Teaching New Motormen How to Handle the Omaha Trolley Cars

DAYS when the honest lad out of work, hearing there was a shortage of motormen on the street railway, could hustle down to the superintendent, strike him for a job, and be reasonably sure of swinging a controller the next day, have passed. A thick and prickly hedge now grows thickly around the motorman's post, and the needle's eye does not hold a candle as to the difficulties of this hedge.

To run a street car nowadays—and street cars to every one but a Chicagoan mean overhead trolleys—requires considerably more than a rugged physique and a steady eye ahead. The person who turns the "juice" on and off in response to the bell taps must know a lot, his past and present record must be clean and it is preferable to the company that he be married and settled into the furrow of home-making and bringing up a family on the Roosevelt pattern.

Thought for Public Safety.

Perhaps the public may not think so, particularly after having been jolted into the lap of the large scornful woman who is carrying home a dozen eggs, but it is true just the same that the Omaha & Council Bluffs Street Railway company uses up much thought and time in selecting trainmen and seeing that they perform their duties somewhat in accord with the rules. There are rules and plenty of them, but it is safe to say if every motorman and conductor carried them out explicitly there would be complaints still. Doubtless it will be a long time before street railroading is reduced to an exact science; perhaps about the same year that science is able to control sex and the size and shape of one's nose. Until then superintendents can only try.

Long before the days of the electric car, in the ages when the horse-drawn conveyance and the grip car were sources of popular amusement and profanity, traction companies had trouble in getting competent trainmen who would stick. It has been recognized by such authority as the United States government that the street car service in the larger cities has for a long time been a refuge for broken down professional men of all grades and sorts; the college graduate who has failed at everything else; the business man whose doctor has declared he cannot live unless he gets active employment in the open air, and so on sweepingly along the list of fellows down on their luck. As a rule the refugees stay only long enough to move on to better fortune. The time the company has spent in making motormen and conductors out of them, not to mention expense bills, has been thrown away.

Trend for the Better.

Of course, the traction companies do not like this for reasons that are obvious. It is decidedly to the corporation's interest to have well-trained, reliable and efficient men in the service. So the struggle has been to get men, for the wages, who will be satisfied with their lot and who intend to follow it as an occupation. In Omaha, as in the other cities, the trend has been for the better steadily, both for the companies and in the higher character and ability of the trainmen. Everything possible is done to increase the self-respect and sense of responsibility in the employes and the standard today is better than ever before.

EXPERT AND PUPIL.

HIS FIRST SWITCH.

REGISTERING AT OFFICE.

Motormen and Wages.

In the Omaha and Council Bluffs street car service are about 300 motormen. Of these two-thirds are what may be called permanent employes. Many have been in the service since the grip cars were abandoned, and some of them used to drive the horse cars. These are the backbone of the motormen, in the mass, and as seniority governs as to choices in runs and hours of service, the old hands come pretty close to getting what they want, within reason. The officers estimate that from seventy-five to 100 new motormen are hired every year, so a third of the body is changeable. But this proportion is far ahead of most other towns.

To a certain extent wages are adjusted to make permanent service desirable. The first year a motorman draws 20 cents an hour, the second year 21 cents and the third year 22. The last is the maximum. The choices in runs amount to service during daylight; late to work in the morning or off early in the evening; longer or shorter hours, enabling greater compensation, and the particular line on which the car is operated. Motormen usually are assigned to the line to suit their own inclination after a conference with the superintendent.

In all but one of the car barns the company has provided rooms, heat and light for the trainmen in which libraries and card tables have been established. The rooms are used for lounging places for extra men and a social media for all the trainmen, where they may meet, smoke, read, play cards and even sleep on bunks provided for the comfort of chaps coming in off late runs or who have been delayed at the barns.

Source of the Supply.

Assistant Superintendent Nash says that the majority of greenhorns who apply for jobs as motormen come from the farms and small towns. Many are rural-raised young men who are tired of the plow and live stock and want to break into the city. Years ago men of Irish ancestry predominated among the street car men; more recently the balance has run to Swedes. A very few experienced men apply for work. Some of the applicants have been common laborers, teamsters, etc. Not a few are attracted by the apparently simple duties of the motorman and the species of authority he wields in running his car. It is to be remembered that motormen are always dressed in neat uniforms and caps. They keep clean; in fact, the rules of the company require them to do so. These points are not of minor importance to fellows who have followed occupations that leave their stain.

