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BALLANTYNE

THE IRON HORSE

Robert Michael Ballantyne

The Iron Horse

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Содержание

Chapter One.	5
Chapter Two.	10
Chapter Three.	17
Chapter Four.	22
Chapter Five.	25
Chapter Six.	31
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	37

R. M. Ballantyne

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Chapter One.

Treats of the Engine-Driver's House and Household

Talk of earthquakes! not all the earthquakes that have rumbled in Ecuador or toppled over the spires and dwellings of Peru could compare, in the matter of dogged pertinacity, with that earthquake which diurnally and hourly shocked little Gertie's dwelling, quivered the white dimity curtains of little Gertie's bed and shook little Gertie's frame. A graceful, rounded little frame it was; yet strong, and firmly knit—perhaps in consequence of its having been from infancy so constantly and so well shaken together.

Her neat little body was surmounted by a head which no sculptor in search of an antique model would have chosen. Gertie's profile was not Grecian; her features were not classic—but they were comely, and rosy, and so sweet that most people wanted to kiss them, and many people did. Gertie did not object. Probably, being only six, she imagined that this was the ordinary and natural method of salutation. Yet it was observable that the child did not reciprocate kisses except in one or two special cases. She had evidently a mind of her own, a fact which was displayed most strikingly, in the passionate manner in which she reciprocated the embraces of John Marrot, her father, when that large hairy individual came in of an evening, and, catching her in his long arms, pressed her little body to his damp pilot-cloth-coated breast and her chubby face to his oily, smoke-and-soot begrimed countenance, forgetful for the moment of the remonstrance from his wife that was sure to follow:—

“Now then, John, there you go again. You ain't got no more power of subjewin' your feelings than one of your own engines, w'ich is the schreechin'ist, fizzin'ist, crashin'ist, bustin' things I ever 'ad the misfortune to 'ave to do with. There's a clean frock just put on this mornin' only fit for the wash-tub now?”

But John was an easy-going man. He was mild, kind, sedate, undemonstrative by nature, and looked upon slight matrimonial breezes as being good for the health. It was only Gertie who could draw him into demonstrations of feeling such as we have described, and, as we have said, she always reciprocated them violently, increasing thereby the wash-tub necessity tenfold.

It would have been strange indeed if John Marrot could have been much put about by a small matrimonial breeze, seeing that his life was spent in riding on an iron monster with white-hot lungs and boiling bowels which carried him through space day and night at the rate of fifty miles an hour! This, by the way, brings us back to our text—earthquakes.

Gertie's house—or Gertie's father's house, if you prefer it—stood close to the embankment of one of our great arterial railways—which of them, for reasons best known to ourself, we don't intend to tell, but, for the reader's comfort, we shall call it the Grand National Trunk Railway. So close did the house stand to the embankment that timid female passengers were known occasionally to scream as they approached it, under the impression that the train had left the rails and was about to dash into it—an impression which was enhanced and somewhat justified by the circumstance that the house stood with one of its corners; instead of its side, front, or back; towards the line; thereby inducing a sudden sensation of wrongness in the breasts of the twenty thousand passengers who swept past it daily. The extreme edge of its most protruding stone was exactly three yards four inches—by measurement—from the left rail of the down line.

Need we say more to account for the perpetual state of earthquakedom, in which that house was involved?

But the tremors and shocks to which it was exposed—by night and by day—was not all it had to bear. In certain directions of the wind it was intermittently enveloped in clouds of mingled soot and steam, and, being situated at a curve on the line where signalling became imminently needful, it was exposed to all the varied horrors of the whistle from the sharp screech of interrogation to the successive bursts of exasperation, or the prolonged and deadly yell of intimidation, with all the intermediate modulations—so that, what with the tremors, and shocks, and crashes, and shrieks, and thunderous roar of trains, Gertie's father's house maintained an upright front in circumstances that might have been equalled but could not have been surpassed by those of the Eddystone Lighthouse in the wildest of winter storms, while it excelled that celebrated building in this, that it faced a storm which knew no calm, but raged furiously all the year round.

John Marrot was an engine-driver on the Grand National Trunk Railway. This is equivalent to saying that he was a steady, sober, trustworthy man. None but men of the best character are nowadays put in so responsible a position. Nearly all the drivers on the line were of this kind—some better than others, no doubt, but all good. Of course there are exceptions to every rule. As in the best regulated families accidents will happen, so, on the best conducted lines, an occasional black sheep will get among the drivers, but this is the exception that proves the rule. The rule in the Grand National Trunk Railway was—get the best drivers and pay them well. The same may be said of the firemen, whose ambition was ultimately to drive the iron chargers which they fed. Besides being all that we have said, John was a big, burly, soft-hearted, hard-headed man, who knew that two and two in ordinary circumstances made four, and who didn't require to be told that his left foot was not his right one.

It was generally supposed that John Marrot had no nerves, and that his muscles had imbibed some of the iron of which his engine was composed. This was a mistake, though there was some truth in both suppositions.

John's family consisted of himself when at home, which, although often, was never for long; his wife—fat and fair, capable of being roused, but, on the whole, a good, sensible, loving woman; his eldest daughter, Lucy or Loo—nineteen, dark, pretty, and amiable; his youngest daughter, Gertrude, *alias* Gertie—six, sunny and serious, at least as serious as was possible for one so young, so innocent, so healthy, and so happy as she; his son Bob, aged twelve, who was a lamp-boy at the great station not far off, and of whom it may be briefly said that he was “no better than he should be,” and, lastly, the baby—not yet at the walking period of life, with a round head, round body, round eyes, and a round dozen at least—if not more—of hairs standing straight up on the top of his bald pate, suggesting the idea that he must at some period of his life have been singed by a passing locomotive—an event not by any means beyond the bounds of possibility, for it may be written, with more truth of this, than of any other infant, that he had been born and nurtured amid thunder, smoke, and blazes.

As might have been expected in the circumstances, he was a powerful baby. We cannot afford space for a full description, but it would be wrong to omit mention of the strength of his lungs. The imitative tendency of children is proverbial. Clearly the locomotive was baby Marrot's pattern in many things. No infant that ever drew breath equalled this one at a yell. There was absolutely a touch of sublimity in the sound of the duet—frequently heard—when baby chanced to be performing a solo and his father's engine went shrieking past with a running accompaniment! It is a disputed point to this day which of the two beat the other; and it is an admitted fact that nothing else could equal either.

There were two other inmates of John Marrot's house—not members of the family. One was his fireman, William Garvie, who lodged with him, the other a small servant or maid-of-all-work who led a rugged existence, but appeared to enjoy it, although it kept her thin. Her name was Ann Stocks, familiarly known as Nanny.

We are thus particular in describing the engine-driver's household because, apart from other reasons, a group of human beings who could live, and thrive, and eat, and sleep, and love, and learn, and so forth, in such circumstances is noteworthy.

It was quite a treat—believe it, reader—to see little Gertie and the baby slumber while the engines were apparently having “a night of it” outside! Come with us and behold. It is 10:30 p.m. Father is crossing country on the limited mail at any pace you choose between fifty and eighty miles an hour, time having been lost at the last station, owing to the unaccountable disappearance of a first-class passenger, and time having to be made up by fair means or otherwise. His mate stands beside him. In the family mansion pretty Loo sleeps like a “good angel,” as she is, in a small room farthest from the corner next the line, but with her we have nothing to do at present. Nanny, also sound asleep, lies in some place of profound obscurity among the coals in the lower regions of the house, laying in that store of health and vigour which will enable her to face the rugged features of the following day. We dismiss her, also, with the hope that she may survive the coal-dust and the lack of oxygen, and turn to the chief room of the house—the kitchen, parlour, dining-room, drawing-room, nursery, and family bedroom all in one. Engine-drivers are not always so badly off for space in their domiciles, but circumstances which are not worth mentioning have led John Marrot to put up with little. In this apartment, which is wonderfully clean and neat, there are two box-beds and a sort of crib. Baby sleeps—as only babies can—in perfect bliss in the crib; Gertie slumbers with her upturned sweet little face shaded by the white dimity curtains in one bed; Mrs Molly Marrot snores like a grampus in the other. It is a wide bed, let deep into the wall, as it were, and Mrs M’s red countenance looms over the counterpane like the setting sun over a winter fog-bank.

Hark? A rumble in the far distance—ominous and low at first, but rapidly increasing to the tones of distant thunder. It is the night express for the North—going at fifty miles an hour. At such a rate of speed it might go right round the world in twenty-one days! While yet distant the whistle is heard, shrill, threatening, and prolonged. Louder and louder; it is nearing the curve now and the earth trembles—the house trembles too, but Gertie’s parted lips breathe as softly as before; baby’s eyes are as tight and his entire frame as still as when he first fell asleep. Mrs Marrot, too, maintains the monotony of her snore. Round the curve it comes at last, hammer and tongs, thundering like Olympus, and yelling like an iron fiend. The earthquake is “on!” The embankment shudders; the house quivers; the doors, windows, cups, saucers, and pans rattle. Outside, all the sledge-hammers and anvils in Vulcan’s smithy are banging an *obbligato* accompaniment to the hissing of all the serpents that Saint Patrick drove out of Ireland as the express comes up; still Gertie’s rest is unbroken. She does indeed give a slight smile and turn her head on the other side, as if she had heard a pleasant whisper, but nothing more. Baby, too, vents a prolonged sigh before plunging into a profounder depth of repose. Mrs Marrot gives a deprecatory grunt between snores, but it is merely a complimentary “Hallo! ’s that you?” sort of question which requires no answer.

As the rushing storm goes by a timid and wakeful passenger happens to lower the window and look out. He sees the house. “It’s all over?” are his last words as he falls back in his seat and covers his face with his hands. He soon breathes more freely on finding that it is not all over, but fifteen or twenty miles lie between him and the house he expected to annihilate, before his nervous system has quite recovered its tone.

This, reader, is a mere sample of the visitations by which that family was perpetually affected, though not afflicted. Sometimes the rushing masses were heavy goods trains, which produced less fuss, but more of earthquake. At other times red lights, intimating equally danger and delay, brought trains to a stand close to the house, and kept them hissing and yelling there as if querulously impatient to get on. The uproar reached its culminating point about 12:45, on the night of which we write, when two trains from opposite directions were signalled to wait, which they did precisely opposite John Marrot’s windows, and there kept up such a riot of sound as feeble language is impotent to convey. To the accustomed ears the whistle and clank of a checked and angry pilot-engine might have been discerned amid the hullabaloo; but to one whose experience in such matters was small, it might have seemed as though six or seven mad engines were sitting up on end, like monster rabbits on a bank, pawing the air and screaming out their hearts in the wild delirium of unlimited power and

ungovernable fury. Still, although they moved a little, the sleepers did not awake—so potent is the force of habit! However, it did not last long. The red lights removed their ban, the white lights said “Come on,” the monster rabbits gave a final snort of satisfaction and went away—each with its tail of live-stock, or minerals, or goods, or human beings, trailing behind it.

The temporary silence round the house was very intense, as may well be believed—so much so that the heavy foot-fall of a man in the bypath that led to it sounded quite intrusive.

He was a tall broad-shouldered man in a large pilot coat, cap and boots, and appeared to walk somewhat lame as he approached the door. He tried the handle. It was locked, of course.

“I thought so,” he muttered in a low bass voice; “so much for a bad memory.”

He rapped twice on the door, loudly, with his knuckles and then kicked it with his boot. Vain hope! If a burglar with a sledge-hammer had driven the door in, he would have failed to tickle the drum of any ear there. The man evidently was aware of this, for, changing his plan, he went round to a back window on the ground-floor, and opened it at the top with some difficulty. Peeping in he gazed for some time intently, and then exclaimed under his breath, “Ha! it’s open by good luck.” Gathering a handful of gravel, he threw it into the house with considerable force.

The result proved that he had not aimed at random, for the shower entered the open door of Nanny’s sleeping-cellar and fell smartly on her face.

It is well-known that sailors, although capable of slumbering through loud and continuous noises, can be awakened by the slightest touch, so likewise Nanny. On receiving the shower of gravel she incontinently buried her head in the blankets, drew an empty coal-scuttle over her shoulders and began to shout thieves! and murder! at the top of her voice. Having taken such pains to muffle it, of course no one heard her cries. The man, if a burglar, had evidently a patient philosophical turn of mind, for he calmly waited till the damsel was exhausted, and when she at length peeped out to observe the effect of her heroic efforts at self-preservation he said quietly, “Nanny, lass, don’t be a fool! It’s me; open the door; I’ve gone an’ forgot my latch-key.”

“Oh la! master, it ain’t you, is it? It ain’t thieves and robbers, is it?”

“No, no. Open the door like a good girl.”

