Edward Dickinson's Rise in the Railroad World

"I CAN assure you it was no easy matter for me to hand in my resignation, even though I was convinced that by so doing I would be enabled to grasp the opportunity of my life," said Edward Dickinson, in speaking of his resignation as general manager of the Union Pacific to become vice president and general manager of the Kansas City, Mexico & Orient.

When it is considered that for thirty-three years Mr. Dickinson had been in the service of the Union Pacific it will not be difficult to appreciate the significance of his remark, "It was one of the hardest tasks of my life to leave the old road."

Whatever of fortune, whatever of misfortune has come to the Union Pacific, has been shared by Edward Dickinson, insofar as the relations of an employe to a great railroad warrant. For Mr. Dickinson began his service, as he expresses it, "in the year one, so to speak." The Union Pacific was completed May 10, 1869, and the name of Edward Dickinson was entered on the pay roll in June of the same year. With the exception of two short periods this service has been continuous.

The career of Mr. Dickinson furnishes many a good lesson for the youth who "to fame and fortune unknown," is about to embark on life's uncertain voyage. It may not give him the key to the vault of riches, for Mr. Dickinson's work has not been that of a financier and he has proceeded thus far in life without amassing any great amount of wealth. But for industry, enterprise, perseverance and indomitable will power, his career is not lacking in good examples. His rise from messenger boy at the age of 11 to general manager at 42, is evidence enough of the qualities of the man.

Edward Dickinson was born in Cumberland, Md., October 8, 1850. His parents were unfortunate and he was thrown upon his own resources when 11 years of age. He secured a position as messenger boy in Cleveland, O., in the office of the old Cleveland & Toledo railroad. While working as messenger boy he found time, now and then, to devote to learning telegraphy, and as early as 14 years of age he was holding a regular operator's position in Cleveland for the Atlantic & Western. Evidently the boy had chosen the right occupation, for he acquired great skill as a manipulator of the wires and his advancement was rapid. In June, 1869, at the age of 19, he came to Omaha and accepted the position of clerk and operator for the Union Pacific in the old freight house which then stood down in the Missouri river bottoms on part of the tract now occupied by the shops. He remained but a short time in this capacity, however, and soon returned to Ohio, where he became assistant train dispatcher on the Atlantic & Western in Cleveland, this being his first really responsible position. The western fever again seized him, and by December, 1871, he was back in Omaha as night dispatcher for the Union Pacific. He handled this position so well that in a short time he was promoted to that of chief train dispatcher at Laramie. In the summer of 1877 he was made superintendent of the Laramie division. His next promotion was to the general superintendency of the Wyoming division, which he held until November, 1884, when he was sent to Denver and made assistant general superintendent of the entire system. He was appointed to this position by S. R. Callaway, then general manager of the Union Pacific, recently president of the New York Central railroad, and now president of the American Locomotive works. In April, 1887, Mr. Dickinson became general superintendent of the system, which once more brought him back to Omaha, where he has been ever since except the ten months that he was with the Baltimore & Ohio at Chicago.

In 1889 the Union Pacific was cut up into five divisions and Mr. Dickinson was made general manager of the Missouri division. He remained in this position until the last of June, 1890.

Here occurred a crisis in Mr. Dickinson's career and the chain of successive promotions was suddenly broken. To use Mr. Dickinson's own words: "I then left the service of the Union Pacific by request."

This was an interesting affair. W. H. Holcomb was assistant general manager and it was he who requested Mr. Dickinson to resign. The latter's resignation was filed on June 30, when the office of general manager of the Missouri division was vacated and on the following day, July 1, before the news of Mr. Dickinson's retirement became generally known, he was in Chicago, entering upon the position of general superintendent of all the lines of the Baltimore & Ohio west of the Buckeye state, a position of much weight and responsibility.

