

The Sunset, Limited.

The crimson glare of the semaphore, at Welmer made but a faint glimmering path way through the cold mist, and a halo shone around the light inside the office window. It was the only night office between Seguin and Schulenberg. An all night man had to be kept there because there was an up grade over two miles long just west of the depot. Here heavy freight trains were frequently stalled, and had to roll back and beyond the station to 'take a leader for the hill and force the grade.'

The east bound 'Sunset Limited' was known to the trainmen as No. 101. It stopped only at county seats or at large towns that were intersected by other roads, or at telegraph offices when signaled for special orders. This did not often occur, especially when the train was late, for its time was very fast, and delay was difficult to make up.

So when Jim Byrd, the night operator at Welmer, heard 101 slowing up without his having received any orders for her, he ran out with his lantern to see what was wanted. The big mogul engine came to a sudden stop in front of the office, with all brakes down hard, puffing and wheezing the air-pumps working to full capacity and the pop-valve blowing off with the sound of a tornado. The engineer leaned out of his cab, and the conductor rushed up the platform.

'Whew! She's pretty hot!' said Byrd. 'She's got to be to reach Houston on time. Worse than that, we've got to pass 83 at Schulenburg, unless you've got orders. They told us to stop here unless you told us to pass. Got any orders for us?' This was all said by the conductor in a loud quick voice.

'No,' answered Jim. 'I guess they forgot to tell me to signal you to go by, as I heard the clicker at Seguin saying for you to go ahead and make up lost time unless signaled down here.'

'Why in thunder didn't they have you give us the white light then?' growled the engineer, grasping his lever and waiting for the conductor to swing on to the mail car.

Then the great machine started off east with puffs that told of an angry engineer, and the white glare from the furnace plowed a pathway of light far up the track.

Jim went in, sat at his desk and began to nod, with his hand on the key so as to be easily aroused if called. The rear end lights of the departing train were still to be made out vaguely in the light fog, when Jim was roused as if by a blow. The key was conveying to him in its mysterious way the excitement thrilling from the nerves of the sender.

Jim was awake in an instant and with horror he rapidly wrote down the following from the despatcher's office:

'Signal 101 for orders! Tell him to pass 83 at White's switch! Letter will not stop! Hold 71 at bridge siding until all others are clear! This order delayed by accident in office here.'

'He didn't think 101 had had time to get here yet,' thought Jim. 'How she must have been running! There she goes just by the bridge siding now!'

Shocked though he was at the thought of the collision that was imminent, Jim lost no time but ticked to headquarters the exact situation, and asked if an engine could not be sent out of Schulenburg to overtake 83, which could not be far from there. The reply was worse than the first message:

'No engine fired up at Schulenburg! Charley had stroke of paralysis at key; no one knew it until wired you. That caused delay in orders. Have doctors ready to take engine of 71 as soon as she comes and go down to wreck! Nothing can prevent terrible collision now!'

'Can't you stop 101 at Flatonia?' asked Jim, although he knew the probable reply.

'No operator there! Perkins took suddenly sick today.'

Jim hung out the red light for 71, rushed down to the end of the platform where he lived, awakened his wife and little boy and quickly explained the situation.

'You may be a help somehow, May,' he said. 'Get up and dress. John, you run and wake up the doctors! I'll be ready for 71!'

As the boy started, train 71 came rattling down the hill and stopped at the tank one hundred yards below the station. Of the brakeman who climbed down from a box car, Jim asked: 'Who's pulling you tonight, Alf?'

Riley.

'Dan Riley? What's he doing pulling

you? I thought it was strange the way that train dashed and stopped.'

'Why, there was a lot of rush-perishable stuff, and all the big engines were out. Dan was hanging round, and they nabbed him with his high wheeler.'

Jim rushed down to the engine and shouted: 'Riley, come to the office quick! Have your fireman get ready to pull out, and I'll have her uncoupled while we get orders!'

Riley told his fireman to get things ready, and then run the engine to the office. He himself raced after Jim on foot.

To the wondering crew who gathered at the office, Jim explained matters. Just as he had finished, a doctor came in, half-dressed, carrying his surgical case.

'Riley, there's no time to lose!' said Jim. 'You must be off at once! Here are the other doctors—away now! Somehow I feel as if we were going to find a way out of this.'

In reply, Riley turned to his fireman: 'Ned, I'm going to catch and stop 101 before she gets to White's switch! You needn't go unless you want to. I can fire and run her, too, if I have to. You doctors who ain't afraid of die must be prepared for the most terrible trip you ever took! There are two hundred people on those trains. The only way to save them is for me to catch that Limited—and she is almost flying tonight!'

As he talked he was running to his engine, the others instinctively following. Dan, Ned and the three doctors silently got into the cab.

