THE FAMILY STORY

SAVED THE TRAIN.

KANE CREEK was a railroad crossing on the S. & C. Railroad, about two miles from the divisional terminal at Mercer. It was in the midst of a scrubby pine forest, with a sandy road crooking out from the trees on one side and into the trees on the other. There were only two or three houses, a little general store with a porch like the visor of a military cap, and a schoolhouse, all arranged in a scraggy row along the railroad track.

A dozen trains whirled through Kane Creek every day with only a shriek of greeting and a whipping wake of fine sand. Only two of them paid the slightest attention to the girl in a blue gingham dress who stood in the little observation window. One of them was the way freight, which stopped at Kane every time it came along while the conductor handed the girl a bundle of yellow papers and received another like it in return. The other was the night express, westward bound, from St. Paul, and running at forty miles an hour. It was a splendid train—ten cars, with the finest engine on the road, big No. 666. As its glaring eye flashed around the bend in the direction of Mercer the girl in the gingham dress often thought of the great train as a powerful and ferocious beast snorting and roaring westward on a race with the sun, and she knew the hand that trained it. When the train was a mile away there were always two blasts of the whistle. Every one in Kane thought they meant simply "Wake up, look out!" for that is what all locomotives say at every crossing, but the girl in the gingham dress heard "Hello, Polly!" and darted out on the platform and waved her handkerchief. As the great train thundered nearer a hand was thrust from the engineer's window, and, although it was usually dark, she could see the flutter of something white, and oftentimes as the engine darted past the station she heard the blurred sound of a voice and caught a glimpse of a grimy face and a blue jean jacket, and then she went back to her place in the little station with a sigh of contentment.

For it was a moment of great joy to Polly Marshall when her father's engine went through. Polly was the station agent at Kane Creek. Any one could have told that a woman presided in the little depot, for was there not always a bouquet in the window and dainty pictures surrounding the grimy time tables on the walls and a kitten curling upon the doorstep? At 17 Polly has gone in as assistant to learn telegraphy, and when Clark, the agent, was called to Mercer the company had left the independent girl in charge. She and her father lived in one of the wooden houses a stone's throw back from the depot, and since Polly's mother died they had been everything to each other.

Engineer Marshall was a big, silent man, and his companions, some of them, thought him gruff and ill-tempered, but to Polly he was always as tender as a kitten. Often when she was a little girl he took her with him to Mercer on his engine, and while she sat on his black leather seat at the cab window, clinging on with both hands, he explained to her how the big black creature under them was started and stopped; what this brass crank was for, and how, when the engine squeaked here or squeaked there, a little oil was needed in this cup or in that crevice, and Polly had learned to know an engine as well as she knew the neat little pantry in the house at home. Indeed, she had more than once managed the levers and throttle, although it was very heavy work for a girl to do.

It was one night late in the fall that Polly Marshall had need of all her knowledge of engines. She was sitting at her desk in the little observation window, a shaded light throwing its rays down on her telegraph instruments and the sounding key clicking sleepily. Suddenly she was startled by the call of her number. Instantly her fingers sought the keys, and she gave the answer that signified that she was all attention.

"Look out for ——" clicked the sounder, and then it suddenly ceased, and try as she would Polly could get no further communication from the station next to the eastward. What could the trouble be? Polly sprang to her feet, remembering that the night express of which her father was the engineer was the next train due. Could anything be the matter? She ran out on the dark platform to see that her lights were all in place and that the switches were properly set, so that the express would slip past the station without an accident. Then she went back and called up Mercer.

"Can't you get Pinckney?" she asked.

Pinckney was the station which had sent her the warning dispatch so mysterious interrupted. She knew the operator at Pinckney well. Every night he told her of the approach of her fatner's train and whether or not it had left his station on time.

"Pinckney quiet. Can't get answer," was the report of the wires. "What's the trouble?"

Polly answered as well as she could, and Mercer made another attempt to arouse Pinckney.

Her father's train was now due. It should be whistling cheerily at the lower bend. Polly stepped out on the platform and peered up the track. Yes, there was the familiar headlight. She would have known it among a hundred. Then came the whistle, "Hello, Polly!" and Polly ran back into her office much relieved, and sat down to warn Mercer. At that instant she heard a peculiar cracking sound that sent her heart quivering deep in her bosom. Then there was the shrill scream of the locomotive whistle, suddenly interrupted as if the hand that had drawn the lever had been struck from its place. Polly knew it was a cry of distress. It seemed to say "Help!" in a long, tremulous wail. Instantly Polly darted outside and flew up the track. Already the express should have thundered past the station, but she could see its headlight a hundred yards or more away.

