

THE EVENING NEWS.

TUESDAY, May 26, 1872.

RUNNING A TIME-TABLE.

A BREAKSMAN'S STORY.

[CONCLUDED.]

We were nearly down to Valley Creek, on time. As we approached the long stretch of dirt grade, I felt by the shakings that Gardner had slackened up, as if the danger were really too great; and then, as if his promise had come full upon his mind, had again carefully opened his throttle. Down the Valley we went, our rapid speed startling the birds, the cattle, and even the staid old forest trees into new and strange ideas. We grasped the brake firmly; the engine stopped, and a screaming warning all to keep clear of it. I held my breath, well knowing that if we left the track it would be to go to destruction. Suddenly the whistle ceased, and then there came three unearthly yells from it; they pierced my ears, and made them ache. How I set up the brake for I do not know; but Gardner did. Then this mad Gardner suddenly reversed his engine. The shutting off, the reversing, and the brakes set up at sight that I feared the chains would break, did not seem to have any effect on the train. On it went, as its dangerously rapid speed. I stretched my neck out as far as possible, not daring to look at the railings; I could see that Gardner was at his post, looking out as I did, and moving his hand energetically, while whistle and bell were uniting their protest.

What was the matter I could not conjecture, but was anxious to know. Springing upon the rail, I made my way to the top of the car, and the mystery was revealed. There on the track was a sight that sent a thrill of horror through me. Only a few feet ahead of us, on the track, stood a mere child, unconscious of its danger, and so that it could not move. Just clear of the track lay a woman evidently half dead. I looked for Gardner, to see what he was doing; I closed my eyes to shut out the horrible sight. The poor fellow had not been idle. Plainly seeing that he could not drive the child from the track, and that its companion was helpless, he left his cab and climbed for a moment on the engine, on to the extreme end of the catcher, hauled over, and while clinging with one hand, reached out with the other. There did not seem to be one chance in a million to save the child—not one—but anxiety overcame horror, and I looked, and shuddered as I looked.

How my heart leaped into my very throat as I saw the train dash on, without a thought as to what it did. Gardner, with almost superhuman effort, raised the child by its arm from the track, and clasped it to his bosom. Then he sank down on the cow-catcher; faint and powerless. His fireman clambered out to his side, and you may rest assured I was not long in getting to their assistance. The unusual noise of the steam had brought out every person in the village to witness the sight, and as they realized it they shouted their joy until their throats must have been hoarse. The engineer and I got to Gardner's house; there was no need to hold the child, for, though rigid and helpless, Gardner held the little one to his breast with an iron grasp. Very soon we crossed the bridge and struck the up-grade, where the train slowed, and finally came to a full stop, nearly in front of Gardner's house. With the help of some of the villagers we took, by force, the child from the engineer's arms, and carried him into the house and laid him on the bed. As he sank down, the little life in him seemed to come back, and he whispered:

"Whose child is it?"

"Superintendent Brown's," said a neighbor, to my astonishment.

"Is it alive?" gasped Gardner.

"It is alive and well—thanks to your bravery," I answered, and Gardner snatched up his pipe.

The child which Gardner had so miraculously saved was the son and only child of our Superintendent. It seemed singular that the morning talk of the two men should have so singular an ending, but so it was. The wife of the Superintendent, with their only child, had been out for a walk. The little one running on ahead had strayed upon the track. Hearing the whistle, the mother called the child to her, but, happy in its freedom, it ran on, launching itself into the middle of the iron jaws of danger. It was too much for the mother. She made an effort to save her darling, but before she could overtake the little one, her strength failed her and she fell.

Our engine was injured, so that it was impossible to go on. We tried all we could to help Gardner, but the physician said that the excitement under which the poor fellow had labored had prostrated him, and that it would require the greatest care and a long time to bring him back to life. He had that care, you may rest assured.

I was in Gardner's house when Superintendent Brown came in that night. The "old man," as we called him, had lost all sign of his anger, and he was a child as he looked upon the scene, and the sympathy in his eyes. He visited the patient daily, and the physician said that the excitement under which the poor fellow had labored had prostrated him, and that it would require the greatest care and a long time to bring him back to life. He had that care, you may rest assured.

I may say, in conclusion, that the accident was a blessing in disguise, for once the Valley Road was thoroughly re-built in the best possible manner, newly stocked, and is to-day one of the best roads in the country, running its trains on time, and giving great delight to the traveling public, thanks to the energy and enterprise of Superintendent Gardner, a kind-hearted, gray-headed gentleman, who is ranked among the best railroad men in the country. I go down to see him twice a year, and we always talk of the day when he undertakes to run his timetable and the results thereof.

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