" She never thought of dandelions.—Detroit Free Press.

CATHOLIC EDUCATION IN SCOTLAND.

The general report for 1870 of Dr. Middleton, H. M. I., concerning the "Lower Ward of Lanarkshire and five adjoining parishes," is very interesting to Catholics. Dr. Middleton states that our body has put forth great exertions during the past seven years, and he gives evidence thereof. The number of schools built since August, 1870, is 18, and they provide accommodation for 9874 pupils, at a total cost of £70,735. There are four other schools in contemplation, entailing an expense of £14,400. The teacher-stalls comprise 64 certificated teachers, and 31 non-certificated. Well might the Inspector say:—"The magnitude of these figures attests the educational zeal and liberality of the Roman Catholics. The money they expend in school building may fairly be considered money? to the ratepayers." As regards the furnishing and general appliances, the testimony is most favorable. Then Dr. Middleton touches upon a fallacy frequently expressed—that in Catholic schools religion is everything and secular education of small account. He attributes this delusion to ignorance, and points out that the managers, while taking care of the child's religion, are deeply impressed with the importance of sending him forth with secular equipment sound enough to give him a fair chance in the competition with others. In plain terms, there is exactly the same secular instruction given in Catholic schools as in non-Catholic schools—which Catholics already know and prove, but which it is as well all the world should know, from so impartial and so undeniable an authority. When the Inspector comes round he subjects all—pupils and pupil-teachers—to the same tests of efficiency; and Dr. Middleton advises those who wish to know what Catholic schools can earn in the way of annual grants to consult the Blue Book.

A man who had been fishing, and came home without any spoils of the finny tribe, told his wife that he had seen but one fish, and that was pike, which looked at his bait and seemed weighing the chances between catching it and being caught himself. The wife responded:—"And of course he was able to weigh the matter correctly, because he had so many scales." "That finishes me," exclaimed the man, as he dropped into a chair.

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