“And it ain’t an accident, is it?” continued Nanny partially dressing in haste. “Oh, I knows it’s a accident, Missus always prophesied as a accident would come to pass some day, which has come true. You’re not maimed, master?”

“No, no; be quick, girl!”

“Nor Willum ain’t maimed, is he? He ain’t dead? Oh *don’t* say Willum is—”

“Bill Garvie’s all right,” said the engine-driver, as he brushed past the girl and went up-stairs.

Now, although Mrs Marrot’s ears were totally deaf to locomotives they were alert enough to the sound of her husband’s voice. When, therefore, he entered the kitchen, he found her standing on the floor with an ample shawl thrown round her.

“Nothing wrong?” she inquired anxiously.

“Nothing, Molly, my dear, only I got a slight bruise on the leg in the engine-shed to-day, and I had to go up an’ show it to the doctor, d’ye see, before comin’ home, which has made me later than usual.”

“Are you *sure* it’s not a back hurt, father?” asked Loo, coming in at the moment—also enveloped in a shawl, and looking anxious.

“Sure? ay, I’m sure enough; it’s only a scratch. See here.”

Saying this he removed one of his boots, and pulling up his trousers displayed a bandaged leg.

“Well, but we can’t see through the bandages, you know,” said Mrs Marrot.

“Let me take them off, father, and I’ll replace—”

“Take ’em off!” exclaimed John, pulling down the leg of his trouser and rising with a laugh. “No, no, Loo; why, it’s only just bin done up all snug by the doctor, who’d kick up a pretty shindy if he found I had undid it. There’s one good will come of it anyhow, I shall have a day or two in the

house with you all; for the doctor said I must give it a short rest. So, off to bed again, Loo. This is not an hour for a respectable young woman to be wanderin' about in her night-dress. Away with you!"

"Was any one else hurt, father?" said Loo. She asked the question anxiously, but there was a slight flush on her cheek and a peculiar smile which betrayed some hidden feeling.

"No one else," returned her father. "I tell 'ee it wasn't an accident at all—it was only a engine that brushed up agin me as I was comin' out o' the shed. That's all; so I just came home and left Will Garvie to look after our engine. There, run away."

Loo smiled, nodded and disappeared, followed by Mrs Marrot, who went, like a sensible woman, to see that her alarmed domestic was all right. While she was away John went to the crib and kissed the rosy cheek of his sleeping boy. Then he bent over the bed with the white dimity curtains to Miss Gertie's forehead, for which purpose he had to remove a mass of curly hair with his big brown hand.

"Bless you, my darling," he said in silent speech, "you came near bein' fatherless this night—nearer than you ever was before." He kissed her again tenderly, and a fervent "thank the Lord!" rose from his heart to heaven.

In less than half-an-hour after this the engine-driver's family sank into profound repose, serenaded by the music of a mineral train from the black country, which rushed laboriously past their dwelling like an over-weighted thunderbolt.

Chapter Two. The Driver Visits a Little Elderly Gentlewoman and Prepares the Iron Horse for Action

Next day John Marrot spent the brief period of repose accorded by the doctor to his leg in romping about the house with the baby in his arms. Being a large man, accustomed to much elbow-room and rapid motion, and the house being small, John may be said to have been a dangerous character in the family on such occasions. Apart from baby, no elephant was ever more sluggish in his motions; but when coupled—professionally speaking—to his own tender infant, John knew no bounds, his wife knew no rest and his baby knew no higher earthly bliss.

Sometimes it was on his shoulder, sometimes on his head and often on his foot, riding with railway speed to “Banbury Cross.” Again it was on its back in the crib or on the bed being tickled into fits of laughter, which bid fair at times to merge into fits of convulsion, to the horror of little Gertie, who came in for a large share of that delightful holiday’s enjoyment, but whose spirit was frequently harrowed with alarm at the riotous conduct of her invalid father. In his glee the man might have been compared to a locomotive with a bad driver, who was constantly shutting off the steam and clapping on the brakes too soon or too late, thus either falling short of or overshooting his mark. What between the door and the dresser, the fire, the crib, the window, and the furniture, John showed himself a dreadfully bad pilot and was constantly running into or backing out of difficulties. At last towards the afternoon of that day, while performing a furious charge round the room with baby on his head, he overturned the wash-tub, which filled the baby with delirious joy, and Gertie with pleasurable alarm.

As for Mrs Marrot, she was too happy to have her husband at home for a whole day to care much about trifles, nevertheless she felt it her duty to reprove him, lest the children should learn a bad lesson.

“There now, John, I knew you’d do it at last. You’re much too violent, and you shouldn’t ought to risk the baby’s neck in that way. Such a mess! How *can* you expect me to keep things tidy if you go on so?”

John was very penitent. He did not reply at first, but putting baby into the crib—where it instantly drowned with a great yell the shriek of a passing train—he went down on his knees and began to “swab” up the water with a jack-towel. Loo ran laughingly from the corner where she had been sewing, and insisted on doing it for him.

“You’ll hurt your leg, father, if you bend it so, and I’m sure it must be swelled and pained enough already with so much romping.”

“Not a bit, Loo,” objected John. “It was me as caused the mess, an’ justice requires that I should swab it up. There, go sew that sentiment into a sampler an’ hang it up over yer bed.”

But Loo would not give in. While they were still engaged in the controversy the door opened, and young Bob Marrot stood before them with his eyes wide open and his hair straight up on end, as if he had recently seen a ghost. This aspect, however, was no sign of alarm, being his normal condition.

“Ha! seems to me, somehow, that somebody’s bin up to somethin’.”

“Right Bob,” replied his father, rising from his knees and throwing the jack-towel at him.

The lad easily evaded the shot, being well accustomed to elude much more deadly missiles, and, picking up the towel, quietly set to work to perform the duty in dispute.

“You’re wanted,” he said, looking up at his father while he wrung the towel over a tin basin.

“Eh! Where?”

“Up at the shed.”

“I’m on sick leave,” said John.

“Can’t help that. The 6:30 p.m. passenger train must be drove, and there’s nobody left but you to drive it. Jones is away with a goods train owin’ to Maxwell having sprained his ankle, and Long Thompson is down with small-pox, so you’ll have to do it. I offered ’em my services, but the manager he said that intelligent lads couldn’t be spared for such menial work, and told me to go and fetch you.”

“Maxwell had no business to sprain his ankle,” said John Marrot. “Hows’ever,” he added cheerfully, “I’ve had a rare good holiday, an’ the leg’s all but right again, so, Molly, let’s have an early tea; I’ll give it a good rest for another half-hour and then be ready for the 6:30 p.m-ers. Cut off your steam, will you?”

This last observation was made to the baby, and was accompanied by a shake and a toss towards the ceiling which caused him to obey instantly, under the impression, no doubt that the fun was to be renewed. Being, however, consigned to the care of Gertie he again let on the steam and kept it up during the whole time the family were at tea—which meal they enjoyed thoroughly, quite regardless of the storm.

He was asleep when his father rose at last and buttoned his heavy coat up to the chin, while Mrs Marrot stood on tiptoe to arrange more carefully the woollen shawl round his neck.

“Now, don’t stand more than you can help on your hurt leg, John.”

“Certainly not, duckie,” said John, stooping to kiss the upturned face; “I’ll sit on the rail as much as I can, like a ’Merican racoon. By the way,” he added, turning suddenly to Loo, “you delivered that note from young Mr Tipps to his mother?”

“Yes, immediately after I got it from you; and I waited to see if there was an answer, but she said there wasn’t. It must have contained bad news, I fear, for she turned pale while she read it.”

“H’m, well,” said John, putting on his cap, “don’t know nothin’ about what was in it, so it’s no bizzness o’ mine.”

With a hearty good-evening to all, and a special embrace to Gertie, the engine-driver left his home, accompanied by Bob his hopeful son.

“Mr Sharp,” said Bob, as they walked along, “has bin makin’ oncommon partikler inquiries among us about some o’ the porters. I raither think they’re a bad lot.”

“Not at all,” replied his father severely. “They’re no more a bad lot than the drivers, or, for the matter of that, than the clerks or the directors, or the lamp-boys. You ought to be gittin’ old enough by this time, Bob, to know that every lot o’ fish in this world, however good, has got a few bad uns among ’em. As a rule railway directors and railway clerks, and railway porters and railway officials of all sorts are good—more or less—the same may be said of banks an’ insurances, an’ all sorts of things—but, do what ye may, a black sheep or two *will* git in among ’em, and, of course, the bigger the consarn, the more numerous the black sheep. Even the clergy ain’t free from that uniwersal law of natur. But what’s Mr Sharp bin inquiring arter?”

“Ah—wot indeed!” replied Bob; “ow should I know? Mr Sharp ain’t the man to go about the line with a ticket on his back tellin’ wot he’s arter. By no means. P’lice superintendents ain’t usually given to that; but he’s arter *somethin’* partickler.”

“Well, that ain’t no bizzness of ours, Bob, so we don’t need to trouble our heads about it. There’s nothin’ like mindin’ yer own bizzness. Same time,” added John after a short pause, “that’s no reason why, as a sea-farin’ friend o’ mine used to say, a man shouldn’t keep his weather-eye open, d’ye see?”

Bob intimated that he did see, by winking with the eye that chanced to be next his parent; but further converse between father and son was interrupted at a turn in the road, where they were joined by a stout, broad-shouldered young man, whose green velveteen jacket vest, and trousers bespoke him a railway porter.

“Evenin’, Sam,” said our driver with a friendly nod; “goin’ on night dooty, eh?”

“Yes, worse luck,” replied Sam, thrusting his powerful hands into his pockets.

“Why so, Sam, you ain’t used to mind night dooty?”

“No more I do,” said Sam testily, “but my missus is took bad, and there’s no one to look after her properly—for that old ’ooman we got ain’t to be trusted. ’Tis a hard thing to have to go on night dooty when a higher dooty bids me stay at home.”

There was a touch of deep feeling in the tone in which the latter part of Sam Natly’s remark was uttered. His young wife, to whom he had been only a year married, had fallen into bad health, and latterly the doctors had given him little encouragement to hope for her recovery.

“Sam,” said John Marrot stopping, “I’ll go an’ send a friend, as I knows of, to look after yer wife.”

“A friend?” said Sam; “you can’t mean any o’ your own family, John, for you haven’t got time to go back that length now, and—”

“Well, never mind, I’ve got time to go where I’m agoin’. You run on to the shed, Bob, and tell Garvie that I’ll be there in fifteen minutes.”

The engine-driver turned off abruptly, and, increasing his pace to a smart walk, soon stood before the door of one of those uncommonly small neat suburban villas which the irrigating influence of the Grand National Trunk Railway had caused to spring up like mushrooms around the noisy, smoky, bustling town of Clatterby—to the unspeakable advantage of that class of gentlefolk who possess extremely limited incomes, but who, nevertheless, prefer fresh air to smoke.

“Is your missus at ’ome?” he inquired of the stout elderly woman who answered to his modest summons—for although John was wont to clatter and bang through the greater part of his daily and nightly career, he was tender of touch and act when out of his usual professional beat.

“Yes; do you wish to see her?”

“I does, my dear. Sorry I ’aven’t got a card with me, but if you’ll just say that it’s John Marrot, the engine-driver, I dessay that’ll do for a free pass.”

The elderly woman went off with a smile, but returned quickly with an anxious look, and bade the man follow her. He was ushered into a small and poorly furnished but extremely neat and clean parlour, where sat a thin little old lady in an easy-chair, looking very pale.

“Ev’nin’, ma’am,” said John, bowing and looking rougher and bigger than usual in such a small apartment.

“You—you—don’t bring bad news, I hope!—my son Joseph—”

“Oh no, Mrs Tipps, not by no means,” said Marrot, hasting to relieve the timid old lady’s feelings, “Mr Joseph is all right—nothing wotiver wrong with him—nor likely to be, ma’am. Leastwise he wos all right w’en I seed ’im last.”

“And when might that be?” asked the timid old lady with a sigh of relief as she clasped her hands tightly together.

“W’y, let me see,” said John, touching his forehead, “it was yesterday evenin’ w’en I came up with the northern express.”

“But many accidents might have happened since yesterday evening,” said Mrs Tipps, still in an anxious tone.

“That’s true, ma’am. All the engines on the Grand Trunk from the Pentland Firth to the Channel might have bu’sted their bilers since that time—but it ain’t likely,” replied John, with a bland smile.

“And—and what was my son doing when you passed him? Did you speak to him?”

“Speak to him! Bless your heart, ma’am,” said John, with another benignant smile, “I went past Langrye station at sixty mile an hour, so we hadn’t much chance to speak to each other. It would have been as much as we could have managed, if we’d tried it, to exchange winks.”

“Dreadful!” exclaimed Mrs Tipps in a low tone. “Is that the usual rate of travelling on your railway?”

