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Tales of the telegraph

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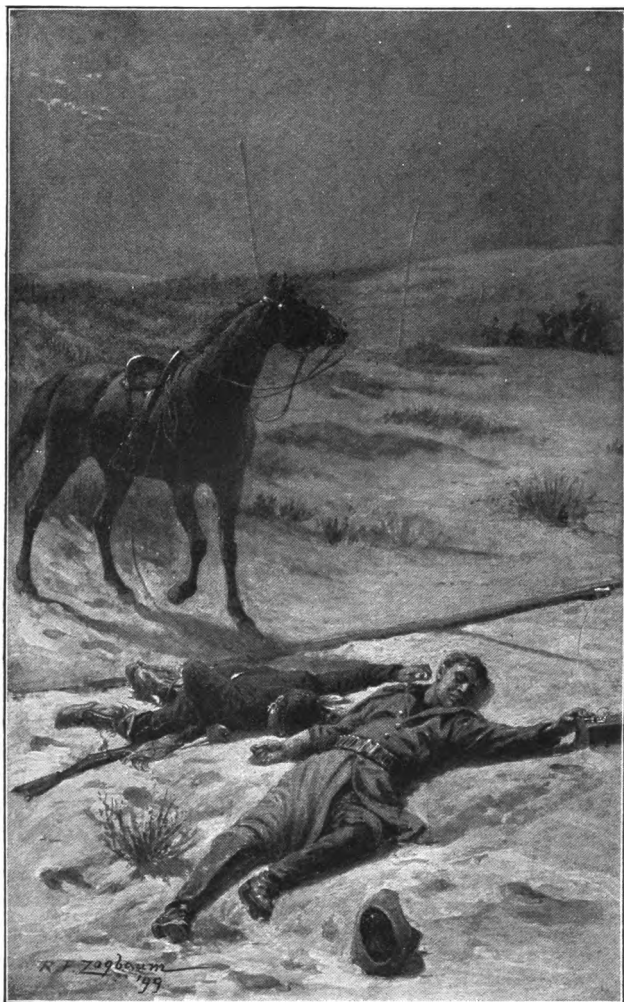
Bernard De Voto

~~Fatta~~

Daird Roberts,

118.

TALES OF THE TELEGRAPH



" . . . Dennis, lying under the telegraph line, his left hand still grasped the instrument." (page 220.)

TALES OF THE TELEGRAPH

The Story of a Telegrapher's Life
and Adventures in Railroad
Commercial and Mil-
itary Work

BY
JASPER EWING BRADY

1st Lieutenant 19th United States Infantry
Late Captain Signal Corps U. S. Volunteers



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**To the
Telegraphers of the Country
this little book is sincerely and affectionately
dedicated.**

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DA 17/16 18—

OTB No. 16 Mn.

OTB No. 17 wa.

(12) No. 16 ~~Ed~~ No. 17 ~~Ed~~ meet at Mercer
 Piding, No. 17 to have Piding. No. 18 due to Learn
Ed Monte, December 16th is annulled between
Ed Monte and Mercer

35. OTB 16 Mn.

(12) M. G. B.

OK Smith 1210 am M. G. B.

35 OTB 17 wa

OK 1211 am M. G. B.

35. Kames & Pomoke No. 16 Mn. Complete 1214 am M. G. B.

35. Steele & Roberts No. 17 wa. Complete 1222 am M. G. B.

FACSIMILE OF A COMPLETED ORDER AS ENTERED IN THE DESPATCHER'S ORDER-BOOK

Tales of the Telegraph

CHAPTER I

LEARNING THE BUSINESS—MY FIRST OFFICE

SEATED in sumptuously furnished palace cars, annihilating space at the rate of sixty miles an hour, but few passengers ever give a thought to the telegraph operators of the road stuck away in towers or in dingy little depots, in swamps, on the tops of mountains, or on the bald prairies and sandy deserts of the west; and yet, these self-same telegraph operators are a very important adjunct to the successful operation of the road, and a single error on the part of one of them might result in the loss of many lives and thousands of dollars.

The whole length of the railroad from starting point to terminus is literally under the eyes of the train dispatcher. By means of reports sent in by hundreds of different operators, he knows the

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exact location of all trains at all times, the number of "loads" and "empties" in each train, the number of cars on each siding, the number of passing tracks and their capacity, the capabilities of the different engines, the gradients of the road, the condition of the road-bed, and, above all, he knows the personal characteristics of every conductor and engineer on the road. In fact if there is one man of more importance than another on a railroad it is the train despatcher. During his trick of eight hours he is the autocrat of the road, and his will in the running of trains is absolute. Therefore despatchers are chosen with very special regard for their fitness for the position. They must be expert telegraphers, quick at figures, and above all they must be as cool as ice, have nerves of steel, and must be capable of grasping a trying situation the minute an emergency arises. An old despatcher once said to me: "Sooner or later a despatcher, if he sticks to the business, will have his smash-up, and then down goes a reputation which possibly he has been years in building up, and his name is inscribed on the roll of 'has-beens.'"

Before the despatcher comes the operator, and the old Biblical saying, "Many are called but few are chosen," is well illustrated by the small number of good despatchers that are found; it is easy

enough to find excellent operators, but a first-class despatcher is a rarity among them.

I learned telegraphy some fifteen or sixteen years ago at a school away out in western Kansas. After I had been there three or four months, I was the star of the class, and imagined that the spirit of Professor Morse had been reincarnated in me. No wire was too swift for me to work, no office too great for me to manage; in fact visions of a superintendency of telegraph flitted before my eyes. Such institutions as this school are very correctly named "ham factories."

During my stay at the school I formed the acquaintance of the night operator at the depot and it was my wont to spend most of my nights there picking up odds and ends of information. For my own benefit I used to copy everything that came along; but the young man in charge never left me entirely alone. Night operators at all small stations have to take care of their own lamps and fires, sweep out, handle baggage, and, in short, be porter as well as operator, and for the privilege of being allowed to stay about I used to do this work for the night man at the office in question. His name was Harry Burgess and he was as good a man as ever sat in front of a key. Some few weeks after this he was transferred to a day of-

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vice up the road and by his help I was made night operator in his stead. Need I say how proud I felt when I received a message from the Chief Despatcher telling me to report for duty that night? I think I was the proudest man, or boy rather, on this earth. Just think! Night operator, porter and baggage-man, working from seven o'clock in the evening until seven o'clock in the morning, and receiving the magnificent sum of forty dollars per month! It was enough to make my bosom swell with pride and it's a wonder I didn't burst.

Heretofore, I had had Burgess to fall back upon when I was copying messages or orders, but now I was alone and the responsibility was all mine. I managed to get through the first night very well, because all I had to do was to take a few "red" commercial messages, "O. S." the trains and load ten big sample trunks on No. 2. The trains were all on time and consequently there were no orders. I was proud of my success and went off duty at seven o'clock in the morning with a feeling that my services were well nigh indispensable to the road, and if anything were to happen to me, receivers would surely have to be appointed.

The second night everything went smoothly until towards eleven o'clock, when the despatcher

began to call "MN," and gave the signal "9." Now the signal "9" means "Train Orders," and takes precedence over everything else on the wire. The situation was anything but pleasant for me, because I had never yet, on my own responsibility, taken a train order, and I stood in a wholesome fear of the results that might accrue from any error of mine. So I didn't answer the despatcher at once as I should have done because I hoped he would get tired of calling me and would tackle "OG," and give him the order. But he didn't. He just kept on calling me, increasing his speed all the time. In sheer desperation, I went out on the platform for five minutes and stamped around to keep warm, hoping all the time he would stop when he found I did not answer. But when I returned instead of calling me on one wire, he had his operator calling me on the commercial line while he was pounding away on the railroad wire. At the rate those two sounders were going they sounded to me like the crack of doom and I was becoming powerfully warm. I finally mustered up courage and answered him.

The first thing the despatcher said was :

"Where in h—l have you been?"

I didn't think that was a very nice thing for him to say, and he fired it at me so fast I could hardly

read it, so I simply replied, "Out fixing my batteries."

"Well," he said, "your batteries will need fixing when I get through with you. Now copy 3."

"Copy 3," means to take three copies of the order that is to follow, so I grabbed my manifold order-book and stylus and prepared to copy. There is a rule printed in large bold type in all railroad time-cards which says, "Despatchers, in sending train orders to operators, will accommodate their speed to the abilities of the operators. In all cases *they will send plainly and distinctly.*" If the despatcher had sent according to my ability just then he would have sent that order by train mail. But instead, from the very beginning, he fired it at me so fast, that before I had started to take it he was away down in the body of it. I had written down only the order number and date, when I broke and said, "G. A. To." That made him madder than ever and he went at me again with increased violence the sounder seeming like the roll of a drum. I think I broke him about ten times and finally he said, "For heaven's sake go wake up the day man. You're nothing but a ham." Strangely enough I could take all of his nasty remarks without any trouble while the order almost completely stumped me. However, I

finally succeeded in putting it all down, repeated it back to him, and received his "O. K."

When the train arrived the conductor and engineer came in the office and I gave them the order. The conductor glanced at it for a moment and then said with a broad grin, "Say, kid, which foot did you use in copying this?" My copy wasn't very clear, but finally he deciphered it, and they both signed their names, the despatcher gave me the "complete," and they left. As soon as the train, which was No. 22, a livestock express, had departed, I made my O. S. report, and then heaved a big sigh of relief.

Scarcely had the tail-lights disappeared across the bridge and around the bend, when the despatcher called again and said, "For God's sake stop that train."

I said, "I can't. She's gone."

"Well," he snapped back, "there's a good chance for a fine smash-up this night."

That scared me almost out of my wits, and I looked at my copy of the order. But it read all right, and yet I felt mighty creepy. About thirty minutes afterwards, I heard a heavy step on the platform and in a second the hind brakeman came tramping in, and cheerfully saluted me with, "Well, I reckon you've raised h—l to-night. 21

and 22 are up against each other hard about a mile and a half east of here. They met on a curve and engines, box-cars, livestock and freight are piled up in fine shape."

"Any one killed?" I asked with a blanched face and sinking heart.

"Naw, no one is exactly killed, but one engineer and a fireman are pretty badly scalded, and 'Shorty' Jones, our head man, has a broken leg caused by jumping. You'd better tell the despatcher."

Visions of the penitentiary for criminal neglect danced before my disordered brain; all my knowledge of telegraphy fled; I was weak in the knees, sick at heart, and as near a complete wreck as a man could be. But something had to be done, so I finally told the despatcher that Nos. 21 and 22 were in the ditch, and he snapped back, "D—n it, I've been expecting it, and have ordered the wrecking outfit out from Watsego. You turn your red-light and hold everything that comes along. In the meantime go wake up the day man. I want an operator there, and not a ham."

When the day man came in, half dressed, he said, "Well, what the devil is the matter?"

Speech had entirely left me by this time, so I simply pointed to the order, and the brakeman

told him the rest. Never in all my life have I spent such a night as that. The day man regaled me with charming little incidents, about men he knew, who, for having been criminally negligent, had been shot by infuriated engineers or had been sent up for ten years. He seemed to take a fiendish delight in telling me these things and my discomforture was great. I would have run away if I hadn't been too weak. About seven o'clock in the morning, after a night of misery, he patronizingly told me, that it wasn't my fault at all; the despatcher had given a "lap order," and that the blame was on him. Well! the reaction was as bad, almost, as the first feeling of horror. I went home and after a light breakfast, retired to bed, but not to sleep, for every time I would close my eyes, visions of wrecks, penitentiaries, dead men and ruined homes came crowding upon my disordered brain.

About ten o'clock they sent for me to come to the office. I went over and Webster the agent said the superintendent wanted to see me. I had never seen the superintendent and he seemed to me to be about as far off as the President of the United States, but I screwed up my courage and went in. I saw a kindly-looking gentleman seated before Webster's desk, but I was too much

frightened to speak and just stood there like a bump on a log. Presently, Mr. Brink, the superintendent, turned to Webster and said, "I wonder why that night man doesn't come?"

I tremblingly replied, "I am the night man, sir."

He looked at me for a moment and smilingly said, "Why, bless my soul, my lad! I thought you were a messenger boy." He then asked me for my story of the wreck. When I had given it he seemed satisfied, and gave me lots of good advice; but in the end he said I was too young to have the position, and I was discharged. But he kindly added, that in a few years he would be glad to have me come back on the road, after I had acquired more experience. The next day I returned to school.

CHAPTER II

AN ENCOUNTER WITH TRAIN ROBBERS

MY FIRST attempt at holding an office had proved such a flat and dismal failure that I thought I should never have the heart to apply for another. I worked faithfully in the school for about a month, and then the fever to try again took hold of me. I knew it would be of no use to apply to my former superintendent, Mr. Brink, so I wrote to Mr. R. B. Bunnell, Superintendent of Telegraph of the P. Q. & X. Railroad at Kansas City, Missouri, saying I was an expert operator and desired a position on his road. Mr. Bunnell must have been laboring under a hypnotic spell, for by return mail he wrote, enclosing me a pass to Alfreda, Kansas, and directing me to assume charge of the night office at that point at the magnificent salary of \$37.50 per month. This was a slight decrease from my former salary, but I didn't care. I wanted a chance to redeem myself and I felt confident I could be more successful in my second attempt. So I packed my few belongings, bade good-bye to the school forever, and away I went.

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When I left "MN," I said nothing to any one about my destination, and I did not know a thing about Alfreda, except that it was near the border line between Kansas and Colorado. The brakeman on the train in talking to me told me it was a very pleasant place; but when he said so I fancied I could detect a sarcastic ring in his voice, and I was in no doubt about it when I arrived and saw what a desolate, dreary place Alfreda was. The only things in sight were a water-tank, a pump-house and the telegraph office; and I wish you could have seen that office. It was simply the bed of a box-car, taken off the trucks and set down with one end towards the track. A small platform, two windows, a door, and the signal board perched high on a pole completed the outfit.

I arrived at six-thirty in the morning and there wasn't a living soul in sight. An hour later, a big broad shouldered Irishman who proved to be the pumper, came ambling along on a railroad velocipede. He looked at me for a minute, and after I had made myself known he grinned and said, "Well, I hopes as how ye will loike the place. Burke, the man who was here afore ye, got scared off by thramps, and I reckon he's not stopped runnin' yit." "Fine introduction wasn't it?"

I found there was no day operator and the only

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house around was the section house, two miles up the track. The operator and pumper boarded there with the section boss; but the railroad company was magnanimous enough to furnish a velocipede for their use in going to and from the station. How I felt the first night, stuck away out there in that box-car, two miles from the nearest house and twelve miles from the nearest town, I must leave to the imagination. My heart sank and I had many misgivings, in fact, I was scared to death, but I set my teeth hard and determined to do my best, with the hope that I might be promoted to a better office. I did win that promotion but I wouldn't go through my experiences again for the whole road.

One night after I had been working there about a month, I went to my office as usual at seven o'clock. It was a black night threatening a big storm. The pumper had not gone home as yet and he remarked, that it was "goin' to be a woild night," but he hoped "the whistlin' av the wind would be after kaping me company," and with that he jumped on the velocipede, and off he went.

I didn't much relish the idea of the storm, for I knew the reputation of Kansas as a cyclone state, and my box-car office was not well adapted to stand a hurricane. However, I went inside, and

after lighting my lamps, sat down and wrote letters and read, when I was not taking train orders. This office was kept up solely because it was a convenient place to deliver orders to freight trains at night when they stopped for water.

About twelve-thirty in the morning my door opened suddenly, and a man stepped quickly in. I was startled because this was almost the only man except the pumper and the train crews that had been there since I came. Once in a while a stray tramp had gone through, but this man was not a tramp. He wore a long overcoat, buttoned to his chin, with the collar turned up. A slouch hat pulled well down over his eyes so far concealed his face that his features were scarcely visible. He came over to my desk and gruffly asked, "What time is there a passenger train east to-night?"

I answered that one went through at half past one, the Overland Flyer, but it did not stop at Alfreda. Quick as a flash he pulled a revolver and poking it in my face, said, "Young man, you turn your red-light and stop that train or I'll make a vacancy in this office mighty d——d quick."

The longer I gazed down the barrel of that revolver the bigger it grew, and it looked to me as if it was loaded with buck-shot to the muzzle. When it had grown to about the size of a gatling

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gun (and it didn't take long to do it), I concluded that "discretion was the better part of valor," and reached up and turned my red-light. Meanwhile the door opened again, and three more men came in. They were masked and the minute I saw them I knew they were going to make an attempt to hold up the Overland Flyer. Often this train carried large amounts of bullion and currency east, and I supposed they had heard that there was a shipment to go through that night.

I was standing with my back to the table, and just then I heard the despatcher say that the Flyer was thirty minutes late from the west. I put my hands quietly behind me and let the right rest on the key. I then carefully opened the key and had just begun to speak to the despatcher when one of the men suspected me and said to the leader, "Bill, watch that little cuss. He's monkeying with the instrument and may give them warning."

I stopped, closed the key, and was trying to look unconcerned, when "Bill," said that "to stop all chances of further trouble," they would bind and gag me. Thereupon two of the men tied my hands in front of me, bound my legs securely, and thrust a villainously dirty gag in my mouth. When this was done, "Bill" said, "Throw him across those blamed instruments so they will

keep quiet." They flung me upon the table, face downwards, so that the relay was just under my stomach, and of course my weight against the armature of the relay stopped the clicking of the sounder. As luck would have it, my left hand was in such a position that it just touched the key, and I found I could move the hand slightly. So I opened the key and pretended to be struggling quite a little. The leader came over and giving me a good stiff punch in the ribs, said with an oath, "You keep quiet or we'll find a way to make you." I became passive again, and then when the men were engaged in earnest conversation, I began to telegraph softly to the despatcher. The relay being shut off by my weight, there was no noise from the sounder, and I sent so slowly that the key was noiseless. Of course I did not know on whom I was breaking in, but I kept on. I told the exact state of affairs, and asked him to either tell the Flyer not to heed my red-light and go through, or, better still, to send an armed posse from Kingsbury, twelve miles up the road. I repeated the message twice, so that he would be sure to hear it, and then trusted to luck.

The cords and gags were beginning to hurt, and my anxiety was very great. The minutes dragged slowly by, and I thought that hour would

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never end; but it did end at last, and all of a sudden I heard the long calliope whistle of the engine on the Flyer as she came down the grade. This was followed by two short blasts, that showed she had seen my red-light and was going to stop. "My God!" I thought. "Has she been warned?" So soon as the train whistled the men went out leaving me helpless on the table. I heard the whistle of the air brakes and knew the train must be slowing up. My anxiety was intense. Presently I heard her stop at the tank, and then, in about a second, I listened to the liveliest fusillade that I had ever heard in my life. It was sweet music to my ears I can tell you, for it indicated to me, what proved to be a fact, that a posse were on board and that the robbers ~~were~~ foiled. One of them was shot, and two were captured, but "Bill," the leader, escaped. They had their horses hitched to the telegraph poles, and as "Bill" went running by the office I heard him say, "I'll fix that d—d operator, anyhow." Then, BANG! crash, went the glass in the window, and a bullet buried itself in the table, not two inches from my head. I was not exactly killed, but I was frightened so badly, and the strain had been so great, that when the trainmen came in to release me, I at once lost consciousness. When I came to, I was sur-

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rounded by a sympathetic crowd of passengers and trainmen, and a doctor, who happened to be on the train, was pouring something down my throat that soon made me feel better.

As soon as I had recovered myself sufficiently, I telegraphed the despatcher what had happened, and the chief, who in the meantime had been sent for, told me to close up my office, and come east on the flyer, to report for duty in the morning in his office as copy operator.

That is how I won my promotion.

CHAPTER III

IN A WRECK

THE change from Alfreda to the chief dispatcher's office in Nicholson was, indeed, a pleasant one. The dispatchers, especially the first trick man, seemed somewhat dubious as to my ability to do the work, but I was rapidly improving in telegraphy, and, in spite of my extreme youth I was allowed to remain. But the life of a railroad man is very uncertain, and one day we were much surprised to hear that the road had gone into the hands of receivers. There were charges of mismanagement made against a number of the higher officials of the road, and one of the first things the receivers did was to have a general "house-cleaning." The general manager, the general superintendent, and a number of the division superintendents resigned to save dismissal, and my friend the chief dispatcher went with them. He was succeeded by Ted Donahue, the man who had been working the first trick. Ted

didn't like me worth a cent, and, rather than give him an opportunity to dismiss me, I quit.

I was at home idle for a few weeks, and then hearing that there might be an opening for operators on the C. Q. & R., a new road building up in Nebraska, I once more started out. It was an all night ride to the division headquarters, and thinking I might as well be luxurious for once, I took a sleeper. My berth was in the front end of the last car on the train. I retired about half past ten and soon dropped off into a sound sleep. I had been asleep for perhaps two hours, when I was awakened by the car giving a violent lurch, and then suddenly stopping. I was stunned and dazed for a moment, but I soon heard the cracking and breaking of timbers, and the hissing of steam painfully near to my section. I tried to move and rise up, but found that the confines of my narrow quarters would not permit it. I then realized that we were wrecked and that I was in a bad predicament. I felt that I had no bones broken, and my only fear was that the wreck would take fire. My fears were not groundless for I soon smelled smoke. I cried out as loudly as I could, but my berth had evidently become a "sound proof booth." Then I felt that my time had come, and had about given

up all hope, and was trying to say a prayer, when I heard the train-crew and passengers working above me. Again I cried out and this time was heard, and soon was taken out. God! what a night it was—raining a perfect deluge and the wind blowing a hurricane.

I learned that our train had stopped on account of a hot driving-box on the engine; the hind brakeman had been sent back to put out a flag, but, imagining there was nothing coming, he had neglected to do his full duty, and before he knew it, a fast freight came tearing around the bend, and a tail-end collision was the result. Seeing the awful effects of his gross neglect, the brakeman took out across the country and was never heard of again. I fancy if he could have been found that night by the passengers and train-crew his lot would have been anything but pleasant. Two people in the sleeper were killed outright, and three were injured, while the engineer and fireman of the freight were badly hurt by jumping. I didn't get a scratch.

As I stood watching the wrecked cars burn, I heard the conductor say, "he wished to God he had an operator with him." I told him I was an operator and offered my services. He said there was a pocket instrument in the baggage car, and

asked me if I would cut in on the wire and tell the despatcher of the wreck. I assented and went forward with him to the baggage car, where he gave me a pair of pliers, a pocket instrument and about eight feet of office wire. I asked for a pair of climbers and some more office wire, but neither was to be had. Here, therefore, was a pretty knotty problem. The telegraph poles were thirty feet high; how was I to make a connection with only eight feet of wire and no climbers? I thought for a while, and then I put the instrument in my pocket, and undertook to "shin up" the pole as I used to do when I was a schoolboy. After many efforts, in which I succeeded in tearing nearly all the clothes off of me, I finally reached the lowest cross-arm, and seated myself on it with my legs wrapped around the pole. There was only one wire on this arm, so I had, comparatively speaking, plenty of room. On each of the other two cross arms there were four wires, and there was also one strung along the tops of the poles. This made ten wires in all, and I had not the least idea which one was the despatcher's wire. The pole being wet from the rain, made the wires mighty hot to handle. I had the fireman hand me up a piece of old iron wire he happened to have on the engine, and with this I made a flying

cut in the third wire of the second cross arm. I attached the little pocket instrument, and found that upon adjusting it, I was on a commercial wire. There I was, straddling a cross arm between heaven and earth, with the instrument held on my knee, and totally ignorant of any of the calls or the wire I was on. I yelled down to the conductor and asked him if he knew any of the calls. No; of course he didn't; and he was so excited he didn't have sense enough to look on his time-card, where the calls are always printed. Finally, after carefully adjusting the instrument, I opened my key, broke in on somebody, and said "Wreck." The answer came, "Sine." I said, "I haven't any sine. No. 2 on the C. K. & Q. has been wrecked out here, and I want the despatcher's office. Can you tell me if he is on this wire?"

Now there is a vast deal of difference between sending with a Bunnell key on a polished table, and sending with a pocket instrument held on your knee, especially when you are perched on a thirty foot pole, with the rain pouring down in torrents, the wind blowing almost a gale, and expecting every minute to be blown off and have your precious neck broken. Consequently my sending was pretty "rocky," and some one came back at me with, "Oh! get out you big ham."

But I hung to it and finally made them understand who I was and what I wanted. The main office in Ouray cut me in on the despatcher's wire and I told him of the wreck. He said he had suspected that No. 2 was in trouble, but he had no idea that it was as bad as I had reported. He said he would order out the wrecking outfit and would send doctors with it. Would I please stay close and do the telegraphing for them, he would see that I was properly rewarded. Then I told him about where I was, but promised to hold on as long as I could, but for him to be sure and send out some more wire and a pair of climbers on the wrecker. After waiting about an hour the wrecker arrived, and with it the doctors; so our anxiety was relieved, the wounded taken care of, and a decent wrecking office put in.

The division superintendent came out with them, and for my services he offered me the day office at X—, which I accepted.

CHAPTER IV

A WOMAN OPERATOR WHO SAVED A TRAIN

X— was a pretty good sort of an office to have, barring a beastly climate wherein all four seasons would sometimes be ably and fully represented in one twenty-four hours. But eighty big round American dollars a month was not to be sneezed at—that was a heap of money to a young chap—and I hung on. In those days civilization had not advanced as far westward as it is to-day, and there was not much local business on the road, due to the sparsely settled country. The first office east of X— was Dunraven, some twenty miles away. Between the two places were several blind sidings used as passing tracks. Dunraven was a cracking good little village and the day operator there was Miss Mary Marsh; there was no night office. Now I was just at the age where all a young man's susceptibility comes to the surface, and I was a pretty fair sample. I weighed one hundred and fifty pounds and every ounce of me was as susceptible as a barometer on

a stormy day. Consequently it was not long until I knew Mary and liked her immensely. All my spare time was occupied in talking to her over the wire, except when the cussed despatcher would chase me off with, "Oh! get out you big spoon, you make every one tired." Then Mary would give me the merry, "Ha, ha, ha."

One time I took a day off and ran down to Dunraven, and my impressions were fully confirmed. Mary was a little bit of a woman, with black hair, red lips, white teeth, and two eyes that looked like coals of fire, so bright were they. She was small, but when she took hold of the key, she was jerked lightning, and I have never seen but one woman since who was her equal in that line.

Our road was one of the direct connections of the "Overland Route," west to San Francisco, and twice a day we had a train, that in those days was called a flyer. Now it would be in a class with the first class freights. The west bound train passed my station at eight in the morning, and the east bound at seven-thirty in the evening. After that I gave "DS" good night, and was free until seven the next morning. The east bound flyer passed Dunraven at eight-fifteen in the evening and then Mary was through for the night. The town was a mile away from the depot and the

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poor girl had to trudge all that distance alone. But she was as plucky as they make them and was never molested. A mile west of Dunraven was Peach Creek, spanned by a wooden pile and stringer bridge. Ordinarily, you could step across Peach Creek, but sometimes, after a heavy rain it would be a raging torrent of dirty muddy water, and it seemed as if the underpinning must surely be washed out by the flood.

One day after I had been at X— a couple of months, we had a stem-winder of a storm. The rain came down in torrents unceasingly for twelve hours, and the country around X— was almost a morass. The roadbed was good, however, and when the section men came in at six that night they reported the track firm and safe. But, my stars! how the rain was falling at seven-thirty as the flyer went smashing by. I made my "OS" report and then thought I'd sit around and wait until it had passed Dunraven and have a little chat with Mary, before going home for the night. At seven-forty-five I called her but no answer. Then I waited. Eight o'clock, eight-fifteen, eight-twenty, and still nothing from Dunraven. The despatcher then started to call "DU," but no answer. Finally, he said to me, "You call 'DU.' Maybe the wire is heavy and she can't adjust for

me." I called steadily for five minutes, but still no reply. I was beginning to get scared. All sorts of ideas came into my head—robbers, tramps, fire and murder.

"DS" said, "I'm afraid something has happened to the flyer. Turn your red-light and when No. 26 comes along, I'll give them an order to cut loose with the engine and go through and find the flyer."

Five minutes later the wire opened and closed. Then the current became weak, but adjusting down, I heard, "DS, DS, WK." Ah! that meant a wreck. "DS" answered and I heard the following message:—

"W. D. C. "PEACH CREEK, 4 | 13, 18—
"DS.

"Peach Creek bridge washed out to-night, but I heard of it and arrived here in time to flag the flyer. Send an operator on the wrecking outfit to relieve me.

"(signed) MARY MARSH, Operator."

Two hours afterwards the wrecker came by X— and, obedient to orders from the despatcher, I boarded it and went down to work the office. We reached there in about forty minutes and found that the torrent had washed out the underpinning of the bridge, and nothing was left but a

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few ties, the rails and the stringers. A half witted boy, who lived in Dunraven, had been fishing that day like "Simple Simon," and came tramping up to the office, telling Miss Marsh, in an idiotic way, that Peach Creek bridge had washed out. Just then she heard me "OS" the flyer and her office was the next one to mine. As the flyer did not stop at Dunraven, the baggage-man and helper went home at six o'clock and she was absolutely alone save for this half witted boy. The section house was a mile and a half away to the east. A mile away, to the south were the twinkling lights of the village, while but one short mile to the west was Peach Creek, with the bridge gone out, and the flyer thundering along towards it with its precious load of human freight. How could it be warned. The boy hadn't sense enough to pound sand. She must do it. So, quick as a flash she picked up the red-light standing near, and started down the track. The rain was coming down in a perfect deluge, and the wind was sweeping across the Nebraska prairies like a hurricane. Lightning was flashing, casting a lurid glare over the soaked earth, and the thunder rolled peal after peal, resembling the artillery of great guns in a big battle. Truly, it was like the setting for a grand drama. Undaunted by it

all, this brave little woman, bare headed, hair flying in the wind, and soaked to the skin, battled with the elements as she fought her way down the track. A mile, ordinarily, is a short distance, but now, to her, it seemed almost interminable; and all the time the flyer was coming nearer and nearer to the creek with the broken bridge. My God! would she make it! Presently, above the howling of the wind she heard the mad waters as they went boiling and tumbling down the channel.

At last she was there, standing on the brink. But the train was not yet saved. Just across the creek the road made an abrupt curve around a small hill, and if she could not reach that curve her labors would be to no avail, and a frightful wreck would follow. All the bridge was gone save the rails, stringers and a few shaky ties. Only forty feet intervened between her and the opposite bank, and get across she must. There was only one way, so grasping the lantern between her teeth, she started across on her hands and knees. The stringers swayed back and forth in the wind, and her frail body, it seemed, would surely be caught up and blown into the mad maëlstrom of waters below. No! No! she could not fail now. Away up the road, borne to her anxious ears by the howling wind, she



"After many efforts I finally reached the lowest cross-arm." (page 22.)

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heard two long and two short blasts of the flyer's whistle as she signalled for a crossing. God! would she ever get there. Straining every nerve, at last success was hers, and tottering, she struggled up the other side. Flying up the track, looking for all the world like some eyrie witch, she reached the curve, swinging her red light like mad. Bob Burns, who was pulling the flyer that night, saw the signal, and immediately applied the emergency brakes. Then he looked again and the red-light was gone. But caution is a magic watchword with all railroad men, and he stopped. Climbing down out of the cab of the engine, he took his torch, and started out to investigate. He didn't have far to go, when he came upon the limp, inanimate form of Mary Marsh, the extinguished red-light tightly clasped in her cold little hand.

"My God! Mike," he yelled to his fireman, "it's a woman. Why, hang me, if it isn't the little lady from Dunraven. Wonder what she is doing out here." He wasn't long in ignorance, because a brakeman sent out ahead saw that the bridge had gone.

Rough, but kindly hands, bore her tenderly into the sleeper, and under the ministrations of her own sex, she soon came around. So soon as she

had seen the flyer stopping she realized that she had succeeded and womanlike—she fainted. Her clothes were torn to tatters, and taken all in all this little heroine was a most woe-begone specimen of humanity.

