

The Skyscraper



It stood one Sunday morning in a group watching for her to speed the narrow-gauge. Many locomotives as I have seen and ridden, a new one is always a wonder to me—chokes me up, even, it means so much. I hear men rave over horses and marvel at it when I think of the iron horse. I hear them chatter of distance, and my mind turns to the annihilator. I hear them brag of ships, and I think of the ship that plows the mountains and rivers and plains. And when they talk of speed—what can I think of but her?

As the new engine rolled into the yards my heart beat quicker. Her lines were too imposing to call strong. They were massive, yet so simple you could draw them, like the needle snout of a collier, to a very point.

Every bearing looked precise, every joint looked supple, as she swept majestically up and checked herself, pausing in front of us.

Foley was in the cab. He had been east on a lay-off and so happened to bring in the new monster, wild, from the river shops.

She was built in Pennsylvania, but the fellows on the Missouri end of our line thought nothing could ever safely be put into our hands until they had stopped it en route and looked it over. "How does she run, Foley?" asked Neighbor, glancing silently over the toy.

"Cool as an icebox," said Foley, swinging down. "She's a regular summer resort. Little stuff on the hills yet."

"We'll take that out of her," mused Neighbor, climbing into the cab to look her over. "Bye, this is up in a balloon," he added, pushing his big head through the cab window and peering down at the ninety inch drivers under him.

"I grew dizzy once or twice looking for the ponies," declared Foley, lighting off a piece of tobacco as he litched at his overalls. "She looks like a skyscraper. Say, Neighbor, I'm to get her myself, ain't I?" asked Foley, with his usual nerve.

"When McNeal gets through with her, yes," returned Neighbor gruffly, giving her a thimble of steam and trying the air.

"What?" cried Foley, affecting surprise. "You going to give her to the kid?"

"I am," returned the master mechanic unfeigningly, and he kept his word.

George McNeal, just reporting for work after the session in his cab with the loose end of a connecting rod, was invited to take out the skyscraper—488, Class II—as she was listed, and Dad Hamilton of course took the scoop to fire her.

"They get everything good that's going," grumbled Foley.

"They are good people," retorted Neighbor. He also assigned a helper to the old fireman. It was a new thing with us then, a fellow with a silos bar to tickle the grate, and Dad, of course, kicked. He always kicked. Neighbor wasted no words. He simply sent the helper back to wiping until the old fireman should cry enough.

"Very likely you know that a new engine must be regularly broken, as a horse is broken, before it is ready for steady hard work. And as George McNeal was not very strong yet, he was appointed to do the breaking."

For two months it was a picnic—light runs and easy lay overs. After the smash at the Narrows Hamilton had sort of taken the kid engineer under his wing, and it was pretty generally understood that any one who elbowed George McNeal must reckon with his doughy old fireman. So the two used to march up and down street together, as much like chums as a very young engineer and a very old fireman possibly could be. They talked together, walked together and ate together. Foley was as jealous as a cat of Hamilton, because he had brought George out west and felt a sort of guardian interest in that quarter himself. Really anybody would love George McNeal; old Dad Hamilton was proof enough of that.

One evening, just after pay day, I saw the pair in the postoffice lobby getting their checks cashed. Presently the two stepped over to the money order window. A moment later each came away with a money order.

"Is that where you leave your wealth, George?" I asked as he came up to speak to me.

"Part of it goes there every month, Mr. Reed," he smiled. "Checks are running light, too, now—eh, Dad?"

"A young fellow like you ought to be putting money away in the bank," said I.

"Well, you see I have a bank back in Pennsylvania, a bank that is now sixty years old and getting gray headed. I haven't sent her much since I've been on the relief, so I'm trying to make up a little now for my old mammy."

"Where does yours go, Dad?" I asked.

"Me," answered the old man evasively. "I've got a boy back east; notting to be a big one too. He's in school. When are you going to give us a passenger run with the skyscraper, Neighbor?" asked Hamilton, turning to the master mechanic.

"Soon as we get this wheat, up on the high line, out of the way," replied Neighbor. "We haven't half engines enough to move it, and I get a wire about every six hours to move it faster. Every siding's blocked, clear to Belgrade. How many of those 00,000 pound cars can you take over, Beverly hill with your skyscraper?"

He was asking both men. The engineer looked at the skyscraper. "I reckon maybe thirty-five or forty," said McNeal. "Eh, Dad?"

"Maybe, son," growled Hamilton, "and break my back doing it?"

