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CHAPTER ONE

Treats of the Engine-driver's House and Household

Talk of earthquakes! not all the earthquakes that have rumbled in Ecuador or toppled over the spires and dwellings of Peru could compare, in the matter of dogged pertinacity, with that earthquake which diurnally and hourly shocked little Gertie's dwelling, quivered the white dimity curtains of little Gertie's bed and shook little Gertie's frame. A graceful, rounded little frame it was; yet strong, and firmly knit—perhaps in consequence of its having been from infancy so constantly and so well shaken together.

Her neat little body was surmounted by a head which no sculptor in search of an antique model would have chosen. Gertie's profile was not Grecian; her features were not classic—but they were comely, and rosy, and so sweet that most people wanted to kiss them, and many people did. Gertie did not object. Probably, being only six, she imagined that this was the ordinary and natural method of salutation. Yet it was observable that the child did not reciprocate kisses except in one or two special cases. She had evidently a mind of her own, a fact which was displayed most strikingly, in the passionate manner in which she reciprocated the embraces of John Marrot, her father, when that large hairy individual came in of an evening, and, catching her in his long arms, pressed her little body to his damp pilot-cloth-coated breast and her chubby face to his oily, smoke-and-soot begrimed countenance, forgetful for the moment of the remonstrance from his wife that was sure to follow:—

“Now then, John, there you go again. You ain't got no more power of subjewin' your feelings than one of your own engines, w'ich is the schreechin'ist, fizzin'ist, crashin'ist, bustin' things I ever 'ad the misfortune to 'ave to do with. There's a clean frock just put on this mornin' only fit for the wash-tub now?”

But John was an easy-going man. He was mild, kind, sedate, undemonstrative by nature, and looked upon slight matrimonial breezes as being good for the health. It was only Gertie who could draw him into demonstrations of feeling such as we have described, and, as we have said, she always reciprocated them violently, increasing thereby the wash-tub necessity tenfold.

It would have been strange indeed if John Marrot could have been much put about by a small matrimonial breeze, seeing that his life was spent in riding on an iron monster with white-hot lungs and boiling bowels which carried him through space day and night at the rate of fifty miles an hour! This, by the way, brings us back to our text—earthquakes.

Gertie's house—or Gertie's father's house, if you prefer it—stood close to the embankment of one of our great arterial railways—which of them, for reasons best known to ourself, we don't intend to tell, but, for the reader's comfort, we shall call it the Grand National Trunk Railway. So close did the house stand to the embankment that timid female passengers were known occasionally to scream as they approached it, under the impression that the train had left the rails and was about to dash into it—an impression

which was enhanced and somewhat justified by the circumstance that the house stood with one of its corners; instead of its side, front, or back; towards the line; thereby inducing a sudden sensation of wrongness in the breasts of the twenty thousand passengers who swept past it daily. The extreme edge of its most protruding stone was exactly three yards four inches—by measurement—from the left rail of the down line.

Need we say more to account for the perpetual state of earthquakedom, in which that house was involved?

But the tremors and shocks to which it was exposed—by night and by day—was not all it had to bear. In certain directions of the wind it was intermittently enveloped in clouds of mingled soot and steam, and, being situated at a curve on the line where signalling became imminently needful, it was exposed to all the varied horrors of the whistle from the sharp screech of interrogation to the successive bursts of exasperation, or the prolonged and deadly yell of intimidation, with all the intermediate modulations—so that, what with the tremors, and shocks, and crashes, and shrieks, and thunderous roar of trains, Gertie's father's house maintained an upright front in circumstances that might have been equalled but could not have been surpassed by those of the Eddystone Lighthouse in the wildest of winter storms, while it excelled that celebrated building in this, that it faced a storm which knew no calm, but raged furiously all the year round.

John Marrot was an engine-driver on the Grand National Trunk Railway. This is equivalent to saying that he was a steady, sober, trustworthy man. None but men of the best character are nowadays put in so responsible a position. Nearly all the drivers on the line were of this kind—some better than others, no doubt, but all good. Of course there are exceptions to every rule. As in the best regulated families accidents will happen, so, on the best conducted lines, an occasional black sheep will get among the drivers, but this is the exception that proves the rule. The rule in the Grand National Trunk Railway was—get the best drivers and pay them well. The same may be said of the firemen, whose ambition was ultimately to drive the iron chargers which they fed. Besides being all that we have said, John was a big, burly, soft-hearted, hard-headed man, who knew that two and two in ordinary circumstances made four, and who didn't require to be told that his left foot was not his right one.

It was generally supposed that John Marrot had no nerves, and that his muscles had imbibed some of the iron of which his engine was composed. This was a mistake, though there was some truth in both suppositions.

John's family consisted of himself when at home, which, although often, was never for long; his wife—fat and fair, capable of being roused, but, on the whole, a good, sensible, loving woman; his eldest daughter, Lucy or Loo—nineteen, dark, pretty, and amiable; his youngest daughter, Gertrude, *alias* Gertie—six, sunny and serious, at least as serious as was possible for one so young, so innocent, so healthy, and so happy as she; his son Bob, aged twelve, who was a lamp-boy at the great station not far off, and of whom it may be briefly said that he was “no better than he should be,” and, lastly, the baby—not yet at the walking period of life, with a round head, round body, round eyes, and a round dozen at least—if not more—of hairs standing straight up on the top of his bald pate, suggesting the idea that he must at some period of his life have been singed by a passing locomotive—an event not by any means beyond the bounds of possibility, for it may be written, with more

truth of this, than of any other infant, that he had been born and nurtured amid thunder, smoke, and blazes.

As might have been expected in the circumstances, he was a powerful baby. We cannot afford space for a full description, but it would be wrong to omit mention of the strength of his lungs. The imitative tendency of children is proverbial. Clearly the locomotive was baby Marrot's pattern in many things. No infant that ever drew breath equalled this one at a yell. There was absolutely a touch of sublimity in the sound of the duet—frequently heard—when baby chanced to be performing a solo and his father's engine went shrieking past with a running accompaniment! It is a disputed point to this day which of the two beat the other; and it is an admitted fact that nothing else could equal either.

There were two other inmates of John Marrot's house—not members of the family. One was his fireman, William Garvie, who lodged with him, the other a small servant or maid-of-all-work who led a rugged existence, but appeared to enjoy it, although it kept her thin. Her name was Ann Stocks, familiarly known as Nanny.

We are thus particular in describing the engine-driver's household because, apart from other reasons, a group of human beings who could live, and thrive, and eat, and sleep, and love, and learn, and so forth, in such circumstances is noteworthy.

It was quite a treat—believe it, reader—to see little Gertie and the baby slumber while the engines were apparently having “a night of it” outside! Come with us and behold. It is 10:30 p.m. Father is crossing country on the limited mail at any pace you choose between fifty and eighty miles an hour, time having been lost at the last station, owing to the unaccountable disappearance of a first-class passenger, and time having to be made up by fair means or otherwise. His mate stands beside him. In the family mansion pretty Loo sleeps like a “good angel,” as she is, in a small room farthest from the corner next the line, but with her we have nothing to do at present. Nanny, also sound asleep, lies in some place of profound obscurity among the coals in the lower regions of the house, laying in that store of health and vigour which will enable her to face the rugged features of the following day. We dismiss her, also, with the hope that she may survive the coal-dust and the lack of oxygen, and turn to the chief room of the house—the kitchen, parlour, dining-room, drawing-room, nursery, and family bedroom all in one. Engine-drivers are not always so badly off for space in their domiciles, but circumstances which are not worth mentioning have led John Marrot to put up with little. In this apartment, which is wonderfully clean and neat, there are two box-beds and a sort of crib. Baby sleeps—as only babies can—in perfect bliss in the crib; Gertie slumbers with her upturned sweet little face shaded by the white dimity curtains in one bed; Mrs Molly Marrot snores like a grampus in the other. It is a wide bed, let deep into the wall, as it were, and Mrs M's red countenance looms over the counterpane like the setting sun over a winter fog-bank.

Hark? A rumble in the far distance—ominous and low at first, but rapidly increasing to the tones of distant thunder. It is the night express for the North—going at fifty miles an hour. At such a rate of speed it might go right round the world in twenty-one days! While yet distant the whistle is heard, shrill, threatening, and prolonged. Louder and louder; it is nearing the curve now and the earth trembles—the house trembles too, but Gertie's parted lips breathe as softly as before; baby's eyes are as tight and his entire frame as still as when he first fell asleep. Mrs Marrot, too, maintains the monotony of her snore. Round the

curve it comes at last, hammer and tongs, thundering like Olympus, and yelling like an iron fiend. The earthquake is “on!” The embankment shudders; the house quivers; the doors, windows, cups, saucers, and pans rattle. Outside, all the sledge-hammers and anvils in Vulcan’s smithy are banging an *obbligato* accompaniment to the hissing of all the serpents that Saint Patrick drove out of Ireland as the express comes up; still Gertie’s rest is unbroken. She does indeed give a slight smile and turn her head on the other side, as if she had heard a pleasant whisper, but nothing more. Baby, too, vents a prolonged sigh before plunging into a profounder depth of repose. Mrs Marrot gives a deprecatory grunt between snores, but it is merely a complimentary “Hallo! ‘s that you?” sort of question which requires no answer.

As the rushing storm goes by a timid and wakeful passenger happens to lower the window and look out. He sees the house. “It’s all over?” are his last words as he falls back in his seat and covers his face with his hands. He soon breathes more freely on finding that it is not all over, but fifteen or twenty miles lie between him and the house he expected to annihilate, before his nervous system has quite recovered its tone.

This, reader, is a mere sample of the visitations by which that family was perpetually affected, though not afflicted. Sometimes the rushing masses were heavy goods trains, which produced less fuss, but more of earthquake. At other times red lights, intimating equally danger and delay, brought trains to a stand close to the house, and kept them hissing and yelling there as if querulously impatient to get on. The uproar reached its culminating point about 12:45, on the night of which we write, when two trains from opposite directions were signalled to wait, which they did precisely opposite John Marrot’s windows, and there kept up such a riot of sound as feeble language is impotent to convey. To the accustomed ears the whistle and clank of a checked and angry pilot-engine might have been discerned amid the hullabaloo; but to one whose experience in such matters was small, it might have seemed as though six or seven mad engines were sitting up on end, like monster rabbits on a bank, pawing the air and screaming out their hearts in the wild delirium of unlimited power and ungovernable fury. Still, although they moved a little, the sleepers did not awake—so potent is the force of habit! However, it did not last long. The red lights removed their ban, the white lights said “Come on,” the monster rabbits gave a final snort of satisfaction and went away—each with its tail of live-stock, or minerals, or goods, or human beings, trailing behind it.

The temporary silence round the house was very intense, as may well be believed—so much so that the heavy foot-fall of a man in the bypath that led to it sounded quite intrusive.

He was a tall broad-shouldered man in a large pilot coat, cap and boots, and appeared to walk somewhat lame as he approached the door. He tried the handle. It was locked, of course.

“I thought so,” he muttered in a low bass voice; “so much for a bad memory.”

He rapped twice on the door, loudly, with his knuckles and then kicked it with his boot. Vain hope! If a burglar with a sledge-hammer had driven the door in, he would have failed to tickle the drum of any ear there. The man evidently was aware of this, for, changing his plan, he went round to a back window on the ground-floor, and opened it at the top with

some difficulty. Peeping in he gazed for some time intently, and then exclaimed under his breath, "Ha! it's open by good luck." Gathering a handful of gravel, he threw it into the house with considerable force.

The result proved that he had not aimed at random, for the shower entered the open door of Nanny's sleeping-cellar and fell smartly on her face.

It is well-known that sailors, although capable of slumbering through loud and continuous noises, can be awakened by the slightest touch, so likewise Nanny. On receiving the shower of gravel she incontinently buried her head in the blankets, drew an empty coal-scuttle over her shoulders and began to shout thieves! and murder! at the top of her voice. Having taken such pains to muffle it, of course no one heard her cries. The man, if a burglar, had evidently a patient philosophical turn of mind, for he calmly waited till the damsel was exhausted, and when she at length peeped out to observe the effect of her heroic efforts at self-preservation he said quietly, "Nanny, lass, don't be a fool! It's me; open the door; I've gone an' forgot my latch-key."

"Oh la! master, it ain't you, is it? It ain't thieves and robbers, is it?"

"No, no. Open the door like a good girl."

"And it ain't an accident, is it?" continued Nanny partially dressing in haste. "Oh, I knows it's a accident, Missus always prophesied as a accident would come to pass some day, which has come true. You're not maimed, master?"

"No, no; be quick, girl!"

"Nor Willum ain't maimed, is he? He ain't dead? Oh *don't* say Willum is—"

"Bill Garvie's all right," said the engine-driver, as he brushed past the girl and went up-stairs.

Now, although Mrs Marrot's ears were totally deaf to locomotives they were alert enough to the sound of her husband's voice. When, therefore, he entered the kitchen, he found her standing on the floor with an ample shawl thrown round her.

"Nothing wrong?" she inquired anxiously.

"Nothing, Molly, my dear, only I got a slight bruise on the leg in the engine-shed to-day, and I had to go up an' show it to the doctor, d'ye see, before comin' home, which has made me later than usual."

"Are you *sure* it's not a back hurt, father?" asked Loo, coming in at the moment—also enveloped in a shawl, and looking anxious.

"Sure? ay, I'm sure enough; it's only a scratch. See here."

Saying this he removed one of his boots, and pulling up his trousers displayed a bandaged leg.

"Well, but we can't see through the bandages, you know," said Mrs Marrot.

"Let me take them off, father, and I'll replace—"

"Take 'em off!" exclaimed John, pulling down the leg of his trouser and rising with a laugh. "No, no, Loo; why, it's only just bin done up all snug by the doctor, who'd kick up

a pretty shindy if he found I had undid it. There's one good will come of it anyhow, I shall have a day or two in the house with you all; for the doctor said I must give it a short rest. So, off to bed again, Loo. This is not an hour for a respectable young woman to be wanderin' about in her night-dress. Away with you!"

"Was any one else hurt, father?" said Loo. She asked the question anxiously, but there was a slight flush on her cheek and a peculiar smile which betrayed some hidden feeling.

"No one else," returned her father. "I tell 'ee it wasn't an accident at all—it was only a engine that brushed up agin me as I was comin' out o' the shed. That's all; so I just came home and left Will Garvie to look after our engine. There, run away."

Loo smiled, nodded and disappeared, followed by Mrs Marrot, who went, like a sensible woman, to see that her alarmed domestic was all right. While she was away John went to the crib and kissed the rosy cheek of his sleeping boy. Then he bent over the bed with the white dimity curtains to Miss Gertie's forehead, for which purpose he had to remove a mass of curly hair with his big brown hand.

"Bless you, my darling," he said in silent speech, "you came near bein' fatherless this night—nearer than you ever was before." He kissed her again tenderly, and a fervent "thank the Lord!" rose from his heart to heaven.

In less than half-an-hour after this the engine-driver's family sank into profound repose, serenaded by the music of a mineral train from the black country, which rushed laboriously past their dwelling like an over-weighted thunderbolt.

CHAPTER TWO

The Driver Visits a Little Elderly Gentlewoman and Prepares the Iron Horse for Action

Next day John Marrot spent the brief period of repose accorded by the doctor to his leg in romping about the house with the baby in his arms. Being a large man, accustomed to much elbow-room and rapid motion, and the house being small, John may be said to have been a dangerous character in the family on such occasions. Apart from baby, no elephant was ever more sluggish in his motions; but when coupled—professionally speaking—to his own tender infant, John knew no bounds, his wife knew no rest and his baby knew no higher earthly bliss.

Sometimes it was on his shoulder, sometimes on his head and often on his foot, riding with railway speed to “Banbury Cross.” Again it was on its back in the crib or on the bed being tickled into fits of laughter, which bid fair at times to merge into fits of convulsion, to the horror of little Gertie, who came in for a large share of that delightful holiday’s enjoyment, but whose spirit was frequently harrowed with alarm at the riotous conduct of her invalid father. In his glee the man might have been compared to a locomotive with a bad driver, who was constantly shutting off the steam and clapping on the brakes too soon or too late, thus either falling short of or overshooting his mark. What between the door and the dresser, the fire, the crib, the window, and the furniture, John showed himself a dreadfully bad pilot and was constantly running into or backing out of difficulties. At last towards the afternoon of that day, while performing a furious charge round the room with baby on his head, he overturned the wash-tub, which filled the baby with delirious joy, and Gertie with pleasurable alarm.

As for Mrs Marrot, she was too happy to have her husband at home for a whole day to care much about trifles, nevertheless she felt it her duty to reprove him, lest the children should learn a bad lesson.

“There now, John, I knew you’d do it at last. You’re much too violent, and you shouldn’t ought to risk the baby’s neck in that way. Such a mess! How *can* you expect me to keep things tidy if you go on so?”

John was very penitent. He did not reply at first, but putting baby into the crib—where it instantly drowned with a great yell the shriek of a passing train—he went down on his knees and began to “swab” up the water with a jack-towel. Loo ran laughingly from the corner where she had been sewing, and insisted on doing it for him.

“You’ll hurt your leg, father, if you bend it so, and I’m sure it must be swelled and pained enough already with so much romping.”

“Not a bit, Loo,” objected John. “It was me as caused the mess, an’ justice requires that I should swab it up. There, go sew that sentiment into a sampler an’ hang it up over yer bed.”

But Loo would not give in. While they were still engaged in the controversy the door opened, and young Bob Marrot stood before them with his eyes wide open and his hair straight up on end, as if he had recently seen a ghost. This aspect, however, was no sign of alarm, being his normal condition.

“Ha! seems to me, somehow, that somebody’s bin up to somethin’.”

“Right Bob,” replied his father, rising from his knees and throwing the jack-towel at him.

The lad easily evaded the shot, being well accustomed to elude much more deadly missiles, and, picking up the towel, quietly set to work to perform the duty in dispute.

“You’re wanted,” he said, looking up at his father while he wrung the towel over a tin basin.

“Eh! Where?”

“Up at the shed.”

“I’m on sick leave,” said John.

“Can’t help that. The 6:30 p.m. passenger train must be drove, and there’s nobody left but you to drive it. Jones is away with a goods train owin’ to Maxwell having sprained his ankle, and Long Thompson is down with small-pox, so you’ll have to do it. I offered ‘em my services, but the manager he said that intelligent lads couldn’t be spared for such menial work, and told me to go and fetch you.”

“Maxwell had no business to sprain his ankle,” said John Marrot. “Hows’ever,” he added cheerfully, “I’ve had a rare good holiday, an’ the leg’s all but right again, so, Molly, let’s have an early tea; I’ll give it a good rest for another half-hour and then be ready for the 6:30 p.m-ers. Cut off your steam, will you?”

This last observation was made to the baby, and was accompanied by a shake and a toss towards the ceiling which caused him to obey instantly, under the impression, no doubt that the fun was to be renewed. Being, however, consigned to the care of Gertie he again let on the steam and kept it up during the whole time the family were at tea—which meal they enjoyed thoroughly, quite regardless of the storm.

He was asleep when his father rose at last and buttoned his heavy coat up to the chin, while Mrs Marrot stood on tiptoe to arrange more carefully the woollen shawl round his neck.

“Now, don’t stand more than you can help on your hurt leg, John.”

“Certainly not, duckie,” said John, stooping to kiss the upturned face; “I’ll sit on the rail as much as I can, like a ‘Merican racoon. By the way,” he added, turning suddenly to Loo, “you delivered that note from young Mr Tipps to his mother?”

“Yes, immediately after I got it from you; and I waited to see if there was an answer, but she said there wasn’t. It must have contained bad news, I fear, for she turned pale while she read it.”

“H’m, well,” said John, putting on his cap, “don’t know nothin’ about what was in it, so it’s no bizzness o’ mine.”

With a hearty good-evening to all, and a special embrace to Gertie, the engine-driver left his home, accompanied by Bob his hopeful son.

“Mr Sharp,” said Bob, as they walked along, “has bin makin’ oncommon partikler inquiries among us about some o’ the porters. I rather think they’re a bad lot.”

“Not at all,” replied his father severely. “They’re no more a bad lot than the drivers, or, for the matter of that, than the clerks or the directors, or the lamp-boys. You ought to be gittin’ old enough by this time, Bob, to know that every lot o’ fish in this world, however good, has got a few bad uns among ‘em. As a rule railway directors and railway clerks, and railway porters and railway officials of all sorts are good—more or less—the same may be said of banks an’ insurances, an’ all sorts of things—but, do what ye may, a black sheep or two *will* git in among ‘em, and, of course, the bigger the consarn, the more numerous the black sheep. Even the clergy ain’t free from that uniwersal law of natur. But what’s Mr Sharp bin inquiring arter?”

“Ah—wot indeed!” replied Bob; “ow should I know? Mr Sharp ain’t the man to go about the line with a ticket on his back tellin’ wot he’s arter. By no means. P’lice superintendents ain’t usually given to that; but he’s arter *somethin’* partickler.”

“Well, that ain’t no bizzness of ours, Bob, so we don’t need to trouble our heads about it. There’s nothin’ like mindin’ yer own bizzness. Same time,” added John after a short pause, “that’s no reason why, as a sea-farin’ friend o’ mine used to say, a man shouldn’t keep his weather-eye open, d’ye see?”

Bob intimated that he did see, by winking with the eye that chanced to be next his parent; but further converse between father and son was interrupted at a turn in the road, where they were joined by a stout, broad-shouldered young man, whose green velveteen jacket vest, and trousers bespoke him a railway porter.

“Evenin’, Sam,” said our driver with a friendly nod; “goin’ on night dooty, eh?”

“Yes, worse luck,” replied Sam, thrusting his powerful hands into his pockets.

“Why so, Sam, you ain’t used to mind night dooty?”

“No more I do,” said Sam testily, “but my missus is took bad, and there’s no one to look after her properly—for that old ‘ooman we got ain’t to be trusted. ‘Tis a hard thing to have to go on night dooty when a higher dooty bids me stay at home.”

There was a touch of deep feeling in the tone in which the latter part of Sam Natly’s remark was uttered. His young wife, to whom he had been only a year married, had fallen into bad health, and latterly the doctors had given him little encouragement to hope for her recovery.

“Sam,” said John Marrot stopping, “I’ll go an’ send a friend, as I knows of, to look after yer wife.”

“A friend?” said Sam; “you can’t mean any o’ your own family, John, for you haven’t got time to go back that length now, and—”

“Well, never mind, I’ve got time to go where I’m agoin’. You run on to the shed, Bob, and tell Garvie that I’ll be there in fifteen minutes.”

The engine—driver turned off abruptly, and, increasing his pace to a smart walk, soon stood before the door of one of those uncommonly small neat suburban villas which the irrigating influence of the Grand National Trunk Railway had caused to spring up like mushrooms around the noisy, smoky, bustling town of Clatterby—to the unspeakable advantage of that class of gentlefolk who possess extremely limited incomes, but who, nevertheless, prefer fresh air to smoke.

“Is your missus at ‘ome?” he inquired of the stout elderly woman who answered to his modest summons—for although John was wont to clatter and bang through the greater part of his daily and nightly career, he was tender of touch and act when out of his usual professional beat.

“Yes; do you wish to see her?”

“I does, my dear. Sorry I ‘aven’t got a card with me, but if you’ll just say that it’s John Marrot, the engine—driver, I dessay that’ll do for a free pass.”

The elderly woman went off with a smile, but returned quickly with an anxious look, and bade the man follow her. He was ushered into a small and poorly furnished but extremely neat and clean parlour, where sat a thin little old lady in an easy—chair, looking very pale.

“Ev’nin’, ma’am,” said John, bowing and looking rougher and bigger than usual in such a small apartment.

“You—you—don’t bring bad news, I hope!—my son Joseph—”

“Oh no, Mrs Tipps, not by no means,” said Marrot, hasting to relieve the timid old lady’s feelings, “Mr Joseph is all right—nothing wotiver wrong with him—nor likely to be, ma’am. Leastwise he wos all right w’en I seed ‘im last.”

“And when might that be?” asked the timid old lady with a sigh of relief as she clasped her hands tightly together.

“W’y, let me see,” said John, touching his forehead, “it was yesterday evenin’ w’en I came up with the northern express.”

“But many accidents might have happened since yesterday evening,” said Mrs Tipps, still in an anxious tone.

“That’s true, ma’am. All the engines on the Grand Trunk from the Pentland Firth to the Channel might have bu’sted their bilers since that time—but it ain’t likely,” replied John, with a bland smile.

“And—and what was my son doing when you passed him? Did you speak to him?”

“Speak to him! Bless your heart, ma’am,” said John, with another benignant smile, “I went past Langrye station at sixty mile an hour, so we hadn’t much chance to speak to each other. It would have been as much as we could have managed, if we’d tried it, to exchange winks.”

“Dreadful!” exclaimed Mrs Tipps in a low tone. “Is that the usual rate of travelling on your railway?”

“Oh dear no, ma’am. It’s only *my* express train as goes at that rate. Other expresses run between forty and fifty miles, an’ or’nary trains average about thirty miles an hour—

goods, they go at about twenty, more or less; but they varies a good deal. The train I drives is about the fastest in the kingdom, w'ich is pretty much the same as sayin' it's the fastest in the world, ma'am. Sometimes I'm obleeged to go as high as nigh seventy miles an hour to make up time."

"The fastest mail-coaches in *my* young days," said Mrs Tipps, "used to go at the rate of ten miles an hour, I believe."

"Pretty much so," said John. "They did manage a mile or two more, I'm told, but that was their average of crawlin' with full steam on."

"And *you* sometimes drive at sixty or seventy miles an hour?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"With people in the carriages?"

"Cer'nly, ma'am."

"How I *wish* that I had lived a hundred years ago!" sighed poor Mrs Tipps.

"You'd have bin a pretty old girl by this time if you had," thought the engine-driver, but he was too polite to give utterance to the thought.

"And what was my son doing when you passed him at that frightful speed—you could see him, I suppose?"

"Oh yes, ma'am, I could see him well enough. He was talkin' an' laughin', as far as I could make out, with an uncommon pretty girl."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Mrs Tipps, flushing slightly—for she was extremely sensitive,—and evidently much relieved by this information. "Well, my good man, what do you wish me to do for you? anything that is in my power to—"

"Thankee, ma'am, but I don't want you to do nothin' for *me*."

"Then what have you to say to me?" added the old lady with a little smile that was clearly indicative of a kind little heart.

"I've come to take the liberty, ma'am, of askin' you to do one of my mates a favour."

"Most willingly," said Mrs Tipps with animation. "I shall never forget that you saved my dear Joseph's life by pulling him off the line when one of your dreadful engines was going straight over him. Anything that I am capable of doing for you or your friends will be but a poor return for what you have done for me. I have often asked you to allow me to make me some such return, Mr Marrot, and have been grieved at your constant refusal. I am delighted that you come to me now."

"You're very good to say so, ma'am. The fact is that one o' my friends, a porter on the line, named Sam Natly, has a young wife who is, I fear, far gone wi' consumption; she's worse to-night an' poor Sam's obliged to go on night dooty, so he can't look arter her, an' the old 'ooman they've got ain't worth nothin'. So I thought I'd make bold, ma'am, to ask you to send yer servant to git a proper nurse to take charge of her to-night, it would be—"

"I'll go myself!" exclaimed Mrs Tipps, interrupting, and starting up with a degree of alacrity that astonished the engine-driver. "Here, write down the address on that piece of

paper—you can write, I suppose?”

“Yes, ma’am,” replied John, modestly, as he bent down and wrote the address in a bold flowing hand, “I raither think I *can* write. I write notes, on a paper I’ve got to fill up daily, on the engine; an’ w’en a man’s trained to do that, ma’am, it’s my opinion he’s fit to write in any circumstances whatsomedever. Why, you’d hardly believe it, ma’am, but I do assure you, that I wrote my fust an’ last love–letter to my missus on the engine. I was drivin’ the Lightenin’ at the time—that’s the name o’ my engine, ma’am, an’ they calls me Jack Blazes in consikence—well, I’d bin courtin’ Molly, off–an’–on, for about three months. She b’longed to Pinchley station, you must know, where we used to stop to give her a drink—”

“What! to give Molly a drink?”

“No, ma’am,” replied John, with a slight smile, “to give the ingine a drink. Well, she met me nigh every day ‘xcept Sundays at that station, and as we’d a pretty long time there—about five minutes—we used to spend it beside the pump, an’ made the most of it. But somehow I took it into my head that Molly was playin’ fast an’ loose with me, an’ I was raither cool on her for a time. Hows’ever, her father bein’ a pointsman, she wos shifted along with him to Langrye station—that’s where your son is, ma’am—an’ as we don’t stop there we was obleeged to confine our courtship to a nod an’ a wave of a handkerchief. Leastwise she shook out a white handkerchief an’ I flourished a lump o’ cotton–waste. Well, one day as we was close upon Langrye station—about two miles—I suddenly takes it into my head that I’d bring the thing to a pint, so I sings out to my mate—that was my fireman, ma’am—says I, ‘look out Jim,’ an’ I draws out my pencil an’ bends my legs—you must always bend your legs a little, ma’am, w’en you writes on a locomotive, it makes springs of ‘em, so to speak—an’ I writes on the back of a blank time–bill, ‘Molly, my dear, no more shilly–shallyin’ with *me*. Time’s up. If you’ll be tender, I’ll be locomotive. Only say the word and we’re coupled for life in three weeks. A white handkerchief means yes, a red ‘un, no. If red, you’ll see a noo driver on the 10:15 a.m. express day after to–morrow. John Marrot.’ I was just in time to pitch the paper crumpled up right into her bosom,” continued the driver, wiping his forehead as if the deep anxiety of that eventful period still affected him, “an’ let me tell you, ma’am, it requires a deal o’ nice calculation to pitch a piece o’ crumpled paper true off a locomotive goin’ between fifty and sixty miles an hour; but it went all straight—I could see that before we was gone.”

“And what was the result?” asked the little old lady as earnestly as if that result were still pending.

“W’y, the result wos as it should be! My letter was a short ‘un, but it turned out to be a powerful brake. Brought her up sharp—an’ we was coupled in less than six weeks.”

“Amazing phase of human life!” observed Mrs Tipps, gazing in admiration at the stalwart giant who stood deferentially before her.

“Well, it *was* a raither coorious kind o’ proposal,” said Marrot with a smile, “but it worked uncommon well. I’ve never wanted to uncouple since then.”

“Pardon *me*, Mr Marrot,” said Mrs Tipps, with little hysterical laugh—knowing that she was about to perpetrate a joke—“may I ask if there are any—any *little* tenders?”

“Oh, lots of ‘em,” replied John, “quite a train of ‘em; four livin’ an’ three gone dead. The last was coupled on only a short time ago. You’ll excuse me now, ma’am,” he added, pulling out and consulting the ponderous chronometer with which the company supplied him, “I must go now, havin’ to take charge o’ the 6:30 p.m. train,—it ain’t my usual train, but I’m obleeged to take it to—night owin’ to one of our drivers havin’ come by an accident. Evenin’, ma’am.”

John bowed, and retired so promptly that poor Mrs Tipps had no time to make further inquiry into the accident referred to—at the very mention of which her former alarm came back in full force. However, she wisely got the better of her own anxieties by throwing herself into those of others. Putting on her bonnet she sallied forth on her errand of mercy.

Meanwhile John Marrot proceeded to the engine—shed to prepare his iron horse for action. Here he found that his fireman, Will Garvie, and his cleaner, had been attending faithfully to their duty. The huge locomotive, which looked all the more gigantic for being under cover, was already quivering with that tremendous energy—that artificial life—which rendered it at once so useful and so powerful a servant of man. Its brasses shone with golden lustre, its iron rods and bars, cranks and pistons glittered with silvery sheen, and its heavier parts and body were gay with a new coat of green paint. Every nut and screw and lever and joint had been screwed up, and oiled, examined, tested, and otherwise attended to, while the oblong pit over which it stood when in the shed—and into which its ashes were periodically emptied—glowed with the light of its intense furnace. Ever and anon a little puff issued from its safety—valve, proving to John Marrot that there was life within his fiery steed sufficient to have blown the shed to wreck with all its brother engines, of which there were at the time two or three dozen standing—some disgorging their fire and water after a journey, and preparing to rest for the night; some letting off steam with a fiendish yell unbearably prolonged; others undergoing trifling repairs preparatory to starting next day, and a few, like that of our engine—driver, ready for instant action and snorting with impatience like war—horses “scenting the battle from afar.” The begrimed warriors, whose destiny it was to ride these iron chargers, were also variously circumstanced. Some in their shirt sleeves busy with hammer and file at benches hard by; others raking out fire—boxes, or oiling machinery; all busy as bees, save the few, who, having completed their preparations, were buttoning up their jackets and awaiting the signal to charge.

At last that signal came to John Marrot—not in a loud shout of command or a trumpet—blast, but by the silent hand of Time, as indicated on his chronometer.

“But how,” it may be asked, “does John Marrot know precisely the hour at which he has to start, the stations he has to stop at, the various little acts of coupling on and dropping off carriages and trucks, and returning with trains or with ‘empties’ within fixed periods so punctually, that he shall not interfere with, run into, or delay, the operations of the hundreds of drivers whose duties are as complex, nice, important, and swift as his own.”

Reader, we reply that John knows it all in consequence of the perfection of *system* attained in railway management. Without this, our trains and rails all over the kingdom would long ago have been smashed up into what Irishmen expressively name smithereens.

The duty of arranging the details of the system devolves on the superintendents of

departments on the line, namely, the passenger, goods, and locomotive superintendents, each of whom reigns independently and supreme in his own department, but of course, like the members of a well-ordered family, they have to consult together in order that their trains may be properly horsed, and the time of running so arranged that there shall be no clashing in their distinct though united interests. When the number of trains and time of running have been fixed, and finally published by the passenger superintendent—who is also sometimes the “Out-door superintendent,” and who has duties to perform that demand very considerable powers of generalship,—it is the duty of the locomotive superintendent to supply the requisite engines. This officer, besides caring for all the “plant” or rolling-stock, new and old, draws out periodically a schedule, in which is detailed to a nicety every minute act that has to be done by drivers—the hour at which each engine is to leave the shed on each day of the week, the number of each engine, its driver and fireman, and the duties to be performed; and this sheet contains complete *daily* (nay, almost hourly) directions for passenger, goods, and pilot-engines.

In order to secure attention to these regulations, each engineman is fined one shilling for every minute he is behind time in leaving the shed. The difficulty of making these runnings of trains dovetail into each other on lines where the traffic is great and constant, may well be understood to be considerable, particularly when it is remembered that ordinary regular traffic is interfered with constantly by numerous excursion, special, and other irregular trains, in the midst of which, also, time must be provided for the repair and renewal of the line itself, the turning of old rails, laying down of new ones, raising depressed sleepers, renewing broken chairs, etcetera,—all which is constantly going on, and that, too, at parts of the line over which hundreds of trains pass in the course of the twenty-four hours.

Besides the arrangements for the regular traffic, which are made monthly, a printed sheet detailing the special traffic, repairs of lines, new and altered signals, working arrangements, etcetera, is issued weekly to every member of the staff; particularly to engine-drivers and guards. We chance to possess one of these private sheets, issued by one of our principal railways. Let us peep behind the scenes for a moment and observe how such matters are managed.

The vacation has come to an end, and the boys of Rapsallion College will, on a certain day, pour down on the railway in shoals with money in hand and a confident demand for accommodation. This invading army must be prepared for. Ordinary trains are not sufficient for it. Delay is dangerous on railways; it must not be permitted; therefore the watchful superintendent writes an order which we find recorded as follows:—

”*Wednesday, 26th April*,—Accommodation must be provided on this day in the 3:10 and 6:25 p.m. Up, and 2:25 and 6:10 p.m. Down Trains, for the Cadets returning to Rapsallion College. By the Trains named, Rapsallion College tickets will be collected at Whitewater on the Down journey, and at Smokingham on the Up journey. Oldershot to send a man to Whitewater to assist in the collection of these tickets.”

Again—a “Relief Train” has to be utilised. It won’t “pay” to run empty trains on the line unnecessarily, therefore the superintendent has his eye on it, and writes:—

”April 23rd.—An Empty Train will leave Whiteheath for Woolhitch at about 8:10 p.m., to work up from Woolhitch at 9:05 p.m., calling at Woolhitch Dockyard and Curlton, and forming the 9:15 p.m. Up Ordinary Train from Whiteheath. Greatgun Street to provide Engines and Guards for this service.”

This is but a slight specimen of the providing, dovetailing, timing, and guarding that has to be done on all the lines in the kingdom. In the same sheet from which the above is quoted, we find notes, cautions, and intimations as to such various matters as the holding of the levers of facing points when trains are passing through junctions; the attention required of drivers to new signals; the improper use of telegraph bells; the making search for lost “passes;” the more careful loading of goods waggons; the changes in regard to particular trains; the necessity of watchfulness on the part of station-masters, robberies having been committed on the line; the intimation of dates when and places where ballast trains are to be working on the line; the times and, places when and where repairs to line are to take place during the brief intervals between trains of the ordinary traffic; and many other matters, which naturally lead one to the belief that superintendents of railways must possess the eyes of Argus, the generalship of Wellington, and the patience of Job.

Being carefully hedged in, as we have shown, with strict rules and regulations, backed by fines in case of the slightest inattention, and the certainty of prompt dismissal in case of gross neglect or disobedience, with the possibility of criminal prosecution besides looming in the far distance, our friend, John Marrot, knowing his duties well, and feeling perfect confidence in himself and his superiors, consulted his chronometer for the last time, said, “Now, then, Bill!” and mounted his noble steed.

Will Garvie, who was putting a finishing drop of oil into some part of the machinery, took his station beside his mate and eased off the brake. John let off two sharp whistles (an imperative duty on the part of every driver before starting an engine) and let on the steam. The first was a very soft pulsation—a mere puff—but it was enough to move the ponderous engine as if it had been a cork, though its actual weight with tender was fifty-three tons. Another puff, and slowly the iron horse moved out of its stable. There was a gentle, oily, gliding, effect connected with its first movements that might have won the confidence even of timid Mrs Captain Tipps. Another puff of greater strength shot the engine forward with a sudden grandeur of action that would certainly have sent that lady’s heart into her throat. In a few seconds it reached and passed the place where the siding was connected with the main line, and where a pointsman stood ready to shift the points. Here the obedient spirit of the powerful steed was finely displayed. Will Garvie reversed the action of the engines by a process which, though beautifully simple and easily done, cannot be easily described. John let on a puff of steam, and the engine glided backwards as readily as it had run forward. A few seconds afterwards it moved slowly under the magnificent arch of Clatterby station, and its buffers met those of the train it was destined to draw as if with a gentle touch of friendly greeting.

At the station all was bustle and noise; but here we must venture to do what no human being could accomplish in reality, compel the 6:30 p.m. train to wait there until it shall be our pleasure to give it the signal to start! Meanwhile we shall put back the clock an hour or so, ask the reader to return to Mrs Tipps’ residence and observe what transpired there while John Marrot was in the shed getting his iron steed ready for action.

CHAPTER THREE

In Which the Widow Holds Converse With a Captain, Makes the Acquaintance of a Young Man, and Receives a Telegraphic Shock, Which Ends in a Railway Journey

Mrs Captain Tipps was, as we have said, a thin old lady of an excessively timid temperament. She was also, as we have shown, impulsively kind in disposition. Moreover, she was bird-like in aspect and action. We would not have it supposed, however, that her features were sharp. On the contrary, they were neat and rounded and well formed, telling of great beauty in youth, but her little face and mouth were of such a form that one was led irresistibly to expect to hear her chirp; she fluttered rather than walked and twittered rather than talked. Altogether she was a charming little old lady, with a pair of bead-like eyes as black as sloes. Happy that captain—a sea-captain, by the way, long since dead—round whom she had fluttered in days gone bye, and happy that son Joseph round whom, when at home, she fluttered now.

But Joseph was not often at home at the time we write of. He was an honest soul—a gentle, affectionate man with a handsome face, neat dapper little frame, something like his mother in many ways, yet not unmanly. He was too earnest, simple, unassuming, and unaffected to be that. He was a railway clerk, and had recently been appointed to Langrye station, about fifty miles from Clatterby, which necessitated his leaving his mother's roof; but Mrs Tipps consoled herself with the intention of giving up her little villa and going to live at Langrye.

Poverty, after the captain's death, had seized upon the widow, and held her tightly down during the whole of that period when Joseph and his only sister Netta were being educated. But Mrs Tipps did her duty bravely by them. She was a practically religious woman, and tried most earnestly to rule her life in accordance with the blessed Word of God. She trained up her children "in the way that they should go," in thorough reliance on the promise that "they would not depart from it when they were old." She accepted the command, "owe no man anything but to love one another," as given to herself as well as to the world at large—hence she kept out of debt, and was noted for deeds of kindness wherever she went.

But she was pinched during this period—terribly pinched—no one knew how severely save her daughter Netta, to whom she had been in the habit of confiding all her joys and sorrows from the time that the child could form any conception of what joy or sorrow meant. But Mrs Tipps did not weep over her sorrows, neither did she become boisterous over her joys. She was an equable, well-balanced woman in everything except the little matter of her nervous system. Netta was a counterpart of her mother. As time went on expenses increased, and living on small means became more difficult, so that Mrs Tipps was compelled to contemplate leaving the villa, poor and small though it was, and taking a cheaper residence. At this juncture a certain Captain Lee, an old friend of her late husband—also a sea-captain, and an extremely gruff one—called upon the widow, found out her

straitened circumstances, and instantly offered her five hundred pounds, which she politely but firmly refused.

“But madam,” said the excitable captain on that memorable occasion, “I must insist on your taking it. Excuse me, I have my own reasons,—and they are extremely good ones,—for saying that it is my duty to give you this sum and yours to take it. I owe it to your late husband, who more than once laid me under obligations to him.”

Mrs Tipps shook her little head and smiled.

“You are very kind, Captain Lee, to put it in that way, and I have no doubt that my dear husband did, as you say, lay you under many obligations because he was always kind to every one, but I cannot assure you—”

“Very well,” interrupted the captain, wiping his bald head with his pocket-handkerchief angrily, “then the money shall go to some charity—some—some ridiculous asylum or hospital for teaching logarithms to the Hottentots of the Cape, or something of that sort. I tell you, madam,” he added with increased vehemence, seeing that Mrs Tipps still shook her head, “I tell you that I *robbed* your husband of five hundred pounds!”

“Robbed him!” exclaimed Mrs Tipps, somewhat shocked. “Oh, Captain Lee, impossible!”

“Yes I did,” replied the captain, crossing his arms and nodding his head firmly, “robbed him. I laid a bet with him to that extent and won it.”

“That is not usually considered robbery, Captain Lee,” said Mrs Tipps with a smile.

“But that ought to be considered robbery,” replied the captain, with a frown. “Betting is a mean, shabby, contemptible way of obtaining money for nothing on false pretences. The man who bets says in his heart, ‘I want my friend’s money without the trouble of working for it, therefore I’ll offer to bet with him. In so doing I’ll risk an equal sum of my own money. That’s fair and honourable!’ Is that logic?” demanded the captain, vehemently, “It is not! In the first place it is mean to want, not to speak of accepting, another man’s money without working for it, and it is a false pretence to say that you risk your own money because it is *not* your own, it is your wife’s and your children’s money, who are brought to poverty, mayhap, because of your betting tendencies, and it is your baker’s and butcher’s money, whose bread and meat you devour (as long as they’ll let you) without paying for it, because of your betting tendencies, and a proportion of it belongs to your church, which you rob, and to the poor, whom you defraud, because of your betting tendencies; and if you say that when you win the case is altered, I reply, yes, it is altered for the worse, because, instead of bringing all this evil down on your own head you hurl it, not angrily, not desperately, but, worse, with fiendish *indifference* on the head of your friend and his innocent family. Yes, madam, although many men do not think it so, betting *is* a dishonourable thing, and I’m ashamed of having done it. I repent, Mrs Tipps, the money burns my fingers, and I *must* return it.”

“Dear me!” exclaimed the old lady, quite unable to reply at once to such a gush. “But Captain Lee, did you not say that it is mean to accept money without working for it, and yet you want me to accept five hundred pounds without working for it?”

“Oh! monstrous sophistry,” cried the perplexed man, grasping desperately the few hairs that remained on his polished head, “is there no difference then between presenting or

accepting a gift and betting? Are there not circumstances also in which poverty is unavoidable and the relief of it honourable as well as delightful? not to mention the courtesies of life, wherein giving and receiving in the right spirit and within reasonable limits, are expressive of good-will and conducive to general harmony. Besides, I do not offer a gift. I want to repay a debt; by rights I ought to add compound interest to it for twenty years, which would make it a thousand pounds. Now, *do* accept it, Mrs Tipps,” cried the captain, earnestly.

But Mrs Tipps remained obdurate, and the captain left her, vowing that he would forthwith devote it as the nucleus of a fund to build a collegiate institute in Cochin-China for the purpose of teaching Icelandic to the Japanese.

Captain Lee thought better of it, however, and directed the fund to the purchase of frequent and valuable gifts to little Joseph and his sister Netta, who had no scruples whatever in accepting them. Afterwards, when Joseph became a stripling, the captain, being a director in the Grand National Trunk Railway, procured for his protege a situation on the line.

To return to our story after this long digression:—

We left Mrs Tipps in the last chapter putting on her bonnet and shawl, on philanthropic missions intent. She had just opened the door, when a handsome, gentlemanly youth, apparently about one or two and twenty, with a very slight swagger in his gait stepped up to it and, lifting his hat said—

“Mrs Tipps, I presume? I bring you a letter from Clatterby station. Another messenger should have brought it, but I undertook the duty partly for the purpose of introducing myself as your son’s friend. I— my name is Gurwood.”

“What!—Edwin Gurwood, about whom Joseph speaks so frequently, and for whom he has been trying to obtain a situation on the railway through our friend Captain Lee?” exclaimed Mrs Tipps.

“Yes,” replied the youth, somewhat confused by the earnestness of the old lady’s gaze, “but pray read the letter—the telegram—I fear—”

He stopped, for Mrs Tipps had torn open the envelope, and stood gazing at it with terrible anxiety depicted on her face.

“There is no cause for immediate fear, I believe,” began Edwin, but Mrs Tipps interrupted him by slowly reading the telegram.

“From Joseph Tipps, Langrye station, to Mrs Tipps, Eden Villa, Clatterby. Dear Mother, Netta is not very well—nothing serious, I hope—don’t be alarmed—but you’d better come and nurse her. She is comfortably put up in my lodgings.”

Mrs Tipps grew deadly pale. Young Gurwood, knowing what the message was, having seen it taken down while lounging at the station, had judiciously placed himself pretty close to the widow. Observing her shudder, he placed his strong arm behind her, and adroitly sinking down on one knee received her on the other, very much after the manner in which, while at school, he had been wont to act the part of second to pugilistic companions.

Mrs Tipps recovered almost immediately, sprang up, and hurried into the house, followed by Gurwood.

“You’ll have time to catch the 6.30 train,” he said, as Mrs Tipps fluttered to a cupboard and brought out a black bottle.

“Thank you. Yes, I’ll go by that. You shall escort me to it. Please ring the bell.”

The stout elderly female—Netta’s nurse—answered.

“Come here, Durby,” said the widow quickly; “I want you to take this bottle of wine to a poor sick woman. I had intended to have gone myself, but am called away suddenly and shan’t be back to-night. You shall hear from me to-morrow. Lock up the house and stay with the woman to look after her, if need be—and now, Mr Gurwood.”

They were gone beyond recall before Mrs Durby could recover herself.

“I never did see nothink like my poor missus,” she muttered, “there *must* be somethink wrong in the ‘ead. But she’s a good soul.”

With this comforting reflection Mrs Durby proceeded to obey her “missus’s” commands.

On reaching the station Mrs Tipps found that she had five minutes to wait, so she thanked Gurwood for escorting her, bade him good-bye, and was about to step into a third-class carriage when she observed Captain Lee close beside her, with his daughter Emma, who, we may remark in passing, was a tall, dark, beautiful girl, and the bosom friend of Netta Tipps.

“Oh, there is Captain Lee. How fortunate,” exclaimed Mrs Tipps, “he will take care of me. Come, Mr Gurwood, I will introduce you to him and his daughter.”

She turned to Gurwood, but that youth did not hear her remark, having been forced from her side by a noiseless luggage truck on India-rubber wheels. Turning, then, towards the captain she found that he and his daughter had hastily run to recapture a small valise which was being borne off to the luggage van instead of going into the carriage along with them. At the same moment the guard intervened, and the captain and his daughter were lost in the crowd.

But Edwin Gurwood, although he did not hear who they were, had obtained a glance of the couple before they disappeared, and that glance, brief though it was, had taken deadly effect! He had been shot straight to the heart. Love at first sight and at railway speed, is but a feeble way of expressing what had occurred. Poor Edwin Gurwood, up to this momentous day woman-proof, felt, on beholding Emma, as if the combined powers of locomotive force and electric telegraphy had smitten him to the heart’s core, and for one moment he stood rooted to the earth, or—to speak more appropriately—nailed to the platform. Recovering in a moment he made a dash into the crowd and spent the three remaining minutes in a wild search for the lost one!

It was a market-day, and the platform of Clatterby station was densely crowded. Sam Natly the porter and his colleagues in office were besieged by all sorts of persons with all sorts of questions, and it said much for the tempers of these harassed men, that, in the midst of their laborious duties, they consented to be stopped with heavy weights on their shoulders, and, while perspiration streamed down their faces, answered with perfect

civility questions of the most ridiculous and unanswerable description.

“Where’s my wife?” frantically cried an elderly gentleman, seizing Sam by the jacket.

“I don’t know, sir,” replied Sam with a benignant smile.

“There she is,” shouted the elderly gentleman, rushing past and nearly overturning Sam.

“What a bo—ar it must be to the poatas to b’ wearied so by stoopid people,” observed a tall, stout, superlative fop with sleepy eyes and long whiskers to another fop in large—check trousers.

“Ya—as,” assented the checked trousers.

“Take your seats, gentlemen,” said a magnificent guard, over six feet high, with a bushy beard.

“O—ah!” said the dandies, getting into their compartment.

Meanwhile, Edwin Gurwood had discovered Emma. He saw her enter a first—class carriage. He saw her smile ineffably to her father. He heard the guard cry, “Take your seats; take your seats,” and knew that she was about to be torn from him perhaps for ever. He felt that it was a last look, because, how could he hope in a populous city to meet with her again? Perhaps she did not even belong to that part of the country at all, and was only passing through. He did not even know her name! What *was* he to do? He resolved to travel with her, but it instantly occurred to him that he had no ticket. He made a stride or two in the direction of the ticket office, but paused, remembering that he knew not her destination, and that therefore he could not demand a ticket for any place in particular.

Doors began to slam, and John Marrot’s iron horse let off a little impatient steam. Just then the “late passenger” arrived. There is always a late passenger at every train. On this occasion the late passenger was a short—sighted elderly gentleman in a brown top—coat and spectacles. He was accompanied by a friend, who assisted him to push through the crowd of people who had come to see their friends away, or were loitering about for pastime. The late passenger carried a bundle of wraps; the boots of his hotel followed with his portmanteau.