With a hundred terrifying questions flashing through her mind, Polly ran on through the gloom. When she was almost within range of the big headlight, she saw half a dozen armed men swarming around the engine, she heard fierce oaths, and then the engine started up again. She saw in an instant that it had been cut free from the train. In the cab window, where her father usually stood, there was a big, unfamiliar figure managing the lever and throttle. Terrified Polly sprang to one side into a clump of bushes. As the locomotive passed her on its way up the track she saw that the man in the cab wore a black mask on his face, and then she knew what had happened. She understood why Pinckney had tried to warn her and failed. Robbers had held up the train and were preparing to rob the express car.

For a moment Polly was torn with doubt and terror. Had they shot her father? She knew that he never would submit to have his train captured without a struggle. Should she go to him? Then she remembered her station and the telegraph, and, without a moment's delay, she was flying down the track toward the depot. She would send for help to Mercer, but squarely in front of the little depot the locomotive stopped, and the black masked man sprang from the cab window and darted across the platform. Hardly thinking what she was doing, Polly ran up on the other side—the fireman's side of the engine—and, raising herself up, peered into the cab. She had half expected to see her father's dead body lying on the floor, for she had heard much about the terrible doings of train robbers.

Through the cab window she could see the robber sitting at her own little desk in the depot sending a message. It flashed over her all at once that he was wiring Mercer that the express was delayed, thus preventing any alarm. The robber had pushed up his mask, and she saw him plainly.

What should she do? She dared not enter the office, and she, a mere girl, could be of no service where the robbers were making their attack on the train. If only she had the little revolver that lay in the drawer of her desk! She set her teeth as she thought what she would do with it.

At that moment three shots rang out, clear and istinct, from the detached train. The man at the telegraph instrument sprang to his feet and ran to a side window in the waiting room and looked up the track.

Now was her chance. Hardly thinkink what she did Polly sprang to the engineer's cab, threw back the reverse lever and opened the throttle steadily. The big steel wheels began to turn, very slowly at first. Farther and farther the throttle opened and faster and faster turned the wheels, and yet they did not go half fast enough to suit Polly, who was now glancing fearfully over her shoulder.

Suddenly the depot door was thrown open, and she saw the robber darting up the track. He had a pistol in his hand. He was pointing it at her and shouting for her to stop, but the engine was now going at good speed, and, run as he would, the robber could not catch it, but he stopped and fired, the bullet ripping through the cab over Polly's head.

The engine was now tearing down the track at full speed. Polly knew that it must be fired or it would not ge far, and so, leaving the throttle open, she sprang to the coal pit, flung open the firehole, and with the heavy shovel in her small white hands threw in load after load of coal. When she returned to her place she could see the first signal light of Mercer already blinking into view. She pulled down on the whistle cord and the engine shrieked its distress.

Five minutes later Polly strained at the heavy reverse lever, turned hard on the airbrake and brought the great iron horse to a sudden standstill. How she ever managed to stammer the story she never knew, but in a few minutes the engine was headed back with a half dozen armed men aboard of her. Behind them came another load of men on a switch engine and two men were racing up the street of Mercer calling the alarm.

They heard the firing before they reached Kane Creek, but it ceased soon afterward. The robbers had gone. They had taken with them much plunder from the passengers, but they had not been able to get into the express safe, although they were at work drilling it open when relief came.

From the time that the engine stopped Polly was missing. When the rescued and excited passengers and express messengers began to crowd around and inquire, the Mercer men remembered her. A party of them went out to find the girl who had brought help to the beleaguered train.

In a little clump of bushes they heard a man moaning, and an instant later they saw Polly kneeling in the sand with her father's head in her lap, crying bitterly, and they gathered up the brave engineer and his daughter and carried them down to the train, cheering all the way.

Engineer Marshall was not badly hurt, and he was able to be in Mercer when the general manager of the road thanked the blushing Polly officially and offered her a new and better position in Mercer, and, of course, all the passengers and express messengers heard about Polly's brave deed and said a great many pleasant things about her, but Polly, being a sensible girl, only blushed and said that she had to do it, and that any other girl would have done the same under like circumstances. Which no one believed, of course.

Later, when the robbers were captured, Polly was able to identify one of them positively—the one who had run the engine—and through him the entire party was convicted and sentenced to the penitentiary.—Brooklyn Standard-Union.

Some Tested Points in Diet.

