

use of the cipher figures is a great saving of time and space. The most imperative orders are issued, and the utmost care taken in moving trains by telegraph; and to answer with 15 before the signal is displayed, is contrary to all rule, as in doing so there is a chance that some duty will come up in the performance of which the signal will be neglected until too late.

"Well! upon receiving the assurance that the flag was out at A—, I gave the order corresponding to the one above, but addressed to No. 102. Thus I had all arranged according to rule, for a crossing at C—. Soon came the answer from No. 65.

"To Hobbs, Dispatcher:

"We understand we are to proceed to C—, and cross No. 102 there.

(Signed) BRUCE, Conductor, } No. 65.  
COSTER, Engineer, }

"To this I promptly gave O. K., and they were dispatched. As No. 102 had not arrived at A—, and no reply could be received from them until conductor and engineer had signed the order, which, of course, the blue flag would notify them was there, I turned my attention to other duties, and thought no more of that crossing, until some time after, it occurred to me that No. 102 was slow about replying.

"So, calling the operator at A—, I asked: 'Has No. 102 arrived?'

"'Arrived and gone,' was the reply.

"'Gone without receiving the orders I gave you? impossible! Did you not display the blue flag?'

"'No!' was the reply. 'Having received no orders to do so, I did not.'

"The operator at A— was comparatively a new man, a nephew of an influential member of our Board of Directors, through whom he had obtained his position, and through whose influence I was soon to lose mine. His deliberate falsehood astounded me, as well it might, for allowing the train to proceed without the orders meant for them to run by C— and endeavour to reach their usual stopping place at B—, as soon as possible, to save delay to 65, which was rushing along expecting to reach them at C—. The result must be a collision.

"The thought drove me nearly frantic. Further questioning only resulted in further denial from the operator of having received any orders to hold the train, which he accused me of having failed to send.

"With fast beating heart and a terrible faintness upon me, I dropped my head upon the instruments and prayed for the poor fellows upon the train. How many of them would survive the wreck, which now it was impossible to prevent, for between the two trains rushing towards each other so swiftly, no operator was on duty with busily clicking instruments to warn them of their fate.

"Noticing my actions the dispatcher eagerly inquired the trouble. I could not reply in words, but noticing my instrument calling, I grasped a pen, and with my trembling fingers copied this message, which relieved my mind of the heaviest load I have ever known. It was addressed to the superintendent from the conductor of No. 65 and ran thus:

"Freights Nos. 65 and 102 met in head collision one mile east of C—, speed of fifteen miles per hour. Crews of both trains escaped uninjured. Fifteen cars derailed, five of them wrecked completely, badly blocking the main line. Will report in person by first train."

"My greatest fear had been that loss of life would result. Now that was passed, I was ready to explain.

"As is usual in such cases, all the participants in the affair were called before the superintendent. Each man told his story. The operator at A— firmly adhered to his falsehood and I as firmly to the truth, but to no purpose. The influence of the director uncle saved for him his position, the blame was attached to me, and I was discharged, forced to give up my position and move. Some time before this, trusting in the security of my position, I had put all our little savings together and purchased a small house and lot in the pleasantest part of our city. I had borrowed from our savings bank the sum of two thousand dollars, and placed a mortgage for that amount upon the place, believing that with prudence and economy we should be able to repay and lift the mortgage in due course of time.

"A pleasant little place it was, and much pleasure we took in fixing it up with flowers and vines, until it presented a most attractive appearance, and to ourselves at least, was the very perfection of taste and home comfort. Now it must all be given up. This made the blow doubly hard, for where could I obtain a position at my business, with the knowledge that I had caused a wreck?

"No! I must give it all up, and commence at the foot of the ladder again.

"The company, having decided to put in the wires and open a station at C—, as a measure for guarding against further trouble, very kindly offered the situation to me. I could but accept. Soon we were moved into our new quarters—I cannot call it a home—in a modest house near my station.

"Day after day came and passed now, so uneventfully, as nearly to destroy all ambition. Duties there were none to speak of. My station was what is termed a 'flag station.' Trains made no regular stop there, and when an occasional passenger wished to take the train, a very unusual occurrence by the way, my red flag by day, or red light at night, 'hauled up' the desired train. I grew despondent. Every day I sat in my little den of an office, listening to the business passing upon the wire, business in which I took no active part, for few, indeed, were the opportunities I had to open the wire.