“All right sir; plenty of time,” observed Sam Natly, coming up and receiving the portmanteau from boots. “Which class, sir?”

“Eh—oh—third; no, stay, second,” cried the short—sighted gentleman, endeavouring vainly to open his purse to pay boots. “Here, hold my wraps, Fred.”

His friend Fred chanced at that moment to have been thrust aside by a fat female in frantic haste and Edwin Gurwood, occupying the exact spot he had vacated, had the bundle thrust into his hand. He retained it mechanically, in utter abstraction of mind. The bell rang, and the magnificent guard, whose very whiskers curled with an air of calm serenity, said, “Now then, take your seats; make haste.” Edwin grew desperate. Emma smiled bewitchingly to a doting female friend who had nodded and smiled bewitchingly to Emma for the last five minutes, under the impression that the train was just going to start, and who earnestly wished that it *would* start, and save her from the necessity of nodding or smiling any longer.

“Am I to lose sight of her for ever?” muttered Gurwood between his teeth.

The magnificent guard sounded his whistle and held up his hand. Edwin sprang forward, pulled open the carriage door, leaped in and sat down opposite Emma Lee! The iron horse gave two sharp responsive whistles, and sent forth one mighty puff. The train moved, but not with a jerk; it is only clumsy drivers who jerk trains; sometimes pulling them up too soon, and having to make a needless plunge forward again, or overrunning their stopping points and having to check abruptly, so as to cause in timorous minds the impression that an accident has happened. In fact much more of one’s comfort than is generally known depends upon one’s driver being a good one. John Marrot was known to the regular travellers on the line as a first-rate driver, and some of them even took an interest in ascertaining that he was on the engine when they were about to go on a journey. It may be truly said of John that he never “started” his engine at all. He merely as it were insinuated the idea of motion to his iron steed, and so glided softly away.

Just as the train moved, the late passenger thrust head and shoulders out of the window, waved his arms, glared abroad, and shouted, or rather spluttered—

“My b-b-bundle!—wraps!—rug!—lost!”

A smart burly man, with acute features, stepped on the footboard of the carriage, and, moving with the train, asked what sort of rug it was.

“Eh! a b-b-blue one, wi-wi—”

“With,” interrupted the man, “black outside and noo straps?”

“Ye-ye-yes—yes!”

“All right, sir, you shall have it at the next station,” said the acute-faced man, stepping on the platform and allowing the train to pass. As the guard’s van came up he leaped after the magnificent guard into his private apartment and shut the door.

“Hallo! Davy Blunt, somethin’ up?” asked the guard.

“Yes, Joe Turner, there *is* somethin’ up,” replied the acute man, leaning against the brake-wheel. “You saw that tall good-lookin’ feller wi’ the eyeglass and light whiskers?”

“I did. Seemed to me as if his wits had gone on wi’ the last train, an’ he didn’t know how to overtake ‘em.”

“I don’t know about his wits,” said Blunt, “but it seems to me that he’s gone on in *this* train with somebody else’s luggage.”

The guard whistled—not professionally, but orally.

“You don’t say so?”

The acute man nodded, and, leaning his elbows on the window-sill, gazed at the prospect contemplatively.

In a few minutes the 6:30 p.m. train was flying across country at the rate of thirty-five or forty miles an hour.

CHAPTER FOUR

A Double Dilemma and Its Consequences

Meanwhile, the “tall good-looking fellow with the eyeglass and light whiskers” sat quaking opposite Emma Lee. The extreme absurdity, not to say danger, of his position as a traveller to nowhere without a ticket, flashed upon him when too late, and he would have cheerfully given fifty pounds, had he possessed such a sum, if the boards under his feet would have opened and let him drop between the rails. In fact he felt so confused and guilty that—albeit not naturally a shy youth—he did not dare to look at Emma for some time after starting, but sat with downcast eyes, revolving in his mind how he was to get out of the dilemma; but the more he revolved the matter the more hopeless did his case appear. At length he ventured to look at Emma, and their eyes encountered. Of course Gurwood looked pointedly out at the window and became fascinated by the landscape; and of course Emma, looked out at the *other* window, and became equally interested in the landscape. Feeling very unhappy; Edwin soon after that took out a newspaper and tried to read, but failed so completely that he gave it up in despair and laid the paper on the seat beside him.

Just then a happy thought flashed into his mind. He would go on to Langrye station, get out there, and make a confidant of his friend Joseph Tipps, who, of course, could easily get him out of his difficulty. He now felt as if a mighty load were lifted off his heart, and, his natural courage returning, he put up his eyeglass, which had been forgotten during the period of his humiliation, and gazed at the prospect with increasing interest—now through the right window, and then through the left—taking occasion each time to glance with still greater interest at Emma Lee’s beautiful countenance.

The captain, whose disposition was sociable, and who had chatted a good deal with his daughter while their *vis-a-vis* was in his agony, soon took occasion to remark that the scenery was very fine. Edwin, gazing at the black walls of a tunnel into which they plunged, and thinking of Emma’s face, replied that it was—extremely. Emerging from the tunnel, and observing the least possible approach to a smile on Emma’s lips, Edwin remarked to the captain that railway travelling presented rather abrupt changes and contrasts in scenery. The captain laughingly agreed with this, and so, from one thing to another, they went on until the two got into a lively conversation—Captain Lee thinking his travelling companion an extremely agreeable young fellow, and Edwin esteeming the captain one of the jolliest old boys he had ever met! These are the very words he used, long after, in commenting on this meeting to his friend Joseph Tipps.

During a pause in the conversation, Emma asked her father to whom a certain villa they were passing belonged.

“I don’t know,” replied the captain; “stay, let me see, I ought to know most of the places hereabouts—no, I can’t remember.”

“I rather think it belongs to a Colonel Jones,” said Gurwood, for the first time venturing to

address Emma directly. "A friend of mine who is connected with this railway knows him, and has often spoken to me about him. The colonel has led an extremely adventurous life, I believe."

"Indeed!"

There was not much apparently in that little word, but there must have been something mysterious in it, for it caused Edwin's heart to leap as it had never leapt before. On the strength of it he began to relate some of Colonel Jones's adventures, addressing himself now partly to the captain and partly to Emma. He had a happy knack of telling a story, and had thoroughly interested his hearers when the train slowed and stopped, but as this was not the station at which he meant to get out—Langrye being the next—he took no notice of the stoppage. Neither did he pay any regard to a question asked by the acute man, whose face appeared at the window as soon as the train stopped.

"Is that your bundle, sir?" repeated Mr Blunt a little louder.

"Eh? yes, yes—all right," replied Edwin, annoyed at the interruption, and thinking only of Emma Lee, to whom he turned, and went on—"Well, when Colonel Jones had scaled the first wall—"

"Come, sir," said Blunt, entering the carriage, and laying his hand on Edwin's shoulder, "it's *not* all right. This is another man's property."

The youth turned round indignantly, and, with a flushed countenance, said, "What do you mean?"

"I mean that you are travelling with another man's property," said Blunt, quietly pointing to the strapped rug.

"That is not my property," said Edwin, looking at it with a perplexed air, "I never said it was."

"Didn't you though?" exclaimed Blunt, with an appealing look to the captain. "Didn't you say, when I asked you, 'Yes, it's all right.' Moreover, young man, if it's not yours, why did you bring it into the carriage with you?"

"I did not bring it into the carriage," said Edwin, firmly, and with increasing indignation. "I came down to this train with a lady, who is now in it, and who can vouch for it that I brought no luggage of any kind with me. I—"

At this moment the elderly gentleman with brown top-coat and spectacles bustled up to the carriage, recognised his rug, and claimed it, with a good deal of fuss and noise.

"Where are you travelling to?" demanded Blunt, with a touch of sarcasm in his tone.

Poor Gurwood's countenance fell. He became somewhat pale, and said, in a much less resolute voice, "You have no right to ask that question; but since you suspect me, I may tell you that I am going to Langrye."

"Show your ticket," said the guard, looking in at that moment.

A glance showed the unhappy youth that Captain Lee was regarding him with surprise and Emma with intense pity. Desperation gave him courage. He turned abruptly to the captain, and said—

“I regret deeply, sir, that we part with such a foul suspicion hanging over me. Come,” he added sternly to Blunt, “I will go with you, and shall soon prove myself innocent.”

He leaped to the platform, closely accompanied by Blunt.

“Where do you intend to take me?” he asked, turning to his guardian, whom he now knew to be a detective.

“Here, step this way,” said Blunt, leading his prisoner towards the rear of the train.

“Such a nice-looking young man, too, who’d ‘ave thought it!” whispered one of the many heads that were thrust out at the carriage-windows to look at him as he passed.

“Get in here,” said Blunt, holding open the door of an empty second-class compartment of the same train; “we shan’t want a ticket for this part of the journey.”

“But the lady I mentioned,” said poor Edwin, “she can—”

“You can see her at Langrye, young man; come, get in,” said Blunt, sternly, “the train’s just starting.”

Edwin’s blood boiled. He turned to smite the acute-visaged man to the earth, but encountering the serene gaze of the magnificent guard who stood close beside him, he changed his mind and sprang into the carriage. Blunt followed, the door was banged and locked, the signal was given and the train moved on.

“Why do you take me to Langrye instead of back to town?” asked Edwin, after proceeding some distance in silence.

“Because we have an hour to wait for the up train, and it’s pleasanter waiting there than here,” replied Blunt; “besides, I have business at Langrye; I want to see one of my friends there who is looking after light-fingered gentry.”

As this was said significantly Edwin did not deign a reply, but, leaning back in a corner, gazed out at the window and brooded over his unhappy fate. Truly he had something to brood over. Besides being in the unpleasant position which we have described, he had quite recently lost his only relative, a “rich uncle,” as he was called, who had brought Edwin up and had led him to believe that he should be his heir. It was found, however, on the examination of the old gentleman’s affairs, that his fortune was a myth, and that his house, furniture, and personal effects would have to be sold in order to pay his debts. When all was settled, Edwin Gurwood found himself cast upon his own resources with good health, a kind but wayward disposition, a strong handsome frame, a middling education, and between three and four hundred pounds in his pocket. He soon found that this amount of capital melted with alarming rapidity under the influence of a good appetite and expensive tastes, so he resolved at once to commence work of some kind. But what was he to turn to? His uncle had allowed him to do as he pleased. Naturally it pleased the energetic and enthusiastic boy to learn very little of anything useful, to read an immense amount of light literature, and to indulge in much open-air exercise.

Bitterly did he now feel, poor fellow, that this course, although somewhat pleasing at the time, did not fit him to use and enjoy the more advanced period of life. He had disliked and refused to sit still even for an hour at a time in boyhood; it now began to dawn upon him that he was doomed for life to the greatest of all his horrors, the top of a three-legged

stool! He had hated writing and figures, and now visions of ledgers, cash-books, invoice-books and similar literature with endless arithmetical calculations began to float before his mental vision. With intense regret he reflected that if he had only used reasonably well the brief period of life which as yet lay behind him, he might by that time have been done with initial drudgery and have been entering on a brilliant career in one of the learned professions. As to the army and navy, he was too old to get into either, even if he had possessed interest, which he did not. Sternly did he reproach his departed uncle when he brooded over his wrongs, and soliloquised thus:—"You ought to have known that I was a fool, that I could not be expected to know the fact, or to guide myself aright in opposition to and despite of my own folly, and you ought to have forced me to study when I declined to be led—bah! it's too late to say all this now. Come, if there is any manhood in me worthy of the name, let me set to work at once and make the most of what is left to me!"

Edwin reflected with complacency on the fact that one part of what was left to him was a tall strong frame and broad shoulders, but his judgment told him that though these were blessings not to be despised, and for which he had every reason to be thankful, he ought not to plume himself too much on them, seeing that he shared them in common with numerous prize-fighters and burglars, besides which they could not prove of very much value professionally unless he took to mining or coal-heaving. He also reflected sadly on the fact that beyond the three R's, a little Latin and French, and a smattering of literary knowledge, he was little better than a red Indian. Being, as we have said, a resolute fellow, he determined to commence a course of study without delay, but soon found that the necessity of endeavouring to obtain a situation and of economising his slender fortune interfered sadly with his efforts. However, he persevered.

In the time of his prosperity, young Gurwood had made many friends, but a touch of pride had induced him to turn aside from these—although many of them would undoubtedly have been glad to aid him in his aims—to quit the house of his childhood and betake himself to the flourishing town of Clatterby, where he knew nobody except one soft amiable little school-fellow, whom in boyish days he had always deemed a poor, miserable little creature, but for whom nevertheless he entertained a strong affection. We need scarcely say that this was Joseph Tipps, the clerk at Langrye station.

CHAPTER FIVE

An Accident and Its Consequences

Locomotives and telegraphy are mere snails compared to thought. Let us therefore use our advantage, reader, stride in advance of the 6:30 p.m. train (which by the way has now become a 7:45 p.m. train), and see what little Joseph Tipps is doing.

There he stands—five feet four in his highest-heeled boots—as sterling and warm-hearted a little man as ever breathed. He was writing at a little desk close to a large window, which, owing to the station being a temporary one and its roof low, was flimsy, and came nearer to the ground than most windows do.

Mr Tipps wrote somewhat nervously. He inherited his mother's weakness in this respect; and, besides, his nerves had been a little shaken, by the sudden illness, with which his sister had been seized that day, at his lodgings.

Outside on the platform a few people lounged, waiting the arrival of the expected train. Among them was one whose bulky frame and firm strongly-lined countenance spoke of much power to dare and do. He was considerably above the middle height and somewhere about middle age. His costume was of that quiet unobtrusive kind which seems to court retirement, and the sharp glance of his eyes seemed to possess something of the gimblet in their penetrating power. This was no less a personage than Mr Sharp, the inspector of police on the Grand National Trunk Railway. Mr Inspector Sharp had evidently an eye for the beautiful, for he stood at the farther extremity of the platform gazing in rapt attention at the sun, which just then was setting in a flood of golden light. But Mr Sharp had also a peculiar faculty for observing several things at once. Indeed, some of his friends, referring to this, were wont to remark that he was a perfect Argus, with eyes in his elbows and calves and back of his head. It would seem, indeed, that this, or something like it, must really have been the case, for he not only observed and enjoyed the sunset but also paid particular attention to the conversation of two men who stood not far from him, and at the same time was cognisant of the fact that behind him, a couple of hundred yards or more up the line, a goods engine was engaged in shunting trucks.

This process of shunting, we may explain for the benefit of those who don't know, consists in detaching trucks from trains of goods and shoving them into sidings, so that they may be out of the way, until their time comes to be attached to other trains, which will convey them to their proper destination, or to have their contents, if need be, unloaded and distributed among other trucks. Shunting is sometimes a tedious process, involving much hauling, pushing, puffing, and whistling, on the part of the engine, and uncoupling of trucks and shifting of points on the part of pointsmen and porters. There is considerable danger, too, in the process,—or rather there *was* danger before the introduction of the "block system," which now, when it is adopted, renders accidents almost impossible,—of which system more shall be said hereafter. The danger lies in this, that shunting has frequently to be done during intervals between the passing of passenger-trains, and, on lines where passenger and goods traffic is very great, these intervals are sometimes

extremely brief. But, strange to say, this danger is the mother of safety, for the difficulty of conducting extensive traffic is so great, that a combination of all but perfect systems of signalling, telegraphing, and organisation is absolutely needful to prevent constant mishap. Hence the marvellous result that, in the midst of danger, we are in safety, and travelling by railway is really less dangerous than travelling by stage-coach used to be in days of old. Yes, timid reader, we assure you that if you travel daily by rail your chances of coming to grief are very much fewer than if you were to travel daily by mail coach. Facts and figures prove this beyond all doubt, so that we are entitled to take the comfort of it. The marvel is, not that loss of life is so great, but that it is so small.

Do you doubt it, reader? Behold the facts and figures—wonder, be thankful and doubt no more! A “Blue Book” (Captain Tyler’s General Report to the Board of Trade on Railway Accidents during the year 1870) tells us that the number of passengers killed on railways last year was ninety. The number of passenger journeys performed was 307 millions, which gives, in round numbers, one passenger killed for every three and a half millions that travelled. In the best mail and stage-coaching days the yearly number of travellers was about two millions. The present railway death-rate applied to this number amounts to a little more than one-half of a unit! Will any one out of Bedlam have the audacity to say that in coaching days only half a passenger was killed each year? We leave facts to speak for themselves, and common-sense to judge whether men were safer then than they are now.

But to return. When Mr Sharp was looking at the distant waggons that were being shunted he observed that the engine which conducted the operation was moved about with so much unnecessary fuss and jerking that he concluded it must be worked by a new, or at all events a bad, driver. He shook his head, therefore, pulled out his watch, and muttered to himself that it seemed to him far too near the time of the arrival of a train to make it safe to do such work.

The calculations, however, had been made correctly, and the train of trucks would have been well out of the way, if the driver had been a smarter man. Even as things stood, however, there should have been no danger, because the distant signal was turned to danger, which thus said to any approaching train, “Stop! for your life.” But here occurred one of these mistakes, or pieces of carelessness, or thoughtlessness, to which weak and sinful human nature is, and we suppose always will be, liable. Perhaps the signalman thought the goods train had completed its operation, or fancied that the express was not so near as it proved to be, or he got confused—we cannot tell; there is no accounting for such things, but whatever the cause, he turned off the danger-signal half a minute too soon, and set the line free.

Suddenly the down train came tearing round the curve. It was at reduced speed certainly, but not sufficiently reduced to avoid a collision with the trucks on a part of the line where no trucks should be.

Our friend John Marrot was on the look-out of course, and so was his mate. They saw the trucks at once. Like lightning John shut off the steam and at the same instant touched his whistle several sharp shrieks, which was the alarm to the guard to turn on *his* brakes. No men could have been more prompt or cool. Joe Turner and Will Garvie had on full brake-power in a second or two. At the same time John Marrot instantly reversing the engine, let

on full steam—but all in vain. Fire flew in showers from the shrieking wheels—the friction on the rails must have been tremendous, nevertheless the engine dashed into the goods train like a thunderbolt with a stunning crash and a noise that is quite indescribable.

The police superintendent, who was all but run over, stood for a few seconds aghast at the sight and at the action of the engine. Not satisfied with sending one of its own carriages into splinters, the iron horse made three terrific plunges or efforts to advance, and at each plunge a heavy truck full of goods was, as it were, pawed under its wheels and driven out behind, under the tender, in the form of a mass of matchwood—all the goods, hard and soft, as well as the heavy frame of the truck itself being minced up together in a manner that defies description. It seemed as though the monster had been suddenly endued with intelligence, and was seeking to vent its horrid rage on the thing that had dared to check its pace. Three loaded trucks it crushed down, over-ran, and scattered wide in this way, in three successive plunges, and then, rushing on a few yards among chaotic *debris*, turned slowly on its side, and hurled the driver and fireman over the embankment.

The shock received by the people at the station was tremendous. Poor Tipps, standing at his desk, was struck—nervously—as if by electricity. He made one wild involuntary bolt right through the window, as if it had been made of tissue paper, and did not cease to run until he found himself panting in the middle of a turnip-field that lay at the back of the station. Turning round, ashamed of himself, he ran back faster than he had run away, and leaping recklessly among the *debris*, began to pull broken and jagged timber about, under the impression that he was rescuing fellow-creatures from destruction!

Strange to say no one was killed on that occasion—no one was even severely hurt, except the driver. But of course this was not known at first and the people who were standing about hurried, with terrible forebodings, to lend assistance to the passengers.

Mr Sharp seemed to have been smitten with feelings somewhat similar to those of Tipps, for, without knowing very well how or why, he suddenly found himself standing up to the armpits in *debris*, heaving might and main at masses of timber.

“Hallo! lift away this beam, will you?” shouted a half-smothered voice close beside him.

It came from beneath the carriage that we have described as having been broken to splinters.

Sharp was a man of action. He hailed a porter near him and began with energy and power to tear up and hurl aside the boards. Presently on raising part of the broken framework of the carriage a man struggled to his feet and, wiping away the blood that flowed from a wound in his forehead, revealed the countenance of Edwin Gurwood to the astonished Tipps.

“What! Edwin!” he exclaimed.

“Ay—don’t stand there, man. Your mother is in the train.”

Poor Tipps could not speak—he could only gasp the word, “Where?”

“In a third-class, behind—there, it is safe, I see.”

His friend at once leaped towards the vehicle pointed out, but Edwin did not follow, he glanced wildly round in search of another carriage.

“You are hurt—Mr Gurwood, if I mistake not,—lean on me,” said Mr Sharp.

“It’s nothing—only a scratch. Ha! that’s the carriage, follow me,” cried Edwin, struggling towards a first-class carriage, which appeared considerably damaged, though it had not left the rails. He wrenched open the door, and, springing in, found Captain Lee striving in vain to lift his daughter, who had fainted. Edwin stooped, raised her in his arms, and, kicking open the door on the opposite side, leaped down, followed by the captain. They quickly made their way to the station, where they found most of the passengers, hurt and unhurt, already assembled, with two doctors, who chanced to be in the train, attending to them.

Edwin laid his light burden tenderly on a couch and one of the doctors immediately attended to her. While he was applying restoratives Mr Blunt touched Edwin on the elbow and requested him to follow him. With a feeling of sudden anger Gurwood turned round, but before he could speak his eye fell on Mrs Tipps, who sat on a bench leaning on her son’s breast, and looking deadly pale but quite composed.

“My dear Mrs Tipps,” exclaimed the youth, stepping hastily forward, “I hope—I trust—”
“Oh, Edwin—thank you, my dear fellow,” cried Joseph, grasping his hand and shaking it. “She is not hurt, thank God—not even a scratch—only a little shaken. Fetch a glass of water, you’ll find one in the booking-office.”

Gurwood ran out to fetch it. As he was returning he met Captain Lee leading his daughter out of the waiting-room.

“I sincerely hope that your daughter is not hurt,” he said, in earnest tones. “Perhaps a little water might—”

“No, thank you,” said the captain somewhat stiffly.

“The carriage is waiting, sir,” said a servant in livery, coming up at the moment and touching his hat.

Emma looked at Edwin for a second, and, with a slight but perplexed smile of acknowledgment, passed on.

Next moment the carriage drove away, and she was gone. Edwin at the same time became aware of the fact that the pertinacious Blunt was at his side. Walking quickly into the waiting-room he presented the glass of water to Mrs Tipps, but to his surprise that eccentric lady rose hastily and said,—“Thank you, Mr Gurwood, many thanks, but I am better. Come, Joseph—let us hasten to our darling Netta. Have you sent for a fly?”

“There is one waiting, mother—take my arm. Many, many thanks for your kindness in coming with her, Gurwood,” said Tipps. “I can’t ask you to come with me just now, I—”

The rest of his speech was lost in consequence of the impatient old lady dragging her son away, but what had been heard of it was sufficient to fill Mr Blunt with surprise and perplexity.

“Well, Blunt,” said Mr Superintendent Sharp, coming up at that moment, “what has brought you here?”

The detective related his story privately to his superior, and remarked that he began to fear

there must be some mistake.

“Yes, there is a mistake of some sort,” said Sharp, with a laugh, “for I’ve met him frequently at Clatterby station, and know him to be a friend of Mr Tipps; but you have done your duty, Blunt, so you can now leave the gentleman to me,” saying which he went up to Edwin and entered into an under-toned conversation with him, during which it might have been observed that Edwin looked a little confused at times, and Mr Sharp seemed not a little amused.

“Well, it’s all right,” he said at last, “we have telegraphed for a special train to take on the passengers who wish to proceed, and you can go back, if you choose, in the up train, which is about due. It will be able to get past in the course of half-an-hour. Fortunately the rails of the up-line are not damaged and the wreck can soon be cleared.”

Just then the dandy with the sleepy eyes and long whiskers sauntered up to the porter on duty, with an unconcerned and lazy air. He had received no further injury than a shaking, and therefore felt that he could afford to affect a cool and not-easy-to-be-ruffled demeanour.

“Aw—po—taw,” said he, twirling his watch-key, “w’en d’you expect anotha twain to take us on?”

“Don’t know, sir, probably half-an-hour.”

“Aw! Dooched awkwad. My fwend has got the bwidge of his nose damaged, besides some sort of internal injuway, and won’t be able to attend to business to-night, I fear—dooched awkwad.”

“D’you hear that?” whispered Sharp to Gurwood, as the “fwend” in question—he with the checked trousers—sauntered past holding a handkerchief to his nose. “I know by the way in which that was said that there will be something more heard some day hence of our fop in checks. Just come and stand with me in the doorway of the waiting-room, and listen to what some of the other passengers are saying.”

“Very hard,” observed a middle-aged man with a sour countenance, who did not present the appearance of one who had sustained any injury at all, “very hard this. I shall miss meeting with a friend, and perhaps lose doin’ a good stroke of business to-night.”

“Be thankful you haven’t lost your life,” said Will Garvie, who supported the head of his injured mate.

“Mayhap I *have* lost my life, young man,” replied the other sharply. “Internal injuries from accidents often prove fatal, and don’t always show at first. I’ve had a severe shake.”

Here the sour-faced man shook himself slightly, partly to illustrate and partly to prove his point.

“You’re quite right, sur,” remarked an Irishman, who had a bandage tied round his head, but who did not appear to be much, if at all, the worse of the accident. “It’s a disgrace intirely that the railways should be allowed to trait us in this fashion. If they’d only go to the trouble an’ expense of havin’ proper signals on lines, there would be nothing o’ this kind. And if Government would make a law to have an arm-chair fitted up in front of every locomotive and a director made to travel with sich train, we’d hear of fewer

accidents. But it's meself 'll come down on 'em for heavy damages for this."

He pointed to his bandaged head, and nodded with a significant glance at the company.

A gentleman in a blue travelling-cap, who had hitherto said nothing, and who turned out to have received severer injuries than any other passenger, here looked up impatiently, and said—

"It appears to me that there is a great deal of unjust and foolish talk against railway companies, as if they, any more than other companies, could avoid accidents. The system of signalling on a great part of this line is the best that has been discovered up to this date, and it is being applied to the whole line as fast as circumstances will warrant; but you can't expect to attain perfection in a day. What would you have? How can you expect to travel at the rate you do, and yet be as safe as if you were in one of the old mail-coaches?"

"Right, sir; you're right," cried John Marrot energetically, raising himself a little from the bench on which he lay, "right in sayin' we shouldn't ought to expect perfection, but wrong in supposin' the old mail-coaches was safer. W'y, railways is safer. They won't stand no comparison. Here 'ave I bin drivin' on this 'ere line for the last eight year an' only to come to grief three times, an' killed no more than two people. There ain't a old coach goin', or gone, as could say as much. An' w'en you come to consider that in them eight years I've bin goin' more than two-thirds o' the time at an average o' forty mile an hour—off an' on—all night a'most as well as all day, an' run thousands and thousands o' miles, besides carryin' millions of passengers, more or less, it do seem most rediklous to go for to say that coaches was safer than railways—the revarse bein' the truth. Turn me round a bit, Bill; so, that'll do. It's the bad leg I come down on, else I shouldn't have bin so hard-up. Yes, sir, as you truly remark, railway companies ain't fairly dealt with, by no means."

At this point the attention of the passengers was attracted by a remarkably fat woman, who had hitherto lain quietly on a couch breathing in a somewhat stertorous manner. One of the medical men had been so successful in his attention to her as to bring her to a state of consciousness. Indeed she had been more or less in this condition for some time past, but feeling rather comfortable than otherwise, and dreamy, she had lain still and enjoyed herself. Being roused, however, to a state of activity by means of smelling-salts, and hearing the doctor remark that, except a shaking, she appeared to have sustained no injury, this stout woman deemed it prudent to go off into hysterics, and began by uttering a yell that would have put to shame a Comanche Indian, and did more damage, perhaps, to the nerves of her sensitive hearers than the accident itself. She followed it up by drumming heavily on the couch with her heels.

Singularly enough her yell was replied to by the whistle of the up train, that had been due for some time past. She retorted by a renewed shriek, and became frantic in her assurances that no power yet discovered—whether mechanical, moral, or otherwise—could or would, ever persuade her to set foot again in a railway train! It was of no use to assure her that no one meant to exert such a power, even if he possessed it; that she was free to go where she pleased, and whenever she felt inclined. The more that stout woman was implored to compose herself, the more she discomposed herself, and everybody else; and the more she was besought to be calm, the more, a great deal, did she fill the waiting-room with hysterical shrieks and fiendish laughter, until at last every one was glad to go out of the

place and get into the train that was waiting to take them back to Clatterby. Then the stout woman became suddenly calm, and declared to a porter—who must have had a heart of stone, so indifferent was he to her woes—that she would be, “glad to proceed to the nearest ‘otel if ‘e would be good enough to fetch her a fly.”

“H’m!” said Mr Sharp, as he and young Gurwood entered a carriage together, after having seen John Marrot placed on a pile of rugs on the floor of a first-class carriage; “there’s been work brewin’ up for me to-night.”

“How? What do you mean?” asked Edwin.

“I mean that, from various indications which I observed this evening, we are likely to have some little correspondence with the passengers of the 6:30 p.m. train. However, we’re used to it; perhaps we’ll get not to mind it in course of time. We do all that we can to accommodate the public—fit up our carriages and stations in the best style compatible with giving our shareholders a small dividend—carry them to and fro over the land at little short of lightning speed, every day and all day and night too, for extremely moderate fares, and with excessive safety and exceeding comfort; enable them to live in the country and do business in the city, as well as afford facilities for visiting the very ends of the earth in a few days; not to mention other innumerable blessings to which we run them, or which we run *to* them, and yet no sooner does a rare accident occur (as it *will* occur in every human institution, though it occurs less on railways than in most other institutions) than down comes this ungrateful public upon us with indignant cries of ‘disgraceful!’ and, in many cases, unreasonable demands for compensation.”

“Such is life,” said Gurwood with a smile.

“On the rail,” added Mr Superintendent Sharp with a sigh, as the whistle sounded and the train moved slowly out of the station.

CHAPTER SIX

History of the Iron Horse

Having gone thus far in our tale, permit us, good reader, to turn aside for a little to make a somewhat closer inspection of the Iron Horse and his belongings.

Railways existed long before the Iron Horse was born. They sprang into being two centuries ago in the form of tramways, which at first were nothing more or less than planks or rails of timber laid down between the Newcastle-on-Tyne collieries and the river, for the purpose of forming a better “way” over which to run the coal-trucks. From simple timber-rails men soon advanced to planks having a strip of iron nailed on their surface to prevent too rapid tear and wear, but it was not till the year 1767 that cast-iron rails were introduced. In order to prevent the trucks from slipping off the line the rails were cast with an upright flange or guide at one side, and were laid on wooden or stone sleepers.

This form of rail being found inconvenient, the flange was transferred from the rails to the wheels, and this arrangement, under various modifications has been ever since retained.

These “innocent” railroads—as they have been sometimes and most appropriately named, seeing that they were guiltless alike of blood and high speed—were drawn by horses, and confined at first to the conveyance of coals. Modest though their pretensions were, however, they were found to be an immense improvement on the ordinary roads, insomuch that ten horses were found to be capable of working the traffic on railroads, which it required 400 horses to perform on a common road. These iron roads, therefore, began to multiply, and about the beginning of the present century they were largely employed in the coal-fields and mineral districts of the kingdom. About the same time thoughtful men, seeing the immense advantage of such ways, began to suggest the formation of railways, or tramways, to run along the side of our turnpike-roads—a mode of conveyance, by the way, in regard to towns, which thoughtful men are still, ever at the present day of supposed enlightenment, endeavouring to urge upon an unbelieving public—a mode of conveyance which we feel very confident will entirely supersede our cumbrous and antiquated “bus” in a very short time. What, we ask, in the name of science and art and common-sense, is to prevent a tramway being laid from Kensington to the Bank, “or elsewhere,” which shall be traversed by a succession of roomy carriages following each other every five minutes; which tramway might be crossed and recrossed and run upon, or, in other words, used by all the other vehicles of London except when the rightful carriages were in the way? Nothing prevents, save that same unbelief which has obstructed the development of every good thing from the time that Noah built the ark! But we feel assured that the thing shall be, and those who read this book may perhaps live to see it!

But to return. Among these thoughtful and far-seeing men was one Dr James Anderson, who in 1800 proposed the formation of railways by the roadsides, and he was so correct in his views that the plans which he suggested of keeping the level, by going round the base

of hills, or forming viaducts, or cutting tunnels, is precisely the method practised by engineers of the present day. Two years later a Mr Edgeworth announced that he had long before, “formed the project of laying iron railways for baggage waggons on the great roads of England,” and, in order to prevent tear and wear, he proposed, instead of conveying heavy loads in one huge waggon, to have a train of small waggons. With the modesty of true genius, which never over-estimates or forms wildly sanguine expectations, he thought that each waggon might perhaps carry one ton and a half! Edgeworth also suggested that *passengers* might travel by such a mode of conveyance. Bold man! What a goose many people of his day must have thought him. If they had been alive now, what geese they might have thought themselves. The Society of Arts, however, were in advance of their time. They rewarded Edgeworth with their gold medal.

This man seems to have been a transcendent genius, because he not only devised and made (on a small scale) iron railways, but proposed to take ordinary vehicles, such as mail-coaches and private carriages, on his trucks, and convey them along his line at the rate of six or eight miles an hour with one horse. He also propounded the idea of the employment of stationary steam-engines (locomotives not having been dreamed of) to drag the trains up steep inclines.

Another semi-prophetic man of these days was Thomas Gray, of Leeds, who in 1820 published a work on what he styled a “General Iron Railway, or Land Steam Conveyance, to supersede the necessity of Horses in all public vehicles, showing its vast superiority in every respect over the present pitiful Methods of Conveyance by Turnpike-Roads and Canals.” Gray, whose mind appears to have been unusually comprehensive, proposed a system of railway communication between all the important cities and towns in the kingdom, and pointed out the immense advantage that would be gained to commerce by such a ready and rapid means of conveying fish, vegetables, and other perishable articles from place to place. He also showed that two post deliveries in the day would become possible, and that fire insurance companies would be able to promote their interests by keeping railway fire-engines, ready to be transported to scenes of conflagration without delay.

But Gray was not esteemed a prophet. His suggestions were not adopted nor his plans acted on, though unquestionably his wisdom and energy gave an impulse to railway development, of which we are reaping the benefit to-day. His labours were not in vain.

Horse railways soon began to multiply over the country. The first authorised by Act of Parliament was the Surrey Railway in 1801. Twenty years later twenty lines of railway were in operation.

About this time, too, another man of note and of great scientific and mechanical sagacity lent his powerful aid to advance the interests of the railway cause. This was Charles Maclaren, of Edinburgh, editor of the *Scotsman* newspaper for nearly thirty years. He had long foreseen, and boldly asserted his belief in, the certain success of steam locomotion by rail, at a time when opinions such as his were scouted as wild delusive dreams. But he did more, he brought his able pen to bear on the subject, and in December 1825 published a series of articles in the *Scotsman* on the subject of railways, which were not only extensively quoted and republished in this country and in America, but were deemed worthy of being translated into French and German, and so disseminated over Europe. Mr

Maclaren was thus among the foremost of those who gave a telling impulse to the cause at that critical period when the Iron horse was about to be put on the rail—the right horse in the right place—for it was not many years afterwards that that auspicious event took place. Mr Maclaren not only advocated generally the adoption of railways, but logically demonstrated the wonderful powers and capacities of the steam locomotive, arguing, from the experiments on friction made more than half a century before by Vince and Colomb, that by the use of steam-power on railroads a much more rapid and cheaper transit of persons as well as merchandise might be confidently anticipated. He leaped far ahead of many of even the most hopeful advocates of the cause, and with almost prophetic foresight wrote, “there is scarcely any limit to the rapidity of movement these iron pathways will enable us to command.” And again,—“We have spoken of vehicles travelling at twenty miles an hour; but we see no reason for thinking that, in the progress of improvement, a much higher velocity might not be found practicable; and in twenty years hence a shopkeeper or mechanic, on the most ordinary occasion, may probably travel with a speed that would leave the fleetest courser behind.” Wonderful words these! At a first glance we may not deem them so, being so familiar with the ideas which they convey, but our estimate of them will be more just if we reflect that when they were penned railways had scarcely sprung into being, steam locomotives had only just been born, and not only men in general, but even many learned, scientific and practical men regarded the statement of all such opinions as being little short of insanity. Nevertheless, many deep-thinking men thought differently, and one contemporary, reviewing this subject in after years, said of Mr Maclaren’s papers, that, “they prepared the way for the success of railway projectors.”

We have said that the steam locomotive—the material transformer of the world—our Iron Horse, had just been born. It was not however born on the rails, but on the common road, and a tremendous baby-giant it was, tearing up its cradle in such furious fashion that men were terrified by it, and tried their best to condemn it to inactivity, just as a weak and foolish father might lock up his unruly boy and restrain him perforce, instead of training him wisely in the way in which he should go.

But the progenitors of the Iron Horse were, like their Herculean child, men of mettle. They fought a gallant fight for their darling’s freedom, and came off victorious!

Of course, many men and many nations were anxious to father this magnificent infant, and to this day it is impossible to say precisely who originated him. He is said by some to have sprung from the brains of Englishmen, others assert that brains in France and Switzerland begat him, and we believe that brother Jonathan exercised his prolific brain on him, before the actual time of his birth. The first name on record in connexion with this infant Hercules is that of Dr Robison, who communicated his ideas to Watt in 1759. The latter thereupon made a model locomotive, but entertained doubts as to its safety. Oliver Evans, of Philadelphia, patented a “steam waggon” in 1782. William Murdoch, the friend and assistant of Watt, made a model in 1787 which drew a small waggon round a room in his house in Cornwall. In the same year Symington exhibited a model locomotive in Edinburgh, and in 1795 he worked a steam-engine on a turnpike-road in Lanarkshire. Richard Trevethick, who had seen Murdoch’s model, made and patented a locomotive in 1802. It drew on a tramway a load of ten tons at the rate of five miles an hour. Trevethick also made a carriage to run on common roads, and altogether did good service in the cause.

Blenkinsop, of Middleton Colliery, near Leeds, made locomotives in 1811 which hauled coals up steep ascents by means of a toothed rail, with a toothed propelling wheel working into it. This unnatural infant, however, turned out to be not the true child. It was found that such a powerful creature did not require teeth at all, that he could “bite” quite well enough by means of his weight alone,—so the teeth were plucked out and never allowed to grow again.

After this, in 1813, came Brunton of Butterley, with a curious contrivance in the form of legs and feet, which were attached to the rear of his engine and propelled it by a sort of walking motion. It did not walk well, however, and very soon walked off the field of competition altogether.

At last, in the fulness of time there came upon the scene the great railway king, George Stephenson, who, if he cannot be said to have begotten the infant, at all events brought him up and effectually completed his training.

George Stephenson was one of our most celebrated engineers, and the “father of the railway system.” He may truly be said to have been one of mankind’s greatest benefactors. He was a self-taught man, was born near Newcastle in 1781, began life as a pit-engine boy with wages at two-pence a day, and ultimately rose to fame and fortune as an engineer.

In 1814 he made a locomotive for the Killingworth Colliery Railway. It drew thirty tons at the rate of four miles an hour, and was regarded as a great success. In 1825 an engine of the same kind was used on the Stockton and Darlington Railway, of which Stephenson had been made engineer.

But the great crowning effort of Stephenson, and the grand impulse to the railway cause, which carried it steadily and swiftly on to its present amazing degree of prosperity, did not occur till the year 1829.

Previous to that date the Manchester and Liverpool Railway was being constructed, and so little was known as to the capabilities of railways and the best mode of working them, that the directors and engineers had some difficulty in deciding whether the line should be worked by fixed engines or by locomotives. It was ultimately decided that the latter should be used, and a premium of 500 pounds was offered for the best locomotive that could be produced, in accordance with certain conditions. These were—That the chimney should emit no smoke—that the engine should be on springs—that it should not weigh more than six tons, or four-and-a-half tons if it had only four wheels—that it should be able to draw a load of twenty tons at the rate of ten miles an hour, with a pressure of fifty pounds to the square inch in the boiler, and should not cost more than 500 pounds.

The Iron Horse was now at last about to assume its right position. It was no longer an infant, but a powerful stripling—though still far from its full growth; as far as six tons is from sixty!

Four iron steeds were entered to compete for the prize. It was in October 1829 that this celebrated trial came off, and great was the interest manifested on the occasion, for not only did the public entertain doubts as to the capabilities of locomotives, but very few even of the engineers of the country would admit the possibility of a locomotive engine attaining a speed greater than ten miles an hour! First came the “Novelty” of Braithwaite

and Ericson; then the “Sans pareil” of Hawkworth; the “Perseverance” of Burstall; and, lastly, the “Rocket” of Stephenson. Of the first three we shall merely say that the “Novelty,” being weak in the wheels, broke down; the “Sans pareil” burst one of her cylinders; and the “Perseverance” turned out to be too heavy to comply with the conditions of the trial.

The “Rocket” advanced, and was harnessed to a train of waggons weighing thirteen tons; the fire was lighted, and the steam got up. The valves lifted at the stipulated fifty pounds pressure, and away it went with its load at an average speed of fifteen, and a maximum speed of twenty–nine miles an hour! Thus triumphantly the “Rocket” won the prize of 500 pounds, and the Iron Horse was fairly and finally married to the Iron Road. One of the important elements of Stephenson’s success lay in the introduction of numerous tubes into his boiler, through which the fire, and heat passed, and thus presented a vast amount of heating surface to the water. Another point was his allowing the waste steam to pass through the chimney, thus increasing the draught and intensifying the combustion; for heat is the life of the locomotive, and without much of this, high rates of speed could not be attained.

The difference between the first locomotive and those now in use is very great—as may be seen any day in London, by any one who chooses to visit one of our great railway stations, and go thence to the Kensington Museum, where the “Rocket” is now enshrined—a memorial of Stephenson’s wisdom, and of the beginning of our magnificent railway system. Yet though the difference be great it is wonderful how complete the “Rocket” was, all things considered. The modern improvements made on locomotives consist chiefly in clothing the boiler with wood, felt, and other non–conductors to increase the life–giving heat; in heating the feed–water, coupling the driving–wheels, working the cylinders horizontally, economising steam by cutting off the supply at any part of the stroke that may be required, and economising fuel by using raw coal instead of coke, and consuming the smoke, besides many other minor contrivances, but all the great principles affecting the locomotive were applied by George Stephenson, and illustrated in the “Rocket.”

It is no wonder that the first Iron Horse was clumsy in appearance and somewhat grotesque, owing to the complication of rods, cranks, and other machinery, which was all exposed to view. It required years of experience to enable our engineers to construct the grand, massive, simple chargers which now run off with our monster–trains as if they were feathers. When the iron horse was first made, men were naturally in haste to ascertain his power and paces. He was trotted out, so to speak, in his skeleton, with his heart and lungs and muscles exposed to view in complex hideosity! Now–a–days he never appears without his skin well–groomed and made gay with paint and polished brass and steel.

We have said that the “Rocket” drew thirteen tons at nearly thirty miles an hour. Our best engines can now draw hundreds of tons, and they can run at the rate of above sixty miles an hour at maximum speed. The more ordinary speed, however, for passenger–trains is from thirty to forty–five miles an hour. The weight of the “Rocket” was six tons. That of some of our largest engines with tenders is from forty to above fifty tons.

From the time of the opening of the old Manchester and Liverpool Railway in 1830 to the present day—a period of little more than forty years— railway construction has gone forward throughout the land—and we may add the world—with truly railway speed,

insomuch that England has become covered from end to end with an absolute network of iron roads, and the benefit to our country has been inconceivably great. It would require a large volume to treat of these and correlative subjects, as they deserve.

Two hundred years ago the course of post between London and Edinburgh was one month; before an answer could be received two months had to elapse! About a hundred years later there was one stage-coach between the two cities, which did the distance in a fortnight, rendering communication and reply possible once in each month. In those days roads were uncommonly bad. One writer tells us that, while travelling in Lancashire, a county now traversed by railways in all directions, he found one of the principal roads so bad that there were ruts in it, which he measured, four feet deep, and that the only mending it received was the tumbling of stones into these holes to fill them up. The extremely limited goods traffic of the country was conducted by the slow means of carts and waggons. Enterprising men, however, then as now, were pushing the world forward, though they were by no means so numerous then as now. In 1673 it took a week to travel between London and Exeter, and cost from forty to forty-five shillings. About the same period a six-horse coach took six days to perform the journey between Edinburgh and Glasgow and back. To accomplish fifty miles or thereabouts in two days with a six-horse stage-coach, was considered good work and high speed about the beginning of last century. Near the middle of it (1740) travelling by night was for the first time introduced, and soon after that a coach was started with a wicker-basket slung behind for outside passengers! Some years afterwards an enterprising individual started a "flying coach" drawn by eight horses, which travelled between London and Dover in a day—the fare being one guinea. Even at the beginning of the present century four miles an hour was deemed a very fair rate of travelling for a stage-coach.

With the improvement of roads by the famous Macadam in 1816, began improved travelling and increased speed. The process was rapid. Mail-coaches began to overrun the country in all directions at the then remarkable pace of from eight to ten miles an hour,—and, let us remark in passing, there was a whirl and dash about these stage-coaches which railway trains, with all their velocity can never hope to attain to, except when they dash into each other! Man is but a weak creature in some senses. Facts are scarcely facts to him unless they touch his eye or ear. The smooth run of a train at twenty or even thirty miles an hour, with its gradual start and gentle pull up, has but a slight effect on him now compared with the splendid swing of the well-appointed mail coach of old as it swept round the bend of a road, and, with red-coated driver and guard, cracking whip, flying dust and stones, and reeking foam-flecked horses, dashed into town and pulled up, while at nearly full speed, amid all the glorious crash and turmoil of arrival! No doubt the passing of an express train within a yard of your nose is something peculiarly awful, and if you ever get permission to ride on the engine of an express, the *real* truth regarding speed, weight, momentum, will make a profound impression on you, but in ordinary circumstances the arrival of a train cannot for a moment compare with the dash, the animal spirit, the enthusiasm, the romance of the mail coach of days gone by.

About the time that the day of slow speed was drawing to a close (1837) licenses were granted to 3026 stage-coaches, of which 1507 went to and from London, besides 103 mail-coaches. And it has been estimated that the number of passengers carried in the year about that time was two millions. In regard to the merchandise traffic of the kingdom, we

cannot give statistics, but we ask the reader to bear in mind that it was all conducted by means of heavy waggons and slow-going canal barges.

Now, let us contrast this state of things with the condition and influence of railways up to the present time. As we have said, the iron horse began his career in 1830 on the Liverpool and Manchester line—long since become part of the London and North-Western Railway—at that time thirty-one miles long. Eight years later, Liverpool, Manchester, and Birmingham were completely connected with London by railway. Then, as success attended the scheme, new lines were undertaken and opened at a still more rapid rate until, in 1843—despite the depression caused for a time by over-speculating—there were nearly 2000 miles of railway open for traffic. In 1850 there were above 6000 miles open; in 1860, above 10,000. In 1864 the railways of the kingdom employed upwards of 7200 locomotives, 23,470 passenger carriages, and 212,900 goods and mineral waggons. In that one year about five million passengers and goods trains ran 130 millions of miles—a distance that would encircle the earth 5221 times—the earth being 24,896 miles in circumference. In 1866 the gross receipts of railways was about forty millions of pounds sterling. At the present date (1871) above 14,000 miles of railway are open in the United Kingdom. This mileage is divided amongst about 430 companies, but a considerable number of these have been incorporated with the larger companies, such as the London and North west, the Great Western, etcetera.

All the lines carried in one year (1870) somewhere about 307 millions of passengers—in other words, that number of passenger journeys were performed on them. The mail and stage-coaches in their best days only conveyed, as we have said, two millions! [\[1\]](#)

It is almost overwhelming to consider what a vast change in the condition and habits of the people of this country is implied in these figures. Forty years ago none travelled but the comparatively rich, and that only to an extent equal to about two-thirds of the present population of London. Now—a-days the poorest artisan can, and does, afford to travel, and the number of journeys performed each year on all our British railways is equal to more than the entire population of Europe! which, in Stewart's "Modern Geography," is set down at 285 millions. From this of course it follows, that as many thousands of men, women, and children never travel at all, many others must have undertaken numerous journeys in that year.

The facilities afforded by railways are altogether innumerable. If so disposed you may sup one night in the south of England and the next night in the north of Scotland. Thousands of families dwell in the country, while the heads thereof go to their business in town by rail every morning and return home every evening. Huntsmen, booted and spurred, are whirled off, horses and all, to distant fields, whence, after "crossing country" all day, they return to the railway and are whirled back to town in time for dinner. Navvys and artisans are conveyed to their work at a penny a mile, and monster-trains carry thousands of excursionists to scenes of rural delight that our fathers never dreamed of in their wildest flights of fancy.

One of the most remarkable and interesting facts in connexion with all this is, that although mail-coaches have been beaten off the field, there are actually more horses employed in this country now than there were in 1837, while canals are doing more business than they ever did, and are making higher profits too. In 1865 the carriage of

cattle by railway amounted to between fourteen or fifteen million head of all kinds. The consumption of coal, in the same year, by our railways amounted to four million tons, and the quantity of that and other minerals carried by rail continually is enormous.

The benefit derived by the post-office also from our railways is incalculable. We cannot afford space to enter into details, but it may be truly said that but for railways the Post-Office Savings Bank system could not have existed; and of course, also, our frequent deliveries of letters and rapid as well as cheap communication with all parts of the kingdom would have been impossible. The railway service of the Post-Office is over 60,000 miles a day, and the gross sum paid by the Post-Office to railways in one year was 570,500 pounds.

These are but a few of the amazing statistics connected with our railway system, which, if fully enlarged upon, would fill a bulky volume. If our readers desire more there are several most interesting and instructive works on the subject, which are well worthy of perusal.^[2]

Before closing this perhaps too statistical chapter, we shall say a few words as to the construction of a railway. No one who has not looked pretty closely into the subject can form any adequate conception of the difficulties that beset an engineer-in-chief in the formation of a line of railway. We will suppose that all the Parliamentary battles have been fought, opposition overcome, the heavy expenses connected therewith paid, and the work begun.

The engineer has walked again and again over the country through which the railway is to be carried and selected the best route, his assistants having meanwhile taken for him "flying levels" and "cross levels." Too frequently prejudice, ignorance, and selfishness interpose to prevent the best route being taken, and immense sums that might have been saved are spent in constructing the line on the next best route. As soon as the course of a line is fixed, accurate surveys are made by the assistant engineers, copies of which are placed, according to Act of Parliament, with the various clerks of the peace of the counties, through which the line is to pass, with the Commissioners of Railways and others, besides which there has to be prepared for each parish its proportion, and for each landholder a section showing the greatest depth of cutting or embankment in any of his fields.

