

DEATH MISSED FLIER ON NEWARK TRESTLE

Driver Senseless in Cab, Train Sped in Storm Toward Stalled Local.

SAVED BY HERO FIREMAN

How Sam Wood Saved Xmas Eve Merrymakers, Not Dreaming of Peril.

It will be news to the men and women who were hurrying to New York on Christmas eve aboard the Philadelphia and Reading express train, due in Jersey City at 6:53 P. M., that the engineer lay unconscious and alone in his cab while the train approached the trestle over Newark Bay at forty miles an hour. It will be news to them and to 200 other persons who were on a train standing motionless on the trestle ahead of the Philadelphia express that

they owe their lives to the alertness of a fireman, whose quick action in an emergency prevented an indescribable catastrophe. Railroad shops, round-houses and offices are ringing with the story of how fireman Sam Wood stopped the express train within 400 feet of a rear end collision on the wooden trestle in a snowstorm. For some reason the Railroad Administration has not seen fit to make it public, so *The Sun* hastens to discharge this duty.

The express train was No. 620, leaving the Reading terminal in Philadelphia at 5 P. M. In its club, dining and parlor cars on December 24 were about 150 travellers bound for New York for the holiday. The only untoward incident they knew about was an abrupt jarring stop on the Newark Bay trestle, an unexplained halt there for several moments and then an unscheduled stop at West Eighth street, Bayonne, a small station at the eastern end of the trestle, those making the train somewhat late in reaching the combined terminal of the New Jersey Central and Reading roads in Jersey City. What had happened was this:

Somewhere along the route where the tracks cross the Newark meadows something had struck the engineer, James Hill, in the right eye and on the forehead. He was peering from his window, watching the twinkling signal lights ahead with special care, for a driving snow was trying to obscure them. What hit him he has no idea, nor how it came. It stunned him so that he lost consciousness. His fingers gripped the throttle and he fell to the floor and

lay there. The speed was forty miles an hour, and so it stayed.

Fireman Always Alert.

The locomotive, No. 200, is of the camel back type, also called Mother Hubbard. The engineer's cab is in the middle; the fireman is twenty feet away at the rear of the boiler, between it and the tank. The fireman on this run was Samuel Wood. The fireman's job is shovelling coal, watching the steam gauge and attending to a lot of incidentals. The rules say he is to watch the signals along the way when not otherwise engaged, but there is plenty to engage him. If there had been a wreck and Fireman Wood had by any chance survived, which is highly improbable, he could not have been held accountable. But it seems that Wood is the kind of fireman who always has his eyes open for any sign of trouble in his field.

As the train left the meadows and slid onto the mile long drawbridge trestle that crosses Newark Bay he glanced from under his protecting hood and noticed that the light on the extended arm of a semaphore they were just passing was red, whereas, if there were no train on the block ahead it would have been green. He turned to the speed indicator; it registered forty miles an hour. The allowable limit on the trestle is thirty. There was no way of communicating with the engineer; even if he could be reached by crawling long the locomotive it would take too much time. The fireman grabbed at the

emergency brake lever and yanked it. Everything might be all right, but he was taking no chances.

Steam continued to press into the cylinders, for the fireman, back where he was, had no way of shutting it off. It was a battle between the air pressure of the emergency brake system and steam which was fighting to make the train go forward. Compressed air won. The express train, with a great wrenching, ground to a stop. Looking ahead Wood could see, 400 feet away, tail lights of a local train, which had been halted on the trestle by the home signal set against it. At the rate at which the express train had been going it would have smashed into the local in about six seconds more.

Found Engineer Senseless.

Wood walked forward to see what ailed Jim, the engineer. Both doors of the cab were locked, as is customary on a long run, but a window was open. As he climbed up to it the fireman heard the engineer groaning. Wood went through the window. He found Hill on the floor with a gash crossing the right eye from cheekbone to forehead. Hill was partly conscious by now, but unable to tell what had befallen him. When the local train was out of the way and the signals were right again Wood, with Hill lying in the cab, drove the train the rest of the way across the trestle to West Eighth street, Bayonne. There the engineer was transferred to a passenger coach. Then the train brought him to Jersey City and an ambulance took him to St. Francis's Hospital, where he

stayed until two days ago. His sight, the loss of which was threatened, has been saved.

