

THE MAN IN THE CAB.

A VIEW AT CLOSE RANGE OF THE MEN WHO GUIDE TRAINS.

The Cab—What It Means to the American Engineer, Though His English Brother Rides in the Open Air—The Whistle and Its Individuality.

The average American engineer and his fireman would think themselves very ill used if an order were issued for the abolishment of the cabs—that friendly retreat from inclement weather that is now considered an absolute necessity on all engines. And yet in civilized England, on a majority of the railroads, the engines in use are built minus the cab, thus forcing the operators to work without shelter in all kinds of weather. It sounds inhuman, and yet in refutation the railroad companies ask whether the soldier should carry an umbrella when it rains or the sailor be allowed to work under an awning? The claim is that the railroad employees become insured to severe weather and the absence of covering keeps them alert, so that the possibility of danger from inattention to duty is reduced to a minimum. Subtle argument, perhaps, but hardly tenable. If this practice was adopted on some of our western roads where the temperature ranges from 20 to 30 degs. below zero, how many engineers would live to carry their trains from one station to the next?

The unpardonable sin in an engineer is to let the water get out of the boiler of the engine in his charge. No matter what excuse he may offer, if he lives to make his report in turn, his dismissal will be peremptory, for by this action he has proved himself incompetent and unworthy of future responsibilities. It is better for an engineer that he had never been born when he reaches this stage of self torture. Fortunately such cases are rare. The man on all well conducted railroads must have shown himself to be trusty and true before he is given charge of an engine, and the rigid inspection to which he is subjected before an engagement is a guarantee of future conduct.

One weakness nearly every engineer has, and that is a penchant for "doctoring" the steam whistle on his pet engine. Every boy in a country town familiarizes himself at an early age with the different "toots" that by day and night waft through the unhappy village. He can detect No. 4's whistle when the train is five miles distant, and in like manner the approach of Nos. 1 and 2 are heralded to his keen ear. Of course all whistles are alike when they leave the shops, but the engineer fills in the sounding bell with a piece of turned wood that fits snug and changes the tone to a short, sharp scream or an angry, impatient howl, as his fancy may dictate.

The close observer may lie snugly in his bed and yet be able to detect the passing of either a freight or passenger train. The engine on the former announces its approach by emitting a sharp, shrill scream that is soul piercing enough to waken the dead, while the passenger engine, with due respect to the living freight it carries, sounds a long, deep warning note that does not bring the occupant of a berth to his feet "all standing," ready to curse the company in general terms and the engineer in particular ones for such an act of folly and inconsiderateness. On the freight train a sharp, shrill scream is essential, for it notifies the brakemen, who are perhaps forty cars in the rear of the engine and separated from the occupants of the cab by many ways of ear piercing sound, just what work is required at their hands.

This whistle is to them what the cry of the call boy on the Thames steamboat used to be to the engineer down below before the advent of electric bells. "Ease her!" the captain would remark in his ordinary tone of conversation to the small boy that followed him like a shadow, and "Ease her!" the youngster would scream in his sharp, shrill staccato down the companionway. "Stop her!" "Turn 'er astern!" "Go ahead!" would perhaps follow in rapid succession, and in this decidedly crude fashion the London steamboat captains did their steering by proxy only a dozen years ago. One wonders what has become of those call boys. Perhaps they spend their hours in spinning yarns to the younger cockneys of the past glories of steamboating in much the same manner that our dethroned stage drivers of the west now regale the tenderfoot with glimpses of bygone acts of heroism and feats of impossible horsemanship. This is somewhat of a digression from the topic under discussion, but perhaps the reader will excuse its insertion. One thought naturally suggested the other.

As a class engineers are usually good natured, kind hearted, though a bit rough; deep thinkers, due to their fixed habits of attention and long hours of enforced silence, and of good morals. An engineer who drinks cannot hope to hold his position long, for no master mechanic will tolerate confirmed tippling in a subordinate whose duties are so responsible as those of an engineer. He must be abstinent, prompt at his post of duty, and ever vigilant if he hopes to maintain his position. His hands may be black and his face grimy, but that his heart is all right was evidenced not long ago in a railroad terminus on the Pacific coast when the engine, puffing and laboring from its dizzy ride over mountain passes and along dangerous precipices, was approached by a golden haired miss of six, who patted one of the huge driving wheels curiously and lisping, "You dear, big black thing, how I love you for bringing my sweet mamma and papa home to me from across those horrid mountains, and you too," she exclaimed, lifting her pretty face to the black bearded engineer, who had been watching her from his cab. The fever that sprang instantly to his eye was not an evidence of weakness, but of a warm, impassioned heart, and the father of the little girl that occasioned this touch of human nature fervently reached for his handkerchief just as the engineer drew his grimy sleeve across his sooty face.—Chicago Herald.

Saved by His Boots.

General Marbot tells, in his "Memoirs," how his light boots once saved him from being killed by Austrian lancers. At the battle of Eckmuhl he was ordered by Marshal Lannes to conduct a regiment of cuirassiers to a point where it was to charge a regiment of Croats.

The French charged and annihilated the Croats, but carrying their charge too far, were in their turn repulsed by a regiment of Austrian lancers. As the French retreated at a gallop they came to where Marbot was standing, his horse having been killed. Only a few hundred feet intervened between the lancers and the cuirassiers, and if Marbot had been left behind he would have been killed.

Two mounted soldiers gave him their hands, and thus, half lifted from the ground, he bounded along, while they galloped at a rapid pace into their own lines.

"It was time for my gymnastic course to end," he writes, "for I was completely out of breath and could not have continued. I learned then how inconvenient are the heavy long boots of the cuirassiers in time of war, for a young officer in the regiment who, like me, had his horse killed under him, and was supported by two of his comrades on the return gallop in the same manner I was, found himself unable to keep pace with the horses on account of his heavy boots. He was left behind, and was killed by an Austrian lancer, while I escaped by reason of my light boots."

