

## ENGINE DRIVER'S STORY

By Frank Filson.

"Did you see that old, gray-headed fellow that went into the cab of No. 24?" asked the engine driver. "That's Joe Egan. How old should you say he was, now? Fifty-five? Joe's seventy-two, come next July, friend, and in spite of his age, there isn't



"As I'm a Man, I Saw Nelly on the Line Again."

a man that can handle his engine better than Joe, or that's more looked up to by the men and bet-thought of by the company. And it must be nigh on thirty years since what I'm going to tell you happened to Joe.

"Thirty years ago—that brings us back to the early eighties, don't it? The compames wasn't so particular in those days as what they are now. Nowadays, if a man wants a drop before going on duty he's got to take the bottle out of his pocket when nobody ain't watching him, and eat

a cough drop afterwards, or else, likely as not, he'll be hunting a job next morning. But in the times I'm speaking of, the company didn't care whether a man drank or not, as long as he looked sober, and spoke sober, and brought his train in on time. And, drunk or sober, Joe never made any mistakes with his engine.

"Still, there wasn't many nights when he didn't come in to Tapham a little soaked, and it got to the superintendent's ears. The company didn't want to get rid of Joe, for he was a pretty steady man, and although the new ideas about drinking had just begun to come into use, still, everybody made excuses for Joe. You see, he'd been through the fire and done what it ain't given to many men to have to do.

"Joe lived by the line, about half a mile this side of Tapham, in a little brick house situated just where the trestle across the Mohegan begins to rise out of the swamp lands. He used to take his engine, with eight cars attached to it, over it on the return trip and run her into Tapham on the stroke of nine. Then he'd walk back home till his turn of duty come again. It was a ticklish spot, because the 8:07 from Waynesboro had the right of way a few minutes after the Tapham local got past.

"One night Joe was behind time. It wasn't his fault, I guess; anyway, just as he approached the trestle he heard the whistle of the 8:07. You know traffic was inconsiderable in those days