A wrecking office was cut in by the baggage-man, who happened to be an old lineman, and she sent the message to "DS," telling him of the wreck. I relieved her and she stayed in the sleeper all night, and the next day she returned to her work at Dunraven, but little worse for the experience. She had positively refused to accept a thing from the thankful passengers, saying she did but her duty.

Two months afterwards she married the chief despatcher, and the profession lost the best woman operator in the business. I was dreadfully cut by the ending of affairs, but she had said, "Red headed operators were not in her class," and I reckon she was about right.

Surely, she was a direct descendant from the Spartan mothers.

CHAPTER V

A NIGHT OFFICE IN TEXAS—A STUTTERING DESPATCHER

IT WAS not long after Mary threw me over that I became tired of X— and gave up my job and started south. I said it was on account of ill health, but the last thing that cussed first trick despatcher said to me was, "Never mind, you old spoon, you'll get over this attack in a very short while."

I landed in St. Louis one bright morning and went up to the office of the chief despatcher of the Q. M. & S., and applied for an office on his division. He had none to give me but wired the chief despatcher at Big Rock, and in answer thereto I was sent the next morning to Healyville. And what a place I found! The town was down in the swamps of southeast Missouri, four miles north of the Arkansas line, and consisted of the depot and twenty or twenty-five houses, five of which were saloons. There was a branch road running from here to Honiton, quite a settlement on the Mississippi river, and that was the only

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possible excuse for an officer at this point.. The atmosphere was so full of malaria, that you could almost cut it with an axe. I stayed there just three days, and then, fortunately, the chief despatcher ordered me to come to his office. He wanted me to take the office at Boling Cross, near the Texas line, but I had the traveling fever and wanted to go further south, and he sent me down on the I. & G. N., and the chief there sent me to Herron, Texas. There wasn't much sickness in the air around Herron, but there were just a million fleas to every square inch of sand in the place. Herron was one of the few towns in a very extensive cattle belt, and a few days after I had arrived I noticed the town had filled up with "cow punchers." They had just had their semi-annual round up, and were in town spending their money and having a whooping big time. You probably know what that means to a cow-boy. I was a tender-foot of the worst kind, and every one at the boarding-house and depot seemed to take particular delight in telling me of the shooting scrapes and rackets of these cow-boys, and how they delighted in making it warm for a tender-foot. Bob Wolfe, the day man at the depot, told me how at times they had come up and raised particular Cain at the station, especially when there was a new

operator on hand. I didn't half believe all their stories, but I will confess that I had a few misgivings the first night when I went to work. One night passed safely enough, but the second was a hummer from the word go. The office was somewhat larger than the telegraph offices usually are in small towns. The table was in the recess of a big bay window, giving me a clear view of the I. & G. N. tracks, while along the front ran the usual long wide platform. The P. & T. C. road crossed at right angles at one end of the platform, and one operator did the work for the two roads. There were two lamps over my desk—one on each side of the bay window—and one was out in the waiting-room. I also kept a lantern lighted to carry when I went out to trains.

All through the early part of the night, I heard sounds of revelry and carousing, accompanied by an occasional pistol shot, up in the town, but about half past eleven these sounds ceased, and I was congratulating myself that my night, would after all, be uneventful. About twelve o'clock, however, there arose just outside the office the greatest commotion I had ever heard in my life. I was eating my midnight lunch, and had a piece of pie in my hand, when I heard the tramp of many feet on the platform. It sounded like a regiment

of infantry, and in a minute there came the report of a shot, and with a crash out went one of my lights, a shower of glass falling on the table. Before I could collect myself there came another shot and smash out went the other light. I dropped my pie and spasmodically grasped the table. The only lights left were the one in the waiting-room and my lantern, which made it in the office little better than total darkness. All the time the tramp, tramp on the platform was coming closer and closer, and my heart was gradually forcing its way up in my mouth. In a moment the waiting-room door was thrown open, and with a wild whoop and a big hurrah, the crowd came in. The door between the office and the waiting-room was closed, but that made no difference to my visitors; they smashed it open and swarmed into the office. One of them picked up the lantern, and swaggering over to where I sat all trembling with fear, and expecting that *my* lights would go out next, raised it to my face. They all crowded around me and one of them gave me a good punch in the ribs. Then the one with the lantern said, "Well, fellows, the little cuss is game. He didn't get under the table like the last one did. Kid, for a tenderfoot, you're a hummer."

Get under the table! I couldn't. I would

have given half my interest in the hereafter to have been able to crawl under the table or to have run away. But fright held its sway, and locomotion was impossible.

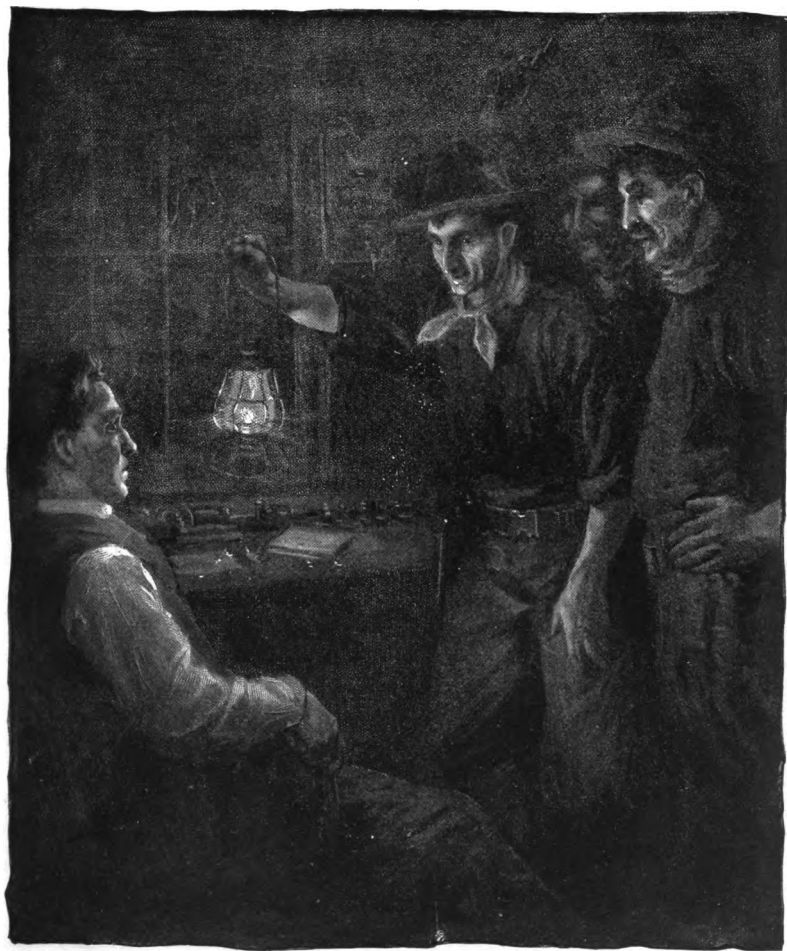
For about five minutes the despatcher had been calling me for orders, and in a trembling voice I asked them to let me answer and take the order. "Cert," said one of them, who appeared to be the leader, "go on and take the order, and then take a drink with us."

By the dim light of only that lantern, with my order pad on a table covered with broken glass, and smattered with pie, I finally copied the order, but it was about the worst attempt I had ever made; and the conductor remarked when he signed it, that it would take a Philadelphia lawyer to read it. The cow-punchers, however, from that time on were very good friends of mine, and many a pleasant Sunday did I spend on their ranches. They afterwards told me that Bob Wolfe had put them up to their midnight visit in order to frighten me. They certainly succeeded. My service at Herron was not very profitable, the road being in the hands of receivers, and for four months none of us received a cent of wages. The road was called the "International & Great North-

ern," but we facetiously dubbed it the "Independent & Got Nothing."

Some months after this I was transferred down to the southern division, and made night operator at Mankato. This was really about the best position I had yet struck: good hours, plenty of work and a fine office to do it in, and eighty dollars a month. The agent and day man were both fine fellows, and there was no chore work around the station—a baggage smasher did that. The despatchers up in "DS" office were pleasant to work with and as competent a lot of men as ever touched a key. I had never met any of them when I first took the office, though of course I soon knew their names, and the following incident will disclose how and under what unusual circumstances I formed the acquaintance of one of them, Fred De Armand, the second trick man.

About four weeks after I took the Mankato office, engine 333, pulling a through livestock freight north, broke a parallel rod, and besides cutting the engineer into mince-meat, caused a great wreck. This took place about two miles and a half north of Mankato. The hind man came back and reported it, and being off duty, I caught up a pocket instrument and some wire, and jumping on a velocipede, was soon at the wreck.



"One of them picked up the lantern, and swaggering over to where I sat all trembling . . ." (page 36.)

I cut in an office in short order, and "DS" soon knew exactly how matters stood. One passenger train south was tied up just beyond the wreck, and in about an hour and a half the wrecker appeared in charge of the train-master. I observed a young man twenty-eight or thirty years of age standing around looking on, and once when I was near him I noticed that he stammered very badly.

I carefully avoided saying anything to that young man, because, I, too, at times, had a rather bad impediment in my speech. It asserted itself especially when I heard any one else stutter, or when the weather was going to change; the men who knew me well said they could always foretell a storm by my inability to talk. From my own experience, however, I knew that when a stammerer heard another man stammer, he imagined that he was being made fun of, and all the fight in him came at once to the surface; and as this young man was about twice my size, I did my best to keep away from him. But in a few moments he came over to where I was and said to me, "A-a-a-sk 'DS' t-t-t-t-o s-s-s-end out m-m-m-y r-r-ain c-c-c-c-oat on th-th-th-irteen." Every other word was followed by a whistle.

My great help in stammering was to kick with my right foot. I knew what was coming, and

tried my best to avert the trouble. I drew in a long breath and said: "Who sh-sh-sh-all I s-s-s-ay y-y-y-ou are?" and my right foot was doing great execution. True to its barometrical functions, my throat was predicting a storm. It came.

He looked at me for a second, grew red in the face, then catching me by the collar, gave me a yank, that made me see forty stars, and said, "B-b-b-last you! wh-wh-at d-d-o y-y-ou m-mean b-b-y m-mocking me? I'll sm-sm-ash y-y-our b-b-b-lamed r-r-ed head."

Speech left me entirely then, and I am afraid I would have been most beautifully thumped, had not Sanders, the trainmaster, come over and stopped him. He called him "De Armand," and I then knew he was the second trick despatcher. After many efforts De Armand told Sanders how I had mocked him. Sanders didn't know me and the war clouds began to gather again; but Johnson, the conductor of the wrecker, came over and said, "Hold on there, De Armand, that kid ain't mocking you; he stammers so bad at times that he kicks a hole in the floor. Why, I have seen him start to say something to my engineer pulling out of Mankato, and he would finish it just as the caboose went by, and we had some forty cars in the train at that."

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At this a smile broke over De Armand's face, and he grasped my hand and said, "Excuse m-m-m-e k-k-id; but y-y-you k-k-know how it is y-y-yourself." You may well believe that I did know.

One night, shortly after this, I was repeating an order to De Armand, and in the middle of it I broke myself very badly. He opened his key, and said, "Kick, you devil, kick!" And I got the merry ha-ha from up and down the line. But in giving me a message a little while after he flew the track, and I instantly opened up and said, "Whistle, you tarrier, whistle!" Maybe he didn't get it back.

CHAPTER VI

BLUE FIELD, ARIZONA, AND AN INDIAN SCRIMMAGE

THE desire to travel was strong within me, and in the following June I left Mankato, went out to Arizona and secured a position on the A. & P., at Blue Field, a small town almost in the centre of the desert. Alfreda, Kansas, was dreary and desolate enough, but there, I was at least in communication with civilization, because I had one wire running to Kansas City, while Blue Field was the crowning glory of utter desolation. The Bible says that the good Lord made heaven and earth in six days, and rested on the seventh. It needed but a single glance at Blue Field to thoroughly convince me that the Lord quit work at the end of the sixth day right there, and had never taken it up since. There was nothing but some scattering adobe shacks, with the usual complement of saloons, and as far almost as the eye could see in every direction,—sand—hot, glaring, burning sand. To the far northwards, could be

dimly observed the outlines of the Mogollon range of mountains. The population consisted chiefly of about four hundred dare-devil spirits who had started to wander westwards in search of the El Dorado and had finally settled there, too tired, too disgusted to go any farther, and lacking money enough to return to their homes. It wasn't the most congenial crowd in the world. There was only one good thing in the place, and that was a deep well of pure sparkling water. The sun during the day was so scorching that the rails seemed to sizzle as they stretched out like two slender, interminable bands of silver over the hot sands, and at night no relief was apparent, and the office so stifling hot that my existence was well nigh unbearable. But the pay was ninety dollars per month and I hung on until I could save funds enough to get back to God's own country. To sleep in a house, in the day time, was almost killing, so I used to make up a sort of bunk on a truck and sleep in the shade of the freight shed. At seven-forty-three in the evening, the Trans-Continental flyer went smashing by at a fifty-five mile an hour clip and the dust it raised was enough to strangle a man.

The Arizona climate is a well known specific for pulmonary troubles, and thousands of people

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come down there in all stages of consumption from the first premonitory cough to the living emaciated skeleton.

The first station west of me was Clear Creek (so called on account of a good sized stream of water that came down from the Mogollons), and a few days after I arrived at Blue Field, I heard a message going over the wires saying that Fred Baird was coming down there to take charge. I had known him up in Kansas, and his looks and a hacking cough indicated only too truly, that the dreaded consumption had fastened itself on him; therefore when I heard of his assignment to Clear Creek, I knew it was his health that brought him down to that awful country. He had a wife (and a sweet little woman she was), and two beautiful children, aged two and four. A few evenings after this I had the pleasure of talking to them for several minutes as they went through on a slow passenger train, and I must say that my heart ached when I thought of the town to which that family was going. What a place to bring a woman? But then women have a faculty of hanging on to their liege lords under all circumstances and conditions. God bless 'em. Baird, himself, looked wretched, being a mere shadow of

his former self, but like all consumptives he imagined he was going to get well.

Just about this time, two Indian gentlemen, named Geronimo and Victoria, were raising particular mischief all through that section of the country, and the feeling that any moment they might come down on you and raise your scalp after puncturing you full of holes was anything but pleasant. It was decidedly creepy and many a time I wished myself back in the good old state of Texas. I had come for excitement and adventure and it was not long until I had both articles doled out to me in large chunks. Those Indians used to break out from their reservations, swoop down on some settlement, kill everything in sight and then loot and burn to their heart's content. There was no warning—just a few shots, then a shrill war-whoop, and a perfect horde of yelling and shooting red devils would be upon you. Precautions were taken and some of the larger settlements were able to stand them off until some of the small army could come and scatter them. Blue Field had pickets posted every night, chosen from among the four hundred toughs that lived there, and was pretty well protected.

They gave us a wide berth for a while, but one night, I was sitting dozing in my chair about

eleven-thirty, when I was awakened by the sharp crack of a rifle, followed in quick succession by others, until it was a regular fusilade. Then I heard the short shrill Apache war-whoop, and mentally I thought my time had come. I tried to breathe a prayer, but the high and unusual position of my heart effectually prevented any articulation. The window had been closed on account of a high wind blowing, or I fancy I should have gone out that way. However, I grabbed up a rifle, and then opening a trap door, dropped down into a little cubby hole under the floor, where we used to keep our batteries. What I brought the rifle along for I can't say, unless it was to blow the top of my own head off. The place was like a bake-oven and all the air I received came through a small crack in the floor, and it was not long until I was soaked with perspiration.

Overhead I could hear the crack of the rifles and the whoop of the Indians as the battle raged, back and forth. During a temporary lull I heard the despatcher calling me for dear life, but he could call for all I cared; I had other business just then—I was truly "25." All at once I heard a bigger commotion than ever, there was a sound as if caused by the scurrying of many feet, and then all was quiet. I sat there wondering what was

coming next, and how much longer I had to live, when I smelled smoke, and in a second I knew the depot was on fire. I tried to raise the trap-door, but it had a snap lock and had been dropped so hard in my mad efforts to get away, that it was securely locked. Good God! was I to be burned like a rat in a trap? All was quiet save the crackling of the flames as they licked up the depot. Something must be done and quickly at that, or there would be one operator who would receive his congé in a manner that was anything but pleasant. Feverishly, I groped around, and all at once my hand came in contact with the Winchester rifle. I grasped it by the barrel, and using it as a battering ram I started to smash that door. The smoke by this time was stifling, suffocating, and already my senses were leaving me,—everything was swimming around before my eyes, but it was a case of life and death, and I hammered away with all my might. Finally, Crash! Ah! I had succeeded, the lock broke and in a moment I had pulled myself up in the office.

The side towards the door was all ablaze and escape that way was impossible, so I picked up a chair and slammed it through the window over the table, and climbed out taking a loose set of instruments with me. The wires were still working,

and above the crackle of the flames I heard "DS" still calling me. I reached in through the window and simply said,

"Indians—depot on fire—have saved a set of instruments—will call you later when I can fix a wire," and signed my name, "Bates."

My lungs were filled with smoke and felt like they had a million sharp needles sticking in them, but thanks to my lucky stars, I was not otherwise hurt. Everything appeared so quiet and still that I was dazed, but presently I heard a low mumbling of voices out to the westwards. I made my way thither and found the population (all that was left of it), assembled. When I staggered up to a group of the men, they turned on me like tigers, not knowing what kind of an animal I was. I recognized one of them who was commonly known as "Full-House Charley," and weakly said,

"Don't shoot, Charley, it's Bates the night operator at the depot."

"Well! where the devil have you been all the time? When the depot was burning some of us went over there, but you'd gone some place. We couldn't save anything so we let 'er burn. Your side partner, the day man, was killed and scalped."

It appeared that just as the fight was the hottest, three troops of the —th U. S. Colored Cav-

ally, appeared on the scene, having been on the trail of this same band all day. They made short work of the red men who melted away to the fastnesses of the Mogollons, first setting fire to the depot, the troops in close pursuit. If there ever were faithful hard working fighters in that country, it was these same dusky brunettes.

I told the gang where I had been, and in a few minutes several of them went over to the station to help me rig up a wire. I knew the dispatcher's wire, and taking a pole's length out of another line, I soon made a connection to the instrument I had saved. It was no go—the wire was dead open. Then I rigged up a ground by running a wire to a pipe that ran down the well, and in testing I found the wire was open west. I called up "DS," who was east of me, and told him what a nice hot old time we had been having out there.

"Yes," he said, "I knew there was trouble. Just after you told me about the Indians and fire, Clear Creek said their place was attacked by another band and things were getting pretty hot with them. Then the wire went open, caused as I supposed by your fire, but now it seems as if Baird is probably up against it as well. A train load of troops will come through in a short while to try and get beyond the Indians and cut them

off. If you are able, I wish you would flag them and go over to Clear Creek and report from there. Disconnect and take your instrument and leave the line cut through. A line man will be sent out from here in the morning. Everything is tied up on the road, and you can tell the C. & E. there's nothing ahead of them, but to run carefully, keeping a sharp lookout for torn up track and burned trestles."

My experiences had been so exciting and the smoke in my lungs so painful, that I was ready to drop from fatigue; but then I thought of poor Fred Baird and his family, and I said I'd go. The troop train came in presently and I boarded her. It did my heart good to ride on that engine with "Daddy" Blake at the throttle, and think that four hundred big husky American regulars were trailing along behind, waiting for something to turn up and just aching for a crack at the red men.

It was now about three o'clock, and just as the first rays of early dawn illumined the horizon, we came in sight of Clear Creek. There was a dull red glow against the sky, that told only too well what we should find. The place had not been as well protected as Blue Field, and the slaughter was something fearful. The depot was nothing but a smoldering mass of ruins, and but a short

distance away we came upon the bodies of Baird, his wife and two children, shot to pieces, stripped, horribly mutilated and scalped. It was sickening, and shortly after, when the troop train pulled out for Chiquito, the sense of loneliness was oppressing. A few people had escaped by hiding in obscure places and when they came out they went to work and buried the dead. I finally succeeded in getting a wire through and then, despite the heat, I slept.

The next day the troops corralled the Indians, gave them a good licking and sent them back to their old reservations. And yet in face of just such incidents as these, there are people who say that poor Lo can be civilized.

A construction gang came out and started to re-build, and the company offered me a good day office if I would remain, but Nay! Nay! I had had all I wanted of Arizona, and I went back to Texas, thankful that I had a whole skin and a full shock of red hair.

CHAPTER VII

TAKING A WHIRL AT COMMERCIAL WORK—MY FIRST ATTEMPT—THE GALVESTON FIRE

THE memory of my exciting experience in Arizona lasted me a good long time, and I finally determined to leave the railroad service and try my hand at commercial work. The two classes are the same, and yet they are entirely different.

It is a most interesting sight, to the uninitiated, to go into the operating room of a big commercial office and see the swarms of men and women bending over glass partitioned tables; nimble footed check boys running hither and thither like so many flies, carrying to each wire the proper messages, while the volume of sound that greets your ears is positively deafening. Every once in a while some operator will raise his head and yell "Pink," "C. N. D." or "Wire." "Pink" means a message that is to be rushed; "C. N. D." is a market quotation that is to be hurried over to the Bucket Shops or Stock Exchange, while "Wire," means a message that pertains to some wire that is in trouble and such messages must have prece-

dence over all others. The check boys are trained to know the destination of each and every wire and work under the direction of the traffic chief.

Far over on one side of a room is the switch board. To the untutored mind it looks like numberless long parallel strips of brass tacked on the side of the wall, and each strip perforated by a number of small holes, while stuck around, in what seems endless profusion, are many gutta-percha-topped brass pegs. Yet through all this seeming mass of confusion, everything is in apple pie order, and each one of those strips represents a wire and every plug a connection to some set of instruments. The wire chief and his assistants are in full charge of this work, and it must needs be a man of great ability to successfully fill such a place in a large office.

The chief operator has entire supervision over the whole office, and his duties are hard, constant, and arduous. Like competent train dispatchers, men able to be first-class chief operators are few and far between. Not only must he be an expert telegrapher, but he must thoroughly understand line, battery and switch board work, and his executive ability must be of the highest order.

I had always supposed if a man were a first-class railroad operator he could do equally

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good work on a commercial wire; in fact the operator in a small town is always employed by the railroad company and does the little amount of commercial work in addition to his other duties.

After leaving Blue Field I loafed a while, but that's tiresome work at best, so I journeyed down to Galveston, Texas, one bright fall morning, and after trying my luck at the railroad offices, I wandered into the commercial office on the Strand and asked George Clarke, the chief operator, for a job.

"What kind of a man are you?" he said.

"First-class in every respect, sir," I replied.

"Sit down there on the polar side of that Houston quad and if you are any account, I'll give you a job at seventy dollars per month."

Now a "Quad" is an instrument whereby four messages are going over the *same* wire at the *same* time. The mechanism of the machine is different in every respect from the old relay, key and sounder, used on the railroad wires. In a vague way I had heard of "quads," and imagined I could work them as well as an "O. S." wire, but when he said for me to sit down on the "Polar side," I was, for a minute, stumped. However, there were already three chaps sitting at that table, so the fourth place must be mine. I sat down and pres-

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ently I heard the sounder say, "Who?" I answered "BY," and then "HO," said, "Hr. City," I grabbed a pen and made ready to copy, but by the time he had finished the address I was just putting down the number and check. "Break" I said, "G. A. from," B-r-r-r-r- how that sounder did jump. This interesting operation was repeated several times, but finally I succeeded in getting the message down, and then without giving me time to draw my breath, he said, "C. N. D." and started ahead with a jargon of figures and words that I had never heard of before. His sending was plain enough, in fact it was like a circus bill, but I wasn't on to the combination, and it was all Greek to me. Perspiration started from every pore, and in my agony I said, "Break, G. A. Ahr.," Holy Smoke! how he did fly off at that, and how those other three chaps did grin at my discomfiture.

"Call your chief operator over here," and with that he refused to work with me any more. Clarke came over and that blasted chump at "HO" said,

"For heaven's sake give us an operator to do the receiving on the polar side of this quad. We are piled up with business and can't be delayed by teaching the ropes to a railroad ham. He's been ten minutes taking one message, and I haven't

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been able to pound into his head what a 'C. N. D,' is yet."

Clarke quietly gave him "O. K." and then turned to me with,

"I guess you are not used to this kind of work. Better go back to railroading, and learn something about commercial work before tackling a job like this again. Come back in six months and I'll give you another trial." I sneaked out of the office, followed by the broad smiles of every man in the place, and thus ended the first lesson.

I took Clarke's advice and went back to work on a narrow-gauge road running northwards out of Houtson, through the most God-forsaken country on the footstool. Sluggish bayous, foul rank growth of vegetation, alligators as long as a rail, that would come out and stop trains by being on the track, and air so malarious in quality that it was only a question of time until one had the fever. I stuck it out for two months and then succumbed to the inevitable and went to the hospital where I lay for three weeks. After I had fully recovered they put me to work in the Houston General Office, and some eight months after reaching there I received a message from my old friend Clarke, saying, "if I had improved any in my commercial work he would give me a job at seventy dollars per

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month." I hadn't improved much, but as this world is two-thirds bluff, I made mine, and said I'd come, trusting to luck to be able to hold on.

I reached there one pleasant afternoon and the next morning went to work. I must have had my rabbit's foot with me, because I was assigned to a "Way Wire." I think if he had told me to tackle a "Quad," again, I should have fainted. A "Way Wire," is one that runs along a railroad, having offices cut in in all the small towns. There wasn't a town on the whole string that had more than ten or fifteen messages a day, but the aggregate of all the offices made up a very good day's work. Then again I didn't have to handle any of those confounded "C. N. D." messages. Clarke watched me closely and at the end of the first day he said my work showed a marked improvement. You may rest assured I watched my P's and Q's, and it wasn't long before I had the hang of the system and could take my trick on a "Quad" with the best of them. Rheostats, wheatstone bridges, polarized relays, pole changers, and ground switches became as familiar to me as the old relay key and sounder had been.

Some of the rarest gems of the profession worked in "G" office at this time—George Clarke, "Cy" Clamhitt, "Jack" Graham, Will Church,

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John McNeill, Paul Finnegan alias the "Count," and a score or more of men, as good as ever touched a key or balanced a quad. A day's work was from eight A. M., until five P. M., and for all over time we were paid extra at the rate of forty cents per hour. This extra work was called "Scooping."

One day in December, Clarke asked me if I wanted to "scoop" that night. I acquiesced and after eating a hasty supper I went back to the office and prepared for a long siege. I was put to sending press reports, which is just about as hard work as a man can do. I sent "30" (the end) at two o'clock in the morning, and went home worn to a frazzle. I was boarding on Avenue M. with ten other operators, in a house kept by a Mrs. Swanson, and roomed with her little son Jimmie, who was a hopeless cripple. I undressed, and after shoving little Jim over to his own side of the bed, tumbled in and was soon sleeping like a log. It seemed as if I had just closed my eyes when I felt some one pulling my hair. I knocked the hand away and prepared to take another snooze, when there was that awful pull on my red head again. I opened my eyes prepared to fight, when I felt an extra hard pull, and heard the wee sma' voice of my diminutive room mate say,

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“Get up, the house is on fire.” “Rats,” I said—Again,—the awful pull,—and,—“Mr. Bates, for God’s sake get up; the house is on fire; the whole town is burning up.”

I sprang out of bed and the crackling of the timbers, the glow of the flames, and the stifling smoke, soon assured me it was time to move, and quickly at that. I grabbed up a few clothes in one arm, and grasping brave little Jimmie Swanson in the other, I started for the steps. On our side, the whole house was in flames, and the smoke rushing up the stair-way was something awful. I wrapped Jimmie’s head in his night shirt, and throwing a coat over mine, I started down the stairs. Half way down my foot slipped, and we both pitched head first to the bottom. Poor little Jim, his right arm was broken by the fall, and when he tried to get up, he found that his one sound leg was badly strained. He said,

“Never mind me, Mr. Bates, save yourself. I’ll crawl out.”

Leave him to roast alive? Never! I grabbed him again and after a desperate effort succeeded in getting him out. All our supply of clothing had been lost in our mad efforts to escape, and as a bitter norther was blowing at the time, our position was anything but pleasant. I found a few clothes

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dropped by some one else and we made ourselves as warm as possible. Then I grabbed Jimmie up again and fled before the fiery blast. The awful catastrophe had started in a fisherman's shack over on the bay, twenty-seven squares from where we lived, and being borne by a high wind, had swept everything in its path. The houses were mostly of timber and were easy prey to the relentless flames. Although Galveston is entirely surrounded by water, the pipe-lines for fighting fire at this time extended only to Avenue H, ten blocks from the Strand. Beyond that, the fire department depended on the cisterns of private houses for the water to subdue the flames.

With lightning-like rapidity the flames had spread and almost before they knew it the town seemed doomed. Arches of flame, myriads of falling sparks, hundreds of fleeing half-clad men, women and children, the hissing of the engines in their puny attempts to fight the monster, and ever and anon the dull roar of the falling walls, made a scene, as grand and weird as it was desolate and awful. In less than two hours time fifty-two squares had been laid waste, leaving a trail of smoldering black ashes. That the whole city did not go is due to a providential switch of the wind that blew the flames back on their own tracks.

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Of the fifteen operators in the day force, twelve had been burned out, and the next morning, at eight o'clock, when all had reported for duty, they were as sorry a looking lot of men as ever assembled.

"Some in rags, some in jags, and one in velvet gown." "Count" Finnegan had on a frilled shirt, a pair of trousers three sizes too small for him, and his manly form was wrapped in a flowing robe of black velvet, picked up by him in his mad flight.

It was many a day before the effects of this direful calamity were entirely obliterated.

CHAPTER VIII

SENDING A MESSAGE PERFORCE—RECOGNIZING AN OLD FRIEND BY HIS STUFF

SOME time after this I was in Fort Worth copying night reports at eighty dollars per month. The night force consisted of two other men besides myself. The "split trick" man worked until ten o'clock, the other chap stayed around until twelve, or until he was clear, while I hung on until "30" on report which came anywhere from one-thirty until four A. M. After midnight I had to handle all the business that came along.

When I had received "30" I would cut out the instruments and go home.

One morning, about two-thirty I had said "G. N." to Galveston, cut out the instruments, put out the lights in the operating room, and started to go home through the receiving room and I was about to put out the last light there, when the outer door opened and in staggered a half drunken ranchman who said,

"Hold on there, young fellow, I want to send a message to St. Louis."

"I'm sorry, but it's too late to send it now. All the instruments are cut out and we won't have St. Louis until eight o'clock in the morning. Come around then and some of the day force will send it for you."

"But," he said in a maudlin voice, "I've got nineteen cars of cattle out here that are going up there to-morrow and I want to notify my agents."

I persisted in my refusal and was beginning to get hot under the collar, but my bucolic friend also had a temper and showed it.

"D—n it," he said, "you send this message or there is going to be trouble."

"Not much, I won't send your confounded old message. Get out of this office: I'm going home."

Just then I heard an ominous click and in a second I was gazing down the barrel of a .45, and he said,

"Now will you send it? You'd better or I'll send you to a home that will be a permanent one."

A .45, especially when it is loaded, cocked and pointed at your head, with a half drunken galoot's finger on the trigger, is a powerful incentive to quick action.

"Give me your blamed old message, and I'll send it for you."

Now there wasn't a through wire to any place

at the time, but I had thought of a scheme to stave him off. I took his telegram, went over and monkeyed around the switch board for a while, and then sat down to a local instrument and went through the form of sending a message. My whole salvation lay in the hope that he was not an operator and would fail to discover my ruse. I glanced at him furtively out of the corner of my eye, and there he stood, pistol in hand, grinning like a monkey and swaying to and fro like a reed in the wind. I didn't know what that grin portended for me, but after I had gone through the form of sending the telegram, I hung it up on the hook, and turned around with,

“There, I hope you are satisfied now. Your blamed old message has been sent.”

