

# CURLING AMERICA'S SPINE WITH DEATH-DEFYING THRILLERS

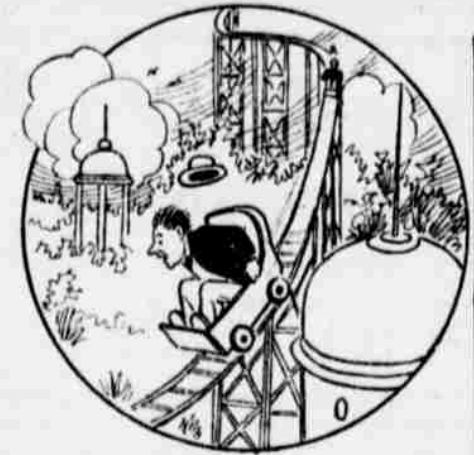
BY WILLARD W. GARRISON



TAKING A TRIP ON A THRILLER



A GROUP OF THRILLERS



THE SCENIC RAILWAY

"W" OOW, whee-ee, oo-oo, gee-ee, whizz, but that was a bump!"

It was our friend from the sand dunes of Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, Ohio, Minnesota, Wisconsin, or any other state with plenty of farming districts, trying out a thriller at Coney Island, Atlantic City, one of Chicago's big amusement parks or for that matter at any city or town which supports these summer devices for extracting coin of the realm from the plebeians.

No matter how stolid he may be in life's ordinary pursuits or how emotionless in an interurban wreck, his spine curls, his sympathetic nerve system tickles and he is compelled to give himself up to thrills. You can find him in every resort where there are scenic railways, roller-coasters, veiv-coasters, figure-eights, shoot-the-chutes, dip-the-dips, leap-the-gaps, ticklers and scores of other modes for shooting the electric currents up and down the spinal cord of the laughing, howling public.

He is a source of amusement for his tutored city brother who tickles the day ledger with a pen during daylight and cavorts about on amusement devices throughout the summer evenings. The city pleasure-seeker has much of this sport and the thrills fail to rise up in his anatomy the way they do in that of the man, woman and child who are taking their first turn at the game.

Statisticians claim that there are so many actual thrillers of different caliber and variety at work daily in the United States that if one should travel on every one of them, just once, the trip would take all summer. There were more this year than ever before. If all of the rides were strung out they would reach clear across the continent; high browed scientists claim.

But that only goes to show that America is amusement-crazy. The populace and the elite, too, can't get enough thrill. Not long ago, an Illinois man with an idea proposed to install an automobile in the parks of the country and this device was scheduled to run down an incline, turn a double somersault and alight upon its wheels again. America's thrillers are terrific and getting more so each year, but the man from the middle west was perhaps a bit premature with his death-defying machine. Sometimes it didn't alight as per program.

The process of starting a thrill through the pleasure-seeker's frame consists of laying out a device which combines both speed and the unexpected. This subject has been studied by every amusement manager in the United States and they can't get the jumps. Drops and bumps long enough or fast enough to attract your shekels from your bank account to their coffers with the desired rapidity.

"Say, by heck, I'm afeared to ride on that shebang. It don't hev a safe logk to me."

Well, hurtling through the air faster than an aeroplane in working order certainly doesn't look safe, but at the same time the visitor to the city who made that remark did not know whereof he spoke. Every single device, no matter how small, how large or how "safe-looking," is required to undergo a rigid test by the building commissioners, before being allowed to accept the public's dimes. There must be a block system of lights, much the same as that used by railway systems, also stoppage devices on every incline to prevent cars, chairs or other seating vehicles from sliding backwards down the incline.

The framework of the device is tested for its strength and made to support far heavier weights than are ever

after made its burden. On the curves of riding thrillers there is the usual horizontal track above the wheels of the vehicle to prevent it from leaving the scheduled pathway. Persons possessing weak hearts are forbidden the thrills and few accept the chance to test that organ when in bad condition. There are also straps, chains, guards, etc., to hold the patron in the car and if he or she falls out it is little short of a miracle and only once or twice a season are accidents reported, so carefully do the amusement managers guard the lives of those who provide a method of bread-winning.

Perhaps the scenic railway is known more generally to those who would line their interiors with momentary thrills. This ride consists of a series of cars strung together. There are brakes between each car and the levers are manned by strong-armed boys from the railway yards. To them there are no thrills. It's monotonous as driving the cows home from pasture for them. Even catching a pair spooning while the train is running through the blackness of a mimic Canadian forest, can't make them feel weary. It happens on every trip.