"The little boy was my almost constant companion. He took great delight in the rural life which we were obliged to lead, grew stout and brown as any little rustic, and his delight knew no bounds as he stood upon the platform when the heavy freights went rolling by, or the fast express, with a rush and scream of the whistle, passed like a flash; and he would watch them out of sight with great round eyes, laughing and clapping his hands with delight.

"We used to watch him in silence, my wife and I, for she often came to sit with us, and cheer me by her presence; and thoughts of the opportunities he would miss, and the privilege of schooling he would be debarred from by my misfortune, were not calculated to make us cheerful.

"One beautiful summer day, when I had been some three months at my station, sitting as usual watching and listening at my instruments, for want of something better to do, I heard the dispatcher's office calling A—, heard him answer, followed by an order from the office to '14 for special freight passing east,' heard the reply exactly as the operator had given it to me on the day of the wreck—'15 for special freight'—then this order:

"To Conductor and Engineer Special Freight:

"You will not leave A— until special passenger train, Fairfield, conductor, has arrived."

"The special passenger train referred to, was, as I knew, for I had heard it reported by wire, composed of an engine, superintendent's private car, and directors' car, filled with the officers of the road with their wives, all of whom had been down the line on a pleasure trip to inspect the new station and grounds at our eastern terminus, and were now returning with all haste, in order to reach their homes in this city before dark.

"I had heard the superintendent's telegraphic request to the dispatcher to give them the right of way as far as practicable, and in accordance with this instruction he was now holding back the freight.

"I sat idly watching the approach of the special, and marking the quick time they were making, as the telegraphic reports, one by one, succeeded each other, as the train passed station after station—and still bemoaning my hard fate.

"No mistakes this time, I thought, only for me was the ill-luck reserved; for surely the operator at A— would not, could not, commit the same fault twice. This time there would be no poor assistant to attach the blame to but the chief dispatcher.

"I sat there some time filled with these ungrateful and useless thoughts, until I was disturbed by the entrance of the little boy, who had been busy at play outside. He came in in high glee, exclaiming: 'Papa! papa! train coming!'

"'No, dear, not just yet. Wait five minutes and then we shall see them go flying by,' I answered him with a smile,

knowing how pleased he would be to see the rushing train.

"'No! now, papa, now! I can see the smoke—come out, quick!' To please him I complied, and looked up the line in the direction of the approaching special, which had passed the last station east of me, and must now be within five miles of our station.

"'That, that way, papa! Look through the tree—see!'

"I turned, and saw rising above the trees the black smoke which denoted the approach of a train. In an instant I understood the situation. The freight was approaching—the freight which was ordered to remain at A—to cross the passenger train. For a moment I was dazed, but only for a moment, for I knew something must be done, and that quickly, to avert an awful catastrophe.

"Below my station, some hundred yards or so, round a curve which hid it from sight, was a switch which opened upon a side track running by the station for another hundred yards, and which would hold the freight, could I but reach and open it before the freight arrived there. But I must also stop the passenger train for fear the freight would not get on in time.

"Rushing into the station I grasped my signal flags, put the blue in the proper place, but not daring to trust to that to stop them, for fear the engineer, having his orders to run past my station, and at the high rate of speed he was coming, might not see it, I took the red flag and the boy in my arms, and placing him in the middle of the platform, put the flag in his hands.

"'Arthur!' I said sternly, 'do just as papa says, now, and we will have the trains. Stand right here! Do not move except to wave this flag, so!' giving him the up-and-down motion. 'Wave it, my brave boy, and do not stop till papa gets back!'

"His blue eyes filled with tears at my manner, and giving him a kiss to reassure him, I turned and ran for the switch. Could I reach it in time? I must! I must! Over the ties I ran for life, for lives; for if the trains came into collision at that high rate of speed, many lives must be sacrificed.

"'O God! permit me to reach it first!' I cried.

"As I turned the curve I looked back at the station. There the little fellow stood, just where I had placed him, and the flag, yes! the flag was waving, up and down, up and down, as fast as the stout little arms could move it, and way down the line as far as the eye could reach, I could see the special passenger train coming. Now for it! Looking and running ahead again I saw the freight.

"Thank God! I shall reach the switch first,' I cried, and ran on. My switch-key was out of my pocket as I ran, and in my hand. A moment more and the switch was reached, and the train one thousand feet behind in the race for life. To insert the key, unlock and throw the rails upon the siding, was the work of an instant.

