THE RULE OF THE ROAD
WHAT THE DIAL TOLD

By JOHN FLEMING WILSON

THE cargo steamer Amphion was drumming through the fog off Tillamook Head on the Oregon coast. The skipper was tamping back and forth on the bridge, volubly impressing discontentment on the weather god. Now and then he put his hand irresolutely on the lever of the engine-room telegraph, which pointed, in spite of rules and regulations, to "Full-Speed." Once or twice he addressed a question to the third officer. The latter refused to commit himself. Finally his superior glanced at the clock under the hood, listened for an answer in the night to the bellow of the siren, and said: "I guess we'll let her go. If we can keep up the gait we can make Astoria by the morning tide, and there's no shipping to be afraid of to-night. Half speed's all right for the lower coast, but up here there's no need of losing time that way."

From the note of indecision in the captain's voice, the third mate thought that encouragement was wanted. But he stared into the blind haze that hid from view the very wash from the cutwater, and only grunted.

"I don't see why we shouldn't hit her along," the skipper went on, irascibly. "We aren't more than a good 20 from the light, and when we get off there we can slow down and crawl in by daylight. I ain't a coward to lay her to when there's no need."

"Shall I keep her at full speed?" the mate asked.

"Well, I wouldn't slow down yet awhile. Maybe if it gets much thicker, and I ain't on the bridge, you better let her down to half speed. Just tell the engineer to drop her a couple of revolutions."

The watch officer nodded. He had served on several seas, and it was no new thing in his experience for a conscientious captain to put his telegraph at half speed, or even dead slow, and warn the engineers not to obey too literally. It can't be done any more, for the new telegraph marks revolutions and must tally with the indicator on the engines. The mate did not like the look of the night, and the perils marked on the chart rose before him distinctly. But he understood quite well a young master's anxiety to get into port on time, and moreover he told himself that if they ran down anything it wasn't his fault. So he nodded again and walked over to the speaking tube.

The chief engineer answered him from the working platform. "Captain says when he rings to slow to half speed, just to drop her a couple," came the drawling voice of the third mate.

The chief looked up at the dial where the indicator pointed steadily at full speed ahead. "All right," he replied.

"The skipper's keeping her going in this fog," suggested the assistant engineer.

"Yes, he wants to get in. It's pretty thick weather to be steaming a good 12."

"Bad coast, too," continued the assistant, flirting his lamp into the champing eccentric well.

"It's always the way with youngsters," the chief responded acidly. "They don't like to lose time by rules. Petersen's all right, so he thinks, but he hasn't been on this coast as long as I have, or he wouldn't be driving her in this muck. He's always throwing it up to me that I ain't the skipper, so I reckon I'll make no fuss if he is trying to hit the Amphion through contrary to rules."

"Well," said the other, glancing up at the dial, "if anything happens, all we've got to say is: It was orders from the bridge. That telegraph won't lie. Shall I ease her only a couple when he signals half speed?"

The gray-haired engineer put his hand on his subordinate's shoulder. His voice rose above the whirr of the dynamo and the clank of the main pump. "That isn't orders," he said. "Our orders are on that dial there. If that says half speed, by Jimmy Cripps, half speed it is."

"Then no talk from the deck goes, sir?"

"Take your orders from the telegraph, when it's working," the chief responded. "If it isn't working then the speaking-tub will do."

An hour later the Amphion was still beating away through the big, oily seas, the fog streaming away from her bows to swirl back and across the yellow glare of the deck lights before piling up in a murky wall astern. The captain kept watch with his mate on the bridge. The engine-room telegraph stood at full speed. Down below in the engine-room the third engineer went quietly about his work, while his chief stood on the working platform under the huge steam valve, smoking his pipe.

Affter his rounds, the assistant came across and stood by the old man's side. "It's an awfully dirty night," he said. "In the stoke-room you can see the fog pouring down the ventilators like steam. Strikes me the skipper is running big risks."

"Yes, he's reckless to-night. I'm pretty well used to young chaps with hot-headed notions, but the older I grow the less I like the captain who boasts in port that he never went half speed. Sooner or later he gets a lesson. Sometimes the engine-room pays for it. Mostly, I might say."

The younger resumed his rounds through the machinery, his light had on a bearing, a swift touch on a driving rod, a squint at an oil cup, a turn on a valve. The swerving bedplates, the thundering cylinders far above, the clacking pumps, the whirling shaft sang about him as he went. Suddenly the steady roar of the huge engines was dulled. The hard-pressed thrust blocks ceased their shrill cry. The plunging piston rods slowed up. With a sigh the engine-room took up the lower beat for half-speed. But the assistant had noticed one strange thing. He quickly joined his chief, and looked at the dial of the telegraph. It still pointed as it had for the last hour. The elder man answered his inquisitive glance with a low, "I don't know what the deck means."