“Satisfied! Why certainly I'm satisfied. I just wanted to show you that the Western Union Company wasn't the whole push. Come on over to the White Elephant with me and we'll have a drink together, just to show there's no hard feelings between us,” and with that he put away his pistol and we went out. On the way over to the Elephant he said,

“Say, kid, did you think I'd shoot if you hadn't sent the message?”

"Well," I replied, "I wasn't taking any chances on the matter."

Then he laughed loud enough to be heard a block away and said, "Why, that pistol hasn't been loaded for six months, I was just running a bluff on you, and you bit like a fish."

Good joke, wasn't it? We had our drink, *and his message was sent by one of the day force, at eight-twelve A. M.*

The Morse telegraphic alphabet is exactly the same the world over, and yet each operator has a peculiarity to his sending, or "stuff," as it is called, that makes it easy to recognize an old friend, even though his name be changed.

In the early part of my career, when I was working days at X—, in Nebraska, at Sweeping Water there was a chap called Ned Kingsbury holding down the night job, and as wild a youngster as ever hit the road. One night when I was sitting up a little late I heard the despatcher give Ned an order for a train that ordinarily would not stop there. Ned repeated it back all right enough, and then gave the signal, "6," which meant that he had turned his red-light to the track and would hold it there until the order was delivered and understood. So far, so good. But the reckless little devil had forgotten to turn his

red-board and proceeded to write to some of his numerous girls, and the first thing he knew that freight train went smashing by at a thirty-five mile clip, and Mr. Ned knew he was up against it.

In some states a rail-roader guilty of criminal negligence is sent up for a term of from one to ten years. The smash up that resulted from Ned's carelessness was a catastrophe of the fatal kind; one engineer was killed, and a fireman and brakeman or two laid up for months. He fully realized the magnitude of his offence and promptly skipped away from the wrath that was sure to follow, and nothing more was heard of him in that section of the country.

This all happened a number of years before I went to work in Fort Worth, and one morning I was doing a little "scooping," by working days, and sat down to send on the "DA" quad. I worked hard for about two hours on the polar side, and was sending to some cracker jack, who signed "KY." Shortly after that I changed over to the receiving side and "KY" did the sending to me. I had been taking about ten messages and the conviction was growing on me momentarily that the sending was very familiar and that I must have known the sender. Where had I heard that peculiar jerky sending before? It was as plain as

print, but there was an individuality about it that belonged only to one man. All at once that night in Nebraska flashed on my mind and I knew my sender was none other than Ned Kingsbury. I broke him and said,

“Hello, Ned Kingsbury, where did you come from?”

“You’ve got the wrong man this time, sonny, my name is Pillsbury,” he replied.

“Oh! come off. I’d know that combination of yours if I heard it in Halifax. Didn’t you work at Sweeping Water, Nebraska, some time ago, and didn’t you have some kind of a queer smash up there?”

Then he ’fessed up and said he had recognized my stuff as soon as he heard it, but hadn’t said anything in hopes I wouldn’t twig him.

“Don’t give me away, old chap. I’m flying the flag now and have lost all my former brashness.”
I never did.

CHAPTER IX

BILL BRADLEY, GAMBLER AND GENTLEMAN.

TELEGRAPHERS are, as a rule, a very nomadic class, wandering hither and thither like a chip buffeted about on the ocean. Their pathway is not always one of roses, and many times their feet are torn by the jagged rocks of adversity. I was no different from any of the rest, neither better nor worse, and many a night I have slept with only the deep blue sky for a covering, and it may be added—*sotto voce*—it is not a very warm blanket on a cold night. 'Tis said, an operator of the first class can always procure work, but there are times when even the best of them are on their uppers. For instance, when winter's chill blasts sweep across the hills and dales of the north, like swarms of swallows, operators flit southwards to warmer climes, and for this reason the supply is often greater than the demand.

I was a "flitter" of the first water, and after I had been in Fort Worth for a very short while I became possessed of a desire to see something of

the far famed border towns along the Rio Grande frontier. So I went south to a town called Hallville, and found it a typical tough frontier town. I landed there all right enough and then proceeded to gently strand. Work was not to be had, money I had none, and my predicament can be imagined. Many of you have doubtless been on the frontier and know what these places are. There was the usual number of gambling dens, dance halls and saloons, and of course they had their variety theatre. Ever go into one of the latter places? The first thing that greets your eye is a big black and white sign "Buy a drink and see the show." Inside, at one end, is the long wooden bar, presided over by some thug of the highest order, with a big diamond stuck in the centre of a broad expanse of white shirt front. At the other end is the so-called stage, while scattered about indiscriminately are the tables and chairs. The air is filled—yea, reeking—with the fumes of bad whiskey, stale beer, and the odor of foul smelling cheap tobacco smoke, and through all this haze the would-be "show," goes on, and the applause is manifested by whistles, cat calls, the pounding of feet on the floor and glasses on the tables. Occasionally some artist (?) will appear who does not seem to strike the popular fancy

and will be greeted by a beer glass or empty bottle being fired at his or her head.

Now, at the time of which I speak, my prospects were very slim, and as nature had endowed me with a fair singing voice, I had just about made up my mind to go to the Palace Variety Theatre and ask for a position as a vocalist. I could, at least, sing as well as some of the theatrical bygoners that graced the place. The price of admission in one of these places is simply the price of a drink. I felt in my pocket and found that I had one solitary lonely dime, and swinging aside the green baize door, I entered.

"Gimme a beer," I said laying down my dime. A small glass, four-fifths froth and one-fifth beer, was skated at me by the bartender from the other end of the counter, and my dime was raked into the till.

Then I stood around like a bump on a log, trying to screw my courage up to ask the blear eyed, red-nosed Apollo for a job. Some hack voiced old chromo was trying to warble "Do they miss me at home," and mentally I thought "if he had ever sung like that when he was at home they were probably glad he had left." The scene was sickening and disgusting to me, but empty stomachs stand not on ceremony, so I turned around and

was just about to accost the proprietor, when Biff! I felt a stinging whack between my shoulders. Quickly I faced about, all the risibility of my red headed nature coming to the surface, and there I saw a big handsome chap standing in front of me. Six feet tall, broad-shouldered, straight, lithe limbs, denoting herculean strength, a massive head poised on a well shaped neck, two cold blue eyes, and a face covered by a bushy brown beard; dressed in well fitting clothes, trousers tucked in the tops of shiny black boots, long Prince Albert coat and a broad sombrero set rakishly on one side of his head. Such was the man who hit me in the back.

“Hello, youngster, what’s your name?”

Rubbing my lame shoulder, I said, “Well it might be Jones and it might be Smith, but it ain’t, and I don’t know what affair it is of yours, any way.”

“Oh! come now, boy, don’t get huffy. You’ve got an honest face and appear to be in trouble. What is it? Out with it. You’re evidently a tenderfoot and this hell-hole of vice isn’t a place for a boy of your years. What’s your name? Come over here at this table and sit down and tell me.”

Something in his bluff hearty manner gave me hope and after sitting down, I said.

"My name is Martin Bates. I'm a telegraph operator by profession and blew into this town this morning on my uppers. I can't get work and I haven't a red cent to my name. It is necessary for me to live, and as I can sing a little bit, I came in here to see if I could get a job warbling. I won't beg or steal, and there is no one here I can borrow from. There's my story. Not a very pleasant one is it?"

"There may have been worse. How long since you've had anything to eat?"

"Nine o'clock this morning," I grimly replied.

"Good Lord, that's twelve hours ago. Come on with me out of here and I'll fix you up."

Meekly I followed my new found friend. I was sick at heart, weary and worn out in body and I didn't care a rap whether school kept or not; anything would be better than my present situation. He took me about three blocks up the main street and we went into a suite of beautifully furnished rooms. He rang a bell, a darkey came in, and it wasn't long before I had a lunch in front of me fit for the gods, and I may add it didn't take me many minutes to get outside of it. My friend

watched me narrowly while I was eating, and when I had finished he said,

“Now youngster, you’re all tired out. You go to bed in the next room and get a good night’s sleep. In the morning we’ll see what we can do for you, but one thing is certain, you’re not going into that vile hole of a Palace Theatre again. Somewhere in this world you have a father and mother who are praying for you this night. Don’t make a slip in your pathway in life and break their hearts. Everything is safe and quiet here and no one will disturb you until I come in in the morning.”

There was a peculiar earnestness in his voice as he spoke that was very convincing, and as he rose to go out, I meekly said,

“What’s your name, mister?”

“Bill Bradley,” he answered with a queer smile. “Now don’t you ask any more questions to-night,” and with that he was gone.

I went to bed almost sick from my exposure and lack of food, and just as the old sand man of childhood’s happy days began to sprinkle his grains in my eyes, I heard, way off in the distance, a peculiar click and a drawling voice calling off some numbers. “Four.” “Sixteen.” “Thirty-three.” “Seventy-eight.” “Ten.” “Twenty-

six," and then, a great shout arose and some one called out "KENO." Ah! I was near a gambling house, but I was too tired to care, nature asserted herself, and I gently crossed the river into the land of Nod.

The next morning I was really sick with a high fever, and when Bill came in I was well nigh loony.

"Hello," he said, "this won't do. Tom, I say, you Tom, go and tell Doctor Bailey I want him here quick. D—n quick. Do you hear?" and black Tom answered, "Yas, suh."

To be brief, I was three weeks on my back, and bluff old Bill Bradley nursed me like a loving mother would a sick child. Day and night he hung over me, never a thing did I need but what he procured for me, and one day after the fever had left me and I was sitting up by an open window, I said,

"Mr. Bradley, what do you do for a living?"

"Boy," he replied with a flushed face, "I am sorry you asked that question, but sooner or later you would have heard it and I'd a great deal rather tell you about it myself. I'm a gambler and these three rooms adjoin my place which is called the "Three Nines," and then he told me the story of his life. He was a son of a fine Connecti-

cut family, a graduate of Harvard, and in his day had been a very able young lawyer with brilliant prospects, but one night, he went out with a crowd of roystering chaps, the lie was passed, and—it was the old story,—he came to Texas for a refuge. The great civil war was just over, the country in a chaotic state, and there he had remained ever since. Thrown with wild, uncouth men, and being reckless in the extreme, he opened a gambling house.

“Why did you take this great interest in me?” I asked.

“Look here, young chap, you are altogether too inquisitive. I’ve got an old father and mother way up in Ball Brooke, Connecticut, whose hearts have been broken by my actions, and when I saw you in that hellish den of vice you looked so out of place that I determined to save you. It was impulse, my boy, and then again, it may have been the remembrance of the one, at whose knee I used to lisp, ‘Now I lay me down to sleep.’”

My recovery was very rapid from that time on, and when I was able to work I secured a position in the commercial office in Hallville. One evening after being paid I strolled into the “Three Nines;” Bill was dealing faro, and I thought I might in a measure, show my gratitude towards him by risk-

ing a coin. There was a big crowd standing around the table, but I edged my way in and placed a dollar on the queen to win. Luck was with me and I won. Once, twice, thrice, did the cards come my way, and my stack of whites and reds was growing. This didn't seem to me much like gratitude to win a man's money, and I wished I hadn't started. Presently Bill looked up, and spying me, pointed to my stack of chips, and said, "Whose stack is that?" "Mine," I replied, and with one fell swoop he dashed the chips into the rack, and taking a ten-dollar bill from the drawer, he turned to his side partner and said, "Jim, take the deal," and then he got up, took me by the arm, saying, "You come with me."

Feeling like a sneak I followed him, and when we had reached his sitting-room, he sat down and said,

"Kid, how much were you in on that deal?"

"Just one dollar," I replied.

Then he looked at me, his eyes shone like coals of fire, and he said,

"Look here boy, here's ten dollars. If you are ever hard up and want money come to me, and I'll give it to you willingly, but don't you ever let me see or hear of you staking a cent on a card again. I'm running a gambling house, and as gambling

houses go, it's an honest one, but I'm not out plucking lambs like you. Your intentions were probably good but don't you ever do it again. If you really want to show your gratitude for what I have done for you, promise me honestly that you will never gamble."

I felt very much humiliated, but took his words of advice, promised, and have never flipped a coin on a card since that night.

Bill was a married man, and in addition to his suite of rooms spoken of, he had a very nice residence on Capitol Hill. His suite was a side issue, to be used when the games were running high. I had never met Mrs. Bradley, but during my illness I had evidence every day of her goodness in the shape of many delicacies that found their way to my bedside. I had asked Bill time and again to take me out to meet his wife, but he always put me off on one pretext or another.

When I started to work, I had secured a room at the house of a Mrs. Slade. She had three daughters and one Sunday afternoon we were all out walking together, when one of them pointed to a very fine residence and said, "That's the residence of Bill Bradley, the big gambler."

Just then Bill and his wife came driving by behind a spanking team of bays. Quick as a flash

my hat came off, and I bowed low. Bill saw it and very cavalierly returned my salute. The elder Miss Slade turned on me like a tigress, and said,

“Mr. Bates, do you know who that man is? Do you know what he is?”

“Yes, I know him very well,” I replied.

“Then what do you mean by insulting us by speaking to such a man? I did not know that you associated with men of his ilk.”

In a plain unvarnished way I told them of Bill Bradley’s kindness to me, but it was no go, and as I would not renounce my liking for the man who had been my benefactor, my room in their house became preferable to my society and I left.

The next evening I saw Bill in his rooms, and he said,

“Martin, yesterday, when Mrs Bradley and I drove by you and the Slade girls, you spoke to me and lifted your hat to Mrs. Bradley. I could do naught but return the salute. Now my boy, there’s no use of my mincing words with you; I befriended you, probably saved you from ruin, but young as you are, you know full well that our paths do not lie parallel with each other. I am a gambler, and although Mrs. Bradley is as good a woman as ever lived, (and I’d kill the first man that said she wasn’t) we are not recognized by

society; no, not even by the riff raff that live in Hallville. You have your way to carve in the world, don't ruin it right at the outset by letting people know you are friendly with gamblers. No matter how good your motives may be, this scoffing world will always miscontrue them and censure you."

This made me hot and I told him so. No matter if he was a gambler, he was more of a gentleman than nine-tenths of the men of society, yes, men, who would come and gamble half the night away in his place, and then go forth the next day and pose as models of propriety.

The upshot of the whole business was that I left Hallville soon after this and went to San Antonio to take day report, and one day I picked up a paper, and read an account of how Bill Bradley had been assassinated by a cowardly cur who had a grudge against him. He was stabbed in the back, and thus ended the career of Bill Bradley, gambler and gentleman.

CHAPTER X

THE DEATH OF JIM CARTWRIGHT—CHASED OFF A WIRE BY A WOMAN

I DIDN'T stay at San Antonio very long after this but started northwards. You see it was getting to be warm weather. The first place I struck was a night job in a smashing good town up near the south line of the pan handle. I quit working at midnight, and to get to my boarding house had to walk a mile through a portion of the town called "Hell's half-acre," to get to my boarding house.

The most prominent place of any description in the city was a saloon and gambling house known as the "Blue Goose," owned by John Waring and Luke Ravel. Both men were as nervy as they make 'em and several nicks in the butts of their revolvers testified mutely as to their prowess. Their place was like all other dens, and consisted of the usual bar and lunch counter in one room, while in the adjoining one was the hall of gaming. Faro, roulette, hazard, monte, and the great national game, poker, held high carnival there

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nightly. Next to the "Goose" was a long narrow room used as a shooting gallery. The place was only a few doors around the corner from my office, and many a night on my way home I would stop at the lunch counter and have a sandwich and a cup of coffee. I remembered my promise to bluff old Bill Bradley, and was never tempted to go in the gambling hall. I generally used to rise about noon each day and go up town and loaf until four o'clock, when it was time to go to work. I picked up a speaking acquaintance with Luke Ravel, and sometimes we would go into the shooting gallery together and have a friendly bout with the Flobert rifles.

At this time there was one of those tough characters in the town named Jim Cartwright. In days gone by he had been a deputy United States Marshal, and one time took advantage of his official position to provoke a quarrel with an enemy and killed him in cold blood. Public indignation ran high and Jim had to skip to Mexico. He stayed away two years and getting in trouble over there, came back to his old stamping grounds in hopes the people had forgotten his former scrape. They hadn't exactly forgotten it, but Jim was a pretty tough character and no one seemed to care to tackle him.

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One night Luke Ravel and Jim had some words over a game of cards, and bad blood was engendered between them. The next day my side partner Frank Noel, and I went into the shooting gallery to try our luck, and were standing there enjoying ourselves, when Luke came in and took a hand. He was dressed in the height of fashion, and while we three were standing there, Jim Cartwright, three sheets in the wind, appeared in the doorway pistol in hand. He looked at Luke and said, with an oath,

“Look here, Luke Ravel, your time has come. I’m going to kill you.”

My hair arose, my heart seemed to stop beating, but there was no way out, so Noel and I edged our way over as far as possible, and held our breath. Luke never turned a hair, nor changed color. He was as cool as an iceberg, and squarely facing Cartwright said,

“You wouldn’t shoot an unarmed man would you, Jim?”

“Aint you got no gun?”

“No,” replied Luke, “I’m unarmed. See,” and with that he threw up the tails of his long coat.

Jim hesitated a minute, and then shoving his gun into his pocket he said,

“No, by heavens, I won’t kill an unarmed man.

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I'll give you a chance for your life, but I warn you to fix yourself, because the next time I see you I'm going to let daylight through your carcass," and with another oath he turned to walk away. Hardly had he taken two steps, when there was a blinding flash followed by a loud report, and Jim Cartwright lay dead, shot through the heart, while Luke Ravel stood over him; a smoking .38 pocket pistol in his hand. Where he pulled his gun from no one ever knew; it was all over in a flash. It seems a cowardly thing to shoot a man in the back, but it was a case of 'dog eat dog.'

Luke was arrested next day, and Noel and I gave our testimony before the coroner's jury, and he was bound over for trial before the next term of the circuit court to sit six months hence. There is an old and very trite saying in Texas that, "a dead witness is better than a live one." This was gently whispered into our ears, and accordingly one night about a month after this, Noel and I "folded our tents, and like the Arabs, silently stole away."

Luke was acquitted on the plea of self defence.

Spring time having come, and with it the good hot weather, I continued to move northwards and finally brought up in a good office in Nebraska, where I was to copy the night report from Chi-

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cago. We had two wires running to Chicago, one a quad for the regular business, and the other a single string for "C. N. D." and report work. My stay in this office was, short, sharp, brilliant and decisive.

The first night I sat down to work at six-thirty, and in a few minutes was receiving the worst pounding I had ever experienced, from some operator in "CH" office who signed "JL." There was no kick coming on the sending, it was as plain as a large sized poster, but it was so all-fired fast, that it made me hustle for all I was worth to get it down. There is no sense in a fellow sending so fast, because nothing is made by it and it tires every one completely out. Ordinarily, a thirty word a minute clip is a good stiff speed for report, but this night, thirty-five or forty was nearer the mark. In every operator there is a certain amount of professional pride inherent that makes him refrain from breaking on report unless it is absolutely necessary. The sender always keeps a record of the breaks of each receiver on the line, and if they become too frequent the offender is gently fired. On the night in question I didn't break, but there were several times when foreign dispatches were coming that I faked names in great shape. It was an ugly night out, and about

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nine o'clock our quad flew the track, and in a minute "JL" said to me,

"Here's ten blacks (day messages) just handed me to send to you," and without waiting for me to get my manifold clip out of the way he started. I didn't get a chance to put the time or date down, and was swearing, fighting mad. After sending five of the ten messages, "JL" stopped a second and said,

"How do I come?"

"You come like the devil. For heaven's sake let up a bit," I replied.

"Who do you think you are talking to?" came back at me.

Seemingly, patience had ceased to be a virtue with me, so I replied, "Some d——d ambitious chump of a fool who's stuck on making a record for himself."

"That settles you. Call your chief operator over here."

Joe Saunders was the chief, and when he came over he said,

"What's the trouble here, kid, this wire gone down?"

"No," I answered, "the wire hasn't gone down, but that cuss up in 'CH' who signs 'JL' has been

pounding the eternal life out of me and I've just given him a piece of my mind."

"Say anything brash?" asked Joe.

"No, not very. Just told him he was a d—d fool with a few light embellishments."

Joe laughed very heartily and said, "I guess you are the fool in this case, because 'JL' is a woman, Miss Jennie Love, by name, and the swiftest lady operator in the business. If she makes this complaint official, you'll get it in the neck."

I didn't wait for any official complaint, but put on my coat and walked out much chagrined, because I had always boasted that no woman could ever run me off a wire. I had the pleasure of meeting Miss Love afterwards and apologized for my conduct. She forgave me, but like Mary Marsh, she married another man.

CHAPTER XI

WITNESSING A MARRIAGE BY WIRE—BEATING A POOL ROOM—SPARRING AT LONG RANGE

AFTER my disastrous encounter with Miss Love, I went south and brought up in St. Louis, where old "Top," the chief operator, gave me a place working a New York quad. This was about the worst "roast" I had ever struck, and it was work from the word go from 5 P. M. until 1 A. M. Work on any wire from a big city leading to New York is always hot, and this particular wire was the worst of the bunch. While working in this office I had several little incidents come under my observation that may be of interest.

The coy little god of love manifests itself in many ways, and the successful culmination of two hearts' happiness is as often queer as it is humorous.

Miss Jane Grey was an operator on the G. C. & F. Railway at Wichita, Kansas, and Mr. Paul Dimmock worked for the Western Union in Louisville, Kentucky. Through the agency of a matrimonial journal, Jane and Paul became ac-

quainted; letters and pictures were exchanged, and—it was the old, old story—they became engaged. They wanted to be wedded and the more sensational and notorious they could make it the better it would suit them both. Jane only earned forty dollars per month, while Paul's monthly stipend was the magnificent sum of sixty, with whatever extra time he could "scoop." Neither one of them wanted to quit work just then, they felt they could not afford it, but that marriage must come off, or they would both die of broken hearts. Paul wrote,—Jane wrote,—plans and compromises were made and refused; the situation was becoming desperate, and finally Jane's brilliant mind suggested a marriage by wire. Great head—fine scheme. *It takes a woman to circumvent unforeseen obstacles every time.* Chief operators were consulted in Kansas City and St. Louis and they agreed to have the wire cut through on the evening appointed. There were to be two witnesses in each office, and I was one of the honored two in St. Louis. The day finally arrived, and promptly at seven-thirty in the evening Louisville was cut through to Wichita, and after all the contracting parties and the witnesses had assembled, the ceremony began. There was a minister at each end, and as the various

queries and responses were received by the witnesses, they would read them to the contracting party present, and finally Paul said,

“With this ring, I thee wed, and with all my worldly goods I thee endow: in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen.”

The ring was placed on the bride’s finger, *by proxy*, the benediction pronounced by the Wichita minister, and the deed was done. In due time the certificate was received and signed by all the witnesses, and the matter made of record in both places.

How long did they live apart? Oh! not very long. I think it was the next night that I saw a message going through directed to Paul saying, “Will leave for Louisville to-night,” and signed “Jane.”

I wonder if old S. F. B. Morse ever had any idea when he was perfecting the telegraph, that it would some day be used to assist in joining together,

“Two souls with but a single thought,
Two hearts that beat as one.”

Operators are as a rule as honest as the sun, yet, “where you find wheat, there also you find chaff,” and once in a while a man will be found

whose proper place is the penitentiary. One of the easiest ways for an operator, so inclined to make money, is to cut wires, steal the reports of races, market quotations, or C. N. D. reports, and beat them to their destinations. Wires are watched very closely so that it is hard for an outsider to do any monkeying. Many men understand telegraphy who do not work at the business, and it is for this reason that all the instruments in the bucket shops and stock exchanges are turned so low that no one outside of the operating room can hear a sound. When it is realized that transactions are made, and fortunes won or lost in a fractional part of a minute, it will be seen how very careful the great telegraph companies must be. The big horse races every year offer great temptations.

While I was working in St. Louis, a case came under my observation that will readily illustrate the perversity of human nature. In a large office not so very far away, there was working a friend of mine, who did nothing but copy race reports and C. N. D.'s all day. On the day the great Kentucky Derby was to be run, the wire was cut through from the track in Louisville to a big pool room in this city.

Now the chief operator in this place was a scaly

sort of a cuss—in fact, it was said that he had done time in the past for some skullduggery—and when the horses went to the post, he stood by the switchboard and deliberately cut the pool room wire, so the report didn't go through. He copied the report himself, knew what horse had won, and then sent a message to a henchman of his, who was an operator and had an instrument secreted in his room near the pool room. This chap went quickly into the pool room and made wagers right and left. A rank outsider, a twenty to one shot, won the race, and after the confederate had signified that he was ready, the chief sent the report through as if it had come from the track. The whole transaction didn't take over two minutes and the "bookies" were hit for about \$30,000, which Mr. Chief and his side pardner divided between them.

A little while later the suspicions of the book-makers became aroused, complaints were made, an investigation followed, and one fine day when matters were becoming pretty warm, the recalcitrant chief disappeared. His confederate confessed to the whole scheme and the jig was up. The chief was afterwards apprehended and sent up for seven years, but he held on to his boodle.

For the first month of my stay in St. Louis, my

life was as uneventful as a May day, but at the end of that time a man came on the New York end of our quad that was enough to make a man drink. The men working together on a wire like this should always be harmonious, because the business is so heavy there is no time for any war of words. However, operators are like all other men, and scraps are not uncommon. Generally they take place at long range, and no one is hurt thereby. Some men have an unhappy faculty of incurring the hatred of every person over a wire, while personally they may be princes of good fellows. The man referred to above, signed "SY," and he had about as much judgment as a two year old kid. It didn't make any difference to him whether the weather was clear or muggy, no matter whether the wire was weak or strong, he'd pound along like a cyclone. Remonstrance availed nothing, and one night when he was cutting up some of his monkeyshines, I became very warm under the collar and told him in language more expressive than elegant, just what I thought of him, threatening to have our wire chief have him fired off the wire. He answered:

"Oh! you go to blazes, you big ham. You're too fresh anyway."

The epithet "ham" is about as mean a one as can be applied to an operator, and I came back at him with:

"Look here, you infernal idiot, I'll meet you some time and when I do I'm going to smash your face. Stop your monkeying and take these messages."

"Hold your horses, sonny, what's the difference between you and a jackass?" he said.

"Just nine hundred miles," I replied.

Further words were useless and in a few minutes he was relieved, but just about the time he got up he said:

"Say, 'BY,' don't forget you've got a contract to smash my face some of these days. I'll be expecting you. Ta Ta."

That was the last of him on that wire and the incident passed from my mind. I pulled up and left St. Louis shortly after that and went to work for the old Baltimore and Ohio Commercial Company, at the corner of Broadway and Canal streets, in New York. I drew a prize in the shape of the common side of the first Boston quad. Sitting right alongside of me was a great, big, handsome Irish chap named Dick Stanley. He was as fine a fellow as ever lived, and that night took me

over to his house on Long Island to board. We were sitting in his room about nine-thirty, having a farewell smoke before retiring and our conversation turned to "shop talk." We talked of the old timers we had both known, told reminiscences, spun yarns, and all at once Dick said:

"Say, Bates, did you ever work in 'A' office in St. Louis?"

"Oh! yes," I replied, "I put in three months there under 'Old Top.' In fact, I came from there to New York."

"That so?" he answered. "I used to work on the polar side of the No. 2 quad, from this end, over in the Western Union office on Broadway and Dey street. What did you sign there?"

"BY," I answered. I thought he looked queer, but we continued our talk, and finally I told him of my wordy war with a man in New York, who signed "SY," and remarked that I was going over to 195 Broadway, and size him up some day. He knocked the ashes out of his pipe, got up from his chair, and, stretching his six feet two of anatomy to its full length said:

"Well, old chap, I'm fagged. I'm going to bed. You'd better get a good sleep and be thoroughly rested in the morning, because you'll need all your strength. I'm the man that signed 'SY'

in the New York office, and I'm ready to take that licking."

Did I lick him? Not much, I couldn't have licked one side of him, and we were the best of chums during my stay in the city.

CHAPTER XII

HOW A SMART OPERATOR WAS SQUELCHED— THE GALVESTON FLOOD

A LITTLE while after this "Stub" Hanigan, another operator, invited Dick and me to go down to a chop house with him for lunch, and we accepted. I say chop house when in reality it was one of those numerous little hotels that abound all over New York where one can get a good meal for very little money. Hanigan was a rattling good operator, but he was very young and had a tendency to be too fresh on occasion.

He ordered us a fine lunch and while we were sitting there discussing the good things, a big awkward looking chap came into the dining-room. He was accompanied by a sweet, pretty looking little woman. She was a regular beauty, and it needed but a glance to see that they were bride and groom, and from the country. They had all the ear marks so apparent in every bride and groom. They hesitated on the threshold a moment, and the groom said very audibly:

"Dearest, this is the finest dining-room in the

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world," and "Dearest" beamed on her liege lord in a manner that was very trustful and sweet. Hanigan, idiot that he was, laughed outright. Dick and I both gave him a savage kick under the table, but it didn't have any effect.

The head waiter brought the couple over and sat them down at our table, and, say—that woman was as pretty as any that ever came down the pike. Towards the end of the meal, Hanigan took his knife and fork and began to telegraph to Stanley and me, making all sorts of fun about the country pair. Now that is a pretty dangerous business, because there is no telling who may be an operator. Dick growled at him savagely under his breath and told him to shut up. Nay! Nay! Mr. Hanigan wouldn't shut up worth a cent. Finally he made some scurrilous remark, and then another knife and fork came into play. Mr. Bridegroom was doing the talking now, and this is what he said to Hanigan:

"I happen to be an operator myself, and have heard and understood every word you said. As long as you confined yourself to innocent remarks about country brides and grooms, I haven't minded it a bit. In fact, I have rather enjoyed it. But now you've gone too far, and in about five

seconds I'm going to have the pleasure of smashing your face."

Then, before we had time to do a thing, biff; and Hanigan got it squarely on the jaw. We hustled him out of there as soon as we could, but Mr. Bridegroom had all his Irish up and followed him out. Eventually we succeeded in calming him down; "Stub" made a most abject apology, and I don't believe he ever used his knife and fork for any such a purpose again.

The gawky chap was Mr. Dave Harrison, one of the finest operators in the profession.

Just about this time fall weather was coming on, and there was a suggestion of an approaching winter in the chill morning air, and receiving a letter from my old friend Clarke in Galveston, telling me there was a good job waiting for me if I could come at once, I pulled up stakes in New York, and sailed away on the Mallory Line ship "Comal," for my old stamping ground. I reached there the next week and was put to work on the New York Duplex, which, by the way, was the longest string in the United States. Mrs. Swanson had re-opened her boarding house on Avenue M, everything looked lovely and I anticipated a very pleasant winter. Up to September 18th, everything was as quiet and calm as a May day.

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The weather had been beautiful, the surf bathing and concerts in front of the Beach Hotel fine, and nothing was left to wish for.

I quit working on Thursday, September 18th, at five P. M., and went out to the beach and had a plunge. The sky was clear, but there was a good stiff breeze blowing, and it was increasing all the time. The tide was flowing in, and the dashing of the waves and roar of the surf made a picture long to be remembered. After my swim I went home, and when supper was finished three of us again went out to the beach. The wind had increased to a perfect gale, and already the water was over the car tracks. The Pagoda and Surf bath houses were surrounded, while numerous small shacks along the shore had been washed away. Inch by inch, foot by foot, the water advanced until it began to look serious, but no one dreamed of the flood that was to follow.

We went home at eight-thirty, and at ten I dropped into the realms of the sand man, lulled to sleep by the roar of the distant surf, and the whistling and moaning of the high wind.

Jimmie Swanson was again my roommate and about five o'clock he woke me up and said:

"Mr. Bates, if this wind keeps up the whole is-

land will be under water in a very few hours more."

