

THE RAILWAY DEPARTMENT OF THE YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION AS A FACTOR IN MODERN RAILWAY OPERATION

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Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen:—

I assure you it is with a great deal of pleasure that I am here this evening, particularly as I have had the privilege of meeting with a good many men whom I met some twelve years ago, when I first came to Toronto. I regard it as an honor to the Association I represent to be invited to come here and talk about the work of the Young Men's Christian Association.

Modern inventions and appliances now in common use on all railroads of importance have not relieved employees of responsibility, but have rather laid a heavier burden upon them. The International Limited of the Grand Trunk worth many thousands of dollars more than the best trains of twenty years ago, and carrying more passengers, if wrecked would involve a greater loss in money certainly, if not in life. Double tracks, air brakes, automatic signals, call for additional watchfulness and intelligence on the part of employees.

It is inevitable that a railway company should inquire into the moral character of its employees, and have a concern about the way they conduct themselves when off duty as well as when at the post of responsibility. There is a story told of a negro brakeman in the South, which seems to furnish an exception to the general right of a company to exercise a strict supervision over an employee's actions.

Two freight trains met on the Norfolk and Western Ry., but not before one of the head brakemen, a long, lanky negro, saw what was about to happen, swung down to the ground, ran out into the field and witnessed the crash from a safe distance. In the investigation which followed, the Superintendent said, "Jim, where were you when the trains met?" Jim replied, "I was over in de field." "Jim, don't you know that you are expected to stay at your post of duty? We do not pay you for being over in the field." Jim's answer came quickly, "Boss, I don't charge you a cent for de time I was over in de field." The unquestioned right of a railroad company to insist on good moral conduct carries with it a corresponding obligation to provide means whereby right living may be encouraged.

In a study of the factors which go to make success in railroading or any other great mechanical enterprise, the human element must have due consideration. It is to give emphasis to the necessity of honesty, integrity and sobriety, that the