The local traction company would rather take the greenest hand who ever applied and attempt to teach him the work of a motorman than hire an expert who knows every city in the country and is not afraid to start out on the heaviest run on the system. Men who have served as motormen elsewhere are viewed with slightly prejudiced eyes from the very start. If they were good motormen and could hold their jobs, why didn't they keep them is the question that is immediately propounded by the superintendent. Rather than run the chances of taking on a man who has failed at the work some place else for an unknown or vague reason the corporation inclines to training its own men, teaching them the business slowly and carefully, reasoning that such employes are likely to be more stable and dependable.

Selecting a Candidate.

No matter what the applicant has done or who he is, his past is looked into and good recommendations from former employers and others are demanded. This, after he has satisfied the eye of the superintendent or assistant and been deemed worthy of consideration. General appearance and behavior are the principal points that count in the initial interview. If men are not needed, or the officer is not pleased with him, the applicant gets an icy discouragement that does not incite a second visit. Should the applicant prove satisfactory on visual inspection, he is handed a blank and told to fill it out. Unless he wears glasses or appears physically defective in some way he is not given any special physical examination. Men with glasses are rejected instantly as candidates for motormen. The age limit is not under 21 nor more than 40, though exceptions are made on the maximum, if other conditions are more than equal.

Promises on Application.

In making out his application on the blank provided the candidate tells the company that if his services are accepted he "agrees to comply strictly with all rules and regulations applicable to the position; to keep sober and temperate and abstain wholly from the use, while on duty, of intoxicating liquors; to at all times conduct himself in an orderly and gentlemanly manner, and work to the best interest of his employers."

Besides this he gives his full name, date and place of birth; whether married or single; present and length of residence; former residence; trade or occupation; how long out of employment; by whom and where last employed; prior service on any steam or street railway; cause of leaving such service; whether he was ever engaged in a strike or riot; to what secret societies or organizations he belongs; if he is sober and temperate and has always been so.

Must Have Good Record.

After doing this the applicant's references are looked up, and, if found to be satisfactory, he is given a printed contract to sign. If gilt-edged references are not forthcoming the man's chance to become a motorman is lost. Enough men want the jobs to give the company a wide latitude in discriminating. In the contract the motorman agrees to "use the utmost care and skill in the performance of his duties; he will become responsible for all property in his charge; will keep a sharp lookout for persons or vehicles upon or approaching the company's tracks; will exercise a general surveillance over passengers getting on or off the motor car and will use all means in his power to avoid accidents from any cause whatever."

This contract must be backed by the personal surety of some man of substance, a resident freeholder of the city, acceptable to the officers of the company.

Learning the Business.

These formalities compiled with, the greenhorn is ready to learn his thrilling future duties. He is given an order to the foreman, directing that functionary to place the bearer with a certain motorman in regular service for instruction in the duties of the place. The candidate takes his position on the front platform and for the first day is permitted to watch the regular motorman in the performance of his work and to ask questions. On the second day, if he has shown a fair degree of intelligence, the old hand gives him a few minutes with the controller, usually in some quiet suburban district. Thus theory and practice is driven into the greenhorn's head at the same time. Some of the learners are veritable trials to the experienced operatives, but if the greenhorn is wise he will kowtow to the man giving him his instructions, for on the instructor's good opinion depends a great deal.

From eighteen to thirty days of such training is given the beginner. Meanwhile he draws no pay. He is serving his apprenticeship and it behooves him to learn fast. At the same time at least eighteen days' training is required before he is put in charge of a car.

Points of Expertness.

It may not generally be believed, but one of the most important rules of the company concerns stopping and starting cars. This is one of three points by which motormen are judged. The first is the ability to avoid and prevent accidents, or briefly, never to have them. The second is to keep on time, whether the travel be light or heavy, and the third is stopping the car gently and at the right place and starting it gradually so there is no perceptible jolt. Be assured that if the motorman jerks ahead with force enough to knock you off your feet, he is doing wrong and breaking rules, provided the apparatus of the car is in good condition. Cars should be stopped and accelerated gradually in order to save electric wear and tear.

