

How Mike Saved The Limited Express

MIKE had been sitting on the pile of ties near the water tank ever since the fast mail shot by in the early morning. Twice he had tried to slip under a car of one of the many passenger trains which pulled up at the tank. He was an adept at riding on the trucks, and in his two years as a tramp had traveled thousands of miles, curled up over the spinning wheels or stretched out on the platform between the engine tender and the mail car. Mike was only 15 years old, but he had seen nearly every State in the country, and knew all of the large cities intimately.

This morning Mike felt that he had encountered a streak of bad luck. Every time he slipped under a car the brakeman or conductor caught him and hauled him out with rough hands and rougher language. But Mike was used to this sort of treatment, and took it as a matter of course.

The afternoon was well along toward evening when the west-bound limited express came around the curve, and the engine stopped under the huge goose-neck pipe which served to pass the water from the reservoir to the tank of the tender. Mike's keen, bright eyes watched every movement of the train crew, although he appeared to have no interest in the train, its crew or passengers. Luck was with him this time. As soon as the hissing cylinders sent the first jets of white steam over the ditches Mike sprang from the ties, and in a second was flattened out on the platform between the mail car and the engine. There he was safe until the next stop, unless the fireman saw him, for there was no door to the platform from the car.

For an hour the train sped over the smooth rails, through farm lands and past towns and villages, rounding curves and coasting down grades. Mike sat at ease on the steps, caring nothing for the hot cinders which rained down when the fireman fed his hungry charge with coal. Just as the train passed through a deep cut the engine whistle gave two sharp blasts, and the grinding of the brake shoes on the wheels told Mike that the engineer had applied the air brakes.

"Something's wrong," said Mike to himself, when he felt the car shiver and jump under the pressure of the powerful brakes. "He's givin' her all the air she'll stand."

He did not dare to swing out and look ahead, for he knew that the conductor and every brakeman on the train were doing that, and he would be seen. He was well acquainted with the country, and knew that there was no town, side track, water tank or stopping place within ten miles of the cut. The train slowed up with jerks, and just as it came to a standstill, Mike jumped from the steps and dove into a clump of bushes.

He glanced toward the engine and saw on the track, not fifty feet from the pilot, a pile of ties on the rails. At the same instant he heard a pistol shot, and then from the bushes on both sides of the track a score of men rushed toward the train. Two of them, with revolvers in their hands, sprang into the engine cab.

The engineer seized a long-handled monkey wrench and the fireman grasped an iron bar, but before they could use them they were shot down and thrown from the cab. Hoarse shouts and pistol shots mingled with the screams of women and the yells of men. Half a dozen of the train robbers attacked the heavy side doors of the express car, and others entered the passenger cars and sleepers with revolvers in their hands.

The men who were trying to break down the door of the express car with a sledge hammer called to the messenger inside to open the door, but they received a shot from a rifle which sent a bullet through the heavy oak. It struck one of the robbers, and he fell to the ground.

"Bring that dynamite," shouted one of the men.

Mike's heart seemed to rise in his throat, but he did not dare leave the bushes. In a few minutes there was a loud report, and Mike saw that the door was shattered. The messenger was struck down, and in a short time the train robbers had rolled the express safe out of the car and carried it into the woods.

All of this time the two men who shot the engineer and fireman remained in the engine cab. The engineer had fallen near Mike's hiding place. He was groaning with pain, and Mike crept to him.

"Are you killed?" asked Mike. "I ain't no robber. I am a tramp and was riding on the platform."

"No," said the engineer, "I am not killed. I am shot through the arm, and I guess my leg is broken."

Just then one of the robbers, who

seemed to be the leader, cried out: "Here, some of you fellows. Throw those ties off the track."

"Get a good look at that fellow," whispered the engineer to Mike. "Look at him good, so you will know him again. Look at all of them. They flagged me in the cut, and I had to stop."

Mike singled out the leader and mentally photographed every feature of his face, his clothing and hat.

"I'll know him again," he said.

By this time the ties were thrown into the ditch, and the leader, giving a shrill whistle, yelled to the two men in the cab:

"Give her steam and jump."

The engineer's pale face grew chalky white. He struggled to rise to his feet, but his leg bent under him. Falling, with a groan, he whispered to Mike:

"Do you know anything about an engine?"

Mike nodded. "I know how to fire and I know how to use the air," said he.

"Get on that train. Get on the front platform. Hurry, the train is moving. Climb aboard and over the tender, shut off steam, and give her every bit of air."

