A RAILROAD STORY.

TWO or three of us hands lounged out of the club one night into Santley's office, to find out the news coming in by cable, which the sleeping town would not hear until the paper would be out tomorrow. Santley was editor of the Courier. He was scribbling away at driving speed, his hat on, an unlighted segar in his mouth.

" You're at it late, Ben."

"Accident on a Western road. Sixty lives fost," without looking up.

We seized the long white slips which lay coiled over the table and read the dispatch.

"Tut, tut!"

" Infamous !"

"No body to blame, of course."

"I tell you the officers of the road where such an accident is possible should be tried for murder!" cried Fer-

Santley shoved his copy to the boy and lighted his segar. "I think you're wrong, Ferrers. Instead of being startled at such casualities, I never travel on a railway that I am not amazed at the searcity of them. Just think of it. Thousands of trains running yearly on each, with but a minute to spare between safety and destruction, the safety of these depending on conductors, telegraph clerks, brakesmen, men of every grade of intellect, their brains subject to every kind of moods and disease and tempers; the engineer takes a glass of diquor; the conductor sets his watch half a minute too fast; the flagman falls asleep, and the train is dashed into ruin. It is not the accident that is to be wondered at; it is the escape that is miraculous!"

We had all dropped into seats by this time. The night was young, and one after another told some story of adventure or danger. Presently Santley said:

"There was an accident which occurred on the Philadelphia and Eric road, a few years ago, which made me feel as I do in the matter. I happened to be an eye witness to the whole affair."

" What was it, Ben ?" "It's rather a long story-

No matter. Go on. You can't go home until your proof comes in, anyhow."

" No. Well to make you understand, about five years ago I had a bad breakdown - night work, hack-writing and poor pay. You know how fast it all wears out the machine. The doctor stalked of diseases of the gray matter of the brain, etc., and prescribed, instead of medicine, absolute rest and change of scene. I would have swallowed all the nostrums in a drug-shop rather than have left the office for a week.

44 J'll take country board and send in my editorials," I said.

"No; you must drop office and work utterly out of your life for a month at least. Talk and think of planting potatoes, or embroidery-anything but newspapers and politics."

Well, I obeyed. I started on a pedestrian tour through Pennsylvania, studied oil stock in Allegheny county, and ate sauerkraut in Berks. Finally I brought up-footstore and bored beyond bearing-in Williamsport. While there, I fell into the habit of lounging about the railway station, studying the construction of the engines, and making friends with the men. The man with whom I always fraternize most readily is the skilled mechanic. He has a degree of common sense-a store of certain facts which your young doctor or politician is apt to lack. Besides, he is absolutely sure of his standing ground, and has a grave self-respect which teaches him to respect you. The professional lad just started on his career is uneasy, not sure of his position; he tries to climb perpetually. I tell you this to explain my intimacy with many of the officials of the road, especially with an engineer named Blakely.

This man attracted me first by his ability to give me the information I wanted in a few direct, sharp words .-Like most reticent men, he knew the weight and value of words. I soon became personally much interested in him. He was about forty, his hair streaked with gray, with a grave, worn face, which hinted at a youth of hardships and much suffering. However, Blakely had found his way to the uplands at last. Three years before he had married a bright, cheerful woman. They had one child-a boy. He had work and good wages, and was, I found, high in the confidence of the company. On one -occasion, having a Sunday off, he took one up to Jersey Shore, where his wife and boy lived. He was an exceptionally silent man, but when with them was garrulous and light-hearted as a boy .-In his eyes Jane was the wisest and fairest of women, and the boy a wonder of intellect.

One great source of trouble to him was, as I found, that he was able to see them but once in three weeks. It was necessary for the child's health to keep them in the country air, and, indeed he could not afford to have

them elsewhere; but this separated him from them almost wholly. Jane was in the habit of coming with Charley down to a certain point of the road every day, that Blakely might see them as he dashed by.