“Oh dear no, ma’am. It’s only *my* express train as goes at that rate. Other expresses run between forty and fifty miles, an’ or’nary trains average about thirty miles an hour—goods, they go at about twenty, more or less; but they varies a good deal. The train I drives is about the fastest in the kingdom,

w'ich is pretty much the same as sayin' it's the fastest in the world, ma'am. Sometimes I'm obleeged to go as high as nigh seventy miles an hour to make up time."

"The fastest mail-coaches in *my* young days," said Mrs Tipps, "used to go at the rate of ten miles an hour, I believe."

"Pretty much so," said John. "They did manage a mile or two more, I'm told, but that was their average of crawlin' with full steam on."

"And *you* sometimes drive at sixty or seventy miles an hour?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"With people in the carriages?"

"Cer'nly, ma'am."

"How I *wish* that I had lived a hundred years ago!" sighed poor Mrs Tipps.

"You'd have bin a pretty old girl by this time if you had," thought the engine-driver, but he was too polite to give utterance to the thought.

"And what was my son doing when you passed him at that frightful speed—you could *see* him, I suppose?"

"Oh yes, ma'am, I could see him well enough. He was talkin' an' laughin', as far as I could make out, with an uncommon pretty girl."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Mrs Tipps, flushing slightly—for she was extremely sensitive,—and evidently much relieved by this information. "Well, my good man, what do you wish me to do for you? anything that is in my power to—"

"Thankee, ma'am, but I don't want you to do nothin' for *me*."

"Then what have you to say to me?" added the old lady with a little smile that was clearly indicative of a kind little heart.

"I've come to take the liberty, ma'am, of askin' you to do one of my mates a favour."

"Most willingly," said Mrs Tipps with animation. "I shall never forget that you saved my dear Joseph's life by pulling him off the line when one of your dreadful engines was going straight over him. Anything that I am capable of doing for you or your friends will be but a poor return for what you have done for me. I have often asked you to allow me to make me some such return, Mr Marrot, and have been grieved at your constant refusal. I am delighted that you come to me now."

"You're very good to say so, ma'am. The fact is that one o' my friends, a porter on the line, named Sam Natly, has a young wife who is, I fear, far gone wi' consumption; she's worse to-night an' poor Sam's obliged to go on night dooty, so he can't look arter her, an' the old 'ooman they've got ain't worth nothin'. So I thought I'd make bold, ma'am, to ask you to send yer servant to git a proper nurse to take charge of her to-night, it would be—"

"I'll go myself!" exclaimed Mrs Tipps, interrupting, and starting up with a degree of alacrity that astonished the engine-driver. "Here, write down the address on that piece of paper—you can write, I suppose?"

"Yes, ma'am," replied John, modestly, as he bent down and wrote the address in a bold flowing hand, "I raither think I *can* write. I write notes, on a paper I've got to fill up daily, on the engine; an' w'en a man's trained to do that, ma'am, it's my opinion he's fit to write in any circumstances whatsomedever. Why, you'd hardly believe it, ma'am, but I do assure you, that I wrote my fust an' last love-letter to my missus on the engine. I was drivin' the Lightenin' at the time—that's the name o' my engine, ma'am, an' they calls me Jack Blazes in consikence—well, I'd bin courtin' Molly, off-an'-on, for about three months. She b'longed to Pinchley station, you must know, where we used to stop to give her a drink—"

"What! to give Molly a drink?"

"No, ma'am," replied John, with a slight smile, "to give the ingine a drink. Well, she met me nigh every day 'xcept Sundays at that station, and as we'd a pretty long time there—about five minutes—we used to spend it beside the pump, an' made the most of it. But somehow I took it into my head

that Molly was playin' fast an' loose with me, an' I was raither cool on her for a time. Hows'ever, her father bein' a pointsman, she wos shifted along with him to Langrye station—that's where your son is, ma'am—an' as we don't stop there we was obleeged to confine our courtship to a nod an' a wave of a handkerchief. Leastwise she shook out a white handkerchief an' I flourished a lump o' cotton-waste. Well, one day as we was close upon Langrye station—about two miles—I suddenly takes it into my head that I'd bring the thing to a pint, so I sings out to my mate—that was my fireman, ma'am—says I, 'look out Jim,' an' I draws out my pencil an' bends my legs—you must always bend your legs a little, ma'am, w'en you writes on a locomotive, it makes springs of 'em, so to speak—an' I writes on the back of a blank time-bill, 'Molly, my dear, no more shilly-shallyin' with *me*. Time's up. If you'll be tender, I'll be locomotive. Only say the word and we're coupled for life in three weeks. A white handkerchief means yes, a red 'un, no. If red, you'll see a noo driver on the 10:15 a.m. express day after to-morrow. John Marrot.' I was just in time to pitch the paper crumpled up right into her bosom," continued the driver, wiping his forehead as if the deep anxiety of that eventful period still affected him, "an' let me tell you, ma'am, it requires a deal o' nice calculation to pitch a piece o' crumpled paper true off a locomotive goin' between fifty and sixty miles an hour; but it went all straight—I could see that before we was gone."

"And what was the result?" asked the little old lady as earnestly as if that result were still pending.

"W'y, the result wos as it should be! My letter was a short 'un, but it turned out to be a powerful brake. Brought her up sharp—an' we was coupled in less than six weeks."

"Amazing phase of human life!" observed Mrs Tipps, gazing in admiration at the stalwart giant who stood deferentially before her.

"Well, it *was* a raither coorious kind o' proposal," said Marrot with a smile, "but it worked uncommon well. I've never wanted to uncouple since then."

"Pardon *me*, Mr Marrot," said Mrs Tipps, with little hysterical laugh—knowing that she was about to perpetrate a joke—"may I ask if there are any—any *little* tenders?"

"Oh, lots of 'em," replied John, "quite a train of 'em; four livin' an' three gone dead. The last was coupled on only a short time ago. You'll excuse me now, ma'am," he added, pulling out and consulting the ponderous chronometer with which the company supplied him, "I must go now, havin' to take charge o' the 6:30 p.m. train,—it ain't my usual train, but I'm obleeged to take it to-night owin' to one of our drivers havin' come by an accident. Evenin', ma'am."

John bowed, and retired so promptly that poor Mrs Tipps had no time to make further inquiry into the accident referred to—at the very mention of which her former alarm came back in full force. However, she wisely got the better of her own anxieties by throwing herself into those of others. Putting on her bonnet she sallied forth on her errand of mercy.

Meanwhile John Marrot proceeded to the engine-shed to prepare his iron horse for action. Here he found that his fireman, Will Garvie, and his cleaner, had been attending faithfully to their duty. The huge locomotive, which looked all the more gigantic for being under cover, was already quivering with that tremendous energy—that artificial life—which rendered it at once so useful and so powerful a servant of man. Its brasses shone with golden lustre, its iron rods and bars, cranks and pistons glittered with silvery sheen, and its heavier parts and body were gay with a new coat of green paint. Every nut and screw and lever and joint had been screwed up, and oiled, examined, tested, and otherwise attended to, while the oblong pit over which it stood when in the shed—and into which its ashes were periodically emptied—glowed with the light of its intense furnace. Ever and anon a little puff issued from its safety-valve, proving to John Marrot that there was life within his fiery steed sufficient to have blown the shed to wreck with all its brother engines, of which there were at the time two or three dozen standing—some disgorging their fire and water after a journey, and preparing to rest for the night; some letting off steam with a fiendish yell unbearably prolonged; others undergoing trifling repairs preparatory to starting next day, and a few, like that of our engine-

driver, ready for instant action and snorting with impatience like war-horses “scenting the battle from afar.” The begrimed warriors, whose destiny it was to ride these iron chargers, were also variously circumstanced. Some in their shirt sleeves busy with hammer and file at benches hard by; others raking out fire-boxes, or oiling machinery; all busy as bees, save the few, who, having completed their preparations, were buttoning up their jackets and awaiting the signal to charge.

At last that signal came to John Marrot—not in a loud shout of command or a trumpet-blast, but by the silent hand of Time, as indicated on his chronometer.

“But how,” it may be asked, “does John Marrot know precisely the hour at which he has to start, the stations he has to stop at, the various little acts of coupling on and dropping off carriages and trucks, and returning with trains or with ‘empties’ within fixed periods so punctually, that he shall not interfere with, run into, or delay, the operations of the hundreds of drivers whose duties are as complex, nice, important, and swift as his own.”

Reader, we reply that John knows it all in consequence of the perfection of *system* attained in railway management. Without this, our trains and rails all over the kingdom would long ago have been smashed up into what Irishmen expressively name smithereens.

The duty of arranging the details of the system devolves on the superintendents of departments on the line, namely, the passenger, goods, and locomotive superintendents, each of whom reigns independently and supreme in his own department, but of course, like the members of a well-ordered family, they have to consult together in order that their trains may be properly horsed, and the time of running so arranged that there shall be no clashing in their distinct though united interests. When the number of trains and time of running have been fixed, and finally published by the passenger superintendent—who is also sometimes the “Out-door superintendent,” and who has duties to perform that demand very considerable powers of generalship,—it is the duty of the locomotive superintendent to supply the requisite engines. This officer, besides caring for all the “plant” or rolling-stock, new and old, draws out periodically a schedule, in which is detailed to a nicety every minute act that has to be done by drivers—the hour at which each engine is to leave the shed on each day of the week, the number of each engine, its driver and fireman, and the duties to be performed; and this sheet contains complete *daily* (nay, almost hourly) directions for passenger, goods, and pilot-engines.

In order to secure attention to these regulations, each engineman is fined one shilling for every minute he is behind time in leaving the shed. The difficulty of making these runnings of trains dovetail into each other on lines where the traffic is great and constant, may well be understood to be considerable, particularly when it is remembered that ordinary regular traffic is interfered with constantly by numerous excursion, special, and other irregular trains, in the midst of which, also, time must be provided for the repair and renewal of the line itself, the turning of old rails, laying down of new ones, raising depressed sleepers, renewing broken chairs, etcetera,—all which is constantly going on, and that, too, at parts of the line over which hundreds of trains pass in the course of the twenty-four hours.

Besides the arrangements for the regular traffic, which are made monthly, a printed sheet detailing the special traffic, repairs of lines, new and altered signals, working arrangements, etcetera, is issued weekly to every member of the staff; particularly to engine-drivers and guards. We chance to possess one of these private sheets, issued by one of our principal railways. Let us peep behind the scenes for a moment and observe how such matters are managed.

The vacation has come to an end, and the boys of Rapsallion College will, on a certain day, pour down on the railway in shoals with money in hand and a confident demand for accommodation. This invading army must be prepared for. Ordinary trains are not sufficient for it. Delay is dangerous on railways; it must not be permitted; therefore the watchful superintendent writes an order which we find recorded as follows:—

“*Wednesday, 26th April*,—Accommodation must be provided on this day in the 3:10 and 6:25 p.m. Up, and 2:25 and 6:10 p.m. Down Trains, for the Cadets

returning to Rapsallion College. By the Trains named, Rapsallion College tickets will be collected at Whitewater on the Down journey, and at Smokingham on the Up journey. Oldershot to send a man to Whitewater to assist in the collection of these tickets.”

Again—a “Relief Train” has to be utilised. It won’t “pay” to run empty trains on the line unnecessarily, therefore the superintendent has his eye on it, and writes:—

“*April 23rd.*—An Empty Train will leave Whiteheath for Woolhitch at about 8:10 p.m., to work up from Woolhitch at 9:05 p.m., calling at Woolhitch Dockyard and Curlton, and forming the 9:15 p.m. Up Ordinary Train from Whiteheath. Greatgun Street to provide Engines and Guards for this service.”

This is but a slight specimen of the providing, dovetailing, timing, and guarding that has to be done on all the lines in the kingdom. In the same sheet from which the above is quoted, we find notes, cautions, and intimations as to such various matters as the holding of the levers of facing points when trains are passing through junctions; the attention required of drivers to new signals; the improper use of telegraph bells; the making search for lost “passes;” the more careful loading of goods waggons; the changes in regard to particular trains; the necessity of watchfulness on the part of station-masters, robberies having been committed on the line; the intimation of dates when and places where ballast trains are to be working on the line; the times and, places when and where repairs to line are to take place during the brief intervals between trains of the ordinary traffic; and many other matters, which naturally lead one to the belief that superintendents of railways must possess the eyes of Argus, the generalship of Wellington, and the patience of Job.

Being carefully hedged in, as we have shown, with strict rules and regulations, backed by fines in case of the slightest inattention, and the certainty of prompt dismissal in case of gross neglect or disobedience, with the possibility of criminal prosecution besides looming in the far distance, our friend, John Marrot, knowing his duties well, and feeling perfect confidence in himself and his superiors, consulted his chronometer for the last time, said, “Now, then, Bill!” and mounted his noble steed.

