

Sanlie's Cross Order

How a Cyclone Wrecked and Saved.

BY ALVAH MILTON KERR,

Author of "In Front of the Stampede," and Other Stories.

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The accident in Pulver's Valley was perhaps as strange a happening as the annals of railroading in the middle west can show. To a certain order of minds it had the cast and color of a miracle; to the more literal and hard-headed, it appeared as pure coincidence; but to both it was, perhaps, equally astounding and impressive. It had inception in the next chair to mine in the dispatcher's office at Traylor. It was the result of a cross order—that terrifying shadow of doom and disaster which hovers over every train dispatcher's life, though happily not so menacing as formerly, owing to improved methods.

I had been some three months in the dispatcher's office. My position was that of way operator, which signifies that I had not reached the grade of dispatcher, but stood next to it, my work being confined to receiving reports from the different stations and sending and taking all sorts of messages relating to the train master's department.

There were three dispatchers, dividing the 24 hours of the day into "tricks" of eight hours each. Besides myself and the three dispatchers there was a "trainmaster," "old Wilk," as we called him, a grizzled graduate from the dispatcher's chair. Charley Sanlie had the second trick—that is, from 8 in the morning until 4 in the afternoon. He was a dear fellow, kind, conscientious, painstaking, and every one liked him. Through several years he had ordered trains from midnight until 8 in the morning, and was never a serious blunder. But his night vigils and the long strain had broken his health. Gradually he had grown thin, and the telltale pallor of a nervous wreck crept into his cheeks. Daily I sat beside him, marveling at his pluck, as I saw his long, thin fingers dancing on the key, and his head bent over the sheet, guiding the hurrying monsters over 200 miles of track. Old Wilk wanted him to quit and go to California, but Charley couldn't afford it, he said. We knew this was true, as he had a mother to support, his father being dead; besides he was trying to keep a younger brother in high school until the boy should graduate.

"Oh, I'll be all right when cool weather comes," he would say in summer, and "Never mind, I will trace up when spring arrives," would be his laughing excuse in winter.

The trainmaster, grim, serious and seemingly as cool and unfeeling as iron, I observed often watched Sanlie, and sometimes gruffly ordered him to go out and walk about for a half-hour, while the old veteran himself took Charley's hair and ordered the trains to the discomfort of many a lazy operator out on the wire.

One day, toward the hot end of June, a long train of coaches, decorated with bunting and many flags, came rounding across the switches and drew up alongside the platform at Traylor. The train was loaded, principally, with well-dressed men wearing badges upon the lapels of their coats, and carrying ribbon-knotted canes, the noisy aggregation representing a great political club on its way to a nominating convention at Chicago.

As the panting engine was uncoupled and started for her stall in the roundhouse, the crowd swarmed onto the station platform. Looking down from the bay window of the office, for we were in the second story, I saw the general manager of the road in a group of men by the train. Having some messages for him, I hurried down and presented them. He drew a writing pad from his pocket, and scribbling several replies, handed them to me, then turned to Charley and said, "Drant!" and shook the grimy hand of a short, grayish, solid-looking man in engineer's overalls, who was passing toward the front of the engine.

"How is the '30,' Drant? Can she take us to Chicago in two hours, you think? The boys are anxious to get in for the afternoon session," said the general manager.

Drant looked up at the tall official, a twinkle in his keen, gray eyes. He was an odd mixture of humor and

savagery, a man with a reputation for making fast runs. "The '30' is well, sir, I'll make her take you there in that time if I have to drive a wedge in her pop," he said.

The manager laughed and held up his hand protestingly. "O, let her have her safety-valve, Drant! Don't wedge that, or she may blow up! In that event the east would probably nominate the next president, the west being short a lot of logrollers and delegates." He glanced smilingly over the crowd of politicians.

"That might prove a blessing," grunted Drant, laconically, as the superb "30" came backing down to be coupled on. "I guess the old girl will dance you there all right," he added, looking fondly at the mighty machine.

"Ha, there, Drant, here's orders for us!" shouted the conductor from the office window. "Come up and sign 'em!"