Getting the habit of responding instantly and properly to the bell signals and stopping and starting right are the hard things for the greenhorn to get pat. He usually has an irresistible impulse to handle the controller on the principle of a broadaxe and to jam the brake into the emergency on a belated stop signal or the sight of a tardy patron speeding from the distance. The regular motorman does not let his pupil do much real work until these ideas have been eliminated. Even a motorman's conscience wouldn't let the student do that.

After a while, if the greenhorn shows a fair degree of intelligence and capacity to grasp the salient points of the work he is turned back to the foreman, and by the foreman to the superintendent with a certificate that the candidate is familiar with the rules and regulations, the streets along the route, and knows the location of switches, curves, turnouts and about the car houses. Further, that the motormen who have been his mentors and the foreman think he is competent to go to work.

Other Things to Learn.

It will be seen from the certificate that the instructor has had to interpret the rules, which the candidate has had to memorize. Besides this, the instructor is supposed to impart a lot of information about the mechanism of the car and the principles upon which it is operated. This part of the motorman's education scarcely extends beyond the rudiments. It has little or nothing to do with electricity. The company does not attempt to make an electrician out of motormen. But it does try to have them roughly understand the mechanical parts of the car and to be in a position to make small repairs and prevent untoward injury to themselves or other persons. To further these intentions the candidate is sent to the master mechanic for a talk on the subject and a general quizzing along these lines.

After all this the pupil is sent out in charge of a car while a road officer watches his work. The officer gives no instruction; merely observes the efficiency or inefficiency of the student. As a rule, if the greenhorn wants to run into an open switch or get behind time, the officer lets him do it and then explains afterwards.

Last of His Trials.

Finally, having passed through these ordeals the student comes back to the superintendent's office, presumably much wiser than when he went away. Formerly he was put through a long and searching verbal examination by the superintendent or assistant superintendent as a final test. Now this verbal examination is to be supplemented by a written one, which will be carefully devised and calculated to bring out all the candidate knows about the practical work of a motorman, the mechanism of the car and the rules and regulations and what generally is expected of him.

Presuming that the man who wants to run a car receives the required percentage (not yet determined) he is given a badge, adjudged fit and put on the extra list. The extra list is arranged so that every man on its gets a fair show at whatever work is in sight by reason of other men being relieved for various causes, suspended or dismissed. The man who stands the first chance one day will be shifted to the bottom the next and so on in rotation. No man gets a monopoly on a run because the man belonging to it has laid off for a week or two. This practice was found unjust because the man laying off frequently would wait until his friend on the extra list stood to take the place and then ask for relief. Usually it requires a year or so for a man to work from the extra list on to a regular run.

Back to the Farm.

It is thus that a motorman, an Omaha motorman, gets his start in life in this decade. What more barriers may be erected for him in the future no one knows. The officers say that most of the men who quit during the year do so to go back to the farm. The theory is that being on the street in the dirt and hurry all the time they get enough of the city in a year or two to last them all their lives.

The old motormen have a belief that standing so much, combined with the strain and nerve wear they are under, or at any rate something incidental to their calling, induces kidney trouble. Some assert that physicians shatter this view. Since the legislature passed the law requiring enclosures on the front end of cars the old-time vicissitudes in rigorous winters have been avoided and, while a motorman has to bundle up warmly, he does not have to face cutting winds, snow, rain and sleet. In case he is sick a mutual benefit association, costing the men 50 cents a month, will contribute $1 a day for his maintenance after he has been ill a week. Most of the men belong to this organization, which is fostered and encouraged by the company.

As for any romance in the occupation—doubtless it could be found if one searched for it. No way that man earns his bread is without it. It is noted that one motorman was penalized the other day for allowing women to ride in the vestibule, which is against the rules. Nevertheless there is always the chance of a hold-up and robbery of the conductor's money bags some dark night—and this happens altogether too frequently to please either the men or their employers.

Growing Old with Bad Habits

THE late Daniel Kelleher of Wilmington, Del., an Irishman by nativity, but an American in his habits, aspirations and ideals, was another of our centenarians who seemed to take particular pleasure toward the end in upsetting the health and longevity theories of those who, as a rule, do not live half as long.