Will Garvie, who was putting a finishing drop of oil into some part of the machinery, took his station beside his mate and eased off the brake. John let off two sharp whistles (an imperative duty on the part of every driver before starting an engine) and let on the steam. The first was a very soft pulsation—a mere puff—but it was enough to move the ponderous engine as if it had been a cork, though its actual weight with tender was fifty-three tons. Another puff, and slowly the iron horse moved out of its stable. There was a gentle, oily, gliding, effect connected with its first movements that might have won the confidence even of timid Mrs Captain Tipps. Another puff of greater strength shot the engine forward with a sudden grandeur of action that would certainly have sent that lady’s heart into her throat. In a few seconds it reached and passed the place where the siding was connected with the main line, and where a pointsman stood ready to shift the points. Here the obedient spirit of the powerful steed was finely displayed. Will Garvie reversed the action of the engines by a process which, though beautifully simple and easily done, cannot be easily described. John let on a puff of steam, and the engine glided backwards as readily as it had run forward. A few seconds afterwards it moved slowly under the magnificent arch of Clatterby station, and its buffers met those of the train it was destined to draw as if with a gentle touch of friendly greeting.

At the station all was bustle and noise; but here we must venture to do what no human being could accomplish in reality, compel the 6:30 p.m. train to wait there until it shall be our pleasure to give it the signal to start! Meanwhile we shall put back the clock an hour or so, ask the reader to return to Mrs Tipps’ residence and observe what transpired there while John Marrot was in the shed getting his iron steed ready for action.

Chapter Three.

In which the Widow holds Converse with a Captain, makes the Acquaintance of a Young Man, and receives a Telegraphic Shock, which ends in a Railway Journey

Mrs Captain Tipps was, as we have said, a thin old lady of an excessively timid temperament. She was also, as we have shown, impulsively kind in disposition. Moreover, she was bird-like in aspect and action. We would not have it supposed, however, that her features were sharp. On the contrary, they were neat and rounded and well formed, telling of great beauty in youth, but her little face and mouth were of such a form that one was led irresistibly to expect to hear her chirp; she fluttered rather than walked and twittered rather than talked. Altogether she was a charming little old lady, with a pair of bead-like eyes as black as sloes. Happy that captain—a sea-captain, by the way, long since dead—round whom she had fluttered in days gone bye, and happy that son Joseph round whom, when at home, she fluttered now.

But Joseph was not often at home at the time we write of. He was an honest soul—a gentle, affectionate man with a handsome face, neat dapper little frame, something like his mother in many ways, yet not unmanly. He was too earnest, simple, unassuming, and unaffected to be that. He was a railway clerk, and had recently been appointed to Langrye station, about fifty miles from Clatterby, which necessitated his leaving his mother's roof; but Mrs Tipps consoled herself with the intention of giving up her little villa and going to live at Langrye.

Poverty, after the captain's death, had seized upon the widow, and held her tightly down during the whole of that period when Joseph and his only sister Netta were being educated. But Mrs Tipps did her duty bravely by them. She was a practically religious woman, and tried most earnestly to rule her life in accordance with the blessed Word of God. She trained up her children "in the way that they should go," in thorough reliance on the promise that "they would not depart from it when they were old." She accepted the command, "owe no man anything but to love one another," as given to herself as well as to the world at large—hence she kept out of debt, and was noted for deeds of kindness wherever she went.

But she was pinched during this period—terribly pinched—no one knew how severely save her daughter Netta, to whom she had been in the habit of confiding all her joys and sorrows from the time that the child could form any conception of what joy or sorrow meant. But Mrs Tipps did not weep over her sorrows, neither did she become boisterous over her joys. She was an equable, well-balanced woman in everything except the little matter of her nervous system. Netta was a counterpart of her mother. As time went on expenses increased, and living on small means became more difficult, so that Mrs Tipps was compelled to contemplate leaving the villa, poor and small though it was, and taking a cheaper residence. At this juncture a certain Captain Lee, an old friend of her late husband—also a sea-captain, and an extremely gruff one—called upon the widow, found out her straitened circumstances, and instantly offered her five hundred pounds, which she politely but firmly refused.

"But madam," said the excitable captain on that memorable occasion, "I must insist on your taking it. Excuse me, I have my own reasons,—and they are extremely good ones,—for saying that it is my duty to give you this sum and yours to take it. I owe it to your late husband, who more than once laid me under obligations to him."

Mrs Tipps shook her little head and smiled.

"You are very kind, Captain Lee, to put it in that way, and I have no doubt that my dear husband did, as you say, lay you under many obligations because he was always kind to every one, but I cannot I assure you—"

“Very well,” interrupted the captain, wiping his bald head with his pocket-handkerchief angrily, “then the money shall go to some charity—some—some ridiculous asylum or hospital for teaching logarithms to the Hottentots of the Cape, or something of that sort. I tell you, madam,” he added with increased vehemence, seeing that Mrs Tipps still shook her head, “I tell you that I *robbed* your husband of five hundred pounds!”

“Robbed him!” exclaimed Mrs Tipps, somewhat shocked. “Oh, Captain Lee, impossible!”

“Yes I did,” replied the captain, crossing his arms and nodding his head firmly, “robbed him. I laid a bet with him to that extent and won it.”

“That is not usually considered robbery, Captain Lee,” said Mrs Tipps with a smile.

“But that ought to be considered robbery,” replied the captain, with a frown. “Betting is a mean, shabby, contemptible way of obtaining money for nothing on false pretences. The man who bets says in his heart, ‘I want my friend’s money without the trouble of working for it, therefore I’ll offer to bet with him. In so doing I’ll risk an equal sum of my own money. That’s fair and honourable!’ Is that logic?” demanded the captain, vehemently, “It is not! In the first place it is mean to want, not to speak of accepting, another man’s money without working for it, and it is a false pretence to say that you risk your own money because it is *not* your own, it is your wife’s and your children’s money, who are brought to poverty, mayhap, because of your betting tendencies, and it is your baker’s and butcher’s money, whose bread and meat you devour (as long as they’ll let you) without paying for it, because of your betting tendencies, and a proportion of it belongs to your church, which you rob, and to the poor, whom you defraud, because of your betting tendencies; and if you say that when you win the case is altered, I reply, yes, it is altered for the worse, because, instead of bringing all this evil down on your own head you hurl it, not angrily, not desperately, but, worse, with fiendish *indifference* on the head of your friend and his innocent family. Yes, madam, although many men do not think it so, betting *is* a dishonourable thing, and I’m ashamed of having done it. I repent, Mrs Tipps, the money burns my fingers, and I *must* return it.”

“Dear me!” exclaimed the old lady, quite unable to reply at once to such a gush. “But Captain Lee, did you not say that it is mean to accept money without working for it, and yet you want me to accept five hundred pounds without working for it?”

“Oh! monstrous sophistry,” cried the perplexed man, grasping desperately the few hairs that remained on his polished head, “is there no difference then between presenting or accepting a gift and betting? Are there not circumstances also in which poverty is unavoidable and the relief of it honourable as well as delightful? not to mention the courtesies of life, wherein giving and receiving in the right spirit and within reasonable limits, are expressive of good-will and conducive to general harmony. Besides, I do not offer a gift. I want to repay a debt; by rights I ought to add compound interest to it for twenty years, which would make it a thousand pounds. Now, *do* accept it, Mrs Tipps,” cried the captain, earnestly.

But Mrs Tipps remained obdurate, and the captain left her, vowing that he would forthwith devote it as the nucleus of a fund to build a collegiate institute in Cochin-China for the purpose of teaching Icelandic to the Japanese.

Captain Lee thought better of it, however, and directed the fund to the purchase of frequent and valuable gifts to little Joseph and his sister Netta, who had no scruples whatever in accepting them. Afterwards, when Joseph became a stripling, the captain, being a director in the Grand National Trunk Railway, procured for his protégé a situation on the line.

To return to our story after this long digression:—

We left Mrs Tipps in the last chapter putting on her bonnet and shawl, on philanthropic missions intent. She had just opened the door, when a handsome, gentlemanly youth, apparently about one or two and twenty, with a very slight swagger in his gait stepped up to it and, lifting his hat said—

“Mrs Tipps, I presume? I bring you a letter from Clatterby station. Another messenger should have brought it, but I undertook the duty partly for the purpose of introducing myself as your son’s friend. I—my name is Gurwood.”

“What!—Edwin Gurwood, about whom Joseph speaks so frequently, and for whom he has been trying to obtain a situation on the railway through our friend Captain Lee?” exclaimed Mrs Tipps.

“Yes,” replied the youth, somewhat confused by the earnestness of the old lady’s gaze, “but pray read the letter—the telegram—I fear—”

He stopped, for Mrs Tipps had torn open the envelope, and stood gazing at it with terrible anxiety depicted on her face.

“There is no cause for immediate fear, I believe,” began Edwin, but Mrs Tipps interrupted him by slowly reading the telegram.

“From Joseph Tipps, Langrye station, to Mrs Tipps, Eden Villa, Clatterby. Dear Mother, Netta is not very well—nothing serious, I hope—don’t be alarmed—but you’d better come and nurse her. She is comfortably put up in my lodgings.”

Mrs Tipps grew deadly pale. Young Gurwood, knowing what the message was, having seen it taken down while lounging at the station, had judiciously placed himself pretty close to the widow. Observing her shudder, he placed his strong arm behind her, and adroitly sinking down on one knee received her on the other, very much after the manner in which, while at school, he had been wont to act the part of second to pugilistic companions.

Mrs Tipps recovered almost immediately, sprang up, and hurried into the house, followed by Gurwood.

“You’ll have time to catch the 6.30 train,” he said, as Mrs Tipps fluttered to a cupboard and brought out a black bottle.

“Thank you. Yes, I’ll go by that. You shall escort me to it. Please ring the bell.”

The stout elderly female—Netta’s nurse—answered.

“Come here, Durby,” said the widow quickly; “I want you to take this bottle of wine to a poor sick woman. I had intended to have gone myself, but am called away suddenly and shan’t be back to-night. You shall hear from me to-morrow. Lock up the house and stay with the woman to look after her, if need be—and now, Mr Gurwood.”

They were gone beyond recall before Mrs Durby could recover herself.

“I never did see nothink like my poor missus,” she muttered, “there *must* be somethink wrong in the ’ead. But she’s a good soul.”

With this comforting reflection Mrs Durby proceeded to obey her “missus’s” commands.

On reaching the station Mrs Tipps found that she had five minutes to wait, so she thanked Gurwood for escorting her, bade him good-bye, and was about to step into a third-class carriage when she observed Captain Lee close beside her, with his daughter Emma, who, we may remark in passing, was a tall, dark, beautiful girl, and the bosom friend of Netta Tipps.

“Oh, there is Captain Lee. How fortunate,” exclaimed Mrs Tipps, “he will take care of me. Come, Mr Gurwood, I will introduce you to him and his daughter.”

She turned to Gurwood, but that youth did not hear her remark, having been forced from her side by a noiseless luggage truck on India-rubber wheels. Turning, then, towards the captain she found that he and his daughter had hastily run to recapture a small valise which was being borne off to the luggage van instead of going into the carriage along with them. At the same moment the guard intervened, and the captain and his daughter were lost in the crowd.

But Edwin Gurwood, although he did not hear who they were, had obtained a glance of the couple before they disappeared, and that glance, brief though it was, had taken deadly effect! He had been shot straight to the heart. Love at first sight and at railway speed, is but a feeble way of expressing what had occurred. Poor Edwin Gurwood, up to this momentous day woman-proof, felt, on beholding Emma, as if the combined powers of locomotive force and electric telegraphy had smitten him to the

heart's core, and for one moment he stood rooted to the earth, or—to speak more appropriately—nailed to the platform. Recovering in a moment he made a dash into the crowd and spent the three remaining minutes in a wild search for the lost one!

It was a market-day, and the platform of Clatterby station was densely crowded. Sam Natly the porter and his colleagues in office were besieged by all sorts of persons with all sorts of questions, and it said much for the tempers of these harassed men, that, in the midst of their laborious duties, they consented to be stopped with heavy weights on their shoulders, and, while perspiration streamed down their faces, answered with perfect civility questions of the most ridiculous and unanswerable description.

“Where’s my wife?” frantically cried an elderly gentleman, seizing Sam by the jacket.

“I don’t know, sir,” replied Sam with a benignant smile.

“There she is,” shouted the elderly gentleman, rushing past and nearly overturning Sam.

“What a bo-ar it must be to the poatas to b’ wearied so by stoopid people,” observed a tall, stout, superlative fop with sleepy eyes and long whiskers to another fop in large-check trousers.

“Ya-as,” assented the checked trousers.

“Take your seats, gentlemen,” said a magnificent guard, over six feet high, with a bushy beard.

