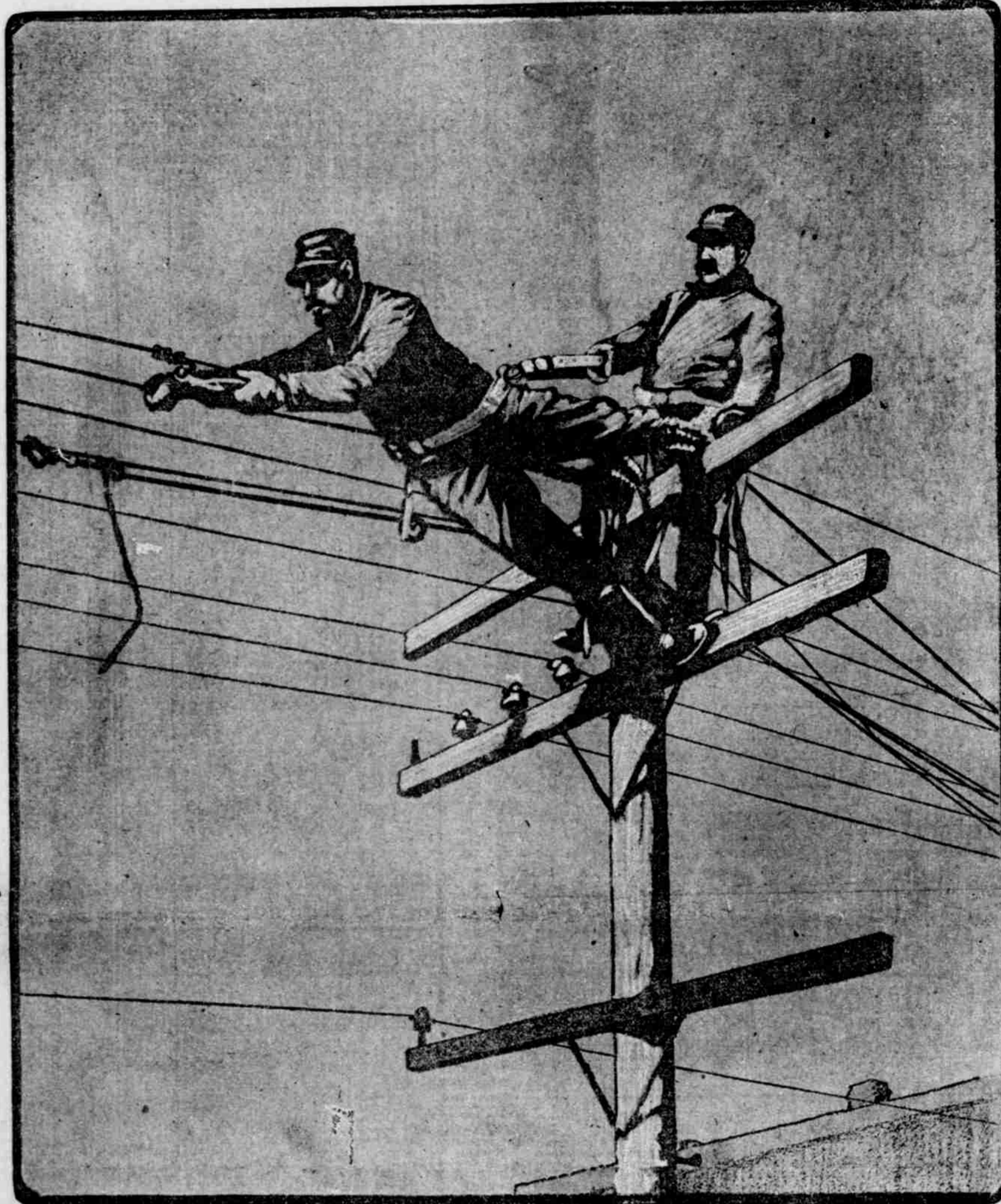




MOST HAZARDOUS VOCATION IN THE WORLD

LIFE OF A PORTLAND LINEMAN ATTENDED BY DANGERS EVERY HOUR



TO THE average individual the term "electric lineman" carries no significance beyond the fact that he is a man who climbs poles and "fixes things."