Wiping his perspiring forehead and oily hands on a piece of waste, Drant climbed the stairs. I was at his heels. The order was a long one, involving several meetings at points and the passing of a number of trains as the special progressed over the 110 miles between Traylor and Chicago. I noticed that Sanlie did not look even as well as usual, and how his thin fingers trembled as he handed out the order book to be signed.

Don't let any rust accumulate under the '30,' Drant shouted Wilkins as the conductor and engineer seized their orders and hurried out the door. Drant grunted derisively, that was all. With flags fluttering and the "30" emitting great snorting gasps from her exhausts, the long train went smashing over the yard frogs and out whirling away along the green valley toward the east.

The first station, Fruitlane, she was to pass without stopping; at the third station out, Treator, her order was to meet a wild oil—that is, a special of

rushed out. As I turned for the door I glanced back. Sanlie was hanging white and wavering across his table, one hand on the key and calling Treator like mad, the other wiping the trickling perspiration from his face. "Poor boy, what a frightful thing has fallen upon him," I thought, as I went lunging down the stairs, and the vision of Sanlie hanging over the keys haunted me through every phase of the terrible scene that followed.

With a few bounds I cleared platform and track and tumbled into the gangway of the "103." I was still on my knees when Stevens pulled her throttle open.

"Throw that switch open! Let us out!" I heard him yelling to someone I could not see.

With a succession of thunderous blows on the frogs, the "103" tore out through the yards and started along the valley like a wild thing. The fireman began shoveling coal into the fire-box with might and main. The heat from the boiler-head, combined with the hot sultriness of the day, was something maddening. I clutched my fingers in the engineer's smutted clothes and clung to him, trying to tell him the situation of the imperiled train as the roll of the engine banged me back and forth.

"There's no operator at Fruitlane, you know," I shouted near his ear, "and the man at Treator is at dinner. The oil-wild will come through Treator without stopping, making for Fruitlane without stopping, making to meet the oil-wild at Treator. They will collide about two miles this side of Treator, Charley said."

Did he give the cross?"

I nodded, a choking lump rising in my throat.

Stevens kicked his feet against the footboard and ground his teeth. He had the throttle lever back in the last notch, and we were going like the wind. The roar of the giant machine was a kind of continuous thunder.

"Drant will drive the '30' like Satan!"



"I have crossed 'em!"

oil tank cars running west. As soon as the "30" cleared the switches at Treator, Drant pulled her throttle lever back close to the last notch and hung his greasy cap on the reversing lever. The fireman flung his cap against the floor, and the tender, tore his shirt collar open and began a battle to keep her hot. In five minutes his face was steaming sweat.

A stifling heat lay over the land. Over 10,000 fields of motionless corn pulsed in soft gleamings, cattle stood in the still shadows of trees, or thirstily licked their red nostrils into the streams, horses at plow and mow stopped without bidding, heaving their dripping flanks, while the faces of the working men were scarlet. A thin, hot steam seemed to fill all space, the sun looked faintly dim; yet out of it an intolerable heat seemed to beat as from the open door of a furnace. All life seemed half mad with suffering. Up in the office at Traylor we had been working since morning in great discomfort. Old Wilk, after a gasping puff, said, "The weather felt like cyclones. Sanlie, poor fellow, hampered away on the brass, his face wet but pallid. I felt irritable and weak.

The big eastern special, however, had not been gone three minutes before the office force awoke to such activity as perhaps it had never known before, for Sanlie suddenly sprang to his feet, with his hand in his hair and his face like ashes. A strange, pitiful note came from his lips. He staggered back, looking with wild eyes at the train sheet.

"Oh!" he cried; "Oh, my God, I have crossed 'em!"

"What!" roared Wilkins; and with two strides he was at Charley's table. "Where? What have you done?" he demanded.

"I've given the oil-wild orders to meet Drant at Fruitlane, and Drant's order is to meet them at Treator! They will meet there, miles this side of Treator! It's Treator's hour at dinner! I can't raise him! Oh, my God!" He clutched the edge of the table, trembling with terror and weakness. I looked at him in horror.

Wilkins smote the circuit breaker open and called Treator for a moment, then rushed to the window and shouted hoarsely:

"Bring your engine on to the main line, Stevens! Go after the Chicago special—a cross order! Be quick!"