"Nonsense, Jimmie," I replied, "there is no danger of that," and I turned over to have another snooze, when I heard a peculiar *swash, swash, swash*, against the side of the house.

"Jimmie, what's the swash we hear?" I asked.

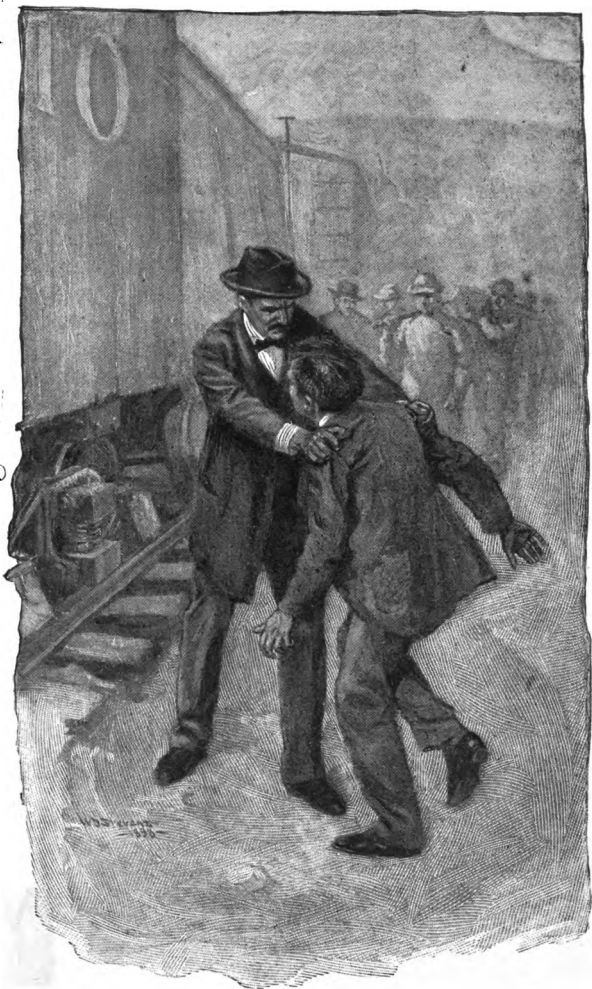
He got out of bed, limped over to the window, opened the blinds, looked a minute and then yelled:

"Good Lord! the whole town is under water, and we are floating."

It needed but a glance to convince me that he spoke pure truth. There we were surrounded on all sides by water, but the house was still on its foundation.

"Water, water, everywhere
Nor any drop to drink."

On account of the sandy nature of the soil on Galveston Island, most of the houses were built up on piles, and the water was gently slopping all over the first floor of our habitation. The streets were flowing waist high, and filled with floating débris of all kinds;—beer kegs, boards, doors, and tables *ad lib.* The wind soon began to quiet down, and when our first fright was over we had a high old time swimming and splashing around



"He looked at me . . . then catching me by the collar . . ."
(page 40.)

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in the water. It's a great city that will bring salt water bathing right up to the doors of its houses.

After a very skimpy breakfast, four of us made a raft, and paddled and pushed it down to the office. Nary a wire was there in working order. You see, Galveston is on a very flat island scarcely one mile wide, and the only approach at this time was a low railroad bridge, three miles long. Our wires were strung along the side of that, and at five o'clock in the morning, every wire was under water, and the force on duty either swam home or slept on the floor.

That day was about the easiest I ever spent in a telegraph office. There was a Mexican cable from Galveston to Vera Cruz, but the flood had washed away their terminals, and for that day, Galveston was entirely isolated from the world.

Houston, fifty-five miles north, was the first big town adjacent, and as all our wires ran through there, it was apparent they were having a hot time doing the relaying all day. They had only a small force, and evidently the business was delayed. The storm had finally blown itself out, and at four o'clock Clarke called for volunteers to go to Houston to help out until our wires came in shape again. The G. H. & H. railroad people

said they thought the water was low enough to permit an engine to cross the bridge, and in response to Clarke's call eight of us volunteered to attempt the trip. After reaching the mainland we would be all right, but there was that confounded three mile bridge to cross. We boarded engine 341, with Dad Duffy at the throttle, and at four-fifteen he pulled out. Water was still over the track and we proceeded at a snail-like pace, Just at the edge of the bridge we stopped; Dad looked over the situation and said:

"The water is within two inches of the fire-box now, and it's doubtful if we can get across, but here goes and God save us all."

The sensation when we first struck that bridge and realized that we were literally on a water support, was anything but pleasant, and I reckon most of us uttered the first prayer in many a day. Slowly we crept along, and just as we were in the middle of the structure the draw sagged a little, and *kersplash!* out went the fire. A great cloud of steam arose and floated away on the evening air, and then, there stood that iron monster as helpless as a babe. Dad looked around at us eight birds perched up on the tender and said:

"Well I reckon you fellers won't pound any brass in Houston to-night."

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Pleasant fix to be in, wasn't it? A mile and a half from land, perched up on a dead engine, surrounded on all sides by water, and no chance to get away. There was no absolute danger, because the underpinning was firm enough, but all the same, every man jack of us wished he hadn't come. Night, black and dreary, settled over the waters, and still no help. Finally, at eight o'clock, the water had receded so that the tops of the rails could be seen, and two of us volunteered to go back on foot to the yard office for help. That was just three miles away, but nothing venture, nothing have, so we dropped off the hind end of the tender and started on our tramp back over the water-covered ties. We had one lantern, and after we had gone about a half of a mile, my companion who was ahead, slipped and nearly fell. I caught him but good-bye to the lantern, and the rest of the trip was made in utter darkness. To be brief, after struggling for two hours and a half, we reached the yard office, and an engine was sent out to help us. At twelve o'clock the whole gang were back in the city, wet, weary and worn out.

The next day the water had entirely subsided and work was resumed. We learned then of the horror of the flood. Sabine Pass had been com-

pletely submerged, and some hundred and fifty or two hundred people drowned. Indianola had been wiped out of existence, and the whole coast lined with the wreckage of ships. That there were no casualties in Galveston, was providential, and due, doubtless, to the fact that the whole country for fifty miles back of it is as flat as a pan-cake, and the water had room to spread.

I worked there until spring and then a longing for my first love, the railroad, came over me and I gave up my place and bade good-bye to the commercial business forever. I had had my fling at it and was satisfied.

CHAPTER XIII

SENDING MY FIRST ORDER

I HAD now been knocking about the country for quite a few years, and working in all kinds of offices and places, and had acquired a great deal of experience and valuable information, so I reached the conclusion that it was about time for me to settle down and get something that would last me for a while. Commercial work I did not care for, nor did I want to go back on the road as a night operator on a small salary. I thought I had the making of a good despatcher in me, and determined to try for that place. I knew it had to be attained by starting first at the bottom, so I went up on the K. M. & O. and secured a position as night operator at Vining. The K. M. & O. was a main trunk line running out of Chaminade, and was the best road for business that I had as yet struck. Vining was midway on the division, and was such a good old town that I would have been content to have stayed there for some time, but one day an engine pulling a through livestock ex-

press broke a driving rod while running like lightning, and the result was a smash up of the first water—engine in the ditch, cars piled all over her, livestock mashed up, engineer killed, fireman badly hurt, and the road blocked for twenty-four hours. The wreck occurred on a curve going down a rather steep grade, so that it was impossible to build a temporary track around it. A wrecking train was sent out from El Monte, and as I happened to be off duty, I was picked up and taken along, to cut in the wrecking office. The division superintendent came out to hurry up things and he appeared so pleased at my work that, in a few weeks, he offered me a place as copy operator in the despatcher's office at El Monte. This appeared to be a great chance to satisfy my ambition to become a despatcher, so I gladly accepted, and in a few days was safely ensconced in my new position. The despatchers only work eight hours a day, while the copy operators work twelve, so they work with two despatchers every day. I had the day end of the job and worked from eight A. M. until eight P. M., with an hour off for dinner, so that I really was only on duty for eleven hours. The pay was good for me, seventy dollars per month, and I was thoroughly satisfied. Really all that is necessary to be a first class copy operator

is to be an expert telegrapher. It is simply a work of sending and receiving messages all day. However I wanted to learn, so I kept my ears and eyes opened, and studied the time card, train sheet, and order book very assiduously.

The first trick despatcher was honest old Patrick J. Borroughs, a man of twenty-five years' experience in the business and as good a man as ever sent an order or took an O. S. report. He was kindness and gentleness personified, and assisted me in every way possible, and all my future success was due to his help and teaching. The memory of the time I worked under him is the brightest spot in all the years I served in the business. After I had been there for about five months, he would allow me, under his supervision, to make simple meeting points for two trains, and one day he allowed me to give a right-of-track order to a through freight train over a delayed passenger. Then he would let me sit around in his chair, while he swallowed his lunch, and copy the O. S. reports. I was beginning to think that my education as a despatcher was complete, and was thinking of asking for the next vacancy, when a little incident occurred that entirely disabused my mind. The following occurrence will show how little I knew about the business.

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We had received notice one morning of a special train to be run over our division that afternoon, carrying a Congressional Railroad Committee, and of course that meant a special schedule, and you all know how anxious the roads are to please railroad committees, especially when they are on investigating tours (?) with reference to the extension of the Inter-State Commerce Act, as this one was. We were told to "whoop her through." The track on our division was the best on the whole road, and it was only 102 miles long; we had plenty of sidings and passing tracks, and besides old "Jimmie" Hayes, with engine 444 was in, so they could be assured of a run that was a hummer. Mr. Hebron, the division superintendent, came in the office and told Borroughs to tear things loose, in fact, as he said, "Make 'em all car sick."

After he had gone out Pat tossed the notification over to me, and said, "Bates, here's a chance for you to show what kind of stuff you are made of. Make out a schedule for this special, giving her a clean sweep from end to end, with the exception of No. 21."

Proud! That wasn't the proper name for it. I was fully determined that *this* special should have a run for her money if she ran on my sched-

ule. No Congressional Committee was going back to Washington with the idea that the K. M. & O. wasn't the swiftest road in the bunch, if I could help it, and I had a big idea that I could. Pat told me he would do the copying while I made the schedule, but as he said it I fancied I saw a merry twinkle in his honest blue eyes. I wasn't daunted though, and started to work.

"Order No. 34.

"To C & E, all trains:

"K. M. & O. RAILROAD (Eastern Division).

"DESPATCHER'S OFFICE, 'DS,' *October 15, 18—*

"Special east engine 444, will run from El Monte to Marsan having right of track over all trains except No. 21, on the following schedule:—

"Leave El Monte, 2:30 P. M."

Thus far I proceeded without any trouble, and then I stuck. Here was where the figuring came in, along with the knowledge of the road, grades and so forth, but I was sadly lacking in that respect. I studied and figured and used up lots of gray matter, and even chewed up a pencil or two. I finally finished the schedule and submitted it to Pat. He read it carefully, knitted his brows for a moment, and then said, slowly:

"For a beginner that schedule is about the best I ever saw. It's a hummer without a doubt. But

to prevent the lives of the Congressional Committee from being placed in jeopardy, I think I shall have to make another." Then he laughed heartily, and continued,

"All joking aside, Bates, my boy, you did pretty well, but you have only allowed seven minutes between Sumatra and Borneo, while the time card shows the distance to be fourteen miles. Jim Hayes and engine 444 are capable of great bursts of speed, but, by Jingo, they can't fly. Then again you have forgotten our through passenger train, No. 21, which is an hour late from the south today; what are you going to do with her? Pass them on one track, I suppose. But don't be discouraged, my boy, brace up and try it again. That's a much better schedule than the first one I ever made."

He made another schedule and I resumed my copying. It wasn't long, however, before my confidence returned and I wanted a trick. I got it, but in such a manner that even now, fifteen years afterwards, I shudder to think of it.

CHAPTER XIV

RUNNING TRAINS BY TELEGRAPH—HOW IT IS DONE

THE despatcher's office of a big railroad line is one of the most interesting places a man can get into, especially if he is interested in the workings of our great railway systems. It is located at the division headquarters, or any other point, such as will make the despatching of trains and attendant orders of easy accomplishment. In riding over a road, many people are prone to give the credit of a good swift run to the engineer and train crew. Pick up a paper any day that the President or some big functionary is out on a trip, and you will probably read how, at the end of the run, he stopped beside the panting engine, and reaching up to shake the hand of the faithful, grimy engineer, would say :

"Thank you so much for giving us such a good run. I don't know when I have ridden so fast before," or words to that effect. He never thinks that the engineer and crew are but the mechanical

agents, they are but small cogs in a huge machine. They do their part and do it well, but the brains of the machine are up in the little office and are all incorporated in the despatcher on duty. Flying over the country regardless of time or space, one is apt to forget where the real credit belongs. The swift run could not be made, and the train kept running without a stop, if it were not for the fact that the despatcher puts trains on the sidetrack so that the special need not be delayed, and he does it in such a manner that the regular business of the road shall not be interfered with.

The interior of the despatcher's office is not, as a rule, very sumptuous. There is the big counter at one side of the room, on which are the train registers, car record books, message blanks, and forms for the various reports. Against the wall on one of the other sides is a big black board known as the "call board." On it is recorded the probable arrival and departure of trains, and the names of their crews, also the time certain crews are to be called. As soon as the train men have completed the work of turning their train over to the yard crew at the end of their run, they are registered in the despatcher's office, and are liable thereafter for duty in their turn. The rule "first

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in, first out," is supposed to be strictly adhered to in the running of trains. About the middle of the room, or in the recess of the bay window, is the despatcher's table. On it in front of the man on duty, is the train sheet, containing information, exact and absolute in its nature, of each train on the division. On this sheet there is also a space set apart for the expected arrival of trains on his district from the other end, and one for delays. Loads, empties, everything, is there that is necessary for him to know to properly run the trains on time and with safety. At any minute the despatcher on duty can tell you the precise location of any train, what she is doing, how her engine is working, how much work she has to do along the road, and all about her engineer and conductor. Generally, there are two sets of instruments on the table, one for use of what is known as the despatcher's wire, over which his sway is absolute, and the other for a wire that is used for messages, reports, and the like, and in case of emergency, by the despatcher. Mounted on a roll in front of him is the current official time card of the division. From the information contained thereon, the despatcher makes all his calculations for time orders, meeting points, work trains, etc. Across the table from the despatcher sits the "copy

operator," whose duty it is to copy everything that comes along, thus relieving the despatcher of anything that would tend to disturb him in his work. The copy operator is generally the man next for promotion to a despatcher's trick, and his relations with his chief must be entirely harmonious.

The working force in a well regulated despatcher's office consists of the chief despatcher, three trick despatchers, and two copy operators, with the various call boys and messengers. The chief despatcher is next to the division superintendent, and has full charge of the office. He has the supervision of the yard and train reports, and the ordering out of the trains and crews. He has charge of all the operators on the division, their hiring and dismissal, and has general supervision of the telegraph service. In fact, he is a little tin god on wheels. His office hours? He hasn't any. Most of the chiefs are in their offices from early morn until late at night, and there is no harder worked man in the world than the chief despatcher.

Each day is divided into three periods of eight hours each, known as "tricks," and a despatcher assigned to each. The first trick is from eight A. M. until four P. M.; the second from four P. M.

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until twelve midnight; and the third from twelve midnight until eight A. M.

At eight o'clock in the morning, the first trick despatcher comes on duty, and his first work is to verify the train sheet and order book. The man going off duty checks off all orders issued by him that have been carried out, and his successor signs his initials to all orders yet to be obeyed. This signifies that he has read them over very carefully and thoroughly understands their purport. As soon as he has receipted for them he becomes as responsible as if he had first issued them. He glances carefully over his train sheet, assures himself that everything is correct and then assumes his duties for the day. Anything that is not clear to him must be thoroughly explained before his predecessor leaves, and he must signify that he understands everything. The value of that old time card rule, so familiar to all rail-rovers, "In case of doubt always take the safe side," is exemplified many times every day in the running of trains by telegraph, and the attendant orders. After a despatcher has assumed charge of the trick he is the master of the situation; he is responsible for everything, and his attentiveness, ability and judgment are the powers that keep the trains moving and on time.

When all trains are running on time, and there are no extras or specials out, the despatcher's duty is easy, and consists largely in taking and recording "O. S. reports," and "Consists." The "O. S. report" is the report sent in by the various operators as the trains arrive and depart from the several stations. A "consist" is a message sent by the conductor of a train to the division superintendent, giving the exact composition and destination of every car in his train. When trains are late, however, or many extras are running or the track washed out, the despatcher's work becomes very arduous. Orders of all kinds have to be made, engines and crews kept working together and trains moving.

Down the centre of the train sheet, which varies in size according to the length of the division, are printed the names of all the telegraph stations on the division and the distances between them. On either side of this main column are ruled smaller columns, each one of which represents a train. The number of each train is at the head of the appropriate column, and under it are the number of the engine, the names of the conductor and engineer, and the number of loads and empties in the train. All trains on the division are arranged in three classes, and each class has certain rights.

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Trains of the first class are always passengers; the through freight, and the combination freight and passenger trains compose the second class. All other trains, such as local freights, work trains and construction trains belong to the third class. It is an invariable rule on all railroads that trains running one way have *exclusive rights* over trains of their own and of inferior classes running in the opposite direction.

What is called the "double order system," is used almost exclusively on all single track roads, and if the rules and regulations governing it were strictly adhered to and carried out, accidents for which human agency is responsible, would be impossible. It consists simply in giving an order to all the trains concerned *at the same time*. That is to say, if the despatcher desires to make a meeting point for two trains, he will send the same order simultaneously to both of them. If a train is leaving his end of the division and he desires to make a meeting point with a train coming in, before giving his order to his conductor and engineer, he would telegraph it to a station at which the incoming train was soon to arrive, and from whence the operator would repeat it back word for word, and would give a signal signifying that his red board was turned. By this means both trains

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would receive the same order, and there would be no doubt about the point at which they were to meet.

To illustrate this method, let us suppose a case of two sections of No. 13 running east and one section of No. 14 running west. Both trains are of the second class, and as the east bound trains have the right of way, No. 14 *must* keep out of the way of the two 13's. A certain point, call it Smithville, is, according to the time card, the meeting point for these two trains. But No. 14 finds out she has a lot of work to do at Jonesboro; or a hot driving box or a draw head pulling out delays her, and thus she cannot possibly reach Smithville for No. 13. She is at Jason, and unless she can get orders to run farther on No. 13's time, she will have to tie up there and be further delayed an hour. The conductor tells the operator at Jason to ask "DS" if he can help them out any. "DS" glances over his train sheet, and finds that he cannot let them run to Smithville, because No. 13 is nearly on time; but there is a siding at Burkes, between Jason and Smithville, and he concludes to let 14 go there. So he tells the operator at Jason to "copy 3," and then he calls Smithville and tells him to "copy 5." Both the engineer and conductor get a copy of all orders pertaining to

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their trains, and the operators retain one for their records and for reference in case of accident. Both operators turn their red boards *the first thing*, and so long as the signal remains red, no train can pass the station, without first receiving an order or a clearance card. In the case supposed the order would be as follows :

“DS DESPATCHER’S OFFICE, 12, 8 , ’98

“Orders No. 31.

To C. & E. 1st and 2nd 13, SM.

To C. & E. No. 14, JN.

First and second sections No. 13, and No. 14 will meet at Burkes.

12. (Answer how you understand).

“H. G. C.”

The despatcher’s operator, sitting opposite to him, copies every word of this order as the despatcher sends it, and when the operators at Smithville and Jason repeat it back, he underlines each word, great care being taken to correct any mistakes made by the operators. After an operator has repeated an order back he signs his name, and the despatcher then says :

“Order No. 31, O. K.,” giving the time and signing the division superintendent’s initials thereto. The order is next handed to the conductor and engineer of each train when they come to

the office; both read it carefully, and then signify that they understand it fully by signing their names. The operator then says to the despatcher, "Order 31, sig. Jones and Smith," and the despatcher gives the "complete" and the exact time. Then a copy is given to the conductor and one to the engineer and they leave. On the majority of roads the conductor must read the order aloud to the engineer before leaving the office.

Thus No. 14 having received her orders, pulls out, and when she reaches Burkes, she goes on the side track and waits there for both 13's, because 13, being an east bound train of the same class, has the right-of-track over her. The same *modus operandi* is gone through with for No. 13, and when the trains have departed the operators pull in their red boards. When the meeting has been made and both trains are safely by Burkes, the despatcher draws a blue pencil or makes a check mark on his order book copy and signs his initials, which signifies that the provisions of the order have been carried out. Should its details not have been completed when the despatcher is relieved, his successor signs his initials thereto showing that he has received it. This is the method of sending train orders, exact and simple, on single track railroads. On double track lines

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the work is greatly simplified because trains running in each direction have separate tracks. Does it not seem simple? And how impossible are mistakes when its rules are adhered to. It really seems as if any one gifted with a reasonable amount of common sense, and having a knowledge of the rudiments of mathematics, could do the work, but underneath all the simplicity explained, there runs a deep current of complications that only long time and a cool head can master. I have worked in offices and been figuring on orders for a train soon to start out from my end of the division, when all of a sudden some train out on the road that has been running all night, will bob up with a hot box, or a broken draw head, and then all the calculations for the new train will be knocked into a cocked hat.

The simple meeting order has been given above. The following examples will illustrate some of the other many forms of orders, and are self-explanatory.

TIME ORDER

No. 14 has a right to use ten minutes of the time of No. 13 between Jason and Jonesboro.

SLOW ORDER

All trains will run carefully over track from

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one-half mile east of Salt Water to Big River Bridge, track soft.

EXTRA ORDER

Engine 341 will run extra from DeLeon to Valdosta.

ANNULMENT ORDER

No. 15 of January 6th is annulled between Santiago and Rio.

WORK ORDER

Engine 228 will work between Posey and Patterson, keeping out of the way of all regular trains. Clear track for extra west, engine 327 at 10:30 A. M.

When an operator has once turned his red board to the track for an order, under no circumstances must he pull it in until he has delivered the order for the train for which it is intended. In the meantime should another train come in for which he has no orders, he will give it a clearance card as follows:

To C. & E., No. 27

There are no orders for you, signal is set for No. 18.

H. G. CLARKE, *Operator.*

At stated times during the day, the dispatchers on duty on each division end full reports of all

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their trains to the divisions adjoining them on either side. This train report is very complete, giving the composition of each and every train on the road, and the destination of every car. A form of the message will readily illustrate this:

SAN ANGELO, 5 | 16, 18—.

W. H. C.

DS

No 17 will arrive at DS, at 10:20 A. M., with the following:

1	HH goods.....	Chgo.
2	Livestock.....	Kansas City.
3	Mdse.....	“
1	Emgt. outfit.....	St. Louis.
6	Coal.....	Houston.
6	Wheat.....	Chgo.
7	Empty sys. flats.....	Flat Rock.

Total 26

H. G. B.

All work is done over the initials of the division superintendent and in his name. These reports keep the despatchers fully informed as to what may be expected, and arrangements can be made to keep the trains moving without delay. Of course the report illustrated above is for but one train, necessarily it must be much longer when many trains are running.

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At some regular time during the day all the agents on the division send in a car report. This is copied by the despatcher's operator and shows how many and what kind of cars are on the side tracks; the number of loads ready to go out; the number and kind of cars wanted during the ensuing twenty-four hours; and if the station is a water station, how many feet of water are in the tank; or if a coaling station, how many cars of coal there are on hand; and lastly, what is the character of the weather. On some roads weather reports are sent in every hour.

In view of all this, I think it is not too much to say, that the eyes of the despatcher see everything on the road. There are a thousand and one small details, in addition to the momentous matters of which he has charge, and the man who can keep his division clear, with all trains moving smoothly and on time, must indeed possess both excellent method and application, and must have the ability and nerve to master numerous unexpected situations the moment they arise. He is not an artisan or a mechanic, *he is a genius.*

CHAPTER XV

AN OLD DESPATCHER'S MISTAKE—MY FIRST TRICK

I HAD become thoroughly proficient and more frequently than ever Borroughs would let me "spell" for him for a while each day. Be it said to his credit, however, he was always within hearing, when I was doing any of his work. He was carefulness personified, and the following incident only serves to show what unaccountable errors will be made by even the best of men.

One cold morning in January, I started to the office as usual. The air was so still, crisp and biting that the air-pumps of the engines had that peculiar sharp, snappy sound heard only in a panting engine in cold weather. They seemed almost imbued with life. As I went into the office at eight o'clock to go to work, the night man remarked that I must be feeling pretty brash; my spirits seemed so high. And in fact, that was no joke; I was feeling fine as silk and showed it all over. But as I said good morning to Borroughs, I noticed that he seemed rather glum, and I asked;

"What's the matter, Dad? Feeling bad this morning?"

He snapped back in a manner entirely foreign to him, "No, but I don't feel much like chaffing this day. I feel as if something was going to happen, and I don't like the feeling."

I answered, "Oh! bosh, Dad. You'll feel all right in a few minutes; I reckon you've got a good old attack of dyspepsia; brace up."

Just then the wires started up, and he gruffly told me to sit down and go to work and our conversation ceased. That was the first time he had ever used anything but a gentle tone to me, and I felt hurt. The first trick is always the busiest, and under the stress of work the incident soon passed from my mind. Pat remarked once, that the general superintendent was going to leave Chaminade in a special at 10:30 A. M., on a tour of inspection over the road. That was about all the talking he did that morning. His work was as good as ever, and in fact, he made some of the prettiest meets that morning I had ever seen.

About 10:35, I asked Borroughs to allow me to go over to the hotel to get a cigar. I would be gone only a few minutes. He assented, and I slipped on my overcoat and went out. I wasn't gone over ten minutes, and as I stepped

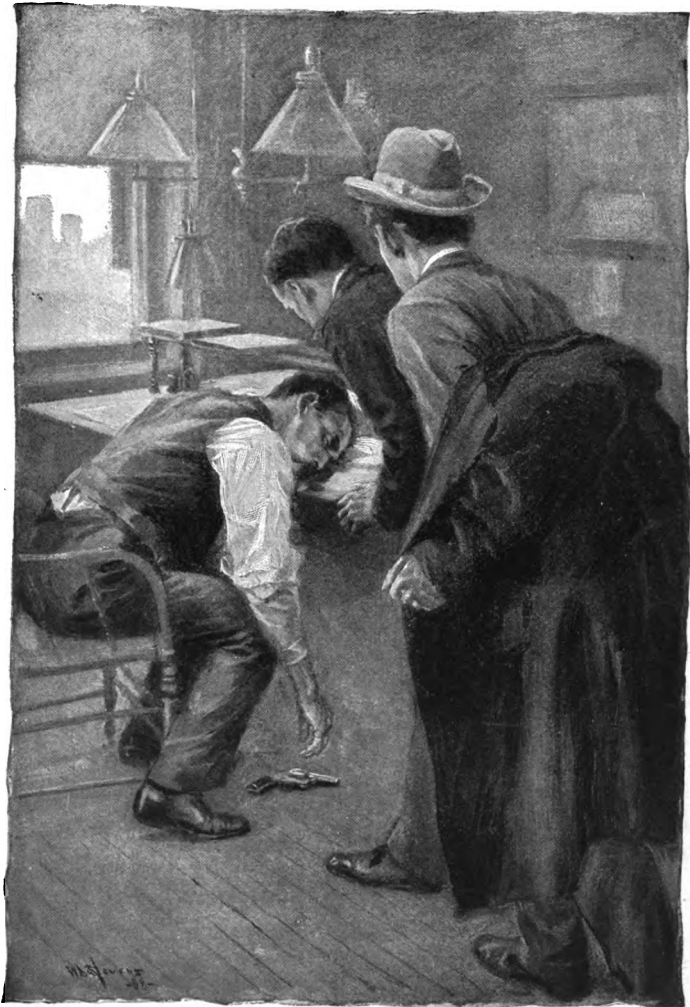
into the doorway to come upstairs on my return, I heard what sounded like a shot in the office. I flew upstairs two steps at a time, and never to my dying day will I forget the sight that met my gaze. Borroughs, whom I had left but a few moments before full of life and energy, was half lying on the table, face downwards, dead by his own hand. The blood was oozing from a jagged wound in his temple, and on the floor was the smoking pistol he had used. Fred Bennett, the chief despatcher, as pale as a ghost, was bending over him, while the two call boys were standing near paralyzed with fright. It was an intensely dramatic setting for a powerful stage picture, and my heart stood still for a minute as I contemplated the awful scene. Mr. Hebron, the division superintendent, came in from the outer office, and was transfixed with horror and amazement when he saw the terrible picture.

Bennett turned to me and said, "Bates, come here and help me lift poor Borroughs out of this chair."

Gently and carefully we laid him down on the floor and sent one of the badly frightened boys for a surgeon. Medical skill was powerless, however, and the spirit of honest Pat Borroughs had crossed the dark river to its final reckoning.

Work in the office was at a standstill on account of the tragic occurrence, but all of a sudden I heard Monte Carlo calling "DS" and using the signal "WK," which means "wreck." Bennett told me to sit down and take the trick until the second trick man could be called. I went over and sat down in the chair, still warm from the body of my late friend, and wiping his blood off the train sheet with my handkerchief, I answered.

It would be impossible to describe the state of my feelings as I first touched the key; I had completely lost track of trains, orders and everything else. However, I gradually pulled myself together, and got the hang of the road again, and then I learned how the wreck had occurred. About a minute after I went out, Borroughs had given a right-of-track order to an express freight from Monte Carlo to Johnsonville, and had told them to hurry up. Johnsonville is on the outskirts of Chaminade, and Borroughs had completely forgotten that the general superintendent's special had left there just five minutes before with a clean sweep order. That he had known of it was evident from the fact that it was recorded on the train sheet. Two minutes after the freight had left Monte Carlo, poor Pat realized he had at last



“ . . . Half lying on the table, face downward, dead by his own hand.” (page 127.)

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made his mistake. He said not a word to any person, but quietly ordered out the wrecking outfit, and then reaching in the drawer he took out a revolver and—snuffed out his candle. He fell forward on the train sheet, as if to cover up with his lifeless body, the terrible blunder he had just made. Many other despatchers had made serious errors, and in a measure outlived them; but here was a man who had grown gray in the service of railroads, with never a bad mark against him. Day and night, in season and out, he had given the best of his brain and life to the service, and finally by one slip of the memory he had, as he thought, ruined himself; and, too proud to bear the disgrace, he killed himself. He was absolutely alone in the world and left none to mourn his loss save a large number of operators he had helped over the rough places of the profession.

The wreck was an awful one. The superintendent's son was riding on the engine, and he and the engineer and the fireman were mashed and crushed almost beyond recognition. The superintendent, his wife and daughter, and a friend, were badly bruised, but none of them seriously injured. The second trick man was not to be found immediately, so I worked until four o'clock, and the impression of that awful day will never

leave me. Pat's personality was constantly before me in the shape of the blood stain on the train sheet. It was a long time before I recovered my equanimity.

The next afternoon we buried poor Pat under the snow, and the earth closed over him forever; and thus passed from life a man whose character was the purest, whose nature was the gentlest: honest and upright, I have never seen his equal in the profession or out. I often think if I had not gone over to the hotel that morning, the accident might have been averted, because, perhaps, I would have noticed the mistake in time to have prevented the collision. But, on the other hand, it is probable I would not have noticed it, because operators, not having the responsibility of the despatchers, rarely concentrate their minds intensely on what they are taking. A man will sit and copy by the hour with the greatest accuracy, and at the same time be utterly oblivious of the purport of what he has been taking. There can be no explanation as to why Pat forgot the special. It is one of those things that happen; that's all.

The rule of seniority was followed in the office, and in the natural sequence of events the night man got my job, I was promoted to the third trick

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—from twelve midnight until eight A. M.—and a new copy operator was brought in from Vining.