As soon as all this has been done, and the Act of Parliament authorising the line obtained, an accurate plan and section of the whole line is made, from which the engineer ascertains and lays down its gradients, in other words its ascents and descents, determines the number and size of the bridges and viaducts to be made, calculates the quantity of embankments required to fill up hollows, and the number of cuttings to level obstructions, in which latter calculations he estimates that the cutting down of elevations will be made subservient as far as may be, to the elevation of depressions. All this involves very nice and exact calculation as to quantity of material, masonry, etcetera, and the sinking of "trial shafts" to ascertain the nature of the various strata to be excavated or tunnelled. Then the cost of all the works has to be estimated in detail, apportioned into lengths and advertised for execution by contract. To each section of the line thus apportioned— forty or fifty miles—an experienced engineer is appointed, having under him "sub-assistants," who superintend from ten to fifteen miles each, and these again are assisted by "inspectors" of masonry, mining, earth-work and permanent way, to each of whom a district is assigned.

These managing and guiding men having been appointed, the physical workers are then called into action, in the form of bands of navvies. As the steam and mechanism of the locomotive are useless except in regulated combination, so brain and muscle can achieve nothing without wise and harmonious union. If boys and men would reflect more deeply on this great truth, pride, boasting, and the false separation of classes would be less rife. We say *false*, because there is a separation of classes which is natural and unavoidable. No one ever complains of *that*. If ill-advised or angry navvies were to refuse to work, what could directors and engineers do? If, on the other hand, ill-advised or angry directors and engineers refused to pay, what could navvies do? Antagonism is an unhealthy condition of things. There is far too much of it between employers and employed in this world. "Agree with thine adversary quickly" is a command which applies to bodies of men quite as much as to individuals, and the word is "agree," not coerce or force. If we cannot agree, let us agree to differ; or, if that won't do in our peculiar circumstances, then let us agree to separate. Fighting, save in self-defence, is only fit for fools.

But to return. When bone and muscle have been for the time welded to brain, then the work of construction goes on "full swing." Difficulties and obstructions are overcome in a way that appears to the unskilled eye nothing less than miraculous. But the work is often hindered and rendered greatly more expensive by the sudden appearance of evils against which no amount of human wisdom or foresight could have guarded.

The Kilsby tunnel of the London and North west Railway is a case in point. When that tunnel was proposed, it was arranged that it should be about 3000 yards long, and 160 feet below the surface, with two great ventilating shafts 60 feet in diameter. It was a gigantic work. The engineer examined the ground in the usual way, with much care, and then advertised for "tenders." The various competing contractors also examined the ground minutely, and the offer of one of them to work it for 99,000 pounds was accepted. Forthwith the contractor went to work, and all went well and busily for some time, until it was suddenly discovered that a hidden quicksand extended 400 yards into the tunnel, which the trial shafts had just passed without touching. This was a more tremendous blow to the contractor than most readers may at first thought suppose, for he believed that to solidify a quicksand was impossible. The effect on him was so great that he was mentally prostrated, and although the company generously and justly relieved him from his engagement, the reprieve came too late, for he died. It then came to be a question whether or not the tunnel should be abandoned. Many advised that it should. At this juncture Mr Robert Stephenson, son of the great George, came forward and undertook the work. He placed his chief dependence on the steam-engine to keep the water down while the work was in progress. At first he was successful, but one day, while the men were busy laying their bricks in cement one of them drove into the roof, and a deluge of water burst in on them, and although they tried to continue their work on a raft the water prevailed and at last drove them out. They escaped with difficulty up one of the air-shafts. The water having put an effectual stop to the work, the directors felt disposed to give it up, but Stephenson begged for a fortnight more. It was granted. By means of thirteen steam-engines, the amazing quantity of 1800 gallons of water per *minute* was pumped out of the quicksand night and day for eight months. With the aid of 1250 men and 200 horses the work was finally completed, having occupied altogether thirty months from the laying of the first brick.

Two very singular accidents occurred during the course of the construction of this tunnel. On one occasion a man who had been working in it was being hauled up one of the shafts, when his coat caught in an angular crevice of the partition, that separated the pumps from the passage for the men, and became so firmly jammed that he was compelled to let go the rope, and was left there dangling in the air, about a hundred feet from the bottom, until his horrified comrades went down and rescued him by cutting away the piece of his coat. This piece of cloth was long preserved in the engineer's office as a memorial of the event! On another occasion some men were at work on a platform, half-way down the shaft, executing some repairs, when a huge navvy, named Jack Pierson, fell from the surface, went right through the platform, as if it had been made of paper, and fell to the bottom. Fortunately there was water to receive him there, else he had been killed on the spot. The men, whom of course he had narrowly missed in his fall, began to shout for a rope to those above, and they hallooed their advice down the shaft in reply. In the midst of the confusion Jack Pierson himself calmly advised them to make less noise and pull him out, which they very soon did, and the poor man was carried home and put to bed. He lay there for many weeks unable to move, but ultimately recovered.

What we have said of the Kilsby tunnel gives a slight glimpse of some of the expenses, difficulties, and dangers that occasionally attend the construction of a railway.

Of course these difficulties and expenses vary according to the nature of the ground. In some places the gradients are slight, bridges few, and cuttings, etcetera, insignificant; but in other places the reverse is emphatically the case, and costly laborious works have to be undertaken.

One such work, which occurred at the very opening of our railway system in 1828, was the bridging of the Chat Moss, on the Liverpool and Manchester line. George Stephenson, the constructor of the "Rocket," was also the hero of the Chat Moss. This moss was a great swamp or bog, four miles in extent, which was so soft that it could not be walked on with safety, and in some places an iron rod laid on the surface would sink by its own weight. Like many other difficulties in this world, the solidification of the Chat Moss was said to be impossible, but the great engineer scarce admitted the propriety of allowing the word "impossible" to cumber our dictionaries. He began the work at once by forming an embankment twenty feet high, which he carried some distance across the treacherous soil, when the whole affair sank down one day and disappeared! Undismayed, Stephenson began again, and went on steadily depositing thousands on thousands of tons of earth, which were greedily swallowed up, until at last a solid foundation was obtained over the greater part of the bog. But there was a particularly soft part of it, known by the name of the "flow moss," which was insatiable. Over this hurdles interwoven with heath were spread, and on these earth and gravel were laid down. When this road showed a tendency to sink below the level, Stephenson loaded the moss beyond the track to balance it; when water oozed through, he invented a new kind of drain-pipe formed of old tallow casks, headed into each other, and ballasted to keep them down, and at last the feat was accomplished—the railway was run over the wet quaking moss on firm dry land.

It was in the formation of this, the true beginning of railways, that the British "navvy" was called into being. To perform the laborious work, Stephenson employed the men called "inland navigators," in other words, the canal excavators. This body of strong "navigators"

or “navvies” formed the nucleus, which gathered recruits from all parts of the kingdom. As the work of railway making, which thenceforward grew fast and furious, was unusually severe, only men who were unusually powerful were suited for the navy ranks, so that they became a distinct class of gigantic men, whose capacity for bread and beef was in accordance with their muscular development and power to toil. Splendid fellows they were, and are; somewhat rugged and untamed, no doubt, with a tendency to fight occasionally, and a great deal of genuine kindness and simplicity. That they are capable of being imbued with refined feeling, noble sentiment, and love to God, has been shown by the publications of Miss Marsh, which detail that lady’s interesting and earnest labours to bring the unbelievers among these men to our Saviour.

Another celebrated piece of railway engineering is the *Britannia Bridge* over the Menai Straits, which separates Caernarvonshire from the island of Anglesey. This was the first bridge ever built on the tubular principle. The importance of crossing the strait was very great, as it lay in the direct route to Holyhead and Ireland. Telford, the engineer, daringly resolved to span the strait with a suspension bridge 100 feet above the water. He began it in 1818, and on the last day of January 1826 the London mail coach passed over the estuary. The bridge remains to this day a vast and beautiful monument of engineering skill. But when railways began to play, something more ponderous and powerful became necessary. A bridge with arches was talked of, but this was considered likely to be obstructive to the navigation of the strait, therefore another plan was demanded. At this juncture Robert Stephenson came forward with a plan. Pounding his opinion on the known fact that hollow columns are stronger than solid ones; that hollow beams are better than solid beams, he leaped to the bold conclusion that a hollow iron beam, or tube, could be made large enough to allow a train to pass through it! As usual there sprang up a host of cold-waterers, but thanks to British enterprise, which can dare anything, there were found enough of men willing to promote the scheme. It was no sooner resolved on than begun. Massive abutments of stone were raised on each shore to the height of 100 feet above high-water. The width of the strait between these abutments is nearly 500 yards. Midway across is the Britannia Rock, just visible at half tide. The engineer resolved to found one of his towers on that rock. It was done; but the distance being too great for a single span of tube, two other towers were added. The centre tower rises 35 feet higher than the abutments, thus giving to the tube a very slight arch, which, however, is barely perceptible.

The tubes were rectangular, with double top and bottom made of plates of wrought-iron, from three-eighths to three-quarters of an inch thick, and varying in length according to their position—the whole when put together forming a single tube about 500 yards long. The two centre ones were the largest and most difficult to manage, each having to be built on shore, floated off on barges, and lifted by hydraulic power a height of about 100 feet. Some idea of what this implied may be gathered from the following fact. Each tube weighed 1800 tons—the weight of a goodly-sized ocean steamer! A perfect army of men worked at the building of the tubes; cutting, punching, fitting, riveting, etcetera, and as the place became the temporary abode of so many artificers and labourers, with their wives and children, a village sprang up around them, with shops, a school, and a surgery. Two fire-engines and large tanks of water were kept in constant readiness in case of fire, and for many months rivet-making machines, punching machines, shearing machines,

etcetera, were in full work. There were two million rivets used altogether, and the quantity of three-quarter-inch iron rod used in making them measured 126 miles. The total weight of iron used was nearly 12,000 tons. The bridge was strengthened by eighty-three miles of angle iron. For many months the outlay in wages alone was 6000 pounds a week, and the cost for the whole of the works more than 600,000 pounds. A curious fact connected with this enormous mass of iron is, that arrangements had to be made to permit of shrinkage and expansion. The tubes were placed on a series of rollers and iron balls, and it was afterwards found that in the hottest part of summer they were twelve inches longer than in winter—a difference which, if not provided for, would have caused the destruction of the towers by a constant and irresistible pull and thrust! The Menai Bridge was begun in 1846 and opened for traffic in March 1850.

Space would fail us were we to attempt even a slight sketch of the great engineering works that railways have called into being. We can merely point to such achievements as the high-level bridges at Newcastle-on-Tyne, Berwick-on-Tweed, and at Saltash, over the Tamar. There are viaducts of great height, length, and beauty in all parts of the kingdom; there are terminal stations so vast and magnificent as to remind one of the structures of Eastern splendour described in the *Arabian Nights Entertainments*; and there are hundreds of miles of tunnelling at the present time in the United Kingdom.

The Metropolitan Railway is the most important and singular of these tunnels—for it is entitled to be regarded as a gigantic tunnel—which burrows under the streets of London.

This stupendous work was undertaken in order to relieve the traffic in the streets of London. The frequent blocks that used to occur not many years ago in the main thoroughfares of the Metropolis, had rendered relief absolutely necessary. When the increase of railways began to pour human beings and goods from all parts of the kingdom into London in a continuous and ever-increasing stream, it became obvious that some new mode of conveyance must be opened up. After much deliberation as to the best method, it was finally resolved that an underground railway should be made, encircling the Metropolis, so that travellers arriving from all points of the compass might find a ready and sufficient means of conveyance into the central parts of the city. There was opposition to the scheme, of course; but, through the persevering energy of the solicitor to the undertaking and others, the work was at length begun, and the line opened for traffic in January 1863. Its extraordinary success soon proved the wisdom of its promoters.

At first it was thought that the chief revenues would be derived from the conveyance of goods from the west to the eastern districts of London, but its enormous passenger traffic eventually became the chief cause of its great prosperity. In the very first year of its opening the number of passengers who travelled by it between Farringdon Street and Bishop's Road, Paddington, amounted to nearly nine and a half millions of individuals, which is more than three times the entire population of London—also, let us add, more than three times the entire population of Scotland!

The number of trains which are constantly following each other in quick succession (at times every two or three minutes) on this magnificent railway has rendered a most perfect system of signalling necessary, as well as a working staff of superior intelligence and activity. The drivers are all picked men, and indeed it is obvious to every one who travels by it that the porters, and guards, and all employed on the line are unusually smart men.

The engineering difficulties connected with the Metropolitan railway were very great as may easily be believed, seeing that it had to be formed under streets whose foundations were unavoidably shaken, and amongst an infinite ramification of gas and water-pipes and sewers whose separate action had to be maintained intact while the process of construction was going on. Some of the stations are most ingeniously lighted from the streets above by bright reflecting tile-work, while others, too deep for such a method, or too much overtopped with buildings to admit of it, are lit perpetually with gas. The whole of the works are a singular instance of engineering skill, reflecting great credit on Mr Fowler, the engineer-in-chief. Despite its great length of tunnelling the line is perfectly dry throughout.

At first fears were entertained that human beings could not with safety travel through such tunnels as were here formed, but experience has proved those fears, like many others, to have been groundless, and a very thorough analysis of the atmosphere of the line in all circumstances, and by the most competent men of the day, has demonstrated that the air of the Metropolitan railway is not injurious to health. The excellent general health of the employes also affords additional and conclusive testimony to this fact even although it is unquestionably true that there is at times a somewhat sulphurous smell there.

This thorough ventilation, of course, could only have been achieved by ingenious arrangements and a peculiar construction of the engines, whereby the waste steam and fumes of the furnaces should be prevented from emitting their foul and sulphurous odours. The carriages are brilliantly lighted with gas, contained in long india-rubber bags on their roofs, and the motion of the trains is much gentler than that of ordinary railways, although they travel at the rate of from fifteen to twenty miles an hour, including stoppages,—a rate, be it observed, which could not have been ventured on at all but for the thorough and effective system of telegraphic and semaphore signalling employed, to indicate from station to station the exact state of the line—as to trains—at all times. On the whole the Metropolitan Railway has proved one of the most useful and successful undertakings of modern times.^[3]

In reference to foreign railways, we have only space to say that there are works as grand, and as worthy of note, as any of which we can boast; and it is with much regret that we feel constrained to do no more than point to such magnificent undertakings as the *Mont Cenis* Railway, which ascends and tunnels through the Alps; and that stupendous line, the Union Pacific Railroad, 3000 miles in length, formed by the daring and enterprising Americans, by means of which the prairies and the Rocky Mountains are made of no account and New York is brought within seven days of San Francisco! The engineering works on the Sommering Railway, between Vienna and Trieste; the mighty Victoria Tubular Bridge at Montreal; the railway bridge over Niagara; the difficulties encountered and overcome in India; the bold achievements of railway engineers amid the dizzy heights and solitudes of the Andes—all these subjects must be passed over in silence, else our readers will, we fear, come to the conclusion that we have lost command of the Iron Horse altogether, allowed him to take the bit in his teeth and fairly run away.

^[1] Many readers may find it difficult to form an adequate conception of such a vast

number as 307 millions. It may help one to some idea of it to know that, if a man were to devote himself to count it, one by one,—sitting down after breakfast counting at the rate of one every moment, and working without intermission for eight hours every day, excepting Sundays,—he would not conclude his task until the thirty–fifth year.

[2] We would refer them particularly to Messrs. W. and R. Chambers' comprehensive and popularly written work on "Railways, Steamer, and Telegraphs;" Money's "Rambles on Railways," which bristles with figures and swarms with anecdote; "Stokers and Pokers," by Sir Francis Head, a capital and very full work, though somewhat old; W.B. Adams' "Roads and Rails," and Bremrer's "Industries of Scotland."

[3] We had intended to devote much larger space to this most interesting line, but the nature of our book forbids it. We quit the subject regretfully; referring the reader, who may desire to know more, to an able notice of the Metropolitan Railway in "The Shops and Companies of London," edited by Henry Mayhew.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Little Gertie Comes Out in a New Light, and Bob Receives Good News

Poor little earnest curly-haired Gertie had been so thoroughly reared in the midst of crashing sounds and dire alarms without any mischance resulting, that she had come to feel at last as if the idea of danger or disaster were a mere fiction. It was therefore a new and terrible shock which she received, when she saw her father carried to his cottage by four railway porters and tenderly laid in his bed; and it went to her heart with an unaccountable thrill when she heard her father's usually loud hearty voice say, in soft, womanly tones, "Thank 'ee, lads; thank 'ee. I'll be all right soon, please God. Good-night and thank 'ee kindly."

"Good-night—good-night, Jack," they replied in various tones of cheeriness; for these hard-muscled men had soft hearts, and although they entertained fears for their friend, they were anxious, by the hearty tones of their voices, to keep up his spirits.

"You mustn't take on like that, Missis," whispered one of them as they were leaving the cottage door; "the doctor said for sartin that there warn't no bones broken, and 'e didn't think there was nothink internal."

"It ain't that I'm afear'd of," whimpered poor Mrs Marrot, "but it does go to my 'art so, to 'ear my John speak in that voice. I never 'ear'd him do it except once before, when he was very low with fever, an' thought himself a-dyin'."

"But 'e ain't agoin' to die *this* time," returned the kindly porter; "so cheer up, Missis. Good-night."

Mrs Marrot returned to the room where her husband lay, evidently suffering severe pain, for he was very pale and his lips were compressed. He was anxious not to alarm Gertie and Loo who stood at the bedside. The former could not speak, and the blood had so completely fled from her face and her small tightly-clasped hands that she resembled a creature of wax.

"Can I do nothing to relieve the pain, dear father?" said Loo, as she wiped the perspiration from his brow.

"Nothin', nothin', dear lass," said John, with some of his wonted heartiness, "except git me a cup o' tea. Mayhap that'll do me good; but the doctor'll be here soon, and he'll put me all to rights in no time."

The idea of a cup of tea was a deep device on the part of John, who meant thereby to give Loo some active work to do and thus take her attention off himself.

"And don't you be uneasy, Molly," he added, turning to his wife, "it ain't a bad hurt, I'm told, an' it ain't hard for a man to suffer a bit o' pain now an' agin when it's the Lord's will. Come, that's the doctor's knock. Don't keep him waitin'. I knew he'd be here soon, 'cause Mr Able said he'd send him without delay."

A prolonged and somewhat painful examination of John's injuries ensued, during which time little Gertie, with clasped hands, parted lips, and eager eyes, watched the doctor's countenance intently. After it was over, the doctor turned to Mrs Marrot, and said—

“I'm happy to tell you, that your husband's injuries, although severe and painful, are not serious. No bones are broken, but he has been severely bruised, and will require careful nursing for some time—and,” he added, turning with a smile to the patient, “no more rushing about the country at sixty miles an hour for several weeks to come.”

Little Gertie began to breathe freely again. Her hands unclasped, and the colour came slowly back, as she crept quietly to the bedside, and, taking her father's large horny hand, laid her cheek softly upon it.

“Are you easier *now*, daddy?” she asked.

“Ay, much easier, God bless you, Gertie. The doctor has made things much more comfortable. They've got a wonderful knack o' puttin' things right—these doctors have. W'y, it minds me o' my ingine after a longish run; she looks dirty an' all out o' sorts; but w'en I gits her into the shed, and gives her an overhaul, you'd scarce know 'er again.”

At this moment baby Marrot who had been sleeping when his father was brought in, became suddenly conscious of internal vacuity, and forthwith set up a lusty howl, whereupon Mrs Marrot pounced upon and throttled him—to some extent.

“Don't stop him, Molly, my dear; you—”

The remainder of the sentence was drowned by the night express which rushed past, joining baby Marrot in a yell, as the latter freed his throat from his mother's grip.

“Don't stop him, Molly,” repeated John; “you don't suppose that after drivin' a locomotive for eight years I'm agoin' to be disturbed by the small pipe of our own youngster. Let him yell, Molly; it does him good, and it don't do me no harm.”

It was now arranged that Gertie was to be head nurse on this trying occasion—not that the appointment was considered appropriate, but it was unavoidable, seeing that Gertie wanted it intensely, and her father was pleased to have it so.

Gertie had never before been called upon to do anything in the nursing way more serious than to look after baby when he had eaten too much or scalded himself—nevertheless, the way in which she went about her nursing would have done credit to an hospital training. She evidently possessed a natural aptitude for the work, and went about it with a sense of the importance of the trust that was quite charming. She was at that tender age when such work becomes barely possible, and the performance of it seems quite miraculous! Her father gazed at her in bewilderment while she went about gravely smoothing his pillow and tucking in corners of blankets, and bringing cups, and tumblers, and spoons, and handkerchiefs, and sundry other articles, to a chair at his bedside, so as to be within reach of his hand. Molly and Loo, besides being highly interested, were intensely amused. It is a matter of dispute even to this day whether baby did not perceive the marvellous aptitude of Gertie, for he continued for a prolonged period to gaze at her as if in solemn wonder. Mrs Marrot declared baby's gaze to be one of admiration, but John held that it was owing to the state of exhaustion that resulted from an unusually long fit of yelling. While he stared thus, Gertie, having completed a number of little operations and put the finishing

touches or *pats* to them, became suddenly aware that every one was laughing quietly.

“What is it?” she asked, relaxing the severity of her brow and brightening up.

They all laughed still more at this, and Gertie, looking round for an explanation, encountered baby’s glaring eyes, whereupon, supposing that she had found out the cause, she laughed too. But she quickly dismissed her levity and recurred to her work with renewed diligence.

It was well for the engine–driver that he had been trained in a rough school, for his powers of endurance were severely tested that night, by the attentions of his numerous friends who called to inquire for him, and in some cases insisted on seeing him.

Among others came one of the directors of the company, who, seeing how matters stood, with much consideration said that he would not sit down, but had merely looked in for a moment, to tell John Marrot that an appointment had been found for his son Robert in the “Works,” and that if he would send him over in the morning he would be introduced to the locomotive superintendent and initiated into the details of his new sphere of action.

This was very gratifying to the engine–driver of course, but much more so to Bob himself, whose highest earthly ambition was to become, as he styled it, an engineer. When that aspiring youth came home that night after cleaning his lamps, he wiped his oily hands on a bundle of waste, and sat down beside his sire to inquire considerably into his state of body, and to give him, as he expressed it, the noos of the line.

“You see, daddy,” he said, “the doctor tells me you’re to be kep’ quiet, an’ not allowed to talk, so in course you’ve got nothin’ to do but lie still an’ listen while I give ‘ee the noos. So ‘ere goes. An’ don’t you sit too near baby, mother, else you’ll wake ‘im up, an’ we’ll have a yell as’ll put talkin’ out o’ the question. Well then—”

“Bob,” said Loo, interrupting her brother as she sat down opposite, and began to mend one of baby’s pinafores—which by the way was already so mended and patched as to have lost much of its original form and appearance—“Bob, Mr Able has been here, and—”

“Who’s Mr Able?” demanded Bob.

“One of the directors,—don’t you know?”

“How should I know?” retorted Bob; “you don’t suppose that the d’rectors is all my partikler friends, do you? There’s only two or three of ‘em as has the honer of my acquaintance.”

“Well,” resumed Loo with a laugh, “you ought to consider Mr Able one of your particular friends at all events, for he has been here this evening making kind inquiries after father, and telling him that he has got you appointed to the works that you’ve been so long hankering—”

“What!” interrupted Bob in great excitement; “you don’t mean that, Loo?”

“Yes, I do.”

“To the great Clatterby Works, where the big hammer is?”

“Well, I suppose it is to these works,” said Loo.

“Ay, Bob, to the Clatterby Works, lad; so you’re a made man if you only behave yourself and do your dooty,” said John Marrot in reply to his son’s look of inquiry.

In the strength of his satisfaction the boy rose, and, taking Loo round the neck, kissed her pretty mouth heartily, after which he bestowed the same favour on his mother and little Gertie, and looked as if he meant to do it to baby too, but he thought better of it.

“Why, mother,” he said, resuming his seat at the bedside, “these are the works where they’ve got the big hammers—so big, mother; oh! you’ve no notion how big they are, and heavy. Why, one of ‘em is full five tons in weight—think o’ that! equal to five carts of coals, mother, all rolled into one.”

“Nonsense!” said Mrs Marrot.

“But it’s *true*,” said Bob, earnestly.

“Nonsense!” repeated Mrs Marrot; “w’y, what would be the use of a hammer as no one could lift?”

“Steam lifts it, mother,” said Bob, “as easy—yes, as easy as you lift the rollin’ pin.”

The unbelieving woman still shook her head, smiled, and said, “Nonsense!”

“Moreover,” continued Bob, waxing enthusiastic on his favourite topic, “I’m told, for I haven’t seen ‘em yet, that they’ve got a pair o’ scissors there as can cut cold iron as easy as you can cut paper—they could cut through,” said Bob, pausing and looking round, “they could cut through the poker and tongs and shovel, all at one go, as easy as if they was straws.”

“Gammon!” said Mrs Marrot.

“Isn’t it a fact, daddy?” cried Bob.

“Quite true, Molly, my dear. I must take you over to see the works some day and convince you,” said John with a faint smile. “But what’s the news you were goin’ to give us, Bob?” he added.

“The noos?—ah; that *good* noos drove it all out o’ my ‘ead. Well, as I was agoin’ to say, there’s a great to–do down at the shed, ‘cause it’s said that an awful lot o’ thefts has bin goin’ on of late at Bingly station, and it’s bin reported that some of the drivers or firemen are consarned in it. An’ d’ee know, father,” continued Bob, suddenly becoming grave and very earnest, “I heard one o’ the men say that Will Garvie is suspected.”

There was a momentary deep silence, as if every one had received a shock; then Mrs Marrot exclaimed “What say ‘ee, boy?”

At the same time her husband demanded sternly, “Who said that?”

“I don’t know, father. I was passing through the shed at the time and didn’t see who spoke, I only heerd ‘im.”

“Father,” said Leo, over whose face a deep crimson flush had spread, “*surely* you don’t for a moment believe it?”

“Believe it,” replied John, “believe that my mate, Will Garvie, is a thief? I’d as soon believe that my Molly was a murderer!”

The energetic driver here struck his fist so violently on the bed as to cause his wounded side an acute twinge of pain. It had scarcely passed away when the door opened and Will Garvie himself entered.

“Well, Jack,” he said, going up to his friend’s couch and taking his hand, “how d’you feel now—better?”

The frank open countenance of the young man—albeit begrimed with smoke, and his clear laughing blue eyes, were such a flat contradiction to the charge which had been made against him that John looked up in his face and laughed.

“Well, you *must* be better, if that’s the way you answer me!”

“Oh, I’m all right,” said John, quietly; “leastwise I’m on the rails agin, an’ only shunted on to a sidin’ to be overhauled and repaired a bit. You’ve heard the noos, I fancy?”

“What of Bob’s appointment?” said Will, glancing at Loo; for he knew that anything that was for Bob’s advantage gave her intense delight, and he liked to watch her countenance in such circumstances—“of course I’ve heard of that. Moreover, I’ve bin to the locomotive superintendent and got leave to go over with him to-morrow and show him through the works, along with any of his family that might want to go. I made a special request for this, thinkin’ that mayhap—”

He looked pointedly at Loo, and Loo looked pointedly at the pinafore which suddenly claimed her undivided attention. Bob, before Will could finish his sentence, broke in with

—
“Now, *ain’t* that a su’cumstance? w’y, we was just talkin’ of havin’ mother over to see the works, an’ lettin’ her be convinced by her own eyes that there is a hammer there of five ton weight, drove by steam, an’ a pair o’ scissors as can cut cold iron an inch thick. You’ll go mother, won’t you?”

“Well, I dessay it would be amoosin’; yes, I’ll go, Bob, if father’s better.”

Accordingly, much to Will Garvie’s disappointment it was arranged that Mrs Marrot was to accompany him and Bob to the great railway “Works” on the following day.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Mrs. Marrot and Bob Visit the Great Clatterby "Works."

We cannot presume to say what sort of a smiddy Vulcan's was, but we feel strongly inclined to think that if that gentleman were to visit the works of the Grand National Trunk Railway, which are about the finest of the kind in the kingdom, he would deem his own old shop a very insignificant affair!

The stupendous nature of the operations performed there; the colossal grandeur of the machinery employed; the appalling power of the forces called into action; the startling *chiaro scuro* of the furnaces; the Herculean activity of the 3500 "hands;" the dread pyrotechnic displays; the constant din and clangour—pshaw! the thing is beyond conception. "Why then," you will say, "attempt description?" Because, reader, of two evils we always choose the less. Description is better than nothing. If you cannot go and see and hear for yourself, there is nothing left for you but to fall back on description.

But of all the sights to be seen there, the most interesting, perhaps, and the most amusing, was the visage of worthy Mrs Marrot as she followed Will Garvie and her son, and gazed in rapt amazement at the operations, and listened to the sounds, sometimes looking all round with a half-imbecile expression at the rattling machinery, at other times fixing her eyes intently down on one piece of mechanism in the vain hope of penetrating its secrets to the core. Bob was not much less amazed than his mother, but he had his sharp wits about him, and was keenly alive to the delight of witnessing his mother's astonishment.

The works covered several acres of ground, and consisted of a group of huge buildings which were divided into different departments, and in these the railway company manufactured almost every article used on the line—from a locomotive engine to a screw-nail.

Here, as we have said, above 3500 men and boys were at work, and all sorts of trades were represented. There were draughtsmen to make designs, and, from these, detailed working drawings. Smiths to forge all the wrought-iron-work, with hammermen as assistants. Pattern-makers to make wooden patterns for castings. Moulders, including loam, dry-sand and green-sand moulders and brass-founders. Dressers to dress the rough edges off the castings when brought from the foundry. Turners in iron and brass. Planers and nibblers, and slotters and drillers. Joiners and sawyers, and coach-builders and painters. Fitters and erecters, to do the rougher and heavier part of fitting the engines together. Boiler-makers, including platers or fitters, caulkers and riveters. Finishers to do the finer part of fitting—details and polishing. In short almost every trade in the kingdom concentrated in one grand whole and working harmoniously, like a vast complex machine, towards one common end—the supply of railway rolling-stock, or "plant" to the line.

All these were busy as bees, for they were engaged on the equitable system of "piece-work,"—which means that each man or boy was paid for each piece of work done, instead of being paid by time, which of course induced each to work as hard as he could in order

to make much as possible—a system which suited both masters and men. Of course there are some sorts of employment where it would be unjust to pay men by the amount of work done—as, for instance, in some parts of tin-mines, where a fathom of rock rich in tin is as difficult to excavate as a fathom of rock which is poor in tin—but in work such as we are describing the piece-work system suits best.

Like a wise general, Will Garvie began with the department in which the less astonishing operations were being performed. This was the timber and sawing department.

Here hard wood, in all sizes and forms, was being licked into shape by machinery in a way and with an amount of facility that was eminently calculated to astonish those whose ideas on such matters had been founded on the observation of the laborious work of human carpenters. The very first thing that struck Bob Marrot was that the tools were so heavy, thick, and strong that the biggest carpenter he had ever seen would not have been able to use them. Bob's idea of a saw had hitherto been a long sheet of steel with small teeth, that could be easily bent like a hoop—an implement that went slowly through a plank, and that had often caused his arm to ache in being made to advance a few inches; but here he saw circular steel-discs with fangs more than an inch long, which became invisible when in a state of revolution.

“What *is* that?” said Mrs Marrot concentrating herself on one of these implements, after having indulged in a stare of bewildered curiosity round the long shed.

“That's a circular saw,” replied Will Garvie; “one of the large ones,— about four feet in diameter.”

“A saw!” exclaimed Mrs Marrot, in surprise. “W'y, Will, it's round. How can a round thing saw? An' it han't got no 'andle! How could any man lay 'old of it to saw?”

“The carpenter here don't require no handles,” replied Will. “He's a queer fellow is the carpenter of this shop, as well as powerful. He works away from morning till night with the power of more than a hundred horses, an' does exactly what he's bid without ever making any mistakes or axin' any questions. He's a steam-carpenter, Missis, but indeed he's a jack-of-all-trades, and carries 'em on all at the same time. See, they're goin' to set him to work now—watch and you shall see.”

As he spoke, two men approached the circular saw bearing a thick log of oak. One of them fitted it in position, on rollers, with its edge towards the saw; then he seized a handle, by means of which he connected the steam-carpenter with the saw, which instantly revolved so fast that the teeth became invisible; at the same time the plank advanced rapidly and met the saw. Instantly there was a loud hissing yet ringing sound, accompanied by a shower of sawdust, and, long before Mrs Marrot had recovered from her surprise, the log was cut into two thick substantial planks.

After two or three more had been cut up in this way in as many minutes, Will Garvie said —

“Now, let's see what they do with these planks. Come here.”

He led them to a place close beside the saw, where there was a strong iron machine, to one part of which was attached a very large chisel—it might have been equal to two or three dozen of the largest ordinary chisels rolled into one. This machine was in motion, but

apparently it had been made for a very useless purpose, for it was going vigorously up and down at the time cutting the atmosphere!

“It’s like a lot of people as I knows of,” observed Mrs Marrot, “very busy about nothin’.”

“It’ll have somethin’ to do soon, mother,” said Bob, who was already beginning to think himself very knowing.

Bob was right. One of the oak-planks had been measured and marked for mortice-holes in various ways according to pattern, and was now handed over to the guardian of the machine, who, having had it placed on rollers, pushed it under the chisel and touched a handle. Down came the implement, and cut into the solid wood as if it had been mere putty. A dozen cuts or so in one direction, then round it went—for this chisel could be turned with its face in either direction without stopping it for the purpose—another dozen cuts were made, and an oblong hole of three or four inches long by two broad and three deep was made in the plank in a few seconds.

Even Mrs Marrot had sufficient knowledge of the arts to perceive that this operation would have cost a human carpenter a very much greater amount of time and labour, and that therefore there must have been a considerable saving of expense. Had she been aware of the fact that hundreds of such planks were cut, marked, morticed, and turned out of hands every week all the year round, and every year continuously, she would have had a still more exalted conception of the saving of time, labour, and expense thus effected.

The guardian of the chisel having in a few minutes cut the requisite half dozen or so of holes, guided the plank on rollers towards a pile, where it was laid, to be afterwards carried off to the carriage-builders, who would fit it as one side of a carriage-frame to its appropriate fellow-planks, which had all been prepared in the same way.

Not far from this machine the visitors were shown another, in which several circular saws of smaller dimensions than the first were at work in concert, and laid at different angles to each other, so that when a plank was given into their clutches it received cuts and slices in certain parts during its passage through the machine, and came out much modified and improved in form—all that the attendants had to do merely being to fit the planks in their places and guide them safely through the ordeal. Elsewhere Mrs Marrot and Bob beheld a frame—full of gigantic saws cut a large log into half a dozen planks, all in one sweep, in a few minutes—work which would have drawn the sweat from the brows of two saw-pit men for several hours. One thing that attracted the attention of Bob very strongly was the simple process of hole-boring. Of course, in forming the massive frames of railway carriages, it becomes necessary to bore numerous holes for large nails or bolts. Often had Bob, at a neighbouring seaport, watched the heavy work and the slow progress of ship-carpenters as they pierced the planks of ships with augers; but here he beheld what he called, “augers and drills gone mad!”—augers small and great whirling furiously, or, as Bob put it, “like all possessed.” Some acting singly, others acting together in rows of five or six; and these excited things were perpetually whirling, whether at work or not, ready for service at a moment’s notice. While Bob was gazing at one huge drill—probably an inch and a half broad, if not more—a man came up to it with a plank, on the surface of which were several dots at various distances. He put the plank under the drill, brought it down on a dot, whizz went the drill, and straightway there was a huge round hole right

through almost before Bob had time to wink,—and Bob was a practised hand at winking. Several holes were bored in this way, and then the plank was carried to another machine, where six lesser holes were drilled at one and the same time by six furious little augers; and thus the planks passed on from one machine to another until finished, undergoing, in the course of a few minutes, treatment that would have cost them hours of torture had they been manipulated by human hands, in addition to which the work was most beautifully, and perfectly, and regularly done.

Many other operations did the visitors behold in this department—all more or less interesting and, to them, surprising—so that Mrs Marrot was induced at last to exclaim—

“W’y, Willum, it seems to me that if you go on improvin’ things at this rate there won’t be no use in a short time for ‘uman ‘ands at all. We’ll just ‘ave to sit still an’ let machinery do our work for us, an’ all the trades—people will be throwd out of employment.”

“How can you say that, Missis,” said Will Garvie, “you bein’ old enough to remember the time w’en there wasn’t five joiners’ shops in Clatterby, with p’rhaps fifty men and boys employed, and now there’s hundreds of joiners, and other shops of all kinds in the town, besides these here railway works which, as you know, keeps about 3500 hands goin’ all the year round?”

“That’s so, Willum,” assented Mrs Marrot in a meditative tone.

Thus meditating, she was conducted into the smiths’ department.

Here about 140 forges and 400 men were at work. Any one of these forges would have been a respectable “smiddy” in a country village. They stood as close to each other as the space would allow,—so close that their showers of sparks intermingled, and kept the whole shed more or less in the condition of a chronic eruption of fireworks. To Bob’s young mind it conveyed the idea of a perpetual keeping of the Queen’s birthday. To his mother it was suggestive of singed garments and sudden loss of sight. The poor woman was much distressed in this department at first, but when she found, after five minutes or so, that her garments were unscathed, and her sight still unimpaired, she became reconciled to it.

In this place of busy vulcans—each of whom was the beau-ideal of “the village blacksmith,” all the *smaller* work of the railway was done. As a specimen of this smaller work, Will Garvie drew Mrs Marrot’s attention to the fact that two vulcans were engaged in twisting red-hot iron bolts an inch and a half thick into the form of hooks with as much apparent ease as if they had been hair-pins. These, he said, were hooks for couplings, the hooks by which railway carriages were attached together, and on the strength and unyielding rigidity of which the lives of hundreds of travellers might depend.

The bending of them was accomplished by means of a powerful lever. It would be an endless business to detail all that was done in this workshop. Every piece of comparatively small iron-work used in the construction of railway engines, carriages, vans, and trucks, from a door-hinge to a coupling-chain, was forged in that smithy. Passing onward, they came to a workshop where iron castings of all kinds were being made; cylinders, fire-boxes, etcetera,—and a savage-looking place it was, with numerous holes and pits of various shapes and depths in the black earthy floor, which were the moulds ready, or in preparation, for the reception of the molten metal. Still farther on they passed through a

workroom where every species of brass-work was being made. And here Bob Marrot was amazed to find that the workmen turned brass on turning-lathes with as much facility as if it had been wood. Some of the pieces of brazen mechanism were very beautiful and delicate— especially one piece, a stop-cock for letting water into a boiler, the various and complex parts of which, when contrasted with the huge workmanship of the other departments, resembled fine watch-work.

As they passed on, Bob observed a particularly small boy, in whom he involuntarily took a great and sudden interest—he looked so small, so thin, so intelligent, and, withal, so busy.

“Ah, you may well look at him,” said Will Garvie, observing Bob’s gaze. “That boy is one of the best workers of his age in the shop.”

“What is ‘e doin’?” inquired Bob.

“He’s preparin’ nuts for screws,” replied Will, “and gets one penny for every hundred. Most boys can do from twelve to fourteen hundred a day, so, you see, they can earn from six to seven shillin’s a week; but that little feller—they call him Tomtit Dorkin—earns a good deal more, I believe, and he has much need to, for he has got an old granny to support. That’s the work that you are soon to be set to, lad.”

“Is it?” said Bob, quite pleased at the notion of being engaged in the same employment with Tomtit; “I’m glad to ‘ear it. You see, mother, when you gits to be old an’ ‘elpless, you’ll not need to mind, ‘cause *I’ll* support you.”

The next place they visited was the great point of attraction to Bob. It was the forge where the heavy work was done, and where the celebrated hammer and terrific pair of scissors performed their stupendous work.

At the time the visitors entered this department the various hammers chanced to be at rest, nevertheless even Mrs Marrot’s comparatively ignorant mind was impressed by the colossal size and solidity of the iron engines that surrounded her. The roof of the shed in which they stood had been made unusually high in order to contain them.

“Well, I s’pose the big ‘ammer that Bob says is as ‘eavy as five carts of coals must be ‘ereabouts?” observed Mrs Marrot looking round.

“Yes, there it is,” said Will, pointing in front of him.

“W’ere? I don’t see no ‘ammer.”

“Why there, that big thing just before you,” he said, pointing to a machine of iron, shaped something like the letter V turned upside down, with its two limbs on the earth, its stem lost in the obscurity of the root and having a sort of tongue between the two limbs, which tongue was a great square block of solid iron, apparently about five feet high and about three feet broad and deep. This tongue, Will Garvie assured his companion, was the hammer.

“No, no, Willum,” said Mrs Marrot, with a smile, “you mustn’t expect me for to believe that. I *may* believe that the moon is made of green cheese, but I won’t believe that that’s a ‘ammer.”

“No: but *is* it, Bill?” asked Bob, whose eyes gleamed with suppressed excitement.

“Indeed it is; you shall see presently.”

Several stalwart workmen, with bare brawny arms, who were lounging before the closed mouth of a furnace, regarded the visitors with some amusement. One of these came forward and said—

“You’d better stand a little way back, ma’am.”

Mrs Marrot obediently retreated to a safe distance. Then the stalwart men threw open the furnace door. Mrs Marrot exclaimed, almost shrieked, with surprise at the intense light which gushed forth, casting even the modified daylight of the place into the shade. The proceedings of the stalwart men thereafter were in Mrs Marrot’s eyes absolutely appalling—almost overpowering,—but Mrs M was tough both in mind and body. She stood her ground. Several of the men seized something inside the furnace with huge pincers, tongs, forceps—whatever you choose to call them—and drew partly out an immense rudely shaped bar or *log* of glowing irons thicker than a man’s thigh. At the same time a great chain was put underneath it, and a crane of huge proportions thereafter sustained the weight of the glowing metal. By means of this crane it was drawn out of the furnace and swung round until its glowing head or end came close to the tongue before mentioned. Then some of the stalwart men grasped several iron handles, which were affixed to the cool end of the bar, and prepared themselves to act. A signal was given to a man who had not hitherto been noticed, he was so small in comparison with the machine on which he stood—perhaps it would be better to say to which he stuck, because he was perched on a little platform about seven or eight feet from the ground, which was reached by an iron ladder, and looked down on the men who manipulated the iron bar below.

On receiving the signal, this man moved a small lever. It cost him no effort whatever, nevertheless it raised the iron tongue about six feet in the air, revealing the fact that it had been resting on another square block of iron embedded in the earth. This latter was the anvil. On the anvil the end of the white-hot bar was immediately laid. Another signal was given, and down came the “five-carts-of-coals weight” with a thud that shook the very earth, caused the bar partially to flatten as if it had been a bit of putty, and sent a brilliant shower of sparks over the whole place. Mrs Marrot clapped both hands on her face, and capped the event with a scream. As for Bob, he fairly shouted with delight.

Blow after blow was given by this engine, and as each blow fell the stalwart men heaved on the iron handles and turned the bar this way and that way, until it was pounded nearly square. By this time Mrs Marrot had recovered so far as to separate her fingers a little, and venture to peep from behind that protecting screen. By degrees the unwieldy mass of misshapen metal was pounded into a cylindrical form, and Will Garvie informed his friends that this was the beginning of the driving-axle of a locomotive. Pointing to several of those which had been already forged, each having two enormous iron projections on it which were afterwards to become the cranks, he said—

“You’ll see how these are finished, in another department.”

But Mrs Marrot and Bob paid no attention to him. They were fascinated by the doings of the big hammer, and especially by the cool quiet way in which the man with the lever caused it to obey his will. When he moved the lever up or down a little, up or down went the hammer a little; when he moved it a good deal the hammer moved a good deal; when

he was gentle, the hammer was gentle; when he gave a violent push, the hammer came down with a crash that shook the whole place. He could cause it to plunge like lightning to within a hair's-breadth of the anvil and check it instantaneously so that it should not touch. He could make it pat the red metal lovingly, or pound it with the violence of a fiend. Indeed, so quick and sympathetic were all the movements of that steam-hammer that it seemed as though it were gifted with intelligence, and were nervously solicitous to act in prompt obedience to its master's will. There were eleven steam-hammers of various sizes in this building, with a staff of 175 men to attend to them, half of which staff worked during the day, and half during the night—besides seven smaller steam-hammers in the smiths' shops and other departments.

With difficulty Will Garvie tore his friends away from the big hammer; but he could not again chain their attention to anything else, until he came to the pair of scissors that cut iron. With this instrument Mrs Marrot at first expressed herself disappointed. It was not like a pair of scissors at all, she said, and in this she was correct, for the square clumsy-looking blunt-like mass of iron, about five feet high and broad, which composed a large portion of it, was indeed very unlike a pair of scissors.

"Why, mother," exclaimed Bob, "you didn't surely expect to see two large holes in it for a giant's thumb and fingers, did you?"

"Well, but," said Mrs Marrot, "it ain't got no blades that I can see."

"I'll let 'ee see 'em, Missis, in a minute," said a workman who came up at that moment with a plate of iron more than a quarter of an inch thick. "Turn it on, Johnny."

A small boy turned on the steam, the machine moved, and Will Garvie pointed out to Mrs Marrot the fact that two sharp edges of steel in a certain part of it crossed each other exactly in the manner of a pair of scissors.

"Well," remarked Mrs M, after contemplating it for some time, "it don't look very like scissors, but I'm free to confess that them two bits of iron *do* act much in the same way."

"And with the same result, Missus," observed the machine-man, putting the plate between the clippers, which, closing quietly, snipped off about a foot of iron as if it had been paper. There was, however, a crunching sound which indicated great power, and drew from Mrs Marrot an exclamation of surprise not altogether unmingled with alarm.

The man then seized a bit of iron about as thick as his own wrist—full an inch and a half in diameter—which the scissors cut up into lengths of eighteen inches or so as easily as if it had been a bar of lead or wood.

"Didn't I say it could cut through the poker, mother?" cried Bob with a look of triumph.

"The poker, boy! it could cut poker, tongs, shovel, and fender, all at once!" replied Mrs Marrot—"well, I never! can it do anything else?"

In reply to this the man took up several pieces of hard steel, which it snipped through as easily as it had cut the iron.

But if Mrs Marrot's surprise at the scissors was great, not less great was it at the punching machine, which punched little buttons the size of a sixpence out of cold iron full half-an-inch thick. This vicious implement not only punched holes all round boiler-plates so as to

permit of their being riveted together, but it cut patterns out of thick iron plates by punching rows of such holes so close to each other that they formed one long cutting, straight or crooked, as might be required. In short, the punching machine acted the part of a saw, and cut the iron plates in any shape that was desired. Here also they saw the testing of engine springs—those springs which to most people appear to have no spring in them whatever—so very powerful are they. One of these was laid on an iron table, with its two ends resting against an iron plate. A man approached and measured it exactly. Then a hydraulic ram was applied; and there was something quite impressive in the easy quiet way, in which the ram shoved a spring, which the weight of a locomotive can scarcely affect, *quite flat* against the iron plate, and held it there a moment or two! Being released, the spring resumed its proper form. It was then re-measured; found not to have expanded a hair's-breadth, and, therefore,—as Will Garvie took care to explain,— was passed as a sound well-tempered spring; whereat Bob remarked that it would need to be a good-tempered spring, to suffer such treatment without grumbling.

It seemed to Mrs Marrot now as if her capacity for surprise had reached its limit; but she little knew the wealth of capacity for creating surprise that lay in these amazing “works” of the Grand National Trunk Railway.

The next place she was ushered into was a vast apartment where iron in every shape, size, and form was being planed and turned and cut. The ceiling of the building, or rather the place where a ceiling ought in ordinary circumstances to have been, was alive with moving bands and whirling wheels. The first thing she was called on to contemplate was the turning of the tyre or rim of one of the driving-wheels of a locomotive. Often had Mrs Marrot heard her husband talk of tyres and driving-wheels, and many a time had she seen these wheels whirling, half-concealed, in their appropriate places, but never till that day had she seen the iron hoop, eight feet in diameter, elevated in bare simplicity on a turning-lathe, where its size impressed her so much that she declared, “she never *could* ‘ave imagined engine-wheels was so big,” and asked, “‘ow did they ever manage to get ‘em lifted up to w’ere they was?”

To which an overseer kindly replied by pointing out a neat little crane fitted on a tail, which, when required, ran along the apartment like a strong obedient little domestic servant, lifting wheels, etcetera, that a man could scarcely move, and placing them wherever they were wanted. Mrs Marrot was then directed to observe the rim of the wheel, where she saw a small chisel cutting iron curls off it just as easily, to all appearance, as a turner cuts shavings off wood—and these iron curls were not delicate; they were thick, solid, unpliant ringlets, that would have formed a suitable decoration for the fair brow of a locomotive, or, perhaps, a chignon—supposing that any locomotive could have been prevailed on to adopt such a wild monstrosity!

This same species of chisel, applied in different ways, reduced masses of iron in size, planed down flat surfaces, enlarged holes, made cylinders “true” and smooth inside, besides doing a variety of other things.

After seeing the large tyre turned, Mrs Marrot could not be induced to pay much regard to the various carriage and truck wheels which were being treated in a similar manner in that department, but she was induced to open her ears, and her eyes too, when the overseer informed her that the “works” turned out complete no fewer than one hundred and thirty

pairs of locomotive, carriage, and waggon wheels a week.

“How many did you say?” she asked.

“A hundred and thirty pair of wheels in the week,” repeated the overseer.

“Every week?” asked Mrs Marrot.

“Yes; every week. Sometimes more, sometimes less; but altogether, pretty well on for 6000 pairs of wheels every year.”

“W’y, what *do* you make of ‘em all?”

“Oh, we make good use of ‘em,” replied the overseer, laughing. “We wear them out so fast that it keeps us working at that rate to meet our necessities. But that,” he continued, “is only a small part of what we do. We turn out of the works 156 first-class carriages besides many seconds and thirds, and about 1560 trucks every year; besides three engines, new and complete, every fortnight.”

“Three noo engines every fortnight!” echoed Mrs Marrot; “how many’s that in the year, Bob?”

“Seventy-eight,” replied Bob, promptly. Bob was a swift mental calculator, and rather proud of it.

“Where ever do they all go to?” murmured Mrs Marrot.

“Why,” replied Will Garvie, “they go to all the stations on the line, of course; some of ‘em go to smash at once in cases of accidents, and all of ‘em goes to destruction, more or less, in about fifteen or twenty years. We reckon that to be the life of a locomotive. See, there’s a drivin’ axle, such as you saw forged by the big hammer, being turned now, and cut to shape and size by the same sort of machine that you saw cuttin’ the tyres.”

They passed on, after looking at the axle for a few minutes, until they came to a part of the building where rails were being forged. This also, although not done by hammer, was a striking process. The place was so hot owing to the quantity of uncooled metal on the floor, that it was not possible to remain long; they therefore took a rapid survey. In one place several men were in the act of conveying to the steam-hammer a mass of shapeless white-hot iron, which had just been plucked from a furnace with a pair of grippers. They put it below the hammer for a few minutes, which soon reduced it to a clumsy bar; then they carried it to a pair of iron rollers driven by steam. The end of the bar being presented to these, it was gripped, dragged in between them, and passed out at the other side, flat and very much lengthened, as well as thinned. Having been further reduced by this process, it was finally passed through a pair of rollers, which gave it shape, and sent it out a complete rail, ready to be laid down on the line.