The "103" stood on the siding across from the station, exhausting slowly as she worked her injectors and pumps. She was ready to be coupled to a train from the west.

"Take a line relay and go with him," Wilkins cried to me. "I'll be with you in six hours. This is the only medicine necessary when kidney treatment is required, because it cures any form of kidney disease. Purely and solely a Kidney Specific. Thousands have tested it—and owe their lives to it. It relieves in six hours. Write for a bottle. For sale by C. McCallum & Co."

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the hot, still atmosphere had turned a brown-green hue, and as we whirled round a long bend suddenly miles and miles of level valley lay open before us. To the northeast of it, indescribably majestic and awful, hung a leaning mountain of cloud, black-green at the base and smoky through all its foamy crags. It seemed pitching forward as if to fall upon and overwhelm the world. Half way down the boiling mountain an immense island of brassy vapor was plunging into it like a moving continent. I saw the two twisting together like mighty serpents, and knew that death was abroad in the sky.

Stevens did not seem to notice it. His eyes were feeding on the reaches of track before us. Swinging in toward the hills for half a mile or more, I lost sight of the colliding storm clouds for a little space; but when a half-mile later we rushed round an outward-bending curve, I saw miles away to the northeast, a forest being torn into fragments. Above it whirled an incredible cyclone of cloud, an appalling monster of destruction. Almost black at the base it towered heavenward for thousands of feet, and spouted about the sides of dark-green and veined with curling forks of lightning. As it spun round it seemed an infinite auger boring into the earth and tearing the very hills into ruin. It was moving toward the southwest with far greater speed than ever a locomotive ran.

I was on my knees in the left-hand forward window of the cab, clutching the frame-work as the engine rolled and plunged. I glanced at Stevens. He was looking toward the cyclone, the track ahead, the veins on his temple distended, the cords of his neck standing out. The fireman seemed never to look up. The black smoke and steam was wet, his face was streaming.

"There they are!" Stevens suddenly shouted. "Found it under her, Burns! Give it to her!" He snatched the lever over his knees, as if he would push the rushing engine faster.

I looked ahead, for my eyes had been lifted to the spinning monster of steam approaching from the northeast. With one glance I saw that which made me my scalp creep. We were within three miles of Treator, and something more than a mile ahead of us the track swung outward into the valley, following the base of a long, projecting spur. Near the beginning of this great curve we saw Drant's special rushing obliquely toward the outer point of the sloping ridge; beyond the point of the curve, perhaps a half a mile, I saw for an instant the polished jacket of the oil-wild's engine glitter against the lightning; then she was lost to sight on an immense plain of white steam.

Stevens saw it at the same moment, and threw himself back and pressed his hands over his eyes, writhing like the man who felt something of the pain of the hundreds of human beings who must surely be crushed to death in a few seconds. As for myself, I was dumb with horror for a little space. My tongue and lips seemed dry, parched, and I swallowed painfully, trying to speak. With my eyes following a special as she thundered toward destruction, I forgot the monster in the heavens. Suddenly I was conscious of pointing toward the northeast, and shouting something. Stevens saw, and the throttle lever fell forward on his knees and gazed outward and upward, all his features working oddly.

The vast, whirling cone of cloud was coming directly across the valley toward the point of the ridge. Houses, barns, fences, trees, all things were being sucked from the surface of the earth by its awful lips. The air about us was green, and somehow all objects seemed touched with a film of rust.

It looked that both Drant and the oil-wild must sweep directly into it, or, missing it, crash together the moment the appalling had passed. Could Drant see it? No; the body of the ridge rose between him and the reeling wreck of force. The men on the oil-wild must surely see it. Would they stop, or, trying to run by it, dash the more certainly into Drant?

As the mad speed of the "103" slackened, we saw the light in fascinated terror at the converging forces near the point of the ridge. The panting fireman threw down his shovel, and, washing the sweat from his eyes, looked and wondered.