The average scenic railway runs up a 45-degree incline or rather is hauled up by a chain and you are ready for the first dip. The brakemen release their levers and down the cars go faster than the New York-Chicago 18-hour limited. If the uninitiated puts his head between his knees he is apt to kick himself in the face on the journey up the hill which follows every dip. Therefore if you haven't yet been bounced around in this manner, hang to the iron guard, stick your hat under your arm, grit your teeth and make up your mind not to care if your hair does get mussed.

After the train has completed the first series of dips there is usually a journey through a dark recess, tragically known as the "cavern," this being installed to give the spooners a chance to gloat over their nerve. The rest is a repetition, generally.

Next in line as a death-defying contrivance is the coaster. There are fewer cars and not so many seats in each vehicle. Then, too, the coaster needs no hauling up a second incline, for there is only one, the difference being noticeable in the length of the descents. In some parks in both east and west there has been a tendency of late to turn the coaster into a semi-loop-the-loop, that is to say, the cars drop off the top of the runway onto a descent at an angle of about 70 degrees, dropping about 80 feet, and then start up the ascent at an angle which is not quite so abrupt. Some coasters have only one of these terrifying dips, while others have about 20—it seems to be the first-thing. Well, one isn't so bad, but about the third jump you begin to calculate that the seat must have slipped off the bottom of the car—you're so high in the air most of the time.

Passing on to another part of the resort you strike the figure-eight. Every hamlet has its figure-eights these days. That contrivance is fashioned like an "8" and much resembles the coaster, except that the cars follow the lines of the figure, the dips are smaller and you naturally don't get so fussed up. It's tamer in fact, and for that reason graduation from the figure-eight entitles you to prestige, which should carry you fearlessly over the jumps which the coaster takes and allow you to blandly hand the "second-

ride-lady" 20 cents for another trip for yourself and friend.

Then there's the tickler. That's a new ride just put on in the west this season. You get into a round car and the device is dragged up an incline for the downward thrill. Starting down it enters a labyrinth of rails, the car revolving in one direction and the descent carrying it in another. This gives a remarkable opportunity to learn how it feels to be jerked in two directions at the same time.

The Potsdam railway is a practical device, "made in Germany," which runs on an overhanging rail and which magnates among the Teutons threaten to make a conventional mode of travel there within a few years. The thrill in this consists of hoping it won't fall off this trip.

Amusement-loving Americans also have the aerostat. Cars are suspended at the ends of long cables, you are locked in and the device is started. It is like a Maypole, except that the cables don't become intertwined around the pole. As the speed increases the cars rise higher at the ends of the cables and, inclined, speed through ether far out over the heads of the multitude. Anyone who is susceptible to sea-sickness might possibly become immune by this treatment for the blues of everyday life. The giant swing, while it is not much like the aerostat, gives the same feeling to some.

Then there is the airship, which majestically winds about the outside of a tall tower and then winds down again. Merry-go-rounds are numerous and despite the fact that this is the father of all thrills, it still has its patrons among the children.

Among the time-honored creations is the shoot-the-chutes, which consists of a slide down a toboggan and a few bounces after the boat strikes the water of the lake at the bottom of the chute. If you're wise you'll not sit in the front seat. There's where the big bump comes and the occupants of the bow of the boat feel the leaps over the water most.

Having traveled on rides enough to stimulate an appetite for something in a different line we steer our downstate friend into the stationary devices for the same purpose. These are of every variety. You step into one at random. The floor starts to move with a circular motion toward the top

of the room. If it moves backwards from you, intuition tells you to step forward. Don't step too speedily or you'll find yourself walking on the ceiling, head down. Finally an opening is reached. You step out onto a floor which bounces up and down as you meander along. A moment later you walk upon what seems to be the top of an airship, loosely inflated. At that time, if you're one of the fair sex, you need protection. The recesses are all pitch dark.

Then, perhaps you are swayed by a wave-like motion of the entire room, which very naturally elicits very proper screams from the women folk. Freed from ocean-liner imitation, you are immediately introduced to a 200-miles-an-hour cyclone, coming from the floor, ceiling, walls and in fact from all sides. The floor begins to move sideways with a quick-jerky motion. You try to steady yourself on a rail, just perceptible in the blackness. Ouch! It's charged with electricity.

