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PHONE 4061

HOW THEY WORK.

Our Special Correspondent Tells About The "Cross-Roads."

We were dumped rather unceremoniously from a St. Johns car, one day last week, at a place called Smith's Crossing, and, as the car and trailer with a wild shriek of the whistle, tore off down the track, the dulcet tones of the conductor came floating back on the breeze, saying, "Go north if yuh want Maegley Junction."

North might have been straight up for all we knew. A road, crossing the car track at right angles, was plainly the only avenue of escape. Some hundred feet each side, the land had been cleared and an array of white painted lot stakes planted, giving to the tenantless locality the cheerful atmosphere of a cemetery. Beyond this, a circle of timber cut off the outside world.

We had hurried some distance down the road when one of the party discovered a new kind of stake made of a piece of dry goods box and inscribed x151-8. From the stake on through the tall timber and underbrush there stretched an aisle of clearing, arched in by overhanging boughs. Blocking the far end a half-mile away, loomed the corner of a new gray house.

What matters it that a man builds his nest in the deep wood! The surveyors arrive with their implements, trample his garden, scare his chickens, "chain" his house and disappear. Later the railroad company comes to buy. Does he refuse to part with his home, they condemn it and take it anyway. Such is the penalty of progress.

"Hey, yuh follerin' the railroad?" Behind us sat a melancholy native with horse and wagon.

"Yes," we replied. "Can you show us the way to Maegley Junction?"

"Foller yer nose and that line 'o stakes," said he, jerking his thumb in the direction of the gray house, "and yer can't miss it." "Durn the railroads!" he added, as he prepared to drive on.

"What's the matter with the railroads?" I inquired. "Wall, yuh see," as he spat out of the wagon, spread his knees and settled his elbows and upper trunk comfortably thereon. "Father writ me as how the railroads was goin' through my land and fer me to come down and fight 'em. Wall, I did. Now they're goin' to miss the ground fur enough not to pay fur it and spile it anyway." He indicated with his finger a strip 25x100 feet enclosed in a rickety pole fence, lying near the surveyed line.

"But your land will increase in value just the same," I said.

"Wall, not much," he replied dismally. "They'll cut a deep hole back there to put their track in an' go tootin' and rumblin' by, all times of day and night. Then there'll be tramps follerin' up, stealin' chickens and beggin' and the chil-ern'll be gettin' on the track and be kilt. I tell you they're no good. Durn the railroads," and the pessimist lumbered leisurely on up the muddy highway.

Taking the advice given we gathered up all hindering skirts and coat-tails and set out after the stakes. It was a fearsome journey. Through backyards and chicken-yards, under clotheslines and shade trees, around houses and swails, over fences, boarded, railed and barb-wired, through newly-plowed fields where stakes were scattered to the four winds, into the twilight gloom of deep forests, where rabbits scurried and squirrels chattered at our invasion and black berry vines tore at our clothing; scolded by women, barked at by dogs, followed by small boys, we tasted in a second degree all the delights and sorrows of a civil engineer: "x128," "x127," here is one at the side "cut 15," here it crosses the road "x126-8," "x125," "a hub," says someone, whatever that may mean, then a long sweeping curve. Eureka, we have arrived! Stop and take a breath.

The two tents of the Portland and Seattle railway on the hill looked deserted. In the dip of land below the highway the O. R. & N. tents squatted snugly over their piece of track, daring Mr. Hill to come and pull it up.

To the right a small band of men sauntered idly about, smoking and talking. Horses and mules, ready harnessed, ate out of the wagon-beds. Plows and scrapers stood

ready for teams to be hooked on. In the fence corner a pile of shovels and picks gave mute testimony of recent activity. To the left a dense column of smoke arose where the right of way was being cleared. Crows held an inquest over a pile of tin-cans near one of the tents. In the background male chickens crowded and cows lay peacefully on the green grass chewing their cud. Little do they guess that this white cloud of tents has come to bring turmoil and clamor over their quiet fields.

A voice could be heard, thinned by the distance. "Five-six-nine." It was echoed nearby. "Five-six-nine." Across the divide stood a man with a surveyor's rod. Near by, the engineer beside his transit wrote down the elevations given. They were determining the grade.

Two men came out of a tent—railroad men from crown to toe. The older one with a jolly face but carrying a good sized fir stick sauntered over our way and looked inquiringly at us. A young man came down the road, and made as if to go into the field but paused on top of the fence. The railroad man forbade him to go farther, but he sat on the top rail, watching the surveyors at work.

In the meantime something had evidently happened. Men began filing out from behind the tents. Horses and mules were being quietly hitched to plows and scrapers. The pile of picks and shovels was melting rapidly away. One man started his plow through the lowest part in the divide. A scraper followed in his lead, another scraper took up the line of march, then a shoyel. Like trained soldiers they fell in line and directly, two banks, each one hundred feet long, had begun to grow on either side of the right of way. Grading had been resumed on the O. R. & N.

"Quite a weighty trestle that was," we ventured to Mr. Newman, the jolly faced man. Mr. Newman's lip curled. "Just a bluff," said he. "Built entirely of four by sixes and toy railroad iron. Not safe for a man and wheelbarrow, to say nothing of a tramcar. Now when we build," he added, "we build for keeps," waving his hand proudly toward the ten inch ties, the eighty pound rails, spiked, tied and leveled, and the cut fully finished and trenched.

Work had not gone far on the grading when a man emerging from the Hill camp, proceeded to the end of the graded work. From there he walked with long strides and eyes on the ground toward the Harriman camp. To some remark of Mr. Newman's, he made a laughing rejoinder and passed on.

Mr. Newman informed us that the man was a civil engineer for the P. & S. company and that he was pacing the ground to be sure that no grading was being done within the disputed territory. "There's no personal feeling here, however," added he. "The companies can fight it out up town but we men down here have no reason to hate one another, so we don't."

Mr. Newman still cast uneasy glances at the man on the fence. Seeing his fellow railroader, whom he called Mac, he raised his stick to attract attention, then in dumb show indicated the man on the fence. Mac gave the young man one keen glance and passed on. Before that look the youth promptly fell off the fence and retreated to the road. He doubtless knew that with that one glance Mac had sized him up, his history, his religion, his character, his reputation, what his parents had been, what his children would be. He had been numbered, catalogued and pigeon-holed for future reference.

"No," said Mr. Newman, "we don't mind about people going inside but that young man lingered too long on the fence. I feared he might be taking our levels, so I stopped him. That is another instance where it is wiser to walk on boldly than to sit astride the fence."

A youth loitered up as if he would speak to Mr. Newman. His hat was tilted over one eye, his hands in his pockets, his head hung forward at a weak angle, his protruding lips glued about the stem of a clay pipe. "Say, mister, do you need any men?"

Mr. Newman did not look up. "Not today, we're full-handed." The boy slouched disgustfully away, doubtless blaming his luck that other men secured work when he couldn't.

A middle-aged gentleman with

[Continued on Last Page.]

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