

Engine 801. - Being oiled up at a station en route.

through the freight yards and finally we were out into the open country near Lambton. No. 801 took the high-level bridge over the Humber without a pause. As we rushed over it and I looked far down into the valley where the river flowed peacefully, I could not help but shiver. Apprehension seized me lest the locomotive should jump the track and plunge over into the depths. But, quick as the thought itself, we were across and away into what was to me terra incognita.

Sproule was now letting out his locomotive to top speed and we were rocking along at a fearful rate. The big engine lurched and plunged, and at each fresh curve, of which there was an almost constant succession, I clutched the edge of the window the tighter, to prevent being thrown over against the boiler.

Now there appeared a small flag station with diminutive siding. I held my breath as we struck the points but the track was perfect and we were over the switch in safety. Then a crossing with its white fence loomed up. While we were still far distant, Sproule gave the crossing whistle, two long and two short blows in the weird shrieking tones of all Canadian Pacific whistles. The fireman grabbed the bell-rope and, with a strong pull, gave the bell enough swing to keep it ringing over the half mile till we had crossed the road. Next appeared a gang of sectionmen, who scattered at our approach and rested on their spades and picks as we tore past.

It was all gloriously exhilarating. The rush of air, the heaving and plunging and quivering of the huge frame, the tremors that seized me as we careered around curves and rattled over switches, all lent spice to the adventure.

At Streetsville, Sproule swung down from the cab and with deft thrusts of the oil can, limbered up the engine's bearings. The stop was of brief duration and I had hardly time to stretch my cramped limbs before we were off again climbing westward towards Guelph Junction. At Milton, I overheard Sproule say that we were losing time steadily. I had been under the impression that we were picking up the lost minutes and was disappointed.

The first stop of any duration was made at Galt, where I climbed out and made a snap-shot of 801. Out of Galt, once the bridge over the Grand River was crossed, there was a heavy up-grade for some distance and at one point we were moving so slowly that it would have been possible to keep up with the train going at a jog-trot alongside. At length we crossed the summit of the rising ground, speed was crowded on, and we enjoyed a fast ride down grades and round curves into Ayr. From this point a nice run brought us into Woodstock, where I bade good-bye to my hosts in the engine-cab and clambered out cramped and dirty.

It was after six o'clock and quite dark when I returned to the station at Woodstock to meet 801 hauling No. 6 on the return trip. The train was posted twenty minutes late and did not pull in until nearly a quarter to seven. Save for the electric head-light, which threw a brilliant sheaf of light into the blackness of the night, the big engine rolled on in darkness. I hurried down to the end of the platform and climbed up into the cab, finding only the fireman there. Sproule had snatched a moment or two to do some oiling up.

"You'll have to sit forward this trip," announced the fireman, "I've got to keep an eye on the lights."

In the dim glow from the torch over the steam-gauge I crawled up to the seat he had placed for me, well forward between the boiler and the front window. It was desperately hot in the confined space and there was no-

thing to be seen save the dim outline of the locomotive showing black against the gleam of the head-light.

When we started, everything was blotted out in the steam that enveloped the boiler. Fortunately with the forward motion a current of air was set up and the heat abated. If the rate we travelled in the daytime had seemed fast, the wild night-run was apparently twice as fast. I was being hurled along into the black chasm of the night, swaying, pitching and pounding forward. I began to feel how absolutely helpless I was, shut into a narrow box, one wall of which was a sizzling boiler. I wondered how Sproule could tell where he was, whether he just trusted to luck and drove recklessly on. And ever and anon, the fireman would leap down from his seat and, in the swaying cab, throw wide the door of the fire-box and dash in shovelful after shovelful of coal. As he did so, the glow from the raging fire would leap up and strike the flying smoke and steam in lurid patches. It was all very eerie and thrilling. I pondered how little of this wild and dangerous part of railroading was realised or considered by the trainload of passengers in the comfortable, brightly-lighted coaches behind.

At Galt, Sproule took pity on me and offered me a place on a tool-chest just behind his seat, which I accepted eagerly. I was now able to see better and it was decidedly cooler. When we had got nicely started from this station, we suddenly ran into a dense fog, an unusual phenomenon for such a fine day. I noticed that Sproule did not reduce his speed but kept the engine pounding along at top notch. It was absolutely impossible to see any distance ahead: the fog seemed to push the beams from the head-light back upon us.

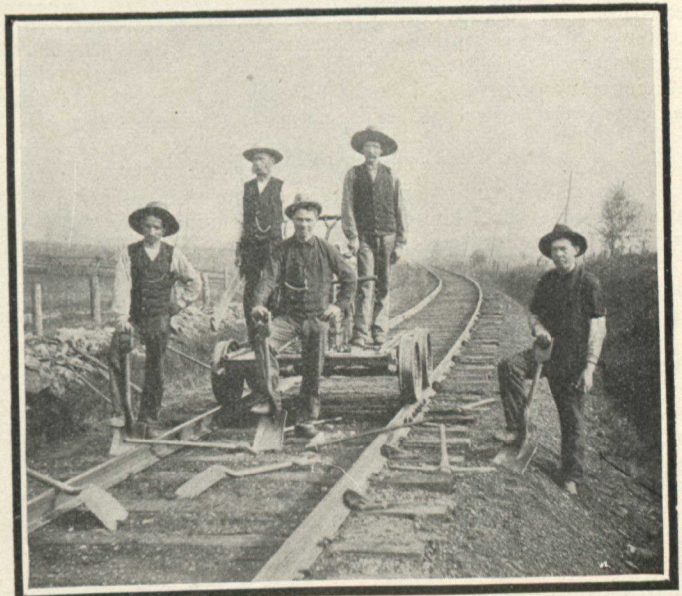
We had been tearing along in this way for several miles when all of a sudden my heart went into my mouth. Sproule had shut off steam, reversed and piled on the air with feverish haste and 801 was swaying and rocking wildly. Next moment I was conscious of two red lights ahead. We were almost on to them. But our speed was slackening and the danger was over.

"Heavens," gasped Sproule, "that was a close shave."

A heavy freight was just making the siding at Milton and our train had all but run it down in the fog.

A few miles further on we emerged from the fog into a bright star-light night. The ride became much more pleasant and Sproule took time now and then to lean back and talk to me. The engine was running much better now than in the morning, he explained, and, though the train was heavier, we would pull in on time, if all was well.

We reached Toronto Junction actually ahead of time. From here the run into the city was most interesting, the play of lights, the passing trains, the shrieks of the whistles and the ceaseless clang of the bells, making a combination of sights and sounds of a most impressive character. Luckily we were not held up in the yards and the station signals gave us direct entry to track No. 2 at the Union Station. With bell ringing proudly and escape spluttering noisily, 801 steamed down alongside the platform, its day's work done. Once more I bade my hosts good-bye, and, mingling in the crowd of arriving passengers left the station.



The men who look after the ties and rails, and keep the road-bed in perfect condition. On their daily faithfulness the safety of many lives depends.