

A RUNAWAY LOCOMOTIVE



A Story for Boys and Girls....

Every boy who is as "boyish" as he ought to be has had, at some time in his life, an overwhelming desire to be a locomotive engineer. The size of the engine, the speed of its course, the mystery of the signals, the life-like motion of the iron creature, and the element of danger involved in running it—all these appeal to his imagination. They combine to persuade him that the only profession worth choosing is that of the man who sits with his hand on the throttle, his eyes fixed on the track before him, and his hair streaming in the wind, while, with coaches coming after him like riders on a bob-sled, he swings around curves and dashes down grades at fifty miles an hour.

I confess that although far past the age of a boy, I am not yet beyond the fascination of all this. That is the reason why, before starting on a trip to New York last summer, I applied to a friend of mine, an officer of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company, for an "engine permit" to ride on the engine over the western division of the main line between Pittsburgh and Altoona.

I rode on the fireman's side of the cab. From there I watched the engineer. He was a sturdy man of forty-five, with strong muscles, clear eyes, and cool nerves, who looked as if nothing ever could excite him. He attended strictly to his work, and during the first five hours of the run, that is, until we had gone through the Gallitzin Tunnel and started down the eastern slope of the mountains, he spoke only once to his fireman and not at all to me. Then, at the very time when we were running fast, and at a point where I least expected it, he took his hand from the throttle, leaned back, and began to talk to me.

"Everything here depends, not on me, but on the men in charge of the track," he explained, when I expressed my surprise that he should appear so careless here. "I am almost helpless now if anything should be on the track—but nothing will be on the track. This section is carefully 'walked' and the switches are in charge of 'old reliables.' We are running without steam, on block signals, and have automatic brakes. There is little for me to do except to wait while we drop down, down, down to the foot of the mountain.

"Running pretty fast?" Not so fast as once. Then, prompted either by reminiscence or by that spirit of mischief which causes Arab guides to tell tales of people falling while they lead tourists down the sides of the Pyramids, he chose that as the time and place to tell me the following story:

"It was during the first month that I was on the Pennsylvania, twenty years ago. The thing has happened before and it has happened since, but I had learned my trade on a prairie railroad, where we did not have grades, and I had never heard of such an accident.

"I was 'freighting' then. Jim Gardner was my fireman, and we two had charge of a big, old-fashioned, seventy-six-ton Mogul 'pusher.' Our business was to help freight trains from Altoona to the top, and run back empty on the east-bound track.

"That morning we went up with a load of heavy cars, cut off at Crestline, and started to drop back. We had 'turned the Shoe' and were well out on the hill when I heard something snap. I looked down at my drivers and then across at Jim. Without looking he had known what the trouble was, and jumped. To this day I can hear his yell, 'A runaway!' as he leaped into the bushes forty feet below.

"The trouble was this: The brake was badly worn, so that one spring pressed more tightly than the other on its tire. The undue friction heated it until it cracked. The broken piece flew into the frame and tore away the king-pin. This let the whole attachment drop to the ties and it was jerked away. The iron horse, freed from this restraining hold, sprang forward like a stallion from a broken tether, and started wildly down the mountain. Before I realized that I could do nothing, and

that it was useless for me to stay, it was too late to jump. There I was, helpless and alone, in a runaway engine.

"And how that engine did run! It seemed as if the drivers were racing to catch the pilot-wheels, and neither could run fast enough to satisfy the piston-rods. They bounded on the tracks till every inch of gearing shook and rattled. The smoke-stack toppled like the head of a dizzy man, while the boiler staggered like his body about to fall. The steam-valve of the whistle was jarred open now and then, and it gave little cries of fiendish glee; while every minute we kept going faster and faster.

"We had gone perhaps a mile before I could draw my wits together sufficiently to think just what was the real danger. As I reasoned the matter out, it appeared to be threefold: we would either run into something on the track; or some switchman, in order to save other trains, would open a siding and 'ditch' us; or else we would run on until the grade became so steep and the speed so great that we would fly the track.

"We passed a block-station. The operator hung far out of the window to watch us. Then I saw him turn to his instrument. He was sending the word ahead, and the track would soon be cleared. The first of the three dangers might be counted out.

"I reflected, too, that the second

disappeared after a while, then came in sight a half-mile nearer. We had passed several trains, either running or standing still, on the west-bound track, but what was my horror when on swinging into line with this, I saw that it was on the outside track!

