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THE WRONG SIDE OF THE CURVE

AN EX-ENGINEER'S STORY.

Among the many incidents that during the late rebellion were connected with that great national artery, the Baltimore and Ohio railway is the one I will relate.

In the fall of 1861, having been detained by business in the town of Cumberland, I was at last about to start for Wheeling, when I learned by a dispatch that the road was occupied below Harper's Ferry by a force of rebels, and therefore no train can pass.

This proved to be true in reference to ordinary trains, but a "special" with which was the Hon. Mr. Pierpont and a few other notabilities, had passed before the rebels cut the track, and was therefore approaching. On inquiry, I found the engineer of the coming train had been one of my own class as I had discarded engine driving for a more profitable business. My friend Joe M— was a cool, bold, skillful engineer, and as generous as reckless of danger.

As I expected, I no sooner saw him and stated my wish to go up the road, than he swore that special or no special, I should ride with him, if for nothing but to see the fast time his engine "Wildfire" could make.

As we dashed rapidly along and went through Black Oak Bottom, a couple of ill-looking fellows in citizens dress fired at the engine; but doing no damage, merely provoked a laugh of derision from him for the want of marksmanship. On arriving at Oakland Md., we were agreeably surprised by receiving a telegram informing us a party of rebels were making great haste to reach the railway at a point many miles ahead of us. Also, they seemed to know who the special contained, and would therefore use all endeavors to capture or kill us.

There was but one car behind the engine and in it was briefly discussed the question to go or stay, while Joe was having the tender refilled with wood and water.

Mr. Pierpont's business was too urgent to admit of any possible delay; two or three others concluded to risk the trip, and I—well, if it's not too egotistical to say so—I had run risks on railways too often to back out because there was danger ahead, while the rest concluded to stay and trust to luck for the opportunity of getting away.

Just as we were about to start, the fireman, making a misstep on the "running board," fell to the ground with such force as to break his arm. Joe hurriedly picked up the poor fellow, but time was precious just then, so leaving him in care of the gentlemen who had accompanied us, he started directly toward me, asking me to come and "run" for him, as having no fireman, he would have more than he could do. I told him, however, to reconsider me his fireman for the rest of the trip, as he was best acquainted with the road, so without any more ado I doffed my coat. We jumped on and away we went, past hamlets, through wildernesses of stunted bushes, up grade and down hill, at a speed rarely equaled. Our light train made firing an easy task for me, and I had frequent leisure to scan the beautiful ranges of the Alleghanies along which we skirted. Joe was sitting as usual with him, with his left hand on the throttle-lever, and his body half out the side window of the "cab" that he might better scan the track ahead.

A few miles south of the famous Cheat river bridge is a deep gorge, with precipitous rocky sides.

It is shaped like an hour glass, wide at each end, but tapering each way toward the middle. The track runs for quite a distance along one side of the gorge, makes a very abrupt turn across the chasm, a very deep one, in straight line nearly parallel with the track on the opposite side for three fourths of a mile.

We were pitching along with that peculiar, rocking, bounding motion, so different from the jar of ordinary fast speed. As we swept to the grade around the side of a hill that commanded a view of the gorge—Joe and I both on the lookout—we saw at a moment's glance, enough to make us concentrate our thinking faculties, and act in a hurry whatever was best to be done.

There on the straight track, just at the near end of the gorge, a lot of men in grey uniforms were hastily piling up some old ties, logs, etc., while at the point where the curve was the sharpest—before reaching the gorge—were several more tugging furiously at a rail, one end of which seemed to baffle them as they pulled it outward. We were within a mile of them when we discovered them, and as we noticed them, the shout came simultaneously from both of us—"the wrong side of the curve!" The miserable fools were pulling out the inside rail instead of the outside. In the latter case nothing could have saved us from running off the track, and probably into the gorge. Our single brakeman, seeing the danger—I suppose from habit—was commencing to tighten the brake, but a look from Joe, I signalled "off brakes," Joe meanwhile opened the throttle to its widest extent as we dashed down the grade at a positively frightful velocity. As we neared them, a party of them huddled together near the track. I seized a light stick of wood, intending, if possible to hurt "somebody." We were going altogether too swift to fear their taking aim at us; and for that

