

PITTSBURG, SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 1890.

THE SIGNAL STAFF.

A Resort to Pioneer Railroad Methods at the Ohio Connecting Bridge.

SAFEST SYSTEM OF ALL.

Enormous Traffic Over This Monster Structure of Iron and Steel.

FACTS ABOUT SIGNAL HISTORY.

Early Day Semaphores and Various Improvements Upon Them.

AUTOMATIC SWITCHES AND THE LIKE

WRITTEN FOR THE DISPATCH.

STICK OF wood, not more than an inch thick and one foot long, has for two or three weeks past protected the millions of dollars' worth of freight that has crossed over the new Ohio Connecting Railroad bridge at Woods' Run. One day last week—the 7th of November—52 freight trains crossed this new bridge, or 28 each way. This means a good many cars. In the first 24 hours after the great structure was opened for traffic nearly 1,000 cars passed over it.

The stick of wood is called a "signal-staff." For the time being it took the place of the telegraph. It was a resort to the primitive railroad customs of Great Britain.

A REMARKABLE RAILROAD.

So pressing was the demand for a bridge like this to supply the missing freight link around Pittsburgh that business upon it commenced at once without waiting for telegraph wires to be erected. The iron superstructure of the bridge is 4,000 feet long, which includes the approaches on either side of the river. In addition to these approaches there is 300 feet of trestling to connect the viaduct with the Panhandle freight yards at Nimick station on the south side of the Ohio, and on the Allegheny side there are several hundred feet more of trestling and graded road-bed necessary to carry the railroad down to the city. The bridge is made of the Ft. Wayne Railroad tracks.

In other words, so high is the bridge approach above Preble avenue and the tracks of the Pittsburgh, Ft. Wayne and Chicago Railroad that the Allegheny shore some distance above Woods' Run station, but cannot connect with the tracks of the latter road until it descends a steep grade as far as the Nimick station. The road-bed has been hewn from solid rock along the hillside above Preble avenue.

THE STAFF OF SAFETY.

So that there is a single-track railroad two miles long, and carrying in proportion, it is said, a heavier freight traffic than any other single-track line in the world, it is running successfully without telegraph. There has been no accident as a result, and not a single pound of freight has been lost. The signal-staff is striped with red and white paint. It is inserted simply with these words: "Ohio Connecting Bridge."

These arms were worked from within the tower by wires in the lookout room, where a powerful telescope in either direction constantly commanded the mode of the next station. If a fog set in at any point on the route, the message was delayed; otherwise, when a sharp lookout was kept, the mission was very rapidly fulfilled. The hour of 10 o'clock by Greenwich time was always communicated to Portsmouth. When the ball fell at Greenwich the semaphores were ready for the message, and it commonly passed from London to Portsmouth, and the acknowledgment back to London within three-quarters of a minute.

In case of weather over the day when flags will not extend on shipboard, semaphores are employed on board some ships as means of signaling from one vessel to another. In such a case the post containing the message is hoisted, and can readily be shipped or unshipped near the stern.

CONES AND LANTERNS.

Before the electric telegraph many gen-

men of ability devoted their attention to simplifying the mode of land and water signals. Red's system of cones was considered a superior form. It did not depend on color, but resorted to form and motion. There were four cones fixed to a mast. The cones were collapsible, and were formed in a similar way to umbrellas. Their usual condition was that and they could only be held open by a rope on each, pulled taut. Each cone represented a number, and thus, by the combinations, the signal or message was sent.

For night signals the old naval plan to hang dingy lanterns in various shapes—triangles, squares, crosses, etc. Besides requiring large bars to be at all risible, this was generally found from the motion of the ship to be useless. Red's cone system was utilized instead at night by hanging four lanterns in a vertical line to represent the cones, and observing those which corresponded to that cones.

WESTINGHOUSE TRIED IT TOO.

Of late years various appliances have been invented for signaling the movements of trains on American railroads. George Westinghouse, of Pittsburgh, has been foremost in this science, and his system of automatic switches and signals is well known. The Duoconco brothers once invented a curious device that gave notice of passing trains on certain portions of a railroad. The transmitter was a magneto-electric genera-

turning of a shield from right to left sufficed as sailing directions to the several lines. In modern times signaling between ships has become indispensable; but there is probably no department of practical science in which progress has been slower, and every so-called system of signals has been distinctly without any system whatever. But in railroad signals progress has been

more accelerated. Incomparably the most powerful medium for the purpose is the electric current. But before that was discovered the basis of the present system existed. It was used though for various purposes.