"It disappeared again round a curve and I tried to estimate the distance. It could not be two miles off. I concluded that they had decided to wreck my engine for the safety of the road, and that to do this, another one, without an engineer, had been sent against mine, and that the two would meet and be thrown over the cliff at a point that was still out of sight.

"What could I do? I tried to think. Once I decided to make a wild leap for my life, but when I looked down the gorge my courage failed me. I simply sat still—dazed—waiting for the awful crash.

"How long would it be? I waited what I thought was time enough. Nothing happened. Then I waited again. Then I caught my breath, and, when the strain became too great, I sprang to my feet and looked ahead. There was an engine in sight, but it was running from me.

"There was an engineer also, but he had come to save me, not to wreck me. He had run as near as he dared, then stopped, thrown his reverse lever, turned on full steam and



"I WAS HELPLESS AND ALONE IN A RUNAWAY ENGINE."

became less real inasmuch as he had seen me; for I guessed, from the astonishment he showed at seeing an engineer still riding, that I would have been expected to jump. Now I reasoned that the switchmen would be less likely to throw out the engine when warned that it carried human freight. So I counted out that possibility.

"Still we ran. We passed two more block-stations, with operators at the windows; but we went so fast I scarcely caught a glimpse of them. The trees flew away behind us as if trying to escape from something, while telegraph-poles stood so close together that they looked like upright bars across the window of the cab.

"So far we had no sharp curves, and although the road ran in and out I could see portions of it for three miles ahead; but only portions, for sometimes it hid itself. You see how all the way down here the road is built against the side of the mountain, and that we are on the outside track. You see, too, if an engine jumped the track where it would go. Well, I was looking away off yonder when I saw an engine coming, head on, full speed up the mountain. It

was now running backward, at almost my own rate, ahead of me. It was desperate work, but he gradually allowed my engine to catch up with his, received the shock as easily as he could, then put on his brakes and brought both under control.

"That was before the days of air-brakes. 'Runaways' do not occur now; but when they did, that is how they were caught—when they were caught. When they were not, they either wrecked themselves, or something else, or both; and for many years they were the most serious menace to railroaders on the steep grades of the Alleghenies.

Donald's Vacation.

"Donald! Donald! Donald!" Mrs. Turner stood in the hall a moment, and then, with a queer little smile on her face, turned and went out on the side veranda. A white-bearded, jolly-faced old man looked up expectantly as she came out. They talked a few minutes in low tones.

"I expect you're right," the old man said. "He probably needs the lesson." The smile gone from his face, he took up the lines and drove the fat white horse out of the yard. Mrs. Turner went back to her baking.

Upstairs in his bedroom Donald was making a kite. It was the first day of vacation, and he intended to have it ready should he want to fly it. He had just finished the frame when he heard his mother's first call. "She just wants me to bring in an armful of wood," he said to himself. "Sarah can do it just as well's not." "Sides, I've got to keep at it if I ever get it done. Shouldn't wonder if the wind'd come up so's we fellows can fly 'em this afternoon," and he spread out the stiff paper and prepared to cut it out.

Donald had got into a bad habit of not starting as soon as he was told to do a thing, and sometimes of not answering when called, but he was not disturbed again.

An hour later he went down stairs after a drink of water.

"I am sorry you didn't hear me call, Donald," said his mother. "Grandpa was here, and wanted you to go out to Uncle Charlie's with him to stay the rest of the week. Uncle Charlie tapped his sugar bush Saturday, and he thought you would enjoy spending your vacation out on the farm."

"O mamma, why didn't you call—!" and then he stopped. He remembered. She had called. "I didn't s'pose you wanted anything much!" he wailed. "Oh, oh, oh!"

That night Mamma Turner had a long talk with him, but nevertheless it was a very sorry-faced little boy who got up Tuesday morning.

Wednesday morning Mamma Turner told him he must not let his mistake spoil his whole week's vacation; and finally he went off upstairs to finish the kite. He had worked half an hour, perhaps, when he heard his mother in the hall below.

"Donald!" she cried. Donald waited no second call. His lesson had been bitter, and now he started at once.

"What is it, mamma?" he asked, from over the banisters.

"Grandpa is here," said Mamma Turner. "He had to come in for new buckets, and he would like to know if you care—" but Donald waited no longer. He was down stairs and out on the porch in a twinkling.

"Here, young man, get your rubber boots and your old clothes," said grandpa, laughing. "We want a hired man about your size to help in the sugar bush—that is, if his hearing is good," he added, his eyes twinkling, and mamma assured him that Donald's had improved since Monday.