Mike darted from the bushes, and, catching hold of the railing, swung himself to the lower step of the front platform. As he did this the two men sprang to the ground. One of them saw Mike.

"Come out of that," he cried, and with a quick motion he leveled his revolver and fired.

Mike felt something hot across his cheek, and then his face felt as though some one had drawn a red hot iron across his skin. He put his hand to the place, and when he drew it away it was covered with blood. The engine puffs were coming faster and faster, and the train was gathering speed rapidly. Mike swung himself



TAKEN TO THE GENERAL MANAGER.

out from the steps and looked back, and saw the two men disappearing in the woods. Then he clambered over the tender, and in a few minutes was in the cab.

The train was rushing along at full speed, and the locomotive rocked and swayed like a boat in a storm. Mike had spent the fifteen years of his life around railroad yards. All of the railroad men at the junction had come to his father's funeral, for Mike's father had been one of the best known section bosses on the line. That was two years back, and Mike had been gathering railroad knowledge ever since. So he looked at the steam gauge as soon as he reached the cab. It showed 125 pounds of steam. Next he looked at the water glass and saw that there was plenty of water in the boiler.

He seated himself on the green cushion which spread over the engineer's bench. The throttle valve was wide open, and he pushed in the lever until the locomotive sensibly lost speed. Then he pulled the reversing lever back a few notches and the huge machine was under control.

He made up his mind to run to the next town, and after a twenty-minute ride he could just see the smoke of a factory in the place. A shout behind him caused him to look back. He involuntarily lowered his head, for on the roof of the mail car were two mail clerks, a brakeman and the conductor of the train, each pointing a revolver toward his head.

"Don't shoot!" he cried. "I am no train robber. I am only doing what the engineer told me to do," and he reached for the whistle cord and sounded the station whistle.

In a few minutes all of the men were in the cab, and Mike began setting the air brakes. He did it so well that the long train came to a full stop at the platform, and the passengers flocked out of the cars and surrounded the engine. The mail clerks told them about Mike, and a passenger took up a contribution for him.

In the meantime the conductor had telegraphed the story of the hold-up to

the train dispatcher, and in ten minutes after a freight locomotive, which stood on the siding, steamed toward the place where the robbers had stopped the train.

The engineer and fireman were brought back to the town, where the doctor said neither was badly injured, and the next day Mike was taken to the office of the general manager of the road by the conductor of the train.

Most of the train robbers were arrested, and when they were brought into court Mike was able to identify the leader and the two men who had captured the engine. Soon after he was sent to school, and the railroad company paid all bills.—San Francisco Post.

Driver Was Literal.

The manager of one of the Chicago express companies tells a good story.

"We have a big, strong Irishman driving one of our teams. Yesterday he was sent with a barrel of flour to the home of a woman on the South Side. Arrived there, the driver took the barrel on his back and started up the stairs, his express book in his coat pocket.

"Half way up the second flight of stairs the Irishman came upon a woman, scrubbing.

"'Will ye be after tellin' me where Mrs. McGowan lives?' he asked.

"'I am Mrs. McGowan,' said the scrubber—a statement which was irrelevant—and I live upstairs.'

"'Where will I have this barrel of flour?' asked the driver.

"'Take it up as far as youse can, and thin put it down. I'll attend to it,' replied Mrs. McGowan.

So he went on up, and when there were no more stairways to conquer he looked about and saw a ladder leading through an open scuttle to the roof. Up this ladder he climbed, out on the roof he stepped and then, finding he could go no higher without a balloon, he deposited the barrel and came down.

"On the stairway—though nearly at the foot—he found the woman again, and she signed the delivery book, but before he got to the office Mrs. McGowan was there demanding an explanation. The driver was called in as soon as he returned.

"'Where did you put that barrel of flour?' demanded the official.

"'Where she told me.'

"'Where did you tell him to put it, madam?'

"'I told him to take it up as far as he could, an'—'

"'An' O' did,' interrupted the honest driver. 'If she'll look on the roof she'll find it.'"

Do Horses Weep?

Do horses weep? Is a question discussed by the Admiralty and Horse Guards Gazette. It tells us that it is a well-authenticated case of a horse's weeping during the Crimean war. On the advance to the heights of Alma a battery of artillery became exposed to the fire of a concealed Russian battery, and in the course of a few minutes it was nearly destroyed, men and horses killed and wounded, guns dismounted and limbers broken.

A solitary horse, which had apparently escaped unhurt, was observed, standing with fixed gaze upon an object close beside him; this turned out to be his late master, quite dead.