And when I found out this habit, it occurred to me that I could give Blakely a great pleasure. How often have I cursed my meddling kindness since. January 25th was the child's birthday. I proposed to Mrs. Blakely that she and Charley should go board the train which her husband drove, unknown to him, and run up to Harrisburg, where he had the night off. There was to be a little supper at the Lochiel House. Charley was to appear in a new suit, etc. Of course the whole affair was at my expense-a mere trifle, but an affair of grandeur and distinction which fairly took Jane's breath. She was a most innocent, happy creature; one of those women who are wives and mothers in the cradle. When Blakely found her she was a thin, pale little tailoress-a machine to grind out badly-made shoddy clothes. But three years of marriage and petting of Charley had made her rosy and plump and pretty.

The little Highland suit was bought complete, to the tiny dirk and feather, and very pretty the little fellow looked in it. I wrote down to order a stunning supper, to be ready at eight. Jane and the boy were to go aboard the train at Jersey Shore, a queer little hill village near which they lived. Blakely ran the train from Williamsport down to Harrisburg that day. His wife being in the passenger car before he took charge of the engine, of course he would see and know nothing of her until we landed at Harrisburg at seven. I had intended to go down into the smoking car as usual, but another fancy, suggested I suppose by the originator of all evil, seized me. No need to laugh. Satan, I believe, has quite as much to do with accidents and misery and death as with sin. Why not? However, my fancy, diabolical or not, was to go down on the engine with Blakely. I hunted up the fireman, and talked to him for an hour. Then I went to the engineer.

"Blakely," I said, "Jones (the fireman) wants to-night off."

"Off! O, no doubt! He's taking to drink, Jones. He must have been drinking when he talked of that. It's impossible,"

I explained to Blakely that Jones had a sick wife, or a sweetheart or something, and finally owned that I had an unconquerable desire to run down the road on the engine, and that knowing my only chance was to take the fireman's place, had bribed him to give it to me. The fact was that in my idleness and the overworked state of my brain I craved excitement as a confirmed drunkard does liquor.

Blakely, I saw, was angry and exceedingly annoyed. He refused at first, but finally gave way with a grave civility, which almost made me ashamed of my boyish whim. I promised to be the prince of firemen.

"Then you'll have to be treated as one, Mr. Santley," said Blakely, curtly. "I can't talk to gentlemen aboard my engine. It's different from here, on the platform, you'll remember, I've got to you to obey, in there, and der and that's all there's of it."

"O, I understand," I said, thinking that it required little moral effort to obey, in the matter of shoveling coal. If I could have guessed what that shoveling was to cost me! But all day I went about thinking of the flery ride through the hills, mounted literally on the iron-

It was in the middle of the afternoon when the train rushed into the station. I caught a glimpse of Jane on the passenger car, with Charley, magnificent in his red and green plaid, beside her. She nodded a dozen of times and laughed, hid behind the window, fearing her husband should see her, Poor girl! It was the second great holiday of her life, she had told me, the first being her wedding-

The train stopped ten minutes. It was neither an express nor an accommodation train, but one which stopped at the principal stations on the route - Selinsgrove, Sunbury, etc.

I had an old patched suit on, fit, as I supposed, for the service of coal-heaver; but Blakely, when I came up, eyed it and my hands sardonically. He was in no better temper, evidently, with his amateur firemen than he had been in the morning.

'All aboard!" he said, gruffly. "You take your place there, Mr. Santley .-You'll put in coal just as I call for it, if you please, and not trust to your own judgment."

His tone annoyed me. "It cannot require much judgment to keep up a fire under a boiling pot, and not to make it too hot. Any woman can do that in her own kitchen.

He made no reply, but took his place in the little square box where the greater part of his life had been passed. I noticed that his face was flushed, and his irritation at my foolish whim was surely more than the occasion required. I watched him with keen curiosity, wondering if it were possible that he could have been drinking, as he had accused poor Jones of doing.

"It strikes me as odd," interrupted Ferrers, "that you should have not only made an intimate companion of of this fellow, Santley, but have taken so keen an interest in the tempers and drinkingbouts. You would not be likely to honor any of us with such atten-

"No. I have something else to do. I was absolutely idle then. Blakely and his family for the time made up my world. As for the friendship, this was an exceptional man, both as to integrity and massive hard sense. The knowledge that comes from books counts with me but for little, compared with the education given by experience and contact with facts for forty years. I was honored by the friendship of this grimy engineer. But the question of his sobriety that day was a serious one. A man in charge of a train with hundreds of souls aboard, I felt ought to be sober, particularly when I was shut up in the engine with him.