"I gave you a helper once, and you

FRANK H. SPEARMAN

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ment George McNeal. Dad, the skyscraper and fifty loads of wheat, reported out at 3:10. While we worked on our time card Neighbor in the dispatcher's office across the hall figured out that the wheat train would enrich the company just \$11,000, tolls and premium. "If it doesn't break in two on Beverly hill," growled Neighbor, with a quail.

On the dispatcher's sheet, which is a sort of panorama, I watched the big train whirl past station after station, drawing steadily nearer to us, and doing it, the marvel, on full passenger time. It was a great feat, and George McNeal, whose nerve and brain were guiding the tremendous load, was breaking records with every mile-stone. They were due in Harvard at 9 o'clock. The first 4, our fier, pulled in and out on time, meeting 55, the west-bound overland freight, at the second station east of Harvard—Redbud.

Neighbor and I sat with the dispatchers up in their office, smoking. The wheat train was now due from the west, and, looking at my watch, I stepped to the western window. Almost immediately I heard the long, peculiarly hollow blast of the skyscraper whistling for the upper yard.

"She's coming," I exclaimed.

The boys crowded to the window, but Neighbor happened to glance to the east.

"What's that coming in from the Junction, Bailey?" he exclaimed, turning to the local dispatcher. We looked and saw a headlight in the east.

"That's 55."

"Where do they meet?"

"Fifty-five takes the long siding in from the Junction—which was two miles east—and she ought to be on it right now," added the dispatcher anxiously, looking over the master mechanic's shoulder. Neighbor jumped as if a bullet had struck him. "She's coming down the main track. What's her orders?" he demanded furiously.

"Meeting orders for first 4 at Redbud, second 4 here, 38 at Glencoe, Great Jupiter," cried the dispatcher, and his face went sick and scared. "They've forgotten second 4!"

"They'll think of her a long time dead," roared the master mechanic savagely, jumping to the west window. "Throw your red lights! There's the skyscraper now!"

Her head shot that instant around the coal chutes less than a mile away, and 55 going dead against her. I stood like one palsied, my eyes glued on the burning eye of the big engine. As she whipped past a street arc light I caught a glimpse of George McNeal's head out of the cab window. He always rode bareheaded if the night was warm, and I knew it was he; but suddenly, like a flash, his head went in. I knew why as well as if my eyes were his eyes and my thoughts his thoughts. He had seen red signals where he had every right to look for white.

But red signals now—to stop her—to pull her flat on her haunches like a broncho? Shake a weather flag at a cyclone!

I saw the fire stream from her drivers. I knew they were churning in the sand. I knew he had twenty air cars behind him sliding. What of it?

Two thousand tons were sweeping forward like an avalanche. What did brains or pluck count for now with 55 dancing along like a schoolgirl right into the teeth of it?

I don't know how the other men felt. As for me, my breath choked in my throat, my knees shook, and a deadly nausea seized me. Unable to avert the horrible blunder, I saw its hideous results.

Darkness hid the worst of the sight; it was the sound that appalled. Children asleep in sod shanties miles from where the two engines reared in awful shock jumped in their cribs at that crash. Fifty-five's little engine barely checked the skyscraper. She split it like a banana. She bucked like a frantic horse and leaped fearfully ahead. There was a blinding explosion, a sudden awful burst of steam. The windows crashed about our ears, and we were dashed to the wall and floor like lead pencils. A baggage truck, whipped up from the platform below, came through the heavy sash and down on the dispatcher's table like a brickbat, and as we scrambled to our feet a shower of wheat suffocated us. The floor heaved. Freight cars slid into the depot like battering rams. In the height of the confusion an oil tank in the yard took fire and threw a yellow glare on the ghastly scene.

I saw men get up and fall again to their knees. I was shivering and wet with sweat. The stairway was crushed into kindling wood. I climbed out a back window, down on the roof of the freight platform and so to the ground. There was a running to and fro, useless and aimless; men were beside themselves. They plunged through went up to their knees at every step. All at once, above the frantic hissing of the buried skyscraper and the wild calling of the car tinkers, I heard the stentorian tones of Neighbor, mounted on a twisted truck, organizing the men at hand into a wrecking gang. Soon people began running up the yard to where the skyscraper lay, like another Samson, prostrate in the midst of the destruction it had wrought. Foremost among the excited men, covered with dirt and blood, staggered Dad Hamilton.

"Where's McNeal?" cried Neighbor. Hamilton pointed to the wreck.

"Why didn't he jump?" yelled Neighbor.

Hamilton pointed at the twisted signal tower; the red light still burned in it.

"You changed the signals on him," he cried savagely. "What does it mean? What has right against everything. What does it mean?" he raved in a frenzy.