If any trick is easier than another it is the third, but none of them are by any means sinecures, When I was a copy operator I used to imagine it was an easy thing to sit over on the other side of the table and give orders, “jack up” operators, conductors and engineers, and incidentally haul some men over the coals every time I had to call them a few minutes; but when I reached the summit of an operator's ambition, and was assigned to a trick I found things very different. Copying with no responsibility was dead easy; but despatching trains I found about the stiffest job I had ever undertaken. I had to be on the alert with every faculty and every minute during the eight hours I was on duty. While the first and second trick men, have perhaps more train order work attached to them, the third is about on a par with them as far as actual labor is concerned, because, in addition to the regular train order work, a new train sheet has to be opened every night at twelve o'clock, which necessitates keeping two sheets until all the trains on the old one have completed their runs. There is also a consolidated train report to be made at this time, which is a re-captulation of the movements of all trains for the

preceding twenty-four hours, giving delays, causes thereof, accidents, cars hauled, etc. This is submitted to the division superintendent in the morning, and after he has perused and digested its contents he sends a condensed copy to the general superintendent. Many a man loses his job by a report against him on that train sheet.

To show the strain on a man's mind when he is despatching trains, let me tell a little incident that happened to me just in the beginning of my career as a despatcher. Every morning about five o'clock, the third trick man begins to figure on his work train orders for the day and when he has completed them he sends them out to the different crews. Work train orders, it may not be amiss to explain, are orders given to the different construction crews, such as the bridge gang, the grading gang, the track gang, etc., to work between certain points at certain times. They must be very full and explicit in detail as to all trains that are to run during the continuance of the order. For regular trains running on time, no notification need be given, because the time card rules would apply; but for all extras, specials, and delayed trains, warnings must be given, so that the work trains can get out of the way for them, otherwise the results might be very serious, and busi-

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ness be greatly delayed. Work orders are the bane of a new despatcher's existence, and the manner in which he handles them is a sure indication as to whether he will be successful or not. Many a man gets to a trick only to fall down on these work orders.

I stumbled along fairly well the first night as a despatcher, and had no mishaps to speak of, although I delayed a through passenger some ten minutes, by hanging it up on a siding for a fast freight train, and I put a through freight on a siding for a train of an inferior class. For these little errors of judgment I was "cussed out" by all the conductors and engineers on the division when they came in; and the division superintendent, on looking over the train sheet the next morning, remarked, that delaying a passenger train would never do—in such a tone of voice that I could plainly see my finish should I ever so offend again.

The second night passed all right enough, and by 5:30 A. M., I had completed my work orders and sent them out. From that time on until eight o'clock when the first trick man relieved me I was kept busy. He read over my outstanding orders, verified the sheet, and signed the transfer on the order book, and after a few moments' chat I

went home. I went to bed about nine o'clock, and was on the point of dropping off to sleep, when all at once I remembered that an extra fast freight was due to leave at 9:45 A. M., and that there was a train working in a cut four miles out. I wondered if I had notified her to get out of the way of the extra. That extra would go down through that cut like a streak of greased lightning, because Horace Daniels, on engine 341, was going to pull her, and Horace was known as a runner from away back. I reviewed in my mind, as carefully as I could all the orders I had given to the work train, and was rather sure I had notified them, but still I was not absolutely certain, and began to feel very uncomfortable. Poor Borroughs had just had his smash up, and I didn't want "poor Bates," to have his right away. Maybe it was the spirit of this same old man Borroughs, who was sleeping so peacefully under the ground that made me feel and act carefully. I looked at my watch and found it was 9:20. The extra would leave in twenty-five minutes and I lived nearly a mile from the office. The strain was beginning to be too much, so I slipped on my clothes and without putting on a collar or a cravat, I caught up my hat and ran with all my might for the depot. As I approached I saw Daniels giving

341 the last touch of oil before he pulled out. Thank God, they hadn't gone. I shouted to him, "Don't pull out for a minute, Daniels; I think there is a mistake in your orders."

Daniels was a gruff sort of a fellow, and he snapped back at me, "What's the matter with you? I hain't got no orders yet. Come here until I oil those wheels in your head."

I went up in the office and Daniels followed me. Bennett, the chief, was standing by the counter as I went in, and after a glance at me he said, "What's up, kid? Seen a ghost? You look almost pale enough to be one yourself."

I said, "No, I haven't seen any ghosts, but I am afraid I forgot to notify that gang working just east of here about this extra."

The conductor and engineer were both there and they smiled very audibly at my discomfiture; in fact, it was so audible you could hear it for a block. Bennett went over to the table, glanced at the order book and train sheet for a minute and then said, "Oh, bosh! of course you notified them. Here it is as big as life, 'Look out for extra east, engine 341, leaving El Monte at 9:45 A. M.' What do you want to get such a case of the rattles and scare us all that way for?"

I was about to depart for home to resume my

sleep, and was congratulating myself on my escape, when Bennett called me over to one side of the room, and in a low, but very firm voice, metaphorically ran up and down my spinal column with a rake. He asked me if I didn't know there were other despatchers in that office besides myself; men who knew more in a minute about the business than I did in a month; and didn't I suppose that the order book would be verified, and the train sheet consulted before sending out the extra? He hoped I would never show such a case of the rattles again. That was all. Good morning. All the same I was glad I went back to the office that morning, because I had satisfied myself that I had not committed an unpardonable error at the outset of my career.

In case of doubt always take the safe side.

CHAPTER XVI

A GENERAL STRIKE—A LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEER FOR A DAY

DURING the ensuing spring, one of those spasmodic waves of strikes passed over the country. Some northern road that wasn't earning enough money to pay the interest on its bonds, cut down the salaries of some of its employees, and they went out. Then the "sympathy" idea was worked to the full limit, and gradually other roads were tied up. We had hopes it would escape us, but one fine day we awoke to find our road tied up good and hard. The conductors and brakemen went first, and a few days later they were followed by the engineers and firemen. That completed the business and we were up against it tighter than a brick. Our men hadn't the shadow of a grievance against the company, and were not in full sympathy with the strike, but their obligation to their unions was too strong for them to resist.

It placed us in a pretty bad fix because just at this time we had a yard full of freight, a good deal

of it perishable, and it was imperative that it should be moved at once or the company would be out a good many dollars. The roundhouse men and a few hostlers were still working, so it was an easy thing to get a yard engine out. Bennett, myself, Burns, the second trick man, and Mr. Hebron, the division superintendent, went down in the yard to do the switching. There were twenty-three cars of Texas livestock and California fruit waiting for a train out, and the drovers were becoming impatient, because they wanted to get up to Chicago to take advantage of a big bulge in the market.

I soon found that standing up in the bay window of an office, watching the switchmen do the yard work and doing it yourself, were two entirely different propositions. When I first went in between two cars to make a coupling, I thought my time had come for sure. I fixed the link and pin in one car, and then ran down to the next and fixed the pin there. The engine was backing slowly, but when I turned around, it looked as if it had the speed of an overland "flyer." I watched carefully, raised and guided the link in the opposite draw head, and then dropped the pin. Those two cars came together like the crack of doom, and I shut my eyes and jumped back, imagining that I

had been crushed to death, in fact, I could feel that my right hand was mashed to a pulp. But it was a false alarm; it wasn't. I had made the coupling without a scratch to myself, and it wasn't long before I became bolder, and jumped on and off of the foot-boards and brake-beams like any other lunatic. That all four of us were not killed is nothing short of miracle.

By a dint of hard work we succeeded in getting a train made up for Chaminade, and all that was now needed was an engine and crew. There was a large and very interested crowd of men standing around watching us, and many a merry ha-ha we received from them for our crude efforts. Engine 341 was hooked on, and we were all ready for the start. Burns was going to play conductor, Bennett was to be the hind man, while I was to ride ahead. But where were the engineer and fireman? Mr. Hebron had counted on a non-union engineer to pull the train, and a wiper to do the firing, but just as we expected them to appear, we found that some of the strikers had succeeded in talking them over to their side. To make matters worse the roundhouse men and the hostlers caught the fever, and out they went. Mr. Hebron was in a great pickle, but he didn't want to acknowledge that he was beaten so he stood around

hanging on in hopes something would turn up to relieve the strain.

Now, it had occurred to me that I could run that engine. When I was young and fresh in the railroad business, I had spent much of my spare time riding around on switch engines, and once in a while I had taken a run out over the road with an engineer who had a friendly interest in me. One man, old Tom Robinson, who pulled a fast freight, had been particularly kind to me, and on one occasion I had taken a few days' lay off, and gone out and back one whole trip with him. Being of an inquisitive turn of mind, I asked him a great many questions about gauges, valves, oil cups, eccentrics, injectors, etc., and whenever he would go down under his engine, I always paid the closest attention to what he did. I used to ride on the right hand side of the cab with him, and occasionally he would allow me to feel the throttle for a few minutes. Thus, when I was a little older, I could run an engine quite well. I knew the oil cups, could work the injector, knew enough to open and close the cylinder cocks, could toot the whistle and ring the bell like an old timer, and had a pretty fair idea, generally speaking, of the machine. Having all these things in mind, I approached Mr. Hebron, as he stood cogitating

upon his ill-luck, and said, "Mr. Hebron, I'll run this train into Chaminade if you will only get some one to keep the engine hot."

"You," said Hebron, "you are a despatcher; what the devil do you know about running a locomotive?"

I told him I might not know much, but if he would say the word I would get those twenty-three cars into Chaminade, or know the reason why. He looked at me for a minute, asked me a few questions about what I knew of an engine and then said,

"By George! I'll risk it. Get on that engine, my boy; take this one wiper left for a fireman, and pull out. But first go over to the office for your orders. You won't need many, because everything is tied up between here and Johnsonville, and you will have a clear track. Now fly, and let me see what kind of stuff you are made of."

Strangely enough, after he had consented I was not half so eager to undertake it; but I had said I would and now I must stick to my word, or acknowledge that I was a big bluffer. I went up to the office and Fred Bennett gave me the orders. But as he did so he said: "Bates, that's a fool-hardy thing for you to do, and I reckon the old man must be crazy to allow you to try it, but

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rather than give in to that mob out there I'll see you through with it. Now don't you forget for one minute, that you have twenty-three cars and a caboose trailing along behind you; that I am on the hind end, and that I have a wife and family to support, with a mighty small insurance on my life."

He went out, and Bennett told the cattle men to get aboard as we were about to start. All this had been done unbeknown to any of the strikers; but when they saw me coming down that yard with a piece of yellow tissue paper in my hand they knew something was up, for every man of them knew that was a train order. But where was the engineer?

I went down and climbed up in the cab of old 341, and removing my coat, put on a jumper I had brought from the office. Engine 341, as I have said, was run by Horace Daniels, one of the best men that ever pulled a throttle, and his pride in her was like that of a mother in a child. She was a big ten-wheeled Baldwin, and I have heard Daniels talk to her as if she was a human being; in fact, he said she was the only sweetheart he ever had. He was standing in the crowd and when he saw me put on the jumper he came over and said:

“See here, Mr. Hebron, who is going to pull this train out?”

Mr. Hebron who was standing by the step, said, “Bates is.”

Daniels grew red with rage, and said:

“Bates? Why good heavens, Mr. Hebron, Bates can’t run an engine; he’s nothing but an old brass pounder, and, judging from some of the meets he has made for me on this division, he must be a very poor one at that. This here old girl don’t know no one but me nohow; for God’s sake don’t let her disgrace herself by going out with that sandy-haired chump at the throttle.”

Mr. Hebron smiled and said, “Well then, you pull her out, Daniels.”

Daniels shook his head and replied, “You know I can’t do that, Mr. Hebron. It’s true I’m not in sympathy with this strike one jot, but the boys are out, and I’ve got to stand by them. But when this strike is over I want old 341 back. Why, Mr. Hebron, I’d rather see a scab run her than that old lightning jerker.”

But Mr. Hebron was firm and Daniels walked slowly and sadly away. By this time we had a good head of steam on, and Bennett gave me the signal to pull out. I shoved the reverse lever from

the centre clear over forward, and grasping the throttle, tremblingly gave it a pull.

Longfellow says, in "The Building of the Ship:" "She starts, she moves, she seems to feel a thrill of life along her keel." I can fancy exactly how that ship felt, because just as the first hiss of steam greeted my ears and I felt that engine move, I felt a peculiar thrill run along my keel, and my heart was in my mouth. She did not start quite fast enough for me, so I gave the throttle another jerk, and whew! how those big drivers did fly around! I shut her off quickly, gave her a little sand, and started again. This time she took the rail beautifully, walking away like a thoroughbred.

There is a little divide just outside of the El Monte yard, and then for a stretch of about five miles, it is down grade. After this the road winds around the river banks, with level tracks to Johnsonville, where the double track commences. All I had to do was to get the train to the double track, and from there a belt line engine was to take it in. Thus my run was only thirty-five miles.

Our start was very auspicious, and when we were going along at a pretty good gait, I pulled the reverse lever back to within one point of the centre, and opened her up a little more. She stood



"See here, who is going to pull this train?"

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up to her work just as if she had an old hand at the throttle instead of a novice. I wish I were able to describe my sensations as the engine swayed to and fro in her flight. The fireman was rather an intelligent chap, and had no trouble in keeping her hot, and twenty-three cars wasn't much of a train for old 341. We went up the grade a-flying. When we got over the divide, I let her get a good start before I shut her off for the down grade. And how she did go! I thought at times she would jump the track but she held on all right. At the foot of this grade is a very abrupt curve and when she struck it, I thought she bounded ten feet in the air. My hat was gone, my hair was flying in the wind, and all the first fright was lost in the feeling of exhilaration over the fact that *I* was the one who was controlling that great iron monster as she tore along the track. I—I was doing it all by myself. It was like the elixir of life to an invalid. My fireman came over to me at one time and said in my ear that I'd better call for brakes or the first thing we knew we would land in the river. Brakes! Not on your life. I didn't want any brakes, because if she ever stopped I wasn't sure that I could get her started again. We made the run of thirty-five miles in less than an hour, and when we reached Johnsonville I received a

message from Mr. Hebron, congratulating me on my success. But Bennett—well, the rating he gave me was worth going miles to hear. He said that never in his life had he taken such a ride, nor would he ever volunteer to ride behind a crazy engineer again. But I didn't care; I had pulled the train in as I said I would, and the engine was in good shape, barring a hot driving box. I may add, however, that I don't care to make any such trip again myself.

We went back on a mail train that night, that was run by a non-union engineer, and in a day or two the strike was declared off, the men returned to work, and peace once more reigned supreme. Daniels got his "old girl" in as good shape as ever, and once when he was up in my office he told me he had hoped that old 341 would get on the rampage that day I took her out and "kick the stuff" out of that train and every one on it. Poor old Daniels, he stuck to his "old girl" to the last, but one day he struck a washout, and as a result received a "right of track order," on the road that leads to the paradise of all railroaders.

CHAPTER XVII

CHIEF DESPATCHER—AN INSPECTION TOUR— BIG RIVER WRECK

I HAD always supposed that the higher up you ascended in any business, the easier would be your position and the happier your lot. What a fallacy, especially in the railroad service, where your responsibilities, work, care, and worries increase in direct proportion as you rise! The operator's responsibility is limited to the correct reception, transmission, delivery and repetition of his orders and messages; the despatcher's to the correct conception of the orders and their transmission at the proper time to the right train; but the chief despatcher's responsibilities combine not only these but many more. A despatcher's work is cut out for him, just as the tailor would cut his cloth for a journeyman workman, and when his eight hour trick is done, his work for the day is finished and his time is his own. Not so the chief. His work is never done; he works early and late, and even at night when he goes home utterly tired out

from his long day, he is liable to be called up to go out on a wrecking outfit, or to perform some special duty. As soon as anything goes wrong on a division the first cry is, "Send for the chief despatcher." Almost everybody on the division is under his jurisdiction except the division superintendent, and sometimes I have seen that mighty dignitary take a back seat for his chief despatcher.

It was some ten years after I had begun to pound brass, that I awoke one fine morning to find myself offered the position of chief despatcher on the central division of the C. N. & Q. Railway, with headquarters at Selbyville. I was very well satisfied at El Monte, had been promoted to the first trick and had many friends whom I did not like to leave, but then, I was as high as I could get in a good many years, because Fred Bennett, the chief, was a stayer from away back, and there wouldn't be a vacancy there for a long time to come. The district of which I was to take charge was about three hundred miles long, and consisted of three freight divisions of one hundred miles each. That meant a whole lot of hard confining work, but who wouldn't accept a promotion; so after carefully considering the matter, I gratefully accepted, and was duly installed in my new position. As I did not know anything about the road

or the operators thereon, one of my first acts was to take a trip of inspection over the road. I rode on freight trains or anything that came along, and dropped off as I wanted to, in order that I might become thoroughly acquainted with the road and the men

One of the time card rules was that no person was to be allowed to enter any of the telegraph offices except those on duty there; even the train men were supposed to receive their orders and transact their business at the window or counter. Generally, however, this rule was not enforced very rigidly. When I was a night operator I never paid any attention to it at all. I dropped off No. 6 at eleven-thirty one night at Bakersville. A night office was kept there because it was a good order point and had a water tank. I had never met the night man and knew nothing of him, except that he was a fiery-tempered Irishman named Barry, and a most excellent operator. It had been told me that the despatchers had, on more than one occasion, complained of his impudence, but his ability was so marked and he was so prompt in answering and transacting business, that he was allowed to remain. As No. 6 pulled out he went into the office, closed the door and then shut the window. He had apparently not seen me, or

if he had he paid no attention to me, so I went into the waiting-room and rapped on the ticket window. He shoved it up, stared at me and gruffly said, "Well! what's wanted?"

I answered pretty sharply, that I desired to come into his office.

"Well then you can take it out in wanting, because you don't get in here, see!"

I started to reason with him, when he slammed the window in my face. That made me madder than a March hare, and I told him if he didn't let me in that office mighty quick, I'd smash that window into smithereens and come in anyhow.

Biff! Up went that window, and Mr. Barry's face looking like a boiled beet appeared, "Smash that window will you? You just try it and I'll smash your blamed old red head with this poker. Get out of that waiting-room. Tramps are not allowed."

Just then it occurred to me that he did not know me from the sight of sole leather; so I said: "Hold on there, young man; I'm Mr. Bates, the newly appointed chief despatcher of this division, and I'm out on a tour of inspection. Now stop your monkeying and open up."

"Bates thunder! Bates would never come sneaking out over the road in this manner. You

pack up and get. It will take more than your word to make me believe you are Bates."

I saw that remonstrance with him was useless, and, besides I had an idea that he might carry out his threat to smash my head with the poker, so I went over to a mean little hotel and stayed all night, vowing to have vengeance on his head in the morning. When daylight came, I went back to the station, and Dayton, the day man, knew me at once, having worked with me on the K. M. & O. Barry had told him of the trouble, and he was having a great laugh at my expense. Barry, himself, showed up in a little while, but he didn't seem the least bit disturbed, when he found out who I really was. He said there was a time card rule, that forbade him allowing any unauthorized person in his office; he thought I was some semi-respectable "hobo," who wanted a place to stay all night; how in the world was he to know? Suppose some one else had come out and said he was the chief despatcher, was he going to let them in the office without some proof? I saw that this was mighty good reasoning and that he was right. Did I fire him? Not much. Men on railroads who so implicitly obey orders are too valuable to lose; and before I left the road he was working the third trick.

Things ran along very smoothly for a while and I was having a good time. The winter passed and with the advent of spring came the heavy rains for which that part of the country was justly noted. Then the work commenced.

One Friday evening after four or five days of the steadiest and hardest kind of rain, I received a message from the section foreman at Truxton, saying that Big River was beginning to come up pretty high, and that the constant rains were making the track quite soft. I immediately sent him an order to put out a track walker at once, and told the despatcher on duty to make a "slow order" for five miles this side of the Big River; the track on the other, or south side, was all right, being on high ground.

Our fast mail came in just then, and after the engines were changed, the engineer and conductor came into my office for their orders. I told them about the soft track, and in a spirit of pure fun, remarked to Ben Roberts, the engineer, that he had better look out or he would be taking a bath in Big River that night. He facetiously replied: "Well, I don't much mind. I'm generally so dirty when I get that far out that a bath would do me good."

They received their orders, and as Roberts went

out the door, he laughingly said, "I reckon, Bates, you'd better send the wrecker out right after us to fish me out of Big River to-night."

I stepped over to the window, saw him climb up on engine 232, a beautiful McQueen, and pull out, and just as he started, he turned and waved his hand to me as if in token of farewell.

Truxton, five miles from the river, was not a stop for the mail, but I had them flagged there, to give them another special warning about approaching Big River with caution. Just then the track walker came into Truxton, and reported that he had come from the river on a velocipede, and that while the track was soft it was not unsafe and the bridge appeared to be all right. Presently, I heard, "OS, OS, XN, No. 21, a 7:45, d 7:51" and I knew the mail had gone on.

The next station south was Burton, three miles beyond the bridge, and I thought I would wait until I had the "OS" report from there before going home for the night. Thirty minutes passed and no sign of her. This did not worry me much, because I knew Roberts would be extremely careful and run slow until he passed the bridge. In a minute Truxton opened up and said, "Raining like blazes now." I asked him where the track

walker was, and he said he had gone out towards the bridge just after the mail had left.

Fifty minutes of the most intense anxiety passed, and all of a sudden every instrument in the office ceased clicking. As soon as a wire opens, all the operators are instructed to try their ground wires, and in that way the break is soon located. Bentonville, Bakersville, Muncy, Ashton, all in quick succession tried their grounds, and reported "All wires open south." Presently the despatchers' wire closed again, and "DS, DS, XN." There! that was Truxton calling us now. I answered and he said, "Wires all open south. Heavy rain now falling; violent wind storm has just passed over us; lots of lightning; looks like the storm would last all night."

I told him to hustle out and get the section foreman, and gave him an order to take his gang and car and go to the bridge and back at once and make a full report.

But where was 21 all this time? Stuck in the mud, I hoped, but all the same I was beginning to have a great many misgivings. Mr. Antwerp, the division superintendent, came in just then, and I reported all the facts of the case to him. He was very much worried, but said he hoped it would turn out all right. Getting nothing from

Burton, on the south, I told Truxton to keep on his ground until the section gang or track walker came back with a report. Twenty minutes later he began to call "DS" with all his might. I answered and this is what the despatcher's copy operator took:

Truxton, 5 | 21, 188—.

"M. N. B.

"DS.

"No. 21 went through Big River bridge tonight; track was soft all the way over from Truxton; engine, mail, baggage and one coach on the bridge when it gave way; three Pullmans stayed on the track. Roberts, engineer; Carter, fireman, and Sampson, conductor, all missing. Need doctors.

"O'HARA,
"Brakeman."

My God! wasn't it awful! I sent one caller to get out the wrecking crew and another for a doctor. I then instructed Burke to prepare orders for the wrecker, pulling everything off and giving her a clean sweep; told Truxton to keep on his ground wire and stay close; and pulling on my rain coat, I bounded down the steps and up to the roundhouse to hurry up the engine. Engine 122, with Ed Stokes at the throttle, was just backing down as I came out, so I ran back, signed the or-

ders, and as soon as the doctors arrived, Mr. Antwerp told me to pull out and take charge, saying he would come out if necessary on a special.

It was scarcely five minutes from the time I received the first message until we pulled out and started on our wild ride of rescue. Forty miles in forty minutes, with one slow down was our time. The old derrick and wreck outfit swayed to and fro like reeds in the wind, as we went down the track like a thunderbolt, but fortunately we held to the rails. There was scarcely a word spoken in the caboose, every one being intent upon holding on and thinking of the horrible scene we were soon to view. When we reached Truxton we found the track walker there, and after hearing his story in brief, we pulled out for the bridge. Our ride from Truxton over to the wreck was frightful. It was still raining torrents, the wind was coming up again, lightning flashed, thunder rolled and the track was so soft in some places that it seemed as if we would topple over; but we finally reached there—and then what a scene to behold!

The bridge, a long wooden trestle, was completely gone, nothing being left but twisted iron and a few broken stringers hanging in the air. Four mail clerks, the express messenger, and the

baggage man were drowned like rats in a trap. Poor Ben Roberts had hung to his post like the hero, that he was, and was lost. Sampson, the conductor, and Carter, the fireman, were both missing, and in the forward coach, which was not entirely submerged, having fallen on one end of the baggage car, were many passengers, a number of whom were killed, and the rest all more or less injured.

The river was not very wide, and I had the headlight taken off of our engine and placed on the bank; and presently a wrecker came up from the south, and her headlight was similarly placed, casting a ghastly weird, white light over the scene of suffering and desolation. I cut in a wrecking office, Truxton took off his ground, I put on mine, and Mr. Antwerp was soon in possession of all the facts. A little later I was standing up to my knees in mud and water, and I heard a weak voice say: "Mr. Bates, for God's sake let me speak to you a minute."

I looked around and beheld the most woebegone, bedraggled specimen of humanity I had ever seen in my life. "Well, who under the sun are you?" I asked.

"I'm Carter, the fireman of No. 21. When I

felt the bridge going I jumped. I was half stunned, but managed to keep afloat, being carried rapidly down the stream. I struck the bank about a mile and a half below here, and I've had one almighty big struggle to get back. For the love of the Virgin give me a drink; I'm half dead;" and with that the poor fellow fell over senseless.

I called one of the doctors and had him taken to the caboose of the wrecker, and when I had time I went in and heard the rest of his story. The poor chap was badly hurt, having one ankle broken, besides being bruised up generally. He said when No. 21 left Truxton, Roberts proceeded at a snail-like pace, keeping a sharp lookout for a wash out. He slowed almost to a standstill before going on the bridge, but everything appearing all safe and sound he started again, remarking to Carter, "Here's where I get the bath that Bates spoke about."

The engine was half way over when there came a deafening roar; the train quivered, and—then Carter jumped. That was all he knew. It was enough, and we sent him back with the rest of the wounded the next morning. He is pulling a passenger train there to-day. The engine was lost in the quicksands, and was never recovered, and

Ben Roberts stayed with her to the last. He had more than his bath in Big River that night; he had his funeral; the river was his grave, and the engine his shroud.

CHAPTER XVIII

A PROMOTION BY FAVOR AND ITS RESULTS

I HAD been on the C. N. & Q. for about eight months, when my second trick man took sick, and being advised to seek a healthier climate, resigned and went south. Generally speaking the chief despatcher's recommendation is enough to place a man in his office; and as I had always believed in the rule of seniority, I wanted to appoint the third trick man to the second trick, make the day copy operator third trick man, and call in a new copy operator to replace the night man who would be promoted to the day job. In fact, I had started the ball rolling toward the accomplishment of this end, when Mr. Antwerp, the division superintendent, defeated all my plans by peremptorily asserting his prerogative and appointing his nephew, John Krantzer, who had been night copy operator to the third trick. I protested with all my might, in fact was once on the point of resigning my position but the old man wouldn't hear of either proposition, and Krantzer secured the

place. Now while Krantzer was an excellent copy operator, he was very young, and lacked that persistence and reliability so essential in a successful despatcher. After I had protested until I was black in the face, I asked Mr. Antwerp at least to put the young man on the second trick, so that in a measure I could have him under my eye. But no, nothing but the third trick would satisfy him, so on the third trick the rattle-brained chap went the next night.

He struggled through the first night without actually killing anybody, but his train sheet the next morning resembled a man with a very bad case of measles; there were delays on everything on the road, with very few satisfactory explanations. There was the fast mail twenty-five minutes in going six miles. Cause? None was given. But a perusal of the order book showed that Krantzer had made a meet for her with a freight train, and had hung her up on a blind siding for fifteen minutes. Freights that had been out all night were still out, tied up in all kinds of shapes. Meets had been made for two long trains at a point where the passing track was not large enough to accommodate either one of them, and the result was thirty minutes lost by both of them in "raw hiding" by. Many other discrepancies

were noticeable, but these sufficed to show that Krantzer's abilities as a despatcher were of a very low order. However, I reflected, that it was his first night, and I remembered my own similar experience not many years ago, so I simply submitted the sheet to Mr. Antwerp without comment. He wiped his glasses, carefully adjusted them on his aristocratic nose, and after glancing at the sheet for a few moments, said, "Ah! humph! Well! Well! Well! Not a very auspicious start, to be sure; but the boy will pick up. Just jack him up in pretty good shape, Bates; it will do him good." I jacked him up all right to the queen's taste but it was like pouring water on a duck's back.

The second night was not much of an improvement, and I made a big kick to Mr. Antwerp the following morning, but it did no good. The third night was a hummer. I was kept at the office pretty late, in fact until after eleven o'clock, and before going home I wrote Krantzer a note telling him to be very careful as there were many trains on the road. Our through business at this time was very heavy, and compelled us to run many extras and specials. I was particular to inform him of two extras north, that would leave Bradford, the lower end of the division, some time

after 12:30 A. M., and directed him to run them as special freights having the right of track over all trains except the passengers. Each train was made up of twenty-five cars of California fruit bound for New York, and they were the first of their kind to be run by us. We had a strong competitor for this class of business in the Valley Route, a line twenty miles away, and were making a big bid for the trade. The general manager had sent a message that a special effort was to be made to put the two trains through a-whooping, and I had ordered engines 228 and 443, two of the best on the road, to pull them. Burke, the second trick man had everything running smoothly at the time I wrote the note, and I told Krantzler that, as it looked then, all he would have to do would be to keep them coming. No. 13, a fast freight south, had an engine that wasn't steaming very well, and I suggested to him to put her on the siding at Manitou. It would delay 13 about fifteen minutes but her freight was all dead stuff, so that would not make much difference. I did everything but write the order, and that I could not do, because I couldn't tell just what the conditions would be when the extras reached Bradford, where they would receive the order.

Krantzler succeeded in getting them started in

fair shape; but not content to let well enough alone, he thought he would run No. 13 on to Burnsidess instead of putting her on the siding at Manitou as I had suggested, and gave orders to that effect. After he had given the "complete" he told the operator to tell them to "fly." If he had given this same order for the meeting at Burnsidess to the two extras, *at the same time*, all would have been well, except that the extras would have been delayed some fifteen minutes, but this he was unable to do. Burnsidess itself is only a day office, so he could not communicate with them there, and they had already passed Gloriana, the first night office south of Burnsidess. The operator at Gloriana heard the order to 13 and told Krantzer it was a risky thing to do; but he told him "to mind his own business, as he (Krantzer) could run that division without any help."

No. 13 was pulled by engine 67, with Jim Bush at the throttle, and he was such a runner that he had earned the sobriquet of "Lightning Jimmie." While he had reported early in the evening that his engine was not steaming very well, he had succeeded in getting her to working good by this time. Burnsidess is at the foot of a long grade from the north, and about a mile up there is a very abrupt curve as the track winds around the

side of the hill. The two extras were bowling along merrily when they struck this grade; and although there is a time card rule that says that trains will be kept ten minutes apart, they were right together, helping each other over the grade. In fact, it was one train with two engines, somewhat of a double header with the second engine in the middle. They were going on for all they were worth, expecting to meet No. 13 at Manitou, as originally ordered.

In the meantime, Bush pulling No. 13, had passed Manitou, and with thirty-eight heavy cars behind him, was working her for all she was worth on the down grade, so as to get on the siding for the extras at Burnsidés. He was carrying out Krantzer's order to "fly," with a vengeance. And just as he turned the curve, he saw, not fifty yards ahead of him, the headlight of the first extra. To stop was out of the question. He whistled once for brakes, reversed his engine, pulled her wide open and then jumped! He landed safely enough, and beyond a broken right arm, and a badly bruised leg, was unhurt. His poor fireman, though, jumped on the other side and was dashed to pieces on the rocks; and the head man and engineer of the first extra were also killed. I had known many times of two trains being put in the hole;

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but this was the first time I had ever seen three of them so placed.