The poor animal, when a trooper was dispatched to recover him, was found with copious tears flowing from his eyes; and it was only by main force that he could be dragged away from the spot, and his unearthly cries to get back to his master were heartrending.

Apropos of the intense love that cavalry horses have for music, a correspondent of the Gazette writes that when the Sixth Dragoons recently changed their quarters a mare belonging to one of the troopers was taken so ill as to be unable to proceed on the journey the following morning. Two days later another detachment of the same regiment, accompanied by the band, arrived. The sick mare was in a loose box, but hearing the martial strains, kicked a hole through the side of her box, and making her way through the shop of a tradesman, took her place in the troop before she was secured and brought back to the stable. But the excitement had proved too great, and the subsequent exhaustion proved fatal.—Philadelphia Times.

Maj. Shirts, of Course.

Famous old Gov. Henry A. Wise of Virginia was directly or indirectly the source of many a good story. Here is one that I do not think has found its way into print: One day at a political gathering he was approached by a well-dressed individual who shook hands warmly with him. The Governor was a bit bothered and confessed he could not recall the handshaker's name.

"Why you must remember me, Governor," said the latter. "I'm from Richmond. I made your shirts."

"Why, of course," said the Governor, with all a politician's tact. "Gentlemen, this is my very excellent neighbor, Maj. Shirts."—Washington Post.

Trout Over Two Feet Long.

A trout of the Lochleven species weighing 11¾ pounds and measuring 2 feet 7 inches in length and 10¼ inches in girth, was recently taken in Kinghorn Loch.

As soon as any one commences taking a prominent part in anything, people commence picking at him.



Signalling to Mars.

Mr. Nikola Tesla has recently suggested the possibility of transmitting electrical impulses, not only to every part of the earth, but even to distant planets—to Mars, for instance. A connecting wire, he says, is not needed.

Value of Pneumatic Tires.

It is reported from Paris, where pneumatic tires have been introduced on some of the cabs, that in consequence of the lessened shock to the vehicles, the cost of repair has been reduced 50 per cent., to say nothing of the saving to the nerves of passengers and the muscles of horses.

A Comet's Double Tail.

Photographs of Perrine's comet, which was visible during the last winter, show that it had two tails, one straight and the other curved sharply backward. According to the views of the Russian astronomer, Brodechin, the straight tail probably consisted of atoms of hydrogen, and the curved tail of atoms of iron.

A Phonographic Joke.

At a recent meeting of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, Nature reports that Prof. John G. McKendrick pronounced these words in the presence of a phonograph which was working backward: "Arrubnde fo Eotlsroevnu." When the instrument was turned in the proper direction the audience was startled at hearing the machine say, "University of Edinburgh."

Radiography in Biology.

The new kind of photography, to which the discovery of the X-rays has given rise, has already been experimentally applied to the study of biology. In Germany not only the bones but the heart, lungs and windpipe of a mouse have been successfully photographed in their normal positions, and something similar has been done in this country. This is clearly a great aid in the study of animal physiology.

Curing Deafness by Noise.

According to Popular Science News, a well-known aurist has invented an instrument for curing partial deafness by the aid of sound. His instrument produces a sustained sound running through several octaves. The sound is conveyed into the patient's ear through a telephone transmitter. As soon as the particular pitch of sound that the ear hears imperfectly has been ascertained, that note is concentrated upon the eardrum for a certain period every day.

Pocket Electricity.

A number of devices have lately been invented by which an electric lamp can be carried about and used like a candle or lantern. Some of these are complete in themselves, carrying a battery that operates only when the lamp—which may be of almost any desired shape, that of a pocket flask, for instance—is held in a particular position. When thus held the acid in the reservoir reaches the battery poles, and the incandescent light blazes out. On reversing the lamp the light is extinguished. In other cases a stronger light is provided by means of a separate battery which may, however, be carried in the pocket. It is proposed to substitute this form of portable electric lamp for the ordinary lantern in the ambulance service of the French army.

Mountain Lions.

The puma, or mountain lion, is said to be comparatively plentiful in all the unsettled parts of the State of Washington, and sometimes it is found in regions where settlement has already begun. In a letter to Science, Mr. M. S. Hill, of Tacoma, describes a mountain lion which came down to the beach of Puget Sound, about thirty miles from Port Townsend, last summer, approaching his wife and children and uttering frightful screams. Mr. Hill and his family succeeded in driving the animal away with shouts and threatening motions. What he says about the cries or screams of the puma is regarded as important, because there has been a conflict of authorities on the question whether the animals utter such sounds. Mr. Hill also reports that a puma has been known to chase a man on horseback, accompanied by a dog, at night.