April, 1891, however, found Mr. Dickinson again with the Union Pacific, his old mother road, and the circumstances of his return are among the most interesting of any in his entire career. The fact that he came back to displace the man who had caused his retirement, probably is of secondary importance to the fact that it was through the personal influence of Jay Gould and Sidney Dillon that he was induced to return and accept the position of assistant general manager. Holcomb then left the road. S. H. H. Clark was at that time president of the Union Pacific, and, while President Clark himself made the proposition to Dickinson to return and accept the assistant general management, it is an open secret that but for the influence of the greatest railroad magnate of those days Dickinson probably would have stayed with the Baltimore & Ohio, where he was comfortably situated and promised the general management by President Charles F. Mayer if he would reject the Union Pacific's offer.

Mr. Dickinson in the fall of 1892 was advanced from assistant general manager to general manager and this position he held continuously until the close of this week. He was, therefore, at this important post when the dark days of the receivership dawned, October 13, 1893, and when the clouds dissolved, February 1, 1898, and the company passed out of the hands of receivers into those of the reorganization, commonly called the new company.

From his first day on the Union Pacific Edward Dickinson was associated with R. W. Baxter, now superintendent of the Nebraska division. It would be difficult to review the career of one of these men without retracing that of the other. Their business associations have bound them by the strongest ties of friendship. Mr. Baxter and Mr. Dickinson first met when Baxter served as Dickinson's messenger boy at Laramie, when the latter was dispatcher. Baxter, however, had been in the service of the company as long as his companion, having started in at the age of 10 as water boy for a dirt train in Wyoming. When Dickinson left the Union Pacific for the Baltimore & Ohio in 1890, Baxter went with him. When Dickinson returned to the Union Pacific, Baxter came with him, or at least a few months later.

E. E. Calvin, who is now general superintendent of the Oregon Short Line, one of the Union Pacific's proprietary lines, has been spoken of as a possible successor to Mr. Dickinson. Should this come about it would be interesting for old-timers to recall that Mr. Calvin "learned the business," as the saying is, under Ed Dickinson. The latter gave Calvin his first and almost his entire instructions in telegraphy and Calvin held the station at Carbon, Wyo., under Dickinson.

Mr. Dickinson, though a native of the Atlantic seaboard, is said to have been a typical frontiersman from his earliest days in the great west, when train and stage coach robbery were mere amusements and pastimes for some of the swifter members of society. And friends of Mr. Dickinson love to recall his eternal vigilance in helping to thwart the ways of these wary fellows. "Never was there a robbery on the Union Pacific," said an old friend of Dickinson's, "but that Ed was on the track of the bandits right away and he generally made the desperadoes realize it, too. Those fellows knew Dickinson and they never went out of their way to meet him, either. Dickinson could tell some mighty thrilling tales about things that happened in those days if he wanted to. The Union Pacific never had a more faithful guardian of its interests than this man. And he was equally as alert when there was a big snow drift or flood to be dealt with—and there used to be lots of them. In the big washout of 1875, when from twenty-five to fifty miles of the Union Pacific track was destroyed in Wyoming, Mr. Dickinson worked day and night to repair the damages. That was a great pressure upon the road and a strain on him. Trains over that division could not run for three months.

One of the pleasant memories which Mr. Dickinson loves to cherish is his association with the late Bill Nye. It was largely through his efforts and influence that Edgar Wilson Nye then a tall, gaunt, angular Yankee, launched the Laramie Boomerang, the medium through which he was introduced to the world as one of its brightest and best humorists. There was nothing in this forlorn country editor which at first suggested to any of his friends, of which somehow he had hosts, that he would ever convulse a world with laughter, but there was a peculiar magnet in his warm and genial soul which drew men to him. The plain, unassuming manners, the aversion for formality and style and the geniality of the two men is said to have formed a bond of mutual affection between Dickinson and Nye.

Mr. Dickinson is no man for ceremony. A suggestion of this trait may be obtained from the circumstances of his resignation as general manager of a road which he had served a third of a century. His resignation was handed in not more than a week prior to the time he expected to leave the company.