Here Garvie took occasion to explain that steel rails, although very expensive, were now being extensively used in preference to iron rails, because they lasted much longer. “For instance,” he said, “steel costs about 12 pounds a ton and iron only costs about 7 pounds; but then, d’ye see, steel rails will last two years and more, whereas iron rails get wore out, and have to be renewed every six weeks in places where there’s much traffic.”

“Now, I can’t stand no more o’ this,” said Mrs Marrot, down whose face the perspiration

was streaming; "I'm a'most roasted alive, an' don't understand your explanations one bit, Willum, so come along."

"Oh, mother, *do* hold on a moment," pleaded Bob, whose mechanical soul was in a species of paradise.

"You'd better come, Bob," interposed Garvie, "else we won't have time to see the department where the engines are fitted."

This was sufficient for Bob, who willingly followed.

The fitting shed at that time contained several engines in various stages of advancement. In one place men were engaged in fitting together the iron framework or foundation of a locomotive, with screws, and bolts, and nuts, and rivets. Others were employed near them, on an engine more advanced, in putting on the wheels and placing the boilers and fire-boxes, while another gang were busy covering the boiler of a third engine with a coating of wood and felt, literally for the purpose of keeping it warm, or preventing its heat from escaping. Farther on, three beautiful new engines, that had just been made and stood ready for action, were receiving a few finishing touches from the painters. Fresh, spotless, and glittering, these were to make their *debut* on the morrow, and commence their comparatively brief career of furious activity—gay things, doomed emphatically to a fast life! Beyond these young creatures lay a number of aged and crippled engines, all more or less disabled and sent there for repair; one to have a burst steam-pipe removed and replaced, another to have a wheel, or a fire-box or a cylinder changed; and one, that looked as if it had recently "run a-muck" against all the other engines on the line, stood sulkily grim in a corner, evidently awaiting its sentence of condemnation,—the usual fate of such engines being to be torn, bored, battered, chiselled, clipt, and otherwise cut to pieces, and cast into the furnaces.

While gazing round this apartment, Mrs Marrot's eyes suddenly became transfixed.

"Wot's the matter *now*?" demanded Bob, in some alarm.

"I *do* believe—w'y—there's a locomotive *in the air*!" said Mrs Marrot in an undertone.

"So it is!" exclaimed Bob.

And, reader, so it was. In that shed they had a crane which rested on a framework overhead, and ran on wheels over the entire shop. It was capable of lifting above fifty tons' weight and as a large locomotive, ponderous though it be, is not much over twenty tons, of course this giant crane made short work of such. When the men have occasion to remove a wheel from the iron horse, not being able to make it lift up its leg, so to speak, to have it taken off, they bring it under the crane, swing it up as a little boy might swing a toy-cart, and operate on it at their leisure.

Mrs Marrot felt an unpleasant sensation on beholding this. As the wife of an engine-driver, she had long felt the deepest respect, almost amounting to reverence, for locomotives, in regard to the weight, speed, and irresistible power of which she had always entertained the most exalted ideas. To see one of the race—and that too, of the largest size—treated in this humiliating fashion was too much for her, she declared that she had seen enough of the "works," and wouldn't on any account remain another minute!

“But you won’t go without seein’ the carriage and truck department, surely?” said Bob.

“Well, I’ll just take a look to please *you*,” said the amiable woman.

Accordingly, to the truck and van department they went, and there Bob, whose mind was sharp as a needle, saw a good many pieces of mechanism, which formerly he had only seen in a transition state, now applied to their ultimate uses. The chiselled, sawn, and drilled planks seen in the first department, were here being fitted and bolted together in the form of trucks, while the uses of many strange pieces of iron, which had puzzled him in the blacksmiths’ department, became obvious when fitted to their appropriate woodwork. Here, also, he saw the internal machinery of railway carriages laid bare, especially the position and shape of the springs that give elasticity to the buffers, which, he observed, were just the same in shape as ordinary carriage springs, placed so that the ends of the buffer-rods pressed against them.

But all this afforded no gratification to Mrs Marrot, whose sensitive mind dwelt uneasily on the humiliated locomotive, until she suddenly came on a row of new first-class carriages, where a number of people were employed stuffing cushions.

“Well, I declare,” she exclaimed, “if here ain’t cushion-stuffing going on! I expect we shall come to coat-and-shift-making for porters and guards, next!”

“No, we haven’t got quite that length yet,” laughed Will Garvie; “but if you look along you’ll see gilding, and glazing, and painting going on, at that first-class carriage. Still farther along, in the direction we’re going, is the infirmary.”

“The infirmary, Willum!”

“Ay, the place where old and damaged trucks and carriages are sent for repair. They’re all in a bad way, you see,—much in need o’ the doctor’s sar’vices.”

This was true. Looking at some of these unfortunates, with crushed-in planks, twisted buffers and general dismemberment, it seemed a wonder that they had been able to perform their last journey, or crawl to the hospital. Some of the trucks especially might have been almost said to look diseased, they were so dirty, while at the corners, where address cards were wont to be affixed, they appeared to have broken out in a sort of small-pox irruption of iron tackets.

At last Mrs Marrot left the “works,” declaring that her brain was “whirling worser than was the wheels and machinery they had just left,” while Bob asseverated stoutly that his appetite for the stupendous had only been whetted. In this frame of mind the former went home to nurse her husband, and the latter was handed over to his future master, the locomotive superintendent of the line.

Reader, it is worth your while to visit such works, to learn what can be done by the men whom you are accustomed to see, only while trooping home at meal hours, with dirty garments and begrimed hands and faces—to see the grandeur as well as the delicacy of their operations, while thus labouring amongst din and dust and fire, to provide *you* with safe and luxurious locomotion. We cannot indeed, introduce you to the particular “works” we have described; but if you would see something similar, hie thee to the works of our great arterial railways,—to those of the London and North-Western, at Crewe; the Great Western, at Swindon; the South-eastern, at Ashford; the Great Northern, at Doncaster; the

North British, at Cowlairs; the Caledonian, at Glasgow, or any of the many others that exist throughout the kingdom, for in each and all you will see, with more or less modification, exactly the same amazing sights that were witnessed by worthy Mrs Marrot and her hopeful son Bob, on that never-to-be-forgotten day, when they visited the pre-eminently great Clatterby “works” of the Grand National Trunk Railway.^[4]

^[4]The foregoing description is founded on visits paid to the locomotive works of the Great Western, at Swindon, and those of the North British, near Glasgow—to the General Managers and Superintendents of both which railways we are indebted for much valuable information.— R.M. Ballantyne.

CHAPTER NINE

Concerning Domestic Economy and Difficulties—surprises and Explanations

How to “make the two ends meet,” is a question that has engaged the attention and taxed the brains of hundreds and thousands of human beings from time immemorial, and which will doubtless afford them free scope for exercise to the end of time.

This condition of things would appear to arise from a misconception on the part of those who are thus exercised as to the necessities of life. They seem to imagine, as a rule, that if their income should happen to be, say three hundred pounds a year, it is absolutely impossible by any effort of ingenuity for them to live on less than two hundred and ninety–nine pounds nineteen shillings and eleven–pence three farthing. They therefore attempt to regulate their expenditure accordingly, and rather plume themselves than otherwise on the fact that they are firmly resolved to save and lay by the farthing. They fail in this attempt as a matter of course, and hence the difficulty of making the two ends meet. If these unfortunates had been bred to the profession of engineering or “contracting,” they would have known that it is what we may style a law of human nature to under–estimate probable expenses. So thoroughly is this understood by the men of the professions above referred to, that, after they have formed an estimate,—set down every imaginable expense, and racked their brains in order to make sure that they have provided for every conceivable and inconceivable item, they coolly add to the amount a pretty large sum as a “margin” to cover unexpected and unthought–of contingencies. But anything of this sort never seems to enter into the calculations of the people who are so much tormented with those obstinate “two ends” that won’t meet. There is one sure and easy mode of escape for them, but they invariably hold that mode to be ridiculous, until in dire extremity they are forced to adopt it. This is simply to make one’s calculations for living *considerably within* one’s income!

We make no apology for going into the minutiae of this remarkable phase of human existence, because it is necessary, in order to the correct appreciation of the circumstances and feelings of good little Mrs Tipps, when, several weeks after the accident described in a previous chapter, she sat down in her little parlour to reconsider the subject of her annual expenditure.

Netta sat beside her looking somewhat pale, for she had not quite recovered from the effects of her recent illness.

“My darling,” said Mrs Tipps, “how *can* you charge me with having made an error somewhere? Have I not got it all down here on black and white, as your dear father used to say? This is the identical paper on which I made my calculations last year, and I have gone over them all and found them perfectly correct. Look there.”

Mrs Tipps held up in triumph, as if it were an incontestable evidence of the rectitude of her calculations, a sheet of note–paper so blotted and bespattered with figures, that it

would have depressed the heart even of an accountant, because, besides the strong probability that it was intrinsically wrong, it was altogether illegible.

“Dear mamma,” remonstrated Netta, with a twinkle of her eye, “I do not call in question the correctness of your calculations, but I suggest that there may perhaps be an error of some sort somewhere. At all events the result would seem to indicate—to imply—that—that everything was not *quite* right, you know.”

“Quite true, darling,” replied Mrs Tipps, who was a candid though obtuse soul; “the result is unsatisfactory, eminently so; yet I cannot charge myself with careless omissions. See—here it is; on one side are my receipts. Your dear father always impressed it so earnestly on me that I should keep the receipts of money on one side of the accounts, and the payments on the other. I never could remember, by the way, on which side to put the receipts, and on which the payments, until he hit on the idea of making me contradict myself, and then I should be sure to keep right. He used to say (how well I remember it), ‘Now, darling, this is the way: Whenever you receive a sum of money to enter in your cash-book, always say to yourself, What side shall I put it on? If your mind suggests on the right, at once say No—because that would be wrong—right being *wrong* in *this* case,’ and he did use to laugh so over that little pleasantry.”

Mrs Tipps’ gravity deepened as she recalled these interesting lessons in book-keeping.

“Yes,” she continued, with a sigh, “and then he would go on to say, that ‘if it was wrong to go to the right, of course it must be right to go the other way.’ At first I used to be a good deal puzzled, and said, ‘But suppose my mind, when I receive a sum of money, should suggest putting it on the *left*, am I to contradict myself *then*?’ ‘Oh no!’ he would say, with another laugh, ‘in that case you will remember that your mind is to be *left* alone to carry out its suggestion.’ I got to understand it at last, after several years of training, but I never *could* quite approve of it for it causes so much waste of paper. Just look here!” she said, holding up a little account-book, “here are all the right pages quite filled up, while all the left pages are blank. It takes only four lines to enter my receipts, because you know I receive my money only once a quarter. Well, that brings me back to the point. Here are all the receipts on one side; my whole income, deducting income-tax—which, by the way, I cannot help regarding as a very unjust tax—amounts to two hundred and fifty pounds seventeen shillings and two-pence. Then here you have my paper of calculations—everything set down—rent, taxes, water rates, food, clothing, coals, gas, candles, sundries (sundries, my darling, including such small articles as soap, starch, etcetera); nothing omitted, even the cat’s food provided for, the whole mounting to two hundred and forty-five pounds. You see I was so anxious to keep within my income, that I resolved to leave five pounds seventeen shillings and two-pence for contingencies. But how does the case actually stand?” Here poor Mrs Tipps pointed indignantly to her account-book, and to a pile of papers that lay before her, as if they were the guilty cause of all her troubles. “How does it stand? The whole two hundred and fifty pounds seventeen shillings spent—only the two-pence left—and accounts to tradesmen, amounting to fifty pounds, remaining unpaid!”

“And have we *nothing* left to pay them?” asked Netta, in some anxiety.

“Nothing, my love,” replied Mrs Tipps, with a perplexed look, “except,” she added, after a

moment's thought, "the tuppence!"

The poor lady whimpered as she said this, seeing which Netta burst into tears; whereupon her mother sprang up, scattered the accounts right and left, and blaming herself for having spoken on these disagreeable subjects at all, threw her arms round Netta's neck and hugged her.

"Don't think me foolish, mamma," said Netta, drying her eyes in a moment; "really it almost makes me laugh to think that *I* should ever come to cry so easily; but you know illness does weaken one so, that sometimes, in spite of myself, I feel inclined to cry. But don't mind me; there, it's past now. Let us resume our business talk."

"Indeed I will not," protested Mrs Tipps.

"Then I will call nurse, and go into the subject with her," said Netta.

"Don't be foolish, dear."

"Well, then, go on with it, mamma. Tell me, now, is there nothing that we could sell?"

"Nothing. To be sure there is my gold watch, but that would not fetch more than a few pounds; and my wedding-ring, which I would sooner die than part with."

Netta glanced, as she spoke, at an unusually superb diamond ring, of Eastern manufacture, which adorned her own delicate hand. It was her father's last gift to her a few days before he died.

"What are you thinking of, darling?" inquired Mrs Tipps.

"Of many things," replied Netta slowly. "It is not easy to tell you exactly what—"

Here she was saved the necessity of further explanation by the entrance of Joseph Tipps, who, after kissing his mother and sister heartily, threw his hat and gloves into a corner, and, rubbing his hands together as he sat down, inquired if Edwin Gurwood had been there.

"No, we have neither seen nor heard of him," said Netta.

"Then you shall have him to luncheon in half-an-hour, or so," said Joseph, consulting his watch. "I got leave of absence to-day, and intend to spend part of my holiday in introducing him to Captain Lee, who has promised to get him a situation in the head office. You've no idea what a fine hearty fellow he is," continued Tipps enthusiastically, "so full of humour and good sense. But what have you been discussing? Not accounts, surely! Why, mother, what's the use of boring your brains with such things? Let me have 'em, I'll go over them for you. What d'you want done? The additions checked, eh?"

On learning that it was not the accounts so much as the discrepancy between the estimate and the actual expenditure that puzzled his mother, Tipps seized her book, and, turning over the leaves, said, "Here, let me see, I'll soon find it out—ah, well, rent yes; taxes, h'm; wine to Mrs Natly, you put that, in your estimate, under the head of food, I suppose?"

"N-no, I think not."

"Under physic, then?"

"No, not under that. I have no head for that."

“What! no head for physic? If you’d said you had no stomach for it I could have understood you; but—well—what *did* you put it under; sundries, eh?”

“I’m afraid, Joseph, that I have not taken note of that in my extract— your dear father used to call the thing he did with his cash-book at the end of the year an extract—I think I’ve omitted that.”

“Just so,” said Tipps, jotting down with a pencil on the back of a letter. “I’ll soon account to you for the discrepancy. Here are six bottles of wine to Mrs Natly, the railway porter’s wife, at three-and-six—one pound one—not provided for in your estimate. Any more physic, I wonder? H’m, subscription for coals to the poor. Half-a-guinea—no head for charities in your estimate, I suppose?”

“Of course,” pleaded Mrs Tipps, “in making an estimate, I was thinking only of my own expenses, you know—not of charities and such-like things; but when poor people come, you know, what *is* one to do?”

“We’ll not discuss that just now, mother. Hallo! `ten guineas doctor’s fee!’ Of course you have not that in the estimate, seeing that you did not know Netta was going to be ill. What’s this?—`five pounds for twenty wax dolls—naked—(to be dressed by —)’”

“Really, Joseph, the book is too private to be read aloud,” said Mrs Tipps, snatching it out of her son’s hand. “These dolls were for a bazaar in aid of the funds of a blind asylum, and I dressed them all myself last winter.”

“Well, well, mother,” said Tipps, laughing, “I don’t want to pry into such secrets; but here, you see, we have seventeen pounds odd of the discrepancy discovered already, and I’ve no doubt that the remainder could soon be fished up.”

“Yes,” sighed Mrs Tipps, sadly, “I see it now. As the poet truly says,—`Evil is wrought by want of thought as well as want of heart.’ I have been assisting the poor at the expense of my trades-people.”

“Mother,” exclaimed Tipps, indignantly, “you have been doing nothing of the sort. Don’t imagine that I could for a moment insinuate such a thing. You have only made a little mistake in your calculations, and all that you have got to do is to *put down a larger sum for contingencies* next time. What nonsense you talk about your trades-people! Every one of them shall be paid to the last farthing—”

Here Tipps was interrupted by the entrance of Edwin Gurwood, who at once began with much interest to inquire into the health of Mrs Tipps, and hoped that she had not suffered in any way from her recent accident.

Mrs Tipps replied she was thankful to say that she had not suffered in any way, beyond being a little shaken and dreadfully alarmed.

“But railways have suffered,” said Tipps, laughing, “for mother is so strongly set against them now that she would not enter one for a thousand pounds.”

“They have suffered in worse ways than that,” said Gurwood, “if all that I hear be true, for that accident has produced a number of serious compensation cases.”

Hereupon Gurwood and his friend plunged into an animated conversation about railway

accidents and their consequences, to the intense interest and horror of Mrs Tipps.

Meanwhile Netta left the room, and went to her old nurse's apartment.

"Nurse," she said, hurriedly, "when did you say you proposed paying your brother in London a visit—about this time, was it not?"

"Yes, dear," said old Mrs Durby, taking off her tortoise-shell spectacles and laying down her work, "I thought of going next week, if it is quite convenient."

"It is quite convenient, nurse," continued Netta, in a somewhat flurried manner; "it would be still more convenient if you could go to-morrow or next day."

"Deary me—what's wrong?" inquired Mrs Durby, in some surprise.

"Listen, I have not time to explain much," said Netta, earnestly, sitting down beside her faithful nurse and putting her hand on her shoulder. "We have got into difficulties, nurse—temporary difficulties, I hope—but they must be got over somehow. Now, I want you to take this diamond ring to London with you—pawn it for as much as you can get, and bring me the money."

"Me pawn it, my dear! I never pawned a thing in my life, and don't know how to go about it."

"But your brother knows how to do it," suggested Netta. "Now, you won't refuse me this favour, dear nurse? I know it is an unpleasant business, but what else can be done? The ring is my own; besides, I hope to be able to redeem it soon. I know no more about pawning than yourself, but I do know that a considerable time must elapse before the ring shall be lost to me. And, you know, our bills *must* be paid."

Good Mrs Durby did not require much persuasion. She consented to set off as soon as possible, if she should obtain permission from Mrs Tipps, who was aware that she had intended to visit her brother about that time. She received the precious ring, which, for security, was put into a pill-box; this was introduced into an empty match-box, which Netta wrapped in a sheet of note-paper and put Mrs Durby's name on it. For further security Mrs Durby enlarged the parcel by thrusting the match-box into an old slipper, the heel of which she doubled over the toe, and then wrapped the whole in several sheets of brown paper until the parcel assumed somewhat the shape and size of her own head. It was also fastened with strong cords, but Mrs Durby's powers of making a parcel were so poor that she left several uncouth corners and ragged ends of paper sticking out here and there. She wrote on it in pencil the simple name—Durby.

Meanwhile Joseph and his friend, having finished luncheon, prepared to set out on their visit to Captain Lee. As they quitted the house, Tipps ran back to the door and called his sister out of the parlour.

"I say, Netta, what about this fifty pounds that mother was talking of?" he said. "Do you mean to say that you are really short of that sum, and in debt?"

"We are, but I see a way out of the difficulty. Don't distress yourself, Joe; we shall have everything squared up, as you call it in a few days."

"Are you *quite* sure of that?" asked Tipps, with a doubting look. "You know I have got an

uncommonly cheap lodging, and a remarkably economical landlady, who manages so splendidly that I feed on a mere trifle a week. Seventy–five pounds a year, you know, is more than I know what to do with. I can live on thirty–five or so, and the other forty is—”

“We don’t require it Joe,” said Netta, laughing. “There, go away, you are giving me cold by keeping me in the passage, and your friend is getting impatient.”

She pushed him out, nodded, and shut the door. Tipps hastened after his friend, apologised for the delay, and, stepping out smartly, they were soon ushered into Captain Lee’s drawing–room. The captain was writing. Emma was seated near the window sewing.

“Ha! Tipps, my fine fellow, glad to see you; why, I was just thinking of you,” said the captain, extending his hand.

“I have called,” began Tipps, bowing to Emma and shaking the captain’s hand, “to introduce my—my—eh!—ah, my—what’s the matter?”

There was some reason for these exclamations, for Captain Lee stood gazing in mute amazement at young Gurwood, while the latter returned the compliment with his eyebrows raised to the roots of his hair. The similarity of their expressions did not, however, last long, for Edwin became gradually confused, while the captain grew red and choleric–looking.

“So,” said the latter at length, in a very stern voice, “*this* is your friend, Mr Tipps?”

“Sir,” exclaimed Edwin, flushing crimson, “you ought not to condemn any one unheard.”

“I do not condemn you, sir,” retorted the captain.

“By word, no, but by look and tone and gesture you do.”

“Captain Lee,” exclaimed Tipps, who had stood perfectly aghast with amazement at this scene, “what *do* you mean?—surely.”

“I mean,” said the captain, “that this youth was taken up by one of our own detectives as a thief, some weeks ago, and was found travelling in a first–class carriage without a ticket.”

Young Gurwood, who had by this time recovered his self–possession, turned to his friend and said,—“Explain this matter, Tipps, you know all about it. The only point that can puzzle you is, that I did not know the name of Captain Lee when I travelled with him, and therefore did not connect him with the gentleman to whom you said you meant to introduce me.”

Tipps drew a long breath.

“Oh,” said he, “I see it all now. Why, Captain Lee, my friend is *perfectly* innocent. It was quite a mistake, I assure you; and the best proof of it is that he is a personal friend of our police superintendent, who was on the spot at the time the accident occurred, but we were all thrown into such confusion at the time, that I don’t wonder things were not cleared up.”

Tipps hereupon went into a detailed account of the matter as far as he knew it, at first to the surprise and then to the amusement of Captain Lee. Fortunately for Gurwood, who would have found it difficult to explain the circumstance of his travelling without a ticket, the captain was as prompt to acknowledge his erroneous impression as he had been to condemn. Instead of listening to Tipps, he stopped him by suddenly grasping Gurwood’s

hand, and thanking him heartily for the prompt and able assistance he had rendered in rescuing his daughter from her perilous position on the day of the accident.

Of course Edwin would not admit that “rescue” was the proper term to apply to his action, and refused to admit that Miss Lee was in the slightest degree indebted to him, at the same time assuring her and her father that it had afforded him the highest possible pleasure to have been of the slightest service to them. The end of it was that they all became extremely good friends, and the captain in particular became quite jocular in reference to mistakes in general and stealing in particular, until Tipps, pulling out his watch, declared that procrastination was the thief of time, and that as he happened to have business to transact with the police superintendent in reference to the very accident which had caused them all so much trouble, he must unwillingly bid them adieu.

“Stay, Tipps,” exclaimed the captain, rising, “I shall accompany you to the station, and introduce our friend Gurwood to the scene of his future labours, where,” continued the captain, turning with a hearty air and patronising smile to Edwin, “I hope you will lay the foundation of a career which will end in a manager’s or secretary’s situation, or some important post of that sort. Good–bye, Emma I’ll not be back till dinner–time.”

Emma bowed to the young men, and said good–bye to her father with a smile so ineffably captivating, that Edwin resolved then and there to lay the foundation of a career which would end in a wife with nut–brown hair and large lustrous eyes.

Poor Edwin! He was not the first man whose wayward spirit had been chained, his impulses directed to good ends and aims, and his destiny fixed, by the smile of an innocent, loving, pretty girl. Assuredly, also, he was not the last!

CHAPTER TEN

Sharp Practice

Standing with his back to the fireplace, his legs slightly apart, his hands in his pockets, and his eyes fixed on the ceiling, Mr Sharp, Police Superintendent of the Grand National Trunk Railway, communed with himself and dived into the future.

Mr Sharp's powers of diving were almost miraculous. He had an unusually keen eye for the past and the present, but in regard to the future his powers were all but prophetic. He possessed a rare capacity for following up clues; investigating cases; detecting falsehoods, not only of the lip, but of the eye and complexion; and, in a word, was able to extract golden information out of the most unpromising circumstances. He was also all but ubiquitous. Now tracking a suspicion to its source on his own line in one of the Midland counties; anon comparing notes with a brother superintendent at the terminus of the Great Western, or Great Northern, or South-Eastern in London. Sometimes called away to give evidence in a county court; at other times taking a look in at his own home to kiss his wife or dandle his child before dashing off per express to follow up a clue to John O'Groats or the Land's End. Here, and there, and everywhere—calm, self-possessed, and self-contained, making notes in trains, writing reports in his office, making discoveries and convictions, and sometimes making prisoners with his own hands by night and day, with no fixed hours for work, or rest, or meals, and no certainty in anything concerning him, save in the uncertainty of his movements, Mr Sharp with his myrmidons was the terror of evil doers, and, we may truly add, the safeguard of the public.

Little did that ungrateful public know all it owed to the untiring watchfulness and activity of Mr Sharp and his men. If he and his compeers were to be dismissed from our lines for a single week, the descent of a host of thieves and scoundrels to commit wide-spread plunder would teach the public somewhat severely how much they owe to the efficient management of this department of railway business, and how well, constantly and vigilantly—though unobtrusively—their interests are cared for.

But to return. Mr Sharp, as we have said stood communing with himself and diving into the future. Apparently his thoughts afforded him some amusement, for his eyes twinkled slightly, and there was a faintly humorous twist about the corners of his mouth.

David Blunt sat at a desk near him, writing diligently. Against the wall over his head hung a row of truncheons. Besides the desk, a bench, two or three wooden chairs, and a chest, there was little furniture in the room.

Blunt's busy pen at length ceased to move, and Sharp looked at him.

"Well, Blunt," he said, "I see nothing for it but to make a railway porter of you."

"By all means, sir," said Blunt, with a smile, laying down his pen.

"Gorton station," continued Sharp, "has become a very nest of thieves. It is not creditable that such a state of things should exist for a week on our line. They have managed things

very cleverly as yet. Five or six bales of cloth have disappeared in the course of as many days, besides several loaves of sugar and half-a-dozen cheeses. I am pretty sure who the culprits are, but can't manage to bring it home to them, so, as I have said, we must convert you into a porter. You have only been once engaged on this part of the line—that was at the accident when you were so hard on poor Mr Gurwood, so that none of the Gorton people will know you. I have arranged matters with our passenger superintendent. It seems that Macdonell, the station-master at Gorton, has been complaining that he is short-handed and wants another porter. That just suits us, so we have resolved to give you that responsible situation. You will get a porter's uniform from—”

At this point Mr Sharp was interrupted by the door opening violently, and a detective in plain clothes entering with a stout young man in his grasp.

“Who have we here?” asked Mr Sharp.

“Man travelling without a ticket sir,” replied the detective, whose calm demeanour was in marked contrast to the excitement of his prisoner.

“Ha! come here; what have you to say for yourself?” demanded the superintendent of the man.

Hereupon the man began a violent exculpation of himself, which entailed nearly half-an-hour of vigorous cross-questioning, and resulted in his giving a half-satisfactory account of himself, some trustworthy references to people in town, and being set free.

This case having been disposed of, Mr Sharp resumed his conversation with Blunt.

“Having been changed, then, into a railway porter, Blunt, you will proceed to Gorton to discharge your duties there, and while doing so you will make uncommonly good use of your eyes, ears, and opportunities.”

Mr Sharp smiled and Blunt chuckled, and at the same time Joseph Tipps entered the room.

“Good-evening, Mr Sharp,” he said. “Well, anything more about these Gorton robberies?”

“Nothing more yet, Mr Tipps, but we expect something more soon, for a new porter is about to be sent to the station.”

Tipps, who was a very simple matter-of-fact man in some ways, looked puzzled.

“Why, how will the sending of a new porter to the station throw light on the matter?”

“You shall know in the course of time, Mr Tipps,” replied the superintendent. “We have wonderful ways of finding out things here.”

“Indeed you have,” said Tipps; “and, by the way, that reminds me that they have some wonderful ways of finding out things on the Continent as well as here. I have just heard of a clever thing done by a German professor. It seems that on one of the lines—I forget which—a large box full of silver-plate was despatched. It had a long way to go, and before reaching its destination the plate was stolen, and the box filled up with sand. On this being discovered, of course every sort of investigation was set on foot, but without success. At last the thing came to the ears of a professor of chemistry—or the police went to him, I don't know which—and it occurred to him that he might get a clue to the thieves by means of the sand in the box. You see the great difficulty the police had, was to

ascertain at which of the innumerable stations on the long line, it was likely that the theft had taken place. The professor ordered samples of the sand at all the stations on the line to be sent to him. These he analysed and examined with the microscope, and found that one of the samples was precisely similar in all respects to the sand in the box. The attention of the police was at once concentrated on the station from which that sand had been gathered, and in a short time the guilty parties were discovered and the theft brought home to them. Now, wasn't that clever?"

"Very good, very good, indeed," said Mr Sharp, approvingly, "and rather peculiar. I had a somewhat peculiar case myself last week. You know some time ago there was a quantity of cloth stolen on this line, for which, by the way, we had to pay full compensation. Well, I could not get any clue to the thieves, but at last I thought of a plan. I got some patterns of the cloth from the party that lost it, and sent one of these to every station on the line where it was likely to have been stolen. Just the other day I got a telegram from Croon station stating that a man had been seen going about in a new suit exactly the same as the pattern. Off I went immediately, pounced on the man, taxed him with the theft, and found the remainder of the cloth in his house."

"Capital," exclaimed Tipps, "that was smartly managed. And, by the way, wasn't there something about a case of stealing muffs and boas lately?"

"Yes, and we got hold of that thief too, the day before yesterday," replied Mr Sharp. "I felt sure, from the way in which the theft was committed, that it must be one of our own men, and so it turned out. He had cut open a bale and taken out several muffs and boas of first-rate sable. One set of 'em he gave to his sweetheart, who was seen wearing them in church on Sunday. I just went to her and said I was going to put a question to her, and warned her to speak the truth, as it would be worse for all parties concerned if she attempted to deceive me. I then asked her if she had got the muff and boa from Jim Croydon, the porter. She blushed scarlet, and admitted it at once, but said, poor thing, that she had no idea they had been stolen, and I believe her. This case occurred just after I had watched the milk-truck the other night for three hours, and found that the thief who had been helping himself to it every morning for some weeks past was the watchman at the station."

"I fear there are a great many bad fellows amongst us," said Tipps, shaking his head.

"You are quite mistaken," replied the superintendent. "There *were* a good many bad fellows, but I flatter myself that there are very few *now* in proportion to the number of men on the line. We are constantly winnowing them out, purifying the ore, as it were, so that we are gradually getting rid of all the dross, and leaving nothing but sterling metal on the line. Why, Mr Tipps, you surely don't expect that railways are to be exempted from black sheep any more than other large companies. Just look at the army and navy, and see what a lot of rascals have to be punished and drummed out of the service every now and then. Same everywhere. Why, when I consider that we employ over twenty thousand men and boys, and that these men and boys are tempted, more almost than any other class of people, by goods lying about constantly in large quantities in the open air, and in all sorts of lonely and out-of-the-way places, my surprise is that our bad men are so few. No doubt we shall always have one or two prowling about, and may occasionally alight on a nest of 'em, but we shall manage to keep 'em down—to winnow them out faster, perhaps, than they come in. I am just going about some little pieces of business of that sort now,"

added Mr Sharp; putting on his hat. “Did you wish to speak with me about anything in particular, Mr Tipps?”

“Yes; I wished to ask you if that fat woman, Mrs —, what’s her name?”

“You mean Mrs Podge, I suppose?” suggested Sharp; “she who kicked her heels so vigorously at Langrye after the accident.”

“Ah! Mrs Podge—yes. Does she persist in her ridiculous claim for damages?”

“She does, having been urged to do so by some meddling friend; for I’m quite sure that she would never have thought of doing so herself, seeing that she received no damage at all beyond a fright. I’m going to pay her a visit to-day in reference to that very thing.”

“That’s all right; then I won’t detain you longer. Good-bye, Mr Sharp,” said Tipps, putting on his hat and quitting the office.

Not long afterwards, Mr Sharp knocked at the door of a small house in one of the suburbs of Clatterby, and was ushered into the presence of Mrs Podge. That amiable lady was seated by the fire knitting a stocking.

“Good afternoon, Mrs Podge,” said Mr Sharp, bowing and speaking in his blandest tones. “I hope I see you quite well?”

Mrs Podge, charmed with the stranger’s urbanity, wished him good afternoon, admitted that she was quite well, and begged him to be seated.

“Thank you, Mrs Podge,” said Mr Sharp, complying. “I have taken the liberty of calling in regard to a small matter of business—but pardon me,” he added, rising and shutting the door, “I inadvertently left the door open, which is quite inexcusable in me, considering your delicate state of health. I trust that—”

“My delicate state of health!” exclaimed Mrs Podge, who was as fat as a prize pig, and rather piqued herself on her good looks and vigour of body.

“Yes,” continued Mr Sharp, in a commiserating tone; “I have understood, that since the accident on the railway your—”

“Oh, as to that,” laughed Mrs Podge, “I’m not much the worse of—but, sir,” she said, becoming suddenly grave, “you said you had called on business?”

“I did. My business is to ask,” said Mr Sharp, with a very earnest glance of his penetrating eyes, “on what ground you claim compensation from the Grand National Trunk Railway?”

Instantly Mrs Podge’s colour changed. She became languid, and sighed.

“Oh, sir—damages—yes—my nerves! I did not indeed suffer much damage in the way of cuts or bruises, though there *was* a good piece of skin torn off my elbow, which I could show you if it were proper to—but my nerves received a *terrible* shock. They have not yet recovered. Indeed, your abrupt way of putting it has quite—thrown a—”

As Mrs Podge exhibited some symptoms of a hysterical nature at this point Mr Sharp assumed a very severe expression of countenance, and said—

“Now, Mrs Podge, do you really think it fair or just, to claim damages from a company, from whom you have absolutely received *no* damage?”

“But sir,” said Mrs Podge, recovering, “my nerves *did* receive damage.”

“I do not doubt it Mrs Podge, but we cannot compensate you for that. If you had been laid up, money could have repaid you for lost time, or, if your goods had been damaged, it might have compensated for that but money cannot restore shocked nerves. Did you require medical attendance?”

“N—no!” said Mrs Podge, reddening. “A friend did indeed insist on my seeing a doctor, to whom, at his suggestion, I gave a fee of five shillings, but to say truth I did not require him.”

“Ha! was it the same friend who advised you to claim compensation?”

“Ye—es!” replied Mrs Podge, a little confused.

“Well, Mrs Podge, from your own admission I rather think that there seems something like a fraudulent attempt to obtain money here. I do not for a moment hint that you are guilty of a fraudulent *intention*, but you must know, ma’am, that the law takes no notice of intentions— only of facts.”

“But *have* I not a right to expect compensation for the shock to my nervous system?” pleaded Mrs Podge, still unwilling to give in.

“Certainly not, ma’am, if the shock did not interfere with your ordinary course of life or cause you pecuniary loss. And does it not seem hard on railways, if you can view the subject candidly, to be so severely punished for accidents which are in many cases absolutely unavoidable? Perfection is not to be attained in a moment. We are rapidly decreasing our risks and increasing our safeguards. We do our best for the safety and accommodation of the public, and as directors and officials travel by our trains as frequently as do the public, concern for our own lives insures that we work the line in good faith. Why, ma’am, I was myself near the train at the time of the accident at Langrye, and *my* nerves were considerably shaken. Moreover, there was a director with his daughter in the train, both of whom were severely shaken, but they do not dream of claiming damages on that account. If you could have shown, Mrs Podge, that you had suffered loss of any kind, we should have *offered* you compensation promptly, but as things stand—”

“Well, well,” exclaimed Mrs Podge, testily. “I suppose I must give it up, but I don’t see why railway companies should be allowed to shock my nerves and then refuse to give me any compensation!”

“But we do not absolutely refuse *all* compensation,” said Mr Sharp, drawing out his purse; “if a sovereign will pay the five shilling fee of your doctor, and any other little expenses that you may have incurred, you are welcome to it.”

Mrs Podge extended her hand, Mr Sharp dropped the piece of gold into it, and then, wishing her good afternoon, quitted the house.

The superintendent of police meditated, as he walked smartly away from Mrs Podge, on the wonderful differences that were to be met with in mankind, as to the matter of acquisitiveness, and his mind reverted to a visit he had paid some time before, to another of the passengers in the train to which the accident occurred. This was the commercial traveller who had one of his legs rather severely injured. He willingly showed his injured

limb to our superintendent, when asked to do so, but positively declined to accept of any compensation whatever, although it was offered, and appeared to think himself handsomely treated when a few free passes were sent to him by the manager.

Contrasting Mrs Podge unfavourably with this rare variety of the injured human race, Mr Sharp continued his walk until he reached a part of the line, not far from the station, where a large number of vans and waggons were shunted on to sidings,—some empty, others loaded,—waiting to be made up into trains and forwarded to their several destinations.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Sharp Practice—continued

Mr Sharp had several peculiarities, which, at first sight, might have puzzled a stranger. He was peculiar in his choice of routes by which to reach a given spot appearing frequently to prefer devious, difficult, and unfrequented paths to straight and easy roads. In the time of his visits to various places, too, he was peculiarly irregular, and seemed rather to enjoy taking people by surprise.

On the present occasion his chief peculiarity appeared to be a desire to approach the station by a round-about road. In carrying out his plans he went round the corner of a house, from which point of view he observed a goods train standing near a goods-shed with an engine attached. In order to reach it he had the choice of two routes. One of these was through a little wicket-gate, near to which a night-watchman was stationed—for the shades of evening were by that time descending on the scene, the other was through a back yard, round by a narrow lane and over a paling, which it required more than an average measure of strength and agility to leap. Mr Sharp chose the latter route. What were palings and narrow lanes and insecure footing in deepening gloom to him! Why, he rejoiced in such conditions! He didn't like easy work. He abhorred a bed of roses—not that he had ever tried one, although it is probable that he had often enjoyed a couch of grass, straw, or nettles. Rugged circumstances were his glory. It was as needful for him to encounter such—in his winnowing processes—as it is for the harrow to encounter stones in preparing the cultivated field. Moving quietly but swiftly round by the route before mentioned Mr Sharp came suddenly on the night-watchman.

“Good-evening, Jim.”

“Evenin', sir.”

“Keep your eyes open to-night, Jim. We *must* find out who it is that has taken such a fancy to apples of late.”

“I will, sir; I'll keep a sharp look-out.”

It was Jim's duty to watch that locality of the line, where large quantities of goods of all descriptions were unavoidably left to wait for a few hours on sidings. Such watchmen are numerous on all lines; and very necessary, as well as valuable, men most of them are—fellows who hold the idea of going to rest at regular hours in quiet contempt; men who sleep at any time of the night or day that chances to be most convenient, and who think no more of a hand-to-hand scuffle with a big thief or a burglar than they do of eating supper. Nevertheless, like every other class of men in this wicked world, there are black sheep amongst them too.

“Is that train going up to the station just now, Jim?” asked Mr Sharp, pointing to the engine, whose gentle simmering told of latent energy ready for immediate use.

“I believe so, sir.”

“I’ll go up with her. Good–night.”

Mr Sharp crossed the line, and going towards the engine found that the driver and fireman were not upon it. He knew, however, that they could not be far off—probably looking after something connected with their train—and that they would be back immediately; he climbed up to the foot–plate and sat down on the rail. He there became reflective, and recalled, with some degree of amusement as well as satisfaction, some of the more recent incidents of his vocation. He smiled as he remembered how, not very far from where he sat, he had on a cloudy evening got into a horse–box, and boring a hole in it with a gimlet, applied his eye thereto,—his satellite David Blunt doing the same in another end of the same horse–box, and how, having thus obtained a clear view of a truck in which several casks of wine were placed, he beheld one of the servants on the line in company with one of his friends who was *not* a servant on the line, coolly bore a hole in one of the wine casks and insert a straw, and, by that means, obtain a prolonged and evidently satisfactory draught—which accounted at once for the fact that wine had been leaking in that locality for some time past, and that the said servant had been seen more than once in a condition that was deemed suspicious.

Mr Sharp also reflected complacently—and he had time to reflect, for the driver and fireman were rather long of coming—on another case in which the thieves were so wary that for a long time he could make nothing of them, although their depredations were confined to a train that passed along the line at a certain hour, but at last were caught in consequence of his hitting on a plan of having a van specially prepared for himself. He smiled again—almost laughed when he thought of this van—how it was regularly locked and labelled on a quiet siding; how a plank was loosened in the bottom of it, by which means he got into it, and was then shunted out, and attached to the train, so that neither guard, nor driver, nor fireman, had any idea of what was inside; how he thereafter bored several small gimlet holes in the various sides of the van and kept a sharp look–out from station to station as they went along; how at last he came to the particular place—not a station, but a place where a short pause was made—where the wary thieves were; how he saw them—two stout fellows—approach in the gloom of evening and begin their wicked work of cutting tarpaulings and abstracting goods; how he thereupon lifted his plank and dropped out on the line, and how he powerfully astonished them by laying his hands on their collars and taking them both in the very act!

At last Mr Sharp’s entertaining reflections were interrupted by the approach of the driver of the engine, who carried a top–coat over his left arm.

As he drew near and observed who stood upon his engine, the man gave an involuntary and scarcely perceptible start.

There must have been something peculiarly savage and ungenerous in the breast of Mr Sharp, one would have thought, to induce him to suspect a man whose character was blameless. But he did suspect that man on the faith of that almost imperceptible touch of discomposure, and his suspicion did not dissipate although the man came boldly and respectfully forward.

“Ho–ho!” thought Mr Sharp, “there is more chaff here to be winnowed than I had bargained for.” His only remark, however, was—

“Good–evening; I suppose you start for the station in a few minutes?”

“Yes, sir,” said the man, moving towards the rear of the tender.

“You’d better get up at once, then,” said Mr Sharp, descending quickly—“what have you got there, my good man?”

“My top–coat sir,” said the driver, with a confused look.

“Ah, let us see—eh! what’s all this? A salmon! a brace of grouse! and a pair of rabbits! Well, you seem to have provided a good supper for to–night. There don’t appear to be very stringent game–laws where you come from!”

The man was so taken aback that he could not reply. As the fireman came out of the neighbouring goods–shed at that moment, Mr Sharp ordered the driver to mount to his place, and then waiting beside the engine received the fireman with an amiable “Good–night.”

This man also had a top–coat over his arm, betrayed the same uneasiness on observing Mr Sharp, went through precisely the same examination, and was found to have made an identically similar provision for his supper.

Almost immediately after him the guard issued from the shed, also burdened with a top–coat! Mr Sharp muttered something about, “birds of a feather,” and was about to advance to meet the guard when that individual’s eyes fell on him. He turned back at once, not in a hurry, but quietly as though he had forgotten something. The superintendent sprang through the open door, but was too late. The guard had managed to drop his booty. Thereupon Mr Sharp returned to the engine, ordered the steam to be turned on, and the driver drove himself and his friends to the station and to condign punishment.

Having disposed of this little incidental case, Mr Sharp—after hearing and commenting upon several matters related to him by the members of his corps, and having ordered David Blunt to await him in the office as he had a job for him that night,—returned towards the locality which he had so recently quitted. In doing this he took advantage of another goods train, from which he dropped at a certain hole–and–corner spot, while it was slowly passing the goods–shed before mentioned. From this spot he took an observation and saw the pipe of Jim, the night–watchman, glowing in the dark distance like a star of the first magnitude.

“Ha!” thought Mr Sharp, “smoking! You’ll have to clear your eyes of smoke if you hope to catch thieves to–night, my fine fellow; but I shall try to render you some able assistance.”

So thinking, he moved quietly about among the vans and trucks, stooping and climbing as occasion required, and doing it all so noiselessly that, had the night permitted him to be visible at all, he might have been mistaken for a stout shadow or a ghost. He went about somewhat like a retriever snuffing the air for game. At last he reached a truck, not very far from the place where Jim paced slowly to and fro, watching, no doubt, for thieves. Little did he think how near he was to a thief at that moment!

The truck beside which Mr Sharp stood sent forth a delicious odour of American apples. The superintendent of police smelt them. Worse than that—he undid a corner of the thick

covering of the track, raised it and smelt again—he put in a hand. Evidently his powers of resistance to temptation were small, for both hands went in—he stooped his head, and then, slowly but surely, his whole body went in under the cover and disappeared. Infatuated superintendent! While he lay there gorging himself, no doubt with the dainty fruit, *honest* Jim paced slowly to and fro until, a very dark and quiet hour of the night having arrived, he deemed it time to act, put out his pipe, and moved with stealthy tread towards the apple-truck. There were no thieves about as far as he could see. He was placed there for the express purpose of catching thieves. Ridiculous waste of time and energy—he would *make* a thief! He would become one; he would detect and catch himself; repay himself with apples for his trouble, and enjoy himself consumedly! Noble idea! No sooner thought than carried into effect. He drew out a large clasp-knife, which opened and locked with a click, and cut a tremendous slash about two feet long in the cover of the truck—passing, in so doing, within an inch of the demoralised superintendent's nose. Thieves, you see, are not particular, unless, indeed, we may regard them as particularly indifferent to the injuries they inflict on their fellow-men—but, what did we say? their fellow-men?—a railway is not a fellow-man. Surely Jim's sin in robbing a railway must be regarded as a venial one. *Honest* men do that every day and appear to think nothing of it! Nobody appears to think anything of it. A railway would seem to be the one great unpardonable outlaw of the land, which does good to nobody, and is deemed fair game by everybody who can catch it—napping. But it is not easily caught napping. Neither was Mr Superintendent Sharp.

Jim's hand came through the hole in the covering and entered some sort of receptacle, which must have been broken open by somebody, for the hand was quickly withdrawn with three apples in it. Again it entered. Mr Sharp might have kissed it easily, but he was a man of considerable self-restraint—at least when others were concerned. He thought it advisable that there should be some of the stolen goods found in Jim's pockets! He did not touch the hand, therefore, while it was drawn back with other three apples in it. You see it was a large hand, and could hold three at a time. A third time it entered and grasped more of the forbidden fruit.

“There's luck in odd numbers,” thought Mr Sharp, as he seized the wrist with both of his iron hands, and held it fast.

The appalling yell which Jim uttered was due more to superstitious dread than physical fear, for, on discovering that the voice which accompanied the grip was that of Mr Sharp, he struggled powerfully to get free. After the first violent effort was over, Mr Sharp suddenly slid one hand along Jim's arm, caught him by the collar, and, launching himself through the hole which had been cut so conveniently large, plunged into Jim's bosom and crushed him to the earth.

This was quite sufficient for Jim, who got up meekly when permitted, and pleaded for mercy. Mr Sharp told him that mercy was a commodity in which he did not deal, that it was the special perquisite of judges, from whom he might steal it if they would not give or sell it to him, and, bidding him come along quietly, led him to the station, and locked him up for the night.

Not satisfied with what he had already accomplished, Mr Sharp then returned to his office, where he found the faithful Blunt awaiting him, to whom he related briefly what he had

done.

“Now,” said he, in conclusion, “if we can only manage to clear up that case of the beer-cask, we shall have done a good stroke of business to-day. Have you found out anything in regard to it?”

The case to which Mr Sharp referred was that of a cask of beer which had been stolen from the line at a station not three miles distant from Clatterby.

“Yes, sir,” said David Blunt with a satisfied smile, “I have found out enough to lead to the detection of the thief.”

“Indeed, who d’ye think it is?”

“One of the men at the station, sir. There have been two about it but the other is a stranger. You see, sir,” continued Blunt, with an earnest look, and in a business tone of voice, “when you sent me down to investigate the case I went d’rect to the station-master there and heard all he had to say about it—which wasn’t much;—then off I goes to where the truck was standin’, from which the cask had bin taken and potted about there for some time. At last I tried on the Red Indian dodge— followed up tracks and signs, till at last I came upon a mark as if somethin’ had bin rolled along the bank, and soon traced it to a gap broken through a hedge into a field. I followed it up in the field, and in a short time came on the cask itself. Of course I made a careful examination of the locality, and found very distinct foot-prints, particularly one of ‘em on a piece of clay as sharp as if it had been struck in wax. While thus engaged I found a shoe—”

“Ha!” exclaimed Mr Sharp.

“And here it is,” said Blunt taking the shoe from under his chair and laying it on the table.

The superintendent took it up, examined it and then replaced it on the table with a nod, saying, “Proceed.”

“Well, sir, of course I looked well for the other shoe, but didn’t find it; so I came away with what I had got, takin’ care to place a lump of a stone over the foot-print in the clay, so as to guard but not touch it,—for it wasn’t the print of *this* shoe, sir, though somewhat like it.”

“Ha!” exclaimed Mr Sharp again.

After revolving the matter in his mind for some minutes, and consulting with his satellite, Mr Sharp resolved to go down at once to the place and watch the beer-cask.

“It is not very late yet,” he said, “and these thirsty boys will be sure to want a drop of beer to their supper to-night. What makes you so sure that Bill Jones is the thief?”

“Because,” answered Blunt, “I observed that he was the only man at the station that had on a pair of new shoes!”

“Well, come along,” said Sharp, smiling grimly, “we shall find out before long.”

They soon reached the scene of the robbery, and were able to examine the place by the light of the moon, which had just managed to pierce the thick veil of clouds that had covered it during the earlier part of that night. Then they retired to a shady cavern, or hole, or hollow at the foot of the embankment, near to the gap in the hedge, and there they

prepared to pass the night, with a heap of mingled clods and stones for their couch, and an overhanging bank of nettles for their canopy.

It was a long weary watch that began. There these patient men sat, hour after hour, gazing at the moon and stars till they almost fell asleep, and then entering into animated, though softly uttered, conversation until they roused themselves up. It was strange converse too, about struggles and fights with criminals and the detection of crime. But it was not *all* on such subjects. No, they forsook the professional path occasionally and strayed, as pleasantly as other men do, into the flowery lanes of social life—talking of friends, and wives, and children, and home, with as much pathos and tenderness as if their errand that night had been to succour some comrade in distress, instead of to watch like wolves, and pounce on unawares, and half throttle if need be, and bear off to punishment, an erring fellow—mortal.

But no fellow—mortal came that night to be thus pounced on, throttled, and borne off. When it became obvious that there was no use in remaining longer, Mr Sharp and his satellite returned to the office, and the former bade the latter go home for the night.

The satellite, thus set free, went home and set immediately—in his bed. The luminary himself postponed his setting for a time, put the thief's shoe in his pocket and went straight to the residence of Bill Jones, which he reached shortly after the grey dawn had appeared. Here he found Bill in bed; but being peremptory in his demand for admission, Bill arose and let him in.

“You look rather pale this morning, Bill?”

“Bin at work late, sir,” said Bill uneasily, observing that the superintendent was casting an earnest glance all round his room.

Jones was a bachelor, so there wasn't much of any kind to look at in the room.

“You've been treating yourself to a new pair of shoes, I see, Jones, what have you done with the old ones?”

“I—they're worn-out, sir—I—”

“Yes, I see—ah! here is *one* of them,” said Mr Sharp, drawing an old shoe out of a corner; “you don't require to look for the other, I've got it here,” he added, drawing its fellow from his pocket.

Jones stood aghast.