ALL ABOUT SEMAPHORES.

Semaphore was the name applied to the system of telegraphy in use before the application of the electric current. Sema-

phores were first established by the French in 1794 as the plan of conveying intelligence from the capital to the armies on the frontiers. In the following year General Murray introduced them in England, and by their means the Board of Admiralty were placed within a few minutes of Portsmouth.

These semaphores were towers built at intervals of from five to ten miles on commanding sites. On the top of each tower was the telegraphic apparatus, which at first comprised six shutters arranged in two frames, by the opening and shutting of which, in various combinations, 63 distinct signals would be formed. In 1816 Sir Home Popham substituted a mast with two arms, similar to many of the present railway signal masts about Pittsburgh.

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But of all certain, though slow methods, the "signal staff," now about to be discarded at the Ohio Connecting Bridge, is perhaps the safest. L. E. STOFFEL.

POSTAL TECHNICALITIES.

The Letter was Damp and Weighed More at Night Than in the Morning.

Not long ago I mailed several letters, with sufficient postage on, says a business man in the St. Louis Globe-Democrat. To my annoyance it was notified the next morning that the whole batch was held for postage. I went around to the postoffice and was informed that each envelope and its contents weighed just enough to turn the scale and that I must in consequence pay the extra postage. At my request one of the letters was weighed on the official scales and instead of being over it turned out to be a fraction under weight.

But my triumph was short-lived, for I was informed that the weight when mailed was what had to be charged on, and the letter weighed more the preceding night than then. The explanation as to the loss in weight was that the letter had been copied and mailed damp, subsequently giving off quite an appreciable weight by evaporation. Now I insist on letters being copied as early

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ON FOOT IN EUROPE.

Lillian Spencer Starts Out to Walk a Thousand Miles or So

ON ORDER OF HER WELSH DOCTOR.

Very Much of a Female Failure According to Her Own Opinion.

THE FIRST DAY ON BELGIAN SOILS

(CORRESPONDENCE OF THE DISPATCH.)

ANTWERP, November 4.—Once upon a time there was a young woman who was bent on living in a grand old, but oddly enough didn't die an invalid, despite the prognostications of the many doctors called in to attend her. Not that she did not make a brave effort in that direction, for she did, but for the very reason that, try as she would, she could not manage to get more than one foot at a time in the grave that the physicians so condescendingly dug for her.

Ungrateful, inconsiderate young woman. The ailments with which she was afflicted were heterogeneous, to say the least. She had neuralgia, or some sort of weakness in the muscles of the spine; vertigo, dyspepsia, congestive headaches; neuralgia, liver complaint, rheumatism, malaria and every kind of invalid weakness to which human flesh is heir. As a matter of course, these ailments did not visit her like an army of creditors all the same day. They came and went, but the invalid, who was not infrequently stayed by her doctor's welcome out, after the fashion of the country cousin.

It is perhaps needless to state that this young woman's lot, like the policeman's, was not a happy one. In appearance she was a tall, slender, well-proportioned young woman, in spirits, suicidal; in disposition—dare not write it, but it's quite as strong as your imagination can possibly lead you to suppose. She never saw the inside of a doctor's office, and she never took a single dose of medicine, but she found life a miserable and dismal bore.

And no wonder! Well, time went on and the "female failure" went on, too, getting more and more bilious and more cadaverous every day. Finally there came upon the scene a rough, blunt-mannered old Welsh doctor, who, after a long and tedious examination, pronounced her to be a "female failure." The anxious relatives of the "failure" called him in for consultation. He had a great reputation and wasn't at all backward about speaking his mind.

"Him," he grunted, fixing a pair of shrewd, gray eyes upon the we-be-gone face of the patient and taking in the whole situation at a glance.

"You find me very low, doctor," the failure ventured, "and so I am, very, very low, indeed; almost past hope. But don't hesitate to tell me the truth. I am used to it. I hear it every day. Whereupon the failure sighed ruefully.

"A CASE OF HYPO." the doctor snapped, "hear that the children in America are tortured worse than the Bengalees children for the begging trade. In winter school heat and in summer, in all the year around sweets and nuts. No exercise, no gymnastics, no regular wholesome food, late hours, hot beds, agitated mind, and a stomach and finishes off by dying of nothing more or less than hypochondria. Yet hypochondria is what you'd hear, if you had a brain for a stomach."

