

THE PLUM HILL RAILROAD

By M. QUAD

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The village of Plum Hill was and is situated fourteen miles from the nearest railroad. To reach it you have to drive the fourteen miles in a wagon. You have to drive over three mountains and two rivers, and the ascent from the outside world is 900 feet.

On a certain day not many years ago Plum Hill was quiet. It was serene. There was an ox team standing in front of the only store in the village, and there were two men sitting on the postoffice steps. Nobody apprehended a great excitement—one that was to upset the place and make things bubble. It was a tin peddler who brought the news. He came from the town of Crow Valley, a village just about as big and ten miles away. Crow Valley was the rival of Plum Hill. It had two stores to one, but its altitude was only 898 feet.

The news brought by the peddler was that Crow Valley was moving for a branch line out to the railroad. If she got it—and she was determined to have it—then goodbye to the prestige of Plum Hill.

There was hurrying to and fro, and there was public speaking. A branch railroad had been the dream of Plum Hill for years, and now Crow Valley was to step in and steal the reality away.

Squar' Latham, the village justice of the peace, nominated himself a committee of one to investigate and report, also to head a subscription list and pass it around. Money would induce the railroad company to construct a branch to Plum Hill, and money it should have. Every Plum Hiller was a patriot to the core.

The Plum Hill Banner took up the matter and printed a double leaded editorial. An old picture of a flat car was used to arouse enthusiasm and inflame the public mind. Plum Hill was called upon to defend the breastworks to the last drop of blood. If they stood back and played second fiddle to Crow Valley, then could it be said of them that they were no longer the sons of Bunker Hill.

The day of the mass meeting came. There was an outpouring of the patriots. Flags waved and men cheered. Squar' Latham was ready with his figures. He had spent a week figuring. He had got things down pat. A part of the work and the glory must be given to the tin peddler. He had toiled like a hero. In addition they had driven over to the railroad and consulted with the freight agent, two trackwalkers and a boarding house keeper. The men had given their opinions and estimates on the enterprise. It had been asserted and generally believed that a branch line to Plum Hill, owing to the mountains, would be impossible on account of the cost.

The squar' had started out expecting to run up against this objection, but he had some news to communicate—some news to delight. He had figured and figured and figured, and he could not make the cost of the line over \$3,000 to bring the iron horse snorting and puffing into Plum Hill. That sum could be raised in fifteen minutes. It could be raised then and there—aye, ten times that amount—but he would move among the patriots with a subscription paper and give all a chance. In years to come he wanted every Plum Hiller to have the privilege of pointing to the snorting, puffing locomotive and rolling palace cars and be privileged to say:

"Look at 'em, gentlemen! I helped to do it!"

The meeting adjourned to meet one week later to hear the squar's final report. The boom was on almost before the motion was put and carried. The merchant began marking up his goods 10 per cent. Various citizens who had been holding the value of their houses and lots at \$600 added on \$400 and walked around with serene countenances. A site for the new depot was selected, and it was generally conceded that Squar' Latham would be selected as boss of the new line. Butter went up 2 cents a pound at sunset, but the boom was too sudden, and at midnight there was a drop back to old figures. The price of eggs also wobbled and was unsettled.

For a week the squar' canvassed. He made no reports of progress, but it was generally understood that he was being offered millions. It was a week of tension. Even the roosters of Plum Hill crowed softly. Then there was another coming together of the patriots, a larger gathering than before. Crow Valley was to be wiped off the map of the United States. Squar' Latham stood up at the proper moment, and when the hush came he began:

"Feller citizens, I was appointed to figger on the cost of this branch line."

"Yes! Yes!"

"I did figger."

"Bully for you!"

"I figgered and figgered and figgered."

"Hurrah for the squar'!"

"I figgered her at \$3,000."

"Whoop!"

"But I got the danged thing wrong.

What she orter be and is is \$3,000,000! I somehow dropped three ciphers!"

Gasps of surprise.

"And I was app'nted to solicit subscriptions. I have solicited."

"And you got the three millions?"

"Gentlemen, the subscriptions amount to jest seven dollars and a half, and I subscribed the seven! Has anybody got a suggestion to make?"

Nobody had. Plum Hill is still fourteen miles from a railroad, and Crow Valley still has one store the most.

CAN'T SIGN AWAY RIGHTS.

Supreme Court Holds Employees of Railroads Cannot Do This.

Under a decision rendered recently by Justice Hughes of the United States supreme court employees of railroads in Iowa cannot sign away their right to damages for injuries suffered through the neglect of their employers. The fact that they may be members of a relief association and have signed contracts relieving the railroads of liability for damages in case of injury does not affect their rights.

An Iowa law passed in 1898 established this proposition. The constitutionality of the law was attacked when Charles L. McGuire sued the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy railroad company for \$2,000 damages for injuries. McGuire had been given \$882 by the Burlington relief department, an association maintained by the railroad and its employees, one of the regulations of which was that employees must elect between accepting relief from it and pressing a claim against the company.

Strike Guards Costly.

The strike at the mills of the International Paper company, at Corinth, Saratoga county, N. Y., last summer cost the county \$26,471.17. This money was expended for the national guard and deputy sheriffs who were detailed there during the strike.

Did You?