In February last Mr. Dickinson was approached by a representative of President Stilwell of the Orient line and asked if he would accept a proposition to become the general manager of that road. Mr. Dickinson received the matter favorably, but made no definite reply. However, between that and July an understanding was reached and Mr. Dickinson had made all preparations, even to the extent of engaging his berth on the steamer Philadelphia to sail for Europe July 9, on which trip he would have severed his connection with the Union Pacific and gone to the Stilwell people. But the shopmen of the Union Pacific struck June 18, and Mr. Dickinson abandoned all these plans, believing that it was his duty to stay and help President Burt through this trouble.

Stilwell was disappointed, but waited until August, when he pressed Mr. Dickinson for a final answer.

"I can do nothing under present conditions," said Mr. Dickinson, "for I feel that my duty is here so long as this strike lasts. If you will give me until January 1, 1903, when I think matters will have resumed their normal shape, I will accept your proposition."

Stilwell wanted Dickinson. He said: "I'll wait."

A little over a week ago Mr. Dickinson was in Kansas City. Stilwell sent for him. He pressed him to come to the Orient sooner than the first of the year. Dickinson returned to Omaha and then for the first time disclosed his affairs to President Burt, and November 1 was decided on as the day Mr. Dickinson should begin his identification with the Stilwell road.

When it became definitely known that Mr. Dickinson had decided to go to the Orient George J. Gould took occasion to send heartiest congratulations to President Stilwell, saying he had secured the best man he could for the place. Mr. Gould added that he personally was strongly attached to Mr. Dickinson, who had won the admiration of his father, the late Jay Gould, many years ago.

Side by side with this tribute from the man who is president of more railroads than any other individual may be laid a token from the Union Pacific strikers, many of whom have known and worked under Mr. Dickinson during the greater part of his service with the Union Pacific. When these men learned that Mr. Dickinson was about to leave there was universal regret and expressions of esteem and admiration for their old chief.

"We always got fair treatment from 'Dick,'" said one, "and if he could not give us what we wanted he made us feel that it was for some good reason and he was still our friend."

CUTTING WALNUT LOGS IN SEWARD COUNTY, NEBRASKA, TO SHIP TO ENGLAND.

Gleanings From the Story Tellers' Pack

CONGRESSMAN JONES of the state of Washington tells this "amen" story: A brilliant theological student had been invited to come and preach as a candidate. Brother Silas Smith was noted for his tendency to keep the audience awake by shouting "Amen" about every so often. Some of the members thought that this might disconcert the preacher, so one of the members offered him a new pair of boots if he would refrain from shouting "amen" that day. Silas agreed. But toward the end of his discourse the student waxed a little too eloquent for Silas, who shouted: "Amen! Boots or no boots, amen!"

The Englishman was being surprised at the rapidity with which the sky scraper was going up.

"Deah me!" he exclaimed, "it seems as if your buildings grow as rapidly as your maize."

"Yes," replied the westerner, unblushingly, "and the process of raising them is much the same."

"Fawncy! Won't you explain further?"

"Well, you see, we just get an iron plant, put it in the ground, have the street sprinklers water it and in a month or six weeks the sky scraper is full grown."

And, taking another breath, the cousin from overseas managed to believe it.

Maurice Grau, the operatic impressario, has been abroad engaging singers for next winter's season of grand opera in America. He is looking older than his years. His face is seamed with "worry lines." He attributes these to the peculiarities of his business.

"It's a pity," he said one night as he sank into a chair in the Waldorf grillroom. It was during the early days of the Boer war.

"What's a pity?" someone asked.

"It's a pity that they can't send them to the front," he answered.

"Who can't send who to the front?" was asked.

"Why, the British send the women to the front," he exclaimed. "If the average woman could fight in the field half as well as the average woman can fight elsewhere wars would cease or the population of the earth would be destroyed."

Still his companion did not understand and looked at him inquiringly.

"They'd be great warriors," he said.

Another pause; a long sigh.

Mr. Grau rose and prepared to go.

