WHERE THE TRAINS COME AND GO

Glimpses of Life Caught in the Rush and Confusion of the Union Depot

AS a test of patience and friendship for the man who runs the railroad, there is nothing like getting out of a comfortable bed and doing the distance intervening between home and the Union Depot in Lou Dillon time, only to find that the expected train is three hours later than usual.

A big, beefy man, one of the kind that looks as though his every move were carefully planned in advance and executed with deliberate care, came hurrying down Sixth street yesterday morning, slipping in between the rain drops with infinite care, his legs moving like the piston rod on a runaway engine and perspiration pouring off his face faster than the stream of water poured from a neighboring roof. He ran through the depot and came to a full stop before the bulletin board, which told him his train was not due for two hours. It had been delayed somewhere in the mountains.

"Guess I'll have time to go back and get breakfast," he exclaimed cheerfully, and the crowd that had pressed about him hoping to be able to add some new phrases to an overstocked vocabulary backed away in disgust.

A crowd is generally gathered about the blackboards studying the result of the guessing contest that is always in progress at the Union Depot. There is a deal of comfort in looking upon the promising figures, and there are strangers in the throng who place a small degree of reliance in the times chalked up by the men in uniform. Poor unsophisticated strangers! They are new to the traveling game and they do not know what the blackboards mean.

As a matter of fact the officials in uniform themselves do not know when the trains are to arrive, but they mark up their guesses with an air of nonchalance that the strangers mistake for confidence. It is an easy game to play, anyway. Experience has taught these uniformed men that the trains with which they are toying cannot arrive before a certain hour. Hence, to begin with, they are safe in chalking up the scheduled time. If the train is not in sight by that hour another guess can be marked up, and the performance repeated until the train actually comes into the station. If the train arrives earlier than predicted, the relief felt by the waiting public is so great that instead of condemning the guesses on the blackboard they are inclined to congratulate the lucky official upon having beaten his own time. Now and then someone guesses the time to a minute. Occasionally someone hits it off twice in succession. They run the thing like a Chinese lottery and the capital prize—that of guessing the arriving time of the score or more of trains arriving during the day—means a promotion to depot master or a new uniform, just as the occasion may warrant.

AFTER all, it is the man at the gate who is the autocrat of the Union Depot. All of the others are mere pawns compared to him. The man at the ticket window is there to be sworn at, and the men in the baggage room are simply on duty to dodge the gripe thrown at them and to break up the trunks entrusted to their care. The porters are present to look important and give out misinformation, but the gatetender has a mission in life, and the crowd at the depot looks up to him with the same awe that a prisoner gazes at the jurist who is presiding over his fate.

If the gatetender smiles one may slip through and stand out on the platform. The ambition of every one who visits the Union Depot is to become, some day, so well acquainted with the gateman, or so important in life that the gateman respects him, that he may go out on the platform and stand in front of the crowd, the cynosure of all eyes and the envy of all who behold him. To strut up and down in close proximity to the depot policeman or to engage in a bit of repartee with a conductor just in from his run is something really worth living for. Few attain to that prominence in life.

The "common herd" is waved back by the gateman with an air of haughtiness that no one has the temerity to resent. The other morning a woman was at the depot to bid her son good-bye. He was, it might be added for the purpose of filling space, about to depart on a train. Otherwise his mother would not have bade him good-bye unless she were going away. The depot master called the train, and the son hastened through the gate and marched away to the waiting line of coaches.

Suddenly the woman gave a cry of anguish and pushed through the crowd at the gate. "I must see my son!" she called, but the autocrat in charge withered her with a glance.

"But he's carried off my key, and I cannot get into the house until he comes if you don't let me see him. What shall I do? Oh, what shall I do!"