Ahead are several staircases and you feel rather relieved to think you're out of it at last. Reaching them safely you start up when, without warning, the whole contrivance begins to move backward and forward, compelling you to grab the rail for safety. In darkness again, you try to make your way through a typical labyrinth of rooms. Feeling along the wall with one foot ahead of you to ascertain the nearness of bottomless pits, etc., for your mind's eye-sees lots that don't exist, you bump your nose against a few barriers and eventually push against a wall, which gives way and you find yourself alone in a turnstile, enclosed on all sides. When your terror has reached a burning point someone else behind pushes the wall as you did and you are liberated, only to again find yourself in the midst of weird ghostlike cries and see skeletons darting hither and thither (on pulleys). A little scream just at this moment might be appropriate. Just to get your mind off the terrors of the place, the next few turns are tame, when suddenly your feet slide out from under you and you find yourself shooting down a chute in a sitting position. Daylight ahead and once again, before you have time to think it over, you've landed among the crowds outside, thanks to the manly strength of the spelter, whose arms received you where the chute ended.

## COW BROKE UP BARN DANCE

Of course, realism is all well enough in its way, but it can easily be carried to an excess. Here, for instance, is the case of that barn dance in the east, where an actual barn was the scene of revelry.

And in the midst of the fun a blooded cow broke away from her stall and took an active interest in the proceedings, ripping the shirt waist from a college youth and hooking a roomy hole in the big fiddle. After which she pranced up the middle with her

head down, and six girls and three boys crawled onto the feed box and fell off in a shrieking heap, and the athlete of the party, with wild yells, broke the record on a quick climb to the hayloft, and four girls hid under the straw cutter, and there was the merry mischief to pay. The cow quickly had her gambol out, and then backed into her stall with a satisfied moo and immediately resumed her cud.

But the barn dance was effectually broken up.—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

## DAVID AND GOLIATH

Sunday School Lesson for Aug. 9, 1908  
Specially Prepared for This Paper

LESSON TEXT.—1 Samuel 17:38-40. Memory verses, 48, 49. GOLDEN TEXT.—"In the Lord put I my trust."—Psalm 111. TIME.—It is uncertain how long after his anointing was David's victory over Goliath. Prof. Beecher imagines it to be about four years. Ussher gives B. C. 1063 for the date.

PLACE.—The Philistines lived in the plain bordering the Mediterranean, south west of Palestine. The armies were gathered at Ephes-dammim, "the boundaries of blood," toward the head of the valley Elah, running up from the Philistine country toward Jerusalem. The scene of the battle was 14 miles south-west of Jerusalem, and ten miles west of Bethleheim.

Comment and Suggestive Thought. A guiding Providence is plainly discerned in this story, the meaning of each part being unseen till the result showed the reason for every step. The significance of Providence is often written as with invisible ink, and cannot be read till the consummation is reached. The three oldest of David's brothers were in the army of Saul, only about ten miles from home, and Jesse, feeling anxious for news about them, sent David to the camp with some fresh provisions, for the soldiers there, as often in later wars, furnished their own supplies. It was the fortieth day of Goliath's challenge when David reached the camp, and heard his haughty words. He soon took in the state of affairs. His inquiries and comments brought upon him the rebuke of his oldest brother. But he kept on till his words came to the ears of Saul.

Saul was convinced by two arguments. (1) The courage, skill and power shown by David in slaying a lion and a bear in defense of his sheep. (2) His trust in God as his deliverer from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear.

What God has enabled one to do is the proof of what he can do in the future, as well as a preparation for doing it. David's Weapons.—Vs. 38-40. Saul was far from seeing the advantage of David's use of the weapons in the use of which he had gained great skill. Hence he began by putting on David his own armor, the best the kingdom afforded. But this was worse than useless, and David put it off.

V. 40. "He took his staff." His shepherd staff and means of offense and defense, in days when no firearms existed. A shepherd's staff from Palestine, in my study, is a heavy, oak club. "Five smooth stones." "Smooth" in order to move straight to the mark; "five," so that if one failed, others would be on hand. Such pebbles as David would choose would weigh between six and fifteen ounces. "In a shepherd's bag . . . a scrip." "As the shepherd is ever moving in search of pasture and water, he is very often far from his headquarters, and therefore he carries slung over his shoulder a skin-bag, primarily to contain his bread, olive berries, raw onions, and dried fruit, figs, or raisins."—Mrs. Howie, in Sunday School Times. The forelegs tied together form the handle of the scrip. "His sling was in his hand." A sling skillfully used was by far the best weapon with which to defeat a huge, mailed warrior. It could be used from a safe distance, but was very powerful. David had doubtless become accurate with his sling as a means of defense, as the Benjamites in the time of the Judges—"everyone could sling stones at a hair-breadth and not miss" (Judg. 20:16).