“O-ah!” said the dandies, getting into their compartment.

Meanwhile, Edwin Gurwood had discovered Emma. He saw her enter a first-class carriage. He saw her smile ineffably to her father. He heard the guard cry, “Take your seats; take your seats,” and knew that she was about to be torn from him perhaps for ever. He felt that it was a last look, because, how could he hope in a populous city to meet with her again? Perhaps she did not even belong to that part of the country at all, and was only passing through. He did not even know her name! What *was* he to do? He resolved to travel with her, but it instantly occurred to him that he had no ticket. He made a stride or two in the direction of the ticket office, but paused, remembering that he knew not her destination, and that therefore he could not demand a ticket for any place in particular.

Doors began to slam, and John Marrot’s iron horse let off a little impatient steam. Just then the “late passenger” arrived. There is always a late passenger at every train. On this occasion the late passenger was a short-sighted elderly gentleman in a brown top-coat and spectacles. He was accompanied by a friend, who assisted him to push through the crowd of people who had come to see their friends away, or were loitering about for pastime. The late passenger carried a bundle of wraps; the boots of his hotel followed with his portmanteau.

“All right sir; plenty of time,” observed Sam Natly, coming up and receiving the portmanteau from boots. “Which class, sir?”

“Eh—oh—third; no, stay, second,” cried the short-sighted gentleman, endeavouring vainly to open his purse to pay boots. “Here, hold my wraps, Fred.”

His friend Fred chanced at that moment to have been thrust aside by a fat female in frantic haste and Edwin Gurwood, occupying the exact spot he had vacated, had the bundle thrust into his hand. He retained it mechanically, in utter abstraction of mind. The bell rang, and the magnificent guard, whose very whiskers curled with an air of calm serenity, said, “Now then, take your seats; make haste.” Edwin grew desperate. Emma smiled bewitchingly to a doting female friend who had nodded and smiled bewitchingly to Emma for the last five minutes, under the impression that the train was just going to start, and who earnestly wished that it *would* start, and save her from the necessity of nodding or smiling any longer.

“Am I to lose sight of her for ever?” muttered Gurwood between his teeth.

The magnificent guard sounded his whistle and held up his hand. Edwin sprang forward, pulled open the carriage door, leaped in and sat down opposite Emma Lee! The iron horse gave two sharp responsive whistles, and sent forth one mighty puff. The train moved, but not with a jerk; it is only clumsy drivers who jerk trains; sometimes pulling them up too soon, and having to make a needless plunge forward again, or overrunning their stopping points and having to check abruptly, so as to

cause in timorous minds the impression that an accident has happened. In fact much more of one's comfort than is generally known depends upon one's driver being a good one. John Marrot was known to the regular travellers on the line as a first-rate driver, and some of them even took an interest in ascertaining that he was on the engine when they were about to go on a journey. It may be truly said of John that he never "started" his engine at all. He merely as it were insinuated the idea of motion to his iron steed, and so glided softly away.

Just as the train moved, the late passenger thrust head and shoulders out of the window, waved his arms, glared abroad, and shouted, or rather spluttered—

"My b-b-bundle!—wraps!—rug!—lost!"

A smart burly man, with acute features, stepped on the footboard of the carriage, and, moving with the train, asked what sort of rug it was.

"Eh! a b-b-blue one, wi-wi—"

"With," interrupted the man, "black outside and noo straps?"

"Ye-ye-yes—yes!"

"All right, sir, you shall have it at the next station," said the acute-faced man, stepping on the platform and allowing the train to pass. As the guard's van came up he leaped after the magnificent guard into his private apartment and shut the door.

"Hallo! Davy Blunt, somethin' up?" asked the guard.

"Yes, Joe Turner, there *is* somethin' up," replied the acute man, leaning against the brake-wheel. "You saw that tall good-lookin' feller wi' the eyeglass and light whiskers?"

"I did. Seemed to me as if his wits had gone on wi' the last train, an' he didn't know how to overtake 'em."

"I don't know about his wits," said Blunt, "but it seems to me that he's gone on in *this* train with somebody else's luggage."

The guard whistled—not professionally, but orally.

"You don't say so?"

The acute man nodded, and, leaning his elbows on the window-sill, gazed at the prospect contemplatively.

In a few minutes the 6:30 p.m. train was flying across country at the rate of thirty-five or forty miles an hour.

Chapter Four.

A Double Dilemma and its Consequences

Meanwhile, the “tall good-looking fellow with the eyeglass and light whiskers” sat quaking opposite Emma Lee. The extreme absurdity, not to say danger, of his position as a traveller to nowhere without a ticket, flashed upon him when too late, and he would have cheerfully given fifty pounds, had he possessed such a sum, if the boards under his feet would have opened and let him drop between the rails. In fact he felt so confused and guilty that—albeit not naturally a shy youth—he did not dare to look at Emma for some time after starting, but sat with downcast eyes, revolving in his mind how he was to get out of the dilemma; but the more he revolved the matter the more hopeless did his case appear. At length he ventured to look at Emma, and their eyes encountered. Of course Gurwood looked pointedly out at the window and became fascinated by the landscape; and of course Emma, looked out at the *other* window, and became equally interested in the landscape. Feeling very unhappy; Edwin soon after that took out a newspaper and tried to read, but failed so completely that he gave it up in despair and laid the paper on the seat beside him.

Just then a happy thought flashed into his mind. He would go on to Langrye station, get out there, and make a confidant of his friend Joseph Tipps, who, of course, could easily get him out of his difficulty. He now felt as if a mighty load were lifted off his heart, and, his natural courage returning, he put up his eyeglass, which had been forgotten during the period of his humiliation, and gazed at the prospect with increasing interest—now through the right window, and then through the left—taking occasion each time to glance with still greater interest at Emma Lee’s beautiful countenance.

The captain, whose disposition was sociable, and who had chatted a good deal with his daughter while their *vis-à-vis* was in his agony, soon took occasion to remark that the scenery was very fine. Edwin, gazing at the black walls of a tunnel into which they plunged, and thinking of Emma’s face, replied that it was—extremely. Emerging from the tunnel, and observing the least possible approach to a smile on Emma’s lips, Edwin remarked to the captain that railway travelling presented rather abrupt changes and contrasts in scenery. The captain laughingly agreed with this, and so, from one thing to another, they went on until the two got into a lively conversation—Captain Lee thinking his travelling companion an extremely agreeable young fellow, and Edwin esteeming the captain one of the jolliest old boys he had ever met! These are the very words he used, long after, in commenting on this meeting to his friend Joseph Tipps.

During a pause in the conversation, Emma asked her father to whom a certain villa they were passing belonged.

“I don’t know,” replied the captain; “stay, let me see, I ought to know most of the places hereabouts—no, I can’t remember.”

“I rather think it belongs to a Colonel Jones,” said Gurwood, for the first time venturing to address Emma directly. “A friend of mine who is connected with this railway knows him, and has often spoken to me about him. The colonel has led an extremely adventurous life, I believe.”

“Indeed!”

There was not much apparently in that little word, but there must have been something mysterious in it, for it caused Edwin’s heart to leap as it had never leapt before. On the strength of it he began to relate some of Colonel Jones’s adventures, addressing himself now partly to the captain and partly to Emma. He had a happy knack of telling a story, and had thoroughly interested his hearers when the train slowed and stopped, but as this was not the station at which he meant to get out—Langrye being the next—he took no notice of the stoppage. Neither did he pay any regard to a question asked by the acute man, whose face appeared at the window as soon as the train stopped.

“Is that your bundle, sir?” repeated Mr Blunt a little louder.

“Eh? yes, yes—all right,” replied Edwin, annoyed at the interruption, and thinking only of Emma Lee, to whom he turned, and went on—“Well, when Colonel Jones had scaled the first wall—”

“Come, sir,” said Blunt, entering the carriage, and laying his hand on Edwin’s shoulder, “it’s *not* all right. This is another man’s property.”

The youth turned round indignantly, and, with a flushed countenance, said, “What do you mean?”

“I mean that you are travelling with another man’s property,” said Blunt, quietly pointing to the strapped rug.

“*That* is not my property,” said Edwin, looking at it with a perplexed air, “I never said it was.”

“Didn’t you though?” exclaimed Blunt, with an appealing look to the captain. “Didn’t you say, when I asked you, ‘Yes, it’s all right.’ Moreover, young man, if it’s not yours, why did you bring it into the carriage with you?”

“*I* did not bring it into the carriage,” said Edwin, firmly, and with increasing indignation. “I came down to this train with a lady, who is now in it, and who can vouch for it that I brought no luggage of any kind with me. I—”

At this moment the elderly gentleman with brown top-coat and spectacles bustled up to the carriage, recognised his rug, and claimed it, with a good deal of fuss and noise.

“Where are you travelling to?” demanded Blunt, with a touch of sarcasm in his tone.

Poor Gurwood’s countenance fell. He became somewhat pale, and said, in a much less resolute voice, “You have no right to ask that question; but since you suspect me, I may tell you that I am going to Langrye.”

“Show your ticket,” said the guard, looking in at that moment.

A glance showed the unhappy youth that Captain Lee was regarding him with surprise and Emma with intense pity. Desperation gave him courage. He turned abruptly to the captain, and said—

“I regret deeply, sir, that we part with such a foul suspicion hanging over me. Come,” he added sternly to Blunt, “I will go with you, and shall soon prove myself innocent.”

He leaped to the platform, closely accompanied by Blunt.

“Where do you intend to take me?” he asked, turning to his guardian, whom he now knew to be a detective.

“Here, step this way,” said Blunt, leading his prisoner towards the rear of the train.

“Such a nice-looking young man, too, who’d ’ave thought it!” whispered one of the many heads that were thrust out at the carriage-windows to look at him as he passed.

“Get in here,” said Blunt, holding open the door of an empty second-class compartment of the same train; “we shan’t want a ticket for this part of the journey.”

“But the lady I mentioned,” said poor Edwin, “she can—”

“You can see her at Langrye, young man; come, get in,” said Blunt, sternly, “the train’s just starting.”

Edwin’s blood boiled. He turned to smite the acute-visaged man to the earth, but encountering the serene gaze of the magnificent guard who stood close beside him, he changed his mind and sprang into the carriage. Blunt followed, the door was banged and locked, the signal was given and the train moved on.

“Why do you take me to Langrye instead of back to town?” asked Edwin, after proceeding some distance in silence.

“Because we have an hour to wait for the up train, and it’s pleasanter waiting there than here,” replied Blunt; “besides, I have business at Langrye; I want to see one of my friends there who is looking after light-fingered gentry.”

As this was said significantly Edwin did not deign a reply, but, leaning back in a corner, gazed out at the window and brooded over his unhappy fate. Truly he had something to brood over. Besides being in the unpleasant position which we have described, he had quite recently lost his only relative,

a “rich uncle,” as he was called, who had brought Edwin up and had led him to believe that he should be his heir. It was found, however, on the examination of the old gentleman’s affairs, that his fortune was a myth, and that his house, furniture, and personal effects would have to be sold in order to pay his debts. When all was settled, Edwin Gurwood found himself cast upon his own resources with good health, a kind but wayward disposition, a strong handsome frame, a middling education, and between three and four hundred pounds in his pocket. He soon found that this amount of capital melted with alarming rapidity under the influence of a good appetite and expensive tastes, so he resolved at once to commence work of some kind. But what was he to turn to? His uncle had allowed him to do as he pleased. Naturally it pleased the energetic and enthusiastic boy to learn very little of anything useful, to read an immense amount of light literature, and to indulge in much open-air exercise.

Bitterly did he now feel, poor fellow, that this course, although somewhat pleasing at the time, did not fit him to use and enjoy the more advanced period of life. He had disliked and refused to sit still even for an hour at a time in boyhood; it now began to dawn upon him that he was doomed for life to the greatest of all his horrors, the top of a three-legged stool! He had hated writing and figures, and now visions of ledgers, cash-books, invoice-books and similar literature with endless arithmetical calculations began to float before his mental vision. With intense regret he reflected that if he had only used reasonably well the brief period of life which as yet lay behind him, he might by that time have been done with initial drudgery and have been entering on a brilliant career in one of the learned professions. As to the army and navy, he was too old to get into either, even if he had possessed interest, which he did not. Sternly did he reproach his departed uncle when he brooded over his wrongs, and soliloquised thus:— “You ought to have known that I was a fool, that I could not be expected to know the fact, or to guide myself aright in opposition to and despite of my own folly, and you ought to have forced me to study when I declined to be led—bah! it’s too late to say all this now. Come, if there is any manhood in me worthy of the name, let me set to work at once and make the most of what is left to me!”