Neighbor answered him never a word; he only put his hand on Dad's shoulder.

"Find him first! Find him!" he roared, peated, with a strain in his voice never heard till then, and the two giants hurried away together. When I reached the skyscraper, buried in the thick of the smash, roaring like a volcano, the pair were already into the jam like a brace of ferrets, hunting for the engine crews. It seemed an hour, though it was much less, before they found any one; then they brought out 55's fireman. Neighbor found him. But his back was broken. Back again they wormed through twisted trucks, under splintered beams—in and around and over—choked with heat, blinded by steam, shouting as they groped,



The cab for a passing instant rose in the air.

boarded wheat and much of the seed wheat, and the 28th day of the month found fifty cars of wheat still in the Zanesville yards. I was at Harvard working on a time card when the word came, and behind it a special from the general manager stating there was \$1,000 premium in it for the company, besides tariff. If we got that wheat into Chicago by Saturday morning.

The train and of it didn't bother me any. It was the motive power that kept us studying. However, we figured that by running McNeal with the skyscraper back west we could put all the wheat behind her in one train. As it happened, Neighbor was at Harvard too.

"Can they ever get over Beverly with 50, Neighbor?" I asked doubtfully.

"We'll never know till we try it," growled Neighbor. "There's a thousand for the company if they do; that's all. How'll you run them? Give them plenty of sea room. They'll have to gallop to make it."

Cool and reckless planning, taking the daring chances, straining the flesh and blood, driving the steel loaded to the snapping point—that was what it meant. But the company wanted results, wanted the prestige and the premium too. To gain them we were expected to stretch our little resources to the uttermost.

I studied a minute, then turned to the dispatcher.

"Tell Norman to send them out as second 4. That gives the right of way over every wheel against them. If they can't make it on that kind of schedule, it isn't in the track."

It was extraordinary business, rather, sending a train of wheat through on a passenger schedule, practically as the second section of our eastbound fier, but we took half lifting chances on the plains.

It was noon when the orders were flashed. At 3 o'clock No. 4 was due to leave Zanesville. For three hours I kept the wires busy warning all operators and trainmen, even switch engines and yardmasters, of the wheat special, second 4.

The fier, the first section and regular passenger train, was checked out of Zanesville on time. Second 4, which

listening for word or cry or gasp. Soon we heard Dad's voice in a different cry, one that meant everything, and the wreckers, tearing like beavers through a dozen blind trails, gathered all close to the big fireman. He was under a great piece of the cab where none could follow, and he was crying for a bar. They passed him a bar; they men, careless of life and limb, tried to crawl under and in to him, but he warned them back. Who but a man baked twenty years in an engine cab could stand the steam that poured on him where he lay?

Neighbor, just outside, flashing a light, heard the labored strain of his breathing, saw him getting half up, bend to the bar, and saw the iron give like lead in his hands as he pried, mightily.

Neighbor heard and told me long afterward how the old man flung the bar away with an imprecation and cried for one to help him, for a minute meant a life now. The boy lying pinned under the shattered cab was roasting in a jet of live steam. The master mechanic crept in.

By signs Dad told him what to do and then, getting on his knees, crawled straight into the dash of the white jet—crawled into it and got the cab on his shoulders.

Crouching an instant, the giant muscles of his back set in a tremendous effort. The wrecked legs slowly and groined, the knotted legs slowly and painfully straightened, the cab for a passing instant rose in the air, and in that instant Neighbor dragged George McNeal from out the vise of death and passed him, like a pluck bar, to the men waiting next behind. Then Neighbor pulled Dad back, blind now and senseless. When they got the old fireman out he made a pitiful struggle to pull himself together. He tried to stand up, but the sweat broke over him, and he sank in a heap at Neighbor's feet.

"That was the saving of George McNeal, and out there they still tell you about that lift of Dad Hamilton's."

We put him on the cot at the hospital next to his engineer, George, dreadfully bruised and scalded, came on fast in spite of his hurts, but the doctor said Dad had wrenched a tendon in that frightful effort, and he lay there a very sick and very old man long after the young engineer was up and around telling of his experience.

"When we cleared the chutes I saw white signals, I thought," he said to me at Dad's bedside. "I knew we had the right of way over everything. It was a hustle anyway on that schedule, Mr. Reed, you know that—an awful hustle with our load. I never choked her a notch to run the yards. Didn't mean to do it with the Junction grade to climb just ahead of us. But I looked out again, and, by hooky, I thought I'd gone crazy, got color blind—red signals! Of course I thought I must have been wrong the first time I looked. I choked her. I threw the air. I dumped the gravel. Heavens! She never felt it! I couldn't figure how we were wrong, but there was the red light. I yelled, 'Jump, Dad!' and he yelled, 'Jump, son! Didn't you, Dad?'"