V. 41. "And the Philistine came on." In his shining armor, with "his dreadful clanking tramp under the hundred-weight of metal." Conder suggests that they walked down the stream on either bank, conversing as they went.

V. 43. "Cursed David by his gods." These gods were such as Dagon, Baal and Astarte. The combat thus became a question not merely between David and Goliath, but between God and idols; between true religion and false, as David fully expressed in his answer to the giant (v. 46) "that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel."

V. 47. "The battle is the Lord's," who will defend his own cause, and not only had moved David to learn his weapon, but guided the stone to its mark.

V. 48. "David hastened, and ran," giving impetus to his sling, and a nearer mark for accuracy. So Paris in the Illad: "With his full strength he bent his angry bow, and winged the feathered vengeance at the foe."

V. 49. "David . . . took thence a stone, and slang it." "On wings of faith and prayer the smooth stone took its fatal flight." "And smote the Philistine in his forehead." The stone either entered a point unprotected by the helmet, or it may even have penetrated and passed through the helmet itself.—Prof. W. H. Green.

Practical Points. The combat between David and Goliath has many points which illustrate and symbolize the conflict between good and evil in the world; a conflict into which every one, old or young, should enter.

There is a personal conflict with evil as when Christ fought the battle of temptation in the wilderness. The church cannot succeed with worldly weapons. David's preparation for his great victory came through daily faithfulness. David showed the daring and heroism of faith.

When Cooks Leave. "Can you assist me?" pleaded the beggar. "I really don't know where my next meal is coming from." "Neither do I," replied Citley. "Cooks haven't the slightest regard for appetites, have they?"

An Example. "If you want a thing well done you simply must do it yourself," declared Mr. Wyss. "Yes," agreed Mrs. Wyss, with a touch of sarcasm, "I remember how nice you looked the time you cut your own hair."

A Foreign View. Mrs. Gunson: "Count, do you consider American girls good enough to marry foreign noblemen?" Count Golde: "Madame, ze beggar cannot be ze chooser."

Something Stronger. Pat: "Sir? Ye niver heard o' th' big wind in Ireland? Begobbs, mon, y'r wan in tin thousand! That wind blew ivverting lengthways, sideways—hic—ldgways, shortways; sure—hic—it was th' strongest thing as ivver blew against a mon!"

The Listener: "There is something stronger, Pat!" Pat: "Tell me what, now! Phat is stronger?" The Listener: "Your breath!"

Making it Pleasant for Him. Mabel—Papa, what did you say to Harold that upset him so? He was absent-minded and nervous all the evening after he had been in to ask your consent. Mabel's Papa—Oh, nothing much. After giving my consent, I merely added that I hoped he wouldn't back out, same as all the other fellows had done, when he found out what a temper you had.

Real Base Ball. (W. J. Lampton in New York World.) Oh, take me away from the base ball game Where science is at the bat And the players play In a technical way Till a rube can't tell where they're at.

Where scores are highest when nothing at all And nobody takes a base; Where nobody makes Any sort of mistakes And everything's just in place.

Where spectators keep on the watch for plays So close that it gives them a pain; And whatever's done in hit, catch or run They scream at to take off the strain.

Oh, carry me back to the old-fashioned game That doesn't know science at all, Where the sides go in With a whoop to win, And they don't do a thing but play ball.

Where twenty or thirty or forty runs Are likely as not to be made; And the bags are hot From many a swat In games that are played as is played.

Where the catcher don't look like an armored knight And the pitcher is not so intense, The batter can't hit 'Em a little bit, But bangs 'em clean over the fence.

Where something is doing that sure stirs up the soul About every minute or so, With the home runs made And double plays played And the whole darn thing on the go.

Where grandstand and bleachers are all of a kind, And are there because they are there To see a good game That's good just the same Though science be up in the air.

Oh, take me away from the base ball game Where scientists have the call, And give me the play That lasts half a day— Hurrah! That is ball; that is ball.

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