Riley placed the doctors where they could hold on and not be in the way—one just behind him, one standing on the apron between the tender and engine and holding on to the corner at the right-hand side, and the other in the same position on the left. In the next moment the great machine started down the track, and Jim's fingers were ticking the news to headquarters.

The steam-gage marked one hundred and sixty pounds, and Ned began feeding in more coal. Riley slowly pulled his throttle open and threw his lever forward, and the engine fairly flew forward, throwing sparks over the telegraph-wires as she seemed to gather herself for a swifter plunge into the night.

As the drivers began to spin, Riley gently pulled on his throttle and lifted his lever a notch, gradually giving her steam as the pistons began going in and out faster and faster. He stood, an incarnate force, a grim specter in silhouette against the faint light thrown back from the headlight. As the doctors stared at that silent figure they felt an awe creep over them.

The bell was ringing except when Ned was shoveling coal into the red hot throat of the iron racer, and every few seconds the shriek of the whistle warned all creatures of flesh and blood to stand aside. Before they had reached the first switch at the bridge, a little more than half a mile down the track, the engine was almost jumping along the rails in mighty throbs, so rapidly was she gaining speed under the steady, regular pull at that throttle.

Riley kept his eyes steadily on the rails. The headlight sent forward a gleam of white that seemed to part the mist into walls of dripping gray on each side of the track, and the rails appeared like two streaks of light from unknown depths.

He pulled his lever up to the three-quarter notch, drew his throttle nearly to the last cog, and looked at the gage. It showed one hundred and eighty pounds, and the pop valve was roaring.

The time was not yet ten o'clock. Many farm-houses showed dim lamps in their windows, and doors flew open as people heard the clanging bell, the shrieking whistle and the blast of the pop valve, and remembered that the Limited had just gone past.

By the time the engine reached Big Sandy bridge, the side-rods were going so fast that they looked as if moving only up and down, and the drivers appeared like gigantic black wheels of solid iron.

To keep upright the doctors clung with all their strength, and Ned reeled and lurched every time he shoveled coal. Then over the glare from the opened mouth, the great mantle of black that was streaming back would serve as a reflector to illumine the faces and forms of the men who were venturing against many chances of sudden death.

As the engine tore across the bridge

and began racing up the grade, Riley and Ned both strained their eyes, for at the end of that grade was a curve, and then a two-mile stretch of level track across a prairie. Ned leaned far out of the cab to gaze, and Riley tried to look across the front of his engine away ahead on Ned's side. Each was looking for the same thing.

Suddenly Ned pointed, jumped down and began shoveling coal in furiously. Riley pulled his throttle out another cog, and the machine made another, appalling leap. Ned had pointed at the two red end lights on the Limited sleeper, but they were barely visible and the Limited was going at the rate of more than fifty miles an hour. The Southern Pacific has one of the best ballasted and smoothest tracks in the country, but it was to be tested that night.

The pursuers had already covered five miles, and must catch and stop that flying train before she reached White's switch, which was now hardly fourteen miles ahead of Riley's engine.

Coal was bouncing all over the floor; the pick and the shovel could not be kept in place. Riley had to stand up and hold to his lever and throttle, ready to put on brakes. Ned had almost to crawl when he shoveled coal, and half of each shovelful would spill. The big oil can had jumped from its rack and was dancing over the floor. The monkey-wrench jolted out of the place beside the boiler, dropped hard on the toe of a doctor, and went tumbling out upon the road-bed.

The roar of the escaping steam, the thunder of the wheels and the clanging of the bell made it impossible for any one to speak audibly except in a shout.

'By the way—those lights went sailing round that curve 101 must be making fifty miles!' roared Ned.

'Yes,' replied Riley, 'and we've got to beat that a good deal! She'll have to slow up some going through Flatonia! It'll be mighty risky, but we'll have to strike those switches just the way we're going now—or faster!'

'Well, I'm not afraid, except for that dump that changes so quickly into a cut and then to a curve just beyond the depot!' said Ned. 'We're doing considerably over fifty miles, I guess!'

'I just counted seventy-three joints we rolled over in twenty seconds by my watch!' shouted Riley. 'That gives us nearly seventy-two miles! I'm going to make her spread herself when we strike the next level and down-grade piece of track!'

Smooth as was the track, with its rock ballast and heavy new steel rails, the flying engine was awaying from side to side and plunging up and down furiously.

'When we catch them, Ned, said Riley, 'you hold the throttle and I'll get down in front and couple on the sleeper, step on it and pull the air; then you reverse her and jim on our wind for all it's worth!'

'No, Dan,' replied Ned, 'it's going to be a ticklish thing to get out there and do that. I'll attend to that part of it. No one can handle this engine the way you can. I'd make her slide, most likely; but you can put on all her holding back force and not strain a watch-spring.'