The electrical lineman is all this and more. From morning until night he is surrounded by a thousand deaths, each more certain and more horrible than the sting of the Rocky Mountain rattler or the prick of his southern brother, the cobra de capello, sometimes called "the veiled death" of India.

To be an electric lineman in Portland is to court death every minute of the working hours. It is the most hazardous occupation in the world and only men of iron nerve may follow it.

Have you ever watched a man climb a pole? Then you must have noted the outward ease and carelessness with which he goes about it. But it is all on the surface, for that man is a bundle of quivering nerves, kept under control by that most powerful of human driving powers—necessity.

The term "hot wire" carries no significance to the mind of the layman, but to the electrical worker it is pregnant with meaning, and that meaning is death, horrible, torturing and disfiguring. Portland has been comparatively free from such tragedies, yet they are possible at any and all times.

What Constitutes a Hot Wire?

With the constant improvement in electrical appliances has come a corresponding increase in the tension or voltage. In Portland some of the companies employ a current running as high as 25,000 volts, while others go as low as 10,000. Only a few years ago a current at 2000 volts was considered a remarkable accomplishment in electrical engineering. Today linemen understand that a "hot wire" may mean a voltage ranging from 2000 to 6000, and there may be two or three or perhaps four of these "hot" wires on one pole.

It is no wonder therefore that an electric lineman views with inward dread the handling of a "hot" wire. It has not been a very great while since a telephone lineman in Portland met the death he had been so long courting. There was a wire "crossed" somewhere in South Portland and he was sent to look for it. He found it and also death, sudden, horrible. Fellow workmen found him sitting on one of the cross arms, apparently engaged in repairing the line.

They called to him, but there came no answer; then one look at the face, full of an agony that cannot be pictured, told the

awful story. The man was dead; he had handled a "hot" wire carrying 5000 volts. Strange to say there was not a mark upon the man's person, yet every nerve in his body had been literally burned out.

It is not easy to say whether death to a lineman is due to his own carelessness or that of the company. Technically the latter certainly cannot be held responsible for such casualties, yet the linemen work-

LITTLE STORIES OF BIG MEN

ONE day when the market was at its worst, a certain St. Louis gentleman, prominent in finance and politics, walked into the office of Harris, Gates & Co., at 19 Wall street. He looked hard at the board for a minute or two. He saw that his pet stock, Northwest, was 40 points below the price at which he had bought the 500 shares he was carrying. He walked over to Mr. Pulfifer, the manager.

"What can I do for you?" asked the latter. They were curt in their speech those days, the men of Gates' surroundings.

"Have you a wire to Providence?" "Yes, we have."

"Well, I wish you'd ask Providence why the devil it doesn't look after me a little better," said the man from St. Louis. He turned and walked out of the office without a smile.

"Bubbles in his think-tank for sure!" commented the manager.

It is a common saying that Russell Sage owns more ready cash than any other man in America. Few people know the reason. Conservative bankers estimate that he has loaned out on collateral at most times cash to the extent of \$25,000,000, while in times when rates are tempting he adds from \$2,000,000 to \$5,000,000 to this interest-drawing principal. His income on this alone amounts to over \$1,250,000 per annum. His income from gilt-edged investments is at least as great. His one luxury is a team of fast horses. He pays \$12,000 ground rent for the real estate on which his Fifth-avenue house is built, and his annual expenses outside of that amount to about \$13,000. It will readily be seen that he is not likely to die poor. Few banks have more actual cash outstanding than has Russell Sage. His total fortune is put at \$80,000,000.

The reason he holds few stocks of any kind is not hard to find. It lies in the fact

ing under high pressure, with just so much labor to perform in a limited time, must needs take greater chances than he should. True, the lineman, is fitted out with rubber gloves and rubber boots, but then they are cumbersome, and if it is raining so much moisture accumulates as to render these non-conductors practically worthless. But the lineman must do his work, so off come the gloves and then—

To tap one of the feeders with a view of running a line into a residence is the least hazardous part of a lineman's detail. The most serious work comes in extending a system into new territory, or taking out an overcharged wire and replacing it with a heavier conductor. In either case it is a question of "cutting in" on a "live" or "hot" wire, that may be carrying 8000 or even 10,000 volts.