We are not prepared to say that we approve of the growing practice among our centenarians of having themselves quoted as saying that they owe the good health and long life they have enjoyed to the observance of rules of living which are generally condemned by people who, if they never become centenarians, have the satisfaction of knowing, at least, that they have lived, as they believe, correctly.

A man who had reached the very respectable age of 110 died in Missouri the other day, leaving behind him a written statement whose purpose was to show that he had overcome dyspepsia when 23 by eating raw turnips and drinking black coffee. It was this man's custom for seventy-nine years previous to his death to smoke a cob pipe almost constantly, and the belief prevails in his neighborhood that he smoked the same cob pipe he began on to the end.

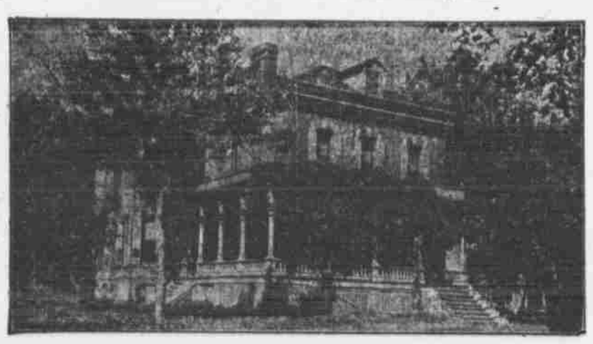
Down in Kentucky a man aged 115 died the other day who was fond of saying that he attributed the good health with which he had always been blessed to wet feet and moonshine whisky. It was his apparently honest opinion that we would all be sounder in body and mind if we would make it a practice to get wet feet daily. Cold feet without moisture, he believed, were carrying many of us away yearly.

A centenarian in West Virginia, in answer to a question, stated that he had never known what it was to have a sick headache, and yet he was passionately fond of buckwheat cakes and ham and cabbage. "There is nothing," he said, "that will brace up a man's stomach and destroy all tendency to headaches like a boiled supper just before bedtime, with some crabapple jelly, plum pudding and pumpkin pie thrown in. Personally, I think that most of our troubles are due to regular habits. There is nothing that wears so much upon the nerves of the masses of our people as the knowledge that they must be at a certain place at a certain time to get their meals. I have never lived regularly, although I ought to say, perhaps, that I have never voted any but the straight republican ticket. The principles of that party have helped me to attain my present venerable age and to pay all of my just debts."

And now, as we have said, the testimony of the late Daniel Kelleher is the latest, and by no means the least discouraging, to the modern health uplift. He passed away at 166, but before doing so he declared that he had used tobacco and liquor all his life, the latter in moderate quantities, but regularly. He smoked three plugs of tobacco a week, and a local statistican has figured out that in the course of his life he had smoked no less than 17,883 feet of the pernicious weed. Another deplorable feature of his statement is his assertion that he never swore off.

Something should be done to prevent our centenarians from talking or writing for publication. They are doing more than any other class to create a lack of confidence in the opinions of the intelligent but delicate people who are striving to teach us how to live.—Chicago Inter Ocean.

Dedication of New Swedish Hospital



SWEDISH HOSPITAL ON NORTH TWENTY-FOURTH STREET, WHICH WILL BE DEDICATED TODAY.

AN INSTITUTION but little known generally in Omaha has been the Swedish hospital, situated on Twenty-seventh avenue, about a block and a half north of Cuming street. This has been due partly to its retired situation, partly to its recent establishment and partly to the plan on which until lately it has been conducted. The hospital was incorporated in January, 1903, and is now under the management of the Swedish Hospital association, which association is made up principally from among the members of the Swedish Mission church. It has occupied a building at 958 North Twenty-seventh avenue, remodeled to suit it to hospital purposes, and during its two and a half years of existence has proved itself to be self-sustaining. Encouraged by the success of their venture in a small way the association has concluded to purchase a building of its own and bring the hospital before the people as a permanent and substantial undertaking and one worthy the support of every member of the community. It has within the last few months purchased a property at 3706 North Twenty-fourth street, consisting of a plat of ground 125x250 feet on the northwest corner of Twenty-fourth and Pratt streets, upon which is a large and exceedingly well built brick house. A force of workmen, carpenters, plasterers, plumbers and steamfitters has within the last six weeks succeeded in transforming this place into a most convenient and attractive hospital building. Altogether the house has been found most admirably adapted for a hospital on account of its substantial build and of the large size of its rooms, and both the board of managers and the doctors who make up its staff are satisfied that they are going to have as well fitted and comfortable a hospital as there is in the city. Although the members of the staff will have their special duties to perform, particularly in connection with the instruction of the nurses, etc., their selection does not mean that the use of the hospital will be restricted only to such as are on the staff. On the contrary, it will be a general hospital and any reputable physician in the city is at liberty and is invited to send his patients there, with the assurance that they will receive the very best of care. There is also a training school for nurses in connection with the hospital. The hospital will be dedicated this afternoon at 3 o'clock. Hon. John L. Kennedy will be the principal speaker for the occasion.

