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Wolfville, March 22, 1900.

Ben and the President.

Old Ben, with the coal piled high and her water box full to overflowing, backed suddenly down on the baggage car of the 7:30 "local" from Worcester and with a savage "ker-chunk" that sent a shiver through the entire train, allowed herself to be coupled by the quick fingered brakeman.

It wanted but five minutes to the half hour, but already a steady stream of passengers heavily laden with all kinds of mysterious looking parcels, was pouring down the platform and into the cars.

There was much bustle and confusion and some few mishaps, as when a nervous old lady tumbled a man with her umbrella, and an exuberant youth accidentally shoved a woman's bonnet over her eyes. But nobody seemed to mind such things, and everybody laughed and joked together as though they had known one another all their lives, and there was no such thing as ill-nature.

For this was the evening of December 24, and the spirit of Christmas was over the land.

The brakemen were kept busy picking up packages that had fallen from over-burdened arms as the people mounted the cars.

They would "size up" each bundle and then hand it back with a merry jest.

"Don't forget the kids' popcorn, ma'am!" or "I reckon your husband's going to get a pair of carpet slippers to-morrow, ain't he?" and everyone would laugh—the women most of all.

But happiest of this happy crowd was Ben the train boy. In a little over an hour and a half he should be home with his dear mother and young brother Dick, and his sister Sal. As he sat on a trunk in the baggage car with his pile of papers by his side, waiting for the train to start, he could think of nothing but that happy reunion.

Since his father died he had been the mainstay of the family. Every man on the road and all the regular passengers knew Ben's cheery voice and bright face. He sold more papers than any other boy on the line, it was said, and he earned enough to keep his little comfortable in the trim little cottage that stood near the Edgerton station, and in whose every window tonight a light would burn, as it always did on every Christmas eve to welcome Ben home.

The boy was home but seldom. The night express carried him far past Edgerton without a stop, and the morning "dyer" back to Worcester gave him but a fleeting glimpse of the dear faces that never failed to nod at him from the window.

Ben had been saving up for this Christmas with more than the usual self-denial, and the result of it all was now before him neatly packed in a wooden box.

Two men there were aboard the "7:30 local" whose faces reflected nothing of the Christmas cheer. The engineer with his visored cap pulled down over his eyes, was chewing doggedly on a quid of tobacco as he leaned listlessly out of the cab-window. The fireman was going about restlessly oiling and polishing up what was already oiled and polished, though he knew that of all nights this extra labor would be wasted on this particular trip.

Presently the fireman put down his oil can and looked up at the engineer.

"What time is the strike ordered for?" he asked.

"Half-past eight, to the second," growled the engineer.

"Why that will leave us 10 miles from nowhere?" cried the fireman whose name was Stubbins. "Nice Christmas we'll have. Lucky if we find a roof to cover us. Why do we have to strike on Christmas eve of all times?" he asked, wrathfully.

"Cause the president takes this train out to Edgerton to-night so's he kin buy Christmas with his old mother. We got the tip no more than an hour ago. The men think that rather than get stuck between here and that he'll come in and grant us what we ask."

The fireman, who was a new hand, gave a low whistle. "Oh, that's the game!" he muttered.

At that moment a well dressed man of 35 or so, extended in hand, came briskly down the platform and got into the

smoker. It was the president of the road. He was a very young man for such a position, but he had long since shown himself equal to his responsibilities. He ruled with a rod of iron, but was always just. And now, to-night, instead of taking three or four men from their Christmas dinners to run his private car to Edgerton and back, he considerably chose to ride on the regular night train to his destination.

The conductor took out his watch. It was already 30 seconds past starting time, but on Christmas eve one does not like to think of anyone losing his train, and so perhaps losing a Christmas dinner.

"At exactly 7:31 the signal was given and with a great hissing of escaping steam and a slow "choo-choo" as though the big engine were taking breath for its long run, the train rolled majestically out of the station.

A light flurry of snow was in the air and a hazy ring about the half obscured moon betokened a good fall before morning. Ben lost no time in making his rounds.

"Here y'are, all the comic weeklies!" he shouted merrily above the roar of the train. "Take one home to the children and see 'em laugh at the funny pictures!"

And both the folks did buy them, right and left, till his entire stock was exhausted. But it is to be guessed that they bought them as much to make Ben's Christmas a little happier as to please their own little ones.