Did you ever whistle merrily as you combed your hair on the morning after the night before?—St. Louis Post-Dispatch.

PERILS OF TOILERS.

Workingmen Must Risk Their Lives or Go Hungry.

An idea of the dangers to mechanics engaged in perilous occupations may be gleaned from the testimony presented to the Wainwright commission, appointed by the New York legislature to investigate employers' liability and industrial accidents.

There appeared before the commission Miles Nelson, an electrical lineman, who had been burned and disabled last summer at Canarsie by a high tension wire, the power having been turned on by mistake. He said his injuries made it impossible for him to work regularly.

Thomas McCoy, representing linemen, declared there ought to be a state regulation as to the placing of high tension wires on poles and some regulation as to the condition in which such wires should be kept when men are at work on them.

Thomas Clark of the Electrical Workers' union said workmen are forced to use imperfect tools.

"Not long ago," he said, "a mechanic was sent out on a job on a six story building at the top floor. He called his foreman's attention to a faulty pipe bender, and the foreman told him to use that particular tool or quit."

"That man had to lean across an air shaft between two buildings. The pipe bender would not grip the metal, and when the man put extra pressure on it he lost his balance, fell down the shaft and was killed."

John Gill of the Bricklayers, Plasterers and Stone Masons' union said something ought to be done about scaffolding and rough flooring in buildings. Good flooring would prevent broken skulls, he said.

"There was a law requiring this protection," said Mr. Gill, "but some fine citizens had it repealed."

Another witness declared there is a law requiring netting around scaffolds, but that it is not enforced.

"Do you mean to tell me there is no netting placed around a scaffold twenty stories high?" asked Senator Wainwright.

"Exactly," said the witness. He cited the case of two men who were on a scaffold which was swung violently by a sudden gust of wind and who were hurled to death.

"Why will men work in these conditions?" the senator asked.

"Because half of the men of our union are walking around hungry and looking for jobs," was the reply. "We have got to work or starve."

LABOR HARD TO DOWN.

Crush Unionism and It Rises Stronger Than Before.

The management of the Panama-Pacific exposition in San Francisco has been notified by some of the Seattle (Wash.) metal trades employers that they will indorse the great project provided the management assures them that the labor in connection with the exposition be of the "open shop" order.

The progressive (?) business men of the sound city are evidently eager to start a labor fight in San Francisco, which seems to be of more importance to them than the success of the exposition itself.

That is a sample of the tactics employed by labor haters in their endeavors to "down the unions."

San Francisco can get along without the exposition, as much as it would help the city, but it cannot afford to surrender its union principles.

It's about time the opponents of unionism learned the lesson that "downing the unions" is not a successful project.

The fact that San Francisco is a

union city today is due to this "downing" project.

"Truth crushed to earth will rise again." Crush unionism and it will come up again stronger than before.

The crushing process has been going on from the beginning, and the unions have been gaining all the time.

If the Seattle metal trades employers want to see the exposition a success they had better forget their union crushing suggestion.

Unionism is established in San Francisco and on the Pacific coast. It is here to stay. It will have to fight, but it will win. It must win. It is a vital necessity to human advancement. And humanity is going to succeed, whether the exposition does or not.—Los Angeles Citizen.

ENGINEERS' NEW SCALE.

Terms on Which Brotherhood and Railroads Agreed.

The differences between the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and the sixty-one railroads radiating to the south, west and northwest of Chicago were settled on the basis of an increase in wages affecting 33,000 engineers and entailing a total increase of expenditure of \$3,889,000 annually by the railroads.

Under the terms of the compromise settlement the engine drivers receive an increase of 75 cents a day on the smaller Mallet engines and \$1 a day on the larger size over the regular schedules. Engine drivers on passenger trains, suburban service, through freight, pusher and helper engines, wreck trains, snowplows, work trains and mixed trains are to receive an increase of 40 cents a day.

On way freight engines a differential of 25 cents a day is allowed, making the increase in that class of service 65 cents a day. On through freight engines with 215,000 pounds on the drivers a differential over the regular rates of 15 cents an hour is provided for. A flat increase of 50 cents a day is conceded to the engine drivers in switch yards and transfer service, and the advance on motorcars is 40 cents a day, with complete jurisdiction over the work.

The average of increase is 10 1-3 per cent.

The Los Angeles Explosion.

A verdict has been returned by the coroner's jury which investigated the explosion that destroyed the Los Angeles (Cal.) Times building on Oct. 1 last, killing a number of employees, and that was sought to be charged up to the labor unions. The verdict says that the explosion was caused "by high explosives other than illuminating gas, placed there by a party or parties unknown to this jury." Notwithstanding the verdict the gas explosion theory still finds many adherents in Los Angeles.

Indiana Compensation Law.

The Real-Shively employers' liability bill has become a law in Indiana. It repeals the fellow servant rule and prescribes what shall be deemed assumption of risk on the part of a workman taking hazardous employment. The liability of the employers is increased where the personal injury is due to violation of the state laws.

A Parlor Trick.

Request any person to mark upon the wall the exact height of an ordinary silk hat, supposing the hat to be placed on its crown on the floor. Exhibit the hat before its height is marked, and it is curious to observe how entirely different are the ideas of half a dozen persons upon the subject, the greater number marking high enough for two or three hats.