

PLEASANT HOURS

PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

Vol. XIV.]

TORONTO, JULY 28, 1894.

[No. 30.]



"You must know that all regular trains upon our road are run upon schedule time, or, in other words, upon that laid down in the time-tables of the company. But extras of any sort, or regular trains when off their schedule time, must be helped along by telegraphic orders, issued by, or in the name of the train dispatcher. This, upon a single track road, carrying so much traffic as ours, is constantly occurring.

"As I might weary you by details, if I entered into too minute an explanation of how this is done, I will give you the system in a few words as possible.

"For example, we will say the regular crossing point for No. 34 going west, and No. 35 going east is B—. Now, all trains are reported by telegraph from each station as they pass. We are on the lookout for these reports, and before us is the train sheet upon which must be noted the time of departure of each train from any station. Thus we can tell, at a glance, the position of every train upon the road. We will say these reports show No. 35, going east, to be thirty minutes late. Since No. 34 would be obliged to wait at the usual crossing point for the laggard, we give it an order to proceed to C—, ten miles beyond, and cross No. 35 there, thus keeping it on time while causing no further delay to the delinquent. Of course it is necessary to notify both trains of the change in crossing points, and right here is where my trouble occurred.

"One day, sitting at my instruments, busily employed as you saw me a few moments ago, I discovered that freight No. 102 was losing time. Soon it was thirty minutes behind, and wishing to help along freight No. 65, which usually crossed at B—, I concluded to push it along to C— for a crossing. Accordingly I called up D—, the next station beyond the usual crossing point, and upon receiving the response went ahead with this order:

"To Conductor and Engineer No. 65.

"You will proceed to C— and cross No. 102 there.

(Signed) HOBBS,
Dispatcher.

"The next move was to protect him in thus passing their usual crossing point, by giving the same order to No. 102 at A—.

"Calling up A—, I said in the cipher used on such occasions: '14 for No. 102,' which means, 'Put out blue signal to hold No. 102.' This blue signal, a flag by day and a lantern by night, conspicuously displayed in front of a station, means telegraphic orders, and by this signal no train is allowed to pass. Instantly came back the reply from the operator at A—, '15 for 102.'

"Now, every operator's duty is to put out the signal before replying with 15, which means: 'blue signal is displayed and will hold the train.' You see the

"Yes, sir! the boy there, though but five years old and not knowing a dash from a dot, stands upon the company's pay-roll as Telegraph Operator, at fifty dollars per month. 'How did it come about?' you ask. Just wait a few moments until my relief comes, and as we walk to the house for supper, I will give you the story."

The speaker was an old school friend of mine, whom I had hunted up after a long absence from my native city, and found busily employed in the Train Dispatcher's office of the ——— Railroad, as chief operator. Upon his telegraph instruments rested the cabinet photograph of a little boy, and my remarking upon the smart appearance of the little fellow elicited the above reply.

"Not much time for conversa-

tion here," continued my friend, as if in apology for not commencing at once; "what with ordinary messages, train reports, and the all-important orders, we are kept pretty busy; the hours are short though, and, by the way, here comes my relief now."

Here followed an introduction to the relief, a pleasant looking young man of twenty-one or two, whose duty it was to stay all night at the post my friend was just vacating, to whom was given some general information as to how the trains were running upon his division, and what orders had been issued; and then, with a pleasant good-night, we were off.

"Now, for the story," continued my friend as we emerged upon the street, and turned our steps towards his home.

"One year ago I was discharged from the very position I now hold, for having, as was charged, caused the wreck of two freight trains at C—, a small station upon our line about thirty miles east of here.