Inasmuch as he was not conducting an information bureau, the gateman referred the mother to the society's office force up stairs. Then, having had his joke, he relented, and suggested that she confer with a porter. One of the men who wear red signs on their caps agreed to go to the train and find the son. After a short conference with the conductor, he returned with the assurance that he had failed in his mission. The gateman and porter regarded the incident as closed, but the woman persisted that she wanted to re-enter her home, and refused to be comforted by the suggestion that she climb through a window. A passing depot master sent a porter out again with the woman in tow, and the household was saved.

THE Southern Pacific train was late the other morning, but a crowd of travelers descended with an air of confidence and looked about for Northern Pacific and O. R. & N. trains that were not present.

"What," an angry man exclaimed to the depot master, a few minutes later, "that train gone! You must be crazy! It can't be gone! Why, it had orders to wait here! Yes, sir! Wait here; right here in Portland, for us. Didn't the conductor get off back here at Roseburg and telegraph that train to wait for us? I guess he did! Now, where is the train?"

And the depot master, a resourceful individual, told him the Northern Pacific had obeyed orders so well that the train would wait until 3 P. M. The wrathy strangers took the regular North Coast limited without the slightest idea that a train had departed for Seattle half an hour before his belated train arrived.

These waits for trains are a good thing for the depot restaurant. Somehow the traveler is inclined to believe, in spite of himself, that the schedule is arranged for the restaurant's benefit. The schedule calls for half a dozen arrivals and departures before the breakfast hour, but the delay and the depot restaurant do the rest. A sign of "popular prices" wins the crowd. "Popular prices" is a delightfully deceptive combination of words. Almost any price is popular. If it fails to coincide with the views of the general public, one may be confident that the price is popular with the management. And so the truthful sign goes right on doing duty, disappointing some, but satisfying some one else.

Then, if one does not care to eat, and has read all the newsvender has to sell, he may enjoy himself watching the antics of the depot policeman. For some peculiar reason the depot policeman cherishes the opinion that he must be a comedian. Not only does he believe he should be, but the theory that he is rests with the emissary from headquarters.

Perhaps the policeman should not be blamed too much. He may never have studied refined comedy, and his ideas of the laughable may be on the plane of a knock-about comedian. In any event, the depot policeman does not go about his mirth-provoking mission as a true artist would. It is the policeman's favorite "stunt" to seize an inoffending stranger up near the shoulders and hurl him about the platform with a few playful remarks about the crime of lese majesty, or to slap a bystander on the back to prove that the policeman's physical culture lessons have not been wasted. As the teeth of the victim are rattled from place and his backbone seems to be forcing its way out through his shirt front, the playful depot policeman will swing the bystander about and pound him in front to restore normal conditions. Whereupon the policeman laughs, and the crowd is presumed to laugh also. Were the crowd to fail to laugh, the policeman might continue his illustration of comedy work elsewhere. If the victim has not protested overly much, the patronizing depot policeman will take the stranger under his wing and let him stand outside the gate, where he can watch the oilers at work on the engine. Perhaps, after all, it pays to be the victim of the depot policeman's joke.

The cab-drivers who gather outside the entrance to spoil the balmy atmosphere with their din, and the officials who burst through the gates to stand outside and look important all have something to do with the going and coming of the trains. The crowd at the depot may not understand just what it is or may fail to realize that trains would neither come nor go if it were not for the crowds, so it is all taken as a part of the show and appreciated as such.

BUT no mercy is shown those who go to the depot to bid friends farewell. If there is to be a dramatic scene the gateman will have it where he can witness the incident, not out behind the train, where his view is cut off. And the kisses that go to waste out there under the gateman's eyes are sufficient to drive the unfortunate traveler who has none to frenzy. There are soft, lingering kisses; the tender variety without end; the loud smack that might mean most anything, and the little peck that betokens a duty performed. Fully half those who pass through the gates seem to get some sort of a kiss near the gateman's deadline.

The gateman has a duty to perform as trains arrive, too. It is a delightful pastime for him to throw open an exit and call sharply to the crowd pressing close to the fence to get back and allow the passengers to depart in peace. One is not allowed to be deliberate when he leaves the train, and those who come to meet friends are not permitted to institute kissing bees as freely as those who go to bid acquaintances good-bye. In the one instance the railroad is about to get the money; in the other it has all the traveler had. And so as the train comes in the gateman orders the crowd to get back, and he talks loudly to show that he means it. Sometimes the crowd is inclined to obey him, but more frequently it is not.