matter, suppose they considered our destruction such a certainty that firing at us would be needless. I was poised the stick of wood, and guessing at the speed—I've had some practice in throwing parcels from trains in motion—when Joe suddenly pulled the whistle rope. The hoarse shriek seemed to startle them for an instant; they huddled closer together, and I tossed the stick outward and downward. I had barely time to see it crash through a group with the force of a thunderbolt, when, with a jarring plunge, the wheels on one side struck the naked ties. That part of the trouble we had feared but little, as the impetus of the engine was almost sure to make it mount the track again. On the track again, but a few yards ahead of us was the formidable barricade, and beyond that the yawning chasm. Joe was standing up now with his eyes blazing, still holding the throttle wide open, as he braced himself for the shock. I had grasped the break rod of the tender the instant I threw the stick of wood. Crash! my hold didn't avail me, and I was pitched head over heels against the fire box, and laid flat on my back on the foot-board or floor of the engine.

Joe was as suddenly jerked half way around, his back striking a little door in front of where he stood, breaking the door and shivering the glass to atoms. But we were through; how I couldn't tell, except we were on the track, and thundering over the gorge. Joe's spirits rose with the occasion. Extricating himself almost as suddenly as he had been deposited in the little glass door, he jerked a tin flask from his pocket, sprang to the top of the tender, and from thence to the roof of the cab. Steadily holding himself for a moment with his face towards the rebels, he shouted "good bye," and made them a low bow, and took a drink perfectly regardless of the white puffs of smoke, as one after another discharged their pieces at him, as he afterwards explained, the engine made too much noise for him to hear the bullets, as they didn't seem to be hitting anybody.

After having, in spite of sore bones, performed a jig he had extemporized for the occasion for the express edification of the rebels, Joe descended from his perch, and deliberately shutting off steam stopped.

We were still in sight of them, though at a tolerably safe distance, and now I saw a group of them standing near several men who had been wounded, perhaps some killed by that "irrepressible" stick of wood.

Our damages were a few bruises each, but no serious hurts. Our engine suffered the loss of the pilot, or cow-catcher and head-light, the front of the smoke-box was stove in, besides sundry dents and bruises on the brass castings of the cylinders; but was, for running purposes, absolutely uninjured, the rebels having piled the logs squarely across the top of the track, the point of the cow-killer had gone under them and though broken by the shock, had raised them sufficiently to keep them from under the wheels, while the engine dashed them right and left into the gorge.

The rebels seeing us stop, started in pursuit, but as we found nothing serious to impede our further progress, and, as in the case, distance lends enchantment to the view, we were off again in high spirits, and without further adventure worth recounting, arrived safely at our destination.

Poor Joe, after being shot at so often as to have acquired sovereign contempt for rebel bullets, was shot dead sometime after, while running a government engine near Chattanooga.

The National Convention.

We clip the following from the Augusta Constitutionalist.

What we want is Congressional Representation on the basis of the Federal Constitution. That we might possibly obtain it by means of this Philadelphia Convention is the only respectable argument we have yet seen advanced in favor of our participation therein. But how does the case stand? And what is the position in this matter of those who engineer this movement? Let us see. For our information we have, first, the Platform of the National Union Club; then its Call; and then its late Circular, appearing in our issue to-day. After this we have President Johnson's position, as defined by himself; then the late declarations of Mr. Seward; and then, finally, the remarks of Mr. Hendricks, of Indiana, some few days since in his place in the Senate. Let us take these several matters up in turn.

The Platform of the National Union Club says:

Resolved, That all the States of the Union are entitled by the Constitution of the United States to representation in the councils of the nation, and that all loyal members duly elected and returned, having the requisite qualifications as prescribed by law, should be admitted to their seats in Congress, without unnecessary delay by their respective

House, each House being the judge of the election, returns and qualifications of its own members."

The call for a Convention issued by this same political organization, says:

"Each House of Congress is made by the Constitution the sole judge of the election returns and qualifications of its members, but the exclusion of loyal Senators and Representatives properly chosen and qualified under the Constitution and laws, is unjust and revolutionary."