Took the Lesson to Heart.

"Going home!" he exclaimed. "Well, I should say I was going home."

"Oh, well, there's no hurry. Wait a few minutes."

"Not a minute. I'll never be late to any kind of a meal again. My wife has taught me better."

"Certain lecture?"

"Never a lecture, but—well, you've eaten steak?"

"Certainly."

"Real nice, tender, juicy steak?"

"Of course."

"With the potatoes just right?"

"Yes."

"There's nothing in the same class with it when a man is real hungry, is there?"

"No! I can't say that there is."

"Tomatoes, croquettes, terrapin and all such things have to take a back seat, don't they?"

"Yes."

"Well, did you ever eat a real good steak cold?"

"Um, yes; I believe I have."

"Ah! Now you're in my class. I was half an hour late yesterday and she just let one of the finest steaks I ever saw stand on the table till I came. Did you ever try to measure the amount of regret in every mouthful of cold steak that you could have had hot?"

"Go home, old man. Your wife has all the best of it."—Chicago Tribune.

How the Map of Peking Was Made.

How a military map of Peking was secretly made is told by General Sir Robert Biddulph. During the China war of 1860, in which Sir Robert was engaged, our army was greatly embarrassed by the absence of any map of the city. But it happened that the Russian legation had, only a few months before, contrived to make a map in spite of the jealous watchfulness of the Chinese. They had sent an officer, in a small covered cart, such as they use to carry their women about, completely covered in. An indicator was attached to the wheel. He drove for a certain distance to a certain crossroad, for example, and "took a shot" with his instrument; then down the next road, and in that way made a complete plan of Peking, with all its streets and roads, both in the Tartar city and in the Chinese city. General Ignatieff, who produced the map, offered it to the English. There were no photographers then attached to the army; but an Italian photographer, who had followed the army for his own private purposes, being set to work, produced a number of copies, which proved extremely serviceable.—London News.

Faith of Italian Fishermen.

The blind faith of the Italian fishermen in the efficacy of holy relics is pathetic. Many of them keep themselves in a state of utter impoverishment in providing necessary amulets and charms. Not only is the fisherman's person covered with these, but his boat must also possess all possible saving power through these religious appliances. Should some great storm arise and genuine danger come, one by one these objects are cast upon the waves with a faith that is positively sublime. Meanwhile his wife ashore, possessed of the same implicit and pious confidence, gives her most precious relics to the sea that her husband may come safe to land. And I have no doubt that when fatal disaster comes, as it always does, this man sinks into the silence beneath the tempest with his last spark of vital consciousness an undimmed flame of trust and faith.—Exchange.

Gross Superstition in Hungary.

A strange story of superstition is reported from Homoloz, in Hungary. Several bodies of men had been found there with their heads cut off. An investigation was made by the police, and it turned out that these mutilations had in every instance been committed by young men who were betrothed to the widows of the decapitated persons. The husbands had died a natural death, and their widows believed that in case they married a second time their first husbands would reappear and destroy their wedded happiness. Hence they had persuaded their new bridegrooms to decapitate their deceased partners.—Pall Mall Gazette.

A Judge Compliments a Lawyer.

It is related that Judge Jero Black said of Thad Stevens: "That he was one of the brightest men ever born, and could say the smartest things, but that, so far as being under any sense of obligation to his creator for superior mental endowments, his mind was a howling wilderness."

A Dangerous Tigress.

A well known student of the habits of wild animals, writing of the stealthy and dangerous character of the man-eating tiger, mentions a case that happened a few years ago in the Nagpur district in India. A tigress had killed so many people that a large reward was offered for her destruction. She had recently dragged away a native, but being disturbed had left the body without devouring it.

The shikaris believed that she would return to her prey during the night, if it was left undisturbed upon the spot where she had forsaken it. There were no trees, nor any timber suitable for the construction of a machan. It was accordingly resolved that four deep holes should be dug, forming the corners of a square, the body lying in the center.

Four watchers, each with his matchlock, took their positions in these holes. Nothing came, and at length the moon went down and the night was dark. The men were afraid to go home through the jungles, and so remained where they were. Some of them fell asleep.

When daylight broke three of the shikaris issued from their positions, but the fourth had disappeared; his hole was empty. A few yards distant his matchlock was discovered lying upon the ground, and upon the dusty surface were the tracks of a tiger and the sweeping traces where some large body had been dragged along.

Upon following up the track the remains of the unlucky shikari were discovered, but the tigress had disappeared. The cunning brute was not killed until twelve months afterward, although many persons devoted themselves to the work.

An Excellent Method of Exercising.

According to competent military critics, one of the best drilled uniformed bodies in this city is a juvenile battalion called "The Knickerbocker Grays." It is composed of from seventy-five to eighty boys, ranging in age from eight to twelve years. The battalion is an exclusive one, being really a private drill class which was started a few years ago by a number of wealthy women who desired that their sons should have the benefit of exercise and instruction in the manual of arms. The use of the Seventy-first Regiment armory is enjoyed by the boys, through the courtesy of the officers of that regiment, and they drill there on Monday and Thursday afternoons during the winter season. The uniform of the Knickerbocker Grays consists of gray coat, trousers and cap of regulation pattern, and dark stockings. The gray garments are neatly trimmed with black braid. Each member of the Grays carries a musket with bayonet.

The president of the association, which exercises a rigid supervision over this drill class, is Mrs. Edward Curtis, the vice president is Mrs. Beverly Robinson, the treasurer is Mrs. Bradish Johnson, and the secretary is Mrs. H. H. Chittenden.—New York Times.

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