Edwin reflected with complacency on the fact that one part of what was left to him was a tall strong frame and broad shoulders, but his judgment told him that though these were blessings not to be despised, and for which he had every reason to be thankful, he ought not to plume himself too much on them, seeing that he shared them in common with numerous prize-fighters and burglars, besides which they could not prove of very much value professionally unless he took to mining or coal-heaving. He also reflected sadly on the fact that beyond the three R’s, a little Latin and French, and a smattering of literary knowledge, he was little better than a red Indian. Being, as we have said, a resolute fellow, he determined to commence a course of study without delay, but soon found that the necessity of endeavouring to obtain a situation and of economising his slender fortune interfered sadly with his efforts. However, he persevered.

In the time of his prosperity, young Gurwood had made many friends, but a touch of pride had induced him to turn aside from these—although many of them would undoubtedly have been glad to aid him in his aims—to quit the house of his childhood and betake himself to the flourishing town of Clatterby, where he knew nobody except one soft amiable little school-fellow, whom in boyish days he had always deemed a poor, miserable little creature, but for whom nevertheless he entertained a strong affection. We need scarcely say that this was Joseph Tipps, the clerk at Langrye station.

Chapter Five.

An Accident and its Consequences

Locomotives and telegraphy are mere snails compared to thought. Let us therefore use our advantage, reader, stride in advance of the 6:30 p.m. train (which by the way has now become a 7:45 p.m. train), and see what little Joseph Tipps is doing.

There he stands—five feet four in his highest-heeled boots—as sterling and warm-hearted a little man as ever breathed. He was writing at a little desk close to a large window, which, owing to the station being a temporary one and its roof low, was flimsy, and came nearer to the ground than most windows do.

Mr Tipps wrote somewhat nervously. He inherited his mother's weakness in this respect; and, besides, his nerves had been a little shaken, by the sudden illness, with which his sister had been seized that day, at his lodgings.

Outside on the platform a few people lounged, waiting the arrival of the expected train. Among them was one whose bulky frame and firm strongly-lined countenance spoke of much power to dare and do. He was considerably above the middle height and somewhere about middle age. His costume was of that quiet unobtrusive kind which seems to court retirement, and the sharp glance of his eyes seemed to possess something of the gimlet in their penetrating power. This was no less a personage than Mr Sharp, the inspector of police on the Grand National Trunk Railway. Mr Inspector Sharp had evidently an eye for the beautiful, for he stood at the farther extremity of the platform gazing in rapt attention at the sun, which just then was setting in a flood of golden light. But Mr Sharp had also a peculiar faculty for observing several things at once. Indeed, some of his friends, referring to this, were wont to remark that he was a perfect Argus, with eyes in his elbows and calves and back of his head. It would seem, indeed, that this, or something like it, must really have been the case, for he not only observed and enjoyed the sunset but also paid particular attention to the conversation of two men who stood not far from him, and at the same time was cognisant of the fact that behind him, a couple of hundred yards or more up the line, a goods engine was engaged in shunting trucks.

This process of shunting, we may explain for the benefit of those who don't know, consists in detaching trucks from trains of goods and shoving them into sidings, so that they may be out of the way, until their time comes to be attached to other trains, which will convey them to their proper destination, or to have their contents, if need be, unloaded and distributed among other trucks. Shunting is sometimes a tedious process, involving much hauling, pushing, puffing, and whistling, on the part of the engine, and uncoupling of trucks and shifting of points on the part of pointsmen and porters. There is considerable danger, too, in the process,—or rather there *was* danger before the introduction of the "block system," which now, when it is adopted, renders accidents almost impossible,—of which system more shall be said hereafter. The danger lies in this, that shunting has frequently to be done during intervals between the passing of passenger-trains, and, on lines where passenger and goods traffic is very great, these intervals are sometimes extremely brief. But, strange to say, this danger is the mother of safety, for the difficulty of conducting extensive traffic is so great, that a combination of all but perfect systems of signalling, telegraphing, and organisation is absolutely needful to prevent constant mishap. Hence the marvellous result that, in the midst of danger, we are in safety, and travelling by railway is really less dangerous than travelling by stage-coach used to be in days of old. Yes, timid reader, we assure you that if you travel daily by rail your chances of coming to grief are very much fewer than if you were to travel daily by mail coach. Facts and figures prove this beyond all doubt, so that we are entitled to take the comfort of it. The marvel is, not that loss of life is so great, but that it is so small.

Do you doubt it, reader? Behold the facts and figures—wonder, be thankful and doubt no more! A “Blue Book” (Captain Tyler’s General Report to the Board of Trade on Railway Accidents during the year 1870) tells us that the number of passengers killed on railways last year was ninety. The number of passenger journeys performed was 307 millions, which gives, in round numbers, one passenger killed for every three and a half millions that travelled. In the best mail and stage-coaching days the yearly number of travellers was about two millions. The present railway death-rate applied to this number amounts to a little more than one-half of a unit! Will any one out of Bedlam have the audacity to say that in coaching days only half a passenger was killed each year? We leave facts to speak for themselves, and common-sense to judge whether men were safer then than they are now.

But to return. When Mr Sharp was looking at the distant waggons that were being shunted he observed that the engine which conducted the operation was moved about with so much unnecessary fuss and jerking that he concluded it must be worked by a new, or at all events a bad, driver. He shook his head, therefore, pulled out his watch, and muttered to himself that it seemed to him far too near the time of the arrival of a train to make it safe to do such work.

The calculations, however, had been made correctly, and the train of trucks would have been well out of the way, if the driver had been a smarter man. Even as things stood, however, there should have been no danger, because the distant signal was turned to danger, which thus said to any approaching train, “Stop! for your life.” But here occurred one of these mistakes, or pieces of carelessness, or thoughtlessness, to which weak and sinful human nature is, and we suppose always will be, liable. Perhaps the signalman thought the goods train had completed its operation, or fancied that the express was not so near as it proved to be, or he got confused—we cannot tell; there is no accounting for such things, but whatever the cause, he turned off the danger-signal half a minute too soon, and set the line free.

Suddenly the down train came tearing round the curve. It was at reduced speed certainly, but not sufficiently reduced to avoid a collision with the trucks on a part of the line where no trucks should be.

Our friend John Marrot was on the look-out of course, and so was his mate. They saw the trucks at once. Like lightning John shut off the steam and at the same instant touched his whistle several sharp shrieks, which was the alarm to the guard to turn on *his* brakes. No men could have been more prompt or cool. Joe Turner and Will Garvie had on full brake-power in a second or two. At the same time John Marrot instantly reversing the engine, let on full steam—but all in vain. Fire flew in showers from the shrieking wheels—the friction on the rails must have been tremendous, nevertheless the engine dashed into the goods train like a thunderbolt with a stunning crash and a noise that is quite indescribable.

The police superintendent, who was all but run over, stood for a few seconds aghast at the sight and at the action of the engine. Not satisfied with sending one of its own carriages into splinters, the iron horse made three terrific plunges or efforts to advance, and at each plunge a heavy truck full of goods was, as it were, pawed under its wheels and driven out behind, under the tender, in the form of a mass of matchwood—all the goods, hard and soft, as well as the heavy frame of the truck itself being minced up together in a manner that defies description. It seemed as though the monster had been suddenly endued with intelligence, and was seeking to vent its horrid rage on the thing that had dared to check its pace. Three loaded trucks it crushed down, over-ran, and scattered wide in this way, in three successive plunges, and then, rushing on a few yards among chaotic *débris*, turned slowly on its side, and hurled the driver and fireman over the embankment.

The shock received by the people at the station was tremendous. Poor Tipps, standing at his desk, was struck—nervously—as if by electricity. He made one wild involuntary bolt right through the window, as if it had been made of tissue paper, and did not cease to run until he found himself panting in the middle of a turnip-field that lay at the back of the station. Turning round, ashamed of himself, he ran back faster than he had run away, and leaping recklessly among the *débris*, began

to pull broken and jagged timber about, under the impression that he was rescuing fellow-creatures from destruction!

Strange to say no one was killed on that occasion—no one was even severely hurt, except the driver. But of course this was not known at first and the people who were standing about hurried, with terrible forebodings, to lend assistance to the passengers.

Mr Sharp seemed to have been smitten with feelings somewhat similar to those of Tipps, for, without knowing very well how or why, he suddenly found himself standing up to the armpits in *débris*, heaving might and main at masses of timber.

“Hallo! lift away this beam, will you?” shouted a half-smothered voice close beside him.

It came from beneath the carriage that we have described as having been broken to splinters.

Sharp was a man of action. He hailed a porter near him and began with energy and power to tear up and hurl aside the boards. Presently on raising part of the broken framework of the carriage a man struggled to his feet and, wiping away the blood that flowed from a wound in his forehead, revealed the countenance of Edwin Gurwood to the astonished Tipps.

“What! Edwin!” he exclaimed.

“Ay—don’t stand there, man. Your mother is in the train.”

Poor Tipps could not speak—he could only gasp the word, “Where?”

“In a third-class, behind—there, it is safe, I see.”

His friend at once leaped towards the vehicle pointed out, but Edwin did not follow, he glanced wildly round in search of another carriage.

“You are hurt—Mr Gurwood, if I mistake not,—lean on me,” said Mr Sharp.

“It’s nothing—only a scratch. Ha! that’s the carriage, follow me,” cried Edwin, struggling towards a first-class carriage, which appeared considerably damaged, though it had not left the rails. He wrenched open the door, and, springing in, found Captain Lee striving in vain to lift his daughter, who had fainted. Edwin stooped, raised her in his arms, and, kicking open the door on the opposite side, leaped down, followed by the captain. They quickly made their way to the station, where they found most of the passengers, hurt and un hurt, already assembled, with two doctors, who chanced to be in the train, attending to them.

Edwin laid his light burden tenderly on a couch and one of the doctors immediately attended to her. While he was applying restoratives Mr Blunt touched Edwin on the elbow and requested him to follow him. With a feeling of sudden anger Gurwood turned round, but before he could speak his eye fell on Mrs Tipps, who sat on a bench leaning on her son’s breast, and looking deadly pale but quite composed.

“My dear Mrs Tipps,” exclaimed the youth, stepping hastily forward, “I hope—I trust—”

“Oh, Edwin—thank you, my dear fellow,” cried Joseph, grasping his hand and shaking it. “She is not hurt, thank God—not even a scratch—only a little shaken. Fetch a glass of water, you’ll find one in the booking-office.”

Gurwood ran out to fetch it. As he was returning he met Captain Lee leading his daughter out of the waiting-room.

“I sincerely hope that your daughter is not hurt,” he said, in earnest tones. “Perhaps a little water might—”

“No, thank you,” said the captain somewhat stiffly.

“The carriage is waiting, sir,” said a servant in livery, coming up at the moment and touching his hat.

Emma looked at Edwin for a second, and, with a slight but perplexed smile of acknowledgment, passed on.

Next moment the carriage drove away, and she was gone. Edwin at the same time became aware of the fact that the pertinacious Blunt was at his side. Walking quickly into the waiting-room he presented the glass of water to Mrs Tipps, but to his surprise that eccentric lady rose hastily and

said,—“Thank you, Mr Gurwood, many thanks, but I am better. Come, Joseph—let us hasten to our darling Netta. Have you sent for a fly?”

“There is one waiting, mother—take my arm. Many, many thanks for your kindness in coming with her, Gurwood,” said Tipps. “I can’t ask you to come with me just now, I—”

The rest of his speech was lost in consequence of the impatient old lady dragging her son away, but what had been heard of it was sufficient to fill Mr Blunt with surprise and perplexity.

“Well, Blunt,” said Mr Superintendent Sharp, coming up at that moment, “what has brought you here?”

The detective related his story privately to his superior, and remarked that he began to fear there must be some mistake.

“Yes, there is a mistake of some sort,” said Sharp, with a laugh, “for I’ve met him frequently at Clatterby station, and know him to be a friend of Mr Tipps; but you have done your duty, Blunt, so you can now leave the gentleman to me,” saying which he went up to Edwin and entered into an under-toned conversation with him, during which it might have been observed that Edwin looked a little confused at times, and Mr Sharp seemed not a little amused.

“Well, it’s all right,” he said at last, “we have telegraphed for a special train to take on the passengers who wish to proceed, and you can go back, if you choose, in the up train, which is about due. It will be able to get past in the course of half-an-hour. Fortunately the rails of the up-line are not damaged and the wreck can soon be cleared.”

Just then the dandy with the sleepy eyes and long whiskers sauntered up to the porter on duty, with an unconcerned and lazy air. He had received no further injury than a shaking, and therefore felt that he could afford to affect a cool and not-easy-to-be-ruffled demeanour.

“Aw—po-taw,” said he, twirling his watch-key, “w’en d’you expect anotha twain to take us on?”

“Don’t know, sir, probably half-an-hour.”