Our suspense was but a few moments. With the roar and power of a rushing rushing, the cyclone struck the point of the ridge. The waters of the little river burst up the hillside; tons of earth lifted into the air, and the appalling had passed. Flying straws, and, in the midst of dust and whirling atoms we saw Drant's special, and the engine turning stop on the hillside, the engine turning on its side. It was the most remarkable vision ever vouchsafed our eyes.

Three minutes later we jumped down from the "103" near the wreck. Around the point of the ridge there had been a road track and scarcely any embankment. The telegraph wires had been swept away. By searching I found the broken end of wire numbing the ground, and the mud at the river's margin.

A half hour after the strange accident took place at Traylor, and gave the Chicago special is up on a hillside about two miles west of Treator. Most of the coaches are on the rails; the track runs with what Engine 90 ran off the end of the rails, lies on her side. No one hurt. The oil-wild stands on the other side of the ridge, run directly up twisted track and stopped; cannot back the train without assistance. None of the crew injured. No track around the hill, a worked nervously, as if he would gladly lift the track up the hill on each side and breaking it in the center. The ties and fishplates held the ties together at each side, and Drant's train ran up the slope. We have flung out east and west."

Wilkins said some odd and sulphurous things on the wire, then added, "Have ordered wrecking train forward. Connect a wire through if you can."

"How is Charley?" I asked fearfully.

"Had him taken home; he's in bad shape. Tell General Manager that he has the cross order—he will understand."

It was like old Wilk, hard and serious on the surface, but tender as a mother's heart underneath. Charley's poor Sanlie's good fame.

Two weeks afterward, when the queer wreck had been straightened out and the train was ready to start for California. The "old man" bought a fruit ranch near San Jose and gave me an interest in it. They never came back, save to visit us. Charley's outdoor life in California's sunny orchards brought him health again, and the old Sanlie's good fame.

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THOUGHTS ON THE NEW YEAR

Amusements Have a Prominent Place in Religious Life.

Visions of Great Possibilities Come to Youth; Age Looks Only to the Future.

A thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past.—Psalms, xc., 4.

Time and eternity! The one is the beautiful porch to the grand temple, the other is the magnificent temple itself, whose spaces are immeasurable, even by the imagination. In very truth we begin the eternal life with the first breath we draw in childhood. As a matter of convenience, however, we cut off a small section of eternity, just long enough to encompass our earthly life, and call it time. Dividing it into years, months and days, we are able to keep our varied experiences in mind, telling ourselves that at such a moment we suffered defeat, at such another we won the victory and at still another some dear one came into the household to add its little voice to the domestic chorus, or perhaps some dear one suddenly became silent and left us to wonder in what climate she is now wandering.

It is a beautiful and profitable custom, this which we celebrate as the old sun shines on each successive first of January. There are 70 hills in the short journey of human life, and as we reach each one in turn we lay our burdens down for a short respite, gather our friends together, re-echo all the past, and with such another won the victory and at still another some dear one came into the household to add its little voice to the domestic chorus, or perhaps some dear one suddenly became silent and left us to wonder in what climate she is now wandering.

Some new faces have come and some of the old faces have disappeared, but love welcomes the one and faith still catches at occasional glimpses of the other. It is the day when we stop for a moment to listen to the keynote of the better life. Disasters and what we have done, the soul bids us be braver, truer and nobler. We heed the warning, and though the cares of the coming year may dim the force of our resolution a subtle something remains which points to possibilities unattained, while it reminds us of the ability to attain them. With the capacity to be great we are still strangely small of soul, and on New Year's Day we chide ourselves for weakness. A sense of shame mingles with the consciousness of power, and we annually promise ourselves better things.

Amid the hilarities of the hour there come to us serious thoughts. Laughter, amusement, pleasure have a conspicuous place in the religious life. Be sad when you must, but be glad whenever you can. The sadness will come of itself, unbidden, but the gladness must be sought, and it is a duty to search for it until it is found. But behind the smiles, the frivolities, the gaieties, every reasoning soul finds food for grave questioning.