The late Circular is silent upon the subject, so, taking the position of the National Union Club to be defined by the language of its published declarations, one finds that position to be in favor of the admission only of such Congressional Representatives as can stand the test of "loyal." Now this, it is evident, is not what we are after, so let us turn to our other sources of information. In the Knoxville Commercial, a paper which vigorously supports the Convention, we find that there is kept standing, some matter, entitled "The President's Policy," from which we extract the following:

"The Representatives of the States should be loyal men, willing to abide by and be devoted to the Union and the Constitution of the States."

"All responsible positions and places ought to be confined distinctly and clearly to men who are unmistakably and unquestionably loyal."—President's Reply to the Virginia Committee.

"I hold it my duty to recommend the admission of every State to its share in public legislation when it presents itself in the persons of Representatives whose loyalty cannot be questioned under any existing constitutional or legal test."—President's Veto Message.

Secretary Seward's position, as set forth in his Tammany letter, of the second of July last is as follows:

"It is said in excuse of the denial of representation, that the States and their chosen representatives still continue to be seditious and disloyal. I ask, is Tennessee disloyal? Is Arkansas seditious? Are the Senators and Representatives of those States disloyal? I desire, in this respect, that each of the two Houses of Congress will apply the constitutional test, with all the improvements of legislation upon it, and thus admit those States and Representatives who are loyal, and reject only those against whom the crime of disloyalty shall be established."

On the eleventh of this month this same very eminent person addressed a letter to Hon. J. R. Doolittle, chairman of the National Executive Committee, approving the proposed Philadelphia Convention and then going on to say:

"After more than five years of dislocation by civil war I regard a restoration of the unity of the country as its most immediate, as well as its most vital interest. That restoration will be complete when loyal men are admitted as representatives of the loyal people of the eleven States so long unrepresented in Congress. Nothing but this can complete it. Nothing more remains to be done, and nothing more is necessary."

Superadded to this information, there is here subjoined the language of Senator Hendricks in a late occasion in the Senate, Mr. Hendricks being, as will be remembered, one of the Conservative Senators who approved the call for the Philadelphia Convention. The congressional Test Oath is the subject of debate:

"Mr. Hendricks, (in response to Mr. Trumbull, Radical.)

"It may suit the Senator's purpose on the hustings, but it will hardly suit his purpose here to say that I, or any who are with me in opinion, are now advocating the admission to seats in this body or the House of Representatives of persons directly connected with the rebellion. The Senator knows very well that there now stands upon the statute book of the United States and upon the rules of the Senate, a provision requiring every person who takes a seat in the Senate to take a solemn oath.

Mr. Trumbull—Is the Senator from Indiana a favor of that law and that rule?

Mr. Hendricks said his votes would

best express his views on that question. He had not asked to repeal the law. Does the Senator from Illinois consent to its repeal?

Mr. Trumbull—Certainly not. Will the Senator from Indiana help me to keep it in force?

Mr. Hendricks replied that while the law remained, although he might have doubts as to its constitutionality, he would not vote for the admission of any man who could not take the prescribed oath. If he (Hendricks) knew a man to be unable to take that oath, he would be opposed to his admission. The question was, however, not whether rebels should take seats in Congress, it was not whether any man who has been connected with the rebellion in any way, be admitted; it was whether men selected by competent authority in the Southern States should be admitted. He (Hendricks) was not in favor of the admission of Alexander H. Stephens or Herschel V. Johnson while the test-oath stood; if they could take that oath, he would be in favor of their admission.

To which we add the following [Jr. Ed. News.]

In August last the following telegram was sent by the President to the Provisional Governor of North Carolina. It explains what loyalty means.

EXECUTIVE MANSION,
Washington, August 22, 1865.

Governor Wm. W. Holden, Raleigh, N. C.:

Information comes to me that reports are freely circulating in influential quarters, and where, without contradiction, they are calculated to do harm, to the effect that in appointments to office, and in the recommendations for appointments, the true Union men are totally ignored, and the provisional governors are giving a decided preference to those who have participated in the rebellion.

The object of such representations is to embarrass the government in its reconstruction policy; and while I place no reliance in such statements, I feel it due to you to advise you of the extended circulation they have gained, and to impress upon you the importance of encouraging and strengthening to the fullest extent the men of your State who HAVE NEVER FALTERED IN THEIR ALLEGIANCE TO THE GOVERNMENT. Every opportunity should be made available to have this known and understood as your policy and determination. Acknowledge the receipt of this telegram.

