

THE EVENING NEWS.

THURSDAY, - - MAY, 24, 1894.

RUNNING A TIMBER.

A BREAKSMAN'S STORY.

I have been a "railroad man" for a great many years—have, as the expression goes, grown gray in the service. I am certain, however, in all my experience, I never saw a road that was the equal of the Valley Air Line, upon which I was, at the time of the incident about to be related, a breaksmen.

The Valley Air Line was one of those roads that spring up suddenly out of the imagination of a few men. One can not say that it sprang from their purses, for if they had in them the seed to grow anything, it was never put in the Valley. There was, as nearly as I can now remember, a capital stock which was nearly paid up, a little town and village credit, and a large amount of preferred stock, first and second mortgage, etc. As a result the road was built in a manner, grades were bad; road-bed was poor; bridges and culverts were thrown together in the worst possible manner, because the "road" was the cheapest. The iron was a light and frail mass, manufactured in England especially for the American market, while the rolling stock had been worn out in service on other roads and sold to the Valley Air Line on credit and long time.

The reader will see from this truthful statement that the Valley was not the safest road for travelers in the country. It was not, innumerable were the accidents that had occurred; but it is a wonder to me that none of these were serious. While we had many narrow escapes, we still managed, through sheer good luck, slow time, and great care, to get on without breaking bones; but I positively assure you that time did not account for us to the road, and we never ran into the depot at night without feeling thankful that we were alive. When I say we, I mean the conductor, engineer, baggage-man, fireman, and myself. How the passengers felt, I do not know; but I do know they ought to have felt as thankful as the road men that their bones were in good condition to allow them to walk from the depot to their homes. Ignorance may have been perfect bliss to them, however.

The engineer of our train—the Lightning Express—was one of the most sober, careful, thoughtful, and industrious men that ever handled a throttle. He possessed more than the ordinary share of thoughtful, prudent, and his class, and it was a relief to find that so great a degree of good fortune came to us.

A few moments before the train was to start one morning, Gardner, the engineer, called me to his cab. He appeared unusually downcast that morning, though at best he was by no means a "gay" fellow.

"Bob," said Gardner, after a few seconds' talk about getting the train started, "I want you to be very careful today—I know you're a good fellow, and always do your duty well; but today I want you to do more. I want you to stand by your horse very carefully, and when I signal I want you to see them up as you never did before, and promptly, too. Now you will do it for me, won't you, Bob?"

I was too astonished to speak for a second, and then I asked: "Why, what under the sun is the matter with you, Gardner? You know the train has nearly worn out that it is impossible to set them up; and you know, too—"

"I know it all, Bob, and that is the reason why I want you to be careful. I am going to try and make the time-table, to-day; if it is possible, I will do so, I feel just as though something was going to happen, and I am sure that half sorry that the train was not started, though. Now, promise me, Bob, and off to your brakes."

I promised, and took my post, not a little mystified as to Gardner's looks, words, and actions.

We left the depot and went rattling on over the iron. Passengers looked at each other in surprise, and wondered what under the sun was the matter with the train. Gardner was so nervous, and the whole thing was so out of the ordinary, that it was impossible to set them up; and you know, too—"

"I know it all, Bob, and that is the reason why I want you to be careful. I am going to try and make the time-table, to-day; if it is possible, I will do so, I feel just as though something was going to happen, and I am sure that half sorry that the train was not started, though. Now, promise me, Bob, and off to your brakes."

"What is the matter with Gardner, this morning?"

"Oh," was the reply, "he and the old man have had a blow out this morning. You see our train never makes connections—passengers always lay over, and of course, they growl. This morning the old man called me to his cab, and the whole thing was so out of the ordinary, that it was impossible to set them up; and you know, too—"

"I know it all, Bob, and that is the reason why I want you to be careful. I am going to try and make the time-table, to-day; if it is possible, I will do so, I feel just as though something was going to happen, and I am sure that half sorry that the train was not started, though. Now, promise me, Bob, and off to your brakes."

"Then Gardner burst out with an oath, that if the passengers did not want their children run over they must keep off the track. It would be a good thing to run over one or two of them, as it would teach them a lesson. Of course, he didn't mean it, but he was so nervous, and he did not know what he did say. He added that Gardner's family lived near the track; and that Gardner's sole reason for slowing down was to have a chance to chat with them as he went through. This set Gardner's nerves on fire, and he then and there declared that he would make time, let the consequences be what they might, and if another accident happened, they would be responsible. You see how keeping his word, but the old fellow felt bad enough.

We dashed on over the frail iron at a frightful speed. You could almost hear the bars crackle as we went. The cars surged from east to west, forcing passengers to cling to their seats. Not far a second did I know any more.

To be continued.

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