To the youth come moments when the vision of great possibilities visits



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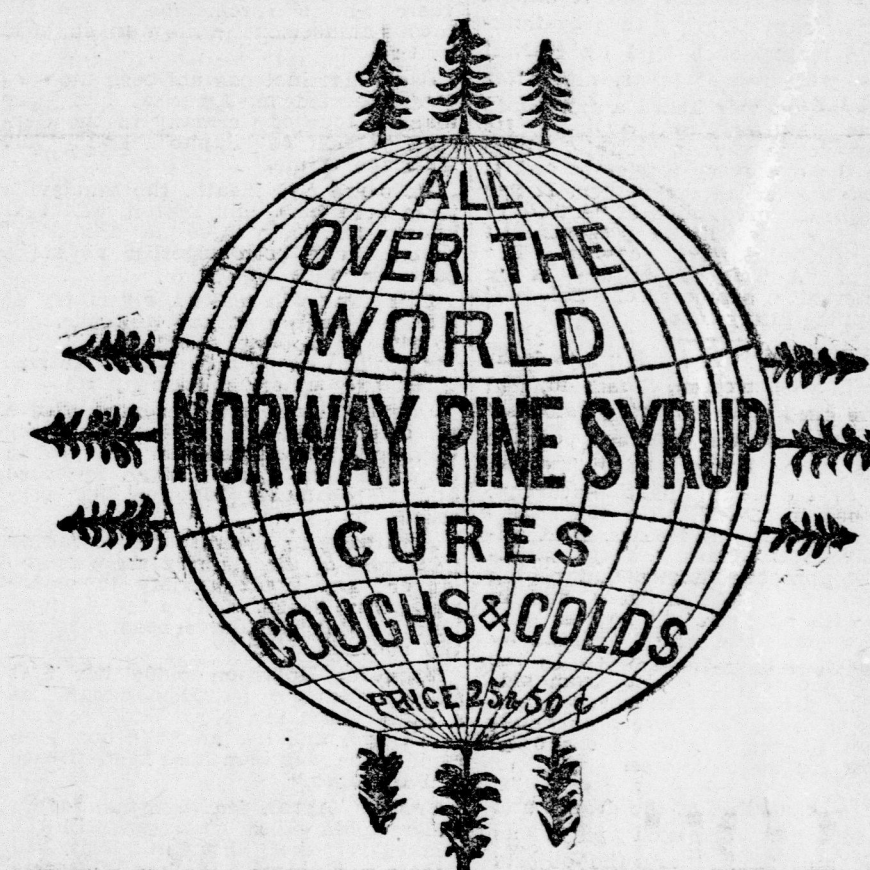
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him. Life is stern, grave, laborious. He dreams of success and stirs his inner depths with the determination to make it his. But what shall the success be? Wealth, fame, position? These are well enough, and quite worthy our most efforts. Still, if we have only wealth, or fame or position, they are not enough. Without manliness, honesty, self-respect, the ability to look back on the past and to travel without a sigh, they count as nothing when the soul criticizes and measures itself. A life of moral principle, of honor, of even-handed justice is the only life worth living. Therefore, with all your striving, let nobility of heart, an unblemished career, be your guiding star.

To the man in middle life the question asks itself on such a day as this. What have I done to make the world better for my living in it? Peasant or merchant, learned or illiterate, that question must be answered, and the answer comes with an armful of joy or of regret. One can make his character great and noble in whatever station he may be placed, and character is the only thing that lasts. Death cannot change it, for it walks through the valley of shadows to the throne of God, to be accepted there. On this bright morning, if we can congratulate our own souls on what they have achieved we have a new year blessing that comes straight from heaven.

To the aged there is nothing left but the future. The past has gone, the recall, and tomorrow beckons. In the sweet faith that the sun will rise again and that we shall rise with it, the winter points to spring. There is no sadness, though the journey draws to a close, for the Beyond opens up its glories and with a single step shall be with our beloved ones once more. If we have done our work well we shall go hence with joy.

For the young, therefore, and for the aged, and for all, there is but one wish—that the new year will find us strong for its duties and ready to reap the harvest in the field in which Providence has placed us.—George H. Hepworth.

At the Königs and Laura mining works, near Breslau, notice has been given to all the foreign miners that they will be replaced on Jan. 1 by German workmen.

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COURTING DANGER

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I caught a relay instrument from the shelf of the supply case, threw a coil of insulated wire over my shoulder, snatched clippers and pliers, and