

HIS LAST TRIP



know more about railroading than I gave you credit for."

"But I feel pretty sure you know a good deal more about this particular piece of railroading than I do," said the quiet man.

"Perhaps," said the boy. "Guess I can tell the poor spots along the line about as well as anybody. I know there's a sharp curve just this side of Billeburg that ought to be straightened. And there's a rough piece near Bayneville that needs re-laying. An' I know we're goin' to strike the worst section of all when we pass Ketorah. They've been talking about relaying it for months, but they don't do it."

"Yes," said the quiet man as he drew a paper from his pocket and pencilled a note on the margin. "So you're a railroad man?" continued the boy, as he studied the stranger's appearance.

"I'm something of a railroad man," was the reply. "What branch would you imagine me to be in?" The boy looked him over carefully. "Well," he said, "I guess you're a freight conductor goin' home to spend your vacation with your mother."

The quiet man laughed aloud. "A good guess," he said, and laughed again. Then he added, "I suppose you are glad to spend your vacations with your mother?" "Me?" said the train boy. "I don't remember that I ever had a mother. I'm just a boy out of the streets. An' aunt that turned me adrift is the only relative I remember. Besides, I don't have any vacations."

"Didn't I hear you call one of the passengers grandma?" inquired the quiet man.

"Yes," replied the boy. "I called her that because she looks like the kind of grandma a boy would like to have. I've had my eye on her ever since she came aboard at Berwick. She knows I'm lookin' out for her an' it makes her feel more comfortable. Every trip now I look out for somebody—just pick 'em out, you know, an' kind o' keep a watchful eye on 'em. It makes the ride a little more pleasant for them, you know, an' I guess it does me some good, too. An' besides, it helps to pass away the time."

The stranger looked at the boy with a new interest.

"What's your name?" he asked.

"Jack," said the boy, "Jack Manning." He looked out of the window as he spoke. "We are just passing Ketorah," he said. "We'll strike that tough bit of road in a minute or two. You'll notice the bumpin' all right."

"So you get no vacations?" said the stranger. "All work and no play must make Jack Manning a dull boy."

The train boy laughed. "Guess I ain't 'specially dull," he said. "Besides, I'm going to get what may be a good, long vacation right away. This road has got through with train boys; they're all laid off. This is my last trip." "Your last trip," echoed the stranger. Scarcely had the words left his lips when the car gave a sudden lurch and careened. There was a savage bump or two, and then with a mighty crash, the car rolled over. High arose a chorus of shrill shrieks and the air was filled with blinding dust.

When the train boy got back his dazed senses he found himself crawling up the bank of the ditch. There was a bump on his head, a cut across his ear, and one of his ankles was wrenched. He looked around as he wiped his grimy face.

The train had been ditched and it was a bad wreck. Ahead he could see the white cloud of steam that told of the engine's position. The tender was piled above it, and behind that came the baggage and express cars and the four passenger cars, crushed against one another or lying battered and shattered along the ditch like so many broken toys.

"Jack!" called a voice. The quiet man, with his head and shoulders projecting from a window, was calling to him. "Here, Jack, give me a lift. I seem to be pinned down by something." The boy mounted the side of the

crushed car, and with a steady pull drew the quiet man out. "My arm is twisted," said the latter, as he looked about, "or I could have helped myself." He gazed around and gave a little groan. Then it seemed to Jack as if his manner suddenly changed. He straightened up, and his eyes sparkled.

"We must have help at once," he cried. "Do you know where we are?"

"The next stop is Caldwell, 'bout three miles ahead," answered Jack. "And Hammersburg is nine miles beyond that," said the quiet man. "They can make up a relief train there." He felt of his injured arm and a twinge ran through him. He turned to Jack.

"Get down into the car and bring up my bag," he said, with swift abruptness.

Jack quickly clambered through the window, and a moment later passed up the handbag.

"Here," he suddenly called, "here's grandma—and she's all right." Almost as he spoke the head of the lady appeared above the opening, and with a strong pull from the quiet man's sound arm and with Jack's help below, she was quickly drawn through.

She was a brave lady, and though she trembled a little her voice was firm.

"There is a shady place under the trees on the bank there," she said as she looked about. "Have the hurt brought up there. I will do what I can for them. I have had experience as a nurse."

"I hope to have help here very soon," said the quiet man. Then he turned to the boy. "Climb that telephone pole there and cut the three wires on the lower arm. Have you anything to do the cutting with?"

"Yes, sir," replied Jack. "I've got a jackknife that will do anything."