“Look here, Jones,” said Mr Sharp, gazing sternly into the culprit's face, “you needn't trouble yourself to deny the theft. I haven't yet looked at the sole of *this* shoe, but I'll engage to tell how many tackets are in it. We have discovered a little lump of clay down near the station, with a perfect impression of a sole having fifteen tackets therein,—three being wanting on the right, side, two on the left, and one at the toe—now, let us see,” he said, turning it up, “am I not a good prophet eh?”

Bill gave in at once! He not only made “a clean breast of it,” but also gave information that led to the capture of his accomplice before that day's sun went down, and before Mr Sharp allowed himself to go to bed.

Thus did our superintendent winnow the chaff from the wheat continually.

Now, dear reader, do not say, "From all this it would appear that railway servants must be a bad lot of men!" It would be a thousand pities to fail into such an error, when we are labouring to prove to you the very reverse, namely, that the bad ones being continually and well "looked after," none but the good are left. Our aim necessarily involves that we should dilate much on evil, so that the evil unavoidably bulks large in your eyes; but if we were capable of laying before you all the good that is done, felt and said by the thousands of our true-hearted men-of-the-line, the evil that is mingled with them would shrink into comparative insignificance.

The truth is, that in writing these details we desire to reassure ourself, as well as to comfort you, O timid railway traveller, by asserting and illustrating the unquestionable fact, that if our dangers on the line are numerous and great, our safeguards at all points are far more numerous and much greater.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Loo's Garden

The plans of nurses, not less than those of mice and men, are apt to get into disorder. Mrs Durby having packed up the diamond ring in the careful manner which we have described in a previous chapter, essayed to get ready for her important journey to London on pawning purposes intent, but she found that there were so many little preparations to make, both in regard to her own toilette and to the arrangements of Mrs Tipps' establishment, in prospect of its being left without its first mate for a time, that a considerable period elapsed before she got her anchor tripped and herself ready to set sail with the first fair wind. Worthy Mrs Durby, we may observe, was fond of quoting the late captain's phraseology. She was an affectionate creature, and liked to recall his memory in this somewhat peculiar fashion.

In anticipation of this journey, Netta went one evening, in company with Emma Lee, to pay Mrs John Marrot a friendly visit, ostensibly for the purpose of inquiring after the health of baby Marrot, who, having recently fallen down—stairs, swallowed a brass button and eaten an unknown quantity of shoe—blacking, had been somewhat ailing. The real object of the visit however, was to ask Mrs Marrot to beg of her husband to take a special interest in Mrs Durby on her journey, as that excellent nurse had made up her mind to go by the train which he drove, feeling assured that if safety by rail was attainable at all, it must be by having a friend at court—a good and true man at the helm, so to speak.

“But la, Miss!” said Mrs Marrot, sitting on the bed and patting the baby, whose ruling passion, mischief, could not be disguised even in distress, seeing that it gleamed from his glassy eyes and issued in intermittent yells from his fevered throat, “if your nurse is of a narvish temperment she'd better not go with my John, 'cause *he* usually drives the Flyin' Dutchman.”

“Indeed!” said Netta, with a puzzled smile; “and pray, what is the Flyin' Dutchman?”

A yell and a glare from baby interrupted the reply. At the same instant the 7:45 p.m. express flew past with a roar, which was intensified by the whistle into a shriek as it neared the station. The house trembled as usual. Netta, not unnaturally, shuddered.

“Don't be alarmed, Miss, it's only the express.”

“Do expresses often pass your cottage in that way?” asked Netta, with a touch of pity.

“Bless you, yes, Miss; they're always passin' day and night continuooly; but we don't think nothink of it. We've got used to it now.”

“Does it not disturb you at night?” asked Emma Lee in some surprise.

“No, Miss, it don't—not in the least. No doubt it sometimes *do* influence our dreams, if I may say so. As my son Bob says—he's a humorous boy is my Bob, Miss—he says, says he, the trains can't awaken *us*, but they *do* awaken noo trains of ideas, especially w'en they stops right opposite the winder an' blows off steam, or whistles like mad for five

minutes at a time. I sometimes think that Bob is right, an' that's w'y baby have took to yellin' an' mischief with such a 'igh 'and. They do say that a man is knowd by the company he keeps, and I'm sure it's no wonder that baby should screech an' smash as he do, considerin' the example set 'im day an' night by them ingines."

Here another yell from baby gave, as it were, assent to these opinions.

"But, as I was sayin'," continued Mrs Marrot, "the Flyin' Dutchman is the name that my 'usband's train goes by, 'cause it is the fastest train in the kingdom—so they say. It goes at the rate of over sixty miles an hour, an' ain't just quite the train for people as is narvish—though my 'usband do say it ain't more dangerous than other trains—not s'much so, indeed, wich I believe myself, for there ain't nothink 'appened to my John all the eight years he have drove it."

"Is sixty miles an hour *very* much faster than the rate of ordinary trains?" asked Emma.

"W'y, yes, Miss. Or'nary trains they run between twenty and forty miles an hour, though sometimes in goin' down inclines they git up to fifty; but my 'usband *averages* sixty miles an hour, an' on some parts o' the line 'e gits up the speed to sixty-five an' siventy. For my own part I'm quite hignorant of these things. To my mind all the ingines seem to go bangin' an' rushin' an' yellin' about pretty much in the same furious way; but I've often 'eard my 'usband explain it all, an' *he* knows all about it Miss, just as if it wor A, B, C."

Having discussed such matters a little longer, and entered with genuine sympathy into the physical and mental condition of baby, Netta finally arranged that her old nurse should go by the Flying Dutchman, seeing that she would be unable to distinguish the difference of speed between one train and another, while her mind would be at rest, if she knew herself to be under the care of a man, in whom she could trust.

"Well, Miss, I dessay it won't much matter," said Mrs Marrot, endeavouring to soothe the baby, in whom the button or the blacking appeared to be creating dire havoc; "but of course my 'usband can't attend to 'er 'isself, not bein' allowed to attend to nothink but 'is ingine. But he'll put 'er in charge of the guard, who is a very 'andsome man, and uncommon polite to ladies. Stay, I'll speak to Willum Garvie about it now," said Mrs Marrot, rising; "he's in the garding be'ind."

"Pray don't call him in," said Netta, rising quickly; "we will go down to him. I should like much to see your garden."

"You'll find my Loo there, too," said Mrs Marrot with a motherly smile, as she opened the door to let her visitors out. "You'll excuse me not goin' hout. I dursn't leave that baby for a minute. He'd be over the— there he—"

The sentence was cut short by a yell, followed by a heavy bump, and the door shut with a bang, which sent Emma and her friend round the corner of the house in a highly amused frame of mind.

John Marrot's garden was a small one—so small that the break-van of his own "Flyin' Dutchman" could have contained it easily—but it was not too small to present a luxuriance, fertility, and brilliance of colour that was absolutely magnificent! Surrounded as that garden was by "ballast" from the embankment, broken wheels and rail, bricks and stones, and other miscellaneous refuse and *debris* of the line, it could only be compared to

an oasis in the desert, or a bright gem on a rugged warrior's breast. This garden owed its origin to Lucy Marrot's love for flowers, and it owed much of its magnificence to Will Garvie's love for Lucy; for that amiable fireman spent much of his small wage in purchasing seed and other things for the improvement of that garden, and spent the very few hours of his life, not claimed by the inexorable iron horse, in assisting to cultivate the same.

We use the word 'assisting' advisedly, because Loo would not hear of his taking this sort of work out of her hands. She was far too fond of it to permit that, but she had no objection whatever to his assistance. There never was, so Will and Loo thought, anything like the love which these two bore to each other. Extremes meet, undoubtedly. Their love was so intensely matter of fact and earnest that it rose high above the region of romance, in which lower region so many of our race do delight to coo and sigh. There was no nonsense about it. Will Garvie, who was naturally bold—no wonder, considering his meteor-like style of life—saw all the flowers in the garden as well as any other man, and admired them more than most men, but he said gravely that he wouldn't give the end of a cracked boiler-tube for the whole garden, if she were not in the midst of it. At which Loo laughed heartily, and blushed with pleasure, and made no other reply.

It was quite delightful to observe the earnestness with which these two devoted themselves to the training of honeysuckle and jessamine over a trellis-work porch in that preposterously small garden, in which there was such a wealth of sweet peas, and roses, and marigolds, and mignonette, and scarlet geraniums, and delicately-coloured heliotropes, that it seemed as though they were making love in the midst of a glowing furnace. Gertie was there too, like a small female Cupid nestling among the flowers.

"A miniature paradise," whispered Emma, with twinkling eyes, as they approached the unconscious pair.

"Yes, with Adam and Eve training the flowers," responded Netta quite earnestly.

Adam making love in the fustian costume of the fireman of the "Flying Dutchman" was an idea which must have struck Emma in some fashion, for she found it difficult to command her features when introduced to the inhabitants of that little Eden by her friend.

"I have called to tell Mrs Marrot," said Netta, "that my old nurse, Mrs Durby, is going to London soon, and that I wished your father to take a sort of charge of her, more for the sake of making her feel at ease than anything else."

"I'm quite sure he will be delighted to do that," said Loo; "won't he, Will?"

"Why, yes," replied the fireman, "your father is not the man to see a woman in distress and stand by. He'll give her in charge of the guard, for you see, ma'am, he's not allowed to leave his engine." Will addressed the latter part of his remarks to Netta.

"That is just what Mrs Marrot said, and that will do equally well. Would *you* like to travel on the railway, Gertie?" said Netta, observing that the child was gazing up in her face with large earnest eyes.

"No," answered Gertie, with decision.

"No; why not?"

“Because it takes father too often away, and once it nearly killed him,” said Gertie.

“Ah, that was the time that my own dear mother received such a shock, I suppose?”

“No, ma’am,” said Will Garvie, “Gertie is thinkin’ of another time, when Jack Marrot was drivin’ an excursion train—not three years gone by, and he ran into a lot of empty trucks that had broke loose from a train in advance. They turned the engine off the rails, and it ran down an embankment into a ploughed field, where it turned right over on the top of Jack. Fortunately he fell between the funnel and the steam–dome, which was the means of savin’ his life; but he got a bad shake, and was off duty some six or eight weeks. The fireman escaped without a scratch, and, as the coupling of the leading carriage broke, the train didn’t leave the metals, and no serious damage was done to any one else. I think our Gertie,” continued Will, laying his big strong hand gently on the child’s head, “seems to have taken an ill–will to railways since then.”

“I’m not surprised to hear it,” observed Emma Lee, as she bent down and kissed Gertie’s forehead. “I have once been in a railway accident myself, and I share your dislike; but I fear that we couldn’t get on well without them now, so you and I must be content to tolerate them, Gertie.”

“I s’pose so,” was Gertie’s quiet response, delivered, much to the amusement of her audience, with the gravity and the air of a grown woman.

“Well, good–evening, Gertie, good–evening,” said Netta, turning to Garvie; “then I may tell my nurse that the engine–driver of the express will take care of her.”

“Yes, ma’am, you may; for the matter o’ that, the fireman of the express will keep an eye on her too,” said the gallant William, touching his cap as the two friends left that bright oasis in the desert and returned to Eden Villa.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Treats of Railway Literature, Sleepy Porters, Crowded Platforms, Foolish Passengers, Dark Plotters, Lively Shawls, and Other Matters

John Marrot was remarkably fond of his iron horse. No dragoon or hussar that we ever read of paid half so much attention to his charger. He not only rubbed it down, and fed and watered it at stated intervals, but, when not otherwise engaged, or when awaiting the signal to start a train, he was sure to be found with a piece of waste rubbing off a speck of dust here or a drop of superfluous oil there, or giving an extra polish to the bright brasses, or a finishing touch to a handle or lever in quite a tender way. It was evidently a labour of love!

On the day which Mrs Durby had fixed for her journey to London, John and his fireman went to the shed as usual one hour before the time of starting, being required to do so by the “Rules and Regulations” of the company, for the purpose of overhauling the iron horse.

And, by the way, a wonderful and suggestive volume was this book of “Rules and Regulations for the guidance of the officers and servants of the Grand National Trunk Railway.” It was a printed volume of above two hundred pages, containing minute directions in regard to every department and every detail of the service. It was “printed for private circulation;” but we venture to say that, if the public saw it, their respect for railway servants and railway difficulties and management would be greatly increased, the more so that one of the first “rules” enjoined was, that *each* servant should be held responsible for having a knowledge of all the rules—those relating to other departments as well as to his own. And it may not be out of place, certainly it will not be uninteresting, to mention here that one of the rules, rendered prominent by large black capitals, enjoined that “THE PUBLIC SAFETY MUST BE THE FIRST AND CHIEF CARE of every officer and servant of the company.” We have reason to believe that all the railways in the kingdom give this rule equal prominence in spirit—probably also in type. In this little volume it was likewise interesting to note, that civility to the public was strictly enjoined; and sure we are that every railway traveller will agree with us in the opinion that railway agents, guards, and porters, all, in short with whom the public come in contact, obey this rule heartily, in the spirit and in the letter.

The particular rules in the book which affected our engine-driver were uncommonly stringent, and very properly so, seeing that the lives of so many persons depended on the constancy of his coolness, courage, and vigilance. John Marrot, like all the engine-drivers on the line, was a picked man. In virtue of his superior character and abilities he received wages to the extent of 2 pounds, 10 shillings per week. Among other things, he was enjoined by his “rules and regulations,” very strictly, to give a loud whistle before starting, to start his train slowly and without a jerk, and to take his orders to start only from the guard; also, to approach stations or stopping places cautiously, and with the train well under control, and to be guided in the matter of shutting off steam, by such considerations

as the number of vehicles in the train, and the state of the weather and rails, so as to avoid violent application of the brakes. Moreover, he was bound to do his best to keep to his exact time, and to account for any loss thereof by entering the cause of delay on his report—ticket. He was also earnestly enjoined to use every effort which might conduce to the safety of the public, and was authorised to refuse to proceed with any carriage or waggon which, from hot axles or otherwise, was in his opinion unfit to run. These are but a few specimens culled from a multitude of rules bearing on the minutest details of his duty as to driving, shunting, signalling, junction and level crossing, etcetera, with all of which he had to become not merely acquainted, but so intimately familiar that his mind could grasp them collectively, relatively, or individually at any moment, so as to act instantaneously, yet coolly, while going like a giant bomb—shell through the air—with human lives in the balance to add weight to his responsibilities.

If any man in the world needed a cool clear head and a quick steady hand, with ample nightly as well as Sabbath rest, that man was John Marrot, the engine—driver. When we think of the constant pressure of responsibility that lay on him, and the numbers in the kingdom of the class to which he belonged, it seems to us almost a standing miracle that railways are so safe and accidents so very rare.

While our engine—driver was harnessing his iron steed, another of the railway servants, having eaten his dinner, felt himself rather sleepy, and resolved to have a short nap. It was our friend Sam Natly, the porter, who came to this unwise as well as unfair resolution. Yet although we are bound to condemn Sam, we are entitled to palliate his offence and constrained to pity him, for his period of duty during the past week had been fifteen hours a day.

“Shameful!” exclaims some philanthropist.

True, but who is to take home the shame? Not the officers of the company, who cannot do more than their best with the materials laid to their hands; not the directors, who cannot create profits beyond the capacity of their line—although justice requires us to admit that they might reduce expenses, by squabbling less with other companies, and ceasing unfair, because ruinous as well as ungenerous, competition. Clearly the bulk of the shame lies with the shareholders, who encourage opposition for the sake of increasing their own dividends at the expense of their neighbours, and who insist on economy in directions which render the line inefficient—to the endangering of their own lives as well as those of the public. Economy in the matter of railway servants—in other words, their reduction in numbers—necessitates increase of working hours, which, beyond a certain point, implies inefficiency and danger. But the general public are not free from a modicum of this shame, and have to thank themselves if they are maimed and killed, because they descend on railways for compensation with a ruthless hand; (shame to Government here, for allowing it!) and still further, impoverish their already over—taxed coffers. Compensation for injury is just, but compensation as it is, and has been claimed and awarded, is ridiculously unfair, as well as outrageously unwise.

Fortunately Sam Natly’s wicked resolve to indulge in undutiful slumber did not result in evil on this occasion, although it did result in something rather surprising. It might have been far otherwise had Sam been a pointsman!

In order to enjoy fully the half-hour which he meant to snatch from duty, Sam entered a first-class carriage which stood on a siding, and, creeping under a seat, laid himself out at full length, pillowing his head on his arm. Tired men don't require feather-beds. He was sound asleep in two minutes. It so happened that, three-quarters of an hour afterwards, an extra first-class carriage was wanted to add to the train which John Marrot was to "horse" on its arrival at Clatterby. The carriage in which Sam lay was selected for the purpose, drawn out, and attached to the train. Tired men are not easily awakened. Sam knew nothing of this change in his sleeping apartment.

Meanwhile Clatterby station became alive with travellers. The train drew up to the platform. Some passengers got out; others got in. The engine which brought it there, being in need of rest, coal, and water, moved off to the shed. John Marrot with his lieutenant, Garvie, moved to the front on his iron horse, looking as calm and sedate in his conscious power as his horse looked heavy and unyielding in its stolidity. Never did two creatures more thoroughly belie themselves by their looks. The latent power of the iron horse could have shot it forth like an arrow from a bow, or have blown the whole station to atoms. The smouldering fires in John's manly breast could have raised him from a begrimed, somewhat sluggish, driver to a brilliant hero.

Some of the characters who have already been introduced at Clatterby station were there on this occasion also. Mr Sharp was there, looking meditative as usual, and sauntering as though he had nothing particular to do. Our tall superlative fop with the sleepy eyes and long whiskers was also there with his friend of the checked trousers. Mr Sharp felt a strong desire to pommel these fops, because he had found them very difficult to deal with in regard to compensation, the fop with the checked trousers having claimed, and finally obtained, an unreasonably large sum for the trifling injury done to his eye on the occasion of the accident at Langrye station. Mr Sharp could not however, gratify his desire. On the contrary, when the checked trousers remarked in passing that it was "vewy disagweeable weather," he felt constrained to admit, civilly enough, that it was.

The two fops had a friend with them who was not a fop, but a plain, practical-looking man, with a forbidding countenance, and a large, tall, powerful frame. These three retired a little apart from the bustle of the station, and whispered together in earnest tones. Their names were the reverse of romantic, for the fop with the checked trousers was addressed as Smith, he with the long whiskers as Jenkins, and the large man as Thomson.

"Are you sure he is to go by this train?" asked Thomson, somewhat gruffly.

"Quite sure. There can be no mistake about it," replied Jenkins, from whose speech, strange to say, the lisp and drawl had suddenly disappeared.

"And how are you sure of knowing him, if, as you say, you have never seen him?" asked Thomson.

"By the bag, of course," answered Smith, whose drawl had also disappeared unaccountably; "we have got a minute description of the money-bag which he has had made peculiarly commonplace and shabby on purpose. It is black leather but very strong, with an unusually thick flat handle."

"He's very late," observed Thomson, moving uneasily, and glancing at the clock as the moment of departure drew near.

Mr Sharp observed the consulting party, and sauntered idly towards them, but they were about as sharp as himself, in practice if not in name. The lisps and drawls returned as if by magic, and the turf became the subject of interest about which they were consulting.

Just then a shriek was heard to issue from a female throat, and a stout elderly woman was observed in the act of dashing wildly across the line in the midst of moving engines, trucks and vans. Even in these unwonted circumstances no one who knew her could have mistaken Mrs Durby's ponderous person for a moment. She had come upon the station at the wrong side, and, in defiance of all printed regulations to the contrary—none of which she could read, being short-sighted—she had made a bold venture to gain her desired position by the most direct route. This involved crossing a part of the line where there were several sidings and branch lines, on which a good deal of pushing of trucks and carriages to and fro—that is “shunting”—was going on.

Like a reckless warrior, who by a bold and sudden push sometimes gains single-handed the centre of an enemy's position before he is discovered and assailed on every side, straight forward Mrs Durby ran into the very midst of a brisk traffic, before any one discovered her. Suddenly a passenger-train came up with the usual caution in such circumstances, nevertheless at a smart rattling pace, for “usual caution” does not take into account or provide for the apparition of stout elderly females on the line. The driver of the passenger engine saw her, shut off steam, shouted, applied the brakes and whistled furiously.

We have already hinted that the weather was not fine. Mrs Durby's umbrella being up, hid the approaching train. As for screaming steam-whistles, the worthy woman had come to regard intermittent whistling as a normal condition of railways, which, like the crying of cross babies, meant little or nothing, and had only to be endured. She paid no attention to the alarm. In despair the driver reversed his engine; fire flew from the wheels, and the engine was brought to a stand, but not until the buffers were within three feet of the nurse's shoulder. At that moment she became aware of her danger, uttered a shriek, as we have said, that would have done credit to the whistle of a small engine, and, bending her head with her umbrella before her, rushed frantically away on another line of rails. She did not observe, poor soul, that a goods train was coming straight down that line towards her,—partly because her mental vision was turned in terror to the rear, and partly because the umbrella obscured all in advance. In vain the driver of the goods engine repeated the warnings and actions of the passenger engine. His had more speed on and was heavier; besides, Mrs Durby charged it at the rate of full five miles an hour, with the umbrella steadily in front, and a brown paper parcel swinging wildly on her arm, as if her sole desire on earth was to meet that goods engine in single combat and beat out its brains at the first blow. Certain it is that Mrs Durby's career would have been cut short then and there, if tall Joe Turner, the guard, had not been standing at the tail of his own train and observed her danger. In the twinkling of an eye he dropped his slow dignified air, leaped like a panther in front of the goods engine, caught Mrs Durby with both hands—any how—and hurled her and himself off the line,—not a moment too soon, for the buffer of the engine touched his shoulder as they fell together to the ground.

A lusty cheer was given by those on the platform who witnessed this bold rescue, and more than one sympathetic hand grasped the massive fist of Joe Turner as he assisted Mrs

Durby to a carriage.

“Why,” exclaimed Will Garvie, hurrying forward at that moment, “it’s Mrs Durby, the woman we promised to take care of! You’ll look after her, Joe?”

“All right,” said the guard, as Will hurried back to his engine; “this way, ma’am. Got your ticket?”

“N—no!” gasped the poor nurse, leaning heavily on her protector’s arm.

“Here, Dick,” cried Joe, hailing a porter, “run to the booking-office and get her a ticket for London, first-class; she’s got a bad shake, poor thing. No doubt the company will stand the difference; if not, we’ll make it up amongst us.”

Hereupon a benevolent old gentleman drew out his purse, and insisted on paying the whole of the fare himself, a point which no one seemed inclined to dispute, and Mrs Durby was carefully placed by Joe in a carriage by herself.

There were two gentlemen—also known to the reader—who arrived just in time to witness this incident: the one was Captain Lee, the other Edwin Gurwood. They both carried bags and rugs, and were evidently going by that train. The captain, who happened to have a bad cold at the time, was muffled up to the eyes in a white worsted comforter, and had a fur travelling-cap pulled well down on his forehead, so that little of him, save the point of his nose, was visible.

The moment that the two fops caught sight of Captain Lee, they whispered to Thomson—

“That’s our man.”

“Sure?” demanded Thomson.

“Quite,” replied Smith. “That’s about the size and make of the man as described to me. Of course they could not tell what sort of travelling gear he would appear in, but there’s no mistaking the bag—old, stout leather, with flat handle—strap.”

“All right,” said Thomson; “but who’s the young fellow with him?”

“Don’t know,” replied Smith; “yet I think I’ve seen his face before. Stay, Jenkins, wasn’t he in the accident at Langrye station?”

“Perhaps he was; but it’s of no consequence to us.”

“It will be of consequence to us if he goes with the old gentleman,” retorted Smith, “for he’s a stout fellow, and wouldn’t be easy to manage.”

“I’ll manage him, no fear,” said Thomson, looking at the unconscious Edwin with a dark sinister smile.

“What if they get into a carriage that’s already nearly full?” suggested the dubious Smith.

“They won’t do that,” replied Jenkins with a laugh. “It seems to be against the laws of human nature to do that. As long as there are empty carriages in a train, so long will men and women pass every carriage that has a soul in it, until they find an empty one for themselves. We have nothing to do but follow them, and, when they have pitched on a carriage, get in after them, and fill it up, so we shall have it all to ourselves.”

“Come along, then; it’s time to stop talking and to act,” said Thomson, testily, as he moved towards the carriages.

That even the wisest of men (in his own conceit) may make mistakes now and then is a fact which was beautifully illustrated on this occasion. We may here let the reader into the secret of Jenkins, Smith, and Thomson. They were men who lived by their wits. They had ascertained that a partner of a certain house that dealt in jewellery meant to return to London by that particular train, with a quantity of valuables that were worth running some risk for. On the journey there was one stoppage quite close to London. The run immediately before that was a clear one of seventy–five miles without a halt, at full express speed, which would afford them ample opportunity for their purpose, while the slowing of the train on approaching the stopping place would give them opportunity and time to leap out and make off with their booty. They had been told that their intended victim was a stout resolute man, but that would avail nothing against numbers.

Having obtained all requisite information they had proceeded thus far with their villainous design, apparently with success. But at this point a hitch occurred, though they knew it not. They had not taken sufficiently into account the fact that black leather bags may be both stout and peculiar, and in some degree similar without being identical. Hence Smith and Jenkins in their self–confidence had settled, as we have seen, that Captain Lee was “their man,” whereas their man was comfortably seated in another carriage, and by his side the coveted bag, which was similar in some points to that of the captain, but different in size and in several small details.

Following the wrong scent, therefore, with wonted pertinacity, the three men sauntered behind Captain Lee and Edwin, who, true to the “laws” with which Jenkins had credited human nature, passed one carriage after another until they found an empty one.

“Here is one, Gurwood,” said the captain.

He was about to step into it, when he observed Mrs Durby sitting in the next compartment.

“Hallo! nurse,” he exclaimed, getting in and sitting down opposite to her; “why, surely it wasn’t you, was it, that had such a narrow escape?”

“Indeed it was, Capting Lee,” replied Mrs Durby in a half whimper, for albeit a woman of strong character, she was not proof against such rough treatment as she had experienced that day.

“Not hurt, I trust?” asked the Captain sympathetically.

“Oh dear no, sir; only shook a bit.”

“Are you alone?” asked Edwin, seating himself beside his friend.

“Yes, sir; but la, sir, I don’t think nothink of travellin’ alone. I’m used to it, sir.”

As she said this the guard’s voice was heard desiring passengers to take their seats, and the three men, who had grouped themselves close round the door, thus diverging one or two passengers into the next compartment, entered, and sat down.

At the same moment Mr Sharp’s earnest countenance appeared at the window. He made a few remarks to Captain Lee and Edwin Gurwood, and took occasion to regard the three

adventurers with much attention. They evidently understood him, for they received his glances with bland smiles.

It was quite touching to note Mr Sharp's anxiety to lay hold of these men. He chanced to know nothing about them, save in connexion with the Langrye accident, but his long experience in business had given him a delicate power of perception in judging of character, which was not often at fault. He, as it were, smelt the presence of fair game, although he could not manage to lay immediate hold of it, just as that celebrated giant did, who, once upon a time, went about his castle giving utterance to well-known words—"Fee, fo, fa, fum, I smell the smell of an Englishman."

"Joe," he whispered, as the guard came up to lock the door, "just keep an eye on these three fellows, will you? I'd lay my life on it that they're up to mischief to-day."

Joe looked knowing, and nodded.

"Show your tickets, please," he said, touching his cap to his director and Edwin.

The tickets were produced—all right. Mrs Durby, in getting out hers, although, of course, having got it for her, Joe did not require to see it, dropped her precious brown paper parcel. Picking it up again hastily she pressed it to her bosom with such evident anxiety, that men much less sharp-witted than our trio, would have been led to suspect that it contained something valuable. But they aimed at higher booty just then, and apparently did not notice the incident.

A rapid banging of doors had now set in—a sure precursor of the starting whistle. Before it was quite completed, the inevitable late passenger appeared in the distance. This time it was a lady, middle-aged and stout, and short of wind, but with an iron will, as was clearly evinced by the energy with which she raced along the platform, carrying a large bundle of shawls in one arm, and a travelling-bag in the other, which she waved continuously as she shouted, "Stop! stop! stop the trai-i-i-in! I'm coming!"

The guard, with the whistle already half-way to his lips, paused and glanced at his watch. There was a fraction of a moment left. He stepped to a carriage and threw open a door.

"Make haste, ma'am; make haste, please," was said in urgent, though respectful tones.

The late passenger plunged in—she might, as far as appearances went, be said to have taken a header into the carriage—and the door was shut.

The guard's whistle sounded. The engine-driver's whistle gave prompt reply, and next instant the train moved. No one could conceive of such a thing as a train *starting* when John Marrot drove!

As the carriages glided by, Mr Sharp cast a passing glance on the late passenger. He observed that her bundle of shawls moved of its own accord, and, for one whole minute after the train had left, he stood motionless, meditating on that curious phenomenon. He had often heard of table-turning, but never until now had he seen inanimate matter move of its own accord. Can we feel surprised that he was both astonished and perplexed? Proceeding to the booking-office he held a brief conversation with the clerks there; then he sauntered into the telegraph-office and delivered a message, after which he left the station with a quiet smile on his sedate countenance.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Which is Too Full of Varied Matter to be Briefly Described

Meanwhile let us fly through space with greater than railway speed and overtake the “Flying Dutchman.”

It has got up full speed by this time. About one mile a minute—sixty miles an hour! Sometimes it goes a little faster, sometimes a little slower, according to the nature of the ground; for a railway is by no means a level-way, the ascents and descents being occasionally very steep. Those who travel in the carriages form but a faint conception of the pace. To realise it to the full you must stand on the engine with John Marrot and Will Garvie. Houses, fields, trees, cattle, human beings, go by in wild confusion—they appear only to vanish. Wind is not felt in the carriages. On the *Lightning* you are in a gale. It reminds one of a storm at sea. The noise, too, is terrific. We once had the good fortune to ride on the engine of the “Flying Dutchman,” and on that occasion had resolved to converse with the driver, and tried it. As well might we have tried to converse amid the rattling of ten thousand tin kettles! John Marrot put his mouth to our ear and *roared*. We heard him faintly. We tried to shout to *him*; he shook his head, put his hand to his ear, and his ear to our mouth.

“Does—it—not—injure—your—hearing?”

“No—sir—not—at—all. It’s—worst—on—our—legs.”

We subsided into silence and wonderment.

We had also resolved to take notes, and tried it. Egyptian hieroglyphics are not more comprehensible than the notes we took. We made a discovery, however, near the end of the journey—namely, that by bending the knees, and keeping so, writing became much more possible—or much less impossible! We learnt this from John, who had to fill up in pencil a sort of statement or report—ticket on the engine. It was interesting and curious to note the fact that of the sentences thus written, one word was pencilled in the grounds of the Earl of Edderline, the next opposite the mansion of Lord Soberly, the third in the midst of Langly Moor, the fourth while crashing through the village of Efferby, and a full stop was added at the mouth of the great Ghostly Tunnel. Think of that, ye teachers of “penmanship in twelve lessons,” and hide your diminished heads.

John Marrot’s engine, of which we have said much, and of which we mean to say still more, was not only a stupendous, but a complex creation. Its body consisted of above 5,400 pieces, all of which were almost as delicately fashioned, and put together with as much care, as watch-work. It was a confirmed teetotaller, too. The morning draught which John had given it before starting, to enable it to run its seventy-seven miles, was 800 gallons of cold water. He also gave it a good feed to begin with, and laid in for its sustenance on the trip one ton of coals. Its power to act vigorously may be gathered from the fact that one morning, some years before, John had got the fire up with unwonted rapidity, and no sooner had the minimum of steam necessary to move it been created, than

it quietly advanced and passed out of its shed through a brick wall fourteen inches thick with as much ease as it would have gone through a sheet of brown paper. This being its power when starting at what we may regard as a quiet walk, some conception may be formed of its capacity when flying down an incline at sixty-five miles an hour with a heavy train of carriages at its back. In such circumstances it would go through an ordinary house, train and all, as a rifle-bullet would go through a cheese. It was an eight-wheeled engine, and the driving-wheels were eight feet in diameter. The cylinder was eighteen inches, with a piston of two feet stroke, and the total weight of engine and tender was fifty-three tons. The cost of this iron horse with its tender was about 3000 pounds.

Having fairly started, John took his stand opposite his circular window in the protecting screen or weather-board and kept a sharp look-out ahead. Will Garvie kept an eye chiefly on the rear to note that all was well in that direction. And much cause was there for caution! To rush through space at such a rate, even on a straight line and in clear weather, was trying enough, but when it is remembered that the day was wet, and that their course lay through sundry deep cuttings and tunnels, and round several curves where it was not possible to foresee obstruction, the necessity for caution will be more apparent.

All went well, however, as usual. After clearing the first thirty-six miles John Marrot consulted his watch, and observed to Will that they had done it in thirty-eight and a half minutes. He then "put on a spurt," and went for some time at a higher rate of speed. Observing that something at the head of the engine required looking after, Will Garvie went out along the side of it, and while doing this piece of work his hair and jacket were blown straight back by the breeze which the engine had created for itself. He resembled, in fact, a sailor going out to work on the sails in a stiff breeze.

This artificial breeze, sweeping round the sides of the screen, caused an eddy which sent up a cloud of coal-dust, but neither John nor his mate appeared to care for this. Their eyes were evidently coal-proof.

Presently they approached a canal over which they rushed, and, for one moment, glanced down on the antipodal mode of locomotion—a boat going three miles an hour with its steersman half asleep and smoking at the helm! Next moment they were passing under a bridge; the next over a town, and then rushed through a station, and it was interesting to note as they did so, that the people on the platform shrank back and looked half-terrified, although they were in no danger whatever, while those in the train—who might at any moment have been hurled into eternity—looked calm and serene, evidently untroubled by thoughts of danger; so difficult is it for man to realise his true condition in such circumstances. Just beyond the station a dog was observed to have strayed on the line, and ran barking before the engine. It was overtaken and passed in a few seconds, and Will looked over the side but saw nothing of it. As no yell was heard, it is probable that the poor thing escaped. Soon after that, two navvies were observed walking coolly and slowly on the line in front of the engine. John frowned and laid his hand on the whistle, but before it could sound, the reckless men had heard the train, looked round with horrified faces, sprang like jumping-jacks off the line, right and left, and were gone!

Soon after this, on approaching the distant signal of one of the stations, they observed that the arms were extended, indicating that the line was "blocked"—that is, that another train being in advance they must check speed or perhaps stop. This was a species of insult to

the “Flying Dutchman,” whose way ought to have been kept perfectly clear, for even a check of speed would inevitably cause the loss of several minutes. With an indignant grumble John Marrot cut off steam, but immediately the signals were lowered and he was allowed to go on. Again, in a few minutes, another signal checked him.

“They’ve let a train on before us,” growled John, sternly, “and p’raps we may be checked all the way to London—but some one shall hear of this, an’ have to account for it.”

John was wrong to some extent. While he yet spoke the signal to go on was given, and a few minutes later the “Flying Dutchman” flashed past the obstructing train, which had been shunted on to a siding, and from its windows hundreds of passengers were gazing at the express which passed them like a meteor—perhaps they were congratulating themselves, as well they might, for, but for the “block system,” their danger would have been tremendous; almost equal to that of a man endeavouring to run away from a cannon-shot. This may be somewhat better understood when we explain that the “Flying Dutchman” could not have been stopped in a shorter space than one mile and a half.

At length the iron horse came suddenly on an obstruction which filled its driver with deep anxiety and alarm. Daily had John driven that train, but never before had he met with a similar danger. At a level crossing, less than a mile in advance of him, he observed a horse and a loaded cart standing right across the line. Either the horse was a run-away, or the driver had left it for a little and it had strayed. Whatever the cause of its being there John’s alert mind saw at once that a collision was inevitable. He shut off steam, and was about to whistle for the guard to apply the brakes, while Will Garvie, who also saw the danger, was already turning on the brakes of the tender.

John reflected that it would be impossible to come to a stand within the space that lay between him and the cart and that a partial concussion would be almost certain to throw his engine off the rails. Less than a minute remained to him.

“Let her go, mate,” he shouted quickly.

Will Garvie obeyed at once. John put on full steam, the “Flying Dutchman” leaped forward with increased velocity. Then followed a slight shock, and; next moment, the cart and horse were smashed to atoms—all but annihilated!

It was a great risk that had been run; but of two evils John Marrot had chosen the less and came off in triumph with only a slight damage to his buffers.

Let us now quit the engine for a little, and, retracing our steps in regard to time, visit some of the carriages behind it.

When the “late passenger” recovered her breath and equanimity, and found herself fairly on her journey, she unfolded her bundle of shawls and disclosed a fat glossy lap-dog, which seemed to enjoy its return to fresh air and daylight, and acknowledged, with sundry wags of its tail and blinks of its eyes the complimentary assurance that it was the “dearest, sweetest, p’ittiest ‘ittle darling that ever was born,” and that, “it wouldn’t be allowed to pay a nasty fare to a mean railway company that let all kinds of ugly parrots and cats and babies travel free!”

A timid little lady, the only other occupant of the carriage, ventured to suggest that the dog travelling free was against the rules of the company.

“I am quite aware of that,” said the late passenger somewhat sharply, “but if people choose to make unjust and oppressive rules I don’t mean to submit to them. Just think of a parrot, a horrid shrieking creature that every one acknowledges to be a nuisance, being allowed to travel free, or a baby, which is enough to drive one distracted when it squalls, as it always does in a railway carriage, while my sweet little pet that annoys nobody must be paid for, forsooth!”

“It does indeed seem unreasonable,” responded the timid little old lady; “but don’t you think that the company has a perfect right to make whatever rules it pleases, and that we are bound to obey them when we make use of their line?”

“No, I don’t!” said the late passenger tartly.

The timid little lady thought it advisable to change the subject and did so by remarking that the dog was a very pretty creature. Upon which the late passenger thawed at once, admitted that it *was* a very pretty creature, and asserted in addition that it was a “perfect darling.”

Their conversation became miscellaneous and general after this point, and not worth reporting, therefore we shall get out at the window and pass along the foot-boards to the carriage occupied by Mrs Durby and her friends.

Immediately after the train had started, as before described, Captain Lee entered into an animated conversation with the nurse as to the health of the Tipps family. Edwin, who was much interested in them, listened and put in a word now and then, but neither he nor the captain, after the first glance, paid any attention to the other occupants of the carriage.

Meanwhile Thomson, Jenkins and Company spent a short time in taking a quiet observation of the state of affairs. The former had placed himself opposite to Edwin and eyed him over critically as a wrestler might eye his opponent; Jenkins had seated himself opposite the captain, who had been apportioned to him in the coming conflict, and Smith, who, although a stout enough fellow, was the smallest of the three, kept his eye on the coveted bag, and held himself in readiness to act as might be advisable. The scoundrels were not long in taking action.

As soon as they were quite clear of the suburbs of Clatterby, Jenkins suddenly hit Captain Lee a tremendous blow on the head, which was meant to fell him at once; but the captain’s head was harder than he had expected it to be; he instantly grappled with Jenkins. Edwin’s amazement did not prevent his prompt action; but at the moment he sprang to the rescue, he received a blow from Thomson, who leaped on him, and seized him by the throat with a vice-like gripe. At the same moment Smith also sprang upon him.

Thomson soon found that he had miscalculated young Gurwood’s strength. Strong though his grasp was, Edwin’s was stronger. Almost as quick as thought he threw his left arm round Thomson’s waist, grasped his hair with his right hand, and almost broke his back. There is no question that he would have overcome him in a few seconds if Smith had not hampered him. As it was, he disengaged his right arm for a moment and, hitting a familiar and oft-tried blow straight out from the shoulder planted his knuckles just above the bridge of Smith’s nose. He fell as if he had been shot but the momentary relief thus afforded to Thomson enabled that scoundrel to get into a better position for continuing the struggle. Meanwhile Jenkins, although bravely and stoutly opposed by the veteran Lee,

quickly rendered his adversary insensible, and at once sprang upon Edwin, and turned the scale in favour of his comrade, who at the moment was struggling in the youth's grasp with savage though unavailing ferocity. At the same time Smith, who had only been stunned, recovered, and seizing Edwin by the legs endeavoured to throw him down, so that it went hard with our young hero after that despite his activity, strength and courage.

During this scene, which was enacted in a very few minutes, poor Mrs Durby sat drawn up into the remotest corner of the carriage, her face transfixed with horror, and a terrific yell bursting occasionally from her white lips. But neither the sound of her cries nor the noise of the deadly struggle could overtop the clatter of the express train. Those in the next compartment did indeed hear a little of it but they were powerless to render assistance, and there was at that time no means of communicating with the guard or driver. Poor Edwin thought of Captain Lee, who lay bleeding on the floor, and of Emma, and the power of thought was so potential that in his great wrath he almost lifted the three men in the air; but they clung to him like leeches, and it is certain that they would have finally overcome him, had he not in one of his frantic struggles thrust his foot below one of the seats and kicked the still slumbering Sam Natly on the nose!

That over-wrought but erring porter immediately awoke to the consciousness of being oppressed with a sense of guilt and of being in a very strange and awkward position. Quickly perceiving, however, by the wild motion of the feet and an occasional scream from Mrs Durby, that something serious was going on, he peeped out, saw at a glance how matters stood, got to his feet in a moment, and dealt Jenkins such a blow on the back of the head that he dropped like a stone. To deal Smith two similar blows, with like result, was the work of two seconds. Thus freed, Edwin rose like a giant, crushed Thomson down into a seat, and twisted his neckcloth until his eyes began to glaze and his lips to turn blue.

Sam Natly was a man of cool self-possession.

Seeing that Edwin was more than a match for his adversary, he left him, and proceeded to attend to the captain, who showed symptoms of revival; but happening to glance again at Edwin, and observing the condition of Thomson, Sam turned and put his hand on the youth's arm.

"I think, sir," he said quietly, "it would be as well to leave enough of him to be hanged. Besides, it might be rather awkward, sir, to do Jack Ketch's dooty without the benefit of judge, jury, witnesses, or clergy."

Edwin released his hold at once, and Thomson raised himself in the seat, clenching his teeth and fists as he did so. He was one of those savage creatures who, when roused, appear to go mad, and become utterly regardless of consequences. While Sam was engaged in temporising handcuffs for Jenkins and Smith out of a necktie and a pocket-handkerchief, Thomson sat perfectly still, but breathed very hard. He was only resting a little to recover strength, for in a moment, without a sound or warning of any kind, he hit Edwin with all his force on the temple. Fortunately the youth saw the coming blow in time to partially give way to it, and in another moment the struggle was renewed, but terminated almost as quickly, for Edwin gave Thomson a blow that stunned him and kept him quiet for the next quarter of an hour.

During this period Edwin examined Captain Lee's hurts, which turned out to be less

severe than might have been expected. He also assisted Sam to secure Thomson's wrists with a handkerchief, and then devoted some time to soothing the agitated spirits of poor Mrs Durby, whose luckless shins had not escaped quite scatheless during the *melee*.

"Oh, sir," sobbed Mrs Durby, glancing with horror at the dishevelled and blood-stained prisoners, "I always thought railways was bad things, but I never, no I never, imagined they was as bad as this."

"But, my good woman," said Edwin, unable to restrain a smile, "railways are not all, nor always, as bad as this. We very seldom hear of such a villainous deed as has been attempted to-day; thanks to the energy and efficiency of their police establishments."

"Quite true, Gurward, quite true," said Captain Lee, glancing sternly at the prisoners, and stanching a cut in his forehead with a handkerchief as he spoke; "our police arrangements are improving daily, as scoundrels shall find to their cost."

Jenkins and Smith did not raise their eyes, and Thomson continued to frown steadily out at the window without moving a muscle.

"I'm sure I don't know nothink about your p'lice, an' what's more, I don't care," said Mrs Durby; "all that I know is that railways is dreadful things, and if I was the Queen, which I'm not, I'd have 'em all put down by Acts of Parlingment, so I would. But never, never, never,— as long as I'm able to manidge my own—ah!"

Mrs Durby terminated here with one of her own appalling shrieks, for it was at this precise moment that John Marrot happened, as already described, to have occasion to knock a cart and horse to atoms. The shock, as we have said, was very slight, nevertheless it was sufficient to overturn the poor nurse's nervous system, which had already been wrought up to a high pitch of tension.

"That's *somethin'* gone, sir," said Sam, touching his cap to Captain Lee.

"What is it, Edwin?" inquired the captain as the youth let down the window and looked out.

"I can see nothing," said Edwin, "except that the guard and fireman are both looking back as if they wanted to see something on the line. We are beginning to slow, however, being not far from the station now."

About a mile and three-quarters from the station, in the suburbs of London, where the tickets were to be collected, John Marrot stopped the pulse of his iron horse, for so terrific was his speed that he was able to run the greater part of that distance by means of the momentum already acquired. By degrees the mighty engine began to "slow." Trees and houses instead of rushing madly past began to run hastily by, and then to glide behind at a rate that was more in keeping with the dignity of their nature. From sixty miles an hour the train passed by a rapid transition to ordinary express speed, then to ordinary speed, then to twenty miles an hour. Then Thomson felt that his opportunity had come. He suddenly wrenched his wrists from their fastening, leaped head foremost out of the window, fell on the embankment in a heap, and rolled to the bottom, where he lay extended on his back as if dead.

Thus much Mrs Durby saw in one horrified glance and then fainted dead away, in which

condition she remained, to the great anxiety and distress of Captain Lee, until the “Flying Dutchman,” after doing seventy–eight miles in one hour and a half, glided as softly up to the platform of the station in the great Metropolis as if it were a modest young train which had yet to win its spurs, instead of being a tried veteran which had done its best for many years past to annihilate space and time. But, after all, it resembled all other tried veterans in this respect.

Generally speaking, engine–drivers are little—far too little—thought of after a journey is over. Mankind is not prone to be wise or discriminating, in giving credit to whom credit is due. We “remember” waiters after having eaten a good dinner, but who, in any sense of the word, “remembers” the cook? So in like manner we think of railway porters and guards at the end of our journeys, and talk of their civility mayhap, but who thinks or talks of the driver and fireman as they lean on the rails of their iron horse, wet and weary perchance— smoke and dust and soot begrimed for certain—and calmly watch the departure of the multitudes whom they have, by the exercise of consummate coolness, skill, and courage, brought through dangers and hairbreadth escapes that they neither knew nor dreamed of?

On this particular occasion, however, the tables were turned for once. The gentlemen in the train hurried to the guard to ask what had caused the slight shock which they had felt. Joe Turner had been called aside for a moment by a clerk, so they went direct to John Marrot himself, who modestly related what had happened in a half apologetic tone, for he did not feel quite sure that he had done the best in the circumstances. His admiring audience had no doubt on the point, however.

“You’re a brick, John!” exclaimed an enthusiastic commercial traveller.

“That’s true,” said another. “If we had more men like him, there would be fewer accidents.”

“Let’s give him something,” whispered a third.

The suggestion was eagerly acted on. A subscription was made on the spot, and in three minutes the sum of about ten pounds was thrust into John’s huge dirty hand by the enthusiastic commercial traveller. But John firmly refused to take it.

“What’s to be done with it, then?” demanded the traveller, “*I can’t keep it, you know, and I’m not going to sit down here and spend half–an–hour in returning the money. If you don’t take it John, I must fling it under the engine or into the furnace.*”

“Well,” said the driver, after a moment’s consideration, while he closed his hand on the money and thrust it into his breeches pocket, “I’ll take it. It will help to replace the cart we smashed, if I can find the owner.”

While this was going on near the engine, the robbers were being removed from their carriage to receive the due reward of their deeds. Three tall and strong–boned men had been on the platform for some time awaiting the arrival of the “Flying Dutchman.” Swift though John Marrot’s iron horse was, a swifter messenger had passed on the line before him. The electric spark—and a fast volatile, free–and–easy, yet faithful spark it is—had been commissioned to do a little service that day. Half–an–hour after the train had left Clatterby a detective, wholly unconnected with our friend Sharp, had called and sent a

message to London to have Thomson, Jenkins, and Smith apprehended, in consequence of their connexion with a case of fraud which had been traced to them. The three tall strong-boned men were there in virtue of this telegram. But, accustomed though these men were to surprising incidents, they had scarcely expected to find that the three culprits had added another to their many crimes, and that one of them had leaped out of the train and out of their clutches—in all probability out of the world altogether! Two of the strong men went off immediately in search of him, or his remains, while the other put proper manacles on Jenkins and Smith and carried them off in a cab.

Meanwhile Joe Turner saw that all the other passengers were got carefully out of the train. He was particularly polite in his attentions, however, to the “late passenger!”

“You have forgot, ma’am,” he said politely, “to give up your dog–ticket.”

“Dog–ticket!” exclaimed the lady, blushing; “what do you mean? I have no dog–ticket.”

“Not for the little poodle dog, ma’am, that you carry under your shawl?”

The lady blushed still deeper as she admitted that she had no ticket for the dog, but said that she was quite willing to pay for it.

This having been done, her curiosity got the better of her shame at having been “caught,” and she asked—

“How did you know I had a dog with me, guard?”

“Ah, ma’am,” replied Joe with a smile, “we’ve got a remarkably sharp-sighted police force on our line, besides the telegraph. We find the telegraph very useful, I assure you, at times. The gentlemen who were removed in handcuffs a few minutes ago were *also* stopped in their little game by the telegraph, ma’am.”

The guard turned away to attend to some one else, and the late passenger, blushing a still deeper scarlet to find that she was classed with criminals, hurried away to reflect, it is to be hoped, on the fact that dishonesty has no variety in character—only in degree.

When the guard left the late passenger, he found that his assistance was required to get Mrs Durby and her belongings out of the railway carriage and into a cab.

The poor nurse was in a pitiable state of mind. A railway journey had always been to her a thing of horror. The reader may therefore form some conception of what it was to her to have been thus suddenly called away from quiet suburban life to undertake not only a railway journey, but to be shut up with a gang of would-be murderers and encounter a sort of accident in addition! By the time she had reached London she had become quite incapable of connected thought. Even the precious parcel, which at first had been an object of the deepest solicitude, was forgotten; and although she had hugged it to her breast not two minutes before, she suffered it to drop under the seat as she was led from the train to the cab.

“Drive to the Clarendon,” said Captain Lee, as he and Gurwood followed the nurse into the cab; “we will take care of her,” he added to Edwin, “till she is better able to take care of herself.”

Mrs Durby gave vent to a hysterical sob of gratitude.

Arrived at the Clarendon they alighted, the captain paid the fare, and the cab was dismissed. Just at that moment Mrs Durby became a temporary maniac. She shrieked, "Oh! my parcel!" and rushed towards the door.

The captain and waiter restrained her.

"It's in the cab!" she yelled with a fervour there was no resisting.

Edwin, comprehending the case, dashed down the steps and followed the cab; but he might as well have followed the proverbial needle in the haystack. Hundreds of cabs, carts, busses, and waggons were passing the Clarendon. He assaulted and stopped four wrong cabs, endured a deal of chaff, and finally returned to the hotel discomfited.

Thus suddenly was Mrs Durby bereft of her treasure and thrown into abject despair. While in this condition she partially unbosomed herself to Captain Lee, and, contrary to strict orders, revealed all she knew about the embarrassments of Mrs Tipps, carefully concealing, however, the nature of the contents of her lost parcel, and the real object of her journey to London.