Before another word was said, there came a slow, sucking lift; the Amphion rolled over till the lanters dimmed. She recovered with a surge, and as the chief engineer wrenched the steam valve shut, the plates beneath their feet bulged upward. A moment of tense straining in the stilled machinery, and then, as if freed from some elastic bond, the steamer leaped forward again. There was the sharp clang of a door, and a stoker pushed his sweaty face above the grating with a cry. But the old engineer threw the steam into the cylinders again, and the engines throbbed in response. "The propellor's still there," he cried, shutting off steam once more.

The third assistant was gazing at the telegraph dial. The indicator had not moved. With an oath he snatched a pair of nippers from the rack and thrust the claws up into the wires behind the face. Then he turned in blazing triumph to his superior. "He shan't put her over at half speed now," he shouted, "and then tell the inspectors that it was us that kept her driving.

Before the words were well out of his mouth, a jolt threw them to the plates, and as they scrambled up again the Amphion seem to crumple up under them. Then with the screeching of riven plates and drawing rivets, the steamer settled on the reef. A breaker flung itself in thunder against the side, and the spray fell like rain through the skylight. The sharp clang of the gong filled the engine-room. "That was the half-speed bell," said the chief, dully. In the lull that followed the rattling boom. His assistant, while the awakened engineers of the other watches peered curiously through the darkness with eyes still heavy from sleep, caught up a lantern that was still burning, and threw its beam on the dial of the telegraph. It still pointed to full speed ahead. "I knew he'd try it, and I fooled him!" he cried.

In the turmoil that followed, while stoker and oiler and engineer fled from the water bubbling waist high, the chief gathered up his own log-book, and carefully tore it up. The fragments he cast on the foamy brine that rose about his engines. "I ain't going to fight unfair," he muttered.

On the bridge of the wrecked Amphion the crew huddled cheerlessly. The slow streaming seas that emerged from the fog and night to windward broke heavily on the submerged hull, and the spume ran in rivers from mast and stanchion. "I had the engine-room telegraph at half speed," said the captain, whitefaced, "and I've got it down in the log that we slowed down as soon as we got into the fog. I guess that'll satisfy the inspectors that I've done all right, and we'd not ha run out of our course unless the engine-room had disobeyed orders and kept her full speed."

The third assistant pushed forward and stared at the captain with open mouth. Then he shook his fist, wildly "That aint so," he bawled. "I knew yer tricks! I got witness down below! Ye don't lose me my papers that way! Anybody with two grains of sense 'ull know this old hooker couldn't pile up this high on any half speed. I tell ye, ye don't lose me my papers!" He turned round to his fellows of the engine-room. "What does the telegraph down there read?" he yelled.

The old engineer, rubbing between his palms the omnipresent badge of his authority, a bit of cotton waste, gazed at the pallid master of the wreck, and shared his shame. With a gesture, he silenced his shrieking men, and bullied the third mate with his eyes. "I was on watch to-night with my assistant," he commenced, harshly. "I am responsible for this. I've lost my engine-room log but it was my orders that kept her driving. It was all my doings, and I guess I'm old enough to stand by it. To hell with the rules of the road! Let's play this fair.

"But—" began the third assistant with a cry.

"Shut up!" bellowed his chief.

The yellow lanters on the tilted bridge flickered in the wind, but their unsteady flames were not more wavering than the eyes of the captain. "I put her over to half speed," he said, shrilly, laying his wet hand on the brass, "but it mightn't have registered in the engine-room. You see—"

"We must play fair," interrupted the chief engineer, loudly. The men crowded closer about him, their oilskins rustling in the darkness. "We must play fair," said the old man, glibly. "The Amphion's piled up here, and some one's got to lose his papers. I ain't been friendly with the skipper, and I just naturally kept her driving, boys. It's my fault, my fault, boys, and I guess I'm up against it. That telegraph says half speed, and I kept her full speed, contrary to orders."

The young skipper turned away his face and picked up a lantern that swung steaming from the rail. Raising it up he scanned the faces that surrounded him. Slowly the lantern fell with his arm. He threw out his hand and caught the lever of the telegraph. With a jerk he threw it back and then forward to full speed ahead. The clang of the bell came up from the half-drowned engine-room and tinkled, a fading echo, in the fog.—San Francisco Argonant.

Two Paths.

There is a path that seemeth passing fair,
With portals open and with entrance broad;
But danger and destruction hover there,
To lure the feet from safety and from God.
There is a path so narrow and so straight,
That to the pure alone is entrance given;
Happy the man who enters at that gate,
To tread the path that leadeth up to Heaven!
—Emily Houseman Watson, in Ram's Horn.