Just as we started a slip of paper was handed to him, which he read and threw down.

'Do you run this train by telegraph ?' I asked, beginning to shovel in coal vigorously. "Yes. No more coal."

"Isn't that unusual ?"

"Yes. There are two special trains

on the road this afternoon.'

'Is it difficult to run a train by telegraph?" I said presently, simply to make conversation, as staring in silence at the narrow slit in the gloomy furnace or out at the village street, through which we slowly passed, was monot-

"No, not difficult. I simply have to obey the instructions which I receive at each station.

'But if you should happen to think the instructions not right?"

"Happen to think! I've no business to think at all! When the trains run by telegraph the engineers are so many machines in the hands of one controller, who directs them all from a central point. He has the whole road under his eye. If they don't obey to the least tittle their orders, it is destruction to the

'You seem to think silent obedience the first and last merit in a railway man ?

"Yes," dryly.

I took the hint and was dumb.

We were out of town now. Blakely quickened the speed of the engine, I did not speak to him. There was little for me to do, and I was occupied in looking out at the flying landscape. The fields were covered with a deep fall of snow, and glanced whitely by, with a strange, unreal shipsmer. The air was keen and cutting. Still the ride was tame. I was disappointed. The excitement was by no means equal to a dash on a spirited horse. I began to think I had little to show for my grimy bands when we slowed at the next station .-One or two passengers came aboard the train. There was the inevitable old lady with bundles, alighting, and the usual squabble about her trunk. I was craning my neck to hear, when the boy ran alongside with the telegram.

The next moment I heard a smotherexclamation from Blakely.

"Go back," said he to the boy. "Tell Sands to have the message repeated .-There's a mistake."

The boy dashed off, and Blakely sat waiting coolly, polishing a bit of the shining brass before him. Back came the boy.

"Had it repeated. Sands is raging at you. Says there's no mistake, and you'd best go on," thrusting the second message up.

Blakely read it, and stood hesitating for half a minute. I never shall forget the dismay, the utter perplexity that gathered in his lean face as he looked at the telegram, and then at the long train behind him. His lips moved as if he were calculating chances, and his eye suddenly qualled, as if he saw death at the end of the calculation.

"What's the matter? What are you going to do ?" I asked.

"Obey."

The engine gave a long shrick of horror, that made me start as if it were Blakely's own voice. The next instant we rushed out of the station, and dashed through the low-lying farms at a speed which seemed dangerous to me.

"Put in more coal," said Blakely.

I shoveled it in. "We are going very fast, Blakely," I

ventured. He did not answer. His eyes were fixed on the steam gauge; his lips closely shut.

" More coal !" I threw it in.

The fields and houses began to fly past but half seen. We were nearing Sunbury. Blakely's eye went from the gauge to the face of the timeplece and back. He moved like an automaton.-There was little more meaning in his

" More!" without turning his eye. I took up the shovel-hesitated.

"Blakely! We're going very fast .-We're going at the rate of sixty miles an hour." " Coal."

I was alarmed at the stern, cold rigidity of the man. His pallor was becoming frightful.

I threw in the coal.

At least we must stop at Sunbury .-He had told me that was the next halt. The little town approached. As the first house came in view, the engine sent out its shriek of warning; it grew louder and louder. We dashed into the street, up to the station, where a group of passengers waited, and past it without the halt of an instant. I caught a glimpse of the appalled faces of the waiting crowd. Then we were in the fields

The speed now became literally breathless, the furnace glared red-hot. The heat, the velocity, the terrible nervous strain of the man beside me, seemed to weight the air. I found myself drawing long stentorlous breaths, like one drowning. I heaped in the coal at intervals, as he bade me.

"I'd have done nothing of the kind." interrupted one of the listeners. "The man was mad."

I did it because I was oppressed by an odd sense of duty, which I never had in my ordinary brain-work. I had taken this mechanical task upon myself, and I felt a stricture upon me to go through with it at any cost. I know now how it is that dull, ignorant men, without a spark of enthusiasm, show such heroism sometimes, as soldiers, engineers, captains of wrecked vessels. It is this overpowering sense of routine duty. It is a finer thing than sheer bravery, to my notion. However, I began to be of your mind, Wright, that Blakely was mad, laboring under some sudden frenzy from drink, though I had never seen him touch liquor.