One more paragraph in regard to this eventful trip of the "Flying Dutchman" ere we have done with the subject.

Having finished his journey, John Marrot took his iron steed to the stable. Usually his day's work terminated at Clatterby; but, owing to the horse being in need of extra rest he had to stop in London that night. And no wonder that the *Lightning* was sometimes fatigued, for even an ordinary express engine on the Grand National Trunk Railway was wont to run over 270 miles of ground in a day, at the rate of about forty-five miles an hour, and with a dead weight of 120 tons, more or less, at her tail. This she did regularly, with two "shed-days," or days of rest, in the week for cleansing and slight repairs. Such an engine was considered to do good service if it ran 250 days in the year. But the engine of the "Flying Dutchman" was more highly favoured than other engines—probably on the ground of the principle taught by the proverb, "It is the pace that kills." Its regular run was 1,544 miles in the day, and assuredly it stood in need of repose and refreshment quite as much as ordinary horses do. Its joints had become relaxed with severe labour, its bolts had been loosened, its rubbing surfaces, despite the oil poured so liberally on them by Will Garvie, had become heated. Some of them, unequally expanded, strained and twisted; its grate-bars and fire-box had become choked with "clinkers," and its tubes charged with coke.

John therefore ran it into the huge shed or stable prepared for the reception of twenty-four iron horses, and handed it over to a set of cleaners or grooms. These immediately set to work; they cleaned out its fire-box, scraped its grate-bars, tightened all its bolts and rivets, greased the moving parts, and thoroughly cleansed it, outside and in. Thus washed, cooled down, and purified, it was left to repose for five or six hours preparatory to a renewal of its giant energies on the following day.

Although we have somewhat exalted our pet locomotive of the "Flying Dutchman," justice requires us to state that goods engines are more gigantic and powerful, though they are not required to run so fast. These engines are the heavy dray-horses of the line, express engines being the racers. The latter can carry a *light load* of some seventy or ninety tons on a good roadway at the rate of fifty miles an hour or upwards. Goods

engines of the most powerful class, on the other hand, run at a much slower pace, but they drag with ease a load of from 300 to 350 tons, with which they can ascend steep gradients.

But whether light or heavy, strong or weak, all of them are subject to the same laws. Though powerfully, they are delicately framed, and like man himself, appear to be incapable of perfect action without obtaining at the least one day of rest in the week.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Treats of Mrs. Durby's Lost Parcel in Particular, and of Lost-luggage in General

We need scarcely say that Edwin Gurwood took a good deal of trouble to find poor Mrs Durby's lost parcel. Had he known what its contents were he might perhaps have done more. As she positively asserted that she had carried it into the cab with her and had not left it in the train, immediate application was not made at the station for it, but Edwin drove her in a cab to Scotland Yard, and there introduced her to the police officials whose duty it is to take charge of articles left in cabs. Here she was asked to describe the appearance of her parcel, which she did, by saying that it was a roundish one in brown paper, fastened with a piece of string, and having the name of Durby written on it in pencil, without any address.

Not feeling quite sure however of the fidelity of the nurse's memory, Edwin then went to the station and made inquiries there, but on application to the lost-luggage office no such parcel had been deposited there. The reader may perhaps be surprised at this, as it is well-known that every train is searched by the porters on its arrival at a terminus, and all forgotten articles are conveyed at once to the lost-luggage office. In the ordinary course of things Mrs Durby's parcel would have been found and restored to her on application, but it happened that a careless porter searched the "Flying Dutchman" that day, and had failed to observe the parcel which lay in a dark corner under the seat. When the carriage therefore was shunted the parcel was left to repose in it all night as well as all next day, which happened to be Sunday.

The parcel had a longish excursion on its own account after that. The carriage in which it lay happened to be a "through one," and belonged to another company, to whose line it was accordingly forwarded on the following Monday. It reached a remote station in the west of England that night and there the parcel was discovered. It lay all night there, and next day was forwarded to the lost-luggage office of that line. Here it was examined; the various pieces of paper were unrolled one by one and the doubled-up slipper was discovered; this was examined, and the little parcel found; the name of Durby having been noted and commented on, the covering of note-paper was removed, and the match-box revealed, from the inside of which was produced the pill-box, which, when opened, disclosed to the astonished gaze of the officials an antique gold ring set with diamonds! As the name "Mrs Durby" written in pencil did not furnish a clue to the owner, the ring was given into the charge of the custodier of the lost-luggage office, and a description of it with a note of all particulars regarding it, was forwarded to the Clearing-House in London.

The lost-luggage office, we may remark in passing, was a wonderful place—a place in which a moralist might find much material for mental mastication. Here, on an extensive series of shelves, were deposited in large quantities the evidences of man's defective memory; the sad proofs of human fallibility. There were caps and comforters and

travelling-bags in great abundance. There were shawls and rugs, and umbrellas and parasols, and sticks and hat-boxes in such numbers as to suggest the idea that hundreds of travellers, smitten with irresistible feelings of gratitude, had left these articles as a trifling testimony of respect to the railway company. There were carpet-bags here not only in large numbers but in great variety of form and size. Smelling-bottles, pocket-handkerchiefs, flasks, pocket-books, gun-cases, portmanteaux, books, cigar cases, etcetera, enough to have stocked a gigantic curiosity shop, and there were several articles which one could not account for having been forgotten on any other supposition than that the owners were travelling maniacs. One gentleman had left behind him a pair of leathern hunting-breeches, a soldier had forgotten his knapsack, a cripple his crutches! a Scotchman his bagpipes; but the most amazing case of all was a church door! We do not jest, reader. It is a fact that such an article was forgotten, or left or lost, on a railway, and, more amazing still, it was never claimed, but after having been advertised, and having lain in the lost goods office the appointed time, it was sold by auction with other things. Many of the articles were powerfully suggestive of definite ideas. One could not look upon those delicate kid gloves without thinking of the young bride, whose agitated soul was incapable of extending a thought to such trifles. That Mrs Gamp-like umbrella raised to mental vision, as if by magic, the despair of the stout elderly female who, arriving unexpectedly and all unprepared at her journey's end, sought to collect her scattered thoughts and belongings and launch herself out on the platform, in the firm belief that a minute's delay would insure her being carried to unknown regions far beyond her destination, and it was impossible to look at that fur travelling-cap with ear-pieces cocked knowingly on a sable muff, without thinking of the bland bald-headed old gentleman who had worn it during a night journey, and had pulled it in all ways about his head and over his eyes, and had crushed it into the cushions of his carriage in a vain endeavour to sleep, and had let it fall off and temporarily lost it and trod upon it and unintentionally sat upon it, and had finally, in the great hurry of waking suddenly on arrival, and in the intense joy of meeting with his blooming girls, flung it off, seized his hat and bag and rug, left the carriage in a whirlwind of greeting, forgot it altogether, and so lost it for ever.

“Nay, not lost,” we hear some one saying; “he would surely call at the lost-luggage office on discovering his loss and regain his property.”

Probably he might, but certainly he would only act like many hundreds of travellers if he were to leave his property there and never call for it at all.

True, much that finds its way to the lost-luggage office is reclaimed and restored, but it is a fact that the quantity never reclaimed is so large on almost any railway that it forms sufficient to warrant an annual sale by auction which realises some hundreds of pounds. One year's sale of lost-luggage on the Grand National Trunk Railway amounted to 500 pounds! and this was not more than an average year's sale. Every possible effort is of course made to restore lost-luggage before such a sale takes place. In the first place, everything bearing a name and address is returned at once to the owner, but of course there are multitudes of small articles which have neither name nor address. Such of these as are locked or tied up are suffered to remain for a short time in an office, where they may be readily reclaimed; but if not claimed soon they are opened, and if addresses are found inside are sent to their owners. In the event of no addresses being found they are retained for a year, then advertised for sale by public auction, and the proceeds go to

reduce that large sum—perhaps 16,000 pounds or more—which the company has to pay annually as compensation for lost and damaged goods. On one railway where the lost-luggage was allowed to lie a considerable time before being examined a singular case occurred. A hat-box was opened and found to contain Bank of England notes to the amount of 65 pounds, with two letters, which led to its being restored to its owner after having lain for more than a year. The owner had been so positive that he had left the hat-box at a hotel that he had made no inquiry for it at the railway office.

A sale-catalogue of left and unclaimed property on one of our chief railways, which now lies before us, presents some curious “lots.” Here are some of them: 70 walking-sticks, 30 silk umbrellas, and there are eleven similar lots, besides innumerable parasols—50 muffs and boas—a crate containing 140 billycocks and hats—24 looking-glasses—160 packets of cloth buttons—15 frying-pans and 18 ploughshares—3 butter machines—2 gas-meters, 2 shovels, and a pair of spectacles—a box of sanitary powder and a 15-horse power horizontal steam-engine! How some of these things, especially the last, could come to be lost at all, is a mystery which we have been quite unable to fathom. Of these lots the catalogue contains 404, and the sale was to occupy two days.

After having failed to obtain any information as to the missing brown paper parcel, Mrs Durby felt so overwhelmed with distress and shame that she took the whole matter into serious consideration, and, resolving to forego her visit to her brother, returned straight to Clatterby, where, in a burst of tears, she related her misadventures to Netta. It need scarcely be said that Netta did not blame her old and faithful nurse. Her disposition was of that mild sympathetic nature which induces one,—when an accident occurs, such as the breaking of a valuable piece of china,—to hasten to excuse rather than to abuse the unhappy breaker, who, in nine cases out of ten, is far more severely punished by his or her own conscience than the sin deserves! Instead, therefore, of blaming the nurse, Netta soothed her; said that it did not matter *much*; that the ring was valuable to her only as a gift from her father; that no doubt some other means of paying their debts would soon be devised; that it would have been an absolute miracle, if nurse had retained her self-possession, in the terrible circumstances, in which she had been placed, and in fact tried so earnestly and touchingly to comfort her, that she unintentionally heaped coals of intensest fire on the poor woman’s head, and caused Mrs Durby not only to blame herself more than ever, but to throw her arms round Netta’s neck, and all but fall down on her knees and worship her.

Thereafter the subject was dismissed, and in a short time almost forgotten.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Describes Engineering Difficulties, a Perplexing Case, and a Harmonious Meeting

Captain Lee's object in visiting London was twofold. He went there primarily to attend the half-yearly general meeting of the Grand National Trunk Railway, and secondarily, to accompany his friend Edwin Gurwood to the Railway Clearing-House, in which establishment he had been fortunate enough to secure for him a situation.

The various circumstances which contributed to the bringing about of an intimacy between Captain Lee and young Gurwood are partly known to the reader. It was natural that the captain should feel some sort of regard for one who had twice shown himself so ready to spring to his assistance in the hour of danger; but that which weighed still more strongly with the old sailor—who had been a strict disciplinarian and loved a zealous man—was the energy, with which Edwin threw himself into the work of the department of the railway, in which he had first been placed. Perhaps if the captain had known the motives and the hopes which actuated the youth he might have regarded him with very different feelings! We know not—and it matters little now.

As a clerk in the Engineers' office, Edwin had, in a few weeks, evinced so much talent and aptitude for the work as to fill his patron's heart with delight. He possessed that valuable quality which induces a man—in Scripture language—to look not only on his own things but on the things of others. He was not satisfied with doing his own work thoroughly, but became so inquisitive as to the work of his companions in the office that he acquired in a short time as much knowledge as some of these companions had acquired in several years.

The engineer's department of a railway is one which involves some of the most important operations connected with the line. But indeed the same may be said of all the departments—passenger, goods, locomotive, and police, each of which is independent, yet connected. They are separate wheels, as it were, which work harmoniously together in one grand system, and the gentlemen at the head of these departments must be men of experience; of acknowledged talent and power, each supreme in his own department, but all subject to the general manager.

The engineer-in-chief, who was Edwin Gurwood's superior, had charge of the entire railway, which was something over one thousand miles in extent. This vast line was divided into four divisions—namely, the northern, southern, western, and eastern; each division being under the superintendence of a resident engineer, who was, of course, subject to the engineer-in-chief. Each division was about 250 miles long, and was subdivided into districts varying from thirty to seventy miles. These were under the charge of inspectors, whose duty it was to travel constantly over their lengths—almost daily—partly on foot and partly by train, to see that the line was kept in perfect working order. The travelling inspectors had under them a large body of "surface-men" or "plate-layers," men whose duty it was to perform the actual work of keeping the line in order. They worked in squads of four or five—each squad having a foreman or gaffer, who was held

responsible for the particular small portion of the line that he and his squad had to attend to. The average number of surface-men was about two to the mile—so that the entire staff of these men on the line numbered over two thousand. Their business was to go over the entire line twice a day, drive tight the wooden “keys” which held the rails in their chairs, lift and re-lay broken or worn-out rails and chairs, raise or depress sleepers wherever these required alteration, so as to make the line level, and, generally, to keep in thorough repair the “permanent way.” Again, each of the four divisions had an inspector of signals and an inspector of buildings, the former being responsible for the perfect working order of all signals, and the latter, who had a few masons, joiners, slaters, blacksmiths, and others under him, having charge of all the stations, sheds, and other buildings on the line. Every month each division engineer sent in to the head office a statement of material used, and of work done; also a requisition for material required for future use.

From all this it can easily be understood that Edwin had a fair opportunity of finding scope for his talents; and he had indeed already begun to attract notice as an able, energetic fellow, when Captain Lee, as we have said, procured for him an appointment in the Clearing-House. On the occasion of the change being made, he invited his young friend to spend a few days at his residence in Clatterby, and thereafter, as we have seen, they travelled together to London.

It need scarcely be said that Edwin did not neglect this golden opportunity to try to win the heart of Emma. Whether he had succeeded or not he could not tell, but he unquestionably received a strong additional impulse in his good resolves—to achieve for himself a position and a wife!

“Gurwood,” said Captain Lee, after Mrs Durby had taken her departure, “I want you to aid me in a little difficulty I have about our mutual friend, Mrs Tipps. She is ridiculously determined not to accept of assistance from me, and I find from that excellent nurse that they are actually up to the lips in poverty—in fact, on the point of going down. I think from what she said, or, rather from what she didn’t say, but hinted, that her errand to London had something to do with their poverty, but I can’t make it out. Now, I have made up my mind to help them whether they will or no, and the question I wish to lay before you is,—how is the thing to be done? Come, you have had some experience of engineering, and ought to be able to cope with difficulties.”

“True,” replied Edwin, with a smile, “but to bend a woman’s will surpasses any man’s powers of engineering!”

“Come, sir,” said the captain, “that is a most ungallant speech from one so young. You deserve to die an old bachelor. However, I ask you not to exercise your skill in bending a woman’s will, but in bridging over this difficulty—this Chat Moss, to speak professionally.”

“Could you not procure for my friend, Joseph Tipps, a more lucrative appointment?” said Edwin eagerly, as the idea flashed upon him.

The captain shook his head.

“Won’t do, sir; I have thought of that; but, in the first place, I have not such an appointment to give him at present; in the second place, if I had, he could not draw his salary in advance, and money is wanted immediately; and, in the third place, he would not

if he had it be able to spare enough out of any ordinary clerk's salary, because the debts due by Mrs Tipps amount to fifty pounds—so Mrs Durby said.”

“It is indeed perplexing,” said Edwin. “Would it not be a good plan to send them a cheque anonymously?”

Again the captain shook his head.

“Wouldn't do. The old lady would guess who sent it at once. Come, I will leave it to you to devise a plan. Never could form a plan all my life, and have no time just now, as I'm going off to the meeting in ten minutes. I constitute you my agent in this matter, Gurwood. You know all the circumstances of the case, and also about my bet of five hundred pounds with the late Captain Tipps. Your fee, if you succeed, shall be my unending gratitude. There, I give you *carte-blanche* to do as you please—only see that you don't fail.”

Saying this, the captain put on his hat and went out, leaving Edwin much amused and not a little perplexed. He was not the man, however, to let difficulties stand in his way unassailed. He gave the subject half-an-hour's consideration, after which he formed a plan and immediately went out to put it into execution.

Meanwhile Captain Lee went to the head offices of the Grand National Trunk Railway, and entered the large room, where the directors and shareholders of the Company were already assembled in considerable numbers to hold a half-yearly general meeting.

It was quite a treat to see the cordial way in which the captain was received by such of his brother directors as sat near him, and, when he had wiped his bald head and put on his spectacles, and calmly looked round the hall, his bland visage appeared to act the part of a reflector, for, wherever his eyes were turned, there sunshine appeared to glow. In fact several of the highly sympathetic people present—of whom there are always a few in every mixed meeting—unconsciously smiled and nodded as his eye passed over their locality, even although they were personal strangers to him.

Very various are the feelings which actuate the directors and shareholders of different railways at these half-yearly gatherings. Doubtless some directors go to the place of meeting with the feelings of men who go to execution, and the shareholders go with the feelings of executioners, if not worse; while other directors and shareholders unquestionably go to hold something like a feast of reason and a flow of soul.

The half-yearly meeting we write of was imbued with the latter spirit. Wisdom and conscientious care had steered the ship and swayed the councils of the Grand National Trunk Railway, so that things were in what the captain called a highly flourishing condition. One consequence was, that the directors wore no defensive armour, and the shareholders came to the ground without offensive weapons.

Sir Cummit Strong having taken the chair, the secretary read the advertisement convening the meeting.

The chairman, who was a tall, broad-browed, and large-mouthed man, just such an one as might be expected to become a railway king, then rose, and, after making a few preliminary observations in reference to the report, which was assumed to have been read, moved, “that the said report and statement of accounts be received and adopted.”

“He–ar, he–ar!” exclaimed a big vulgar man, with an oily fat face and a strong voice, who was a confirmed toady.

“I am quite sure,” the chairman continued, “that I have the sympathy of all in this meeting when I say that the half–year which has just come to a close has been one of almost unmixed success—”

“He–ar, he–ar!” from the toady.

“And,” continued the chairman, with pointed emphasis, and a glance at the toady, which was meant to indicate that he had put in his oar too soon, but which the toady construed into a look of gratitude—”*and* of very great satisfaction to those whom you have appointed to the conducting of your affairs.”

“He–ar, he–ar!”

Captain Lee, who sat immediately behind the toady and felt his fingers and toes tingling, lost a good deal of what followed, in consequence of falling into a speculative reverie, as to what might be the legal consequences, if he were to put his own hat on the toady’s head, and crush it down over his eyes and mouth.

“Gentlemen,” continued the chairman, “there are three points on which we have reason to congratulate ourselves to–day, namely, the safety, the efficiency, and the economy with which our railway has been worked. As regards the first, I find that ten millions of journeys have been performed on our line during the half–year with hardly a detention, with very few late trains, at high speeds, and with only one accident, which was a comparatively slight one, and was unattended with loss of life or serious damage to any one.”

“He–ar, he–ar!” from the toady.

At this point a wag in the distance got up and suggested, in a very weak voice, that if the toady would say, “he–ar, he–ar!” less frequently, perhaps they would “he–ar” much better—a suggestion which was received with a burst of laughter and a round of applause. It effectually quelled the toady and rendered him innocuous for a considerable time.

“Now,” resumed the chairman, “some people appear to think that it is an easy thing to work a railway in safety, but I can assure you that such is not the case. Intelligence, care, foresight, and the strictest discipline, are necessary to secure this result; and, remember, we have not the advantage of anything so powerful as military discipline to help us. We have nothing to appeal to save the hopes and fears of our staff; and we feel it to be our great difficulty, as it is our principal duty, to be most careful in the selection of the thousands of men who, in their various positions and vocations, have to be employed in the conduct of your enterprise.

“I know well,” continued Sir Cummit Strong, “how men shudder when statistics are mentioned in their ears! Nevertheless, I shall venture to give you a few statistics that will, I am quite sure, prove interesting—all the more so that the figures which I quote apply to several other railways—and, therefore, will serve to give those of you who may chance to be unlearned on railway matters, some idea of the vast influence which railways have on our land.

“We run on this railway (I use round numbers) about 700 trains a day. In addition to which we have spare engines and empty trains, which perhaps ought to be added to the number given. Now, just consider for a moment the operations which have to be performed daily in the ordinary working and running of your passenger traffic. These 700 trains stop about 5000 times in the twenty-four hours, and of course they start the same number of times. The empty trains and engines have also to stop and start. We have on the line upwards of 1000 signals, including the telegraphic signals and auxiliaries. Those signals have to be raised and lowered 10,000 times in the twenty-four hours. There are on our line 1700 pairs of points, which have to be opened and shut, to be cleaned, oiled, and attended to, above 5000 times in the day. In addition to all this there are the operations of shunting, carriage-examining, greasing, and other things in connexion with trains which involve operations amounting to nearly 6000 in number. So that— apart from repairs to the line and to vehicles—there are above 30,000 individual operations which have to be performed every twenty-four hours in the conduct of this enormous passenger traffic.

“All this information I have obtained from our able and excellent passenger-superintendent, than whom there is not a more important officer in the Company’s service, unless, indeed,” (here the chairman turned with a smile and a slight bow to the gentlemen who sat on his right hand) “I may except the general manager and secretary.

“Well, now, gentlemen, I put it to you, is it surprising that the 6000 men who have to perform these 30,000 operations in the day—amounting to the vast total of ten millions of operations in the year—is it surprising, I say, that these 6000 men should now and then fall into some error of judgment, or make some mistake, or even be guilty of some negligence? Is it not, on the contrary, most surprising that accidents are not far more numerous; and does it not seem almost miraculous that where duties are so severe, the demands made by the public so great— speed, punctuality, numberless trains by day and night—there should be only one accident to report this half-year, while last half-year there were no accidents at all? And does it not seem hard that the public should insist that we shall be absolutely infallible, and, when the slightest mistake occurs, should haul us into court and punish us with demands for compensation for accidents which no human ingenuity or foresight could prevent?

“Before leaving this subject allow me to direct your attention to the fogs which occurred this half-year. There were thirty days in which during a part, if not the whole, of the twenty-four hours we had out our fog-signal men; that is to say, an additional staff of 300 men, each with his flag and detonating signals, placed within sight, or within sound of one another, to assist the ordinary signalmen in the safe conduct of the traffic. During these fogs the omnibuses had to be withdrawn from the roads, the steamers had to be moored on the river, and the traffic on the streets was almost at a standstill, nevertheless we carried through the fog, in and out of London, above one million six hundred thousand passengers *without accident!*”

The “hear, hear,” which burst from the audience at this point might have satisfied even the toady himself!

“And yet,” continued the chairman, with emphasis, “if a single mishap had occurred owing to the mistake of any of our half-blinded men, we should probably have been let in for compensation to the extent perhaps of 20,000 pounds! Is this fair? If it be so, then one

may be tempted to ask why does not the same `sauce' suit shipowners, many of whom are notorious for sending to sea unseaworthy craft, and who consign above one thousand human beings to an untimely grave *every year* without being punished in any way or being asked for a farthing of compensation?

“I have already said so much on this point gentlemen, that I shall make but a few remarks on the other two subjects. Well, then, as to efficiency. Our carrying ten millions of passengers in safety and comfort is one proof of that—and, I may remark in passing, that our receipts for the conveyance of these ten millions amounts to nearly half a million of money. Another proof of our efficiency lies in the fact that all the compensation we have had to pay for loss or detention of luggage has been only 100 pounds. Then as to goods. For merchandise carried we have received about 150,000 pounds, and the total compensation for the half-year amounts to only about 660 pounds. Surely I may say with truth that such facts speak to the regularity and efficiency of your service.

“If the public only knew the anxiety and care with which its interests are looked after both by night and by day by our excellent passenger and goods-managers they would perhaps present each of these gentlemen with a testimonial piece of plate, and would for evermore lay aside that wicked and ungrateful idea that railway companies are `fair game,' to be plundered by every one who receives, or fancies he has received, the slightest possible amount of damage to limb or property. Railway companies are not perfect any more than other companies. There are certain faults, it may be, and weak points, which all of us deplore, and which are being remedied as fast as experience and the progress of human knowledge will admit, but I hold, gentlemen, that the management of railway companies is above the average management of many other companies. We have much more work—more dangerous work—to do than other companies, and we do it with much less proportional loss to life, limb, and property.”

“He-ar, he-ar!” burst from the toady in spite of his recent rebuke; but as it was drowned in a round of hearty applause no one was the wiser or the worse of his note of approval.

“When I think,” continued the chairman, “of the condition this country was in before the days of railways—which probably most of those present remember—the ingratitude of the public seems to me utterly unaccountable. I can only understand it on the supposition that they have somehow obtained false notions as to the great value of railways and the great blessing they are to the community.

“Why, our goods-manager informs me that there is a certain noble lord, whom of course I may not name in public, who has a farm at a considerable distance out of town. He has a fancy that the milk and cream produced on his own farm is better than Metropolitan milk and cream—(laughter). He therefore resolves to have fresh milk and cream sent in from his farm every morning, and asks us to carry it for him. We agree; but he further insists that the milk and cream shall be delivered at his residence punctually at nine a.m. To this we also agree, because the thing can be done; yet it is sharp practice, for it is only by the train arriving at its time, punctually to a minute, and by our horse and van being in readiness to start the instant it is loaded, that the thing can be accomplished. Now, gentlemen, it is owing to the extreme care and vigorous superintendence of our goods—I had almost said our good-manager that that noble lord has never missed his milk or cream one morning during the last six months. And the same punctuality attends the milk—

delivery of 'Brown, Jones, and Robinson,' for railways, as a rule, are no respecters of persons. Should not this, I ask, infuse a little of the milk of human kindness into the public heart in reference to railways?

"Then, consider other advantages. In days not long gone by a few coaches carried a few hundreds of the more daring among our population over the land at a high cost and at the truly awful rate of ten miles an hour. In some cases the break-neck speed of twelve was attained. Most people preferred to remain at home rather than encounter the fatigues, risks, and expense of travelling. What are the facts now? Above three hundred millions of separate journeys are undertaken by rail in the United Kingdom in one year. Our sportsmen can breakfast in London on the 11th of August, sup the same night in Scotland, and be out on the moors on the morning of the 12th. On any afternoon any lady in England may be charmed with Sir Walter Scott's 'Lady of the Lake,' and, if so minded, she may be a lady on the veritable lake itself before next evening! Our navvies now travel for next to nothing in luxurious ease at thirty miles an hour, and our very beggars scorn to walk when they can travel at one penny a mile. But all this is nothing compared with our enormous increase of goods traffic throughout the kingdom. I have not time, nor is this the place, to enlarge on such a subject, but a pretty good commentary on it exists in the simple fact that on your line alone, which is not, as you know, the largest of the railways of this land, the receipts for goods, minerals, and live-stock carried amounted to 500,000 pounds in the last half-year, as you will see from the report.

"There is one point to which I would now direct your attention—namely, the great facilities which we give to residential and season-ticket holders. I think it a wise and just course to afford the public such facilities, because it tends to produce a permanent source of traffic by tempting men, who would otherwise be content to live within walking or 'bus distance of their offices, to go down into the country and build villas there, and if you extend that sort of arrangement largely, you cause villages at last to grow into towns, and towns to spread out with population and with manufactures. I regard our course of action in regard to season-tickets, therefore, as a sowing of the seed of permanent and enduring income. The receipts from this source alone, I am happy to say, amounts to 84,000 pounds."

Captain Lee's spirit had, at the bare mention of season-tickets, gone careering down the line to Clatterby, in the beautiful suburbs of which he had the most charming little villa imaginable, but he was abruptly recalled by a "he-ar, he-ar," from the toady, who was gradually becoming himself again, and a round of applause from the audience, in which, having an amiable tendency to follow suit, he joined.

After this the chairman expatiated at some length on the economical working of the line and on various other subjects of great importance to the shareholders, but of little interest to the general reader; we will therefore pass them all by and terminate our report of this meeting with the chairman's concluding remark, which was, that, out of the free revenue, after deduction of the dividends payable on guaranteed and preference stocks and other fixed charges, the directors recommended the payment of a dividend on the ordinary stock of six and a half per cent.

It need scarcely be said that this latter statement was received with hearty applause and with an irrepressible "he-ar, he-ar!" from the toady, which was not only tolerated by the

meeting, but echoed by the wag in the distance, who, though his words that day had been few, had done the shareholders good service nevertheless, inasmuch as he had quelled, to some extent the propensities of a self-sufficient “bore.”

Lest the reader should regard us as a statistical bore, we shall bring this chapter to a close.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Gertie is Mysteriously Cared For—sam Natly Dines Under Difficulties in Connexion With the Block System

One day, not long after the half-yearly meeting described in the last chapter, Mrs Marrot—being at the time engaged with the baby—received a visit from an elderly gentleman, who introduced himself as a lawyer, and said that he had been sent by a client to make a proposal to her—

“Of course,” he said, with a bland smile, “I do not refer to a matrimonial proposal.”

Mrs Marrot felt and looked surprised, but waited for more in silence.

“To come to the point at once,” continued the elderly gentleman, “my client, who is rather eccentric, has taken a great fancy, it seems, to your little daughter Gertrude—Gertie he calls her—and is desirous of giving her a good education, if you have no objection.”

Mrs Marrot, being under the impression that this would involve Gertie’s being taken away from her, and being put to a boarding-school, at once looked her objections so plainly, that her visitor hastened to explain that his client did not wish Gertie to quit her parents’ house, but merely to go for a few hours each day to the residence of a teacher in the neighbourhood—a governess—whom he should provide.

This altered the case so much that Mrs Marrot expressed herself quite ready to allow Gertie to undergo *that* amount of education, and hoped it would do her good, though, for her part she did not believe in education herself, seeing that she had got on in life perfectly well without it. She also expressed some curiosity to know who was so good as to take such an interest in her child.

“That, my good woman, I cannot tell, for two reasons; first because my client has enjoined me to give no information whatever about him; and, secondly, because I do not myself know his name, his business with me having been transacted through a young friend of mine, who is also a friend of his. All I can say is, that his intentions towards your child are purely philanthropic, and the teacher whom he shall select will not be appointed, unless you approve. That teacher, I may tell you, is Miss Tipps.”

“What! Miss Netta teach my Gertie?” exclaimed Mrs Marrot in great surprise—“never!”

“My good woman,” said the lawyer with a perplexed look, “what is your objection to Miss Tipps?”

“Objection? I’ve no objection to Miss Netta, but she will have some objection to me and Gertie.”

“I thought,” said the lawyer, “that Miss Tipps had already taught your child, to some extent, gratuitously.”

“So she has, God bless her; but that was in the Sunday-school, where she teaches a number of poor people’s children for the sake of our dear Lord—but that is a very

different thing from giving or'nary schoolin' to my Gertie."

"That may be," rejoined the lawyer; "but you are aware that Miss Tipps already teaches in order to increase her mother's small income, and she will probably be glad to get another pupil. We mean to pay her well for the service, and I suppose that if *she* has no objection *you* will have none."

"Cer'nly not!" replied Mrs Marrot with much emphasis.

Whenever Mrs Marrot said anything with unusual emphasis, baby Marrot entertained the unalterable conviction that he was being scolded; no sooner, therefore, did he observe the well-known look, and hear the familiar tones, than he opened wide his mouth and howled with injured feeling. At the same moment a train rushed past like an average earthquake, and in the midst of this the man of law rose, and saying that he would communicate with Mrs Marrot soon, took his leave.

Next evening Mrs Tipps was seated at tea with Netta, planning with anxious care how to make the two ends meet, but, apparently, without much success.

"It is dreadful, Netta," said Mrs Tipps; "I was never before brought to this condition."

"It is very dreadful," responded Netta, "but that renders it all the more imperative that we should take some decided step towards the payment of our debts."

"Yes, the liquidation of our debts," said Mrs Tipps, nodding slowly; "that was the term your dear father was wont to use."

"You know, mamma, at the worst we can sell our furniture—or part of it—and pay them off, and then, with a system of rigid economy—"

A postman's knock cut short the sentence, and in a few seconds Mrs Durby—careworn and subdued—presented a letter to her mistress and retired.

"My—my dear!" exclaimed Mrs Tipps, "th—this is positively miraculous. Here is a cheque for fifty pounds, and—but read for yourself."

Netta seized the letter and read it aloud. It ran thus:—

"Clarendon Hotel, London.

"Dear Madam,—There is a little girl living in your neighbourhood, in whose father I have a deep interest. I am particularly anxious to give this child, Gertrude Marrot by name, a good plain education. Understanding that your daughter has had considerable experience in teaching the young, and is, or has been, engaged in tuition, I venture to propose that she should undertake the training of this child, who will attend at your daughter's residence for that purpose at any hours you may deem most suitable. In the belief that your daughter will have no objection to accept of this trust I enclose a cheque for 50 pounds—the first year's salary—in advance. I am, dear madam, your very obedient servant,

"Samuel Tough."

Although the above can scarcely be considered a brilliant achievement of Edwin Gurwood, it nevertheless accomplished its purpose; for the letter was, in all respects, so very unlike Captain Lee, that neither Mrs Tipps nor her daughter suspected him for an instant. On the contrary, they took it in good faith. Netta wrote a reply by return of post

agreeing to the proposal, and on the day following began her pleasant task, to the inexpressible delight of Gertie, who would joyfully, on any terms whatever, have been Netta's slave—not to mention pupil.

A considerable time after this happy arrangement had been made, Mrs Durby, in a moment of confidential weakness, related to little Gertie the circumstances attending the loss of the diamond ring. Gertie, on returning home, communicated the matter to Loo, and gave it as her opinion that it was a pity such a valuable ring had been lost.

"Couldn't father find out about it somehow?" she asked with a hopeful look—hopeful because she believed her father capable of doing anything he chose to set his mind to.

"Perhaps he could, but he won't be home to-night," replied Loo, thoughtfully.

"I think Sam Natly could tell us how to find it. Suppose I go and ask him," said Gertie.

Loo laughed, and said she thought Sam couldn't help them much. The child was, however, a resolute little thing, and, having taken up the idea, determined to go and see Sam forthwith, as he was on duty not far from John Marrot's cottage.

Sam had recently been advanced from the position of a porter, to the responsible office of a signalman. The great sin he had committed in going to sleep in a first-class carriage, when unable to keep his eyes open, had been forgiven, partly because it was his first offence, partly because of the good and opportune service he had rendered on the day of the attempted robbery, and partly on account of his being one of the steadiest and most intelligent men on the line. Sam's wife, under the care of Mrs Tipps and Mrs Durby, had made a marvellous recovery, and Sam's gratitude knew no bounds. Mrs Tipps happened to refer to him one day when conversing with Captain Lee, and the latter was much pleased to discover that the man in whom Mrs Tipps felt so much interest, was the same man who had come to his help in the hour of his extremity. He therefore made inquiry about him of the station-master at Clatterby. That gentleman said that Sam was a first-rate man, a stout, hard-working, modest fellow, besides being remarkably intelligent, and clear-headed and cool, especially in the midst of danger, as had been exemplified more than once in cases of accident at the station, in addition to which Sam was a confirmed abstainer from strong drink. All these facts were remembered, and when the block system of signalling was introduced on that part of the line Sam was made a signalman.

The scene of his new labours was an elevated box at the side of the line, not far from Gertie's home. As this box was rather curious we shall describe it. It was a huge square sentry-box, with three of its sides composed of windows; these commanded a view of the line in all directions. On the fourth side of the box hung a time-piece and a framed copy of signal regulations. There was a diminutive stove in one corner, and a chest in another. In front of the box facing the clock were two telegraphic instruments, and a row of eight or ten long iron levers, which very much resembled a row of muskets in a rack. These levers were formidable instruments in aspect and in fact, for they not only cost Sam a pretty strong effort to move them, but they moved points and signals, on the correct and prompt movements of which depended the safety of the line, and the lives of human beings.

Just before little Gertie reached the station, Sam happened to be engaged in attempting to take his dinner. We use the word *attempting* advisedly, because our signalman had not the ghost of a chance to sit down, as ordinary mortals do, and take his dinner with any degree

of certainty. He took it as it were, disjointedly in the midst of alarms. That the reader may understand why, we must observe that the “block system” of signalling, which had recently been introduced on part of the line, necessitated constant attention, and a series of acts, which gave the signalman no rest, during certain periods of his watch, for more than two minutes at a time, if so long. The block system is the method of protecting trains by “blocking” the line; that is, forbidding the advance of trains until the line is clear, thus securing an interval of *space* between trains, instead of the older and more common method of an interval of *time*. The chief objection to the latter system is this, that one accident is apt to cause another. Suppose a train despatched from a station; an interval of say quarter of an hour allowed and then another sent off. If the first train should break down, there is some chance of the second train overtaking and running into it. With the block system this is impossible. For instance, a train starts from any station, say A, and has to run past stations B and C. The instant it starts the signalman at A rings a telegraph bell to attract B’s attention, at the same time he indicates on another telegraphic instrument “Train on line,” locks his instruments in that position, and puts up the “stop” signal, or, blocks the line. B replies, acknowledging the signal, and telegraphs to C to be ready. The moment the train passes B’s station, he telegraphs to C, “Train on line,” and blocks that part of the line with the semaphore, “Stop”, as A had done, he also telegraphs back to A, “Line clear,” whereupon A lets a second train on, if one is ready. Very soon C sends “Line clear” to B, whereupon B is prepared to let on that second train, when it comes up, and so on *ad infinitum*. The signals, right and left are invariably repeated, so that there is no chance of mistake though the failure of the telegraph instruments, because if any of these should fail, the want of a reply would at once induce a telegram through the “speaking” instrument with which each station is furnished, and which is similar to the telegraph instruments used at most railway stations, and the line would remain “blocked” until a satisfactory answer set it free. The working of the semaphore signals, which are familiar to most people as tall posts with projecting moveable arms, is accomplished by the mechanical action of the “levers” before mentioned. There are two “distant” signals and one “home” signal to be worked by each man. Besides these there are levers for working the various “points” around the station which lead to sidings, and when these levers are in action, i.e. placed for the shunting of a goods train, they self-lock the levers that “block” the line, so that while this operation of shunting (which just means shoving a train to one side out of the way) is going on, the signalman could not make the mistake of letting a train pass the distant signal—the thing is rendered impossible.

From this it will be seen that the signalman has entire control of the line, and if we consider that shunting of waggons, carriages, and trains is a pretty constant and lively operation at some stations, we can easily conceive that the office of signalman can only be filled by a very able and trustworthy man.

As we have said, just before Gertie’s arrival Sam Natly chanced to be attempting to dine. The telegraph needles pointed to “Line clear” on both sides of him. Dinner consisted of a sort of Irish stew cooked in a little square iron pan that fitted into the small stove. Being a placid, good-humoured man, not easily thrown off his balance either mentally or physically, Sam smiled slightly to himself as he put the first bit of meat into his mouth. He thought of his wife, wished that she was there to assist in the eating of it and shut his lips on the savoury morsel. A piece of potato was arrested by the sharp telegraph bell—one

beat—of warning. The potato followed the meat as he was in the act of rising. Sam touched his telegraphic bell in reply to his signal—friend on the right, and “Train on line” was marked by a telegraphic needle pointing to these words. As the train was yet a great way off, at least as to distance, he sat down again and disposed of bit number two. Number three followed, and he had made some approach to engulfing number four when a shrill whistle struck his ear. Up he sprang, glanced at the time—piece, wiped his mouth, and went to the levers. He touched his bell—a single note of warning to his signal—friend on the left and received a reply, one beat, meaning “Ready.” The train appeared, came up like a rocket and went past like a thunderbolt. When Sam saw its red tail—light, and thus knew that all the train was there,—that none of the tail carriages or trucks had broken loose and been left behind,—he gave a mighty pull to one of the levers, which turned up the arms of his distant signal, and thus blocked the line to all other trains. The needle was now “pegged down” or fixed at “Train on line,” so that there could be no mistake about it, and no trusting to memory. Having accomplished this, he went to a large book which lay open on a desk in a corner, glanced at the time—piece, recorded the passage of the train—a passenger one, and once more sat down to dinner.

The distance between his station and the next to the left was somewhat greater than that on the right, so that at least three mouthfuls in succession, of the Irish stew, were disposed of before the wicked little bell summoned him again. He rose as before with alacrity, rung his bell in reply, and unstopped his needle. The friend on his left at once pointed it to “Line clear,” whereupon Sam again went to his levers, and lowered the obstructing arms on his right. Having thus a clear line on right and left, he sat down for the third time to dinner, with a clear head and a clear conscience.

But he was interrupted sooner than before, indeed he had barely got one mouthful deposited when he was rung up by the friend on his right, with *two* beats of the bell, to pass a heavy goods train, which, with something like the impatience of stout people in crossing dangerous roads, was anxious to get on and out of the way as fast as possible, for it knew that a `limited mail' was tearing after it, at a fearfully unlimited pace. Sam knew this too—indeed he knew, and was bound to know, every train that had to pass that station, up and down, during his period of duty. He therefore replied, sat down, had a bite or two, and sprang up when the whistle of the train was audible. There was longer delay this time, for the goods train had to stop, and be shunted, at this station. Moreover, another goods train that had quietly, but impatiently, been biding its time in a siding, thought it would try to take advantage of this opportunity, and gave an impatient whistle. Sam opened one of his sliding windows and looked out.

“Couldn’t you let me shunt over a truck t’other side *now*, Sam?” asked its driver remonstratively.

Sam glanced at his time—piece with an earnest thoughtful look, and said—

“Well, yes; but look sharp.”

He had already pulled the lever of the home signal, and now, with two mighty pulls, blocked both up and down lines with the distant signals. At the same time he pulled other levers, and shifted the “points,” so as to let the plethoric goods train just arrived, and the goods train in waiting, perform their respective evolutions. It required nearly all Sam’s

strength to “pull over” several of those levers, because, besides being somewhat heavy to work, even at their best, several of them had got slightly out of order—wanted oiling, perhaps. It was quite evident to the meanest capacity that there was room for improvement in this department of the Grand National Trunk Railway. In performing this last operation Sam locked all the semaphores, and so rendered his part of the line absolutely impregnable. There was so much vigorous action and whistling here, and such puffing and backing and pushing on the part of the engines, that a superficial observer might have supposed there was a great deal of movement and confusion to no purpose, but we need scarcely say that such was not the case. Several trucks of goods were dropped by both trains, to be carried on by other trains, and several trucks that had been left by other trains, were taken up, and thus in a few minutes a part of the enormous traffic of the line was assorted.

Sam had judged his time well. He had got a good piece of work advanced, and both trains well out of the way, just before the bell again intimated the approach of the limited mail. He replied, set the line free, booked the passage of the goods train, and sat down once more to dinner, just as the door of his box opened and the pretty face of Gertie peeped in.

We are not sure that such a visit would be permitted in these days of stringent “rules;” at that time they may not have been very particular as to visitors, or perhaps Gertie, being one of themselves, as it were, was privileged. Be this as it may, there she was with a laughing face.

“May I come in, Sam?”

“May a cherub from the skies come in—yes,” replied Sam, rising and lifting Gertie in his strong arms until he could print a kiss on her forehead without stooping. “All well at home, Gertie?”

“Very well, thank you. We expect father home to tea.”

“I know that,” said Sam, sitting down at his small table and attempting dinner once again.

“How do you know that?” asked Gertie in surprise.

“‘Cause I’ve got to pass him up wi’ the express in half-an-hour,” replied Sam, with his mouth full, “and, of course, he don’t prefer takin’ tea on the *Lightenin’* with his mate Bill Garvie, w’en he’s got a chance o’ takin’ it wi’ his wife and a little angel, like you.”

“I wish you’d not talk nonsense, Sam,” remonstrated Gertie with a serious look.

“That ain’t nonsense,” said Sam, stoutly.

“Yes, it is,” said Gertie; “you know angels are good.”

“Well, and ain’t you good?” demanded the signalman, filling his mouth with a potato.

“Mother says I am, and I feel as if I was,” replied Gertie with much simplicity, “but you know angels are *very very* good, and, of *course*, I’m not near so good as them.”

“You are,” said Sam, with an obstinate snap at a piece of meat; “you’re better than any of ‘em. You only want wings to be complete.”

Gertie laughed, and then remarked that Sam dined late, to which Sam replied that he did, that he preferred it, and that he didn’t see why gentlefolk should have that sort of fun all to

themselves.

“What’s that?” exclaimed Gertie, as Sam dropped his knife and fork, rang his electric bell, and laid hold of a lever.

“The limited mail, my dear,” said Sam, as the train rushed by.

“Oh, how it shakes the house! I wonder it don’t fall,” exclaimed the child.

“It’s made to be well shaken, like a bottle o’ bad physic,” replied Sam, as he went through the various processes already described, before sitting down to finish his oft-interrupted meal.

“Do you always take your dinner in that uncomfortable way?” asked Gertie, sitting down on the chest and looking earnestly into the manly countenance of her friend.

“Mostly,” said Sam, at last finishing off with a draught of pure water, and smacking his lips.

“Sometimes it’s all I can do to get it eaten—other times I’m not so hard pressed, but it’s never got over without interruption, more or less.”

“Are breakfast and tea as bad?”

“Not quite,” replied Sam with a laugh; “about breakfast time the traffic ain’t quite so fast and furious, and I takes tea at home.”

“How long are you here at a time?” asked the inquisitive Gertie.

“Twelve hours, my dear, and no time allowed for meals.”

“Surely you must be very tired?”

“Sometimes, but they talk of shortening the hours soon. There’s a want of signalmen just now, that’s how it is. But what good fortune has sent *you* here this evenin’, Gertie?”

“I want to ask you about a ring, Sam.”

“A ring! What! you ain’t goin’ to get married already, are you?”

Gertie replied by bursting into a hearty fit of laughter; when she had sufficiently recovered her gravity, she revealed her troubles to the sympathising signalman.

“Well, it *is* a perplexin’ business. What was the old woman doin’ wi’ such a ring tied up in such a queer way?”

“I don’t know,” said Gertie.

“Well, it ain’t no business of mine, but we must try to git hold of it somehow. I’ll be off dooty at six, and your dad’ll be passin’ in a few minutes. After I’m free, I’ll go up to the shed and have a palaver with ‘im. There he is.”

As he spoke the bell was rung by his signal-friend on the left replied to in the usual way, and in a few minutes the chimney of the *Lightning* was seen over the top of the embankment that hid a bend of the up-line from view.

“Put your head out here at this window, and be ready to wave your hand, Gertie,” said Sam, placing the child.

The “Flying Dutchman” came on in its wonted wild fashion, and for a few seconds Gertie saw her father’s bronzed and stern face as he looked straight ahead with his hand on the regulator. John Marrot cast one professional glance up, and gave a professional wave of his right hand to the signalman. At that instant his whole visage lighted up as if a beam of sunshine had suffused it, and his white teeth, uncovered by a smile, gleamed as he flew past and looked back. Gertie waved frantically with her kerchief, which flew from her hand and for some distance followed the train. In another moment the “Flying Dutchman” was a speck in the distance—its terrific crash suddenly reduced by distance to a low rumble.

“Evenin’, Jack,” said Sam, as his successor or comrade on the “night-shift” entered the box, “Come along now, Gertie. We’ll go and see your father. He’ll be up at the station in no time, and won’t take long to run back to the shed.”

So saying, Sam Natly assisted Gertie down the long iron ladder, by which his nest was reached, and walked with her to the engine-shed, which they soon reached. They had not waited long before John Marrot’s iron horse came panting slowly into its accustomed stable.

As there were at least twelve iron horses there in all stages of being-put-to-bedism, and some, like naughty boys, were blowing off their steam with absolutely appalling noise, it was next to impossible for Gertie and Sam to make known their difficulty to John. They therefore waited until he had seen his satellites in proper attendance upon his charger, and then left the shed along with him.

When the case was made known to John, he at once said, “Why didn’t they apply to the Clearin’ House, I wonder?”

“Ah, why not?” said Sam.

“Nurse doesn’t know about that place, I think,” suggested Gertie.

“Very likely not; but if she’d only gone an’ seen any one as know’d anything about the line, she’d have found it out. However, the parcel’s pretty sure to be somewhere, so I’ll set some inquiries a-foot w’en I goes up to town to-morrow. Good-night, Sam.”

“Good-night, John,” answered the signalman, as he turned off in the direction of his own dwelling, while the engine-driver and his little daughter pursued the footpath that led to their cottage.

Sam Natly’s residence was a very small one, for house-rent was high in that neighbourhood. There were only two rooms in it, but these two bore evidence of being tended by a thrifty housewife; and, truly, when Sam’s delicate, but partially recovered, wife met him at the door that night, and gave him a hearty kiss of welcome, no one with an atom of good taste could have avoided admitting that she was a remarkably pretty, as well as thrifty, little woman.

“You’re late to-night, Sam,” said little Mrs Natly.

“Yes, I’ve had to go to the shed to see John Marrot about a diamond ring.”

“A diamond ring!” exclaimed his wife.

“Yes, a diamond ring.”

Hereupon Sam related all he knew about the matter, and you may be sure the subject was quite sufficient to furnish ground for a very lively and speculative conversation, during the preparation and consumption of as nice a little hot supper, as any hard-worked signalman could desire.

“You’re tired, Sam,” said his little wife anxiously.

“Well, I am a bit. It’s no wonder, for it’s a pretty hard job to work them levers for twelve hours at a stretch without an interval, even for meals, but I’m gittin’ used to it—like the eels to bein’ skinned.”

“It’s a great shame of the Company,” cried Mrs Natly with indignation.

“Come, come,” cried Sam, “no treason! It ain’t such a shame as it looks. You see the Company have just bin introducin’ a noo system of signallin’, an’ they ha’n’t got enough of men who understand the thing to work it, d’ye see; so of course we’ve got to work double tides, as the Jack-tars say. If they *continue* to keep us at it like that I’ll say it’s a shame too, but we must give ‘em time to git things into workin’ order. Besides, they’re hard-up just now. There’s a deal o’ money throw’d away by companies fightin’ an’ opposin’ one another—cuttin’ their own throats, I calls it—and they’re awful hard used by the public in the way o’ compensation too. It’s nothin’ short o’ plunder and robbery. If the public would claim moderately, and juries would judge fairly, an’ directors would fight less, shareholders would git higher dividends, the public would be better served, and railway servants would be less worked and better paid.”

“I don’t care two straws, Sam,” said little Mrs Natly with great firmness, “not two straws for their fightin’s, an’ joories, and davydens—all I know is that they’ve no right whatever to kill my ‘usband, and it’s a great shame!”

With this noble sentiment the earnest little woman concluded the evening’s conversation, and allowed her wearied partner to retire to rest.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

A Soiree Wildly Interrupted, and Followed Up by Surprising Revelations

One afternoon Captain Lee and Emma called on Mrs Tipps, and found her engaged in earnest conversation with Netta. The captain, who was always in a boiling-over condition, and never felt quite happy except when in the act of planning or carrying out some scheme for the increase of general happiness, soon discovered that Netta was discussing the details of a little treat which she meant to give to the boys and girls of a Sunday-school which she and her mother superintended. With all his penetration he did not, however, find out that the matter which called most for consideration was the financial part of the scheme—in other words, how to accomplish the end desired with extremely limited means. He solved the question for them, however, by asserting that he intended to give all the scholars of all the Sunday-schools in the neighbourhood a treat, and of course meant to include Netta's school among the rest— unless, of course, she possessed so much exclusive pride as to refuse to join him.