Do Fish Take Ballast?

It is asserted on the authority of the captain of a steam fishing smack in the North Sea that codfish, at certain times of the year, take sand into their stomachs for "ballast." This, according to the captain, is done when the fish are about to migrate from the shallow water covering the southern banks of the North Sea to the deeper water farther north. He says that he has often observed that fish caught on the southern

banks just before the migration begin, and these caught in the northern waters after it is completed, have sand in their stomachs, and that the sand is discharged after the arrival of the fish at the southern banks on the return migration. In proof of this it is stated that the sand found in the fish differs in color and quality from that of the bottom where they are caught.

Hot-Ham Heroism.

A Polish officer, now dead, who came to the United States soon after the Russians suppressed the Polish insurrection under General Chlopicki, in 1831, used to tell with much zest the story of his promotion from the ranks. He was a private of cavalry when Chlopicki's retreat began. The troops had made a weary night march, and were in bivouac for breakfast, when some word that they were almost surrounded by a Russian force, instantly the Poles hurried to their saddles, mounted, and sought a way of escape.

The young cavalryman had been holding some pieces of ham for himself in a camp kettle. Anxious to "save his bacon," he dumped the half-boiled mess into his saddle-bags, and joined his companions. Two minutes later his horse became restive, at a most inopportune moment, for on surmounting a ridge the Poles had found themselves confronted by a Russian force of infantry.

There was but one thing to be done. The Russian line must be broken through at once. It was being rapidly re-enforced. If the Poles should fail to cut their way out at the first charge they must all be captured.

On they rushed at the order to charge, and now our young trooper's horse had become fairly frantic and quite uncontrollable. He sprang away far in advance of the charging line. The rider, determining to make the best fight he could, swung his sabre, took a stronger grip with his knees, and gazed hard at the face of the Russian he expected to be launched against.

Just then a volley hurtled into the charging line, but the foremost horse and rider escaped unharmed. A few moments and they were upon the enemy. Usually a horse refuses to leap at bayonets, but this one jumped furiously at the kneeling front rank, and such was the momentum and fury of the beast that the Russians just in his front lost nerve, broke, and gave him entrance.

Through the gap just made other Poles sprang a moment later. Striking right and left, they widened the breach, and in ten seconds the Russian infantry was demoralized. The Poles escaped with slight loss, and it was not long before the young leader quieted his steed, dismounted and found a chance to examine his self-cooled ham.

A few hours later the Polish general of cavalry rode up to the captain of the troop that had so distinguished itself, complimented him, and said: "By the way, captain, who was that splendid young officer that led you all in?"

"He wasn't an officer; that was only one of my boys."

"Not an officer! May the bullets strike me if I don't make him one! Call him out here at once."

The general shook hands with the youth, promoted him to a lieutenantcy then and there, and gave him a place on his staff.

Some days later, when the captain called at headquarters, he sought out the new lieutenant, whom he found dolefully contemplating his unsaddled horse, which had a huge, raw sore on each side.

"What on earth is the matter with your horse?" asked the captain.

"Oh, nothing much."

"But what made those terrible sores?"

"The same thing that made me a lieutenant," said the hero. "A big chunk of hot ham in each saddle-bag; but, for the love of the saints, don't tell the general, or the boys."

Cats Wanted in Oregon.

On the register of a prominent Philadelphia hotel this legend was written recently: "Joshua L. Drumgoole, Oregon; here for pleasure, and cats." The clerk was inclined to doubt the sanity of the guest, despite the fact that he looked sensible. Mr. Drumgoole, however, laughingly explained away the clerk's fears before he went to dinner. "I have a large ranch in Oregon, devoted principally to the growing of wheat and other grain. For several years past our crops have suffered greatly by reason of the depredations of great armies of gophers that infest the country thereabouts. The nuisance has grown more and more annoying with each succeeding year, and we have finally decided that a stop must be put to it. Now, a cat is death on a gopher, but cats are not so plentiful in the West as they are here. So I intend to get together a couple of hundred cats and take them with me when I start for home. Out in my country cats bring fancy prices, but from my recollection of this locality, I should be able to get all I need for very little money."

Bloomerites Must Pay Men's Prices.

What is claimed to be the most expensive thermometer in the world is in use at one of the large universities. It is an absolutely correct instrument, with graduations on the glass so fine that it is necessary to use a magnifying glass to read them. The value is \$10,000.

People are not easily shocked after they are fifty years old.