Krantzer had sense enough to order out the wrecker, and send for me. I knew just as soon as I heard the caller's rap on my door that he had done something so I lost no time in getting over to the office and there sat Krantzer as cool as if he had not just killed three men by his gross carelessness and cost the company thousands of dollars. I had the old man called and when he came and learned what had occurred, his discomfiture was so great that I felt fully repaid for all my annoyance on his nephew's account. He directed me to go out to the wreck and report to him upon arrival. I had Forbush, the first trick man, called and placed him in charge of the office during my absence. Incidentally, I told Krantzer he had better be scarce when I sent the remains of those crews in, because I fancied they were in a fit mood to kill him. When I returned I found that he had gone. It appeared that Jim Bush went up into the office, and although he had one arm broken, he was prepared to beat the life out of that crazy young despatcher. Forbush saw him coming and gave Krantzer a tip, and as Bush came in one door, Krantzer went out the other.

The effects of this wreck were far beyond cal-

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culatation to the company because they lost the business they were striving to win, and the way the general manager went for old man Antwerp was enough to make us all grin with delight. It is needless to say I was allowed to place my own men thereafter.

CHAPTER XIX

JACKING UP A NEGLIGENT OPERATOR—A CONVICT OPERATOR—DICK, THE PLUCKY CALL BOY

ONE of the most unpleasant duties I had to perform was that of "jacking up" operators, and punishing them for their short-comings. Generally, if the case was not a very bad one, and the man had a good reputation, I would try and smooth it over with only a reprimand; but there are times "when patience ceases to be a virtue," and punishment must be inflicted. The train sheet is always the first indication that some operator is to be "hauled up on the carpet." One morning I found the following entry on the sheet:—

"No. 16 delayed forty-five minutes at Bentonville, account not being able to raise the operator at Sicklen in that time. Called for explanation and operator said 'he was over at hotel getting some lunch.'"

That excuse "over at hotel getting some lunch," is as familiar to a railroad operator as the creed is to a good churchman. A young man named

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Charles Ferral was the night man at Sicklen, and his ability as an operator was only exceeded by his inability to tell the truth when he was in a tight place. I was too old an operator to be fooled by any such a yarn as this; and besides, the conductor of No. 17 reported to me that he had found Ferral stretched out on the table asleep, when he stopped there for water. But he was a first-rate man and I didn't want to lose him, so I wrote him a sharp letter and told him that a repetition of his offense would cause him to receive his time instantly. He was as penitent as the prodigal son, and promised never to so offend again; and he kept his word—for just about ten days.

One morning he asked my permission to come up to "DS" on No. 2 and go back on No. 3 in the afternoon. I gave it, but warned him to not lose too much sleep. There are some men in the business that the sound of their office call on a telegraph instrument will cause to awaken at once no matter how soundly they may be sleeping, but Ferral was not one of these. The night following his return to his station, I was kept at the office until late, and about eleven o'clock No. 22 appeared at Bakersville, and wanted to run to Ashton for No. 17. They were both running a little late, and as 17 had a heavy train of coal and sys-

tem empties, I told Burke to let them go. But the only station at which we could then get an order to 17 was Sicklen, Ferral's station. Burke began to call, but Sicklen made no answer. He called for forty-five minutes at a stretch, 22 all the time waiting at Bakersville. He stopped for five minutes and then went at it again. In ten minutes Sicklen answered. Burke started to give the order, but Ferral broke and gave the "OS" report that 17 had just gone by.

That settled it; No. 22 was hung up another hour all on account of Ferral's failure to attend to his duty. I opened up on him and said, "Where have you been for the last fifteen minutes?" The same old excuse, "Lunch," came back at me.

"Well, where were you for ten minutes before that?"

Then that dear old stereotyped expression, "Fixing my batteries," followed. But I was only too sure that he had been asleep, and No. 17 going by had awakened him. So I gently remarked that "I was not born yesterday, and said that he would probably have ample time to fix his batteries after this; that, in fact, I thought it would be a good thing for him to take a long course in battery work, and I would assist him all I could—I would provide him with the time for the work."

The next morning I laid the matter before Mr. Antwerp, and he wanted the man discharged forthwith. But during the night my anger had cooled somewhat and now I felt inclined to give him another chance; so I simply urged that he be laid off for a while.

"All right, Bates, but make it a good stiff lay-off—not less than fifteen days," said Mr. Antwerp.

I wrote Ferral accordingly; but I had scarcely finished when a letter came from him to me, begging off, and promising anything if I would not discharge him; but, instead would lay him off for *forty-five days*. I took him at his word and gave him the forty-five days he asked for, instead of the fifteen I had intended to give him. But, about two weeks later he came up to "DS," and looked so woebegone, and pleaded so hard to be taken back, that I remitted the remainder of his punishment. He was greatly chagrined when he learned that he had trebled his own sentence. He was never remiss again. Go over to the despatcher's office any night and you will see him, bright and alert, sitting opposite the despatcher doing the copying. He is in the direct line of promotion, and some day will be a despatcher himself. I never regretted my leniency.

In addition to the main line, I had a branch of thirty-eight miles, running from Bentonville up to Sandia. The despatching for this branch was done from my office, and when we wanted anyone there Bentonville would cut us through. This was seldom necessary, however, because there were only two trains daily, a combination freight and passenger each way. The last station this side of Sandia was Alexis. The state penitentiary was located there, and the telegraphing was done by a convict "trusty"—a man who, having been appointed cashier of a big freight office in the western part of the state, couldn't stand prosperity, and, in consequence, had been sent up for six years. His conduct had been so good that, after he had served four years inside of the walls, he was made a "trusty." His ability as an operator was extraordinary. He had a smooth easy way of sending that made his sending as plain as a circus bill.

The two branch trains on the branch were known as 61 and 62, and one day 62, running north in the morning, had jumped the track laying herself out about ten hours. When she left Sandia as 61 on her return trip south, she again went off the track and the result was sixteen hours' more delay. We wouldn't send a wrecker up from

the main line, and they had to work out their own salvation. When they finally appeared at Alexis they were running on the time of 62. That would never do, and the conductor asked the operator at Alexis to get him orders to run to Bentonville regardless of No. 62. Burke, my second trick man, was on duty at the time, and it so chanced that he did not know the Alexis man was a convict. He was about to give the order asked for when something on the main line diverted him for a moment. When he was ready again, Alexis broke him and said, "Wait a minute."

To tell a despatcher to wait a minute when he is sending a train order is to court sudden death, and Burke said, "Wait for what?"

"For whatever you blame please, I'm going out to weigh this coal."

Burke's Irish blood was all up in his head by this time, and he said: "What do you mean by talking that way to me? No. 61 is waiting for this 'g'; now you copy and I'll get your time sent you in the morning."

"Oh! will you? I guess my time is all fixed so you can't touch it. I only wish you could; I'd like mighty well to be fired from this job; I wouldn't even wait for my pay."

I had been sitting at my desk taking it all in,

and was just about ready to expire with laughter, when Burke called over to me: "Did you hear that young fellow's impudence?"

"Yes, I heard."

"Well, what are you going to do about it? I've never had an operator talk to me like that before. I must certainly insist that you dismiss him at once. He and I can't work on the same road."

"Unfortunately, Burke," said I, "the State has a claim on his services for two years yet, and I am afraid they won't waive it."

At this it dawned upon Burke, who and what the man really was; but I cannot say that his humor was improved at once by the discovery.

One morning shortly after this I was sitting in my office making up an annual train report, and was cussing out anything and everybody, because this train report is one of the worst things in the whole business. It was figures till you couldn't rest, and I had already been working at it for three days, and my head was in a perfect whirl. That morning one of our call boys had turned up missing and that fact also irritated me. It would seem that a call boy was a pretty insignificant chap in a big railroad, but such is not the case. In a perfect system every employee is like a cog in a big wheel, and as soon as one cog is broken

there is a jar in the otherwise smooth symmetrical movement of the machine. The call boy is quite an important personage, because, upon him depends the prompt calling of the various crews in time to take out their trains. He must keep a keen watch on the call board for the marking up of trains; he must know who is the first to go out, and he must know the dwelling place of every engineer, fireman, conductor and brakeman in the city. On a big division like ours, this, in itself, was not a small job. On some roads men are employed for this work, but I had always been partial to the boys, and kept four of them, two on days and two on nights. When my day boy left, I promoted a night boy to the second day job, and was cudgeling my brain for a good chap to go on nights. In a little while I heard a sharp rap on the office door, and in response to my "come in," uttered in a tone that was anything but pleasant, a sturdy looking little chap about fourteen years old stood before me. He had a shock of jet black hair, tumbled all over his head, a pair of bright eyes, round full face, not over clean, strong limbs and a well knit body. His clothes hung on him like gunny sacks, and the crudity of the many various patches indicated that they had not been

put on by woman's deft fingers. He didn't wait for me to speak, but blurted out :

"Say, mister, I have just heard tell as how you wants a call boy. Do you?"

He took my breath away by his bluntness; he looked so honest and sincere, so I simply replied, "Yes," and waited.

"Well then, I wants the job. See!"

"What's your name, youngster, and where is your home?"

"My name's Dick Durstine; I hain't got no home, no father, no mother, no nothin', just me, and I wants to learn the tick tick business. It looks dead easy."

This was really funny, but I liked his impudence, and, while I had no intention of hiring him, I determined to draw him out, so I said :

"Where were you born, when did you come here, and do you know where any of the crews live?"

"I was born in St. Louis; mother died when I was a kid, and Dad was such a drunken worthless old cuss and beat me so much, that I brought up in a foundling asylum. I come in here riding on the trucks of your mail train about three weeks ago, and the fellers up in the roundhouse have been lettin' me feed and snooze there. I know

where all the crews live exceptin' some of your kid glove engineers wot pulls the fast trains, but I can soon find them out. Please give me the job, mister; I'm honest and I'll work hard."

Something in his blunt straightforward way appealed to me and I determined to try him. Handled right I imagined he would be a good man; handled wrong, he would probably become a bright and shining light of the *genus* hobo. So I hired him, telling him his salary would be forty dollars per month.

"Hully gee!" he exclaimed, "forty plunks a month! Well say! I won't do a ting wid all dat mun; I'll just buy a road. Thank you mister, I'll work so hard for you that you'll not be sorry you gave me the job. But don't you forget that I wants to learn the tick tick business."

That night at seven o'clock he went to work, and it didn't take long to see that he was as bright as a new dollar. He knew everything about the division, knew all the crews and where they lived. Days went by and still he held up his end and was a great favorite with all the force. There was a local instrument in the office, and one of the operators wrote the Morse alphabet for him, and ever after that he kept pegging away at the key. He practiced writing and it wasn't many weeks

before he was getting to be something of an operator. I went out to the main line battery room one evening to give some instructions to the man in charge and there I discovered Master Dick with a battery syringe in one hand and a brush in the other deeply engrossed in monkeying with the jars.

“Look here, you young rascal,” I said sharply, “what are you doing in here? First thing you know you will short circuit some of these batteries and then there’ll be the de’il to pay. Don’t you ever let me catch you out here again, or I’ll fire you bodily.”

“I hain’t been doing nothin’, Mister Bates, I just wanted to see what made the old thing go tick tick. Wot’s all them glass jars for wid the green water and the tin in?”

I explained to him as well as I could the construction of the gravity battery. He had been forbidden to monkey with any of the instruments or the switch board in the main office, but his infernal inquisitiveness soon ran away with his sense, and it wasn’t long before he was in trouble. He pulled a plug out of the switch board one evening, and Burke threatened to kill him. Another evening, he went into my office and monkeyed with an instrument that I kept there connected to the

despatcher's wire, and left it open. There was no report from any of the offices on either side, and investigation soon revealed the culprit. The wire was open for ten minutes and Burke was as mad as a March hare, when he reported it to me the next morning. I sent for Master Dick and informed him that another such a report against him would cause his instant dismissal. He seemed penitent enough, but two nights afterwards he short circuited all the main line batteries by his foolishness, and raised Cain in the office for a while. The next morning his time was presented to him and he was told to get out. He pleaded hard but his offenses had been too numerous, and I had to let him go. I must confess, however, that we all missed him greatly, because, in spite of his troublesome nature, he was a prime favorite with all the force.

Our road ran through some wild unsettled country, and a few years previous, a Mr. Bob Forney and some distinguished gentlemen of the road, had paid us a visit, with the result that the express company lost about forty thousand dollars and their messenger his life. The country became too warm for them and they fled.

Our flyer left two nights after this, having on board about a hundred thousand dollars of gov-

ernment money, and I remarked to Bob Stanton, the conductor, that it was a fine chance for a hold up, but he laughed it off and said that civilization was too far advanced for that kind of work just now.

About nine o'clock I was sitting in the despatcher's office smoking a cigar before going home for the night, when all at once the despatcher's wire and the railroad line opened. Sicklen reported south of him and then took off his ground. Pretty soon the sounder began to open and close in a peculiar shaky manner, and then I heard the following:

"To 'DS,' gang of robbers goin' to hold up the flyer in Ashley's cut to-night. They will place rails and ties on the track to wreck train if they don't heed signal. Warn train to watch out and bring gang out from Sicklen. This is Dick Durs-tine."

All was quiet for a minute and then he started again, but soon he stopped short and we heard no more. The line remained open.

We raised Sicklen on a commercial wire and told him to turn his red-light and hold everything. I was in somewhat of a quandary; the sending had been miserable, sounding unlike any stuff Dick had ever sent, and then the stopping of the

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whole business made it seem rather suspicious. Still Ashley's cut was an ideal place for a hold up, and the weather was dark and stormy. Everything was propitious for just such a job.

In the meantime, Ashton, the first office south of Sicklen, had reported on the commercial line that the despatcher's wire was open north of him. That would place it near the cut in all probability. Anyway I didn't intend to take any chance, so I sent a message to Sicklen telling him to notify the sheriff of all the facts and ask him to send out a posse on the flyer, and, also, for him to get the day man to go out and patch the lines up until a line man could get there in the morning. About twenty minutes afterwards the flyer left Sicklen nicely fixed with a strong posse, and an order to approach the cut with caution. It was only three miles from Sicklen to the cut, and I knew it would be but a matter of a short while until something was heard. Sure enough, forty minutes later the despatcher's wire closed and this message came:

"To Bates, DS:

"Attempt to hold up No. 21 in Ashley's cut was frustrated by the sheriff's posse. Outlaws had placed ties on the track in case we did not heed the signal to stop. Two of them killed, three captured and one escaped. Dick Durstine is here,

badly shot through the right lung. Will have him sent in from Sicklen on 22 in the morning.

“Stanton, Conductor.”

The next morning when 22 pulled in I went down and there, laid out on a litter in the baggage car, was Dick Durstine, my former call boy, weak, pale, and just living. He was conscious, and when I leaned over him his eyes glistened for a minute, he smiled and feebly said:

“Say, Mister Bates, didn’t I do them fellers up in good shape? When I gets well again will you gimme back my job so I can learn some more about the tick tick? I’ll never monkey any more, honest to God, I won’t.”

A queer lump came in my throat and there was a suspicion of moisture in my eyes as I contemplated this brave little hero, and I said:

“God bless your brave little heart, Dick, you can have anything on this division.”

Mr. Antwerp had appeared and was visibly affected. We had Dick removed to the company hospital, and then for some days he lay hovering between life and death, but youth, and a strong constitution finally won out and he began to mend.

When he was able to sit up I heard his story. It appeared that when I dismissed him he laid around the place for a day, and then jumping a

freight, started south. At Sicklen he had been put off by a heartless brakeman and had started to walk to Ashton. It was evening and he became tired. After walking as far as the north end of the cut he laid down and went to sleep behind a pile of old ties. He was awakened by the sound of voices near by, and listening intently, he learned that the men were outlaws and intended to hold up the flyer that night. They intended to flag her down as she entered the cut and do the business in the usual smooth manner. In case she wouldn't stop, they would have a pile of ties on the track that would soon put a quietus on her flight. Poor little Dick was horrified and stealing quietly away some distance he stopped and cogitated. Time was becoming precious. How was he to send a warning? Oh! if he could only get into a telegraph office! Suddenly an idea struck him. He went a little farther up the track, and shinning up a pole he took his heavy jack-knife, and after a hard effort, succeeded in cutting two wires. Another pole was climbed and only one wire cut from it. With this strand he made a joint so that the two ends of the despatcher's wire could be brought in easy contact. Then by knocking the two ends together he sent the warning. His cutting of the wire had made a peculiar loud twang and one of

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the outlaws heard it. Becoming suspicious, he and his partner started up the track to investigate. They came upon Dick, kneeling on one knee, engrossed in his work, and without one word of warning shot him in the back. They left him for dead, but thank God he did not die, and to-day he is on a road that before many years will land him on top of the heap.

CHAPTER XX

AN EPISODE OF SENTIMENT

THE night man down at Bentonville quit rather suddenly one fall morning, and as I had no immediate relief in prospect, I wired the chief despatcher of the division south of me to send me a man if he had any to spare. That afternoon I received a message from him saying he had sent Miss Ellen Ross to take the place. I still had a very distinct recollection of my encounter with Miss Love, and I wasn't overfond of women operators anyway, so Miss Ross's welcome to my division was not a hearty one. She was the first woman I had ever had under my jurisdiction. I was at the office quite late a night or two after this, and heard some of her work; there was no use denying that she was a very smooth operator as well as a very prompt one. Burke said he had no complaint to offer; she was always on time, and I must confess I felt much chagrined. I wanted a chance to discharge her, but it didn't appear to materialize. But I was a patient waiter

and one morning about three weeks later I came into the office and on looking over the delay sheet I saw the following entry in the delay column :

“No. 18 delayed fifty minutes, account not being able to raise the operator at Bentonville in that time; as an explanation, operator says she was over at the hotel getting her lunch.”

Evidently Miss Ross had little ingenuity in the line of excuses or she would never have offered such a threadbare one as that. I wanted the chance to annihilate her and here it was. I called up Bentonville and asked if Miss Ross was there. She was, and I said, “Isn’t it possible for you to invent a better excuse than ‘lunch’ for your failure to answer last night, or this morning rather?”

She drummed on the key for a moment and then said if I didn’t like that excuse I knew what I could do. I caught my breath at her audacity and then “*did.*” I sent her time to her on No. 21, and a man to take her place. I then dismissed the matter from my mind and supposed that I had heard the last of Miss Ross. I never was very well acquainted with the female sex or I would not have dismissed the matter with such complacency.

A day or two after this I was sitting in the di-

vision superintendent's office, he being out on the road, and I heard a voice say :

"Is this Mr. Bates?" I had not heard anyone come in and I glanced up and answered, "Yes." I saw before me a young woman of an air and appearance that fairly took my breath away. I immediately arose to my feet and with all possible deference invited her to take a seat. I supposed she was the wife of some of the officials and wanted a pass. In response to my inquiry as to what could I do for her she said, timidly :

"I am Miss Ross, lately night operator at Bentonville."

Her answer put me more off my ease than ever, but the discipline of the road had to be maintained at any cost ; so as soon as I could, I put on my severest look and sternly said, "Well!" She smiled slightly in a way that made me doubt if she were much impressed by my display of rigor ; and answered, "I came to see if you wouldn't take me back. I am sure I didn't mean to offend the other night. I have been an operator for nearly four years and I have never had the least bit of trouble before. You have no fault to find with my work I am sure ; and I promise to be very careful to never offend again. Won't you please take me back?"

Gee! but she did look pretty and her big black eyes were shining like bright stars. If she had only known it I was ready by this time to have given her the best job on the whole division, even my own, but I wasn't going to give up without a show of resistance and I said:

"Humph! Well let's see!" Then I rang my bell and told the boy to get me the train sheet of the sixteenth. I looked very stern and very wise as I read the delay report to her.

"That, Miss Ross, is a very serious offense. A delay of fifty minutes to any train is bad enough, but when it happens to a through freight it is the worst possible. Then you say you were at the hotel for lunch. The order book shows that the despatcher called you from two A. M. until two-fifty A. M. Isn't that rather an unearthly hour to be going out to lunch? My recollection of the Bentonville station is that it is a mile from the excuse of a hotel in the place. Really, I am very sorry but I don't see how anything can be done."

Discipline was being maintained, you see, in great shape, but all the time I was delivering my little speech I was feeling like a big red-headed hypocrite. Miss Ross looked up at me with those beautiful eyes; then two big tears made their appearance on the scene, and she sobbed out:

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“Well, I know I told a fib when I made that excuse, but the despatcher was so sharp and I was so scared when he said he had been calling me for fifty minutes, that I told him the first thing that came into my mind. Then, the next day I was angry at you, because I thought you were chaffing me, as I was the only woman on the line, and I suppose I was rather impudent. But do you think it is fair to discharge me for the same thing that you only gave Mr. Ferral fifteen days for? Are you not doing it simply because I am a woman?”

I never could stand a woman's tears, especially a pretty one, and when she cited the case of Ferral, I realized that I had lost my game. I let myself down as easily as I could and that night Miss Ross went back to work at Bentonville, and the man there was put on the waiting list.

It was very funny after this how many times I had to run down to Bentonville. That Sandia branch line had to be inspected; the switch board had to be replaced by a new one in “BN” office; wires had to be changed, a new ground put in, and many other things done, and always I had to go myself to see that the work was done properly. The agent at Bentonville came, before very long, to smile in a very knowing way whenever I

jumped off the train; Mr. Antwerp had a peculiarly wise look in his eye when I mentioned anything about Bentonville, but I didn't mind it. I was in love with the sweet little girl, and was walking on the clouds. If I hadn't been I would have seen that my cake was all dough in that quarter. I might have noticed that big Dan Forbush had an amused look in his eye when I went off on one of these trips. If I had watched the mail I might have seen numerous little billets coming daily from Bentonville, addressed in a neat round hand to "Mr. Dan Forbush." But I didn't, I kept right on in my mad career, and one day when my courage was high I offered my hand and my heart to Miss Ross. She refused and told me that while she was honored by my proposal, she had been engaged to Mr. Forbush for two years, having known him down on the "Sunset" before he came to our road. I took my defeat as philosophically as I could and the next spring she left Bentonville for good, and Dan took a three weeks' leave. When he came back he brought sweet Ellen as his bride. One evening not long after that I was calling there, when Mrs. Forbush looked up at me very naively and said:

"Mr. Bates, did I pay you back for discharging me?"



"Are you not doing it just because I am a woman ?"
(page 189.)

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There's no doubt about it, she did, and I felt it. She was the third girl to throw me over, and I determined to give up the business and go for a soldier. I stuck it out there till fall and then resigned for all time.

CHAPTER XXI

THE MILITARY OPERATOR—A FAKE REPORT THAT NEARLY CAUSED TROUBLE

THE railroad and commercial telegraphers are well known to the general public, because they are thrown daily in contact with them, but there is still another class in the profession, which, while not being so well known are, in their way, just as important in their acts and deeds. I refer to the military telegrapher. His work does not often carry him within the environments of civilization; his instruments are not of the beautiful Bunnell pattern, placed on polished glass partitioned tables; his task is a very hard one and yet he does it without a grumble. His sphere of duty is out at the extreme edge of advancing civilization. You will find him along the Rio Grande frontier; out on the sun-baked deserts of New Mexico and Arizona; up in the Bad Lands of Montana, and the snow-capped mountains of the Rockies. A few of them you will find in nice offices at some department headquarters or in the war office in

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Washington, but such places are generally given to men who have grown old and gray in the service. His office? Any old place he can plant his instruments, many times a tent with a cracker box for a table; a chair would be an unheard-of luxury. His pay? Thirteen big round American dollars per month. His rank and title? Hold your breath while I tell you. Private, United States Army. Great, isn't it? Many times a detail to one of the frontier points means farewell to your friends as long as the tour lasts.

When I left the railroad business I journeyed out westward to Fort Hayes, Kansas, and held up my right hand and swore all manner of oaths to support the Constitution of the United States; obey the orders of the President of the United States and all superior officers; to accept the pay and allowances as made by a generous (God save the word) Congress for the period of five years. Thus did I become a soldier and a "dough boy" because I went to the infantry arm of the service. I've stuck to the business ever since.

I supposed when I went into the army that my connection with wires and telegraph instruments was entirely finished. I had worked at the business long and faithfully and was in a state of mind that I thought I had had enough. That's very

good in theory, but powerful poor in practice, because I hadn't been soldiering a month before a feeling of home-sickness for my old love came over me; in fact to this day I never see a railroad but what I want to go up in the despatcher's office and sit down and take a "trick." But there were commissions to be had from the ranks of the army and I wanted one, so I hung on and did my duty as best I could.

The stay at Fort Hayes was a very peaceful and serene one; I did no telegraphing there for a year, and then we were ordered to Fort Clark, Texas. When I quit the commercial business I had almost taken an oath never to go back to Texas, but I couldn't help it in this case.

Fort Clark is one hundred and thirty miles due west of dear old San Antonio, and situated nine miles from the railroad. When my company arrived, there was no telegraphic communication with the outside world and all telegrams had to be sent by courier to Spofford Junction, for transmission. After having been stationed there for about eight months I was sent for by the commanding officer and told to take charge of a party and build a telegraph line over to the railroad. The poles had been set by a detachment of the 3rd Cavalry and in five days' time I had strung

the wire. Being the only operator in the post I was placed in charge of the office and relieved from all duty. It was a perfect snap; no drills, no guards, no parades, nothing but just work the wire and plenty of time to devote to my studies.

In December, 1890, the Sioux Indians again broke loose from their reservations at Pine Ridge and all of the available men of the pitifully small, but gallant, United States army were hurriedly rushed northwards to give them a smash that would be lasting and convincing. There was the 7th Cavalry, Custer's old command, the 6th and 9th Cavalry, the 10th, 2nd, and 17th Infantry, the late lamented and gallant Capron's flying battery of artillery, besides others—General Miles personally assumed command, and the campaign was short, sharp, brilliant and decisive. The Indians were lambasted into a semblance of order, and that personification of deviltry, Sitting Bull, given his transportation to the happy hunting grounds, but not before a score or more of brave officers and men had passes to their long reckoning. Captain George Wallace, of the 7th Cavalry; Lieutenant Mann, of the same regiment, and Lieutenant Ned Casey, of the 22nd Infantry, left places in the ranks of the officers that were hard to fill.

My regiment, the 18th Infantry, was too far

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away to go, and besides, the Rio Grande frontier, with Senor Garza and his band of cut-throats prowling around loose, could not be left unprotected. There would be too big a howl from the Texans if that occurred.

During all these trying times my telegraph office was naturally the center of interest, and I had made an arrangement with the chief operator at San Antonio to send me bulletins of any important news. I always made two copies, posting one on the bulletin board in front of my office, and delivering the other to the colonel in person.

Soldiers are very loquacious as a rule and give them a thread upon which to hang an argument, and in a minute a free silver, demo-popocrat convention would sound tame in comparison. Go into a squad-room at any time the men are off duty, and you can have a discussion on almost any old subject from the result of the coming prize fight to the deepest question of the bible and theology. Many times the argument will become so warm between Privates "Hicky" Flynn and "Pie Faced" Sullivan that theology will be settled *a la* Queensbury out behind the wash-house. Among soldiers this argumentative spirit is called "chewing the rag."

One morning shortly after Wounded Knee with

its direful results had been fought, I thought it would be a great joke to post a startling bulletin, just to start the men's tongues a-wagging.

So I wrote the following :

"Bulletin

"San Antonio, Texas, 12 | 26, 1890.

"Reported that the 6th and 9th Cavalry were ambuscaded yesterday by Sioux Indians under Crazy Horse, and completely wiped out of existence. Custer's Little Big Horn massacre out-done. Not a man escaped."

I chuckled with fiendish glee as I posted this on the bulletin board and then started for breakfast. I thought some soldier would read it, tell it to the men of his company, and in that way the fun would commence. My scheme worked to perfection, because some of the men of G Company, (mine was D) had seen me stick it up and had come post haste to read. I started the ball rolling in my own company and in about a minute there were fifty men around me all jabbering like magpies as to the result of this awful massacre. Of course, the regiment would be hurried north forthwith—no other regiment could do the work of annihilation so well as the 18th. Oh! no. Of course not!

Said my erstwhile friend and bunkie "Hickey" Flynn: "Av coorse, Moiles will be after sendin' a message to Lazelle to bring the Ateenth fut up at once, and thin the smashin' we will be after givin' them rid divils will make a wake look sick."

"Aw cum off, Hickey," said Sullivan, "phat the divil does yez know av foightin' injuns? Phat were ye over in the auld sod? Nathin' but a turf digger. Phat were ye here before ye 'listed? Dom ye, I think ye belong to the Clan na Gael and helped to murder poor Doc Cronin, bad cess to ye."

A display of authority on the part of the top sergeant prevented a clash and the jaw-breaking contest proceeded. By this time the news had spread and the entire garrison were talking. Just as I was about to tell them that it was a fake pure and simple, I happened to glance towards my office, and Holy Smoke! there was my captain standing on his tiptoes (he was only five feet four) reading that confounded bulletin. I hadn't counted on any of the officers reading it. Generally they didn't get up until eight o'clock and by that time I would have destroyed the fake report.

The officers' club was in the same building as my office and the captain had come down early, evidently to get a—to read the morning paper (*which came at 4 P. M.*) and his eye lighted on

my bulletin. I saw him read it carefully, and then reaching up he tore it from the board and as quick as his little legs would carry him, he made a bee line for the commanding officer's quarters. I knew full well how the colonel would regard that bulletin when he found out it was a fake. I was able to discern a summary court-martial in my mind's eye, and that would knock my chances for a commission sky-highwards—because a man's military record must be absolutely spotless when he appears for examination. What was I to do? Just then I saw the captain go up the colonel's steps, ring the bell, and in a moment he was admitted. I felt that my corpse was laid out right then and there and the wake was about to begin.

A few moments later the commanding officer's orderly came in, and looking around for a minute, caught sight of me and said :

“Corporal, the commanding officer wants to see you at his quarters at once,” and out he went. “Start the band to playing the ‘Dead March in Saul,’ ” thought I, “because this is the beginning of a funeral procession in which I am to play the leading part.” I walked as slowly as I could and not appear lagging, but I arrived at my crematory all too soon. I rapped on the door and in tones that made me shiver, was bidden by the old man to

come in. The colonel was standing in the middle of his parlor, wrapped in a gaudy dressing gown, and in his hand he held my mangled bulletin. Right at that minute I wished I had never heard a telegraph instrument click.

“Corporal,” said the colonel, “what time did you receive this bulletin?”

“About six-fifteen, sir, immediately after reveille,” I replied with a face as expressionless as a mummy’s.

“Why did you not bring it to me direct as you have heretofore done?”

“Well, sir, I didn’t think you were awake yet, and I did not want to disturb you.”

“Have you any later news, corporal?”

“No sir, none, but I haven’t been back to the office since, sir.” Gee! but that room was becoming warm!

“Are you certain as to the truth of this awful report?”

“It is probably as authentic as a great many stories that are started during times like these—that is all I know of it, sir.” (Lord forgive me.)

“It seems almost too horrible to be true, and yet, one cannot tell about those Sioux. They’re a bad lot—a devilish bad lot”—this to my captain—and then to me: “You go back to your office, corpo-

ral, and remain very close until you have a denial or a confirmation of this story and bring any news you may receive to me instanter. That's all corporal."

The "corporal" needed no second dismissal, and saluting I quickly got out of an atmosphere that was far from chilly to me.

Now, by my cussed propensity for joking, I had involved myself in this mess, and there was but one way out of it, and that was to brazen it out for a while longer and then post a denial of the supposed awful rumor. *But the denial must come over the wire*, so when I reached my office I called up Spofford and told old man Livingston what I had done and what I wanted him to do for me, and in about half an hour he sent me a "bulletin" saying that the previous report had happily proved unfounded and the 6th and 9th Cavalry were all right. This message I took at once to the colonel and as he read it he heaved a big sigh of relief, but he dismissed me with a very peculiar look in his eye.

The next evening as I was passing the colonel's quarters on my way to deliver a message to the hospital, I heard him remark to another officer, "Major, don't you think it is strange that the papers received to-day make no mention of that

frightful report received here yesterday morning relative to the supposed massacre of the 6th and 9th Cavalry?"

No, the major didn't think it a bit strange. Maybe he knew that newspaper stories should be taken *cum grano salis*, and then maybe he knew me.