The boy's leg was sore and his head hummed and throbbed, and it was hard climbing, but he managed to reach the bar. A moment later the several wires fell, and the quiet man had drawn a telegraph instrument from his bag and was sounding them. As Jack reached the ground he heard the rapid clicking.

The quiet man presently arose.

"An engine with doctors will leave Caldwell in fifteen minutes," he said, "and a relief train will be made up at once at Hammersburg."

"Yes, sir," said Jack. "What next?"

"Are you hurt?" cried the quiet man as he stared at the boy.

"Only a scratch, sir," he flung his coat aside. "Waitin' orders, sir," he said.

"Go down the line and tell the trainmen to report to me here at once. We must go at this work in an orderly way."

"Who shall I say sent me?"

"Manager Robbins."

The boy whistled as he sped along.

"The new general manager," he murmured, and he's a corker, too."

Then followed hours of the hardest work the boy had ever known. He was the manager's right hand man, his messenger, his lieutenant, his devoted aid, his faithful clerk. Through all these scenes of suffering and toil the boy never faltered. The old woman got at him and bandaged his head and begged him to rest, but he shook his bandages at her and hurried back to the side of the quiet man.

The quiet man was a man of steel, who, with one arm dangling by his side, gave his orders, and sent despatches and kept an ever-watchful eye on all that was done.

And then when night's shades had fallen and a merciful coolness had

come with the setting of the sun, and the second relief train was about to leave and the track repairers and the wrecking crew were at work, the quiet man turned to the boy and gripped his shoulder.

"Well, my lad," he said, with a dry sob, "we have done what we could, please God." He looked at the lad. "You have found me a hard master," he said.

"You are just my style," said Master Jack a little brokenly.

"Come," said the quiet man, "we can go now." He leaned on Jack's shoulder as they walked toward the train. He was tired and faint. "And remember," he added, with a little smile, "that vacation is indefinitely postponed."

"All right, sir," said Jack.

—W. R. Rose in Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Little Johnny on the Elephant.

Ephlents is the biggest thing wick is in the world, but the tagger it is more stripy and the giraff he has got a mity long neck wick Providence has giv him so that he can look over the ephlent. Ephlents is fownd in ol parts of the world if you have enough munny for to get in, but is natifs of Ilnoy. Uncle Ned, wick has been in Injy and evrywere, he says one time he was huntin ephlents in the jingles of Peory, an there was a big feller with tucks 20 feet long, an it took after uncle Ned, the ephlent did. Uncle Ned he run as hard as he cud, an he thruw a way his gun an his game bag an his coat an his shoes an evry thing wick he had, but at last he was so tired he fel down and give up an got redy for to hav the ephlents tucks thrusted thru him. Then the ephlent it stoped and looked at him a wile out of its eyes, an then it put all its feet to gather an turnd round an round like on a pivvet, and then it stude on its hed, an bime by it lifted its pobosus and got down on to its knees close to Uncle Ned and opened its mouth reel wide. Uncle Ned he see how things was, so he arose up an stuck his hed in the ephlent's mouth. Then the ephlent got up an bowed, much as to say he felt better, and wolked a way in to the jingle.

But if I was chase by a ephlent I wuld land him one on the point of the jaw, yes; in deed, I de nock him out like he was no bddy only but jest ole Corbett. But Mister Pichel, wick was a mitionary preacher, he says the only thing which can kanock out a ephlent is the ri nose rose, for the ri it jabs its horn in the stum-muck of the ephlents belly and makes him grunt like distent thunder. But Billy, that's my brother, he says gowging is no fair.

My sisters yung man he says once there was a ephlent wick was a sho, and it was loos in the sho yard, and it had the biggest tucks wick was ever see! One day a man come in the sho yard and the ephlent it chased him. The man he run an holler to the keeper for to call him of, but the keeper he said: "Oh, he wont bite." After the eph it had stop foolin the man he sed to the keeper: "You mus xcuse me for given you so much trouble, but this is the first time I have ever see a beest wick carrys his teeths out side his mouth and his tung a hanging to the end of his nose and I didnt kno wether it would be

peace or war." The sho man he sed: "Wel, he has got a sort of military air, partier wen he is foragin for carimals, but he is reely a child of peece, an if you had stood your ground, and give him a good look at your face he wuld have fled in terror from the spot!"

If I was a eph I rather be a eegle, wick sores in to the bloom pirian an fixes his ey on to the sun and screems til tirents tremble! Hop todes is warty, an the goos it has lether feets, an Uncle Ned says cals is the states men of the sea, but eagles is the shine of each patriots divotion! And thats wy I say Gorge Washington was the fore mast man of his time and a fo to progres! —Ambrose Bierce, in Examiner.

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