Over bridges, across valleys, through fields by hamlets whose gaping people stared with wonder and freight, by section-houses that passed like great, silent birds swiftly flying away from them, the engine charged on, racking the five men who thought continually on the terrible possibilities before them. The slightest mishap might prove fatal.

But the risk must be taken to save the unconscious passengers on the trains that were rushing toward collision.

The plan was arranged. Ned was to get on the cowcatcher and have the great draw-bar ready to put into the jaw of the sleeper coupler. Then, unless he failed, he was to jump on the platform of the sleeper, while Riley kept the bar in place until Ned could pin it in. Then Ned was to pull the air-cord on the rear of the sleeper, and Riley was to shut off steam and put on his jam-brakes and blow four quick blasts as signals of distress.

Never did the inhabitants of quiet Flatonia see such a sight as that great engine tearing through the town and across streets, never clacking, with whistles scream and bell clanging, the engine rocking and reeling over switch frogs and street intersections. People went out on the streets and collected in groups, and spoke in hushed voices of wonder and fear, for they knew the Sunset Limited had passed through not more than a minute before, slowing up on its way through the town.

The speed of Riley's engine grew more terrific as it reached the straight piece of track, down grade, beyond the town. His plan was to make lightning speed down this to the level stretch four miles beyond, at the end of which he expected to catch 101 just before she reached White's switch.

Ned knew what was coming. He re-

newed the fire, crawled out on the foot-board, grasped the hand rods, and went on his hands and knees along the side of the leaping engine. There were the two red lights down the track. Now came the trial! All that has been done before seemed child's play to what lay before them now.

Ned pulled his cap down over his ears, and slowly drew himself along until he reached the boiler-head. As the engine was steadying itself after a struggle and heavy plunge, he dropped on his stomach to the platform of the cowcatcher. Firmly planting his feet between the timbers of the pilot, he waited.

They were just behind 101 now, and gradually creeping up to her. Riley strained his eyes to catch Ned's every movement. The pursuing engine seemed to spurt right up to the sleeper. Ned lifted the heavy bar. The sleeper lurched, the engine pitched and rocked, and the train seemed to be trying to get away. It crept ahead and out of reach. Ned had dropped the bar. He seemed agonized. The doctors clung and stared; it seemed to them terrible—that failure!

But Riley still hoped. He did not increase his speed, feeling that 101 had simply taken one of those unaccountable spurts made by trains at times, and that Ned needed a moment to become cool and calm. Two seconds passed. Again the engine began to creep up on the flying train, and soon the cowcatcher was under the sleeper.

Now Ned painfully raised the great bar higher and placed it in the jaw of the coupler. Riley saw it fall, and was on the point of putting on a little more steam to keep it in place when he noticed that Ned seemed faint and suffering. In the glare of the headlight his face was as pale as death. But he had lifted the bar, and slowly he put it in place, crawled up on the platform and dropped a pin into the bar. Then he staggered up to the air cord and pulled.

Instantly he was flattened out against the end of the car by the suddenness with which the train checked its speed. Riley had shut off steam as he saw Ned pull the cord, and had put on his jam brakes.

The sudden pulling back of the train, followed by those four shrieks of the whistle, told the amazed engineer of 101 that something awful, and never before known in his experience, was happening! So he, too, shut off steam and put on his brakes.

In a few moments the train was at a standstill, both engines puffing impatiently, with their pop-valves blowing off until one could hardly hear any other noise. The crew of 101 rushed back and stood in speechless astonishment!

'Don't ask questions! Back quickly, and let's get on White's switch!' exclaimed Riley, for they had run by the switch.

They were not slow in backing up into it, but the train had barely cleared the main track and the brakeman had hardly time to throw the switch when 83 flashed in sight around the curve, and dashed by with its three baggage and mail cars and five coaches and sleepers.

Then Riley sprang up to the rear platform of 101 and lifted the head of his fallen fireman. In a dead faint! That strong man! But his boot! For the heavy draw bar had fallen on that foot, jamming it between the timbers of the cowcatcher, and breaking the bones. Yet he had held himself to the rescue till it was done!

'That's all right,' said Ned, when he came to and the and they praise him; but the foot kept him in the hospital for five months.

As for Riley, the newspapers greatly distinguished him by dubbing him hero.

'Snucks!' he said. 'Makes me sick! Done my duty and done no more! But Ned was dead game sure!'

Still from New Orleans to San Francisco that race after the Sunset Limited is talked of by railway men and travellers.

A CENTREPIECE ON A BAT.

Tale of Flowers That Drank Whiskey and Seemed to Like It.