"Yes! I was discovered by the engineer of the train—heard the shrill whistle for brakes, the danger signal, saw the engine reversed, the brakemen scrambling over the tops of the cars setting the brakes, and knew all was done that could possibly be done to slacken the speed of the heavy train—standing at the switch, ready to throw the rails back as soon as they had passed upon the siding.

"In a moment they were within hailing distance, the fireman was upon my side, down upon the steps of his engine making ready to jump.

"Stick to your engine,' I cried. Run upon the siding, and do your best to stop her. Tell the engineer to stick and stop her for his life."

"It is wonderful that he heard me, much more comprehended my meaning through the rush and roar of the train, and hiss of escaping steam, as the engine rolled by at greatly reduced speed; but I saw him climb back and commence setting the brake of the tender. With a terrible roar and grinding of the brakes upon the wheels, the train passed.

"I closed and locked the switch on the main line, and started back for the station. I knew the special must have stopped there, else, ere this, it would have been upon us. Yes! sure enough,—coming in sight of the station,—there she stood, safe and sound, and upon the siding beside it stood the freight, now come to a full stop.

"The platform in front of the little

depot was filled with people, passengers of the special and train men. I saw the boy, still holding the red flag, in the arms of the superintendent. Crowded about him were the president, Board of Directors and other notables, invited guests of the road, with their ladies, numbering full twenty-five people, who certainly, some of them, if not all, owed their lives to the little fellow.

Upon reaching the station, I was at once the centre of the excited throng, all eager for an explanation. In a few words as possible I gave, in answer to the superintendent's inquiry, my story,—how the baby had discovered the approaching freight, how I had instantly placed him with the flag, which, it seems, had been the means of stopping them, how I had hastened to the switch, arriving just in time to put the freight upon the siding, and that was all.

"All—no! This was followed by an impromptu directors' meeting in my little seven-by-nine station—a directors' meeting in which ladies took a prominent part. I was called in with my wife, who had run to the station, alarmed by the unusual excitement—and the boy. Speeches were made which brought the blush to my cheeks and tears to my wife's eyes, tears of joy and pride in the boy.

"Yes, sir! They voted me two thousand dollars 'for prompt action and heroic conduct in time of danger,' and at the suggestion of the ladies—who but a woman would have thought of anything so romantic?—also voted to place the boy upon the payroll as telegraph operator.

"A happy household we were that evening, and with many a kiss the boy was put to bed at night. The next day I was called to the general offices, and the dispatcher having told his story, how the orders had been promptly given to hold the freight, there were no doubts now as to the person who had been remiss in duty upon both occasions. I was reinstated in my old position, and we immediately moved back into the little house you see yonder, which the company's gift allowed me to free from debt; and, yes, that is the boy running to meet us now—a proud little fellow upon pay-day, as he goes with me to the office, and stands among the men taking their turn to receive their pay—the pet of all. My wife fears they will spoil him with their attention, and the presents of the ladies on that train.

"The operator? Oh! Without stopping to learn the result of his second blunder he deserted his post, and for aught I know, may be running yet; for, certainly, I have no knowledge of his future career. His error lay in replying that the blue was displayed before putting it out, and then neglecting it. When he saw the train pass, he deliberately tore up the orders, trusting in his ability to shift the blame upon me, in the first instance, but the second was too much."

—W. D. Holman in *The Fourth's Companion*.

### Not Yet!

My boy Bert, with dancing eyes,  
Flushed and eager, goes from play  
Half-a-dozen times a day,  
Straight to where a red book lies  
On the lowest library shelf,  
Finds the page all by himself,  
Where a lion is portrayed  
Springing toward a shrinking maid:  
Long he looks at this attraction,  
Then remarks with satisfaction,  
Flinging back his curls of jet:  
"The lion hasn't got her yet."

That was years and years ago;  
Still the trembling little maid  
In the red book is portrayed  
Facing her terrific foe,  
And my boy with dancing eyes  
Views them now without surprise;  
When my heart is full of fear,  
Fancying there is trouble near,  
And I dread what is to be,  
Then he breaks out laughingly:  
"Auntie, don't you fuss and fret:  
The lion has not got her yet!"  
—Wide Awake.

"Well, Mr. Bronson," said a dominie,  
"I hoped you derived profit from the  
services this morning." "Sir," returned  
Bronson, inclining to be indignant,  
"I assure you I drop business on Sundays and  
attend church with no hope of profit."