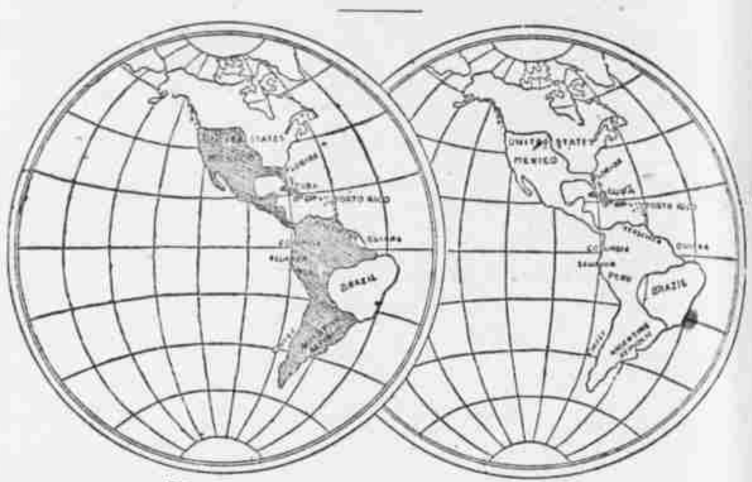
The fact that milk has become extremely popular with all classes of physicians of late years is emphasized by a recent writer in the North American Review. Formerly a fever patient was forbidden to take the article, while in modern practice it is about the only food allowed, and a well-nigh exclusive diet of that liquid is said to be very efficacious in diabetes. At the German spas, Carlsbad, Wiesbaden, etc., a very little bread is allowed, the diet being mostly made up of milk, eggs, grapes and lean beef; a non-starch diet is the rule, bread, starchy vegetables and cereals being almost excluded. Rice is easily digested and an excellent food, except that it abounds in earth salts. Fruits are not only digested in the first stomach, but they have a large part of the nourishment already in a condition to be absorbed and assimilated as soon as eaten. The food elements in bread and cereals have to undergo a process of digestion in the stomach, and then be passed on to the intestines for a still further chemical change before being of use to the human system, showing the advantage of a diet of lean meats and fruits.

Signs of the Times.

With a single break about fourteen miles in length it is now possible to go in trolley cars from Providence, R. I., to Nashua, N. H., a distance of considerably over 100 miles. This is a striking reminder of how the trolley has spread over New England during the last ten years.—Boston Journal.

A colored philosopher says it is foolish to count your chickens before daybreak.

SPAIN'S AMERICAN POSSESSIONS.



1798.
Spain owned one hundred years ago a great part of what is now the United States, all of Mexico, Central and South America save Brazil, and the Guianas, and many of the West Indies.

1898.
Within one hundred years Spain has lost all of her territory on the Western Hemisphere, except the islands of Cuba and Puerto Rico.

strong. When the depth of water is considerable, or when the current is rapid, "ground mines"—heavy mines similar in construction to the others, but resting on the bottom—must be used. Ground mines have been planted in sixty-five feet of water. For this depth a charge of about 1,200 pounds of guncotton, equivalent to 4,800 pounds of gunpowder, should be used. The method of firing the ground mine is very simple and ingenious. The mine is held in position on or near the ground by a heavy anchor or sinker. Two observers are usually employed to determine when the enemy is directly over the mine. The mine is then exploded by means of electric cables.

High explosives like guncotton, dynamite or explosive gelatine are used in submarine mines at present. They are superior to gunpowder in that they are not seriously affected by moisture. A leak in the case containing the charge will not render it useless, as would be the case with gunpowder mines. Besides, the high explosives are from four to six times as powerful as gunpowder. The pressure necessary to blow a hole through the double bottom of a modern ship has been estimated to be between 6,000 and 12,000 pounds per square inch.

The important function of the submarine mine defense is to check the first advance of a naval enemy against a seaport, thus giving the defenders time to concentrate their ships to meet the attack.

An Instrument of War.

The bagpipe, whose stirring music fired the blood of the Gordon Highlanders as they scaled the heights of Dargai, enjoys, though it is not generally known, the unique distinction of having been declared by a court of law to be "an instrument of war." In an early volume of the Scots Magazine we find it reported that on the 15th November, 1746, a James Reid, of Angus, was tried for taking part in the rebellion. It was proved for his defense that he had never carried arms of any kind, but, on the other hand, it was shown that he had for some time officiated as a piper in a Highland regiment. It is not unlikely that he had been pressed into the service, for we are told "he behaved very devoutly, prayed fervently, and sang part of a psalm." Notwithstanding these most untraditional piper traits, however, the court found poor Reid guilty of high treason, and sentenced him to suffer the punishment which that crime involved. It was held that a "Highland regiment never marched without a piper, and, therefore, his bagpipes in the eye of the law was an instrument of war." There is little wonder, in the face of such a decision, that Pennant when he came north later in the century found the "bagpipes becoming scarce."