“Aw! Dooiced awkwad. My fwend has got the bwidge of his nose damaged, besides some sort of internal injuway, and won’t be able to attend to business to-night, I fear—dooiced awkwad.”

“D’you hear that?” whispered Sharp to Gurwood, as the “fwend” in question—he with the checked trousers—sauntered past holding a handkerchief to his nose. “I know by the way in which that was said that there will be something more heard some day hence of our fop in checks. Just come and stand with me in the doorway of the waiting-room, and listen to what some of the other passengers are saying.”

“Very hard,” observed a middle-aged man with a sour countenance, who did not present the appearance of one who had sustained any injury at all, “very hard this. I shall miss meeting with a friend, and perhaps lose doin’ a good stroke of business to-night.”

“Be thankful you haven’t lost your life,” said Will Garvie, who supported the head of his injured mate.

“Mayhap I *have* lost my life, young man,” replied the other sharply. “Internal injuries from accidents often prove fatal, and don’t always show at first. I’ve had a severe shake.”

Here the sour-faced man shook himself slightly, partly to illustrate and partly to prove his point.

“You’re quite right, sur,” remarked an Irishman, who had a bandage tied round his head, but who did not appear to be much, if at all, the worse of the accident. “It’s a disgrace intirely that the railways should be allowed to trait us in this fashion. If they’d only go to the trouble an’ expense of havin’ proper signals on lines, there would be nothing o’ this kind. And if Government would make a law to have an arm-chair fitted up in front of every locomotive and a director made to travel with sich train, we’d hear of fewer accidents. But it’s meself ’il come down on ’em for heavy damages for this.”

He pointed to his bandaged head, and nodded with a significant glance at the company.

A gentleman in a blue travelling-cap, who had hitherto said nothing, and who turned out to have received severer injuries than any other passenger, here looked up impatiently, and said—

“It appears to me that there is a great deal of unjust and foolish talk against railway companies, as if they, any more than other companies, could avoid accidents. The system of signalling on a great part of this line is the best that has been discovered up to this date, and it is being applied to the whole line as fast as circumstances will warrant; but you can’t expect to attain perfection in a day. What would you have? How can you expect to travel at the rate you do, and yet be as safe as if you were in one of the old mail-coaches?”

“Right, sir; you’re right,” cried John Marrot energetically, raising himself a little from the bench on which he lay, “right in sayin’ we shouldn’t ought to expect perfection, but wrong in supposin’ the old mail-coaches was safer. W’y, railways is safer. They won’t stand no comparison. Here ’ave I bin drivin’ on this ’ere line for the last eight year an’ only to come to grief three times, an’ killed no more than two people. There ain’t a old coach goin’, or gone, as could say as much. An’ w’en you come to consider that in them eight years I’ve bin goin’ more than two-thirds o’ the time at an average o’ forty mile an hour—off an’ on—all night a’most as well as all day, an’ run thousands and thousands o’ miles, besides carryin’ millions of passengers, more or less, it do seem most rediklous to go for to say that coaches was safer than railways—the revarse bein’ the truth. Turn me round a bit, Bill; so, that’ll do. It’s the bad leg I come down on, else I shouldn’t have bin so hard-up. Yes, sir, as you truly remark, railway companies ain’t fairly dealt with, by no means.”

At this point the attention of the passengers was attracted by a remarkably fat woman, who had hitherto lain quietly on a couch breathing in a somewhat stertorous manner. One of the medical men had been so successful in his attention to her as to bring her to a state of consciousness. Indeed she had been more or less in this condition for some time past, but feeling rather comfortable than otherwise, and dreamy, she had lain still and enjoyed herself. Being roused, however, to a state of activity by means of smelling-salts, and hearing the doctor remark that, except a shaking, she appeared to have sustained no injury, this stout woman deemed it prudent to go off into hysterics, and began by uttering a yell that would have put to shame a Comanchee Indian, and did more damage, perhaps, to the nerves of her sensitive hearers than the accident itself. She followed it up by drumming heavily on the couch with her heels.

Singularly enough her yell was replied to by the whistle of the up train, that had been due for some time past. She retorted by a renewed shriek, and became frantic in her assurances that no power yet discovered—whether mechanical, moral, or otherwise—could or would, ever persuade her to set foot again in a railway train! It was of no use to assure her that no one meant to exert such a power, even if he possessed it; that she was free to go where she pleased, and whenever she felt inclined. The more that stout woman was implored to compose herself, the more she discomposed herself, and everybody else; and the more she was besought to be calm, the more, a great deal, did she fill the waiting-room with hysterical shrieks and fiendish laughter, until at last every one was glad to go out of the place and get into the train that was waiting to take them back to Clatterby. Then the stout woman became suddenly calm, and declared to a porter—who must have had a heart of stone, so indifferent was he to her woes—that she would be, “glad to proceed to the nearest ’otel if ’e would be good enough to fetch her a fly.”

“H’m!” said Mr Sharp, as he and young Gurwood entered a carriage together, after having seen John Marrot placed on a pile of rugs on the floor of a first-class carriage; “there’s been work brewin’ up for me to-night.”

“How? What do you mean?” asked Edwin.

“I mean that, from various indications which I observed this evening, we are likely to have some little correspondence with the passengers of the 6:30 p.m. train. However, we’re used to it; perhaps we’ll get not to mind it in course of time. We do all that we can to accommodate the public—fit up our carriages and stations in the best style compatible with giving our shareholders a small dividend—carry them to and fro over the land at little short of lightning speed, every day and all day and night too, for extremely moderate fares, and with excessive safety and exceeding comfort;

enable them to live in the country and do business in the city, as well as afford facilities for visiting the very ends of the earth in a few days; not to mention other innumerable blessings to which we run them, or which we run *to* them, and yet no sooner does a rare accident occur (as it *will* occur in every human institution, though it occurs less on railways than in most other institutions) than down comes this ungrateful public upon us with indignant cries of ‘disgraceful!’ and, in many cases, unreasonable demands for compensation.”

“Such is life,” said Gurwood with a smile.

“On the rail,” added Mr Superintendent Sharp with a sigh, as the whistle sounded and the train moved slowly out of the station.

Chapter Six.

History of the Iron Horse

Having gone thus far in our tale, permit us, good reader, to turn aside for a little to make a somewhat closer inspection of the Iron Horse and his belongings.

Railways existed long before the Iron Horse was born. They sprang into being two centuries ago in the form of tramways, which at first were nothing more or less than planks or rails of timber laid down between the Newcastle-on-Tyne collieries and the river, for the purpose of forming a better “way” over which to run the coal-trucks. From simple timber-rails men soon advanced to planks having a strip of iron nailed on their surface to prevent too rapid tear and wear, but it was not till the year 1767 that cast-iron rails were introduced. In order to prevent the trucks from slipping off the line the rails were cast with an upright flange or guide at one side, and were laid on wooden or stone sleepers.

This form of rail being found inconvenient, the flange was transferred from the rails to the wheels, and this arrangement, under various modifications has been ever since retained.

These “innocent” railroads—as they have been sometimes and most appropriately named, seeing that they were guiltless alike of blood and high speed—were drawn by horses, and confined at first to the conveyance of coals. Modest though their pretensions were, however, they were found to be an immense improvement on the ordinary roads, insomuch that ten horses were found to be capable of working the traffic on railroads, which it required 400 horses to perform on a common road. These iron roads, therefore, began to multiply, and about the beginning of the present century they were largely employed in the coal-fields and mineral districts of the kingdom. About the same time thoughtful men, seeing the immense advantage of such ways, began to suggest the formation of railways, or tramways, to run along the side of our turnpike-roads—a mode of conveyance, by the way, in regard to towns, which thoughtful men are still, ever at the present day of supposed enlightenment, endeavouring to urge upon an unbelieving public—a mode of conveyance which we feel very confident will entirely supersede our cumbrous and antiquated “bus” in a very short time. What, we ask, in the name of science and art and common-sense, is to prevent a tramway being laid from Kensington to the Bank, “or elsewhere,” which shall be traversed by a succession of roomy carriages following each other every five minutes; which tramway might be crossed and recrossed and run upon, or, in other words, used by all the other vehicles of London except when the rightful carriages were in the way? Nothing prevents, save that same unbelief which has obstructed the development of every good thing from the time that Noah built the ark! But we feel assured that the thing shall be, and those who read this book may perhaps live to see it!

But to return. Among these thoughtful and far-seeing men was one Dr James Anderson, who in 1800 proposed the formation of railways by the roadsides, and he was so correct in his views that the plans which he suggested of keeping the level, by going round the base of hills, or forming viaducts, or cutting tunnels, is precisely the method practised by engineers of the present day. Two years later a Mr Edgeworth announced that he had long before, “formed the project of laying iron railways for baggage waggons on the great roads of England,” and, in order to prevent tear and wear, he proposed, instead of conveying heavy loads in one huge waggon, to have a train of small waggons. With the modesty of true genius, which never over-estimates or forms wildly sanguine expectations, he thought that each waggon might perhaps carry one ton and a half! Edgeworth also suggested that *passengers* might travel by such a mode of conveyance. Bold man! What a goose many people of his day must have thought him. If they had been alive now, what geese they might have thought themselves. The Society of Arts, however, were in advance of their time. They rewarded Edgeworth with their gold medal.

This man seems to have been a transcendent genius, because he not only devised and made (on a small scale) iron railways, but proposed to take ordinary vehicles, such as mail-coaches and private carriages, on his trucks, and convey them along his line at the rate of six or eight miles an hour with one horse. He also propounded the idea of the employment of stationary steam-engines (locomotives not having been dreamed of) to drag the trains up steep inclines.

Another semi-prophetic man of these days was Thomas Gray, of Leeds, who in 1820 published a work on what he styled a “General Iron Railway, or Land Steam Conveyance, to supersede the necessity of Horses in all public vehicles, showing its vast superiority in every respect over the present pitiful Methods of Conveyance by Turnpike-Roads and Canals.” Gray, whose mind appears to have been unusually comprehensive, proposed a system of railway communication between all the important cities and towns in the kingdom, and pointed out the immense advantage that would be gained to commerce by such a ready and rapid means of conveying fish, vegetables, and other perishable articles from place to place. He also showed that two post deliveries in the day would become possible, and that fire insurance companies would be able to promote their interests by keeping railway fire-engines, ready to be transported to scenes of conflagration without delay.

But Gray was not esteemed a prophet. His suggestions were not adopted nor his plans acted on, though unquestionably his wisdom and energy gave an impulse to railway development, of which we are reaping the benefit to-day. His labours were not in vain.

Horse railways soon began to multiply over the country. The first authorised by Act of Parliament was the Surrey Railway in 1801. Twenty years later twenty lines of railway were in operation.

About this time, too, another man of note and of great scientific and mechanical sagacity lent his powerful aid to advance the interests of the railway cause. This was Charles Maclaren, of Edinburgh, editor of the *Scotsman* newspaper for nearly thirty years. He had long foreseen, and boldly asserted his belief in, the certain success of steam locomotion by rail, at a time when opinions such as his were scouted as wild delusive dreams. But he did more, he brought his able pen to bear on the subject, and in December 1825 published a series of articles in the *Scotsman* on the subject of railways, which were not only extensively quoted and republished in this country and in America, but were deemed worthy of being translated into French and German, and so disseminated over Europe. Mr Maclaren was thus among the foremost of those who gave a telling impulse to the cause at that critical period when the Iron horse was about to be put on the rail—the right horse in the right place—for it was not many years afterwards that that auspicious event took place. Mr Maclaren not only advocated generally the adoption of railways, but logically demonstrated the wonderful powers and capacities of the steam locomotive, arguing, from the experiments on friction made more than half a century before by Vince and Colomb, that by the use of steam-power on railroads a much more rapid and cheaper transit of persons as well as merchandise might be confidently anticipated. He leaped far ahead of many of even the most hopeful advocates of the cause, and with almost prophetic foresight wrote, “there is scarcely any limit to the rapidity of movement these iron pathways will enable us to command.” And again,—“We have spoken of vehicles travelling at twenty miles an hour; but we see no reason for thinking that, in the progress of improvement, a much higher velocity might not be found practicable; and in twenty years hence a shopkeeper or mechanic, on the most ordinary occasion, may probably travel with a speed that would leave the fleetest courser behind.” Wonderful words these! At a first glance we may not deem them so, being so familiar with the ideas which they convey, but our estimate of them will be more just if we reflect that when they were penned railways had scarcely sprung into being, steam locomotives had only just been born, and not only men in general, but even many learned, scientific and practical men regarded the statement of all such opinions as being little short of insanity. Nevertheless, many deep-thinking men thought differently, and one contemporary, reviewing this subject in after years, said of Mr Maclaren’s papers, that, “they prepared the way for the success of railway projectors.”