Ben was on his fourth round, "candy and bonbons" this time, when there was a sudden jolting and jarring as the train came quickly to a standstill.

Some folks, thinking it a station, gathered up their traps preparatory to departure, but Ben knew better. He knew they should be half way between Sandville and Henderson, which was the last stop before Edgerton.

"Hat box, I reckon," muttered Ben to himself. "That'll mean a half hour delay, and mother'll get uneasy."

The train boy stepped out on the platform, and, leaning far out, he saw a knot of men standing by the engine their faces lighted up by the light from the cab.

Quickly climbing down, he ran up to the group. Facing each other were the engineer and the president.

"This is a dastardly plot of yours," Mr. Pearson, the president, was saying, "but you won't force me to give in by any such course."

"All right, sir!" replied the engineer coolly. "Then we'll have to quit the train right here. Stubbins, dump the fire!"

The president with eyes flashing took a step backward toward the engine.

"No, you don't!" he cried, sharply. "If you want to leave, that's your business, but the engine is the property of the road, and you sha'n't lay a finger on it!"

"We've got to dump the fire, afore leavin'," retorted the engineer, defiantly. "I don't want to treat you with disrespect, but it'll be best if yer step one side."

The president was a slight man, of medium height, and no match for the burly engine crew, but Mr. Pearson was so cowardly. He squared his shoulders and awaited the outcome.

The conductor and brakemen remained mutely passive. According to orders, they were not to interfere in any way. There was an ominous pause. Then the engine driver said: "Stubbins, climb on to the cab from the other side an' I'll stand by this."

The president felt himself beaten, but at that instant Ben's voice, shrill with excitement, rang out sharply: "Stay here where yer be, Stubbins. I'm not going to have the president's Christmas and my folks' Christmas spoiled by any o' yer fool orders!"

When Ben had realized the situation he had dashed madly into the baggage car, wrenched open his Christmas box and taken from it the shabbiest intended as a present for his brother. In a trice he had loaded it and then climbed on to the engine from the other side.

The sight of the gleaming barrel very much disconcerted the strikers, and they hesitated.

"I didn't think this o' you, Ben!" cried Stubbins, sheepishly.

"And I didn't think this o' you, trying to spoil folks' Christmas!" retorted Ben.

Mr. Pearson jumped up beside Ben, and, taking the gun from the boy, faced the strikers.

"This boy might not dare to shoot you, but you know I'll not hesitate," he said sternly. "Leave the law on my side. Now, clear out both of you, or I'll fire as sure as my name is Pearson!"

The two disconcerted men, seeing nothing else to do, ducked off across the tracks and thence across an open field toward a light tree half of a habitation. The president turned on the rest of the train hand.

"Is there one among you who can run an engine? I'll pay a hundred dollars to run this train on to Edgerton."

There was a short pause; then a brakeman spoke up. "I kin run 'em engine but it's as much as my life's worth. There'll be a gang o' strikers at Henderson as'll fire on us if we come through. Besides the men'd never let me hear the last of it. No, sir; not one of us would dare to turn 'em through to night."

"Five hundred dollars to the man who drives the engine—it's only thirty miles!" cried Mr. Pearson. No one moved.

"I think I could run old 49," said Ben, timidly.

"You boy!" muttered the president staring up the sturdy form of 16 year old Ben. "What do you know about an engine?"

"If you please, sir, my father, John Dixon, was an engineer on this road afore he died, an' often's the time I rode on the cab with him. He showed me how to work the lever and the whistle valve and all the rest of it. If you could only get some one else to fire, now—"

"I'll fire," replied the president quietly. Then, turning to the trainmen he said: "This boy and I will run the train. Go back and tell the passengers that we are going right through. Then you can stop here or go on with us, just as you choose."

Then the news was passed along the train that a substitute engineer had been found, and the train was to go through, after all.

Aboard the engine, his gloved hands welding the above, was the president of the road, while Ben, with his head out of the cab window, kept his left hand on the throttle. Presently the steam hissed out sharply from the escape valve.

"Guess she's got up steam enough now, sir," cried Ben looking at the gauge.

Mr. Pearson slammed the big iron door, to shutting out the glare of the fiery furnace.

"My boy," he said, laying a hand on Ben's shoulder, "the lives of a couple of hundred people are in your hands tonight."