There were no more "fake reports" from that office.

CHAPTER XXII

PRIVATE DENNIS HOGAN, HERO

IT WAS while I was sitting around a barrack-room fire that I picked up the following story. There were a number of old soldiers in my company—men who had served twenty-five years in the army—and their fund of anecdote and excitement was of the largest size.

On Thanksgiving Day, 187—, Private Dennis Hogan, Company B, 29th United States Infantry, the telegraph operator at Fort Flint, Montana, sat in his dingy little "two by four" office in the head-quarter building, communing with himself and cussing any force of circumstances that made him a soldier. The instruments were quiet, a good Thanksgiving dinner had been enjoyed and now the smoke from his old "T. D." pipe curled in graceful rings around his red head.

Denny was a smashing good operator and some eighteen months before he had landed in St. Louis dead broke. All the offices and railroads were

full and nary a place did he get. While walking up Pine street one morning his eye fell foul of a sign:—

“Wanted, able-bodied, unmarried men, between the ages of twenty-one and thirty-five, for service in the United States Army.”

In his mind's eye he sized himself up and came to the conclusion that he would fill all the requirements. Now, he hadn't any great hankering for soldiering, but he didn't have a copper to his name and as empty stomachs stand not on ceremony, in he went and after being catechized by the recruiting sergeant, he was pounded for thirty minutes by the examining surgeon, pronounced as sound as a dollar, and then sworn in “to serve Uncle Sam honestly and faithfully for five years. So help me God.” The space of time necessary to transform a man from a civilian to a soldier is of a very short duration, and almost before he knew it he was dressed in the plain blue of the soldier of the Republic. He was assigned to B company of the 29th United States Infantry stationed at Fort Flint, Montana. The experience was new and novel to him, and the three months recruit training well nigh wore him out, but he stuck to it, and some two months after he had been returned to duty, he was detailed as telegraph operator vice

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Adams of G Company, discharged. There he had remained since.

At four o'clock on the afternoon in question Denny was aroused from his reverie by the sounder opening up and calling "FN" like blue blazes. He answered and this is what he took:

"DEPARTMENT HEADQUARTERS ST. PAUL, MINN.

"November 26th, 187—

"COMMANDING OFFICER,
"Fort Flint, Montana.

"Sioux Indians out. Prepare your command for instant field service. Thirty days' rations; two hundred rounds ammunition per man. Wire when ready.

"By command of Major General Wherry.

"(Signed) SMITH,
"Assistant Adjutant-General."

Denny was the messenger boy as well as operator and without waiting to make an impression copy, he grabbed his hat and flew down the line to the colonel's quarters. That worthy was entertaining a party at dinner, and was about to give Hogan fits for bringing the message to him instead of to the post adjutant; but a glance at the contents changed things and in a moment all was bustle and confusion.

For weeks the premonitory signs of this out-

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break had been plainly visible, but true to the red-tape conditions, the army could not move until some overt act had been committed. The generous interior department had supplied the Indians with arms and ammunition and then Mr. Red Devil under that prince of fiends incarnate, Sitting Bull, started on his campaign of plunder and pillage.

At eight o'clock that night Colonel Clarke wired his chief that his command was ready, and at midnight he received orders to proceed the next morning at daylight, by forced marches up to the junction of the forks of the Red Bud, and take position there to intercept the Indians should they attempt to cross. Two regiments from the more northern posts were due to reach there at the same time, and the combined strength of the three commands was supposed to be sufficient to drive back any body of Indians. There was little sleep in Fort Flint that night.

Now, Hogan wasn't much of a success as a garrison soldier, but when a chance for a genuine fight presented itself, all the Irish blood in his nature came to the surface, and after much pleading and begging, the adjutant allowed him to join his company, detailing Jones of D Company as operator in his stead. Jones wasn't as good an opera-

tor by far as Denny, but in a pinch he could do the work, and besides, he had just come out of the hospital and was unable to stand the rigors attendant upon a winter campaign in Montana.

Denny went to his company quarters in high glee and soon had his kit all packed. Some weeks before he had been out repairing the line and when he returned to the post he had left a small pocket instrument and a few feet of office wire in his haversack. He saw these things and was about to remove them, when something impelled him to take them along. What this was no one ever knew. Perhaps premonition.

The next morning just as the first dim shadows of early dawn stole over the snow-clad earth, the gallant old 29th, five hundred strong, swung out of Fort Flint, on its long tramp. From out of half-closed blinds on the officer's line gazed many a tear-stained face, and up on "Soapsuds Row" many an honest-hearted laundress was bemoaning the fates that parted her from her "ould mon."

The weather turned bitter cold and after seven days of the hardest kind of marching they reached and crossed the Red Bud just below the junction of the two forks. A strong position was taken and every disposition made to prevent surprise.

The expected re-enforcement would surely come soon and then all would be safe.

The next day dawned and passed, but not a sign of that re-enforcement. That night queer looking red glows were seen at stated intervals on the horizon—North, West and East on the north side of the river, and to the South on the other bank did they gleam and glow. Colonel Clarke was old and tried in Indian warfare and well did he know what those fires meant—Indians—and lots of them all around his command. His hope now was that the two northern regiments would strike them in the rear while he smashed them in front.

The next morning, first one, two, three, four, an hundred, a thousand figures mounted on fleet footed ponies appeared silhouetted against the clear sky, and it wasn't long before that little command of sturdy bluecoats was surrounded by a superior force of the wildest red devils that ever strode a horse or fired a Winchester rifle. Slowly they drew their lines closer about the troops like the clinging tentacles of some monster devilfish, and about eleven o'clock, *Bang!* and the battle was on.

“Husband your fire, men. Don't shoot until you have taken deliberate aim, and can see the ob-

ject aimed at," was the word passed along the line by Colonel Clarke.

Behind hastily constructed shelter trenches the soldiers fought off that encircling band of Indians, with a desperation and valor born of an almost hopeless situation. Ever and anon, from across the river came the ping of a Winchester bullet, proving that retreat was cut off that way. The Indians had completely marched around them.

Where was the re-enforcement? Why didn't it come? Was this to be another Little Big Horn, and were these brave men to be massacred like the gallant 7th Cavalry under Custer? As long as his ammunition held out Colonel Clarke knew he could stand them off, but after three days of hard fighting, resulting in the loss of many brave men, the situation was becoming desperate. Fires could not be lighted and more than one brave fellow went to kingdom come in filling the canteens at the river's bank. Most of the animals had been shot, many of them being used for breastworks.

Colonel Clarke was inspecting his lines on the early evening of the third day, and had about made up his mind to ask for a volunteer to try and get beyond the Indian lines and carry the news to Fort Scott, sixty miles away, to call for re-enforcements. Six troops of the 11th Cavalry were

stationed there under his old friend and class-mate, Colonel Foster. He knew the character of the regular army chaps well enough to be certain they would come to his assistance, if it were a possible thing. If all went well with his courier in three days' time they would be there.

The word was passed along the line and in a few seconds he had any number of officers and men who were willing and ready to take the ride. Just as the colonel had decided to send 1st Lieutenant Jarvis on this perilous trip, Hogan appeared before him, saluting with military precision, and said with a broad Irish brogue:—

“Axin' yer pardin' kurnel, but Oi think Oi kin tell ye a better way. The telegraph loine from Scott to Kearney runs just twenty-foive moiles beyant here to the southards. Up at the end of our loines on the other side of the river is a deep ravine. If Oi kin get across with a good horse and slip through the Indian loines on the other soide, I can, by hard roidin' reach this loine in two or three hours. I have a pocket instrument wid me and can cut in and ask for re-enforcements from Fort Scott. If the loine is down I can continue on to the post, and make as quick time as any of the officers; if it is up it will be a matter of a short toime before we are pulled out of this

hole. Plaze let me thry it kurnel. Lieutenant Jarvis has a wife and two children, and his loss would be greatly felt, whoile I—I—well I haven't any wan, sir, and besoides, I'm an Irishman, and you know, kurnel, an Irishman is a fool for luck." This last was said with a broad grin.

Colonel Clarke was somewhat amazed at this speech, but he studied reflectively, with knitted brows for a moment, and then said, "All right, Hogan, I'll let you try it. Take my horse and start at three o'clock in the morning. Do your best, my man, do your best; the lives of the remainder of this command depend on your efforts. God be with you."

"If I fail kurnel, it will be because I'm dead, sir."

Shortly before three o'clock in the morning, Denny made ready for his perilous ride. The horse's hoofs were carefully padded, ammunition and revolver looked after, the pocket instrument fastened around his neck by the wire, so if any accident happened to the horse he would not be unnecessarily delayed, and all was ready. He gave his old bunkie a farewell silent clasp of the hand and then started on his ride that meant life or death to his comrades. The horse was a magnificent Kentuckian and seemed to know what was

required of him. Carefully and slowly Hogan pushed his way to the place opposite the ravine, and then giving his mount a light touch with the spurs, he took to the cold water. The stream was filled with floating ice but was only about fifty yards wide and in a few minutes he was safely over, and climbing up the other bank through the ravine. Finally, the end was reached and he was on high ground. Resting a minute to see if all was well, he started. So far, so good, he was beyond the Indian lines. He was congratulating himself on the promised success of his mission when all at once, directly in front of him he saw the dim shadowy outlines of a mounted Indian. Quick as a flash Denny pulled his revolver and another Indian was soon in the happy hunting ground. This caused a general alarm and Hogan knew he was in for it. Putting his spurs deep in his horse's flanks away he went with the speed of the wind. A perfect swarm of Indians came after him, yelling like fiends and shooting like demons. On! on! he sped, seemingly bearing a charmed life because bullets whizzed by him like hail. He was not idle, and when the opportunity presented itself his revolver spoke and more than one Indian pony was made riderless thereby.

Suddenly he felt a sharp stinging pain in his

right shoulder, and but for a convulsive grasp of the pommel with his bridle hand he would have pitched headlong to the earth.

No, by God! he couldn't fail now. He must succeed, the lives of his comrades depended on his efforts. He had told Colonel Clarke he would get through or die, and he was a long way from dead yet. Only an hour and a half more and he would have sent the message and then all the Indians in the country could go to the demnition bow wows for all he cared.

Hearing no more shots Denny drew rein for a moment and listened. Not a sound could be heard, the snow had started to softly fall and the first faint rays of light on the eastern horizon heralded the approach of a new-born day. Ah! he had outridden his pursuers. Gently patting his faithful horse's neck, he once more started swiftly on, and when he was within a few miles of the line he chanced to glance back and saw that one lone Indian was following him.

Now it was a case of man against man. In his first flight and running fight he had fired away all his ammunition save one cartridge. This he determined to use to settle his pursuer, but not until it was absolutely necessary; and putting spurs to his already tired horse, he galloped on.

The Indian was slowly gaining on him and he saw the time for decisive action was at hand. Ahead of him but one short half mile was that line, already in the early morning light he could see the poles, and if the god of battles would only speed his one remaining bullet in the right direction, his message could be sent in safety and his comrades rescued. His wounded right arm was numb from pain and his left was not the steadiest in the world, but nothing venture, nothing have, and just then—*Bang!* and a bullet whizzed by his head. “Not this toime, ye red devil,” Denny defiantly shouted. A second bullet and he dropped off his horse. Quickly wheeling about, he dropped on his stomach, and taking a careful aim over his wounded right arm, he fired. The shot was apparently a true one and the Indian pitched off head first and lay still.

With an exultant shout Hogan jumped up and started for the line. Nothing could stop him now. Loss of blood and the intense cold had weakened him so that his legs were shaky, the earth seemed to be going around at a great rate, dark spots were dancing before his eyes; but with a superhuman effort he recovered himself and was soon at the line.

The wire was strung on light lances, and if

Denny were in full possession of his strength he could easily pull one down. He threw his weight against one with all of his remaining force—but to no avail. What was he to do? But sixteen feet intervened between him and that precious wire.

The faithful, tired horse, when Denny jumped off, had only run a little way and stopped, only too glad of the chance to rest. He was now standing near Hogan, as if intent on being of some further use to him. Suddenly Denny's anxious eyes lighted on the horsehair lariat attached to the saddle. Here was the means at hand. Quickly as he could he undid it, and with great difficulty tied one end to the pommel and the other to the lance. Then he gave the horse a sharp blow, and, *Crash!* down went the lance.

Making the connections to the pocket instrument as best he could with one cold hand, he placed the wire across a sharp rock and a few blows with the butt of his revolver soon cut it. The deed was done.

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Private Dunn, the operator at Fort Scott, opened up his office bright and early one cold morning and marveled to find the wire working clear to Kearney. After having a chat with the

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man at Kearney about the Indian trouble, he was sitting around like Mr. Micawber when he heard the sounder weakly calling "FS." Quickly adjusting down he answered and this is what he took.

"COMMANDING OFFICER,

"Fort Scott, Montana.

"29th Infantry surrounded by large body hostile Sioux just north of junction of the forks of the Red Bud. Colonel Clarke asks for immediate re-enforcements; ammunition almost gone; situation desperate. I left the command at three o'clock this morning.

"(Signed.) DENNIS HO—."

Then blank, the sounder was still and the line remained open. The sending had been weak and shaky, just as if the sender had been out all night, but there was no mistaking the purport of the message.

Dunn didn't wait to pick up his hat but fairly flew down the line to the commanding officer's quarters. The colonel was not up yet, but the sound of animated voices in the hallway caused him to appear at the head of the stairs in his dressing gown.

"What is it, Dunn," he asked.

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"A message from the 29th Infantry, sir, saying they are surrounded by the Sioux Indians and want help."

Colonel Foster read the message, and exclaimed,

"My God! Charlie Clarke stuck out there and wants help! Dunn, have the trumpeter sound 'Boots and Saddles.' Present my compliments to the adjutant and tell him I desire him to report to me at once. Kraus,"—this to his Dutch striker who was standing around in open-mouthed wonderment—"saddle my horse and get my field kit ready at once. Be quick about it."

A few men had seen Dunn's mad rush to the colonel's quarters and suspected that something was up, so they were not surprised a few minutes later to hear "Boots and Saddles" ring out on the clear morning air. The command had been in readiness for field service for some days, and but a few moments elapsed until six sturdy troops were standing in line on the snow-covered parade. A hurried inspection was made by the troop commanders and then Colonel Foster commanded "Fours right, trot, march," and away they went on their sixty-mile ride of rescue. A few halts were made during the day to tighten girths, and at six o'clock a short rest was made for coffee.

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The sound of the firing across the river shortly after Hogan left the 29th was plainly heard by his comrades and many a man was heard to exclaim, "It's all up with poor Denny." But the firing grew more distant and Colonel Clarke had hopes that Hogan had successfully eluded his pursuers and determined to hold on as best he could. He knew full well that the Indians would be extraordinarily careful and that it would be folly for him to attempt to get another courier through that night. That day was indeed a hard one; it was trying to the extreme. Tenaciously did those Indians watch their prey. Well did they know by the rising of the morrow's sun the ammunition of the soldiers would be exhausted and then would come their feast of murder and scalps; Little Big Horn would be repeated.

About two o'clock, Colonel Clarke, utterly regardless of personal danger, exposed himself for a moment and Chug! down he went, shot through the thigh by a Winchester bullet. Brave old chap, never for one minute did he give up, and after having his wound dressed as best it could be done, he insisted on remaining near the fighting line. Lieutenant Jarvis was shot through the arm, Captain Belknap of E Company was lying dead near

his company, and scores of other brave men had gone to their last reckoning. Hanigan, Hogan's bunkie, was badly wounded, and out of his head. Every once in a while he would mumble, "Never you mind, fellers, we will be all right yet, just stand 'em off a little while longer and Denny will be here with the 11th Cavalry. He said he'd do it and by God! he won't fail."

As the shades of the cold winter evening crept silently over the earth, the firing died away, and the command settled down to another night of the tensest anxiety and watching. Oh! why didn't those northern regiments come? Did Hogan succeed in his perilous mission? Depressed indeed were the spirits of the officers and men.

About nine o'clock Lieutenant Tracy, the adjutant, was sitting beside his chief, who was apparently asleep. Suddenly, Colonel Clarke sat up and grabbing Tracy by the arm said, "Hark! what's that noise I hear?"

"Nothing sir, nothing," replied Tracy; "lie down Colonel and try to rest, you need it sir"—and then aside—"poor old chap, his mind's wandering."

"No, no, Tracy. Listen man, don't you hear it? It sounds like the beat of many horses' hoofs,

re-enforcements are coming, thank God. Hogan got through."

Just then, Crash! Bang! and a clear voice rang out, "Right front into line, gallop, March! *Charge!*" and those sturdy chaps of the 11th Cavalry true to their regimental hatred for the Indians, charged down among the red men scattering them like so much chaff. Then to the northwards was heard another ringing cheer, and the two long-delayed regiments came down among the Indians like a thunderbolt of vengeance. Truly, "It never rains but it pours." The 29th, all that was left of it, was saved, and when Colonel Foster leaned over the prostrate form of his old friend and comrade, Colonel Clarke feebly asked, "Where is that brave little chap, Hogan?"

"Hogan? Who is Hogan?" asked Foster.

"Why, my God, man, Hogan was the man that got beyond the Indian lines to make the ride to inform you of our plight. Didn't you see him?"

"No, I didn't see him," and then Colonel Foster related how the information had reached him.

A rescuing party was started out and in the pale moonlight they came upon the body of poor Denny lying stark and stiff under the telegraph line, his left hand grasping the instrument and the

key open. A bullet hole in his head mutely told how he had met his death. Beside him lay the Indian, dead, one hand grasping Hogan's scalp lock, the other clasping a murderous-looking knife. Death had mercifully prevented the accomplishment of his hellish purpose.

Hogan's shot had mortally wounded the Indian in the left breast, but with all the vengeful nature of his race, he had crawled forward on his hands and knees, and while Hogan was intent on sending his precious message, he shot him through the head, but not until the warning had been given to Fort Scott. Denny's faithful horse was standing near, as if keeping watch over the inanimate form of his late friend.

They buried him where he lay, and a traveler passing over that trail, will observe a solitary grave. On the tombstone at the head is inscribed:

"DENNIS HOGAN,

"Private, Company B,

"29th U. S. Infantry.

"He died that others might live."

CHAPTER XXIII

THE COMMISSION WON—IN A GENERAL STRIKE

THE time spent as a soldier in the ranks passed by all too swiftly. The service was pleasant, the duty easy, and the regiment one of the best in the entire army. I don't know any two and a half years of my life that have been as happy and peaceful as those spent in the ranks of the American Army. When the proper time came my recommendations were all in good shape and I was duly ordered to appear before an august lot of officers and gentlemen at Fortress Monroe, Virginia, to determine my fitness to trot along behind a company, sign the sick-book, and witness an occasional issue of clothing. One warm June afternoon I bade good-bye to the men who had so long been my comrades, and journeyed to the eastwards. I was successful in the examinations, and on a Sunday morning early in August, myself, in company with twelve other young chaps, received the precious little parchment in which the President of

the United States sends greetings and proclaims to all the world:—

“That reposing especial confidence and trust in the valor, patriotism, and fidelity of one John Smith, I have made him a second lieutenant in the regular army. Look out for him because he hasn’t much sense but I have strong hopes as how he will learn after a while.”

The apprenticeship was finished and the chevrons gave way to the shoulder straps.

This time I thought surely I had heard the last of the telegraph, never again was I going to touch a key. I had been at my first station just about two months when one morning I appeared before the Signal Officer of the post and plaintively asked him to let me have a set of telegraph instruments. He did, and it wasn’t long before I had a ticker going in my quarters. There was no one to practice with me, so I just pounded away by myself for an hour or so each day, to keep my hand in. I have yet to see a man who has worked at the business for any length of time who could give it up entirely. It’s like the opium habit—powerful hard to break off. I have never since tried to lose sight of it.

In 189— one of those spasmodic upheavals known as a sympathetic strike spread over the

country like wild fire, and it wasn't long before the continuance of law and order was entirely out of the hands of the state authorities in about ten states, and once more the faithful little army was called out to put its strong hand on the throat of destruction and pillage. Troops were hurriedly despatched from all posts to the worst points and the inefficient state militia in several states relegated to its proper sphere—that of holding prize drills and barbecues.

Owing to the fact that the army cannot be used until a state executive acknowledges his inability to preserve law and order, and owing also to the fact that the executives in one or two of the states were pandering to the socialistic element, saying they could enforce the laws without the assistance of the army, this strike had spread until the entire country except the extreme east and southeast was in its strong grasp, and the work cut out for the army was doled out to it in great big chunks. Men seemed to lose all their senses and the emissaries of the union succeeded in getting many converts, each one of which paid the sum of one dollar to the so-called head of the union. Snap for the aforesaid "head," wasn't it? It was positively refreshing to the army at this time to have at its head a man who did not know what it was to pan-

der to the socialists, and one who would enforce his solemn oath, "To enforce the laws of the United States," at all hazards. United States mail trains were being interfered with; the Inter-State Commerce law was being violated with impunity, and various other acts of vandalism and pillage were being committed all over the land—and the municipal and state authorities "winked the other eye."

Way out in one of the far western posts was a certain Lieutenant Jack Brainerd, 31st U. S. Infantry, serving with his company. Jack was a big, whole-souled, impulsive chap, and before his entrance to the military academy, had been a pretty fair operator. In fact, being the son of a general superintendent of one of the big trunk lines, he was quite familiar with a railroad, and could do almost anything from driving a spike, or throwing a switch to running an engine. The first three years succeeding his graduation had been those of enervating peace; all of which palled on the soul of Lieutenant Jack to a large degree. The martial spirit beat high within his breast, and he wanted a scrap—he wanted one badly.

The preliminary mutterings of this great strike had been heard for days, but no one dreamed that anarchy was about to break loose with the strength

of all the fires of hell; and yet such was the case. On the evening of July 4th, a message came to the commanding officer at Fort Blank, to send his command of six companies of infantry to C— at once to assist in quelling the riots. The chance for a scrap so longed for by Lieutenant Brainerd was coming swift and sure. The next morning the command pulled out. The trip was uneventful during the day, but at night a warning was received by Major Sharp, the grizzled battalion commander, who had fought everything from manly, brave confederates to skulking Indians, to watch out for trouble as he approached the storm centre. There were rumors of dynamited bridges, broken rails, etc. The major didn't believe much in these yarns, but—"*Verbum Sap.*"—and the precautions were taken. The next morning at five the train pulled into Hartshorne, eleven miles out from C—. This was the beginning of the great railroad yards and evidences of the presence of the enemy were becoming very apparent. A large crowd had gathered to watch the bluecoats and it was plain to be seen that they were in full sympathy with the strikers. "Scab" and a few other choice epithets were hurled at the train crew, and when they were ready to pull out the train didn't go. The conductor went forward and

found that the engineer had refused to handle his engine because Hartshorne was his home and the crowd had threatened to kill him if he hauled that load of "slaves of Pullman" any further. When Major Sharp heard of it his little grey eyes snapped and he growled out:—

"Won't pull this train, eh! Well, damn him, we'll make him pull it. Here, Mr. Brainerd, you take some men and go forward and make that engineer take us through these yards. If he refuses you know what to do with him."

Do? Well, I reckon Jack knew what to do all right enough. He took Sergeant Fealy, a veteran, and three men and went forward. The engineer, a little snub-nosed Irishman, was at his post with his fireman, a good head of steam was on, but nary an inch did that train budge. A big crowd of men and women stood around jeering and laughing at the plight of the bluecoats. Pushing his way through the crowd, Jack climbed up into the cab closely followed by his little escort.

"Sergeant Fealy," he said in a voice loud enough to be heard a block, "get up on that tender, have your men load their rifles, and shoot the first d—d man that raises a hand or throws a missile. And you," this to the engineer, "shove that reverse lever over and pull out."

“But, my God, lieutenant,” expostulated the engineer, “this is my home and if I pull you fellers out of here they’ll kill me on sight—besides look at the track ahead. I’d run over and kill a lot of those people.”

“There’s no ‘buts’ about it. This train is going in or I’ll lose my commission in the army; besides if these people haven’t sense enough to get out of the way let ‘em die.”

Mr. Engineer started to expostulate farther but the ominous click of a .38 Colt’s was incentive enough to make him stop and then he shoved her over and gave her a little steam—just a coaxer.

“Here, you blasted chump, that won’t do,” and with that Brainerd reached over and yanked the throttle so that she bounded away like a hare; at the same time he gave her sand. It’s a great wonder every draw head in the train didn’t pull out, but fortunately they held on. The crowd on the track melted away like the mists before the summer’s sun, and beyond a few taunting jeers no overt act was committed. The engineer didn’t relish the idea of a soldier running his engine and became somewhat obstreperous. Brainerd grabbed him by the scruff of the neck and landed him all in a heap in the coal. Then he climbed up on the right-hand side of the cab and took charge of

things himself. There were myriads of tracks stretching out before him like the long arms of some giant octopus, but all traffic was suspended on account of the strike and the main line was clear. The train flew down the line like a scared rabbit and in thirty minutes reached the camp at Blake Park. I had arrived there that morning from the south for special service and when I saw Brainerd climb down off of that engine his face was smutty, but his eyes twinkled and he came towards me with a broad grin and said,

“Hello, Bates, where in thunder did you spring from?”

There wasn't much time for talking because the great city was groaning beneath the grasp of anarchy, and until that power was broken, there would be no rest for the weary.

The situation that existed at this time is too well known to require any explanation here. The state and city authorities were powerless; the militia inefficient and many a citizen bowed his head and thanked God on that warm July morning for the arrival of the regulars. Only twenty-one hundred of them all told, mind you, against so many thousands of the rioters, and yet, they were disciplined men and led by officers who simply enforced orders as they received them. No matter

where or what the sympathies of the men of a company might be, when the captain said "Fire," look out, because the bullets would generally fly breast high. The situation resembled the Paris Commune, and but for the timely arrival of the small body of bluecoats, another cow might have kicked over another lamp, and the frightful conflagration of 1871 have been more than duplicated. But the "cow" was slaughtered and the "lamp" extinguished.

The morning after Brainerd arrived he was detailed on special service and ordered to report to me, and together we worked until the trouble was over. Just what this service was need not be recorded, but one thing sure, railroads and the telegraph figured in it quite largely. In fact the general superintendent of the Western Union Telegraph Company placed the entire resources of the company at my disposal. A wire was run direct to Washington, lines run to all the camps, and Jack and I each carried a little pocket instrument on our person.

Although the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers did not go out in a body, there was quite a number of them who would not pull trains for fear of personal violence from the strikers. One old chap, Bob Redway, by name, had known Ma-

major McKenney of our battalion, in days gone by, when he was pulling a train on the N. P., and the major was stationed at Missoula. Bob wandered into camp one afternoon to see his old friend and just at that time a company was ordered to the southern part of the city to stop a crowd that was looting and burning P. H. Railway property. As usual the engineer backed out at the last moment. The major turned to Redway, and said, "See here, Bob, you're not in sympathy with these cutthroats, suppose you pull this train out."

"All right, major, I'll pull you through if the old girl will only hold up. She's a stranger to me, but I reckon she'll last."

Brainerd and I were to go along and do some special work around the stock-yards, and soon we were shooting down the track like a flyer. At 62nd street we passed a sullen looking crowd and when we reached 130th street, we were flagged by the operator in the tower, and informed that the mob in our rear was starting to block the track by overturning a standard sleeper. They were going to cut us off. We cut the engine loose, put fourteen men up on the tender, and Brainerd and I started back with them. The engine was going head on, having backed out from the city, and Bob let her put for all she was worth. Just at 62nd

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street there is a long sweeping curve and we were coming around it like a streak of blue lightning, when all at once we saw the crowd just in the act of pulling the sleeper over on our track. There was no time to lose and the command "Fire" was sharply given. "Bang," rang out the Springfields, one or two of the mob dropped to the ground, the rest let go of the ropes and ran like scared cats, and the car tottered back in its original place. Redway had shut off steam and was slowing down under ordinary air, when all at once there was a dull deafening roar, and then for me—oblivion. I was only stunned and when I regained consciousness looked around and saw the men slowly regaining their feet. Redway was not killed, but the shock and concussion of the detonation of the dynamite made him lose his speech and he was bleeding profusely at the nose and ears. The cowcatcher, headlight and forward trucks of the engine were blown to smithereens, but fortunately the boiler did not burst and there she stood like some powerful monster wounded to the death. The mob, imagining that their fiendish work had been complete, became emboldened and rapidly gathered around the little body of bluecoats. It began to look rocky, and Brainerd came limping over to me and said, "Bates, I'm pretty badly

bruised about the legs, and can't climb, but if you're able, for God's sake climb that telegraph pole and cut in and ask department headquarters to send us down some help. I'll form the men around the bottom of the pole and shoot the first damned man or woman that throws a missile. We're in a devilish bad box."

I took the little instrument, nippers and wire and up I went. There were side steps on the pole so the ascent was easy. What a scene below! Five or six thousand angry faces, besotted, coarse and ill-bred looking brutes, gazing up at me with the wrath of vengeance in their hearts; and held at bay by a band of fourteen battered and bruised bluecoats, a wounded engineer and fireman, commanded by an almost beardless boy. Well did that mob know that if those rifles ever spoke there would be a number of vacant chairs at the various family boards that night. The wire was soon cut, the main office gave me department headquarters and in thirty minutes' time that mob was scattering like so much chaff before the wind, and with a ringing cheer, two companies of the —th Infantry came down among them like a thunderbolt. We were saved and took Redway back to camp with us. That evening the major came over to see him. Poor chap! he couldn't speak but he mo-

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tioned for a pencil and paper and this is what he wrote:—

“Don’t worry, major, I’m all right. My speaking machine seems to have had a head end collision with a cyclone, but if you want me to pull any more trains out my right arm is still in pretty good shape.” Bob hung to us all through the trying weeks that followed and in the end some of us succeeded in getting him a good position in one of the departments in Washington.

Far up in the Northwest things were in a very bad shape. Everything was tied up tight; mail trains could not run because there were no men to run them; “Debsism” had a firm grasp; and even though many of the trainmen were willing to run, intimidation by the strikers caused them to go slow.

At one place, call it Bridgeton, there was an overland mail waiting to go out, but no engineer. Here’s where the versatility of the American soldier came in. Major Clarke of the —th Infantry, had four companies of his regiment guarding public property at Bridgeton and he sent word by his orderly that he wanted a locomotive engineer and a fireman. Quick as a flash he had six engineers and any number of men who could fire. He chose two good men and then detailed Captain Stilling’s

company to go along as an escort. Orders were procured at the telegraph office for the train to run to Pokeville, where further orders would be sent them. When the crowd of loiterers and strikers saw the preparations they jeered in derision. They had the engineer and fireman coralled, but their laugh turned to sorrow when they saw a strapping infantry sergeant climb into the cab and after placing his loaded rifle in front of him, he grasped the throttle and away they went—much to the disgust of Mr. Rioter. They didn't like it worth a cent, but as one striker put it, "What's the use of monkeyin' with them reg'lars? When they gets an order to shoot, they're just damned fools enough to shoot right into the crowd. Milish' fire in the air, because as a rule they have friends in the crowd and don't care to hurt 'em."

Pokeville was one hundred and two miles from Bridgeton and the run was carefully made and without incident. When the volunteer engineer and Captain Stillings, who was playing conductor, went to the office for orders, they found the place deserted. A sullen-looking crowd was looking on and appeared to enjoy the discomfiture of the soldiers. They had put the operator *away* for a while. Pressing up near the sides of the train they became somewhat ugly and Captain Stillings

brought out his company, and lining them up alongside of the track he turned to his 1st lieutenant and said:

“Mr. Mitchell, I’m going into this telegraph office. If this crowd gets ugly I want you to shoot the first damned man that moves a finger to harm anybody.”

But without an operator orders could not be procured, and without orders the train could not go. Captain Stillings was in a quandary, but all at once he stepped out in front of his company and said in a loud tone, “I want an operator.”

“I’m one, sir,” said Private O’Brien, quickly stepping forward and saluting.