We have said that the steam locomotive—the material transformer of the world—our Iron Horse, had just been born. It was not however born on the rails, but on the common road, and a tremendous baby-giant it was, tearing up its cradle in such furious fashion that men were terrified by it, and tried their best to condemn it to inactivity, just as a weak and foolish father might lock up his unruly boy and restrain him perforce, instead of training him wisely in the way in which he should go.

But the progenitors of the Iron Horse were, like their Herculean child, men of mettle. They fought a gallant fight for their darling's freedom, and came off victorious!

Of course, many men and many nations were anxious to father this magnificent infant, and to this day it is impossible to say precisely who originated him. He is said by some to have sprung from the brains of Englishmen, others assert that brains in France and Switzerland begat him, and we believe that brother Jonathan exercised his prolific brain on him, before the actual time of his birth. The first name on record in connexion with this infant Hercules is that of Dr Robison, who communicated his ideas to Watt in 1759. The latter thereupon made a model locomotive, but entertained doubts as to its safety. Oliver Evans, of Philadelphia, patented a "steam waggon" in 1782. William Murdoch, the friend and assistant of Watt, made a model in 1787 which drew a small waggon round a room in his house in Cornwall. In the same year Symington exhibited a model locomotive in Edinburgh, and in 1795 he worked a steam-engine on a turnpike-road in Lanarkshire. Richard Trevethick, who had seen Murdoch's model, made and patented a locomotive in 1802. It drew on a tramway a load of ten tons at the rate of five miles an hour. Trevethick also made a carriage to run on common roads, and altogether did good service in the cause.

Blenkinsop, of Middleton Colliery, near Leeds, made locomotives in 1811 which hauled coals up steep ascents by means of a toothed rail, with a toothed propelling wheel working into it. This unnatural infant, however, turned out to be not the true child. It was found that such a powerful creature did not require teeth at all, that he could "bite" quite well enough by means of his weight alone,—so the teeth were plucked out and never allowed to grow again.

After this, in 1813, came Brunton of Butterley, with a curious contrivance in the form of legs and feet, which were attached to the rear of his engine and propelled it by a sort of walking motion. It did not walk well, however, and very soon walked off the field of competition altogether.

At last, in the fulness of time there came upon the scene the great railway king, George Stephenson, who, if he cannot be said to have begotten the infant, at all events brought him up and effectually completed his training.

George Stephenson was one of our most celebrated engineers, and the "father of the railway system." He may truly be said to have been one of mankind's greatest benefactors. He was a self-taught man, was born near Newcastle in 1781, began life as a pit-engine boy with wages at two-pence a day, and ultimately rose to fame and fortune as an engineer.

In 1814 he made a locomotive for the Killingworth Colliery Railway. It drew thirty tons at the rate of four miles an hour, and was regarded as a great success. In 1825 an engine of the same kind was used on the Stockton and Darlington Railway, of which Stephenson had been made engineer.

But the great crowning effort of Stephenson, and the grand impulse to the railway cause, which carried it steadily and swiftly on to its present amazing degree of prosperity, did not occur till the year 1829.

Previous to that date the Manchester and Liverpool Railway was being constructed, and so little was known as to the capabilities of railways and the best mode of working them, that the directors and engineers had some difficulty in deciding whether the line should be worked by fixed engines or by locomotives. It was ultimately decided that the latter should be used, and a premium of 500 pounds was offered for the best locomotive that could be produced, in accordance with certain conditions. These were— That the chimney should emit no smoke—that the engine should be on springs—that it should not weigh more than six tons, or four-and-a-half tons if it had only four wheels—that it should

be able to draw a load of twenty tons at the rate of ten miles an hour, with a pressure of fifty pounds to the square inch in the boiler, and should not cost more than 500 pounds.

The Iron Horse was now at last about to assume its right position. It was no longer an infant, but a powerful stripling—though still far from its full growth; as far as six tons is from sixty!

Four iron steeds were entered to compete for the prize. It was in October 1829 that this celebrated trial came off, and great was the interest manifested on the occasion, for not only did the public entertain doubts as to the capabilities of locomotives, but very few even of the engineers of the country would admit the possibility of a locomotive engine attaining a speed greater than ten miles an hour! First came the “Novelty” of Braithwaite and Ericson; then the “Sans pareil” of Hawkworth; the “Perseverance” of Burstall; and, lastly, the “Rocket” of Stephenson. Of the first three we shall merely say that the “Novelty,” being weak in the wheels, broke down; the “Sans pareil” burst one of her cylinders; and the “Perseverance” turned out to be too heavy to comply with the conditions of the trial.

The “Rocket” advanced, and was harnessed to a train of waggons weighing thirteen tons; the fire was lighted, and the steam got up. The valves lifted at the stipulated fifty pounds pressure, and away it went with its load at an average speed of fifteen, and a maximum speed of twenty-nine miles an hour! Thus triumphantly the “Rocket” won the prize of 500 pounds, and the Iron Horse was fairly and finally married to the Iron Road. One of the important elements of Stephenson’s success lay in the introduction of numerous tubes into his boiler, through which the fire, and heat passed, and thus presented a vast amount of heating surface to the water. Another point was his allowing the waste steam to pass through the chimney, thus increasing the draught and intensifying the combustion; for heat is the life of the locomotive, and without much of this, high rates of speed could not be attained.

The difference between the first locomotive and those now in use is very great—as may be seen any day in London, by any one who chooses to visit one of our great railway stations, and go thence to the Kensington Museum, where the “Rocket” is now enshrined—a memorial of Stephenson’s wisdom, and of the beginning of our magnificent railway system. Yet though the difference be great it is wonderful how complete the “Rocket” was, all things considered. The modern improvements made on locomotives consist chiefly in clothing the boiler with wood, felt, and other non-conductors to increase the life-giving heat; in heating the feed-water, coupling the driving-wheels, working the cylinders horizontally, economising steam by cutting off the supply at any part of the stroke that may be required, and economising fuel by using raw coal instead of coke, and consuming the smoke, besides many other minor contrivances, but all the great principles affecting the locomotive were applied by George Stephenson, and illustrated in the “Rocket.”

It is no wonder that the first Iron Horse was clumsy in appearance and somewhat grotesque, owing to the complication of rods, cranks, and other machinery, which was all exposed to view. It required years of experience to enable our engineers to construct the grand, massive, simple chargers which now run off with our monster-trains as if they were feathers. When the iron horse was first made, men were naturally in haste to ascertain his power and paces. He was trotted out, so to speak, in his skeleton, with his heart and lungs and muscles exposed to view in complex hideosity! Now-a-days he never appears without his skin well-groomed and made gay with paint and polished brass and steel.

We have said that the “Rocket” drew thirteen tons at nearly thirty miles an hour. Our best engines can now draw hundreds of tons, and they can run at the rate of above sixty miles an hour at maximum speed. The more ordinary speed, however, for passenger-trains is from thirty to forty-five miles an hour. The weight of the “Rocket” was six tons. That of some of our largest engines with tenders is from forty to above fifty tons.

From the time of the opening of the old Manchester and Liverpool Railway in 1830 to the present day—a period of little more than forty years—railway construction has gone forward throughout the land—and we may add the world—with truly railway speed, insomuch that England has become covered from end to end with an absolute network of iron roads, and the benefit to our

country has been inconceivably great. It would require a large volume to treat of these and correlative subjects, as they deserve.

Two hundred years ago the course of post between London and Edinburgh was one month; before an answer could be received two months had to elapse! About a hundred years later there was one stage-coach between the two cities, which did the distance in a fortnight, rendering communication and reply possible once in each month. In those days roads were uncommonly bad. One writer tells us that, while travelling in Lancashire, a county now traversed by railways in all directions, he found one of the principal roads so bad that there were ruts in it, which he measured, four feet deep, and that the only mending it received was the tumbling of stones into these holes to fill them up. The extremely limited goods traffic of the country was conducted by the slow means of carts and waggons. Enterprising men, however, then as now, were pushing the world forward, though they were by no means so numerous then as now. In 1673 it took a week to travel between London and Exeter, and cost from forty to forty-five shillings. About the same period a six-horse coach took six days to perform the journey between Edinburgh and Glasgow and back. To accomplish fifty miles or thereabouts in two days with a six-horse stage-coach, was considered good work and high speed about the beginning of last century. Near the middle of it (1740) travelling by night was for the first time introduced, and soon after that a coach was started with a wicker-basket slung behind for outside passengers! Some years afterwards an enterprising individual started a “flying coach” drawn by eight horses, which travelled between London and Dover in a day—the fare being one guinea. Even at the beginning of the present century four miles an hour was deemed a very fair rate of travelling for a stage-coach.

With the improvement of roads by the famous Macadam in 1816, began improved travelling and increased speed. The process was rapid. Mail-coaches began to overrun the country in all directions at the then remarkable pace of from eight to ten miles an hour,—and, let us remark in passing, there was a whirl and dash about these stage-coaches which railway trains, with all their velocity can never hope to attain to, except when they dash into each other! Man is but a weak creature in some senses. Facts are scarcely facts to him unless they touch his eye or ear. The smooth run of a train at twenty or even thirty miles an hour, with its gradual start and gentle pull up, has but a slight effect on him now compared with the splendid swing of the well-appointed mail coach of old as it swept round the bend of a road, and, with red-coated driver and guard, cracking whip, flying dust and stones, and reeking foam-flecked horses, dashed into town and pulled up, while at nearly full speed, amid all the glorious crash and turmoil of arrival! No doubt the passing of an express train within a yard of your nose is something peculiarly awful, and if you ever get permission to ride on the engine of an express, the *real* truth regarding speed, weight, momentum, will make a profound impression on you, but in ordinary circumstances the arrival of a train cannot for a moment compare with the dash, the animal spirit, the enthusiasm, the romance of the mail coach of days gone by.

About the time that the day of slow speed was drawing to a close (1837) licenses were granted to 3026 stage-coaches, of which 1507 went to and from London, besides 103 mail-coaches. And it has been estimated that the number of passengers carried in the year about that time was two millions. In regard to the merchandise traffic of the kingdom, we cannot give statistics, but we ask the reader to bear in mind that it was all conducted by means of heavy waggons and slow-going canal barges.

Now, let us contrast this state of things with the condition and influence of railways up to the present time. As we have said, the iron horse began his career in 1830 on the Liverpool and Manchester line—long since become part of the London and North-Western Railway—at that time thirty-one miles long. Eight years later, Liverpool, Manchester, and Birmingham were completely connected with London by railway. Then, as success attended the scheme, new lines were undertaken and opened at a still more rapid rate until, in 1843—despite the depression caused for a time by over-speculating—there were nearly 2000 miles of railway open for traffic. In 1850 there were above 6000 miles open; in 1860, above 10,000. In 1864 the railways of the kingdom employed upwards of

7200 locomotives, 23,470 passenger carriages, and 212,900 goods and mineral waggons. In that one year about five million passengers and goods trains ran 130 millions of miles—a distance that would encircle the earth 5221 times—the earth being 24,896 miles in circumference. In 1866 the gross receipts of railways was about forty millions of pounds sterling. At the present date (1871) above 14,000 miles of railway are open in the United Kingdom. This mileage is divided amongst about 430 companies, but a considerable number of these have been incorporated with the larger companies, such as the London and North west, the Great Western, etcetera.

All the lines carried in one year (1870) somewhere about 307 millions of passengers—in other words, that number of passenger journeys were performed on them. The mail and stage-coaches in their best days only conveyed, as we have said, two millions!¹

It is almost overwhelming to consider what a vast change in the condition and habits of the people of this country is implied in these figures. Forty years ago none travelled but the comparatively rich, and that only to an extent equal to about two-thirds of the present population of London. Now-a-days the poorest artisan can, and does, afford to travel, and the number of journeys performed each year on all our British railways is equal to more than the entire population of Europe! which, in Stewart's "Modern Geography," is set down at 285 millions. From this of course it follows, that as many thousands of men, women, and children never travel at all, many others must have undertaken numerous journeys in that year.

The facilities afforded by railways are altogether innumerable. If so disposed you may sup one night in the south of England and the next night in the north of Scotland. Thousands of families dwell in the country, while the heads thereof go to their business in town by rail every morning and return home every evening. Huntsmen, booted and spurred, are whirled off, horses and all, to distant fields, whence, after "crossing country" all day, they return to the railway and are whirled back to town in time for dinner. Navvys and artisans are conveyed to their work at a penny a mile, and monster-trains carry thousands of excursionists to scenes of rural delight that our fathers never dreamed of in their wildest flights of fancy.

¹ Many readers may find it difficult to form an adequate conception of such a vast number as 307 millions. It may help one to some idea of it to know that, if a man were to devote himself to count it, one by one,—sitting down after breakfast counting at the rate of one every moment, and working without intermission for eight hours every day, excepting Sundays,—he would not conclude his task until the thirty-fifth year.

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