"It's all right, sir," replied Ben cheerily. "There ain't no train ahead of us on this branch, nor behind as either. It's clear sailing to Edgerton. The strikers may give us trouble at Henderson, perhaps. Ef they does, well, I guess we'll come out of it some how."

The president looked hard at Ben for a moment. "You'll do!" he said approvingly.

In the mean time the brakeman had a short consultation with the conductor and concluded that the best course for them was to quit the train and leave it to its fate.

A couple of male passengers volunteered to act as brakeman and conductor, and with this strange crew, the train presently got under way. It had been decided that, as trouble probably awaited them at Henderson, where a large crowd element was located, the train would stop a half mile this side of the town for the passengers and then Ben was to run through Henderson without stopping.

They went along at a good 30 mile an hour clip, while Ben kept his eyes fixed to the ever-on-verging tracks ahead. As the dim outline of a bridge loomed up ahead Ben turned off the steam and slowly applied the breaks, bringing the train to a stop.

About half a mile ahead could be seen the twinkling lights of the station. The passengers for Henderson were hurriedly helped to alight, and then, with the signal to start, Ben threw wide open the throttle, and old 49

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On the current a mile above Niagara's plunge is just a much lost as when it enters the swirling, swinging wrath of water, unless some strong hand head it up stream and out of danger. A flirtation to-day is merely a ripple, but to-morrow it will be a breaker, and then a whirlpool and after that comes hopeless loss of character.

Girls, I have seen you gather up your roses from their vases at night and fold them away in damp paper to protect their loveliness for another day. I have seen you pluck the jewels like sun sparkling from your fingers and your ears, and lay them in velvet cases which you locked with a silver key for safe keeping. You do all this for flowers which a thousand suns shall duplicate in beauty, and for jewels for which a handful of dollars can reimburse your loss, but you are infinitely careless with the delicate rose of maidenliness, which once faded, no summer thing can ever woo back to freshness, and with the unsullied jewel of personal reputation, which all the wealth of kings can never buy back again, once lost.

See to it that you preserve that modesty and womanliness without which the prettiest girl in the world is no better than a bit of scentless lawn in a milliner's window, as compared with the white rose in the garden, around which the honey bees gather. See to it that you lock up the unsullied splendor of the jewel of your reputation as carefully as you do your diamonds, and carry the key within your heart.—The Catholic Mirror.

Benevolence of Smoking.
The most self-indulgent and the most selfish of luxuries, is tobacco. I never knew a dozen men that used tobacco who cared anything about whether they smelled agreeably to others, or whether they carried themselves so that other people were made happy or not. They will foul the house, or the boat, or the stage, or the car, if they are not restrained by force. They forget father, and mother, and wife and children, and all others, and go through life smoking, stenchful and disagreeable; and when they are expostulated with, they coolly laugh! The use of tobacco may not make a man a monster; it only makes

him intensely selfish in respect to the comfort of people about him.

The London Times also says: One man has no more right to void his choking and sickening smoke into other people's faces than he has to void his saliva in the same way. Why may not a man as well appear on Broadway with a stick strepped horizontally across his back or with an open package of assafetida in his hands, or a pole-ant in his arms, or his clothes dripping with kerosene oil, with as much right as he may smoke there? If a man treads on another's foot, or a lady's trail, he humbly asks pardon; but if he puff his filthy and poisonous smoke into another's face he thinks it no insult—in fact he thinks it makes him more of a gentleman.

The Way Editors are Fooled.
An editor in Chicago recently ordered a pair of trousers from the tailor. On trying them on they proved to be several inches too long. It being late on Saturday night, the tailor's shop was closed, and the editor took the trousers to his wife and asked her to cut them off and hem them over. The good lady, whose dinner had, perhaps, disagreed with her, brusquely refused. The same result followed an application to the wife's sister and the eldest daughter. But before bed-time the wife relenting, took the pants and, cutting off six inches from the legs, hemmed them up nicely and restored them to the editor. Half an hour later her daughter, taken with compassion for the unskillful conductor, took the trousers and, cutting off six inches, hemmed and replaced them. Finally the sister-in-law felt the pangs of conscience, and she too performed an additional surgical operation on the garment. When the editor appeared at breakfast on Sunday the family thought a Highland chieftain had arrived.

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