A New Envelope.

An envelope for carrying merchandise through the mails is so constructed with reversible flaps and a stiffening strip attached to the closing flap that the inside of the envelope may become the outside, and the same envelope used to return merchandise in the same manner in which it was forwarded.

Queer Restaurant Sign.

In Sweden the railway stations where meals are served are known by the picture of a crossed knife and fork opposite the name of the station.

He may be called Senor de Lome in Spain, but his name is Mud in this country.

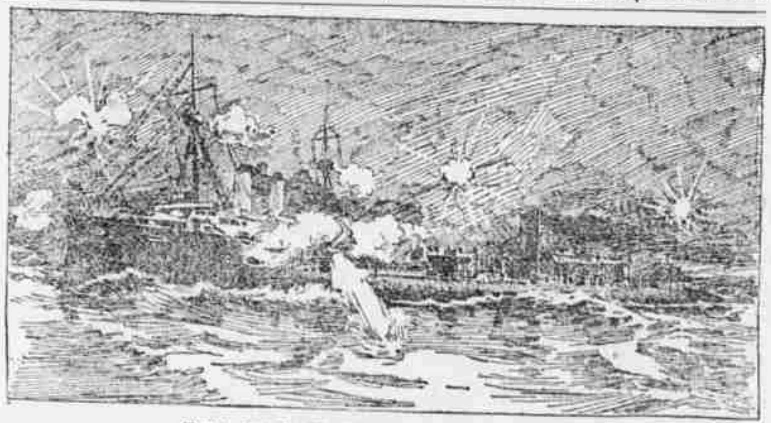
THE RAM KATAHDIN.

The Powerful U. S. Turtle-back Ship Recently Placed in Commission.

The belief prevails among naval officers that in a naval fight the country would be electrified with the havoc caused among the enemy's fleet by such a vessel as the Katahdin. No modern vessel of this kind has ever been used in actual warfare, and, in fact, the Katahdin is about the only craft of her kind in the world. She resembles the old-style ram Merrimac only in the use of armor, the employment of steam power and the pointed steel prow.

The Katahdin has a length on the load water line of 250.9 feet and her beak or ram, which is below the water line, gives her an extreme length of about 254 feet. Other statistics of the vessel are: Displacement under normal coal supply, 2,155; tonnage, 582; extreme breadth, 43.5 feet; mean draught, 15 feet; indicated horse power, 5,068; speed, 16.11 knots; capacity of coal bunkers, 192.70 tons. The Katahdin is propelled by twin screws. Her full complement consists of 90 men.

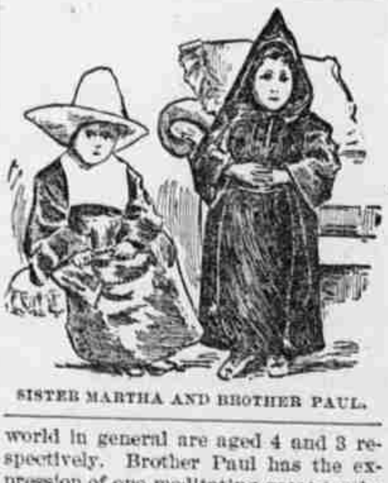
The most peculiar feature of the Katahdin is her concealment under water. Only her smooth turtle back, covered with armor plate and surmounted simply by a small conning tower and a smokestack are visible. The tower is made of steel 18 inches thick, and unless squarely hit by a heavy shot at close range, is proof against any attack. Aside from her dangerous sharp beak of steel and her covering of armor plate the Katahdin is equipped with slight means of offensive or defensive character. She carries four six-pound, rapid-firing guns, which are intended as defense against torpedo boats or boarders. Her speed is low, hardly higher than that of a battleship; but with her tremendous momentum and powerful propelling force behind a sharp steel prow the Katahdin is calculated to do a lot of mischief among the enemy's fleet. The ram, being situated below the water line, is directed at the most vulnerable part of a battleship or cruiser, where armor is either thin or altogether wanting.



THE RAM KATAHDIN IN ACTION.

Taking Life Seriously.

This exceptionally clever photo of children was taken in Dublin. The two mites who in their garb of monk and nun look so solemnly out on the world in general are aged 4 and 3 respectively. Brother Paul has the expression of one meditating great truths and Sister Martha is as benign as though fifty years older.



SISTER MARTHA AND BROTHER PAUL.

When a man is making a night of it he usually discovers that the darkest hour is just before the dawn.