"He jumped, but I wasn't ever going to jump, and my engine going full against a red lamp. Not much."

"I kind of dodged down behind the head; when she struck it was blif, and she jumped about twenty feet up straight. She didn't? Well, it seemed like it. Then it was blif, blif, blif, one after another. With that train behind her she'd have gone through Beverly hill. Did you ever buck snow with a rotary, Mr. Reed? Well, that was about it, even to the rolling and heaving. Dad, want to lie down? Let me get another pillow behind you. Isn't that better? Poor Musgrave!" he added, speaking of the engineer of 55, who was instantly killed. "He and the fireman both. Hard lines, but I'd rather have it that way, I guess, if I was wrong. Eh, Dad?"

Even after George went to work Dad lay in the hospital. We knew he would never shovel coal again. It cost him his good back to lift George loose, so the surgeon told us, and I could believe it, for when they got the jacks under the cab next morning, and Neighbor told the wrecking gang that Hamilton alone had lifted it six inches the night before on his back the wrecking boss fairly snorted at the statement, but Hamilton did just the same.

"Son," muttered Dad one night to George, sitting with him, "I want you to write a letter for me."

"Sure."

"I've been sending money to my boy back east," explained Dad feebly. "I told you he's in school."

"I know, Dad."

"I haven't been able to send any since I've been by, but I'm going to send some when I get my relief. Not so much as I used to send. I want you to kind of explain why."

"What's his first name, Dad, and where does he live?"

"It's a lawyer that looks after him—a man that tends to my business back there."

"Well, what's his name?"

"Scaylor—Ephraim Scaylor."

"Scaylor?" echoed George in amazement.

"Yes. Why, do you know him?"

"Why, that's the man who and I had so much trouble with. I wouldn't write to that man. He's a rascal, Dad."

"What did he ever do to you and your mother?"

"I'll tell you, Dad, though it's a matter I don't talk about much. My father had trouble back there fifteen or sixteen years ago. He was running an engine and had a wreck. There were some passengers killed. The dispatcher managed to throw the blame on father, and they indicted him for manslaughter. He pretty near went crazy, and all of a sudden he disappeared. I never heard of him from that time on. But this man Scaylor, who was a lawyer, he knew something about it. He was, only he al-

fort to sit up, to speak, but he choked. His face contracted, and George rose frightened. With a herculean effort the old man raised himself up and grasped George's hands.

"Son," he gasped to the astonished boy, "don't you know me?"

"Of course I know you, Dad. What's the matter with you? Lie down."

"Boy, I'm your own father. My name is David Hamilton Sinclair. I had the trouble, George." He choked up like a child, and George McNeal went white and seared; then he grasped the gray haired man in his arms.

When I dropped in an hour later they were talking hysterically. Dad was explaining how he had been sending money to Scaylor every month, and George was contending that neither he nor his mother had ever seen a cent of it. But one great fact overshadowed all the villainy that night—father and son were united and happy and a message had already gone back to the old home from George to his mother, telling her the good news.

"And that indictment was wiped out long ago against father," said George to me, "but that rascal Scaylor kept writing him for money to fight it with and to pay for my schooling—and this was the kind of schooling I was getting all the time. Wouldn't that kill you?"

I couldn't sleep till I had hunted up Neighbor and told him about it, and next morning we wired transportation back for Mr. Sinclair to come out on.

Less than a week afterward a gentle little old woman stepped off the pier at Zanesville and into the arms of George Sinclair. A smart rig was wait-

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Gastonia, N. C. July 13, 1904.

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On Tuesday the 30th day of April, 1907, I will sell at the door of the city hall in the town of Gastonia at 2 o'clock p. m. the following real estate, for the purpose of collecting taxes due the Town of Gastonia.
To Writ:
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Not Good After Friday, May 10, 1907

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John Mitchell Seriously Ill
Chicago, Ill., April 24.—President John Mitchell, of the United Mine Workers of America is seriously ill here. He is confined to his bed at his home, and friends and wife have been summoned. Roosevelt's letter regarding the Moyer-Haywood matter was read to him but Mitchell made no comment.

Canned Goods Poison Family.
Wadesboro, April 24.—From eating canned goods of various kinds, three members of the family of Mr. Hugh Jordan, of this place, have died and two others are in a dying condition, from the effects of ptomaine poison. The father and several children were stricken last Friday and since then the rest of the large family of children have been affected.

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