'My wife is the gardener in our family,' said the quiet man, who had been listening and, incidentally, smoking two cigars to the others' one, while the other men talked. Now it was nearly time to rejoin the ladies, and he thought he might as well get his story off anyway.

'My wife is very fond of flowers,' he went on, 'and has great success with them, except with her centrepieces. Those always look tired and weary—perhaps they need Christian Science. But the other night I had a queer experience with the present centrepiece. I won't say that I wouldn't believe it if any one else told me, for that would give you an opening; I'll merely say that it was queer, and as it happened to me, I know it's true.'

'My brother and I had some papers to look over, and to spread them out took

them to the dining room table. We pushed aside the centrepiece, and studied our papers, and as we neared the end of our work had some whiskey and water. Finally, as we were putting things away, one of us upset his half-emptied glass on the centrepiece. No harm was done, and we went on with the plans. Suddenly my brother said:

'Say! Look at that plant!'

'The plant had acquired a jag, blest if it hadn't! Its leaves were wriggling and staggering around as far as their stems would allow, twining themselves around one another and really seeming almost to leer at us. One or two of them seemed to be ashamed; they hung down, as they staggered and wretched about; but most of them were openly glad of their condition. As they twined about they rubbed against one another, and really the faint noise that they made was quite like that of a band of merry roisterers in a policeless Tenderloin. I couldn't stand it, it was so like human beings. So I packed up everything and turned out the light and went to bed.'

'The next morning my wife asked me to look at the centre piece. It was a veritable "morning alter." Some of the leaves were pretty brisk, but most of them looked sick and sore, leaning one against another, and suffering very evidently from big heads.'

'What's the matter, do you suppose?' asked my wife. I told her what had happened. 'Well, they do look a good deal the way you do when you have been out with the boys,' she said, looking first at me and then at the plants. I picked up the water pitcher.

'What? you going to do?' my wife cried rather anxiously.

'Not going to hit you,' I said, 'Going to give them some icewater.'

'Hold on,' she said, and with that she ran to the pantry, and came back with a syphon of selters. She administered gently to the plants, which brightened up at once; then she gave them a little bromide, and by the time breakfast was over they had pretty nearly recovered their good looks.

'But that,' ended the quiet man, 'is the first time I ever heard of plants getting drunk.'

'Shall we join the ladies?' asked the host.

VIGOROUS OLD AGE.

OBTAINED THROUGH THE USE OF DR. WILLIAMS' PINK PILLS.

Mr. William Gray of Newmarket, Tells How He Became Hiale and Hearty at the Advanced Age of Seventy After Having Suffered Great Torture from Sciatica and Rheumatism.

From the Express, Newmarket, Ont.

Mr. William Gray, who is well and favorably known in the town of Newmarket and vicinity, is rejoicing over his release from the pains of sciatica and rheumatism through the use of Dr. Williams' Pink Pills. A reporter of the Express called upon him for the purpose of obtaining particulars of the cure when Mr. Gray gave the following story for publication:— 'About two and a half years ago I was seized with a very severe attack of rheumatism. The pain was simply torturing. At times the trouble was so bad in my knees, then in my hips. For nearly a year I suffered along, working as best I could, in the hope of being able to overcome the disease. During the day the pain was less severe, but at night it was just as bad as ever. To increase my torture I caught a cold which resulted in an attack of sciatica in my right leg. If I walked a short distance I would be seized by sharp pains in the hip and in time I became a used up man; my appetite failed me, and I could not rest at night on account of the pain. I tried one medicine after another without avail. I also consulted doctors with no better result. I was beginning to think that I was doomed to suffer the rest of my life when one day a friend strongly advised me to try Dr. Williams' Pink Pills. I took his advice and procured a supply of the pills and began taking them according to directions. Before the third box was finished I noted a change for the better, so I continued the use of the pills till I had taken ten or twelve boxes when my trouble had entirely disappeared. Today I am free from pain and feel that life is worth living, even at the ripe old age of seventy. I can now do a day's work with many men who are twenty years younger than I. I thank God for my restoration to health through the agency of Dr. Williams' Pink Pills, and I trust other similar sufferers will give them a trial, for knowing what these pills have done for me I am sure that they cannot fail being as beneficial to others similarly afflicted.

If the blood is pure and wholesome disease cannot exist. The reason Dr. Williams' Pink Pills cure so many forms of disease is that they act directly upon the blood and nerves, thus reaching the root of the trouble. Other medicines act only on the symptoms of the trouble, and that is the reason the trouble always returns when you cease these medicines. Dr. Williams' Pink Pills make permanent cures in kidney troubles, rheumatism, erysipelas, anaemia and kindred diseases. But be sure you get the genuine which bear the full name Dr. Williams' Pink Pills for Pale People on the wrapper around every box.