

THE BREAKDOWN GANG

Quick and Hard Work When a Railroad Smashup Comes.

THE ROUGH AND READY CREW.

They Board the Wreck Special and Are Speeded to the Scene of the Accident—The Rush, the Peril and the Difficulty of the Work They Do.

Have you ever heard of the minutemen of the breakdown gang—the fellows who are the rough and ready of the railroad?

A bowlder fell on the track. The switch handle was turned the wrong way. A loose spike may have misplaced the rail. But it is not for them to stop and learn how it happened.

You don't hear much about them unless you are a railroad, but the superintendent, the manager, perhaps some of the directors, know them.

In the fifteen or twenty which make up the average crew you can generally find two or three little men; for there are tight places in a wreck where they can do considerable work in propping up or loosening a part, crawling into holes which no one else could reach.

The boss wrecker tries to get two or three left handers also, as their services are valuable in hammering away in corners where a right handed man would be useless.

Their limited is not much for looks. Like the men, it is also rough and ready. Down by the division roundhouse or repair shop it stands on a siding where it can take the line at a minute's notice.

Enter the box car and you see a miniature lumber yard—square pieces of timber all the way from an inch to a foot through. They are wanted for propping up the wreckage, which may be holding down the living as well as the dead.

Any old coach will do for the crew, provided its wheels and axles are sound. Taking out some of the seats gives room for a table where the men can eat and play cards if they don't want to get a nap on the way, but if they have time for a little sleep half a dozen wooden bunks round the sides give them a chance.

Such is the usual makeup of the "wreck special," as the railroader terms it. When called into service, a big driver engine backs down to it and couples on. There is no need of any speed orders. Those are understood in advance.

The first thing to find out is if any-

thing human is underneath. Whether dead or alive it must come out, and the gang need no urging at the task, even if they hear no moan or cry to hasten their rescue.

A locomotive may turn bottom up on the track, with the driving wheels in the air. Then it must be turned over and pulled to one side of the railroad until there is time between the passing of trains to right it—if it can be righted.

Everything goes with a rush from the first news of the accident. Once the wreckers get busy there is no stopping for rest or refreshment, although a man may have to work all night or all day.

Now the crane goes into action. If the embankment is sloping the usual plan is to drag the locomotive along, allowing the earth and ballast to assist in supporting it until the top is reached.

One of the curious methods of employing the locomotive of the wreck train was to make it move a car forward by starting the locomotive backward. Fastening a tackle securely round the car, it would be passed through a pulley fastened to a tree or post in front of it, and the rope then led back to the locomotive.

There are times, though, when even the most careful riggers make a mistake. They have not realized the strain which the tackle must stand when things begin to move.

The canoeist is the most independent of men. He can push his craft through a stream three feet wide and five inches deep, and he can safely negotiate any bit of water that a catboat or moderate sized launch would care to attempt.

When the hill was steep he must alight and walk. When the road was bad or the foot of the hill dubious he must do likewise. The canoeist suffers none of these restrictions. He carries with him his place of abode—his bed, his food and the means of preparing it.

Tired Tatters—Say, Weary, wot's de matter wid us walkin' down de railroad track?

Weary Walker—Not for me. I ain't goin' to disgrace meself by havin' people tink I'm a actor.—Chicago News.

THE UNCONQUERED ONE.

Tribute of a Philosopher to a Well Established Mind.

Demetrius, who was surnamed Pallorcetes, took Megara, and the philosopher Stilbo, when asked by him whether he had lost anything, answered, "No; I carry all my property about me." Yet his inheritance had been given up to pillage, his daughters had been outraged by the enemy, his country had fallen under a foreign dominion, and it was the king, enthroned on high, surrounded by the spears of his victorious troops, who put this question to him.

Seneca on Savage Fortitude.

When Seneca wrote his inspiring philosophy our ancestors who dwelt north of the Alps were savages. We may take some pride in the fact that he points to these savages as exemplars in fortitude for the Romans; you may see what endurance might effect in us if you observe what labor does among tribes that are naked and rendered stronger by want.

What Was on the Tablet.

An Ohio author, now in Chicago, recently had a visit from a friend who still lives in the town where the two boys together. He gives this account of one memory of that call: "Nesbit," said he, with the pleasantest kind of a look on his face, "you remember that little old house on Main street where you were born?"

Mirth in the Mine.

A party of ladies and gentlemen exploring the depths of a celebrated mine arranged that a lunch should be partaken of on the 1,500 foot level. Four large baskets full of dainties, both liquid and substantial, were therefore lowered to the depths.

How I Won Consent.

(Original.)

Alice would not marry me without her father's consent, and that consent he would not give. He had the blood of a British ducal family in his veins, while I was an American commoner.

Mr. Cordery, Alice's father, was an inveterate gambler. The only thing in America that he approved of was the national game of poker. American society was to him a boiling pot.

I lost small sums at several sittings and lost intentionally. I would never bet high with any opponent except Mr. Cordery and in this way avoided winning or losing any considerable sum from any one but him.

Before entering upon these games I had gone to a professional gambler and paid him to teach me how to win. He initiated me into a system of marking the cards on the back with little specks.

Well, I won all Mr. Cordery's belongings—they were not large—and made him a pauper. I am aware that in cases of this kind, especially in plays, the next step would be for the loser to put up his daughter for a stake.

As soon as I had received his consent, learning from Alice of sundry debts that had long been owing her father, I sent him \$100, purporting to come from one of his debtors from the other side of the world.

Dear Mother—So I am; which prevents his duty being paid to his loving mother by her affectionate son, SAM FOOTE.

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EUGENE HOLMES BURT.

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Two Seasons' Hauls. A slow smile spread over the face of Amos Rudd as he prepared, with his usual deliberation, to answer the question of the newcomer from Massachusetts.

"Yes, I do considerable teaming, first and last," he said cheerfully. "Haul logs in winter and city folks in summer, and I don't know which is the hardest work."

"Why, you have to do heavy lifting with logs, of course," said the young person from Massachusetts, with some indignation. "That must be a great deal harder than just carrying people to and from the hotel and taking them to drive, as your wife told me you did."

"She don't go," remarked Mr. Rudd in a casual tone. "And not being an eyewitness of any of the puffinances she's no proper judge. The logs are hefty, it's true, but once get 'em on an' there they are. I've never known 'em to squirm around, lean all to one side till they most upset the gearing or ketch me by the sleeve for the sake of a mess o' roadside bloom."

"I've weighed my two occupations in my mind off an' on a good many times, an' I'm not yet prepared to say which of 'em takes the most wear out o' me—no, ma'am!"—Youth's Companion.

Brief, but to the Point.

A young fellow at college wrote to his uncle, on whom he entirely depended:

My Dear Uncle—Ready for the needful. Your affectionate nephew.

The uncle replied:

My Dear Nephew—The needful is not ready. Your affectionate uncle.

It is pleasant that affection should survive pecuniary embarrassments, as it did in the case of Samuel Foote's mother and himself:

My Dear Sam—I am in prison for debt; come and assist your loving mother.

E. FOOTE.

Dear Mother—So I am; which prevents his duty being paid to his loving mother by her affectionate son, SAM FOOTE.

A nobleman was deeply in love with a "lady fair." He met her one evening at a crowded ball, and as he could not get an opportunity of talking to her he contrived to slip into her hand a piece of paper with the two words, "Will you?" written upon it.

The reply was equally brief: "Won't I!"

In winter the suburbanite longs for his lawn mower; in the summer he thinks how much nicer it would be to be pushing his snow shovel.

Visiting cards and Wedding invitations at the COLUMBIAN office. If

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