VETERANS' TALES OF WAR DAYS

A LOCAL G. A. R. veteran, Joseph Griffin, of 250 Wood street, has a remarkable love letter, written by a Georgia girl to her sweetheart in the Confederate army, and intercepted by Sherman's troops in their march to the sea. It was so interesting that it was preserved. Mr. Griffin vouches for its authenticity. Following is a copy:

"Dare Soloming I rite to you to Dutling uncle Jake says thores a rite smart un you boys there I know yod not forgit your lizu. Good by.

"God bls you sol.

"We had a dance to widow Johnsings the other night my old bow bill harming wanted me to dance with him but I Inclined when you left sol I Promised not to dance with ary a young man or set upon his knee until you got back or killed. o sol the yanks are cutting up mightily I hard that was killed on the picket lyne but my heart dont feel it and sol it feels mightily for you sometimes. I kiss your picture before the yanks to make them mad thars a curley headed yank with blue eyes thats a saying hele kiss me if I keep a doing of it. I wouient care if he did but for your sake dare sol.

"git a furlow and come to me. cross over the river at capertons ferry near sterngson and ill give the curley headed yank a kiss to let you over. good by sol I must go.

"mother sayes the yanks ar a hunting down the chickens and goin to the smoke house the home gads on tother side of the tenessee and sum of the confederate cavalry stole all the chickens from the union folks

"Thar cussing..

"Jane had a offer to marry a yank last week and lord shele do it. thers heapes un our girls a marry on em. I wont never du it no never if I can du better I halt them wurz than I love u. o dare sol come to see me Just wunst. if u knew how I suffer for you and a little snuff yud come. the wether is rite bad so is my cold dare sol.

"sol I love u as I never loved no wone. right to me sol at capertons ferry. yur ever loving and efeckshunate lizu."

AMONG the visiting G. A. R. veterans here from the San Francisco encampment is F. H. Cobb, of Michigan. Mr. Cobb was sergeant in the First Michigan company in the First United States Sharpshooters, one of the most famous regiments of the Army of the Potomac.

"We were called Berdan's Sharpshooters," said Mr. Cobb, the other day. "Berdan was not a military man at the outbreak of the war, but he was a rifle enthusiast, and conceived the idea of forming a special regiment of sharpshooters. The War Department officials fell in at once with the idea, and he was given a Colonel's commission for organizing the regiment.

"The test for admittance to the sharpshooters was that the applicant must make in ten consecutive shots 40 inches or less on a target at 200 yards, the bullseye being but two inches in diameter. In this method, a shot three inches from the bullseye counted three inches, another six inches from the bullseye would count six, or a total of nine inches in the score, and so on, so you can see one had to keep pretty close to the center, else the 40 inches would soon run up in ten shots.

"The idea was popular, and enough men qualified to fill two regiments instead of one. They were distributed, four companies to Michigan, five to New York, two to New Hampshire, two to Vermont, two to Wisconsin; Pennsylvania, one; Maine, one, and Minnesota, one. Members were scattered about apportioned among all the other regiments of the army. Berdan's sharpshooters were altogether in but one battle—Gettysburg. Here they held the "Devil's Den" against General Longstreet. Afterward Longstreet once said to Berdan: "'If it hadn't been for you fellows that day we would surely have had Little Round Top with our batteries.'

"Little Round Top, you know, was the highest eminence of the battlefield, and if the rebel batteries had got it the day might have gone differently. But our breech-loading rifles were too much for them. We had tried various rifles during the war, many starting with their own old-fashioned "Squirrel" guns, but at last we all got Sharp's breech-loader. We used the globe sight, and could fire about three times a minute, getting blood generally. In firing 100 rounds or so, one could do about as rapid work with the Sharp's as with the modern Krag, for you know one must wait for the latter to cool after a rapid discharge."