Diamond Wedding Celebration in Omaha

MR. AND MRS. F. C. SEIDLER, living at 5614 Lincoln avenue, Omaha, celebrated the sixtieth anniversary of their marriage Saturday, November 11, 1905, at the home of their daughter, Mrs. Emma Denker, living just across the street from the Seidler home.

Frederick C. Seidler and Miss Frederick Reichter were united in marriage at Itzehoe, Holstein, Germany, November 11, 1845. The marriage day was also the twentieth anniversary of Mrs. Seidler's birth, her husband being six years her senior. Fifty-four years ago Mr. and Mrs. Seidler came to America, settling first at Davenport, Ia., living there about twenty years, when they moved to Omaha. They have lived for the last twenty-five years at their present home on Lincoln avenue.

Prior to coming to America Mr. Seidler was an "anchor smith," being engaged in the hand-welding of ships' anchors. Arriving in America he at once engaged in the trade of blacksmithing, which he continued up to about ten years ago, when his advancing years compelled him to relinquish that arduous work. He is yet in excellent health, though 86 years of age, though, as he said on his anniversary: "Today I am only 45 and can wrestle any of you men of that age." Mrs. Seidler bears her 80 years with the vigor of a woman of 30 years her junior.

Twelve children were born of this union, four of whom are yet living. They are Mrs. Sophie Schmidt of Idaho, Albert Seidler of Idaho, Mrs. Emma Denker of Lincoln avenue and Mrs. Ida Rice of 50 Poppleton avenue, Omaha. There are sixteen grandchildren and four great-grand children.

The celebration of the sixtieth wedding anniversary of the venerable and hale couple was attended by only those of their children and grand-children living in Omaha. It was merely a family gathering, with a few near friends and neighbors from Omaha and Papillion. Dinner was served at noon, and the afternoon and evening were given over to a reception to friends, with music and refreshments in the evening. A number of valuable presents suitable to the occasion were given Mr. and Mrs. Seidler by their children and friends.

MR. AND MRS. F. C. SEIDLER AND SOME OF THEIR DESCENDANTS ON THE SIXTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THEIR WEDDING, NOVEMBER 11, 1905.

Gossip and Stories About Noted People

WILLIAM H. BERRY, treasurer-elect of Pennsylvania, the man chosen as the instrument for rebuking graft, is 53 years of age. He is a child of the prairies, having been born in Illinois. His father was an inventor. The Pompeiian bricks, now so familiar in building construction and the machines for their manufacture, were the products of his brain and industry. William H. Berry followed in the footsteps of his father, and became a mechanical engineer, and is today president of the Berry Engineering company of Chester, Pa. The home to him is the center of the whole fabric of life. He belongs to no secret organizations, to no genealogical societies. He never joined a club until within the last year, when he became a member of the Penn club of Chester, a social organization.

For nearly twenty years this gray-eyed, gray-haired, tall, outspoken business man, who has the cares of large enterprises on his shoulders, has been a local preacher in the Methodist Episcopal church. There has been scarcely a Sunday in that time that he has not preached somewhere, almost always in some poor church or to some congregation of the colored race.

He is a man of strong personality and vigorous expression. He believes in the gospel of work. He never drank, and if he has any dissipation that the sterner sects might catalogue against him it is his fondness for a good cigar. He is rugged in health and believes in the strenuously physical.

Too Much of a Good Thing.