ANDREW JOHNSON,
President of the United States.

A WELCOME ALLY

The Atlanta New Era of the 18th has an article on the Philadelphia Convention which closes as follows:

As friends to the movement, as faithful supporters of President Johnson, as friends of the Constitution and the Union of the States, and above all as the friends of Georgia, we express our sincere conviction that Georgia should not send delegates to the Philadelphia Convention. Sympathy, interest and self-respect combine to forbid it.

SIGNIFICANT.

It appears that the Ohio Democracy lately resolved to send delegates to the Philadelphia Convention, and the fact was supposed to speak well for the prospects of this new party Messrs. Randall, Doolittle & Co. were hatching. From the Dayton (Ohio) Empire of the 14th inst., a straight out anti-war Democratic sheet, we learn that "The State Central Democratic Committee, and the gentlemen present in consultation with it, all alike understood that the Philadelphia Convention was called with no purpose whatever of forming a new party, by disbanding the Democracy; and all were resolved to oppose any movement of that nature to the very utmost. Co-operation, not fusion, is the idea."

Doubtless this is the sentiment of the Northern Democracy elsewhere, and, if so, look out for a split in the Philadelphia Convention not many days after the fourteenth of August. The platform has been smuggled away out of sight—the language of the call has been amended—

ed—the number of delegates has been altered—and the very National Union Club itself has been changed by the fusion with it of Montgomery Blair's "club." Before the thing is a month old it has commenced to assume Protean shapes, and Heaven only knows to what complexion it may come at last. Don't expect anything from this Convention and you'll not be disappointed.—Augusta Constitutionalist.

"THE RECONSTRUCTED."

Editor Bennet does not often drive the quill himself, but when he does nobody can mistake his peculiar style. In the Herald of the 21st appears an article which takes a general view of the politics of the day, and in touching (on the Philadelphia Convention, discourses on this wise:

There was some talk of admitting certain reconstructed rebel politicians as delegates from the South to the Philadelphia Convention, and as these philosophers usually travel with bow-knives under their coat collars and pistols in their pockets and their boots, quite an exciting session was naturally expected. But in deference to the feelings of the Hon. Henry J. Raymond, who proved on the bloody fields of Solferino and Bull Run that he was as courageous as Bob Acres this idea has been abandoned and nobody who fought against the Union in the recent war is to be admitted as a delegate. This will practically exclude the Southern States, for every representative man from that section took part in the rebellion.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

We clip the following from the National Intelligencer of the 19th, which speaks by the card, and italicize some portions:

PERSONNEL OF THE PHILADELPHIA CONVENTION.

The Radical Disunion press are very anxious for the Convention, to be composed of what it terms Northern copperheads and Southern secessionists. They see in such a composition of the Convention a very considerable element out of which to make capital. But we apprehend that in this regard they are destined to a signal disappointment. The great Conservative Union party of the North will be represented in the Convention by men whose devotion to the country has been conspicuous. The party at the South, who seek so ardently the early and complete restoration of the Union will, doubtless, in the selection of delegates to the Convention, send such men as, by their antecedents, will most fully give the stamp of nationality to the Convention. Men "who accept the national situation and cordially endorse the principles" set forth in the call appearing in the Convention from the South, urging restoration of the Union, would give to the action of the Convention immense moral power. A delegation of this character from the South would exercise a vast influence for good at this time. We take it for granted that the people of the South, in availing themselves of the opportunity presented by this Convention of making known the national sentiment of the South, will do so in such a manner as to give the fullest force to their action. To attain this purpose, they cannot have too much regard for the personal of their delegations. The importance of this matter is so obvious that it is unnecessary longer to dwell upon it.

ORDER FROM GENERAL GRANT.

General Grant has issued an order directing all the department, district and post commanders in the States lately in rebellion to arrest all persons who have been or may hereafter be charged with the commission of crimes and offences against officers, against citizens and inhabitants of the United States, irrespective of color, in cases where the civil authorities have failed, neglected or are unable to arrest and bring such parties to trial, and detain them in military confinement until such time as a proper judicial tribunal may be ready and willing to try them.