How Peter Named Himself.

Percy Morgan's aunty, going to Europe, presented her pet cat to her nephew. Since this aunty had lived just next door, it was not a hard matter to induce her "Peter" to change homes, although at first he winked indifferently at Percy's coaxing, and refused to budge an inch from the top of the post by the veranda steps.

But the night fell cold, and Peter was hungry; so he rose, stretched himself, and walked solemnly over to the next house.

After his hunger was appeased at Percy's eager hands, he was persuaded to sit in front of the open fire in the library and be stroked and petted by his new master. He even deigned to sing a low song in his deep bass voice.

With this he seemed to consider himself completely installed in his new home.

Percy was delighted with his new pet. It was "so nice to have something to play with which was alive!"

One day he suddenly exclaimed, "What a horrid name Peter is for my nice cat! I don't see what did make aunty call him Peter!"

"Rechristen him," suggested papa. Papa was laid up on the sofa for a few days with a sprained ankle, and was, therefore, ready to be useful mentally to any one.

Percy gladly caught at the suggestion. "May I, papa? Do you think he'd learn a new name?"

"Certainly." Percy sat lost in thought for several minutes, and seemed to be intently watching a stick of wood burn in two and fall apart. "Papa," he finally said, "I can't think of any name nice enough."

Papa had also been thinking. "Suppose we let him choose his own name," he said.

"Oh, how? how?" "I'll show you. Bring me a newspaper and the shears."

Then he showed his son how to trim off the margins and cut them into lengths of about six inches. "Now," said he, taking out his pencil, "we'll write a name on each one. Let me see—" and he scribbled busily until every strip was marked. Then he read the list to Percy:

"Jerry, Tony, Ginger, Tom, Grimalkin, Tiger, Cato, Plato, Otto, Mustafa, Caesar, Rene."

The boy laughed. "Why, papa, I

think some are very queer. What is that Grim-Grim—"

"Grimalkin means an old cat."

"But my cat isn't old."

Papa smiled. "No, that's true, dear; but he will be if he lives long enough, and just while he's young you might call him 'Grim' for short."

"All right," and Percy's face was perfectly contented.

"Now then, tie the cord across the room and then pin the papers upon it as Bridget pins her clothes upon the line. Good! Now stand here by me and jar the line so that the papers will flutter, and see if Peter won't try to catch them. The one he succeeds in pulling off will have his name upon it."

Percy quickly started them dancing like veritable sprites, and Peter was all attention in a twinkling. He ran along the line, looking up curiously at each quivering paper.

Back and forth several times he went. He mounted a chair, and putting his head very knowingly on one side, reached out his paw toward an end paper. No; it was too far off. To the other end he ran, where, springing to Percy's shoulder, he attempted to walk from it down the string, but fell to the floor.

"Peter thought he could walk a tight rope without any practice, didn't he?" said papa. But Percy was laughing too hard to reply, or even to wonder what a tight rope was.

There was an ottoman on the floor with a fur rug thrown over it. Peter went over to it and threw himself upon it, but still closely watched the tantalizing papers. Finally he fixed his eyes brightly on one, while his tail thrashed back into the fur and twitched excitedly, sometimes only the tip, and sometimes with a quiver

that ran its whole length. Suddenly his claws gripped the edge of the ottoman, his eyes dilated, and with a mighty spring he brought down a paper. Percy fairly shrieked with delight. In fact, he was so excited he forgot all about the name.

"Run and get the paper!" cried papa. "He'll tear it up, and you'll never know what his name is."

Percy quickly secured the precious paper then, which the cat was holding wildly about the room. He slowly spelled out the name thereon. "Papa," he's called himself Caesar. That's like a king, isn't it?"

"Yes; and the old Caesars were great conquerors, so it is a very fitting name for such a conquering hero as your cat has proved himself to be."

The Night Express.

There's a light at last in the sable mist, and it hangs like a rising star

On the border-line 'twixt earth and sky, where the rails run straight and far;

And deeply sounds from hill to hill in mighty monotone, A distant voice—a hoarse, wild note with savage warning blown.

'Tis the night express, and well named, for behold! from out the night

It comes and darkly adown the rails it looms to the startled sight—Larger, nearer, nearer yet—till at last there's a clang and rattle,

A wave of heat, and a gleam of light from a closing furnace door;

Then the crash and shriek of the rushing train—and our hearts beat fast and high.

When sudden and swift through the shadowy mist the night express goes by!

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