

TRESPASSERS, BEWARE!

SOME months since I was staying a few days with a friend in the country, not far from the railway. Having occasion to visit a town on the line, I asked my host about the way to the station, which was, I knew, some two or three miles from us. The road, too, was a roundabout one, and very dirty, so that I was desirous, if possible, of saving time and toil by making a short cut.

"In that case," said my friend, when I asked him about it, "you had better go down the line."

"What," I said, "walk along the railroad? that isn't allowed, is it?"

"Well," he replied, "it isn't allowed, but we do it."

"But," I rejoined, "aren't you prevented and ordered off? I don't want to be sent all the way back again and lose my train."

"Oh!" he said, "there is a man appointed to keep off trespassers, but we don't often see him. If you should meet him, tell him you are a stranger, and were told to go that way, and I dare say he'll let you pass on."

I somewhat demurred, for I did not like the idea of trespassing; but the thought of a clean short walk along the line, instead of a long, dirty two miles by a bad country road was a strong temptation, and conscience soon began to lean to the side of convenience. I began to think, "Well, after all, there's no great harm in it, and surely my friend would not go that way unless it were allowed, or at least winked at, by the railway people." I did not like, either, to say, "No," to what my host evidently thought so harmless; so at last, though still somewhat reluctantly, I allowed him to show me the way down the line.

There was a beaten track up the bank, as if it were an accustomed way, and I thought to myself, "Come, it's all right, after all." Then, again, there would come intruding, "No, it isn't the right thing; trespassing is forbidden on grounds of public safety, and I have no right to break the law." Still, like many another man who has begun in a wrong way, I went on.

After walking awhile, and finding I was not interfered with, I became a little more comfortable, and was going on, thinking of something else, when right before me stood one of those large white boards with black letters, headed, *Notice!* which inform trespassers of the penalties that await them. I had

to pass right by it. Had its position been less prominent, had its writing, like that of some country sign-posts that I know, been obscure, I might have had a plea; but no, there could be no manner of doubt about it. Had the policeman appeared before me at that moment, I felt the excuse with which my friend had furnished me would have been of no service. I was a trespasser, that was clear.

Should I go back? If I did, I should lose my train. Should I go and find myself in custody? But standing still was worse than either, so I determined to go on and run the risk, conjuring up fearful visions of a bench of magistrates.

No one was in sight. The long straight iron rails ran before me and behind me as far as the somewhat misty morning would let me see them, when I heard the distant rattle of an approaching train. I was on an high embankment, and in order to get out of the

way of this rushing monster, now rapidly drawing near, I went a few yards down the bank, and then — conscience made such a coward of me — I went all the way down, lest I should be recognised and reported to the people at the station. I fancied the driver and guard looked at me suspiciously, but they said nothing; and when they had got into the mist again, I climbed up the steep bank and went on, beginning heartily to wish that I had chosen the long dirty lanes instead of the clear straight railroad.

"Well," I thought at last, "I will not run the risk a bit longer than I can help;" so I took the first opportunity of leaving the line and got into the fields, determining to keep along the side of the embankment, so as not to miss my way. Oh! how relieved I felt when I got off that hateful line, and fancied my troubles were ended.

But, alas! the consequences of our "trespasses" do not always cease when we leave off trespassing. My troubles, indeed, may be said now to have begun.

I like walking across grass fields, and for a time my way was tolerably pleasant, except that the turf was not improved by a recent thaw, and a plentiful quantity of manure which was, unfortunately for me, well spread. However, I was countryman enough not to care much for that, and was congratulating myself on the change, when I drew near to the end of the first field. The next was not quite so pleasant, in fact, it was decidedly swampy, and my boots soon gave signs