There was no resisting Captain Lee. As well might a red-skin attempt to stop Niagara. When once he had made up his mind to “go in” for something, no mortal power could stop him. He might indeed be *turned*. Another object of interest, worthy of pursuit and judiciously put before him, might perhaps induce him to abandon a previous scheme; but once his steam was up, as John Marrot used to say, you could not get him to blow it off into the air. He was unlike the iron horse in that respect, although somewhat like him in the rigour of his action. Accordingly the thing was fixed. Invitations were sent out to all the schools and to all who took an interest in them, and the place fixed on was a field at the back of Mrs Tipps's villa.

The day came, and with it the children in their best array. The weather was all that could be wished—a bright sun and a clear sky,—so that the huge tent provided in case of rain, was found to be only required to shade the provisions from the sun. Besides the children there were the teachers—many of them little more than children as to years, but with a happy earnestness of countenance and manner which told of another element in their breasts that evidently deepened and intensified their joy. There were several visitors and friends of Captain Lee and Mrs Tipps. Emma was there, of course, the busiest of the busy in making arrangements for the feast which consisted chiefly of fruit, buns, and milk. Netta and she managed that department together. Of course little Gertie was there and her sister Loo, from which we may conclude that Will Garvie was there in spirit, not only because that would have been natural, but because he had expressly told Loo the day before that he meant to be present in that attenuated condition. Bodily, poor fellow, he was on the foot-plate of the *Lightning*, which is as much as to say that he was everywhere by turns, and nowhere long. Mrs Marrot was there too, and baby, with Nanny Stocks as his guardian. Miss Stocks's chief employment during the evening appeared to be to forget herself in the excess of her delight, and run baby's head against all sorts of things and persons. Perhaps it was as well she did so, because it tended to repress his energy. She acted the part of regulator and safety-valve to that small human engine, by controlling his

actions and permitting him good-naturedly to let off much of his superfluous steam on herself. Indeed she was a species of strong buffer in this respect, receiving and neutralising many a severe blow from his irrepressible feet and fists. Bob Marrot was also there with his bosom friend Tomtit Dorkin, whose sole occupation in life up to that time had been to put screws on nuts; this must have been “nuts” to him, as the Yankees have it, because, being a diligent little fellow, he managed to screw himself through life at the Clatterby Works to the tune of twelve shillings a week. Joseph Tipps, having got leave of absence for an evening, was also there,—modest amiable, active and self-abnegating. So was Mrs Natly, who, in consideration of her delicate health, was taken great care of, and very much made of, by Mrs Tipps and her family— conspicuously by Mrs Durby, who had become very fond of her since the night she nursed her. Indeed there is little doubt that Mrs Durby and the bottle of wine were the turning-point of Mrs Natly’s illness, and that but for them, poor Sam would have been a widower by that time. Mr Able, the director, was also there, bland and beaming, with a brother director who was anything but bland or beaming, being possessed of a grave, massive, strongly marked and stern countenance; but nevertheless, owning a similar spirit and a heart which beat high with philanthropic desires and designs—though few who came in contact with him, except his intimate friends, would believe it. There were also present an elderly clergyman and a young curate—both good, earnest men, but each very different in many respects from the other. The elder clergyman had a genial, hearty countenance and manner, and he dressed very much like other gentlemen. The young curate might have breakfasted on his poker, to judge from the stiffness of his back, and appeared to be afraid of suffering from cold in the knees and chest, to judge from the length of his surtout and the height of his plain buttonless vest.

When all were assembled on the green and the viands spread, the elder clergyman gave out a hymn; and the curate, who had a capital voice, led off, but he was speedily drowned by the gush of song that rose from the children’s lips. It was a lively hymn, and they evidently rejoiced to sing it. Then the elder clergyman made the children a short speech. It was amazingly brief, insomuch that it quite took the little ones by surprise—so short was it, indeed and so much to the point, that we will venture to set it down here.

“Dear children,” he said, in a loud voice that silenced every chattering tongue, “we have met here to enjoy ourselves. There is but one of your Sunday lessons which I will remind you of to-day. It is this,—‘Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.’ Before beginning, then, let us ask God’s blessing.”

Thereupon he asked a blessing, which was also so brief, that, but for the all-prevailing name of Jesus, with which he closed it, some of those who heard him would scarce have deemed it a prayer at all. Yet this elderly clergyman was not always brief.

He was not brief, for instance, in his private prayers for himself, his friends, and his flock. Brevity did not mark his proceedings when engaged in preparing for the Sabbath services. He was not brief when, in his study, he pleaded with some awakened but unbelieving soul to cast itself unreservedly on the finished work of our Saviour. He was a man who carried his tact and common-sense into his religious duties; who hated formalism, regarding it as one of the great stumbling-blocks in the progress of Christianity, and who endeavoured at all times to suit his words and actions to the circumstances of the occasion.

The children regarded him with a degree of affection that was all but irrepressible, and

which induced them, at his earnest request, to sit still for a considerable time while his young brother gave them “a *short* address.” He was almost emphatic on the word *short*, but the young curate did not appear to take the hint, or to understand the meaning of that word either in regard to discourses or surtouts. He asserted himself in his surtouts and vests, without of course having a shadow of reason for so doing, save that some other young curates asserted themselves in the same way; and he asserted himself then and there in a tone of voice called “sermonising,” to which foolish young men are sometimes addicted, and which, by the way, being a false, and therefore irreligious tone, is another great stumbling-block in the way of Christianity. And, curiously enough, this young curate was really an earnest, though mistaken and intensely bigoted young man. We call him bigoted, not because he held his own opinions, but because he held by his little formalities with as much apparent fervour as he held by the grand doctrines of his religion, although for the latter he had the authority of the Word, while for the former he had merely the authority of man. His discourse was a good one, and if delivered in a natural voice and at a suitable time, might have made a good impression. As it was, it produced pity and regret in his elder brother, exasperation in Captain Lee, profound melancholy in Joseph Tipps, great admiration in Miss Stocks and the baby, and unutterable *ennui* in the children. Fortunately for the success of the day, in the middle of it, he took occasion to make some reference, with allegorical intentions, to the lower animals, and pointed to a pig which lay basking in the sunshine at no great distance, an unconcerned spectator of the scene. A rather obtuse, fat-faced boy, was suddenly smitten with the belief that this was intended as a joke, and dutifully clapped his hands. The effect was electrical—an irresistible cheer and clapping of hands ensued. It was of no use to attempt to check it. The more this was tried the more did the children seem to think they were invited to a continuance of their ovation to the young curate, who finally retired amid the hearty though unexpressed congratulations of the company.

By good fortune, the arrival of several more friends diverted attention from this incident; and, immediately after, Captain Lee set the children to engage in various games, among which the favourite was blindman’s-buff.

One of the new arrivals was Edwin Gurwood, who had come, he said, to introduce a gentleman—Dr Noble—to Mrs Tipps.

“Oh, the hypocrite!” thought Mrs Tipps; “he has come to see Emma Lee, and he knows it.”

Of course he knew it, and he knew that Mrs Tipps knew it, and he knew that Mrs Tipps knew that he knew it, yet neither he nor Mrs Tipps showed the slightest symptom of all that knowledge. The latter bowed to Dr Noble, and was expressing her happiness in making his acquaintance, when a rush of laughing children almost overturned her, and hurled Dr Noble aside. They were immediately separated in the crowd, and, strange to say, Edwin at once found himself standing beside Emma Lee, who, by some curious coincidence, had just parted from Netta, so that they found themselves comparatively alone. What they said to each other in these circumstances it does not become us to divulge.

While all parties were enjoying themselves to the full, including the young curate, whose discomfiture was softened by the kind attentions of Mrs Tipps and her daughter, an

incident occurred which filled them with surprise and consternation. Dr Noble was standing at the time near the large tent looking at the games, and Nanny Stocks was not far from him choking the baby with alternate sweetmeats and kisses, to the horror of Joseph Tipps, who fully expected to witness a case of croup or some such infantine disease in a few minutes, when suddenly a tall man with torn clothes, dishevelled hair and bloodshot eyes, sprang forward and confronted Dr Noble.

“Ha!” he exclaimed with a wild laugh, “have I found you at last, mine enemy?”

Dr Noble looked at him with much surprise, but did not reply. He appeared to be paralysed.

“I have sought you,” continued the man, trembling with ill-suppressed passion, “over land and sea, and now I’ve found you. You’ve got the casket—you know you have; you took it from my wife the night she died; you shall give it up now, or you die!”

He spluttered rather than spoke the last words between his teeth, as he made a spring at the doctor.

Edwin Gurwood had seen the man approach, and at once to his amazement recognising the features of Thomson, his old opponent in the train, he ran towards him, but was not near enough to prevent his first wild attack. Fortunately for Dr Noble this was thwarted by no less a personage than Joseph Tipps, who, seeing what was intended, sprang promptly forward, and, seizing the man by the legs adroitly threw him down. With a yell that sent a chill of horror to all the young hearts round, the madman, for such he plainly was, leaped up, but before he could renew his attack he was in the powerful grasp of his old enemy, Edwin Gurwood. A terrific struggle ensued, for both men, as we have said before, were unusually powerful; but on this occasion madness more than counterbalanced Edwin’s superior strength. For some time they wrestled so fiercely that none of the other gentlemen could interfere with effect. They dashed down the large tent and went crashing through the *debris* of the feast until at length Thomson made a sudden twist freed himself from Edwin’s grasp, leaving a shred of his coat in his hands, and, flying across the field, leaped at a single bound the wall that encompassed it. He was closely followed by Edwin and by a constable of the district, who happened to arrive upon the scene, but the fugitive left them far behind, and was soon out of sight.

This incident put an end to the evening’s enjoyment but as the greater part of it had already passed delightfully before Thomson came on the ground to mar the sport, the children returned home much pleased with themselves and everybody else, despite the concluding scene.

Meanwhile Mrs Tipps invited her friends who had assembled there to take tea in Eden Villa, and here Dr Noble was eagerly questioned as to his knowledge of his late assailant, but he either could not or would not throw light on the subject. Some of the guests left early and some late, but to Mrs Tipps’s surprise the doctor remained till the last of them had said good-night, after which, to her still greater surprise, he drew his chair close to the table, and, looking at her and Netta with much earnestness, said—

“Probably you are surprised, ladies, that I, a stranger, have remained so long to-night. The truth is, I had come here to have some conversation on private and very important matters, but finding you so lively, and, I must add, so pleasantly engaged, I deemed it expedient to

defer my conversation until you should be more at leisure.”

He paused as if to collect his thoughts, and the ladies glanced at each other uneasily, and in some surprise, but made no reply. In truth, remembering the scene they had just witnessed, they began to suspect that another style of madman had thought fit to pay them a visit.

He resumed, however, with every appearance of sanity—

“How the madman who assaulted me this evening found me out I know not. I was not aware until this day that he had been tracking me, but, judging from what he said, and from what I know about him, I now see that he must have been doing so for some years. Here is the explanation, and, let me add, it intimately concerns yourselves.”

Mrs Tipps and Netta became more interested as Dr Noble proceeded.

“You must know,” he said, “that when in India some years ago I made several coasting voyages with a certain sea-captain as surgeon of his ship, at periods when my health required recruiting. I received from that gentleman every attention and kindness that the heart of a good man could suggest. On one of these voyages we had a native prince on board. He was voyaging, like myself, for the benefit of his health, but his case was a bad one. He grew rapidly worse, and before the end of the voyage he died. During his illness the captain nursed him as if he had been his own child; all the more tenderly that he thought him to be one of those unfortunate princes who, owing to political changes, had been ruined, and had lost all his wealth along with his station. It was quite touching, I assure you, madam, to listen to the earnest tones of that captain’s voice as he read passages from the Word of God to the dying prince, and sought to convince him that Jesus Christ, who became poor for our sakes, could bestow spiritual wealth that neither the world, nor life, nor death could take away. The prince spoke very little, but he listened most intently. Just before he died he sent a sailor lad who attended on him, for the captain, and, taking a small box from beneath his pillow, gave it to him, saying briefly,—‘Here, take it, you have been my best friend, I shall need it no more.’

“After he was dead the box was opened, and found to contain a most superb set of diamonds—a necklace, brooch, ear-rings, bracelets, and a ring, besides a quantity of gold pieces, the whole being worth several thousands of pounds.

“As the prince had often said that all his kindred were dead, the captain had no conscientious scruples in retaining the gift. He locked it away in his cabin. When the voyage was finished—at Calcutta—the men were paid off. The captain then be-thought him of placing his treasure in some place of security in the city. He went to his chest and took out the box—it was light—he opened it hastily—the contents were gone! Nothing was left to him of that splendid gift save the ring, which he had placed on his finger soon after receiving it, and had worn ever since.

“From some circumstances that recurred to our memories, we both suspected the young man who had been in attendance on the prince, but, although we caused the most diligent search to be made, we failed to find him. My friend and I parted soon after. I was sent up to the hills, and never saw or heard of him again.

“Several years after that I happened to be residing in Calcutta, and was called one night to

see the wife of an Englishman who was thought to be dying. I found her very ill—near her end. She seemed to be anxious to communicate something to me, but appeared to be afraid of her husband. I thought, on looking at him attentively, that I had seen him before, and said so. He seemed to be annoyed, and denied ever having met with me. I treated the matter lightly, but took occasion to send him out for some physic, and, while he was away, encouraged the woman to unburden her mind. She was not slow to do so. ‘Oh, sir,’ she said, ‘I want to communicate a secret, but dared not while my husband was by. Long ago, before I knew him, my husband stole a box of diamonds from a Captain Tipps—’”

“My husband!” exclaimed the widow.

“You shall hear,” said Dr Noble. “‘I often heard him tell the story, and boast of it,’ continued the sick woman, quietly, ‘and I resolved to obtain possession of the box, and have it returned, if possible, to the rightful owner. So I carried out my purpose—no matter how—and led him to suppose that the treasure had been stolen; but I have often fancied he did not believe me. This Captain Tipps was a friend of yours, sir. I know it, because my husband has told me. He remembers you, although you don’t remember him. I wish you to return the box to Captain Tipps, sir, if he is yet alive. It lies—’ here she drew me close to her, and whispered in my ear the exact spot, under a tree, where the jewels were hid.

“‘You’ll be sure to remember the place?’ she asked, anxiously.

“‘Remember what place?’ demanded her husband, sternly, as he returned with the medicine.

“No answer was given. The woman fell back on hearing his voice, but, although she lived for nearly an hour, never spoke again.

“The man turned on me, and asked again what place she had been speaking of. I said that it was idle to repeat what might prove to be only the ravings of a dying woman. He seized a bludgeon, and, raising it in a threatening manner, said, ‘I know you, Dr Noble; you shall tell me what I want to know, else you shall not quit this room alive.’

“‘I know you, too, Thomson,’ said I, drawing a small sword from a stick which I always carried. ‘If you proceed to violence, it remains to be seen who shall quit this room alive.’

“I opened the door and walked quietly out, leaving him glaring like a tiger after me.

“Going to the place described, I found the diamonds; and from that day to this I have not ceased to try to discover my old friend, but have not yet succeeded. Knowing that he might be dead, I have made inquiry of every one possessing your name, Mrs Tipps, in the hope of discovering his widow or children; and, although your name is an uncommon one, madam, you would be surprised if you knew how many I have ferreted out in the course of years. Unfortunately, my friend never mentioned his family, or the place of his residence in England, so I have had no clue to guide me save one. I have even found two widows of the name of Tipps besides yourself, and one of these said that her husband was a sailor captain, but her description of him was not that of my friend. The other said her husband had been a lawyer, so of course *he* could not be the man of whom I was in search.”

“But, sir,” said Mrs Tipps, in some perplexity, “if you are to depend on description, I fear that you will never attain your end, for every one knows that descriptions given of the same person by different people never quite agree.”

“That is true, madam; and the description given to me this evening of your late husband is a case in point; for, although it agrees in many things—in most things—there is some discrepancy. Did your husband never give you the slightest hint about a set of diamonds that he had once lost?”

“Never; but I can account for that by the fact, that he never alluded to anything that had at any time given him pain or displeasure, if he could avoid it.”

“There is but the one clue, then, that I spoke of, namely, the ring that belonged to the set of diamonds. Did your husband ever possess—”

“The ring!” exclaimed Mrs Tipps and Netta in the same breath. “Yes, he had a diamond ring—”

They stopped abruptly, and looked at each other in distress, for they remembered that the ring had been lost.

“Pray, what sort of ring is it? Describe it to me,” said Dr Noble.

Netta carefully described it and, as she did so, the visitor’s countenance brightened.

“That’s it; that’s it exactly; that *must* be it for I remember it well, and it corresponds in all respects with—my dear ladies, let me see the ring without delay.”

“Alas! sir,” said Mrs Tipps, sadly, “the ring is lost!”

A look of blank dismay clouded poor Dr Noble’s visage as he heard these words, but he quickly questioned the ladies as to the loss, and became more hopeful on bearing the details.

“Come,” he said at last, as he rose to take leave, “things don’t look quite so bad as they did at first. From all I have heard I am convinced that my friend’s widow and daughter are before me—a sight of the ring would put the question beyond all doubt. We must therefore set to work at once and bend all our energies to the one great point of recovering the lost ring.”

CHAPTER NINETEEN

A Run-away Locomotive

Being, as we have had occasion to remark before, a communicative and confiding little woman, Netta Tipps told the secret of the ring in strict confidence to her old nurse. Mrs Durby, in a weak moment as on a former occasion, related the history of it to Gertie, who of course told Loo. She naturally mentioned it to her lover, Will Garvie, and he conveyed the information to John Marrot. Thus far, but no further, the thing went, for John felt that there might be danger in spreading the matter, and laid a strict injunction on all who knew of it to keep silence for a time.

While at the station the day following, just after having brought in the “Flying Dutchman,” he was accosted by the superintendent of police, who chanced to be lounging there with, apparently, nothing to do. Never was there a man who was more frequently called on to belie his true character. It was a part of Mr Sharp’s duty to look lazy at times, and even stupid, so as to throw suspicious men off their guard.

“A fine day, John,” he said, lounging up to the engine where John was leaning on the rail, contemplating the departure of the passengers whose lives had been in his hands for the last hour and a half, while Will Garvie was oiling some of the joints of the iron horse.

John admitted that it was a fine day, and asked what was the noos.

“Nothing particular doing just now,” said Mr Sharp. “You’ve heard, I suppose, of the mad fellow who caused such a confusion among Miss Tipps’s Sunday-school children last night?”

“Oh yes, I heard o’ that.”

“And did you hear that he turns out to be the man who jumped out of your train on the day of the attempted robbery?”

“Yes, I’ve heard o’ that too. They haven’t got him yet, I believe?”

“No, not yet; but I think we shall have him soon,” said Mr Sharp with a knowing glance; “I’ve heard rumours that lead me to think it would not be very surprising if we were to see him hanging about this station to-day or to-morrow. I’ve got a sort of decoy-duck to attract him,” continued Mr Sharp, chuckling, “in the shape of a retired East India doctor, who agrees to hang about on the condition that we keep a sharp eye on him and guard him well from any sudden attack.”

“You don’t mean *that*?” said the engine-driver in an earnest undertone.

Instead of replying, the superintendent suddenly left him and sauntered leisurely along the platform, with his eyes cast down and softly humming a popular air.

The act was so brusque and unlike Mr Sharp’s naturally polite character that John knew at once, as he said, that “something was up,” and looked earnestly along the platform, where he saw Thomson himself walking smartly about as if in search of some one. He carried a

heavy-headed stick in his hand and looked excited; but not much more so than an anxious or late passenger might be.

Mr Sharp went straight towards the madman—still sauntering with his head down, however; and John Marrot could see that another man, whom he knew to be a detective, was walking round by the side of the platform, with the evident intention of taking him in rear. The moment Thomson set eyes on the superintendent he recognised him, and apparently divined his object in approaching, for he started, clenched his teeth, and grasped his stick. Mr Sharp instantly abandoned all attempt at concealment and ran straight at him. Thomson, probably deeming discretion the better part of valour, turned and fled. He almost ran into the arms of the detective, who now made sure of him, but he doubled like a hare and sprang off the platform on to the rails. Here one or two of the men who were engaged in washing or otherwise looking after empty carriages, seeing what was going on, at once sought to intercept the madman, but he evaded two or three, knocked down another, and, finding himself alongside of a detached engine which stood there with steam up ready to be coupled to its train, he leaped upon it, felled the driver who was outside the rail, oiling some of the machinery, seized the handle of the regulator and turned on full steam.

The driving-wheels revolved at first with such tremendous rapidity that they failed to “bite” and merely slipped on the rails. Thomson was engineer enough to understand why, and at once cut off part of the steam. Next moment he shot out of the station, and, again letting on full steam, rushed along the line like an arrow!

It chanced that the passenger-superintendent was on the platform at the time. That gentleman had everything connected with the traffic by heart. He saw that the points had been so set as to turn the run-away engine on to the down line, and in his mind's eye saw a monster excursion train, which had started just a few minutes before, labouring slowly forward, which the light engine would soon overtake. A collision in a few minutes would be certain. In peculiar circumstances men are bound to break through all rules and regulations, and act in a peculiar way. Without a moment's hesitation he ran to John Marrot and said in an earnest hurried voice—

“Give chase, John! cross over to the up-line, but don't go too far.”

“All right, sir,” said John, laying his hand on the regulator.

Even while the superintendent was speaking Will Garvie's swift mind had appreciated the idea. He had leaped down and uncoupled the *Lightning* from its train. John touched the whistle, let on steam and off they went crossed to the up-line (which was the wrong line of rails for any engine to run in *that* direction), and away he went at forty, fifty, seventy miles an hour! John knew well that he was flying towards a passenger-train, which was running towards him at probably thirty-five or forty miles an hour. He was aware of its whereabouts at that time, for he consulted his watch and had the time-table by heart. A collision with it would involve the accumulated momentum of more than a hundred miles an hour! The time was short, but it was sufficient; he therefore urged Will to coal the furnace until it glowed with fervent heat and opened the steam valve to the uttermost. Never since John Marrot had driven it had the *Lightning* so nearly resembled its namesake. The pace was increased to seventy-five and eighty miles an hour. It was awful.

Objects flew past with flashing speed. The clatter of the engine was deafening. A stern chase is proverbially a long one; but in this case, at such a speed, it was short. In less than fifteen minutes John came in view of the fugitive—also going at full speed, but, not being so powerful an engine and not being properly managed as to the fire, it did not go so fast; its pace might have been forty or forty-five miles an hour.

“Will,” shouted John in the ear of his stalwart fireman, “you’ll have to be sharp about it. It won’t do, lad, to jump into the arms of a madman with a fire-shovel in his hand. W’en I takes a shot at ‘im with a lump of coal, then’s yer chance—go in an’ win, lad—and, whatever—ye do, keep cool.”

Will did not open his compressed lips, but nodded his head in reply.

“You’ll have to do it all alone, Bill; I can’t leave the engine,” shouted John.

He looked anxiously into his mate’s face, and felt relieved to observe a little smile curl slightly the corners of his mouth.

Another moment and the *Lightning* was up with the tender of the run-away, and John cut off steam for a brief space to equalise the speed. Thomson at that instant observed for the first time that he was pursued. He looked back with a horrible glare, and then, uttering a fierce cheer or yell, tugged at the steam handle to increase the speed, but it was open to the utmost. He attempted to heap coals on the fire, but being inexpert, failed to increase the heat. Another second and they were abreast John Marrot opened the whistle and let it blow continuously, for he was by that time drawing fearfully near to the train that he knew was approaching.

Seeing that escape was impossible, Thomson would have thrown the engine off the rails if that had been possible, but, as it was not, he brandished the fire-shovel and stood at the opening between the engine and tender, with an expression of fiendish rage on his countenance that words cannot describe.

“Now, Bill, look out!” said John.

Will stood like a tiger ready to spring. John beside him, with a huge mass of coal in one hand concealed behind his back. There was a space of little more than two feet between the engines. To leap that in the face of a madman seemed impossible.

Suddenly John Marrot hurled the mass of coal with all his might. His aim was to hit Thomson on the head, but it struck low, hitting him on the chest, and driving him down on the foot-plate. At the same instant Will Garvie bounded across and shut off the steam in an instant. He turned then to the brake-wheel, but, before he could apply it, Thomson had risen and grappled with him. Still, as the two strong men swayed to and fro in a deadly conflict, Will’s hand, that chanced at the moment to be nearest the brake-wheel, was seen ever and anon to give it a slight turn.

Thus much John Marrot observed when he saw a puff of white steam on the horizon far ahead of him. To reverse the engine and turn full steam on was the work of two seconds. Fire flew in showers from the wheels, and the engine trembled with the violent friction, nevertheless it still ran on for a considerable way, and the approaching train was within a comparatively short distance of him before he had got the *Lightning* to run backwards. It was not until he had got up speed to nigh forty miles an hour that he felt safe, looked back

with a grim smile and breathed freely. Of course the driver of the passenger-train, seeing an engine on the wrong line ahead, had also reversed at full speed and thus prevented a collision, which would inevitably have been very disastrous.

John now ran back to the crossing, and, getting once more on the down line, again reversed his engine and ran cautiously back in the direction of the run-away locomotive. He soon came in sight of it, reversed again, and went at such a pace as allowed it to overtake him gradually. He saw that the steam was still cut off, and that it had advanced that length in consequence of being on an incline, but was somewhat alarmed to receive no signal from his mate. The moment the buffers of the *Lightning* touched those of the other engine's tender he applied the brakes and brought both engines to a stand. Then, leaping off, he ran to see how it had fared with Will Garvie.

The scene that met his eyes was a very ghastly one. On the floor-plate lay the two men, insensible and covered with blood and coal-dust. Each grasped the other by the throat but Will had gained an advantage from having no neckcloth on, while his own strong hand was twisted into that of his adversary so firmly, that the madman's eyes were almost starting out of their sockets. John Marrot at once cut the 'kerchief with his clasp-knife, and then, feeling that there was urgent need for haste, left them lying there, ran back to his own engine, coupled it to the other, turned on full steam, and, in a short space of time, ran into Clatterby station.

Here the men were at once removed to the waiting-room, and a doctor—who chanced to be Dr Noble—was called in. It was found that although much bruised and cut as well as exhausted by their conflict, neither Will nor Thomson were seriously injured. After a few restoratives had been applied, the former was conveyed home in a cab, while the latter, under the charge of Mr Sharp and one of his men, was carried off and safely lodged in an asylum.

CHAPTER TWENTY

A Nest "Harried."

Having thus seen one criminal disposed of, Mr Sharp returned to his office to take measures for the arrest of a few more of the same class.

Since we last met with our superintendent, he had not led an idle life by any means. A brief reference to some of his recent doings will be an appropriate introduction to the little entertainment which he had provided for himself and his men on that particular evening.

One day he had been informed that wine and spirits had been disappearing unaccountably at a particular station. He visited the place with one of his men, spent the night under a tarpaulin in a goods-shed, and found that one of the plate-layers was in the habit of drawing off spirits with a syphon. The guilty man was handed over to justice, and honest men, who had felt uneasy lest they should be suspected, were relieved.

On another occasion he was sent to investigate a claim made by a man who was in the accident at Langrye Station. This man, who was an auctioneer, had not been hurt at all—only a little skin taken off his nose,—but our fop with the check trousers advised him to make a job of it, and said that he himself and his friend had intended to make a claim, only they had another and more important game in hand, which rendered it advisable for them to keep quiet. This was just before the attack made on Mr Lee in the train between Clatterby and London. The auctioneer had not thought of such a way of raising money, but jumped readily at the idea; went to Glasgow and Dundee, where he consulted doctors—showed them his broken nose, coughed harshly in their ears, complained of nervous affections, pains in the back, loins, and head, and, pricking his gums slightly, spit blood for their edification; spoke of internal injuries, and shook his head lugubriously. Doctors, unlike lawyers, are not constantly on the watch for impostors. The man's peeled and swelled nose was an obvious fact; his other ailments might, or might not, be serious, so they prescribed, condoled with him, charged him nothing, and dismissed him with a hope of speedy cure. Thereafter the auctioneer went down the Clyde to recruit his injured health, and did a little in the way of business, just to keep up his spirits, poor fellow! After that he visited Aberdeen for similar purposes, and then sent in a claim of 150 pounds damages against the Grand National Trunk Railway.

Mr Sharp's first proceeding was to visit the doctors to whom the auctioneer had applied, then he visited the various watering-places whither the man had gone to recruit and ascertained every particular regarding his proceedings. Finally, he went to the north of Scotland to see the interesting invalid himself. He saw and heard him, first, in an auction-room, where he went through a hard day's work even for a healthy man; then he visited him in his hotel and found him, the picture of ruddy health, drinking whisky punch. On stating that he was an agent of the railway company, and had called to have some conversation regarding his claim, some of the auctioneer's ruddy colour fled, but being a bold man, he assumed a candid air and willingly answered all questions; admitted that he was better, but said that he had lost much time; had for a long period been unable to attend

to his professional duties, and still suffered much from internal injuries. Mr Sharp expressed sympathy with him; said that the case, as he put it, was indeed a hard one, and begged of him to put his statement of it down on paper. The auctioneer complied, and thought Mr Sharp a rather benignant railway official. When he had signed his name to the paper, his visitor took it up and said, "Now, Mr Blank, this is all lies from beginning to end. I have traced your history step by step, down to the present time, visited all the places you have been to, conversed with the waiters of the hotels where you put up, have heard you to-day go through as good a day's work as any strong man could desire to do, and have seen you finish up, with a stiff glass of whisky toddy, which I am very sorry to have interrupted. Now, sir, this is very like an effort to obtain money under false pretences, and, if you don't know what that leads to, you are in a very fair way to find out. The Company which I have the honour to represent, however, is generous. We know that you were in the Langrye accident, for I saw you there, and in consideration of the injury to your nerves and the damage to your proboscis, we are willing to give you a five-pound note as a sort of sticking-plaster at once to your nose and your feelings. If you accept that, good; if not you shall take the consequences of *this!*" The superintendent here held up the written statement playfully, and placed it in his pocket-book. The auctioneer was a wise, if not an honest, man. He thankfully accepted the five pounds, and invited Mr Sharp to join him in a tumbler, which, however, the superintendent politely declined.

But this was a small matter compared with another case which Mr Sharp had just been engaged investigating. It was as follows:—

One afternoon a slight accident occurred on the line by which several passengers received trifling injuries. At the time only two people made claim for compensation, one for a few shillings, the other for a few pounds. These cases were at once investigated and settled, and it was thought that there the matter ended. Six months afterwards, however, the company received a letter from the solicitors of a gentleman whose hat it was said, had been driven down on the bridge of his nose, and had abraded the skin; the slight wound had turned into an ulcer, which ultimately assumed the form of permanent cancer. In consequence of this the gentleman had consulted one doctor in Paris and another in Rome, and had been obliged to undergo an operation—for all of which he claimed compensation to the extent of 5000 pounds. The company being quite unable to tell whether this gentleman was in the accident referred to or not, an investigation was set on foot, in which Mr Sharp bore his part. At great expense official persons were sent to Paris and to Rome to see the doctors said to have been consulted, and in the end—nearly two years after the accident—the Company was found liable for the 5000 pounds!

While we are on this subject of compensation, it may not be uninteresting to relate a few curious cases, which will give some idea of the manner in which railway companies are squeezed for damages—sometimes unjustly, and too often fraudulently. On one occasion, a man who said he had been in an accident on one of our large railways, claimed 1000 pounds. In this case the company was fortunately able to prove a conspiracy to defraud, and thus escaped; but in many instances the companies are defeated in fraudulent claims, and there is no redress. The feelings of the juries who try the cases are worked on; patients are brought into Court exhibiting every symptom of hopeless malady, but these same patients not unfrequently possess quite miraculous powers of swift recovery, from what had been styled "incurable damage." One man received 6000 pounds on the supposition

that he had been permanently disabled, and within a short period he was attending to his business as well as ever. A youth with a salary of 60 pounds a year claimed and got 1200 pounds on the ground of incurable injury—in other words he was pensioned for life to the extent of 60 pounds a year—and, a year afterwards, it was ascertained that he was “dancing at balls,” and had joined his father in business as if there was nothing the matter with him.

A barmaid who, it was said, received “injuries to the spine of a permanent character,” was paid a sum of 1000 pounds as—we were about to write—compensation, but *consolation* would be the more appropriate term, seeing that she had little or nothing to be compensated for, as she was found capable of “dancing at the Licensed Victuallers’ Ball” soon after the accident and eventually she married! To oblige railways to compensate for loss of time, or property, or health, *to a limited extent*, seems reasonable, but to compel them to pension off people who have suffered little or nothing, with snug little annuities of 50 pounds or 60 pounds, does really seem to be a little too hard; at least so it appears to be in the eyes of one who happens to have no interest whatever in railways, save that general interest in their immense value to the land, and their inestimable comforts in the matter of locomotion.

The whole subject of compensation stands at present on a false footing. For the comfort of those who wish well to railways, and love justice, we may add in conclusion, that proposals as to modifications have already been mooted and brought before Government, so that in all probability, ere long, impostors will receive a snubbing, and shareholders will receive increased dividends!

But let us return to Mr Sharp. Having, as we have said, gone to his office, he found his faithful servant Blunt there.

“Why, Blunt,” he said, sitting down at the table and tearing open a few letters that awaited him, “what a good-looking *porter* you make!”

“So my wife says, sir,” replied Blunt with a perfectly grave face, but with a twinkle in his eye.

“She must be a discriminating woman, Blunt. Well, what news have you to-night? You seemed to think you had found out the thieves at Gorton Station the last time we met.”

“So I have, sir, and there are more implicated than we had expected. The place is a perfect nest of them.”

“Not an uncommon state of things,” observed Mr Sharp, “for it is well-known that one black sheep spoils a flock. We must weed them all out, Blunt, and get our garden into as tidy a condition as possible; it is beginning to do us credit already, but that Gorton Station has remained too long in a bad state; we must harrow it up a little. Well, let’s hear what you have found out. They never suspected you, I suppose?”

“Never had the least suspicion,” replied Blunt with a slight approach to a smile. “I’ve lived with ‘em, now, for a considerable time, and the general opinion of ‘em about me is that I’m a decent enough fellow, but too slow and stupid to be trusted, so they have not, up to this time, thought me worthy of being made a confidant. However, that didn’t matter much, ‘cause I managed to get round one o’ their wives at last, and she let out the whole

affair—in strict confidence, of course, and as a dead secret!

“In fact I have just come from a long and interesting conversation with her. She told me that all the men at the station, with one or two exceptions, were engaged in it, and showed me two of the missing bales of cloth—the cloth, you remember, sir, of which there was such a large quantity stolen four weeks ago, and for which the company has had to pay. I find that the chief signalman, Davis, is as bad as the rest. It was his wife that gave me the information in a moment of over-confidence.”

“Indeed!” exclaimed Sharp, in some surprise; “and what of Sam Natly and Garvie?”

“They’re both of ‘em innocent, sir,” said Blunt. “I did suspect ‘em at one time, but I have seen and heard enough to convince me that they have no hand in the business. Natly has been goin’ about the station a good deal of late, because the wife of one of the men is a friend of his wife, and used to go up to nurse her sometimes when she was ill. As to Garvie, of course he knows as well as everybody else that some of the men there must be thieves, else goods would not disappear from that station as they do, but *his* frequent visits there are for the purpose of reclaiming Davis, who, it seems, is an old playmate of his.”

“Reclaiming Davis!” exclaimed Sharp.

“Yes, an’ it’s my opinion that it’ll take a cleverer fellow than him to reclaim Davis, for he’s one of the worst of the lot; but Garvie is real earnest. I chanced to get behind a hedge one day when they were together, and overheard ‘em talkin’ about these robberies and other matters, and you would have thought, sir, that the fireman was a regular divine. He could quote Scripture quite in a stunnin’ way, sir; an’ *did* seem badly cut up when his friend told him that it was of no use talkin’, for it was too late for *him* to mend.”

“Has Garvie, then, been aware all this time that Davis is one of the thieves, and kept it secret?” asked Sharp.

“No, sir,” replied Blunt. “Davis denied that he had any hand in the robberies when Garvie asked him. It was about drink that he was pleadin’ with him so hard. You know we have suspected him of that too, of late; but from what I heard he must be a regular toper. Garvie was tryin’ to persuade him to become a total abstainer. Says he to him, ‘You know, Davis, that whatever may be true as to the general question of abstaining from strong drink, *your* only chance of bein’ delivered lies in total abstinence, because the thing has become a *disease*. I know and believe that Christianity would save you from the power of drink, but, depend upon it, that it would do so in the way of inducin’ you of your own free will to “touch not, taste not, handle not, that which” *you* “will perish by the using.”’ Seems to me as if there was something in that, sir?” said Blunt, inquiringly.

Sharp nodded assent.

“Then Garvie does not suspect him of being connected with the robberies?” he asked.

“No,” replied Blunt; “but he’s a deep file is Davis, and could throw a sharper man than Garvie off the scent.”

After a little further conversation on the subject Mr Sharp dismissed the pretended porter to his station, and called upon the superintendent of the police force of Clatterby, from whom he received an addition to his force of men.

That night he led his men to Gorton station, and when he thought a suitable hour had arrived, he caused them to surround the block of buildings in which the men of the station resided. Then, placing Blunt and two or three men in front of Davis's house, he went up to the door alone and knocked.

Mrs Davis opened it. She gave the least possible start on observing by the light of her lobby lamp who her visitor was—for she knew him well. Mr Sharp took note of the start!

“Good—evening, Mrs Davis,” he said.

“Good—evening, sir; this is an unexpected pleasure, Mr Sharp.”

“Most of my visits are unexpected, Mrs Davis, but it is only my friends who count them a pleasure. Is your husband within?”

“He is, sir; pray, walk this way; I'm sure he will be delighted to see you. Can you stay to supper with us? we are just going to have it.”

“No, thank you, Mrs Davis, I'm out on duty to-night,” said Sharp, entering the parlour, where Davis was engaged in reading the newspaper. “Good—evening, Mr Davis.”

Davis rose with a start. Mr Sharp took note of that also.

“Good—evening, Mr Sharp,” he said; “sit down, sir; sit down.”

“Thank you, I can't sit down. I'm on duty just now. The fact is, Mr Davis, that I am come to make a search among your men, for we have obtained reliable information as to who are the thieves at this station. As, no doubt, *some* of the men are honest, and might feel hurt at having their houses searched, I have thought that the best way to prevent any unpleasant feeling is to begin at the top of the free and go downwards. They can't say that I have made fish of one and flesh of another, if I begin, as a mere matter of form, Mr Davis, with yourself.”

“Oh, certainly—certainly, Mr Sharp, by all means,” replied Davis.

He spoke with an air of candour, but it was quite evident that he was ill at ease.

Calling in one of his men, Mr Sharp began a rigorous search of the house forthwith. Mr Davis suggested that he would go out and see that the men were in their residences; but Mr Sharp said that there was no occasion for that, and that he would be obliged by his remaining and assisting in the search of his own house.

Every hole and corner of the ground-floor was examined without any discovery being made. Mrs Davis, observing that her visitors were particular in collecting every shred of cloth that came in their way, suddenly asked if it was cloth they were in search of. Mr Sharp thought the question and the tone in which it was put told of a guilty conscience, but he replied that he was in search of many things—cloth included.

Immediately after, and while they were busy with a dark closet, Mrs Davis slipped quietly out of the room. Mr Sharp was stooping at the time with his back towards her, but the two back buttons of his coat must have been eyes, for he observed the movement and at once followed her, having previously ordered Mr Davis to move a heavy chest of drawers, in order to keep him employed. Taking off his shoes he went up—stairs rapidly, and seeing an open door, peeped in.

There he saw a sight that would have surprised any man except a superintendent of police. Mrs Davis was engaged in throwing bales of cloth over the window with the energy of a coal-heaver and the haste of one whose house is on fire! The poor woman was not robust, yet the easy way in which she handled those bales was quite marvellous.

Being a cool and patient man, Sharp allowed her to toss over five bales before interrupting her. When she was moving across the room with the sixth and last he entered. She stopped, turned pale, and dropped the bale of cloth.

“You seem to be very busy to-night Mrs Davis” he observed, inquiringly; “can I assist you?”

“Oh, Mr Sharp!” exclaimed Mrs Davis, covering her face with her hands.

She could say no more.

Mr Sharp took her gently by the arm and led her down-stairs. They reached the room below just in time to see Blunt enter, holding the ejected bales with both arms to his bosom. Blunt had happened to take his stand just underneath the window of Mrs Davis’s bedroom, and when that energetic woman tossed the bales out she pitched them straight into Blunt’s willing arms. The accommodating man waited until he had received all that appeared likely to be delivered to him, and then with a quiet chuckle bore them, as we have seen, into Davis’s parlour.

“This is a bad business, Davis,” said Sharp, as he slipped a pair of manacles on his prisoner.

Davis made no reply. He was very pale, but looked defiant. Mrs Davis sat down on a chair and sobbed.

Leaving them in charge of Blunt, Mr Sharp then paid a visit to all the men of the place, and ere long succeeded in capturing all who had been engaged in the recent robberies, with the various proofs of their guilt—in the shape of cloth, loaves of sugar, fruit, boxes of tea, etcetera, in their apartments.

It had cost Mr Sharp and his men many weary hours of waiting and investigation, but their perseverance was at length well rewarded, for the “nest” was thoroughly “harried;” the men were dismissed and variously punished, and that portion of the Grand National Trunk Railway was, for the time, most effectually purified.

CHAPTER TWENTY ONE

The Diamond Ring and the Railway Clearing-house

Let us turn now, for a brief space, to Edwin Gurwood. He is seated before a desk in one of the rooms of that large building in Seymour Street, Euston Square, London, where a perfect army of clerks—about a thousand—clear up many of the mysteries, and overcome a number of the difficulties, incident to the railway traffic of the kingdom.

At the particular time we write of, Edwin was frowning very hard at a business-book and thinking of Emma Lee. The cause of his frown, no doubt, was owing to the conflict between duty and inclination that happened to rage in his bosom just then. His time belonged to the railways of the United Kingdom; to Emma belonged his heart. The latter was absent without leave, and the mind, thus basely forsaken, became distracted, and refused to make good use of time.

That day Edwin met with a coincidence, he made what he believed to be a discovery, and almost at the same moment received an inquiry as to the subject of that discovery. While endeavouring, without much success, to fix his attention on a case of lost-luggage which it was his duty to investigate, and frowning as we have said, at the business-book, his eye was suddenly arrested by the name of “Durby.”

“Durby!” he muttered. “Surely that name is familiar? Durby! why, yes— that’s the name of Tipps’s old nurse.”

Reading on, he found that the name of Durby was connected with a diamond ring.

“Well, now, that *is* strange!” he muttered to himself. “At the first glance I thought that this must be the brown paper parcel that I made inquiry about at the station of the Grand National Trunk Railway long ago, but the diamond ring puts that out of the question. No nurse, in her senses, would travel with a diamond ring tied up in a brown paper parcel the size of her head.”

We may remind the reader here that, when the brown paper parcel was found and carried to the lost-luggage office of one of our western railways, a note of its valuable contents was sent to the Clearing-House in London. This was recorded in a book. As all inquiries after lost property, wheresoever made throughout the kingdom, are also forwarded to the Clearing-House, it follows that the notes of losses and notes of inquiries meet, and thus the lost and the losers are brought together and re-united with a facility that would be impracticable without such a central agency. In the case of our diamond ring, however, no proper inquiry had been made, consequently there was only the loss recorded on the books of the Clearing-House.

While Edwin was pondering this matter, a note was put into his hands by a junior clerk. It contained an inquiry after a diamond ring which had been wrapped up in a large brown paper parcel, with the name Durby written on it in pencil, and was lost many months before between Clatterby and London. The note further set forth, that the ring was the

property of Mrs Tipps of Eden Villa, and enclosed from that lady a minute description of the ring. It was signed James Noble, M.D.

“Wonderful!” exclaimed Edwin. “The most singular coincidence I ever experienced.”

Having thus delivered himself, he took the necessary steps to have the ring sent to London, and obtained leave (being an intimate friend of the Tipps family) to run down by train and deliver it.

While he is away on this errand, we will take the opportunity of mounting his stool and jotting down a few particulars about the Clearing–House, which are worth knowing, for that establishment is not only an invaluable means of effecting such happy re–unions of the lost and the losers, as we have referred to, but is, in many other ways, one of the most important institutions in the kingdom.

The Railway Clearing–House is so named, we presume, because it clears up railway accounts that would, but for its intervention, become inextricably confused, and because it enables all the different lines in the country to interchange facilities for through–booking traffic, and clears up their respective accounts in reference to the same.

Something of the use and value of the Clearing–House may be shown at a glance, by explaining that, before the great schemes of amalgamation which have now been carried out, each railway company booked passengers and goods only as far as its own rails went, and at this point fresh tickets had to be taken out and carriages changed, with all the disagreeable accompaniments and delays of shifting luggage, etcetera. Before through–booking was introduced, a traveller between London and Inverness was compelled to renew his ticket and change luggage four times; between Darlington and Cardiff six times. In some journeys no fewer than nine or ten changes were necessary! This, as traffic increased, of course became intolerable, and it is quite certain that the present extent of passenger and goods traffic could never have been attained if the old system had continued. It was felt to be absolutely necessary that not only passengers, but carriages and goods, must be passed over as many lines as possible, at straight “through” to their destinations, with no needless delays, and without “breaking bulk.” But how was this to be accomplished? There were difficulties in the way of through–booking which do not appear at first sight. When, for instance, a traveller goes from London to Edinburgh by the East Coast route, he passes over three different railways of unequal length, or mileage. The Great Northern furnishes his ticket, and gives him station accommodation besides providing his carriage, while the North–Eastern and North British permit him to run over their lines; and the latter also furnishes station accommodation, and collects his ticket. To ascertain precisely how much of that traveller’s fare is due to each company involves a careful and nice calculation. Besides this, the *whole* fare is paid to the Great Northern, and it would be unjust to expect that that company should be saddled with the trouble of making the calculation, and the expense of remitting its share to each of the other companies. So, too, with goods—one company furnishing the waggon and tarpaulin, besides undertaking the trouble of loading and furnishing station–accommodation and the use of its line, while, it may be, several other companies give the use of their lines only, and that to a variable extent. In addition to all this, the company providing its carriages or waggons is entitled to “demurrage” for every day beyond a certain time that these are detained by the companies to which they do not belong.

Now, if all this be unavoidable even in the case of a single fare, or a small parcel, it must be self-evident that in lines where the interchange of through-traffic is great and constant, it would have been all but impossible for the railway companies to manage their business, and the system would have given rise to endless disputes.

In order to settle accounts of this description, it was soon seen to be absolutely necessary that some sort of arrangement must be come to, and, accordingly, the idea of a central office was conceived, and a system established without delay, which, for minute detail and comprehensive grasp, is unrivalled by any other institution. At first only a few of the railway companies united in establishing the Clearing-House in 1842, but by degrees, as its immense value became known, other companies joined, and it now embraces all the leading companies in the kingdom. It is said to be not inferior to the War Office, Colonial Office, and Admiralty in regard to the amount of work it gets through in a year! Its accounts amount to some twelve millions sterling, yet they always must, and do, balance to a fraction of a farthing. There must never be a surplus, and never a deficiency, in its funds, for it can make no profits, being simply a thoroughly honest and disinterested and perfectly correct go-between, which adjusts the mutual obligations of railways in a quick and economical manner. Its accounts are balanced every month, and every pound, shilling, and penny can be accounted for. It annually receives and dispenses a revenue greater than that of many European kingdoms. In 1847 its gross receipts were only 793,701 pounds. In 1868 they had risen to above eleven millions.

Each line connected with the Clearing-House has a representative on the committee to look after its interests, and bears its proportion of the expenses of the establishment.

Before showing the manner in which the work is performed for the railway companies, it may be well to premise that one great good which the Clearing-House system does to the public, is to enable them to travel everywhere with as much facility as if there were only one railway and one company in the kingdom.

To avoid going too much into detail, we may say, briefly, that in regard to goods, statements of through-traffic *despatched* are sent daily from thousands of stations to the Clearing-House, also separate statements of through-traffic *received*. These are compared. Of those that are found to agree, each company is debited or credited, as the case may be, with the proportion due to or by it. Where discrepancies occur, correspondence ensues until the thing is cleared up, and then the distribution to the accounts of the several companies takes place. As discrepancies are numerous and constant, correspondence is necessarily great. So minutely correct and particular are they at the Clearing-House, that a shilling is sometimes divided between four companies. Even a penny is deemed worthy of being debited to one company and credited to another!

As it is with goods, so is it with passengers. Through-tickets are sent from all the stations to the Clearing-House, where they are examined and compared with the returns of the tickets issued, and then sent back to their respective companies. As these tickets amount to many thousands a day, some idea may be formed of the amount of labour bestowed on the examination of them. The proportions of each ticket due to each company are then credited, and statements of the same made out and forwarded to the several companies daily. From the two sets of returns forwarded to the Clearing-House, statements of the debit and credit balances are made out weekly.

Parcels are treated much in the same way as the goods.

“Mileage” is a branch of the service which requires a separate staff of men. There are hundreds of thousands of waggons, loaded and empty, constantly running to and fro, day and night, on various lines, to which they do not belong. Each individual wagon must be traced and accounted for to the Clearing–House, from its start to its arrival and back again; and not only waggons, but even the individual tarpaulins that cover them are watched and noted in this way, in order that the various companies over whose lines they pass may get their due, and that the companies owning them may get their demurrage if they be improperly detained on the way. For this purpose, at every point where separate railways join, there are stationed men in the pay of the Clearing–House, whose duty it is to take the numbers of all passenger carriages and goods, waggons and tarpaulins, and make a *daily* statement of the same to the Clearing–House.

As daily returns of all “foreign” carriages arriving and departing from all Clearing–House stations are forwarded to the same office, they are thus in a position to check the traffic, detect discrepancies, and finally make the proper entries as to mileage and demurrage in the accounts of the respective companies. Frequently the charge of one–tenth of a penny per mile for a tarpaulin is divided among several companies in various proportions. For a wagon or carriage from Edinburgh to London, mileage and demurrage accounts are sent out by the Clearing–House to four companies. Formerly, before demurrage was introduced, carriages were frequently detained on lines to which they did not belong, for weeks, and even months, until sometimes they were lost sight of altogether!

Once a month the balances are struck, and the various railways, instead of having to pay enormous sums to each other, obtain settlement by means of comparatively small balances.

For example, the London and North–Western railway sends its through passengers over the Caledonian line. The mileage charged for its “foreign” carriages is three farthings per mile. Small though that sum is, it amounts at the end of a month perhaps to 5000 pounds. This little bill is sent to the Clearing–House by the Caledonian against the London and North–Western. But during the same period the latter company has been running up a somewhat similar bill against the former company. Both accounts are sent in to the Clearing–House. They amount together to perhaps some fifteen or twenty thousand pounds, yet when one is set off against the other a ten or twenty pound note may be all that is required to change hands in order to balance the accounts.

