



FRIDAY, APRIL 17, 1903.

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Contributions

Wrong Repairs to Trojan Couplers.

Troy, N. Y., April 1, 1903.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE RAILROAD GAZETTE:

Will you kindly bring the following subject, which we believe will be interesting, to the notice of your readers:

It has been brought to our attention recently that some railroad companies are replacing, when broken, the drop forged steel operating rods of Trojan couplers, with cast-iron, malleable iron or cast-steel imitations of these rods.

The impropriety of such replacements will be conspicuously apparent to the railroad operating departments, particularly since these imitations do not even conform in essential dimensions, and we trust that they will give instructions to inspectors at interchange points to be on the lookout for such improper repairs.

The incident will bring to the minds of some of the similar practice of replacing broken knuckles with those made of gray iron and malleable iron in the early '90s.

THE TROJAN CAR COUPLER CO.

The Mississippi River Overflow.

New Orleans, La., April 7, 1903.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE RAILROAD GAZETTE:

The statement concerning this year's high water in the Mississippi in your "Scrap Heap" of April 3, is not entirely correct.

No destruction from water has occurred since 1897. In that year there were 38 breaks in the levees between Cairo and New Orleans, about 965 miles. This year, although the flood height exceeded that of 1897 in most places, and in some as much as 2½ ft., there have been only five breaks in that part of the river, owing to the improvement in the levee system during the past five years. Among these is the Hymelia crevasse, which, instead of being beyond control, has been closed and the railroads have resumed operation.

The relative areas overflowed in 1897 and 1903 is reduced in proportion to the number of breaks. The flood, with its danger, has not entirely passed from the lower part of the river, but this statement is correct up to date.

B. M. HARRON, C.E.

Umbrella Sheds.

New York, April 13, 1903.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE RAILROAD GAZETTE:

I am thoroughly in accord with the general views expressed in the editorial on "Umbrella Sheds" in your issue of April 10, namely, that too much stress is laid on the absolute necessity of having a large expensive train-shed at passenger terminal stations. In many cases a judicious arrangement of platform roofs and cross-roofs will give better results than a low, inadequate and badly designed train-shed.

In my book, "Buildings and Structures of American Railroads," published in 1893, I called attention to the

constant need of repairs on a large train-shed, and the large first cost. Excepting during very stormy weather, this system provides ample protection for passengers and baggage. The deafening noise from trains and engines, which renders a great many train-sheds very objectionable, is done away with. The noise of escaping steam from cylinders or safety valves, the ringing of the bell, and the sounds accompanying the slipping of the drivers in starting a heavy train, often render a large shed a nuisance.

WALTER G. BERG.

Arboriculture on the Michigan Central.

Detroit, Mich., April 8, 1903.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE RAILROAD GAZETTE:

I have your letter asking for information as to methods employed on this road for the embellishment of station grounds.

Years ago greenhouses were established at Ypsilanti and Niles where our station grounds are quite extensive and lay of ground is such that they could be planted and ornamented at comparatively slight expense. Year by year we have continued the work of planting, and now many of our station grounds on both main line and branches are much more pleasing to the eye than in their original condition. This work is in charge of the Engineering Department under the direction of a Chief Gardener. The expense amounts to but very little and will decrease rather than increase, as it is now our policy to use hardy shrubs for ornamentation rather than blooming or foliage plants. These shrubs are being propagated at various points and when additional planting is ordered we generally have or expect to have necessary stock without purchasing on the market.

Patrons of the road and citizens at practically all of our stations are taking a great interest in the work, and it is very seldom a request is made by a committee of citizens from any town along the line for a little attention on our part that does not carry with it an offer of assistance in the nature of grading, laying water pipes, etc. This, of course, reduces the expense to a minimum as the planting takes but little time and grounds are taken care of, by some necessary attendants of the station, as he finds time to devote to such work. The greenhouses referred to, in addition to furnishing small floral offerings for lady passengers on our trains, provide and care for plants, palms, ferns, etc., to be found in all our dining halls and dining cars.

I have given you a rough and hurried outline of methods at present employed on this line of work and I hope for their continuance. In addition to embellishing station grounds, we are interested in the cultivation of catalpas. This work is comparatively young with us, but we have many thousand trees planted at outlying stations which are being added to yearly and watched with interest.

W. S. KINNEAR,

Chief Engineer, Michigan Central Railroad.

[The beginning of this work had some amusing incidents. In 1892 Mr. Hawks became chief engineer. His energy was restless. In the early spring he brought down from the Mackinac line several barrels of trailing arbutus, and had these sweet-smelling May flowers tied in small bouquets and attached to a small card: "With the compliments of the Engineering Department." Passenger train conductors were easily induced to distribute these souvenirs among the women passengers. Called to account, Hawks explained that he was only letting people know that there was such a thing as an engineering department. He was acquitted of the charge of interfering with the business of another department on the ground that he had a right to advertise his own. When the May flower season passed, some ladies' aid societies of churches at Ypsilanti and other cities contracted to furnish the engineering department with small bouquets, at a moderate price, the proceeds to be devoted to the spread of gospel, that is, the maintenance of the churches. This continuance of activity caused a second inquiry, and Hawks' reply that, as an engineer, he was only "adapting the forces of nature to the uses of man" was not considered fully responsive. It was developed that he had paid all costs from his own pocket, and also that he had begun the greenhouse at Ypsilanti. The value of the idea had been so well shown that the engineering department was formally authorized to go ahead, but the passenger department took charge of the "floral offerings."—EDITOR.]