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Any person or persons so entering upon said premises without my consent will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

FRANDS THOMSEN.

Timber Land Act, June 3, 1878—
NOTICE FOR PUBLICATION
United States Land Office,
Roseburg, Oregon, Nov. 7th, 1907.

Notice is hereby given that in compliance with the provisions of the act of Congress of June 3, 1878, entitled "An Act for the sale of Timber Lands in the States of California, Oregon, Nevada and Washington Territory, as extended to all the Public Land States by Act of August 4, 1892.

CLARK D. SMITH

of Satsop, County of Chehalis, State of Washington, has filed in this office his sworn statement No. 8588 for the purchase of lot 4 of Sec 30 and lots 1 and 2 and NE¼ NW¼ of Section No. 31 in Township No 31 South of Range No 14 West, W M Ore. and will offer proof to show that the land sought is more valuable for its timber or stone than for agricultural purposes, and to establish his claim to said land before the Register and Receiver of this office at Roseburg, Oregon, on Saturday the 8th day of February, 1908.

He names as witnesses:
Joe Olsen, Satsop, Wash.
Bud Wilson, " "
Ora Watson, " "
James Foster, " "
John Wood, Cedarville, Wash.

Any and all persons claiming adversely the above described lands are requested to file their claims in this office on or before said 8th day of February, 1908.

BENJAMIN L. EDDY, Register.

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United States Land Office.
Roseburg, Ore., Aug. 8th 1907.

Notice is hereby given that in compliance with the provisions of the act of Congress of June 3, 1878, entitled "An act for the sale of timber lands in the states of California, Oregon, Nevada and Washington Territory," as extended to all the Public Land States by act of August 4, 1892.

RAYMOND E. BAKER.

of Myrtle Point, County of Coos, State of Oregon, has this day filed in this office his sworn statement No. 8496, for the purchase of the W½ of SE¼ and E½ of SW¼ of Section No. 24, in Township No. 32 South, Range No 15 West, and will offer proof to show that the land sought is more valuable for its timber or stone than for agricultural purposes and to establish his claim to said land before J. H. Upton, U. S. Commissioner, at his office at Langlois Oregon, on Thursday the 7th day of November, 1907.

He names as witnesses:
William Limpach,
James M Limpach,
Charles Forty all of Port Orford, Ore.
Edwin O. Carter of Myrtle Point, Ore.

Any and all persons claiming adversely the above described lands are requested to file their claims in this office on or before said 7th day of November, 1907.

BENJAMIN L. EDDY
Register.

Trespass Notice.

Notice is hereby given to all persons whom it may concern, not to enter upon or trespass upon the premises of Eli Bagley, for the purpose of hunting, or fishing with hook and line. Said premises are situated on Elk River, Curry County, Oregon, and described as follows. The West half of Section twenty seven, Township thirty two South, Range fifteen West.

Any person or persons so trespassing for the purpose of hunting, fishing, or traveling through in any shape form or manner, or tearing down fences, or leaving out side gates open, or molesting personal property, will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

Wm. R. Johnson,
Lessee of the above described premises

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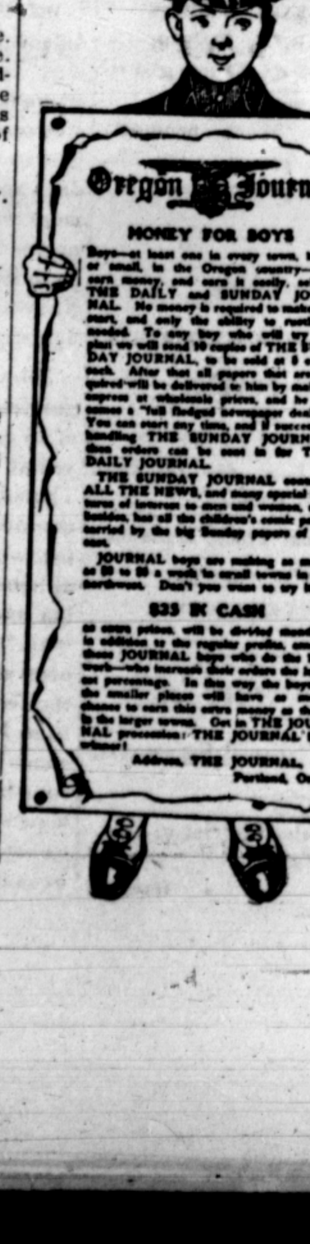
HARRY WILSON

To Whom It May Concern.

The undersigned hereby give notice that they are the owners of the South half of Section 16, Township thirty three, South range fourteen West of Willamette meridian, Oregon. All parties are warned not to trespass upon or make any locations, either placer or quartz claims at their peril.

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