The total mileage of lines under the jurisdiction of the Clearing–House, and over which it exercises complete surveillance on every train that passes up or down night or day, as far as regulating the various interests of the companies is concerned, amounts to more than 14,000. The *Times*, at the conclusion of a very interesting article on this subject, says, —“Our whole railway system would be as nothing without the Clearing–House, which affords another illustration of the great truth that the British railway public is the best served railway public in the world, and, on the whole, the least grateful.” We hope and incline to believe that in the latter remark, the great Thunderer is wrong, and that it is only a small, narrow–minded, and ignorant section of the public which is ungrateful.

Disputed claims between railways are referred to the arbitration of the committee of the

Clearing–House, from whose decision there is no appeal.

The trouble taken in connexion with the lost–luggage department is very great; written communications being sent to almost innumerable stations on various lines of rails for every inquiry that is made to the House after lost–luggage.

It is a striking commentary at once on the vast extent of traffic in the kingdom, and the great value in one important direction of this establishment, the fact that, in one year, the number of articles accounted for to the Clearing–House by stations as left by passengers, either on the platforms or in carriages, amounted to 156,769 trunks, bags and parcels, and of these nearly ninety–five in every hundred were restored, through the Clearing–House, to their owners. It is probable that the property thus restored would amount to half a million of money.

This reminds us that we left Edwin Gurwood on his way to restore Mrs Tipps her lost ring, and that, therefore, it is our duty to resume the thread of our story, with, of course, a humble apology to the patient reader for having again given way to our irresistible tendency to digress!

CHAPTER TWENTY TWO

Mrs. Tipps Goes on a Journey, and Meets a Gentleman Who, With Much Assurance, Comments Freely on Insurance

On a particular holiday, it was advertised that a great excursion train would start from the Clatterby station at a certain hour. At the appointed time the long line of carriages was pushed up to the platform by our friend John Marrot, who was appointed that day to drive the train.

“Bill,” remarked John to his mate, “it’ll be a biggish train. There’s an uncommon lot o’ people on the platform.”

“They’re pretty thick,” replied Will Garvie, wiping his countenance with a piece of waste, which, while it removed the perspiration, left behind a good deal of oil, and streaked his nose with coal-dust. But Will was not particular!

The excursionists were indeed unusually numerous. It chanced to be a fine day, and the platform was densely crowded with human beings, many of whom moved, when movement was possible, in groups, showing that there were various sections that had a common aim and interest, and meant to keep together as much as possible. There were men there who had evidently made up their minds to a thoroughly enjoyable day, and women whose aspect was careworn but cheerful, to whom a holiday was probably a memorable event in the year. Of young people there was of course a considerable sprinkling, and amongst the crowd could be seen a number of individuals whose amused expression of countenance and general aspect bespoke them ordinary travellers, who meant to avail themselves of a “cheap train.” All classes and conditions of men, women, and children were hustling each other in a state of great excitement; but the preponderating class was that which is familiarly though not very respectfully styled “the masses.”

Mrs Marrot was there too—much against her will—and little Gertie. A sister of the former, who lived about twenty miles from Clatterby, had, a short time before, made her husband a present of a fine fat pugilistic boy, and Mrs M felt constrained to pay her a visit.

John was on the look-out for his wife and child, so was Will Garvie. The former waved a piece of cotton-waste to her when she arrived; she caught sight of him and gave him a cheerful nod in reply; and an unexpressed blessing on his weather-beaten face arose in her heart as Garvie pushed through the crowd and conducted her and Gertie to a carriage.

Timid little Mrs Tipps was also there. It is probable that no power on earth, save that of physical force, could have induced Mrs Tipps to enter an excursion train, for which above all other sorts of trains she entertained a species of solemn horror. But the excitement consequent on the unexpected recovery of the diamond ring, and the still more unexpected accession of wealth consequent thereon, had induced her to smother her dislike to railways for a time, and avail herself of their services in order to run down to a town about twenty miles off for the purpose of telling the good news to Netta, who chanced to be on a short

visit to a friend there at the time. When Mrs Tipps reached the station, her ignorance of railway matters, and the confused mental state which was her normal condition, prevented her from observing that the train was an excursion one. She therefore took out a first-class ticket and also an insurance ticket for 500 pounds, for which latter she paid sixpence! Her ignorance and perturbation also prevented her from observing that this rate of insurance was considerably higher than she was accustomed to pay, owing to the fact of the train being an excursion one. If she had been going by an ordinary train, she could have insured 1000 pounds, first-class, for 3 pence; half that sum, second-class, for 2 pence; and 200 pounds, third-class, for the ridiculously small sum of one penny!

Good Mrs Tipps held the opinion so firmly that accident was the usual, and all but inevitable, accompaniment of railway travelling, that she invariably insured her life when compelled to undertake a journey. It was of no avail that her son Joseph pointed out to her that accidents were in reality few and far between, and that they bore an excessively small proportion to the numbers of journeys undertaken annually; Mrs Tipps was not to be moved. In regard to that subject she had, to use one of her late husband's phrases, "nailed her colours to the mast," and could not haul them down even though she would. She therefore, when about to undertake a journey, invariably took out an insurance ticket, as we have said,—and this, solely with a view to Netta's future benefit.

We would not have it supposed that we object, here, to the principle of insuring against accident. On the contrary, we consider that principle to be a wise one, and, in some cases, one that becomes almost a duty.

When Mrs Tipps discovered that Mrs Marrot and Gertie were going by the same train, she was so much delighted at the unlooked-for companionship that she at once entered the third-class, where they sat, and began to make herself comfortable beside them, but presently recollecting that she had a first-class ticket she started up and insisted on Mrs Marrot and Gertie going first-class along with her, saying that she would pay the difference. Mrs Marrot remonstrated, but Mrs Tipps, strong in her natural liberality of spirit which had been rather wildly set free by her recent good fortune, would not be denied.

"You must come with me, Mrs Marrot," she said. "I'm so frightened in railways, you have no idea what a relief it is to me to have any one near me whom I know. I will change your tickets; let me have them, quick; we have no time to lose—there—now, wait till I return. Oh! I forgot your insurance tickets."

"W'y, bless you, ma'am, we never insures."

"You never insure!" exclaimed Mrs Tipps in amazement; "and it only costs you threepence for one thousand pounds."

"Well, I don't know nothink as to that—" said Mrs Marrot.

Before she could finish the sentence Mrs Tipps was gone.

She returned in breathless haste, beckoned Mrs Marrot and Gertie to follow her, and was finally hurried with them into a first-class carriage just as the train began to move.

Their only other companion in the carriage was a stout little old gentleman with a bright complexion, speaking eyes, and a countenance in which benevolence appeared to struggle

with enthusiasm for the mastery. He was obviously one of those men who delight in conversation, and he quickly took an opportunity of engaging in it. Observing that Mrs Tipps presented an insurance ticket to each of her companions, he said—

“I am glad to see, madam, that you are so prudent as to insure the lives of your friends.”

“I always insure my own life,” replied Mrs Tipps with a little smile, “and feel it incumbent on me at least to advise my friends to do the same.”

“Quite right, quite right, madam,” replied the enthusiastic little man, applying his handkerchief to his bald pate with such energy that it shone like a billiard ball, “quite right, madam. I only wish that the public at large were equally alive to the great value of insurance against accident. W’y, ma’am, it’s a duty, a positive duty,” (here he addressed himself to Mrs Marrot) “to insure one’s life against accident.”

“Oh la! sir, is it?” said Mrs Marrot, quite earnestly.

“Yes, it is. Why, look here—this is your child?”

He laid his hand gently on Gertie’s head.

“Yes, sir, she is.”

“Well, my good woman, suppose that you are a widow and are killed,” (Mrs Marrot looked as if she would rather not suppose anything of the sort), “what I ask, what becomes of your child?—Left a beggar; an absolute beggar!”

He looked quite triumphantly at Mrs Tipps and her companions, and waited a few seconds as if to allow the idea to exert its full force on them.

“But, sir,” observed Mrs Marrot meekly, “supposin’ that there do be an accident,” (she shivered a little), “that ticket won’t prevent me bein’ killed, you know?”

“No, ma’am, no; but it will prevent your sweet daughter from being left a beggar—that is, on the supposition that you are a widow.”

“W’ich I ain’t sir, I’m happy to say,” remarked Mrs Marrot; “but, sir, supposin’ we was both of us killed—”

She paused abruptly as if she had committed a sin in merely giving utterance to the idea.

“Why, then, your other children would get the 500 pounds—or your heirs, whoever they may be. It’s a splendid system that, of insurance against accident. Just look at *me*, now.” He spread out his hands and displayed himself, looking from one to the other as if he were holding up to admiration something rare and beautiful. “Just look at *me*. I’m off on a tour of three months through England, Scotland, and Ireland—not for my health, madam, as you may see—but for scientific purposes. Well, what do I do? I go to the Railway Passengers Assurance Company’s Office, 64 Cornhill, London, (I like to be particular, you see, as becomes one who professes to be an amateur student of the exact sciences), and I take out what they call a Short Term Policy of Insurance against accidents of all kinds for a thousand pounds—1000 pounds, observe—for which I pay the paltry sum of 30 shillings—1 pound, 10 shillings. Well, what then? Away I go, leaving behind me, with perfect indifference, a wife and two little boys. Remarkable little boys, madam, I assure you. Perfect marvels of health and intelligence, both of ‘em—two little boys, madam, which

have not been equalled since Cain and Abel were born. Every one says so, with the exception of a few of the cynical and jaundiced among men and women. And, pray, why am I so indifferent? Just because they are provided for. They have a moderately good income secured to them as it is, and the 1000 pounds which I have insured on my life will render it a competence in the event of my being killed. It will add 50 pounds a year to their income, which happens to be the turning-point of comfort. And what of myself? Why, with a perfectly easy conscience, I may go and do what I please. If I get drowned in Loch Katrine—what matter? If I break my neck in the Gap of Dunloe—what matter? If I get lost and frozen on the steep of Ben Nevis or Goatfell—what matter? If I am crushed to death in a railway accident, or get entangled in machinery and am torn to atoms—still I say, what matter? 1000 pounds must *at once* be paid down to my widow and children, and all because of the pitiful sum of 30 shillings.

“But suppose,” continued the enthusiastic man, deepening his tone as he became more earnest, “suppose that I am *not* killed, but only severely injured and mangled so as to be utterly unfit to attend to my worldly affairs—what then?”

Mrs Tipps shuddered to think of “what then.”

“Why,” continued the enthusiastic gentleman, “I shall in that case be allowed from the company 6 pounds a week, until recovered, or, in the event of my sinking under my injuries within three months after the accident, the whole sum of 1000 pounds will be paid to my family.”

Mrs Tipps smiled and nodded her head approvingly, but Mrs Marrot still looked dubious.

“But, sir,” she said, “supposin’ you don’t get either hurt or killed?”

“Why then,” replied the elderly gentleman, “I’m all right of course, and only 50 shillings out of pocket, which, you must admit, is but a trifling addition to the expenses of a three months’ tour. Besides, have I not had three months of an easy mind, and of utter regardlessness as to my life and limbs? Have not my wife and boys had three months of easy minds and indifference to my life and limbs also! Is not all that cheaply purchased at 30 shillings? while the sum itself, I have the satisfaction of knowing, goes to increase the funds of that excellent company which enables you and me and thousands of others to become so easy-minded and reckless, and which, at the same time, pays its fortunate shareholders a handsome dividend.”

“Really, sir,” said Mrs Tipps, laughing, “you talk so enthusiastically of this Insurance Company that I almost suspect you to be a director of it.”

“Madam,” replied the elderly gentleman with some severity, “if I *were* a director of it, which I grieve to say I am not, I should only be doing my simple duty to it and to you in thus urging it on your attention. But I am altogether uninterested in it, except as a philanthropist. I see and feel that it does good to myself and to my fellow-men, *therefore* I wish my fellow-men to appreciate it more highly than they do, for it not only insures against accident by railway, but against all kinds of accidents; while its arrangements are made to suit the convenience of the public in every possible way.”

“Why, madam,” he continued, kindling up again and polishing his head violently, “only think, for the small sum of 4 pounds paid annually, it insures that you shall have paid to

your family, if you chance to be killed, the sum of 1000 pounds, or, if not killed, 6 pounds a week while you are totally laid up, and 1 pound, 10 shillings a week while you are only partially disabled. And yet, would you believe it, many persons who see the value of this, and begin the wise course of insurance, go on for only a few years and then foolishly give it up—disappointed, I presume, that no accident has happened to them! See, here is one of their pamphlets!”

He pulled a paper out of his pocket energetically, and put on a pair of gold spectacles, *through* which he looked when consulting the pamphlet, and *over* which he glanced when observing the effect of what he read on Mrs Tipps.

“What do I find—eh? ha—yes—here it is—a Cornish auctioneer pushed back a window shutter—these are the very words, madam—what more he did to that shutter, or what it did to him, is not told, but he must have come by *some* damage, because he received 55 pounds. A London clerk got his eye injured by a hair-pin in his daughter’s hair—how suggestive that is, madam! what a picture it calls up of a wearied toil-worn man fondling his child of an evening—pressing his cheek to her fair head—and what a commentary it is (he became very stern here) on the use of such barbarous implements as hair-pins! I am not punning, madam; I am much too serious to pun; I should have used the word *savage* instead of *barbarous*.

“Now, what was the result? This company gave that clerk compensation to the extent of 26 pounds. Again, a medical practitioner fell through the floor of a room. It must have been a bad, as it certainly was a strange, fall—probably he was heavy and the floor decayed—at all events that fall procured him 120 pounds. A Cardiff agent was bathing his feet—why, we are not told, but imagination is not slow to comprehend the reason, when the severity of our climate is taken into account; he broke the foot-pan—a much less comprehensible thing—and the breaking of that foot-pan did him damage, for which he was compensated with 52 pounds, 16 shillings. Again, a merchant of Birkenhead was paid 20 pounds for playing with his children!”

“Dear me, sir!” exclaimed Mrs Marrot in surprise, “surely—”

“Of course, my good woman,” said the elderly gentleman, “you are to understand that he came by some damage while doing so, but I give you the exact words of the pamphlet. It were desirable that a *little* more information had been given just to gratify our curiosity. Now, these that I have read are under the head of ‘Accidents at Home.’ Under other ‘Heads,’ we find a farmer suffocated by the falling in of a sand-pit, for which his representatives received 1000 pounds. Another thousand is paid to the heirs of a poor dyer who fell into a vat of boiling liquor; while, in regard to smaller matters, a warehouseman, whose finger caught in the cog-wheel of a crane, received 30 pounds. And, again, here is 1000 pounds to a gentleman killed in a railway accident, and 100 pounds to a poor woman. The latter had insured for a single trip in an excursion train at a charge of two-pence, while the former had a policy of insurance extending over a considerable period, for which he probably paid twenty or thirty shillings. These are but samples, madam, of the good service rendered to sorrowing humanity by this assurance company, which, you must observe, makes no pretensions to philanthropic aims, but is based simply on business principles. And I find that the total amount of compensation paid in this manner during one year by this Company amounts to about 72,000 pounds.”

As Mrs Marrot yawned at this point and Mrs Tipps appeared somewhat mystified, the enthusiastic gentleman smiled, put away his pamphlet, and wisely changed the subject. He commented on the extreme beauty of the weather, and how fortunate this state of things was for the people who went to the country for a day's enjoyment. Thus pleasantly he whiled away the time, and ingratiated himself with Gertie, until they arrived at the station where Mrs Tipps and Mrs Marrot had to get out, and where many of the excursionists got out along with them. While the former went their several ways, arranging to meet in the evening and return together by the same train, the latter scattered themselves over the neighbouring common and green fields, and, sitting down under the hedgerows among the wild-flowers, pic-nicked in the sunshine, or wandered about the lanes, enjoying the song of birds and scent of flowers, and wishing, perchance, that their lot had been cast among the green pastures of the country, rather than amid the din and smoke and turmoil of the town.

CHAPTER TWENTY THREE

Details a Terrible Accident

In due time that holiday came to a close, and the excursionists returned to the station where their train awaited them. Among the rest came Mrs Tipps and Mrs Marrot, but they did not arrive together, and therefore, much to their annoyance, failed to get into the same carriage.

The weather, which up to that time had kept fine, began to lower, and, just as the train started, a smart thunder–shower fell, but, being under cover, the holiday–makers heeded it not. Upon the whole they were an orderly band of excursionists. Some of the separate groups were teetotallers, and only one or two showed symptoms of having sought to increase their hilarity by the use of stimulants.

When the shower began, John Marrot and his mate put on their pilot–cloth coats, for the screen that formed their only protection from the weather was a thin flat one, without roof or sides, forming only a partial protection from wind and rain.

Night had begun to descend before the train left the station, and as the lowering clouds overspread the sky, the gloom rapidly increased until it became quite dark.

“We are going to have a bad night of it,” observed John Marrot as his mate examined the water–gauge.

“Looks like it,” was Garvie’s curt reply.

The clatter of the engine and howling of the wind, which had by that time risen to a gale, rendered conversation difficult; the two men therefore confined themselves to the few occasional words that were requisite for the proper discharge of their duties. It was not a night on which the thoughts of an engine–driver were likely to wander much. To drive an excursion train in a dark night through a populous country over a line which was crowded with traffic, while the rain beat violently on the little round windows in the screen, obscuring them and rendering it difficult to keep a good look–out was extremely anxious work, which claimed the closest and most undivided attention. Nevertheless, the thoughts of John Marrot did wander a little that night to the carriage behind him in which were his wife and child, but this wandering of thought caused him to redouble rather than to relax his vigilance and caution.

Will Garvie consulted the water–gauge for a moment and then opened the iron door of the furnace in order to throw in more coal. The effect would have stirred the heart of Rembrandt. The instantaneous blinding glare of the intense fire shot through the surrounding darkness, lighting up the two men and the tender as if all were made of red–hot metal; flooding the smoke and steam–clouds overhead with round masses and curling lines of more subdued light, and sending sharp gleams through the murky atmosphere into dark space beyond, where the ghostly landscape appeared to rush wildly by.

Now it chanced that at the part of the line they had reached, a mineral train which

preceded them had been thrown off the rails by a bale of goods which had fallen from a previous goods train. Carelessness on the part of those who had loaded the truck, from which the bale had fallen, led to this accident. The driver and fireman of the mineral train were rather severely hurt, and the guard was much shaken as well as excited, so that they neglected to take the proper precaution of sending back one of their number to stop the train that followed them. This would have been a matter of little consequence had the line been worked on the block system, because, in that case, the danger-signal would have been kept up, and would have prevented the excursion train from entering on that portion of the line until it was signalled "clear;" but the block system had been only partially introduced on the line. A sufficient interval of *time* had been allowed after the mineral train had passed the last station, and then, as we have seen, the excursion train was permitted to proceed. Thus it came to pass that at a part of the line where there was a slight curve and a deep cutting, John Marrot looking anxiously through his circular window, saw the red tail-light of the mineral train.

Instantly he cried, "Clap on the brakes, Bill!"

Almost at the same moment he reversed the engine and opened the whistle to alarm the guard, who applied his brakes in violent haste. But it was too late. The speed could not be checked in time. The rails were slippery, owing to rain. Almost at full speed they dashed into the mineral train with a noise like thunder. The result was appalling. The engine was smashed and twisted in a manner that is quite indescribable, and the tender was turned completely over, while the driver and fireman were shot as if from a cannon's mouth, high into the air. The first two carriages of the passenger-train, and the last van of the mineral, were completely wrecked; and over these the remaining carriages of the passenger-train were piled until they reached an incredible height. The guard's van was raised high in the air, with its ends resting on a third-class carriage, which at one end was completely smashed in by the van.

At the time of the concussion—just after the terrible crash—there was a brief, strange, unearthly silence. All was still for a few seconds, and passengers who were uninjured gazed at each other in mute and horrified amazement. But death in that moment had passed upon many, while others were fearfully mangled. The silence was almost immediately broken by the cries and groans of the wounded. Some had been forcibly thrown out of the carriages, others had their legs and arms broken, and some were jammed into fixed positions from which death alone relieved them. The scenes that followed were heart-rending. Those who were uninjured, or only slightly hurt, lent willing aid to extricate their less fortunate fellow-travellers, but the howling of the wind, the deluging rain, and the darkness of the night, retarded their efforts, and in many cases rendered them unavailing.

John Marrot, who, as we have said, was shot high into the air, fell by good fortune into a large bush. He was stunned at first, but otherwise uninjured. On regaining consciousness, the first thoughts that flashed across him were his wife and child. Rising in haste he made his way towards the engine, which was conspicuous not only by its own fire, but by reason of several other fires which had been kindled in various places to throw light on the scene. In the wreck and confusion, it was difficult to find out the carriage, in which Mrs Marrot had travelled, and the people about were too much excited to give very coherent answers

to questions. John, therefore, made his way to a knot of people who appeared to be tearing up the *debris* at a particular spot. He found Joe Turner, the guard, there, with his head bandaged and his face covered with blood.

“I’ve bin lookin’ for ‘ee everywhere, John,” said Joe. “She’s *there!*” he added, pointing to a mass of broken timbers which belonged to a carriage, on the top of which the guard’s van had been thrown, crushing it almost flat.

John did not require to ask the meaning of his words. The guard’s look was sufficiently significant. He said not a word, but the deadly pallor of his countenance showed how much he felt. Springing at once on the broken carriage, and seizing an axe from the hand of a man who appeared exhausted by his efforts, he began to cut through the planking so as to get at the interior. At intervals a half-stifled voice was heard crying piteously for “John.”

“Keep up heart, lass!” said John, in his deep, strong voice. “I’ll get thee out before long—God helping me.”

Those who stood by lent their best aid, but anxious though they were about the fate of those who lay buried beneath that pile of rubbish, they could not help casting an occasional look of wonder, amounting almost to awe, on the tall form of the engine-driver, as he cut through and tore up the planks and beams with a power that seemed little short of miraculous.

Presently he stopped and listened intently for a moment, while the perspiration rolled in big drops from his brow.

“Dost hear me, Mary?” he asked in a deeply anxious tone.

If any reply were uttered it was drowned by the howling of the wind and the noise of the workmen.

Again he repeated the question in an agonising cry.

His wife did not reply, but Gertie’s sweet little voice was heard saying faintly—

“I think mother is dead. Oh, take us out, dear father, take us out,— quick!”

Again John Marrot bowed himself to the task, and exerting his colossal strength to the utmost, continued to tear up and cast aside the broken planks and beams. The people around him, now thoroughly aroused to the importance of haste, worked with all their might, and, ere long, they reached the floor of the carriage, where they found mother and child jammed into a corner and arched over by a huge mass of broken timber.

It was this mass that saved them, for the rest of the carriage had been literally crushed into splinters.

Close beside them was discovered the headless trunk of a young man, and the dead body of a girl who had been his companion that day.

Gertie was the first taken out. Her tender little frame seemed to have yielded to the pressure and thus escaped, for, excepting a scratch or two, she was uninjured.

John Marrot did not pause to indulge in any expression of feeling. He sternly handed her to the bystanders, and went on powerfully but carefully removing the broken timbers and

planks, until he succeeded in releasing his wife. Then he raised her in his arms, staggered with her to the neighbouring bank and laid her down.

Poor Mrs Marrot was crushed and bruised terribly. Her clothes were torn, and her face was so covered with blood and dust as to be quite unrecognisable at first. John said not a word, but went down on his knees and began carefully to wipe away the blood from her features, in which act he was assisted by the drenching rain. Sad though his case was, there was no one left to help him. The cries of the unfortunate sufferers still unextricated, drew every one else away the moment the poor woman had been released.

Ere long the whole scene of the catastrophe was brilliantly illuminated by the numerous fires which were kindled out of the *debris*, to serve as torches to those who laboured might and main for the deliverance of the injured. Troops of people from the surrounding district quickly made their appearance on the scene, and while some of these lent effective aid in the work of rescue, others brought blankets, water, and spirits, to cover and comfort those who stood so much in need of help. As the wounded were got out, and laid upon the banks of the line, several surgeons busied themselves in examining and binding their wounds, and the spot bore some resemblance to a battle-field after the tide of war had passed over it. Seventeen dead and one hundred and fifty injured already lay upon the wet ground, while many of the living, who went about with blanched, solemn faces, yet with earnest helpful energy, were bruised and cut badly enough to have warranted their retiring from the spot, and having their own cases considered. Meanwhile a telegram had been sent to Clatterby, and, in a short time, a special train arrived with several of the chief men of the line, and a gang of a hundred surface-men to clear away the wreck and remove the dead and injured.

Many of those unhurt had made singularly narrow escapes. One man was seated in a third-class carriage when the concussion took place. The side of the carriage fell out, and he slid down on the rails just as the other carriages and vans piled up on the place he had left, killing or wounding all his fellow-travellers. Beneath the rubbish next the tender, a mother and child were buried and several others. All were dead save the mother and child when the men began to dig them out and before they succeeded in their labours the mother had died also, but the child survived. In another carriage, or rather under it, a lad was seen lying with a woman's head crushed down on his breast and an infant beside her. They had to saw the carriage asunder before these could be extricated. The woman died almost immediately on being released, but the lad and infant were uninjured. Elsewhere a young girl, who had attracted attention by the sweet expression of her face, had been strangled, and her face rendered perfectly black. In another case the surface-men attempted to extricate a woman, by sawing the broken carriage, under which she lay, but the more they sawed the more did the splinters appear to cling round her, and when at last they got her out she was dead, while another passenger in the same carnage escaped without a scratch.

We would not prolong a painful description which may, perhaps, be thought too long already—yet within certain limits it is right that men should know what their fellows suffer. After all the passengers had been removed to the special train—the dead into vans and horse-boxes and the living into carriages—the surface-men set to work to clear the line.

Poor Mrs Tipps was among the rescued, and, along with the others, was sent on to the

Clatterby station by the special train.

While the people were being placed in this train, John Marrot observed Edwin Gurwood in the crowd. He chanced to be at Clatterby when the telegram of the accident arrived, and ran down in the special train to render assistance.

“I’m glad to see you, sir,” he said in a low, earnest voice. “My mate, Bill Garvie, must be badly hurt, for he’s nowhere to be found. He must be under the wreck somewheres. I wouldn’t leave the spot till I found him in or’nary circumstances; but my Mary—”

He stopped abruptly.

“I hope Mrs Marrot is not hurt?” said Edwin anxiously.

John could not reply at first. He shook his head and pointed to a carriage near at hand.

“She’s there, sir, with Gertie.”

“Gertie!” exclaimed Edwin.

“Ay, poor thing, Gertie is all right, thank the good Lord for that; but—”

Again he stopped, then with an effort continued—

“I couldn’t quit *them*, you know, till I’ve got ‘em safe home. But my mind will be easy, Mr Gurwood, if you’ll look after Bill. We was both throw’d a good way from the engine, but I couldn’t rightly say where. You’ll not refuse—”

“My dear Marrot,” said Edwin, interrupting him, and grasping his hand, “you may rely on me. I shall not leave the ground until he is found and cared for.”

“Thank ‘ee, sir, thank ‘ee,” said John, in something of his wonted hearty tone, as he returned Edwin’s squeeze of the hand, and hastened to the train, which was just ready to start.

Edwin went at once to the spot where the surface-men were toiling at the wreck in the fitful light of the fires, which flared wildly in the storm and, as they had by that time gathered intense heat, bid defiance to the rain. There were several passengers, who had just been extricated, lying on the ground, some motionless, as if dead, others talking incoherently. These he looked at in passing, but Garvie was not among them. Leaving them under the care of the surgeons, who did all that was possible in the circumstances for their relief, he ran and joined the surface-men in removing the broken timbers of a carriage, from beneath which groans were heard. With some difficulty a woman was extricated and laid tenderly on the bank. Just then Edwin observed a guard, with whom he was acquainted, and asked him if the fireman had yet been found.

“Not yet sir, I believe,” said the man. “They say that he and the driver were flung to one side of the line.”

Edwin went towards the engine, and, judging the probable direction and distance to which a man might be thrown in such an accident, went to a certain spot and sought carefully around it in all directions. For some time he sought in vain, and was on the point of giving up in despair, when he observed a cap lying on the ground. Going up to it, he saw the form of a man half-concealed by a mass of rubbish. He stooped, and, raising the head a little, tried to make out the features, but the light of the fires did not penetrate to the spot. He

laid him gently down again, and was about to hasten away for assistance when the man groaned and said faintly, "Is that you, Jack?"

"No, my poor fellow," said Edwin, stooping down. "Are you badly hurt? I am just going to fetch help to—"

"Mr Gurwood," said the man, interrupting, "you don't seem to know me! I'm Garvie, the fireman. Where am I? Surely there is something wrong with my left arm. Oh! I remember now. Is Jack safe? And the Missis and Gertie? Are they—"

"Don't exert yourself," interrupted Edwin, as Will attempted to rise. "You must keep quiet until I fetch a doctor. Perhaps you're not much hurt, but it is well to be careful. Will you promise me to be still?"

"All right sir," said Will, promptly.

Edwin hastened for assistance, and in a short time the fireman was carried to a place of comparative shelter and his wounds examined.

Almost immediately after the examination Edwin knelt at his side, and signed to those around him to retire.

"Garvie," he said, in a low kind voice, "I'm sorry to tell you that the doctors say you must lose your left arm."

Will looked intently in Edwin's face.

"Is there *no* chance of savin' it?" he asked earnestly; "it might never be much to speak of, sir, but I'd rather run some risk than lose it."

Edwin shook his head. "No," he said sadly, "they tell me amputation must be immediate, else your life may be sacrificed. I said I would like to break it to you, but it is necessary, my poor fellow, that you should make up your mind at once."

"God's will be done," said Will in a low voice; "I'm ready, sir."

The circumstances did not admit of delay. In a few minutes the fireman's left arm was amputated above the elbow, the stump dressed, and himself laid in as sheltered a position as possible to await the return of the train that was to convey the dead and wounded, more recently extricated, to Clatterby.

When that train arrived at the station it was touching to witness the pale anxious faces that crowded the platform as the doors were opened and the dead and sufferers carried out; and to hear the cries of agony when the dead were recognised, and the cries of grief, strangely, almost unnaturally, mingled with joy, when some who were supposed to have been killed were carried out alive. Some were seen almost fondling the dead with a mixture of tender love and abject despair. Others bent over them with a strange stare of apparent insensibility, or looked round on the pitying bystanders inquiringly, as if they would say, "Surely, surely, this *cannot* be true." The sensibilities of some were stunned, so that they moved calmly about and gave directions in a quiet solemn voice, as if the great agony of grief were long past, though it was painfully evident that it had not yet begun, because the truth had not yet been realised.

Among those who were calm and collected, though heart-stricken and deadly pale, was

Loo Marrot. She had been sent to the station by her father to await the arrival of the train, with orders to bring Will Garvie home. When Will was carried out and laid on the platform alive, an irresistible gush of feeling overpowered her. She did not give way to noisy demonstration, as too many did, but knelt hastily down, raised his head on her knee, and kissed his face passionately.

“Bless you, my darling,” said Will, in a low thrilling voice, in which intense feeling struggled with the desire to make light of his misfortune; “God has sent a cordial that the doctors haven’t got to give.”

“O William!” exclaimed Loo, removing the hair from his forehead—but Loo could say no more.

“Tell me, darling,” said Garvie, in an anxious tone, “is father safe, and mother, and Gertie?”

“Father is safe, thank God,” replied Loo, with a choking voice, “and Gertie also, but mother—”

“She is not dead?” exclaimed the fireman.

“No, not dead, but very *very* much hurt. The doctors fear she may not survive it, Will.”

No more was said, for at that moment four porters came up with a stretcher and placed Garvie gently upon it. Loo covered him with her shawl, a piece of tarpaulin was thrown over all, and thus he was slowly borne away to John Marrot’s home.

CHAPTER TWENTY FOUR

Results of the Accident

Years passed away—as years inevitably must—and many important changes took place in the circumstances and the management of the Grand National Trunk Railway, but the results of that terrible accident did not quickly pass away. As we have said, it cost Will Garvie an arm, and nearly cost Mrs Marrot her life. We have much pleasure, however, in recording, that it did not make the full charge in this matter. A small, a very small modicum of life was left in that estimable woman, and on the strength of that, with her wonted vigour of character and invincibility of purpose, she set to work to draw out, as it were, a new lease of life. She succeeded to admiration, so much so, in fact, that but for one or two scars on her countenance, no one could have known that she had come by an accident at all. Bob Marrot was wont to say of her, in after years, that, “if it had bin his mother who had lost an arm instead of Will Garvie, he was convinced that her firmness, amountin’ a’most to obstinacy, of purpose, would have enabled her to grow on a noo arm as good as the old ‘un, if not better.” We need scarcely add that Bob was an irreverent scamp!

Poor Will Garvie! his was a sad loss, yet, strange to say, he rejoiced over it. “W’y, you see,” he used to say to Bob Marrot—Bob and he being great and confidential friends—“you see, Bob, if it hadn’t bin for that accident, I never would have bin laid up and brought so low—so very nigh to the grave—and I would never have know’d what it was to be nursed by your sister too; and so my eyes might have never bin opened to half her goodness an’ tenderness, d’ye see? No, Bob, I don’t grudge havin’ had my eyes opened by the loss of an arm; it was done cheap at the price. Of course I know Loo pretty well by this time, for a few years of married life is apt to clear a good deal of dust out of one’s eyes, but I do assure you, Bob, that I never *could* have know’d her properly but for that accident, which was the luckiest thing that ever happened to me; an’ then, don’t ‘ee see, I’m just as able to work these there points with one arm as with two.”

To which Bob would reply,—“You’re a queer fish, Bill; howsoever, every man’s got a right to his own opinions.”

Will Garvie was a pointsman now. On recovering from his prolonged illness, during which he had been supported out of the Provident Fund of the railway—to which he and all the other men on the line contributed—he was put to light work at first at the station of Clatterby. By degrees his strength returned, and he displayed so much intelligence, and such calmness of nerve and coolness of courage, that he was made a pointsman at the station, and had a sentry-box sort of erection, with windows all round it, apportioned to his daily use. There he was continually employed in shifting the points for the shunting of trains, none of which dared to move, despite their mighty power and impatience, until Will Garvie gave them leave.

To John Marrot, the accident although not severe at first, had proved more damaging in the long-run. No bones had been broken, or limbs lost, but John had received a shake so

bad that he did not resume his duties with the same vigour as heretofore. He continued to stick to his post, however, for several years, and, before giving it up, had the pleasure of training his son Bob in the situation which Garvie had been obliged to resign. Bob's heart you see, had been all along set on driving the *Lightning*; he therefore gladly left the "Works" when old enough,—and when the opportunity offered,—to fill the preliminary post of fireman.

During this period Edwin Gurwood rose to a responsible and sufficiently lucrative situation in the Clearing-House. At the same time he employed much of his leisure in cultivating the art of painting, of which he was passionately fond. At first he painted for pleasure, but he soon found, on exhibiting one or two of his works, that picture-dealers were willing to purchase from him. He therefore began to paint for profit, and succeeded so well that he began to save and lay by money, with a view to that wife with the nut-brown hair and the large lustrous eyes, who haunted his dreams by night and became his guiding-star by day.

Seeing him thus wholly immersed in the acquisition of money, and not knowing his motive, his faithful little friend Joe Tipps one day amazed, and half-offended him, by reminding him that he had a soul to be cared for as well as a body. The arrow was tenderly shot, and with a trembling hand, but Joe prayed that it might be sent home, and it was. From that date Edwin could not rest. He reviewed his life. He reflected that everything he possessed, or hoped for, came to him, or was to come, from God; yet as far as he could make out he saw no evidence of the existence of religion in himself save in the one fact that he went regularly to church on Sundays. He resolved to turn over a new leaf. Tried—and failed. He was perplexed, for he had tried honestly.

"Tipps," he said, one day, "you are the only man I ever could make a confidant of. To say truth I'm not given to being very communicative as to personal matters at any time, but I *must* tell you that the remark you made about my soul the other day has stuck to me, and I have tried to lead a Christian life, but without much success."

"Perhaps," said Tipps, timidly, "it is because you have not yet become a Christian."

"My *dear* fellow!" exclaimed Edwin, "is not leading a Christian life becoming a Christian?"

"Don't you think," said Tipps, in an apologetic tone, "that leading a Christian life is rather the result of having become a Christian? It seems to me that you have been taking the plan of putting yourself and your doings first, and our Saviour last."

We need not prolong a conversation referring to the "old, old story," which ran very much in the usual groove. Suffice it to say that Edwin at last carefully consulted the Bible as to the plan of redemption; and, in believing, found that rest of spirit which he had failed to work out. Thenceforward he had a higher motive for labouring at his daily toil, yet the old motive did not lose but rather gained in power by the change—whereby he realised the truth that, "godliness is profitable for the life that now is as well as that which is to come."

At last the painting became so successful that Edwin resolved to trust to it alone—said good-bye to the Clearing-House with regret—for he left many a pleasant companion and several intimate friends behind him—and went to Clatterby, in the suburbs of which he took and furnished a small villa.

Then it was that he came to the conclusion that the time had arrived to make a pointed appeal to the nut-brown hair and lustrous eyes. He went off and called at Captain Lee's house accordingly. The captain was out—Miss Lee was at home. Edwin entered the house, but he left all his native courage and self-possession on the doorstep outside!

Being ushered into the drawing-room he found Emma reading. From that moment—to his own surprise, and according to his own statement—he became an ass! The metamorphosis was complete. Ovid, had he been alive, would have rejoiced in it! He blushed more than a poor boy caught in his first grievous offence. The very straightforwardness of his character helped to make him worse. He felt, in all its importance, the momentous character of the step he was about to take, and he felt in all its strength the love with which his heart was full, and the inestimable value of the prize at which he aimed. No wonder that he was overwhelmed.

The reader will observe that we have not attempted to dilate in this book on the value of that prize. Emma, like many other good people, is only incidental to our subject. We have been obliged to leave her to the reader's imagination. After all, what better could we have done? Imagination is more powerful in this matter than description. Neither one nor other could, we felt, approach the reality, therefore imagination was best.

“Emma!” he said, sitting down on the sofa beside her, and seizing her hand in both of his.

“Mr Gurwood!” she exclaimed in some alarm.

Beginning, from the mere force of habit, some half-delirious reference to the weather, Edwin suddenly stopped, passed his fingers wildly through his hair, and again said, with deep earnestness,—“Emma.”

Emma looked down, blushed, and said nothing.

“Emma,” he said again, “my good angel, my guiding-star—by night and by day—for years I have—”

At that moment Captain Lee entered the room.

Edwin leaped up and stood erect. Emma buried her face in the sofa cushions.

“Edwin—Mr Gurwood!” exclaimed Captain Lee.

This was the beginning of a conversation which terminated eventually in the transference of the nut-brown hair and lustrous eyes to the artist's villa in Clatterby. As there was a good garden round the villa, and the wife with nut-brown hair was uncommonly fond of flowers, Edwin looked out for a gardener. It was at this identical time that John Marrot resolved to resign his situation as engine-driver on the Grand National Trunk Railway. Edwin, knowing that he had imbibed a considerable amount of knowledge of gardening from Loo, at once offered to employ him as his gardener; John gladly closed with the offer, and thus it came about that he and his wife removed to the villa and left their old railway-ridden cottage in possession of Will and Loo—or, to be more correct, Mr and Mrs Garvie, and all the young Garvies.

But what of timid Mrs Tipps? The great accident did little for her beyond shaking her nervous system, and confirming her in the belief that railways were unutterably detestable; that she was not quite sure whether or not they were sinful; that, come what might, she

never would enter one again; and that she felt convinced she had been born a hundred years too late, in which latter opinion most of her friends agreed with her, although they were glad, considering her loveable disposition, that the mistake had occurred. Netta did not take quite such an extreme view, and Joseph laughed at and quizzed them both, in an amiable sort of fashion, on their views.

Among all the sufferers by that accident few suffered so severely—with the exception: of course, of those who lost their lives—as the Grand National Trunk Railway itself. In the course of the trials that followed, it was clearly shown that the company had run the train much more with the view of gratifying the public than of enriching their coffers, from the fact that the utmost possible sum which they could hope to draw by it was 17 pounds, for which sum they had carried 600 passengers upwards of twenty miles. The accident took place in consequence of circumstances over which the company had no control, and the results were—that twenty persons were killed and about two hundred wounded! that one hundred and sixty claims were made for compensation— one hundred and forty of which, being deemed exorbitant or fraudulent, were defended in court; and that, eventually, the company had to pay from seventy to eighty thousand pounds! out of which the highest sum paid to one individual was 6750 pounds! The risks that are thus run by railway companies will be seen to be excessive, especially when it is considered that excursion trains afford but slight remuneration, while many of them convey enormous numbers of passengers. On the occasion of the first excursion from Oxford to London, in 1851, fifty-two of the broad-gauge carriages of the Great Western were employed, and the excursionists numbered upwards of three thousand five hundred—a very town on wheels! Truly the risks of railway companies are great, and their punishments severe.

CHAPTER TWENTY FIVE

The Last

A certain Christmas-day approached. On the morning of the day preceding, Will Garvie—looking as broad and sturdy as ever; a perfect man, but for the empty sleeve—stood at his post near his sentry-box. His duties that day were severe. At that season of the year there is a great increase of traffic on all railways, and you may be sure that the Grand National Trunk Railway had its full share.

On ordinary occasions about three hundred trains passed Will Garvie's box, out and in, during the twelve hours, but that day there had been nearly double the number of passengers, and a considerable increase in the number of trains that conveyed them, while goods trains had also increased greatly in bulk and in numbers.

Garvie's box abutted on a bridge, and stood in the very midst of a labyrinth of intricate crossing lines, over which trains and pilot-engines were constantly rushing and hissing, backing and whistling viciously, and in the midst of which, Will moved at the continual risk of his life, as cool as a cucumber (so Bob Garvie expressed it), and as safe as the bank.

Although thus situated in the midst of smoke, noise, dust, iron, and steam, Will Garvie managed to indulge his love for flowers. He had a garden on the line—between the very rails! It was not large, to be sure, only about six feet by two—but it was large enough for his limited desires. The garden was in a wooden trough in front of his sentry-box. It contained mignonette, roses, and heart's-ease among other things, and every time that Will passed out of or into his box in performing the duties connected with the station, he took a look at the flowers and thought of Loo and the innumerable boys, girls, and babies at home. We need not say that this garden was beautifully kept. Whatever Will did he did well—probably because he tended well the garden of his own soul.

While he was standing outside his box during one of the brief intervals between trains, an extremely beautiful girl came on the platform and called across the rails to him.

"Hallo! Gertie—what brings *you* here?" he asked, with a look of glad surprise.

"To see *you*," replied Gertie, with a smile that was nothing short of bewitching.

"How I wish you were a flower, that I might plant you in my garden," said the gallant William, as he crossed the rails and reached up to shake Gertie's hand.

"What a greedy man you are!" said Gertie. "Isn't Loo enough for you?"

"Quite enough," replied Will, "I might almost say more than enough at times; but come, lass, this ain't the place for a palaver. You came to speak with me as well as to see me, no doubt."

"Yes, Will, I came with a message from Mrs Tipps. You know that the railway men are going to present father with a testimonial to-night; well, Mrs Tipps thinks that her

drawing-room won't be large enough, so she sent me to ask you to let the men know that it is to be presented in the schoolroom, where the volunteer rifle band is to perform and make a sort of concert of it."

"Indeed!" said Will.

"Yes; and Mrs Tipps says that Captain Lee is going to give them what she calls a cold collation, and brother Bob calls a blow-out."

"You don't say so!" exclaimed Will.

"Yes, I do; won't it be delightful?" said Gertie.

"Splendid," replied Will, "I'll be sure to be up in good time. But, I say, Gertie, is young Dorkin to be there?"

Gertie blushed, but was spared the necessity of a reply in consequence of a deafening whistle which called Will Garvie to his points. Next moment, a passenger-train intervened, and cut her off from further communication.

According to promise, Will was at the schoolroom in good time that evening, with some thirty or forty of his comrades. Loo was there too, blooming and matronly, with a troop of boys and girls, who seemed to constitute themselves a body-guard round John Marrot and his wife, who were both ignorant at that time of the honour that was about to be done them. John was as grave, sturdy, and amiable as ever, the only alteration in his appearance being the increased number of silver locks that mingled with his black hair. Time had done little to Mrs Marrot, beyond increasing her bulk and the rosiness of her countenance.

It would be tedious to comment on all our old friends who assembled in the schoolroom on that memorable occasion. We can only mention the names of Captain Lee (*alias* Samuel Tough), and Mr Abel, and Mrs Tipps, and Dr Noble, and Mr Sharp, and David Blunt, and Joe Turner, and Mrs Durby, with all of whom time seemed to have dealt as leniently as with John Marrot and his wife. Sam Natly was also there, with his invalid wife restored to robust health, and supported on either side by a blooming boy and girl. And Edwin Gurwood was there with his wife and son and three daughters; and so was Joseph Tipps, looking as if the world prospered with him, as, indeed, was the case. And, of course, Netta Tipps was there, and the young curate, who, by the way, was much stouter and not nearly so stiff as when we first met him. He was particularly attentive to Netta, and called her "my dear," in a cool free-and-easy way, that would not have been tolerated for a moment, but for the fact that they had been married for the last three months. Bob Marrot was there also—as strapping a young blade as one could wish to see, with a modest yet fearless look in his eye, that was quite in keeping with his occupation as driver of the "Flying Dutchman."

There was there, also, a tall, slim, good-looking youth, who seemed to be on very intimate terms with Bob Marrot. He was well-known as one of the most rising men at the Clatterby works, who bade fair to become an overseer ere long. Bob called him Tomtit, but the men of the line styled him Mister Dorkin. He had brought with him an extremely wrinkled, dried-up old woman, who appeared to have suffered much, and to have been dragged out of the lowest depths of poverty. To judge from appearances she had been placed in a position of great comfort. Such was in truth the case, and the fine young fellow who had

dragged her out and up was that same Mister Dorkin, who may be said to have been all but stone-blind that evening, because, from first to last, he saw but one individual there, and that individual was Gertie. He was almost deaf too, because he heard only one voice—and that voice was Gertie's.

And Nanny Stocks was there, with "the baby," but *not* the baby Marrot! *That* baby—now a stout well-grown lad—was seated beside his mother, paying her all sorts of delicate attentions, such as picking up her handkerchief when she dropped it, pushing her bonnet on her head when, in her agitation, it fell back on her neck, and beating her firmly on the back when she choked, as she frequently did that evening from sheer delight. No doubt in this last operation he felt that he was paying off old scores, for many a severe beating on the back had Mrs Marrot given him in the stormy days of his babyhood.

The baby of whom Nanny Stocks was now the guardian was baby Gurwood, and a strong resemblance it bore to the old baby in the matters of health, strength, fatness, and self-will. Miss Stocks was one of those human evergreens which years appear to make no impression on at all. From her shoe-latchet to her topmost hair-pin she was unalterably the same as she had been in days gone by. She treated the new baby, too, as she had treated the old—choked it with sweetmeats and kisses, and acted the part of buffer to its feet and fists.

It would take a volume to give the full details of all that was said and done, and played and sung, on that Christmas-eve. We can only touch on these things. The brass band of the volunteers surpassed itself. The songs—volunteered or called for—were as good as songs usually are on festive occasions, a few of them being first-rate, especially one which was sung by a huge engine-driver, with shoulders about a yard broad, and a beard like the inverted shako of a guardsman. It ran thus—

SONG OF THE ENGINE-DRIVER.

Oh—down by the river and close by the lake
We skim like the swallow and cut through the brake;
Over the mountain and round by the lea,
Though the black tunnel and down to the sea.
Clatter and bang by the wild riven shore,
We mingle our shriek with the ocean's roar.
We strain and we struggle, we rush and we fly—
We're a terrible pair, my steed and I.

Chorus—Whistle and puff the whole day round,
Over the hills and underground.
Rattling fast and rattling free—
Oh! a life on the line is the life for me.

With our hearts a-blazing in every chink,
With coals for food and water to drink,
We plunge up the mountain and traverse the moor,
And startle the grouse in our daily tour.

We yell at the deer in their lonely glen,
Shoot past the village and circle the Ben,
We flash through the city on viaducts high,
As straight as an arrow, my steed and I.

Chorus—Whistle and puff, etcetera.

The Norseman of old, when quaffing his mead,
Delighted to boast of his “ocean steed;”
The British tar, in his foaming beer,
Drinks to his ship as his mistress dear.
The war-horse good is the trooper’s theme—
But what are all these to the horse of steam?
Such a riotous, rollicking roadster is he—
Oh!—the Iron Horse is the steed for me!

Chorus—Whistle and puff, etcetera.

The collation also, or, according to Bob Marrot, the “blow-out,” was superb. Joseph Tipps declared it to be eminently satisfactory, and the men of the line evidently held the same opinion, if we may judge from the fact that they consumed it all, and left not a scrap behind.

The speeches, also, were excellent. Of course the great one of the evening was the best being, delivered by Mr Abel, who not unnaturally made a remarkably able oration.

When that gentleman rose with a beautiful silver model of a locomotive in his hand, which he had been deputed by the men of the line to present as a mark of their regard, admiration, and esteem, to John Marrot, he took the worthy ex-engine-driver very much by surprise, and caused Mrs Marrot to be seized with such a fit of choking that the baby (not the new one, but the old) found it as hard work to beat her out of it, as she had formerly found it to beat *him* out of a fit of wickedness. When she had been restored, Mr Abel launched off into a glowing oration, in the course of which he referred to John Marrot’s long services, to his faithful and unwearied attention to his arduous duties, and to the numerous instances wherein he had shown personal courage and daring, amounting almost to heroism, in saving the lives of comrades in danger, and in preventing accidents on the line by coolness and presence of mind.

“In conclusion,” said Mr Abel, winding up, “let me remark that the gift which is now presented might have been of a more useful character, but could not have been more appropriate; because the wish of those who desire to testify their regard for you this evening, Mr Marrot, is not to give you an intrinsically valuable or useful present, but to present you with a characteristic ornament which may grace your dwelling while you live, and descend, after you are gone, to your children’s children (here he glanced at Loo and her troop), to bear witness to them that you nobly did your duty in driving that great iron horse, whereof this little silver pony is a model and a memorial. To perform one’s duty well in this life is the highest ambition that any man can have in regard to temporal things.

Nelson, our greatest naval hero, aimed at it, and, on the glorious day of Trafalgar, signalled that England expected every man to do it. Wellington, our greatest soldier, made *duty* his guiding-star. The effectual and earnest performance of duty stamps with a nobility which is not confined to great men—a nobility which kings can neither give nor take away—a nobility which is very, *very* difficult to attain unto, but which is open alike to the prince and the peasant, and must be wrought hard for and won—or lost with shame,—for, as the poet happily puts it—

“Honour and shame from no condition rise;
Act well your part,—there all the honour lies.’

“For myself I can only say that John Marrot has won this nobility, and I couple his name with a sentiment with which all here, I doubt not, will heartily sympathise.—Prosperity to the men of the line, and success to the Iron Horse!”

Reader, we can do no better than echo that sentiment, and wish you a kind farewell.

THE END.