Some Railroading Stories.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE RAILROAD GAZETTE:

A few reminiscences from an old railroader's diary may be of interest at this time. Railroad accidents usually are caused by carelessness or negligence on the part of employees; some permitting themselves to be overworked; some are naturally indifferent and careless. The former are excusable to a certain degree, while for the latter there is no justification. Take, for instance, the appalling accident at Tucson, Ariz., the latter part of last January. Superintendent Agler, of that road, is quoted by the newspapers as saying: "We have made up our minds where the blame belongs. . . . The wreck was due to the fault of the operator. . . . The whole story is told in two words: 'He forgot.' Yes, 'he forgot,' as operators sometimes do who are overworked. That boy wrote home to his parents time and again telling them this. It seems to me the superintendent ought to have been aware of this. Twelve hours a day, or night, as the

case may be, acting as operator, ticket agent, baggage-man, switchman, and frequently manager of a commercial telegraph office, as well as other minor duties, is almost too much for human nature to stand, and is certainly more than should be imposed upon one person. A young, active man, frequently a mere boy, is selected for this responsible work. I know this, as I speak from experience. Under these conditions who is most to blame for these terrible accidents and the harrowing scenes attending them? The young and overworked operator, or the older and more experienced superintendent?

Many years ago an operator but 14 years of age worked night and day as operator and ticket agent for a period of nearly two weeks at a stretch. The result was that at the end of this time he dozed off one night, got up in his sleep and took a train order for a down special engine to cross an up wood train at his station. When he awoke, about 5 a.m., he discovered the order on his desk, in his own handwriting. It had been received and replied to, as the marks on it indicated. This was all the knowledge he had of it; he did not remember having received it. He immediately turned the signal in front of the station, and walked out on the platform only to observe the down special engine coming up. It had passed by while he was sleeping, and, on turning a curve a couple of miles away the engineer discovered the wood train coming towards him, and, thinking discretion the better part of valor, stopped and backed up.

Nothing serious happened in this instance, but the question arises: Who would have been most to blame had an accident resulted—the operator in short pants, or the superintendent, who ought to have been cognizant of what was going on?

A peculiar thing happened on the Missouri Pacific at Lexington, Mo., a few years ago. A freight train reached that station about noon, and the train hands went across the way to a lunch stand for something to eat. On returning from luncheon, the fireman and one of the brakemen, being a little in advance of the others, discovered that three empty flat cars which, for convenience sake, had been placed in front of the engine, had disappeared, and, so far as the eye could reach down the line, were not visible. They knew that the cars must have broken away, or had been released from the engine by some mischievous person, and sent spinning down the grade as fast as they could go, into the face of a passenger train which was due at the next station in a few minutes. So they disconnected the engine from the rest of the train, jumped aboard, pulled wide open the throttle and started on a race for life after those cars. Three miles below was a curve. On turning this they could see the three flat cars about three miles ahead, bouncing and jumping along, swaying from side to side, and making the very best time they could. The fireman, acting as engineer, realized that he must catch those cars in the next five minutes or it was all up with the passenger train, which was coming toward them only a few miles away. He pulled the throttle wide open, the brakeman, acting as fireman, worked like a Trojan, shoveling in the coal, and away the engine sped, and nearer the runaway cars they came. Looking over and ahead of them they could see the express just coming into Aultville. As they drew nearer the cars the brakeman climbed out of the cab window, a coupling-pin in his hand, making his way along the side of the engine to the pilot in front. Reaching over and grasping the pilot-bar with one hand, raised it, and, with a coupling-pin in the other, stood ready to make the connection. The fireman at the throttle waited for the signal. He saw a hand come out from the side of the engine, which told him the connection was made. He quickly reversed his lever, and in a few seconds they came to a standstill.

One night, some years ago, on the Santa Fe road, the night operator at P— was enjoying a short nap with his head resting on his arms, which were folded on the table, when the dispatcher called him. He was all attention in a moment, received a crossing order for the down express to cross the up "flyer" at his station. He replied to it in proper form. He had been asleep, but had aroused himself for the time being and had taken upon himself a heavy responsibility. But he was tired, and hesitated a moment before rising from his chair and pulling the cord that turned the signal in front of the station. His head fell over and rested on his arms again; he was fast asleep. The "flyer" and fast express were rushing toward each other, some distance away, to be sure, but surely and swiftly nearing each other. The operator slept on. The "flyer" reached P— and flew past the station. The operator awoke, grasped his lantern, rushed through the doorway and out to the platform, only to see the rear lights of the flyer disappearing in the distance. He swung his red lantern, but to no purpose; it was too late.

When he rushed out to the platform he had left the doors open behind him. Suddenly he heard the sound of his instrument; the dispatcher was calling him. He hesitated a moment; he trembled all over. Should he answer his call? He realized that he had been derelict in his duty and an awful collision seemed sure. It almost made him a coward for the moment, but hadn't he worked night and day for the past week? The agent's wife had died and he had done double duty. Would not this excuse him? He hurried into his office and answered his call. The dispatcher sent an order annulling the one which had been the cause of the operator's awful anxiety; the flyer could safely go on to the next station because the express had been delayed by a hot box.

The operator felt better.

C. W. THAYER.