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The Making of a Railway Man.

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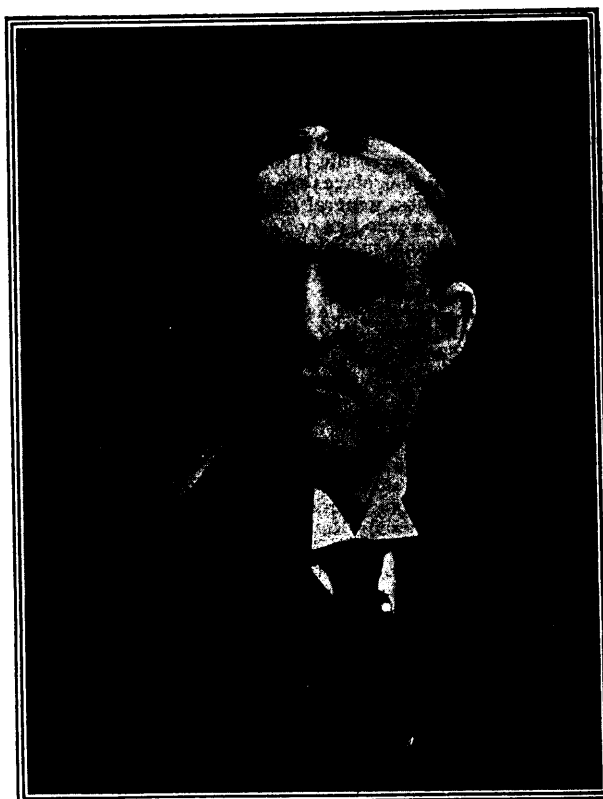
Most persons think that about the easiest job to secure is a railway clerkship. If a man can't do anything else successfully in the world he turns to a railway office. If a father or a guardian has a boy who has made a failure, even of a commercial college, he tries to fix the youth in a railway department. But all these people are very far from right. One of the hardest places I know of to get a start in is a railway office. I shall tell about you that in detail, later. A large number of railway clerks are the sons or relatives of railway men, & they usually seek the department toward which their bents of mind lead them. Some young men are mechanical in taste, some have tendencies toward electrical work, some want to be bookkeepers, & others are active, restless, hustling, ambitious—ready to take a try at the biggest, liveliest kind of business in the world. There is a place for them all in the railway office. It is so varied in its work & so broad in its field that it has room for almost every kind of a man imaginable except the average man who knocks at its door for a job.

There is no room in a railway office, however, for a shirk, an incompetent, the man who works for money, or the man who counts his hours. Such a man may find foothold, & frequently does, but he seldom retains it. I know of few places where a man will find his level quicker than in a railway office. Of late years the growth of the business has been so enormous that it has led to specialization among its employees. The field covers so much territory that one man cannot get over it all, as used to be the case; so he only takes a part of it.

Specialization exists as much among clerks as other classes of railway men, such as brakemen, firemen & telegraphers. The mechanical man naturally gets work in the departments of the superintendent of motive power. Here he studies engines & their manufacture, cars & coaches, rails & switches. He figures on the "strength of materials" & studies to avoid the "perversity of inanimate things." He learns all about the hauling power of a certain quantity of coal & a given amount of steam over known grades with a specified weight in cars & contents. That involves a practical knowledge of mechanics.

When it comes to the adoption or rejection of new devices in machinery it is the trained clerk in the department who does the figuring for the chief of that branch. On our road we have had men begin in the shops as apprentices to fit themselves for these clerkships.

The man with a liking for electricity generally goes into the transportation department or the office of superintendent of telegraphy. In one he has practical experience with the key & sounder, & in the other he deals with the higher branches of the science, construction & maintenance of lines, new methods of transmission of light, heat & power. In the office of the superintendent of the road the clerk attends to the details of the movement of trains, among other things. The present appliances for block signaling require sufficient study to make that branch of work a special training in itself.



GEORGE COLVIN JONES,
Superintendent, Middle Division, Grand Trunk Railway System.

In the general passenger agent's department there are several divisions. The rate department looks after the division of business between the road & its auxiliaries. The ticket department attends to the issuing, handling or charging up of the tickets. Then there is the advertising department, which places the advantages of travel over the line attractively before the public; & besides this, there are the soliciting department, which is engineered from the main office but is conducted chiefly in the field, & the baggage department, which attends to the handling & tracing of baggage.

More clerks are employed in the accounting department than in any other division. Here the railway bookkeeping is done. The controller has a large clerical staff to check up the accounts from all the other departments, & the treasurer has a corps of aids equally numerous, who receive, pay out & keep track of the money that comes in.

The freight department employs a great army of clerks, & is organized on the same general lines as the passenger & other departments. The station agent at small places is often the passenger, freight, operating & despatching clerk combined in one man, jointly paid & severally controlled by these departments. Such a man is accountable to almost every officer of the road, but, naturally enough, when it is possible to concentrate so much responsibility in one man, the work is not hard & the duties are largely routine. In all the larger cities the departments have their own representatives working under the immediate supervision of the division heads. Take Buffalo, for example. I have a division passenger agent & a local passenger agent. There are division & local freight agents, a local despatcher, train master, station master, & so on.

So much for the specialization. Now let me say a word about the routine of office work, the grades of pay & the chances for promotion. All offices depend almost wholly upon their clerks. Of course the head of the department is responsible. Directly under the head of the department comes the assistant, or if there is no such officer, the chief clerk. All matters of office work pass through his hands before going to the head. He is the clearing-house association for the other office divisions. Take the passenger department for a general illustration. I have a chief clerk who is, under me, the head of my office. To him come the reports of the heads of the rate & ticket bureaus. The general advertising agent & the general baggage agent report direct to me. All other reports reach me through the chief clerk. I do not mean that I am only to be reached through the chief clerk. I refer to the routine office business, that necessary drudgery that makes up so large a part of every railway man's life. The clerks are all graded, & each grade receives pay according to the value of its services.

The pay of clerks varies according to the road & the city that the clerk works in. Larger salaries are paid in New York, as a rule, than anywhere else, but there are a dozen applicants for each vacancy where there is one in any other town. The expenses of living are greater in the metropolis. Messenger boys get from \$15 a month up to \$25. Clerks get from \$40 to \$100 a month. Chief