"At Chancellorsville," continued Mr. Cobb, "61 men of companies C, I and K of our regiment captured 345 Confederates. They were the remains of a regiment which left them hiding in a railroad cut. Our band came out of the woods, and, keeping under cover along a fence, were able to disable every man that showed himself outside the cut. They didn't know our numbers, and under the circumstances their ranking officer felt obliged to surrender. When they marched out our commander had to handle things pretty carefully to keep them from getting onto our numbers, but, by keeping under cover until the right time, each of us was detailed to guard five or six of the rebels and take them to headquarters."

JOSEPH GRIFFIN, the veteran who furnished the copy of the Georgia girl's love letter, told an amusing story of Morgan's raid to some comrades at the Board of Trade rooms Friday.

"We were Morgan's 'rear guard,'" he said, "and chased him all along his route through Tennessee, Kentucky and Indiana until we captured him in Ohio. Near the town of Hamilton, in that state, lived a copperhead, who greeted Morgan very effusively.

"'Have you any horses?' Morgan asked.

"'Yes, General; nine of the best in the state.'

"'I need five badly; and you say you are a friend of the South?'

"The man kicked like a blue steer, but had to give them up.

"'Now,' said Hamilton, 'my "rear guard" will be along shortly, and when you see them coming just you go out and holler for Jeff Davis.'

"That's just what the blame fool did. When we came along there he was, swinging his hat and hurrahing for Jeff Davis.

"WE were once detailed for picket duty along the Rappahannock, above Fredricksburg," said Mr. Cobb. "At first it was pot shooting at every opportunity between ourselves and the rebels across the river, but they soon grew tired of that and were ready to call it a game and quit. After that we went in swimming with one another and became very friendly. We learned one another's names and regiments, and agreed that if it ever happened that we met again to be of what help we could each to the other. Well, long afterward I was shot through the thigh in the Battle of the Wilderness, and had to be left on the field, though a big Vermonter wanted to pack me out on his back. When the Johnnies came along I found that they belonged to the Eleventh Alabama.

"'I know some of your men,' I said, and gave the names.

"They sent those fellows to me, three of the men I had met at the Rappahannock, and those boys did all they could for me at the time. I managed to save the leg, though it never got a doctor's attention. After the war I had raised a family, and often told this and other stories to my children. One day my son, a young man, asked me why I did not try to find those Confederates. Acting on his suggestion, I sent a letter to an Alabama paper. It was published, and not long after I got a letter from one of the very men who had helped me that day in the Wilderness. We have corresponded ever since at more or less lengthy intervals."

Mr. Cobb is visiting his daughter in this city.

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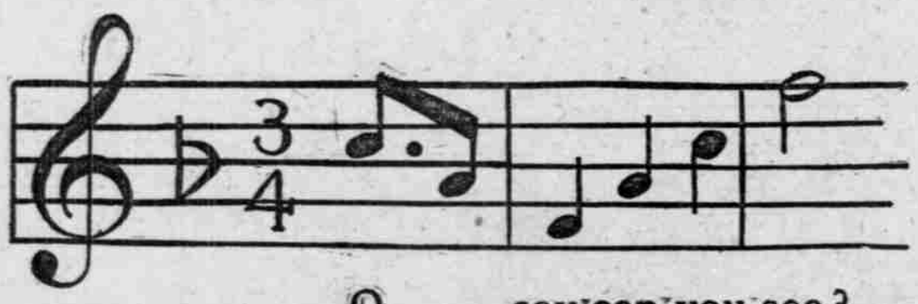

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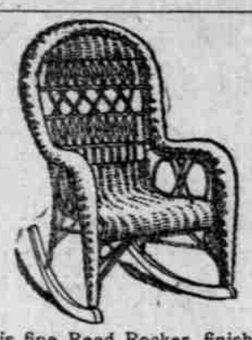

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