The local train into which the Philadelphia express was about to crash was No. 256, leaving Cranford at 4:35 P. M. It commonly carries many of the employees of the Singer Sewing Machine's Elizabethport factory. Few of them were aboard on Christmas eve, but the train carried about 200 passengers. Immediately after the episode of the trestle track inspectors examined the trestle every inch of the roadbed for many miles back, but found no object which could have flown through the air or up from the track and injured the engineer. It was thought that perhaps a grease cup from a connecting rod had snapped off and upward, but every grease cup on the locomotive was in place. The investigation is still on. A veteran railroader recalled that while leaning from his cab one day a great bump had been raised on his forehead by something that hit him and seemed to be as hard as a chunk of rock, but which proved to be an English sparrow, the force of the impact being derived from the combined speed of the train and of the bird.

Hill is 49 years old and is one of the best engineers on the road. Fireman Wood is about 34. Both live in Philadelphia and have families. Wood is a "promoted fireman"; that is, he is so competent that when traffic is heavy he takes a turn as engineer. It is understood that the Railroad Administration, when its files on this case are complete, will give him a testimonial in cash of its appreciation of his act.

NEW MORGUE LAW IN EFFECT.

Undertakers Must Present Affidavit Before Removing Bodies. Dr. Royal S. Copeland, Health Commissioner, announced yesterday that the city morgue is now operating under the new amendment to the Sanitary Code, which prescribes that all undertakers claiming bodies must present an affidavit from families or relatives of the deceased. He also stated that during the year 1919 the morgue had 35 per cent. less work to do than in the year 1917. The number of cases in 1918 broke all records on account of the influenza epidemic.

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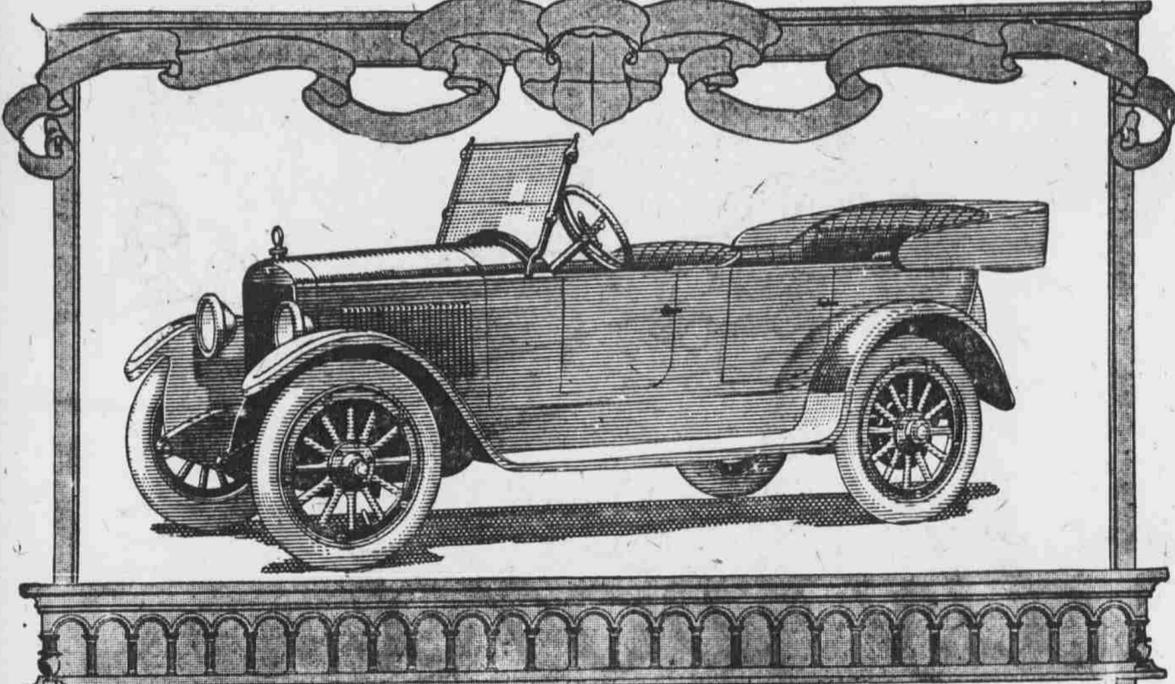
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