“Go in that office and get orders for this train.”

“Yes, sir,” replied O’Brien, and in a minute another bluecoat was helping the train on its way. If Captain Stillings had wanted a Chinese interpreter he could have gotten one—any old thing. The train had no further mishaps, because everything necessary to run a railroad was right here in one company of sixty-two men belonging to the regular army.

July slipped away and it was well into August before we returned to our posts and the old grind of “Fours right,” and “Fours left.”

CHAPTER XXIV

EXPERIENCES AS A GOVERNMENT CENSOR OF TELEGRAPH

THE few years succeeding the great strike were ones of calm, peaceful tranquility. Each recurring November 1st, brought the initiation of Post Lyceums at all garrisons, in which the officers were gathered together twice a week, and war in all its phases was studied. We didn't exactly know where the war was coming from, but, still we boned it out. Old campaigns were fought over; the mistakes made by the world's greatest commanders, from Alexander the Great to Grant and Lee were pointed out; Kriegspiel was played; essays written and discussed, recommendations made as to ammunition and food supply; use of artillery in attack and defense; the proper method of employing the telegraph in the war; and a thousand and one things relative to the machine militaire were gone over. All this time we were slumbering over a smoldering volcano, and on February 16, 1898, the eruption broke loose; the

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good ship *Maine* was destroyed in Havana harbor, and the feelings of the people, already drawn to the breaking point by the inhuman cruelties of Spain towards her colonies near our own shores, burst with a vehemence that portended, in unmistakable language, the rending asunder of the once proud kingdom of Spain. The army wanted a war; the navy wanted it, the whole population wanted it and here it was within our grasp. It was the dawning of a new day for the United States; a new empire was being born in the Western hemisphere. The feverish preparations attendant upon the new conditions are of too recent date to need any sketching here.

When it was finally determined that the time had arrived for the assembling of the small but efficient regular army, I was stationed with my regiment at Fort Wayne, Michigan. Like all other troops, we were at the post ready for the start. The pistol cracked on the 15th of April, and on the 19th we started. Mobile, Alabama, was our objective where we arrived on the 22nd of the month. Here began the ceaseless preparation for the part the regiment was to play in the grand drama of war that was to follow, all this camp life and concentration being but the prologue.

The camp was a most beautiful one, the weather pleasant, and it was indeed a most inspiring sight to see the long unbroken lines of blue go swinging by, keeping absolute time and perfect alignment to the inspiring strains of some air like "Hot time in the old town to-night," or "The stars and stripes forever."

I had started in with my regiment and expected to remain on duty with it until the end of the war, sharing all its perils and hardships, doing my part in the fighting, and partaking of any of the renown it might achieve should the Dons ever be met. But "Man proposes and God disposes," and on the afternoon of May 21st, I was sitting in my tent correcting some manuscript when a very bright-eyed colored newsboy came along and said:

"Buy a paper, cap'n."

That was the day that a wild rumor had been in circulation that Sampson had met Cervera in the Bahama Channel and completely smashed him, so I laid down my manuscript and said:

"Anything in there about Sampson licking Cervera?"

"Naw, sir, dat were a fake, cap'n, but dere is lots of oder news fur you."

"No, kid, I don't want a paper to-night, and besides I'm not a captain, I'm only a lieutenant."

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“But yer may be one some day. Please buy one cap’n,” and with this he laid a paper down on my table (a cracker box). I was about to shove it aside and sharply tell him to skip out when my eye fell upon :

“Nominations by the President.”

“To be captains in the Signal Corps,” then followed my name. I bought a paper, yes, all he had.

On May 27th, I was ordered to proceed at once to Tampa, Florida, reporting upon arrival by telegraph to the chief signal officer of the army for instructions. Tuesday morning, the 29th of May, I reported my arrival and spent the rest of the morning in looking around the camps, renewing old acquaintances. I supposed of course that I was to be assigned to the command of one of the new signal companies then forming to take part in the Santiago campaign and was filled with delight at the prospect, but about eleven o’clock I received an order from General Greely directing me to assume charge of the telegraphic censorship at Tampa. Three civilians, Heston at Jacksonville, Munn at Miami, and Fellers at Tampa, were sworn in as civilian assistants and directed to report to me, thereafter acting wholly under my orders. Mr. B. F. Dillon, superintendent of the

Western Union Telegraph Company, was in Tampa, and I had a long conference with him. He assured me of his confidence and cordial support, and placed the entire resources of his company at my disposal. Operators all over the state were instructed that anything I ordered was to be obeyed and then the work began.

The idea of a telegraphic censorship was a new and irksome one to the great American people and just what it meant was hard to determine. Much has been written about "Press Censorship." That term was a misnomer. There never *was* an attempt to *censor the great American press*. The newspapers were just as free to print as they were before the war started. *All the censorship that existed was over the telegraph lines militarily occupied*. A government officer was placed in charge and his word was absolute; he could only be overruled by General Greely, the Secretary of War or the President. It was his duty to watch telegrams, regulate the kind that were allowed to pass, and to see that no news was sent whereby the interests of the government or the safety of the army might suffer.

The instructions I received were general in their nature and in all specific cases arising, my judgment was to determine, and I want to remark

right here, the rapidity with which those specific cases would arise was enough to make a man faint. The first rule made was that cipher messages or those written in a foreign tongue were prohibited unless sent by a government official on public business. There were a few exceptions to this rule. For instance; many large business houses have telegraphic cipher codes for the transaction of business, and it was not the policy of the government to interfere in any manner with the commercial affairs of the country, so these messages were allowed to pass when the code book was presented to the censor and a sworn translation made in his presence. Spanish messages were transmitted only after being most carefully scanned and upon proof of the loyalty of the sender or receiver and a sworn translation. Not a single private message could be sent by any one, that in any way hinted at the time of the departure or destination of any ship or body of troops. Even officers about to sail away were not allowed to telegraph their wives and families. If they had a pre-arranged code, whereby a message could be written in plain English, there was no way to stop their transmission. Foreign messages were watched with eagle eyes and many and many a one was gently con-

signed to the pigeon hole, when the contents and meaning were not plain.

From Key West (which was shortly afterwards placed in my charge) there ran the cable to Havana, and this line was the subject of an extraordinarily strict espionage; not a message being allowed to pass over it that was not perfectly plain in its meaning. Mr. J. W. Atkins was sworn in as my assistant at Key West, and thus I had the whole state of Florida under my control. All the lines from the southern part of the state converge to Jacksonville, and not a message could go from a point within the state to one out of it without first passing under the scrutiny of either myself or one of my sworn assistants.

My office was in H. B. Plant's Tampa Bay hotel, and there, every day, from seven A. M. until twelve midnight, and sometimes one and two in the morning, I did my work. My own long experience as a practical telegrapher stood me in good stead and when any direct work was to be done with the White House in Washington, or any especially important messages were to be sent, I personally did the telegraphing. At the Executive Mansion was Colonel B. F. Montgomery, signal corps, in charge of the telegraph office, so

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when anything special passed, no one knew it but the colonel and myself.

The Tampa Bay hotel was at this time the scene of the most dazzling and brilliant gaiety. Shafter's 5th Corps was preparing for its Santiago campaign and each night many officers and their wives would meet in the hotel and pass the time away listening to the music of some regimental band or in pleasant conversation. Men who had not seen each other since the close of the great civil war renewed old acquaintances and spun reminiscences by the yard. Military attaches from all the countries of the world were daily arriving, and their gaudy uniforms added a dash of color to the already brilliant panorama. The bright gold of Captain Paget, the English naval attache, the deep blue of Colonel Yermeloff, who represented Russia, contrasted vividly with the blue and yellow of Japanese Major Shiska, and the scarlet and black of Count Goetzen of Germany. But prominent among all this moving panorama of color was the plain blue of the volunteer, and the brown khaki of the regular. My view of the scene was limited to fleeting glimpses from my office where I was nightly scanning messages, doing telegraphing or overlooking 30,000 or 40,000 words of correspondents' copy. Preparations for

the embarkation were going on with feverish haste, and orders were daily expected for the army to move.

There were at this time nearly two hundred newspaper correspondents scattered around through the hotel and in the various camps. They represented papers from all over the world, and were typical representatives of the brain and sinew of the newspaper profession, and were there to accompany the army when it moved. Such men as Richard Harding Davis, Stephen Bonsal, Frederick Remington, Caspar Whitney, Grover Flint, Edward Marshall, Maurice Low, John Taylor, John Klein, Louis Seibold, George Farman and Mr. Akers of the London papers, and scores of others. They were quick and active, intensely patriotic, alert for all the news, a "scoop" for them was the blood of life, and the censorship came like a wet blanket. In a small way I had been corresponding for a paper since the beginning of the war, but when the detail as censor came I gave it up as the two were incompatible.

CHAPTER XXV

MORE CENSORSHIP

I **MUST** confess that I stood in awe of these newspaper chaps, because I knew my orders would incense them and if they took it into their heads to roast me my life would be made miserable for a good many days to come. But then in the army orders are made to be obeyed and I determined not to show partiality to any of them. It was to be "a fair field and no favor," so I sent word and asked them to meet me in the reading-room of the hotel at two o'clock that afternoon. They came garbed in all sorts of field uniform and I made a little speech telling what they might send and what was interdicted; I remarked that the work was as irksome to me as it was to them, but orders were orders and if they would live up to the few *simple* rules they would make my task much easier and save themselves lots of trouble. Nothing absolutely was to be sent, that would convey in any way an idea of the number of troops in Tampa, the time of arrival or departure of any number of

troops or ships, and above all, not a word was to be sent out as to when the 5th Army Corps was to sail. When I had finished one of the correspondents shook his head in a deprecatory way and said:

“Well, captain, we thought Lieutenant Miley (my predecessor) was bad enough but you can give him cards and spades and beat him out. You’re certainly a hummer from the word go, and I reckon we’d better go home.”

He had my sympathy but that was all. Every correspondent had a war department pass; these I examined and registered each man.

That night my fun commenced. At six P. M. they began to file stuff, and armed with a big blue pencil I started to slash and when I finished, some of their sheets looked like a miniature football field, while their faces betokened blank amazement and intense disgust. Boiled down, the first night’s batch of copy consisted of a glowing description of the new censor; this fiend whose weapon was a blue pencil—his glowing red whiskers—his goggle eyes, and his Titian-colored hair. One of them said:

“This afternoon the new censor stuck his head out of the window and the glow was so great from his red whiskers and auburn locks that the fire

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department was turned out. The latest report is that the censor was unquenched," and so on. They couldn't send any news so they sent me. Most of them were space writers and everything went. In many ways they tried to evade the rules; by insinuations, hints upon which a bright telegraph editor could raise an edifice with a semblance of truth, but the blue pencil generally got in its work before the dispatch reached the operator. I had two stamps made; one "O. K. for transmission," and the other, "REJECTED, file, do not return." Number one went on all messages for transmission and number two on all others. As I gaze at these relics now I see that number two has been used much more than its companion.

I had made it a rule that each paper maintaining a correspondent in Tampa was to furnish me with a copy of every edition of the paper. As a result, in a few days I had a mail that was stupendous. A clerk was on hand who read these papers, marking all things bearing a Tampa date line. Then I would read them and woe betide the correspondent whose paper contained contraband news from Tampa. Off went his head and his permit was recalled for a certain time as a punishment.

There never has been a line of sentinels so

strong but that some one could break through, and there was undoubtedly some leakage from Tampa, but to see news of actual importance from there was like hunting for a needle in a haystack. The mails carried out some, but even then the correspondents suffered. Two incidents may not be amiss.

One young chap whose keenness ran away with his judgment, brought me a stack of copy one night, almost every word of which was contraband. The blue pencil got in its work in great shape and then the "rejected" stamp put its seal of disapproval on the message and it was filed away with many others, that "were not dead, but sleeping." Mr. Correspondent muttered something about "a cussed red-headed censor who wasn't the pope and could be beaten" and walked away. I thought no more of the matter until about seven days thereafter when my clerk gave me a marked copy of the correspondent's paper, and there, big as life, under a Tampa date line was the rejected dispatch. He had left my office and mailed his story to a friend living up in Georgia, and it was telegraphed by him from there. You see, Georgia was beyond my jurisdiction. He had surely made a "scoop;" he had sown the wind and that night he reaped the whirlwind, because I

promptly suspended him from correspondents' privileges, and forbade him the use of the wires. General Greely upheld me in this as in all other cases and for ten days I allowed him to ruminate over his offence, while his paper was cussing him out for failing to send in stuff. Then I restored him to his former status, first making him sign a pledge on honor that he would abide forever thereafter by the censorship rules.

Another young man who represented a Cincinnati daily, walked into the express office in Tampa one evening and gave the agent a package saying:

"Say, old chap, have your messenger running north to-night give this to the first operator after crossing the Georgia line and tell him to send it to my paper. It's a big scoop and I want to get it through."

Of course, the "old chap" was built just that way. He took the message and in five minutes it was reposing gently in my desk. I then quickly sent out a telegram to all my censors taking away the correspondent's privileges until further orders.

That night full of innocence—and beer—he walked into the Tampa city office and handed Censor Fellers a message for his paper, just as a sort

of a bluff. Fellers grinned at him quietly and said:

"Sorry, Mr. J—, but Captain B—has just suspended you from use of the telegraph until further orders."

In a very few minutes Mr. J— appeared at my office, blustering like a Kansas cyclone, and demanded to know why I had dared to treat him thus? I simply picked up his copy and showed it to him, saying:

"This is your handwriting, I believe, Mr. J—."

The props dropped out from under him and he said:

"Well, by thunder, you censor mail, telegraph and express; I reckon if I attempted to send anything by carrier pigeon you'd catch it and put that d—d old 'rejected' stamp on it."

"No," I replied, "but I might possibly use it on a mule."

In spite of his pleadings and promises he was hung up for ten days.

It must be said, however, that such men as these were rarities: most of the men, especially those representing the great dailies, were only too willing to abide by orders. They kicked hard—naturally and rightfully—because news that they were forbidden to send from Tampa was sent broad-

cast from Washington as coming from the war department. Oh! yes they kicked so much that it seemed as if my auburn locks would turn gray, but the protest was against the censorship in general and not against me. I was enough of a newspaper man to fully appreciate their position, and more than one message went from me to General Greely asking if Washington could not be censored as well as Tampa. No! Army officers had no power to stop the mouths of the high civil officials of the government, and so the dance went on.

And the managing editors would flood their correspondents with telegrams of inquiry as to why they did not send the news that daily came from Washington as having originated in Tampa; and the correspondents would come to me and I would endeavor to calm them down as best I could. Then, incidentally, the managing editors would take a fling at me personally, and I would receive a polite telegram of protest but to no avail.

Finally, one night the trouble culminated, and conjointly the correspondents sent a long telegram to General Greely asking if he could not right the seeming injustice. They did not mind being beaten in a fair field, but they did hate to be "scooped" by Washington correspondents who

were having an easy time. Almost every man signed the protest and then it was brought to me, and I quickly O. K'd. it. Shortly afterwards a number of them came to my office and assured me that it was not against me personally they were kicking, and Louis Seibold, of the New York World, sent General Greely a message saying :

“I don't like your blooming censor business one bit, but if you have to have it, you've got the best man for it in the army right here in Tampa,” or words to that effect. Many others sent similar messages but not quite so outspoken. General Greely appreciated their position and said so, but was unable to change the condition of affairs and so matters continued.

All this time feverish preparations were being made to rush off Shafter's expedition. June 7th was a very hard and trying day, and at six o'clock in the evening I had just seated myself for a hasty bite of dinner when a messenger came to me from the telegraph office saying that the White House wanted me at once. I went to the key and was informed that the President wanted to talk to Generals Miles and Shafter and that the greatest secrecy must be maintained. After sending word to the generals, I sent all the operators out of the office, closed the windows and turned down the

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sounder so that it could not be heard *three feet away*. When General Shafter came in he had an officer stationed in the hall so that no one could approach in that direction. General Miles came in shortly afterwards and the door was closed. We all sat in front of the table, General Miles on my right, and General Shafter on the left. Lieutenant Miley of General Shafter's staff stood behind his chief. It was a scene long to be remembered. General Shafter was dressed in the plain blue army fatigue uniform, its strict sombreness being relieved only by the two gleaming silver stars on his shoulder straps. General Miles, the commanding general, was in conventional tuxedo dress, and looked every inch the gallant soldier and gentleman that he is. From the little telegraph instrument on the table ran a single strand of copper wire, out in the dark night, over the pine tops of Florida and Georgia, over the mountains of the Carolinas, and hills and vales of Virginia, into the Executive Mansion at Washington. In the office of the White House were the President, the Secretary of War, and Adjutant-General Corbin. The key there was worked by Colonel Montgomery, so if there ever was an official wire this was one.

When all was ready I told the White House to "go ahead."

The first message was from the Secretary of War to General Shafter directing him to sail at once, as he was needed at the destination which was known at this time only to about five officers in Tampa. General Shafter replied that he would be ready to sail the next morning at daylight. Then, by the President's direction, a message was repeated that had been received from Admiral Sampson, saying he had that day bombarded the outer defenses of Santiago, and if ten thousand men were there the city and fleet would fall within forty-eight hours. The President further directed that General Shafter should sail as indicated by him with not less than ten thousand men. Then followed an interchange of messages, more or less personal in their nature, between the generals and the Washington contingent. Finally all was over and the line was cut off. The whole conversation lasted about fifty minutes, but the beginning of new history was started in that time and the curtain was going up on the grand drama of war. All the time this was going on I could hear faintly the strains of '*Auf Wiedersehen*,' together with the merry jest of the officers and the light laughter of the women. Brave men, braver women—soon

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their laughter was turned to tears and many of the officers who went out of the Tampa Bay hotel on that warm June night are now sleeping their last sleep, having given up their lives that their country's honor might live. The train carrying the headquarters to Port Tampa left at five o'clock in the morning. There was very little sleep that night and the next morning the big hotel was well nigh deserted. And all this time the destination of the fleet was unknown to all but those high in rank and myself.

CHAPTER XXVI

CENSORSHIP CONCLUDED

MY OWN sleep on that night was limited to about two hours snatched between work, and the following morning was a very busy one. About once every hour I would report to the White House how things were progressing at the port. As the big transports received their load of living freight, one by one they would pull out in the stream and anchor, waiting until the time should come when all would be ready, and then like a big swarm they would pull out together. They did not sail at daylight; unexpected delays occurred, and eight, nine, ten, eleven and twelve o'clock passed and still they had not sailed, although the twelve o'clock report said they would be gone by twelve-thirty.

At one o'clock a messenger came hurriedly to me and said the White House wanted me at the key at once. When I answered, Colonel Montgomery said, "*The President wants to know if you can stop that fleet?*" Now the wire to Port Tampa

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was on a table right back of me and calling him with my left hand I said :

“Can you get General Miles or General Shafter?” and with my right hand I said to the President, “I’ll try, wait a minute.”

Then said the White House, “*It is imperative that the fleet be stopped at once.*”

From Port Tampa, “No sir, I can’t find General Miles or General Shafter.”

I replied, “Have all the transports pulled out of the slip?”

“Yes sir, so far as I can see they are all gone.”

From Washington, “Have you stopped the fleet?”

“Wait a minute—will let you know later, am trying now.”

To Port Tampa, “Go out and find a tug and get this message to either General Miles or General Shafter, ‘The President directs that you stop the sailing of Shafter’s army until further orders.’ Now fly.”

Just then Port Tampa said, “Here comes General Miles now,” and in a minute more the message was delivered and the fleet stopped. I then reported to the President :

“I have delivered your message to General

Miles and the fleet will not sail until further orders.”

They came back wondering what had stopped them and that evening we learned of the appearance of the “Phantom” Spanish fleet in the Nicholas Channel *heading westward*. “Cervera wasn’t bottled up in Santiago,” said some, “and before morning he will be here and blow us out of the water.” Great was the consternation and as a precaution all the ships were ordered back into the slip. It must be said, however, that General Miles *never had any idea that the Spanish fleet was approaching our shores*.

The transport fleet was tied up and then followed six days of weary waiting, and the duties of the censor became more arduous than ever, and the utmost vigilance was exercised. Private messages were almost all hung up, in fact, very little else than government business was allowed to pass over the wires. And yet, every day for a week, copies of the daily papers that reached me had, under flaming headlines, the startling news that Shafter’s fleet had sailed—destination—Havana, San Juan, Matanzas,—yes—even the Spanish coast. All this was announced from Washington, and made the correspondents snort; they made every excuse to let their papers know they were

still there. They wanted money, they wanted to send messages to their families, in fact, they wanted everything under the sun, but to no avail. Finally, on the 14th of June the army sailed away, filled with hope and courage, on their mission that resulted in victory for the American arms; but that was a foregone conclusion, while we less fortunate ones were left behind to pray for the success that we knew would be theirs.

The correspondents were all on the transport "Olivette," and just before they pulled out I sent them a message saying I would release the news that night about the *sailing of the fleet only*, and they might file their messages. They did in large numbers and here is where the joke came in. When the messages reached the papers they thought it was all a bluff to mislead the public, and many of them refused to publish the news, but the fleet had gone this time for certain. As late as two days afterwards I received messages from the managing editors of two of the greatest papers in the country, asking me if the fleet had really sailed. I assured them it had. One thing is certain, the destination of that fleet was a well-kept secret. Mr. Richard Harding Davis in his admirable book on the Cuban and Porto Rican Campaigns, says that credit is due the censor be-

cause it was so well kept. I am afraid that this is about the only good word the censor ever received from the said Mr. Davis.

The "Olivette," on which the correspondents sailed, was the last boat to leave Port Tampa. She left about six-thirty P. M. in the glory of the setting sun of a tropical evening. About five-thirty P. M. Mr. Edward Marshall, that prince of good fellows, who represented the New York Journal, came into my office to write a message for his paper, to be left with me and sent when the story was released. Marshall was a typical newspaper man and a thorough American, and had just returned from New York where he had been in attendance upon the sick-bed of his wife. He was very anxious to get his story written before he sailed. I knew the "Olivette" was about to pull out, and if he expected to go on her it was high time he was moving. As Port Tampa was nine miles away, I told him to fly and cut his story short or send it from Port Tampa. He thanked me and reached Port Tampa just in time to save being left. It was this same Edward Marshall who so daringly pushed to the front during the Guasimas fight of the Rough Riders, and was seriously wounded by a Mauser bullet near his spine. He was supposed to be dying, but true to his

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newspaper training and full of loyalty to his paper, he dictated a message to his journal between the puffs of a cigarette, when it was supposed each breath would be his last. But thank God he did not die, and now gives promise of many years of useful life. I have often thought if I had not warned him in time to go he would not have been shot; but then all war is uncertain, and in warning him I was only, "Doing unto others as I would be done by."

During all these stirring times just described there were two women correspondents, poor souls, who were indeed sad and lonely. They were very ambitious and wanted to go to Cuba with the army, but the War Department wisely forbade any such a move and then my trouble began. At all hours of the day or night I was pestered by these same women. One of them represented a Canadian paper and was most anxious to go. She tried every expedient and tackled every man or woman of influence that came along. Even dear old Clara Barton did not escape her importunities. She wanted to go as a Red Cross nurse, but didn't know anything about nursing. However, I reckon she was as good as some of the women who did go. She was an Irish girl with rich red hair, and as mine was of an auburn tinge we didn't get

along worth a cent. She didn't do much telegraphing but sent all of her stuff by mail. However, it was her intention to send *one telegram* to her paper and "scoop" all the other chaps in so doing. She wrote a letter to her managing editor in Toronto and told him there was a censor down there who thought he could bottle up Florida as regards news, but she intended to outwit him. Particular attention was being paid so as to preserve the secrecy of the sailing day of Shafter's army. Cipher and code messages bearing on this occurrence were to be strictly interdicted. But that didn't make any difference to her; she could beat that game. So on the day the fleet actually sailed she would send a message to her paper saying, "*Send me six more jubilee books.*" This would indicate that the fleet had really gone. Brilliant scheme from the brain of a very bright woman, but she lost sight of the fact that Messrs. Carranza and Polo y Bernabe were at that time in Canada spying on the United States, and that all the Canadian mail was most carefully watched. Such, however, was the case, and in a short time the contents of her letter were known to General Greely, and by him communicated to me. One evening Miss Correspondent was standing in the

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lobby of the Tampa Bay hotel surrounded by a group of her friends, when I approached and said:

“Excuse me, Miss J—, but I should like to speak to you for a moment.”

“Well, what is it, pray? Surely you haven’t anything to say but what my friends can hear, have you?” Sassy, wasn’t she?

“Oh! well if that is the case?” I replied, “I am sorry to inform you that you are suspended from correspondent’s privileges and from the use of the telegraph until further orders.”

“And what for pray?”

“I don’t just exactly know,” I answered, “but I think it has something to do with sending you ‘six more jubilee books’ from Canada.”

Well! she turned all the colors of the rainbow, and snapped out, “Goodness gracious! how did you—where did you hear that?”

I smiled politely and walked away. The next morning, shortly after I reached my office, a timid knock was heard at the door.

“Come in,” I yelled, thinking it was a messenger boy. In walked Miss J—, woebegone, crest-fallen and disheartened, with a letter of apology and explanation. I forwarded this to General Greely and kept her suspended for seven days.

She never offended again, and the last I heard of her she was in Key West gazing with longing eyes towards the Pearl of the Antilles. She never reached there.

The other woman correspondent was different. She was an American widow, bright, dashing and vivacious. She had heard of the ogre of a censor; she would conquer him through his susceptibility. I'll admit that the censor in question was susceptible of some things—but not in business matters. One day she filed an innocent little telegram to her paper, saying, "For ice cream read typhoid." The operator glanced at it and said, "You'll have to get Captain B—'s O. K. on that message before I can send it."

She talked sweetly to him, but that didn't happen to be one of his "susceptible" days. Then she came to me, and as my "susceptibility" had run to a pretty low ebb I refused to permit the message to go on, on account of its hidden meaning.

"Oh, pshaw! Captain, I wrote a story for my paper and in it described the death of a man from the effects of eating too much ice cream, and now I learn that he died of typhoid fever."

I was pretty hard-headed that morning and couldn't assist the lady and she left the office vow-

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ing vengeance. The next edition of her paper contained the most charmingly sarcastic article about the red-headed, white-shoed censor I have ever seen, but I had become case-hardened by this time and did not mind it in the least.

It might be supposed that as soon as the army had sailed and the correspondents had gone, that the censorship duties would be lighter. They were, officially, but otherwise they became harder than ever. The army had gone, but the women had been left behind. The husbands were away—fighting—dying—while the wives were waiting with dry eyes and aching hearts for the news that would mean life or death to them. There were some forty wives, daughters, and sweethearts remaining in the Tampa Bay hotel, and to them the censor became a most interesting party. They knew that any news that came to Tampa would come through him, and they wanted it whether his orders would allow him to divulge it or not. Before, I had to contend with the importunities of zealous correspondents, now it was the longing eyes of sweet women whose hearts were breaking with suspense, whose lives had stood still since the 14th day of June when the fleet sailed away. Of the two, I would rather contend with the former,

The long and trying days dragged slowly by and still no news. Finally, on the 22nd of June, it was known that the army was landing; June 24th, the Guasimas fight of the cavalry division took place, and from that time on life was made miserable for me by importunate women. Many telegrams—yes, hundreds of them—came to me every day, and each time one of those cursed little yellow envelopes was put in my hands, if I happened to be in the lobby of the hotel, I could feel forty or fifty pairs of anxious eyes concentrated on me, as if to read from the expression of my face whether the news was good or bad. Colonel Michler of General Miles's staff was there, and if we should happen to be together talking, the women would surmise that the news was bad; and many times their surmises were just about right. One sweet little black-eyed woman always said she could tell from my face whether I was bluffing or not. July 1st, 2nd, and 3rd, were very gloomy days for we poor chaps who had been left behind—and for the women. We—they—knew the fight was on, that men were heroically dying, and *we* also knew that the army was in a hard way. Strive as we might, no gleam of hope could be culled from the news of those three days. Cervera's fleet was still in the harbor of Santiago, and

the army not only had the Spanish troops to fight but the navy as well. Flesh and blood might stand the rain of Mauser bullets, but they could not stand rapid-fire guns and eight-inch shells. The third of July dragged by, and at eleven o'clock Colonel Michler retired for the night not feeling in a very pleasant frame of mind. The lobby was well nigh deserted, but Colonels Smith and Powell and a few more officers sat by one of the big open doors having a farewell smoke and chat before going to bed. At eleven-thirty I was standing by the desk talking to the clerk, when the night operator came charging out of the office and gave me a little piece of yellow paper. I quickly opened it and read, "Sampson entirely destroyed Cervera's fleet this morning." News like that, if true, was too good to keep, so I went into the telegraph office and had a wire cut through to the New York office and asked for a confirmation or denial of the report. They confirmed it and gave me the text of the official report. I bounded out in the hall and shouted out the glorious news at the top of my voice. Gloom was dispelled instanter, and joy reigned supreme. At just twelve o'clock midnight, we drank a toast to the army and navy, and to our country.

Santiago surrendered and the army went to

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Porto Rico only to be stopped in the midst of a most brilliant campaign by the signing of the protocol. The censorship was ended and willingly did I lay down the blue pencil and take up my sword.

CHAPTER XXVII

CONCLUSION

I CANNOT refrain from concluding this little volume by a tribute to the telegraphers of the country.

It is but fifty-five years since Professor S. F. B. Morse electrified the civilized world by the completion of his electro-magnetic telegraph. Since that time great improvements have been made until now it is difficult to recognize in the delicate mechanisms of the relay, key, sounder, duplex, quad, and multiplex, the principle first promulgated in the old Morse register. Its influence was at once felt in all walks of life; it was an art to be an expert telegrapher. Keeping pace with the strides of advancing civilization, the telegraph has spread its slender wires, until now almost the entire world is connected by its magnetism. Away back in the early fifties when railroads and comforts were few, while danger and trials were plenty, these faithful knights of the key carried on their work under the most adverse circumstances. Since its first appearance it has manifestly been the possessor of millions of secrets,

public and private. In times of joy you flash your congratulations to distant relatives or friends; in minutes of sorrow and tribulation, your message of sympathy is quickly carried as a balm to aching hearts; in the worries of business its use is of the most vital importance; and while you are peacefully slumbering on some swiftly moving railroad train the telegraph is one of the principal means of insuring a safe and speedy trip. Pick up your favorite daily paper—the one that is always reliable—read the market or press reports accurately printed, and then think that the telegraph does it all. Read news from foreign countries—from out-of-the-way places—and think of the miles of mountains, deserts, plains and valleys passed over; think of the slender cable down deep in the throbbing bosom of the ocean and of the little spark that brings the news to your door; and then reflect on the men whose abilities accomplish these results. Think of his work in the countries where it is so hot that it seems as if the land beyond the River Styx is at his elbow; in lands where it is always cold and the days and nights are long. In season and out; in times of death, pestilence and famine, with never a murmur, these sturdy, loyal men, and true-hearted women do their work. All these are incidents of

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peace. Now think, when war, grim-visaged and terrible, spreads its mighty power over the earth. What is responsible for the news of victory? What brings you the list you so anxiously scan of the dead and wounded? What means are employed by the subdivisions of the army in the field to keep in constant communication, so that they may act as the integral parts of an harmonious whole? In the late Spanish-American war what first brought news, authentic in character, to the Navy Department that Cervera with his doomed fleet was in Santiago harbor? And during the dark and trying days from June 22nd until July 14th, the telegraphers of the army—the signal corps men—were ceaseless and tireless in their efforts, and as a result within five minutes of its being sent, a message would be in Washington. While the army slept they worked, without any regard to self or comfort. And to-day in the far-off Philippine islands they are still striving with the best results. The telegraphers are honest, loyal, patriotic men—a little Bohemian, perhaps, in their tastes—and deserve a better recognition for the good work they do.

“30”

“Filed, 2:35 A. M.”

“Received, 2:43 A. M.”

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