The late Bishop Peck of the Methodist Episcopal church, while presiding at a New Hampshire conference, was entertained by a Mrs. Brown, who had a high reputation as a cook. She was especially famous for her mince pies, and at supper the bishop, who weighed 300 pounds, at first declined a second help of mince pie. "I know some mince pies are indigestible, but mine are quite harmless," said Mrs. Brown. So the bishop yielded and had a second and then a third helping. Evening came and the large church was packed with people. The choir sang and the preliminary services were well started, but no bishop. Then two or three went out to look for the absent gentleman. They found him at Mrs. Brown's, writhing in the agonies of indigestion. One of the ministers said: "Why, Bishop Peck, you are not afraid to die, are you?" "No," replied the bishop, between groans. "I am not afraid to die, but I am ashamed to."

Great Irishman Coming.

Douglas Hyde, the president of the Gaelic league, who will visit America this month, is one of the greatest of the men of action in Ireland who began the work of their lives in the nineteenth century, and who are, with the Irish people, facing the work that is to be done in the twentieth with heart as resolute as ever and with courage growing stronger as each passing day adds to the certainty of final success. Most Irishmen could readily name a dozen of the most prominent, popular and well known men who are now factors in the national life of the country. High in the roll of honor would be the name of Dr. Douglas Hyde, and in many respects he stands apart and above them all, because, if he was not the original author of a great idea, its germination and development were delayed until he set himself the task of nursing the "seedling gem" into life and vigor. He is not only a leader and a source of inspiration—he is a zealous worker in the ranks of the language movement.

Years Deal Gently With Him.

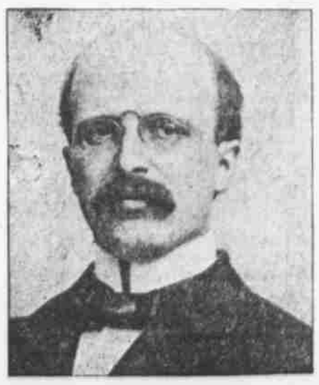
Since retiring from politics some seven or eight years ago Justin McCarthy has made his home at Westgate-on-Sea, on the Kentish coast. Working leisurely in his beautiful home called Herdholt, he has finished his great "History of Our Own Times." A friend who has recently seen him says of the gifted historian: "Where can you find so charming a talker, one who has seen so much, knows so much, met so many famous people and who by a word or a phrase can make the past live, laugh and cry again?" The years since he left politics have been kind to Mr. McCarthy. His outlook is the bright outlook of youth and his health is perfect. His single burden is a weakened eyesight which does not permit him to read, but, as he says, means the pleasure of being read to by others. His daughter, Miss Charlotte McCarthy, is his constant companion.

Family Characteristic.

Rudyard Kipling haunted magazine offices a good while before he succeeded in breaking into print with the sketches which have made him famous. He persisted, however, and the result everybody knows. This dogged characteristic was prominent in his childhood. The elder Kipling was bringing him home from India to an English school. A steward rushed to Mr. Kipling one afternoon in the smoking room and announced that the boy was out on the yardarm hanging by his hands. "If he lets go," said the steward, "he'll fall and be drowned." Mr. Kipling smiled quietly and said as he turned the next page of his book, "Oh, never fear; he won't let go."

St. Mary's Avenue Congregational Pastor

REV. LUCIUS O. BAIRD, who comes to St. Mary's Avenue Congregational church today as pastor, last Sunday closed a very successful pastorate of more than ten years at Ottawa, Ill., where he was recognized as a leader in church work and was one of the most popular men in the ministry. He has held a very prominent place in Congregationalism in Illinois, being registrar and treasurer of the Fox River association for ten years and president of the Illinois Home Mission society for two terms. Both of these organizations accepted his resignation from office with very deep regret and testified to the strength and high quality of his work. Rev. Baird is an native of Illinois, his parents being some of the strongest members of the New England Congregational church of Chicago. He was graduated from Yale in 1885 and prepared for the practice of law, finishing with several months in Europe. He then returned to the Yale divinity college and took his degree in divinity in 1890. With others he organized the "Yale Band" and went to the frontiers of the state of Washington, doing valiant missionary work. Mrs. Baird is spoken of as a valuable assistant to her husband and a charming woman. They have two children.



REV. L. O. BAIRD, NEW PASTOR OF ST. MARY'S AVENUE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, OMAHA.