THINGS SEEN AND HEARD IN WALL STREET ABOUT SEVERAL MILLIONAIRES

photograph. He was talking, this time, with some of his business associates, and was therefore almost impossible of approach. However, since, as Kipling says, it would take three "lyddite batteries" to stop one New York reporter, they swooped down in a body on Mr. Morgan. One of the artists opened the ball:

"Excuse me, Mr. Morgan," said he, "but would you mind if I took your picture?" The financier swung around, facing the mob.

"What—take my picture! I'd rather lose a million dollars!"

Whereupon a certain youth of the Journal (lately rechristened American), spoke up and said:

"You've lost fifteen million already, Mr. Morgan, for we have about fifteen pictures."

There was a laugh, and it was on the man who had dined with the Kings. He joined in it, and thereafter he consented to be interviewed, probably considering that the gang that could get ahead of him for fifteen million in fifteen seconds was worth talking to.

Little drops of water, Little grains of sand, Make up Morgan's land, Also Morgan's land.

There is a 29-story building on the corner of Wall and William streets that has only 19 stories. It belongs to the Atlantic Trust Company. Ex-Governor Francis, of Missouri, discovered this curious fact on his last visit to New York. He went into the building under the supposition that he had found the Broad Exchange.

He was looking for President Yoakum, of Frisco, whose office is on the 13th floor of the Broad Exchange. Governor Francis got into the elevator and started for the top.

"Thirteen," he said. "Thirteen? There ain't any thirteen in

ence and narrow escapes, he loosens the old wire from the terminal insulator, drawing the new one slowly toward him. With splicing tools he laps the "live" wire some six inches over the "dead" wire, twisting them into a simple knot. If it is raining he must not allow the "hot" wire to touch the cross arm, for it would burn off, neither must he allow it to sag, or come in contact with another wire on

the same pole. If this should happen and his elbow touch one of the fast wires and his leg another, death would be instantaneous.

Use the Same Poles.

In this city telephone and electric wires are placed upon the same poles, but on different crossarms. One constant source of danger to the lineman is the breaking of glass insulators by malicious boys. In a high-tension current a leakage frequently occurs, forming a "ground," so that if the lineman accidentally touches the iron braces supporting the crossarm, his life pays the penalty. In any line work the junction pole is greatly dreaded, because the crossarms are at right angles, thus doubling the chances of a sudden death.

Value of a Lineman's Life.

I asked a prominent local superintendent the other day what was the percentage of deaths among linemen. The answer rather appalled me, for usually men's lives are not figured on a basis of dollars and cents.

"I can't answer that in the way you mean," he said, "because we don't calculate it that way. I should say that the percentage of deaths was about one to every \$125,000 outlay."

Rather a unique way of getting around a dangerous subject, wasn't it?

The cost of copper wire materially increases the lineman's hazard. For instance, the present cost of copper is 16 cents a pound. If, therefore, a plant is supplied with the latest electrical appliances, the daily cost of a high-tension service, say 20,000 volts, is not materially greater than a tension of 5000 volts, and greater results are accomplished. But lives count for little if they stand in the way of science and progress. If the lineman does not like his job he can quit it.

Truly the electric lineman is a public benefactor. It is he who enables us to enjoy rapid transit; talk to our friends over long wires; light our homes and our offices; keeps us cool in the Summer and gives us a hundred other conveniences, each one of which we fondly think is essential to our perfect peace and comfort.

But the lineman is a hero as well, for he faces death every working hour of the year, and as compensation therefore receives the princely sum of \$3 per diem.

Long live the linemen! May mechanical science so improve the hazard of his occupation that, awake or asleep, the "Grim Reaper" will not be ever by his side.

P. SLOPE