He did not move hand or foot, except in the mechanical control of the engine, his eye going from the gauge to the timepiece with a steadiness that was more terrible and threatening than any gleam of insanity would have been .-Once he glanced back at the long train sweeping after the engine, with a headlong speed that rocked it from side to side. You would catch glimpses of hundreds of men and women talking, reading, smoking, unconscious that their lives were all in the hold of one man, whom I now strongly suspected to be mad. I knew by his look that he remembered their lives were in his hand, He glanced at the clock.

"Twenty miles," he muttered .-"Throw on the coal, Jones. The fire is going out."

I did it. Yes, I did it. There was something in the face of that man that I could not resist. Then I climbed forward and shook him by the shoulder.

" Blakely!" I shouted, " you are running this train into the jaws of death."

"I know it," quietly.

"Your wife and child are on it." " My God !"

He staggered to his feet. But even

then he did not move his eye from the gauge. In a minute-" " Make up the fire," he said, and push-

ed in the throttle valve. "I will not."

" Make up the fire, Mr. Saniley," very

quietly. "I will not. You may murder yourself and wife and boy, but you shall not murder me."

He looked at me. His kindly gray eyes glared like those of a wild beast .-But he controlled himself in a moment. "I could throw you out of the door, and make short work of you. But - look

here; do you see the station yonder?" I saw a thin wisp of smoke against the sky, about five miles in advance.

"I was told to reach the station by six o'clock. The express train meeting us is due now. I ought to have laid for it at Sunbury. I was told to come on. The track is a single one. Unless I can make the siding at that station in three minutes, we will meet in the hollow."

"Somebody blundered ?" "Yes, I think so."

"And you obeyed ?"

He said nothing. I threw on coal. If I had had petroleum, I would have thrown it on. But I never was calmer

in my life. When death has a man actually by the throat it sobers him. Blakely pushed in the valve still farther. The engine began to give a queer

panting sound. Far off to the South I could see the bituminous black smoke of a train.

I looked at Blakely inquiringly. He nodded. It was the express.

I stooped to the fire.

"No more," he said.

I looked across the clear, wintry sky at the gray smoke of the peaceful little village, and beyond, that black line coming closer, closer, across the sky .-Then I turned to the watch.

In one minute more-

Gentlemen, I confess ; I sat down and buried my face in my hands. I don't think I tried to pray. I had a confused thought of a mass of mangled, dying men, and women, mothers and their babies, and, vaguely, of a merciful God. Little Charley with his curls and pretty suit-

There was a terrific shrick from the engine, against which I leaned. Another in my face. A hot tempest swept past me.

I looked up. We were on the siding, and the express had gone by. The hindmost cars touched in passing.

"Thank God! You've done it! Blakely!" I oried.

But he did not speak. He sat there immoveable, and cold as stone. I went to the cars and brought Jane and the boy to him, and when he opened his eyes and took the little woman's hand in his I came away.

An engineer named Fred, who was at the station, ran the train into Harrisburg. Blakely was terribly shaken .-But we went down and had our little feast after all. Charley, at least, enjoy-

ed it."
What was the explanation? A blunder of the director, or the telegraph

operator ?"

"I don't know. Blakely made light of it afterwards, and kept the secret .-These railway men must have a strong esprit de corps."

All I know is that Blakely's salary was raised soon after, and he received that Christmas a very handsome "testimonial for services rendered," from the

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AND WAS CURED.

AND WAS CURED.

DRLAWARR, O., Feb. 16, 1878.

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Very respectfully yours, F. ANTHONI.

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DORCHESTER, MASS., June 11.

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MARGERY WELLS.

VEGETINE.—The great success of the Vegetine as a cleanser and purifier of the blood is shown beyond a doubt by the great numbers who have taken it, and received immediate relief, with such remarkable cures.

VEGETINE. Is better than any MEDICINE.

I have used H. R. Stevens' Vegetine, and like it better than any medicine I have used for purify-ing the blood. One bottle of Vegetine accomplish-ed more good than all other medicines I have taken. VEGETINE is composed of Roots, Barks and Heros. It is pleasant to take; every child likes it.

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