"You've got it, and so have two-thirds of your sickly American sisters."

And the doctor jumped up from his chair and went to the door, and he never returned. The invalid sank back on the sofa speechless, in fright and amazement.

Finally the doctor laid hold of a chair, dragged it up to the foot of the bed, and sat down. "Put yourself in my hands, and I will cure you. And what is more, I won't charge you a penny."

"How," cried the invalid, showing the first signs of hope, "and how?"

"Easily enough—you have simply to take a walk."

"TOO SIMPLE A MEDICINE." the invalid snatched back hopefully.

"A walk," she repeated, "I have tried that and it did me no more good than anything else."

"Where did you walk?" inquired the doctor.

"Oh, in the park and down the street, but it was no use. I felt the same as if I had never walked a walk."

"No, but I couldn't do that. It would be impossible."

"Why?"

"I am weak—I'll never went more than six blocks at a time in my life. I have no strength. My back aches. As for walking through Europe, ridiculous, preposterous, absurd!"

"It's not far," reassured the doctor. "Only a thousand miles or so, by the route I prescribe." Whereupon this extraordinary doctor proceeded to lay out the details of the plan, which it is needless to state, this American family dumb with surprise.

Two weeks later however the invalid was on board one of the Union Line steamers bound for Liverpool. A friend accompanied her and a host of sympathizing friends and acquaintances waved her an adieu from the receding shore.

ELEVEN DAYS LATER she landed in Liverpool. Her costume consisted of a blue flannel sailor suit, a short walking jacket, a pair of flat-heeled English boots, and a hat. Her underwear was merino. She had on a Jeness Miller divided skirt made of flannel, blank stockings and no linen whatsoever.

In the canvas knapsack strapped to her shoulders, she carried a change of undergarments and hose, a few handkerchiefs, a comb, a toothbrush and a cake of soap.

Thus equipped, she started out on her walk through Europe.

And a notable journey it turned out to be.

The first day was spent in Liverpool, where she walked six miles without knowing or feeling it. But the rest voyage had proved a great tonic and the cool English climate a great invigorator.

Decidedly the Welsh doctor knew what he was about.

A VERY COMFORTABLE INN.

From Liverpool, she went by rail to Normanton, a quiet old Yorkshire town, with a typical English inn, where one sleeps in a great soft spacious bed, big enough for four, and eats Yorkshire ham and fresh country eggs, and falls in love with English life and English customs, and particularly English inns.

From Normanton she went on by rail to Bell, and thence by steamer to Antwerp, Belgium.

The channel is not a good-natured stream, as every one who has crossed it is aware. It has a fondness for cutting up all sorts of many capers, the humor of which most people fail to appreciate. On this particular occasion it conceived the idea of shoving up the passengers like dice in a box and spilling them out at random. It shook up our heroine not a little, and caused her to think many unchristianlike things of the Welsh doctor. But the channel can do worse than convert Christians into heathen for that matter.

ON FIVE FRANCES A DAY.

It was 11 P. M. when the steamer docked at Antwerp. The custom house officers were so sleepy to examine the baggage, so it was not long before the invalid and her friend found themselves walking up a street in search of a lodging for the night.

Let it be understood here that neither of these tourists were in affluent circumstances and the friend, a rather shrewd person, decided that 5 francs apiece a day was all they could afford to spend. Five francs is \$1 in the United States, but it goes much farther. For instance, these two travelers stopped before the open door of a small, but genteel, eatinest and cafe. The eatinest is a sort of a bar, resembling that everywhere, with chairs on the sidewalk, where monsieur and madame, and even the little demoiselles sit and sip their beer.

Everyone drinks beer in Belgium. There's no way out of it. The water is so poison, and the eatinest is more common than the bakery or the sweet shops. This beer, oddly enough, is not beer at all. It is a mixture resembling that everywhere, with the hops, if concerned at all in the concoction, merely nipped over, giving place to barley, vinegar, and no one knows what else. It costs 2 cents a glass and a half in the United States, but it goes much farther. For instance, these two travelers stopped before the open door of a small, but genteel, eatinest and cafe. The eatinest is a sort of a bar, resembling that everywhere, with chairs on the sidewalk, where monsieur and madame, and even the little demoiselles sit and sip their beer.

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