"I've just been discussing contracts with Mme. Calve," he said solemnly and wearily, as he started away. As he reached the door he half turned and added over his shoulder:

"Enough said!"

In a Broad street hotel in Philadelphia Senator Quay and some friends were in the habit of "sitting in" at a regular weekly game of poker, at one of which Senator Penrose of Pennsylvania was a mere looker-on. After watching the game for an hour or two the junior senator innocently remarked:

"Fellows, I think I could play that game if you'd just make me out a schedule of points." They did so, and Penrose, with the rules carefully written out in front of him, took a hand. As the time for the jackpot approached one of the players said:

"I'll open for a dollar."

Penrose scanned his hand, then looked carefully over the rules and finally asked: "What's all of one color?"

"A flush," he was told.

"I'll play," he observed.

The man who opened perfunctorily bet a chip and, when the senator raised, drew out.

"It's all yours, Penrose," the latter was told, and then, as he drew the pile toward him, somebody added: "Let's see what you got, anyway."

They looked, found two diamonds and three hearts and sarcastically inquired:

"Didn't you say you had a flush?"

"No; you said it," replied Penrose, adding, ingenuously: "I don't know much about the game, you know, but I rather think I like it."

Perhaps the Maryland priest of whom the following is related did not give the best possible advice to the penitent who appeared before him, but he has not yet been reproved by his bishop.

The penitent was a young theological student, who was also a foot ball enthusiast and the commander of a team engaged in a very hot contest The game was a tie, depending on a grand rush to secure the victory. It was a man-to-man contest, and the youthful bishop in embryo, with all the fire of those militant churchmen of old who rode in armor, with blazing eyes, into the thick of the fight, cried out to his squad: "Do your d——dst! Do your d——dst!"

But when the exultation of victory had passed off and calm reflection had restored the youngster to his normal state of mind conscience troubled him as it has troubled many another man after giving way to the excitements of the flesh. He felt that he had done wrong and should atone for it. In his trouble he went very penitently to a priest who had witnessed the exciting struggle on the college campus and was hardly done rejoicing over the result, for he was a backer of the side which won. The conscience-stricken student apologetically said: "Father, I fear that in my excitement I did very wrong and said things I should not have said."

"What did you say?"

"I urged our side to do their d——dst. What penance should I do?"

"Well, do your d——dst."

The wisdom, the wit and the consolation of the advice were gratifying. It showed him that he had consciously done no wrong, and if he had the maxim of the homeopathists should be applied to the case—similia similibus curantur.

A worthy man, who was very sensitive and retiring, having lost his wife, privately requested that he might be remembered in the minister's morning prayer from the pulpit, but asked that his name might not be mentioned.

On Sunday morning the good minister prayed most eloquently for "our aged brother, upon whom the heavy hand of sore affliction has so lately fallen."

At this point an elderly man, whom the minister had married to a very young wife during the week, rose with a bounce and stamped down the aisle, muttering loud enough to be heard all over the chapel:

"It may be an affliction, but I'm blest if I want to be prayed for in that fashion."

The recent Grand Army encampment in Washington provoked a good deal of comment regarding the large numbers of civil war veterans who are still in good enough physical condition to endure the fatigue of a long march. Several southern democrats were discussing this in a Washington hotel lobby the other evening, reports the New York Times, when Secretary Charles A. Edwards of the democratic congressional committee said:

"A few years ago Colonel William Green Sterett and I were sitting at a window watching the parade at a Grand Army encampment. Hour after hour passed and still the Yankee hosts swept by. Colonel Sterett became more and more thoughtful, silent and depressed as the march went on. After a long silence he looked up, and, laying his hand on my arm, said with the utmost impressiveness:

"'Charlie, I'm going back to Texas and burn up every southern history of the war that I can find.'

"'What are you going to do that for?' I asked.

"'Because, Charlie,' he said, still more impressively, 'they're full of lies. They all tell about how many Yankees we killed, Charlie, we never killed a d—d Yankee. They're all here now!'"