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"RUN TO SEED."

By Thomas Nelson Page

1891

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I.

Jim's father died at Gettysburg; up against the Stone Fence; went to heaven in a chariot of fire on that fateful day when the issue between the two parts of the country was decided: when the slaughter on the Confe'd-erate side was such that after the battle a lieutenant was in charge of a regiment, and a major commanded a brigade.

This fact was much to Jim, though no one knew it: it tempered his mind: ruled his life. He never remembered the time when he did not know the story his mother, in her worn black dress and with her pale face, used to tell him of the bullet-dented sword and faded red sash which hung on the chamber wall.

They were the poorest people in the neighborhood. Everybody was poor; for the county lay in the track of the armies, and the war had swept the country as clean as a floor. But the Uptons were the poorest even in that community. Others recuperated, pulled themselves together, and began after a time to get up. The Uptons got flatter than they were before. The fences (the few that were left) rotted; the fields grew up in sassafras and pines; the barns blew down; the houses decayed; the ditches filled; the chills came.

"They're the shiftlesses' people in the worl'," said Mrs. Wagoner with a shade of asperity in her voice (or

was it satisfaction?). Mrs. Wagoner's husband had been in a bombproof during the war, when Jim Upton (Jim's father) was with his company. He had managed to keep his teams from the quartermasters, and had turned up after the war the richest man in the neighborhood. He lived on old Colonel Duval's place, which he had bought for Confederate money.

"They're the shiftlesses' people in the worl'," said Mrs. Wagoner. "Mrs. Upton ain't got any spirit: she jus' sets still and cries her eyes out."

This was true, every word of it. And so was something else that Mrs. Wagoner said in a tone of reprobation, about "people who made their beds having to lay on them"; this process of incubation being too well known to require further discussion.

But what could Mrs. Upton do? She could not change the course of Destiny. One—especially if she is a widow with bad eyes, and in feeble health, living on the poorest place in the State—cannot stop the stars in their courses. She could not blot out the past, nor undo what she had done. She would not if she could. She could not undo what she had done when she ran away with Jim and married him. She would not if she could. At least, the memory of those three years was hers, and nothing could take it from her—not debts, nor courts, nor anything. She knew he was wild when she married him. Certainly Mrs. Wagoner had been careful enough to tell her so, and to tell every one else so too. She would never forget the things she had said. Mrs. Wagoner never forgot the things the young girl said either—though it was more the way she had looked than what she had said. And when Mrs. Wagoner descanted on the poverty of the Uptons she used to end with the declaration: "Well, it ain't any fault of *mine*: she can't blame *me*, for Heaven knows I warned her: I did *my* duty!" Which was true. Warning others was a duty Mrs. Wagoner seldom omitted. Mrs. Upton never thought of blaming her, or any one else. Not all her poverty ever drew one complaint from her sad lips. She simply sat down under it, that was all. She did not expect anything else. She had given her Jim to the South as gladly as any woman ever gave her heart to her love. She would not undo it if she could—not even to have him back, and God knew how much she wanted him. Was not his death glorious—his name a heritage for his son? She could not undo the debts which encumbered the land; nor the interest which swallowed it up; nor the suit which took it from her—that is, all but the old house and the two poor worn old fields which were her dower. She would have given up those too if it had not been for her children, Jim and Kitty, and for the little old enclosure on the hill under the big thorn-trees where they had laid him when they brought him back in the broken pine box from Gettysburg. No, she could not undo the past, nor alter the present, nor change the future. So what could she do?

In her heart Mrs. Wagoner was glad of the poverty of the Uptons; not merely glad in the general negative way which warms the bosoms of most of us as we consider how much better off we are than our neighbors—the "Lord-I-thank-thee-that-I-am-not-as-other-men-are" way;—but Mrs. Wagoner was glad positively. She was glad that any of the Uptons and the Duvals were poor. One of her grandfathers had been what Mrs. Wagoner (when she mentioned the matter at all) called "Manager" for one of the Duvals. She was aware that most people did not accept that term. She remembered old Colonel Duval—the *old* Colonel—tall, thin, white, grave. She had been dreadfully afraid of him. She had had a feeling of satisfaction at his funeral. It was like the feeling she had when she learned that Colonel Duval had not forgiven Betty nor left her a cent.

Mrs. Wagoner used to go to see Mrs. Upton—she went frequently. It was "her duty" she said. She carried her things—especially advice. There are people whose visits are like spells of illness. It took Mrs. Upton a fortnight to get over one of these visits—to convalesce. Mrs. Wagoner was "a mother to her": at least, Mrs. Wagoner herself said so. In some respects it was rather akin to the substance of that name which forms in vinegar. It was hard to swallow: it galled. Even Mrs. Upton's gentleness was overtaxed—and rebelled. She had stood all the homilies—all the advice. But when Mrs. Wagoner, with her lips drawn in, after wringing her heart, recalled to her the warning she had given her before she married, she stopped standing it. She did not say much; but it was enough to make Mrs. Wagoner's stiff bonnet-bows tremble. Mrs. Wagoner walked out feeling chills down her spine, as if Colonel Duval were at her heels. She had "meant to talk about sending Jim to school": at least she said so. She condoled with every one in the neighborhood on the "wretched ignorance" in which Jim was growing up, "working like a common negro." She called him "that ugly boy."

Jim was ugly—Mrs. Wagoner said, very ugly. He was slim, red-headed, freckle-faced, weak-eyed; he stooped and he stammered. Yet there was something about him, with his thin features, which made one look twice. Mrs. Wagoner used to say she did not know where that boy got all his ugliness from, for she must admit his father was rather good-looking before he became so bloated, and Betty Duval would have been "passable" if she had had any "vivacity." There were people who said Betty Duval had been a beauty. She was careful in her limitations, Mrs. Wagoner was. Some women will not admit others are pretty, no matter what the difference in their ages: they feel as if they were making admissions against themselves.

Once when Jim was a boy Mrs. Wagoner had the good taste to refer in his presence to his "homeliness," a term with which she sugar-coated her insult. Jim grinned and shuffled his feet, and then said, "Kitty's pretty." It was true: Kitty was pretty: she had eyes and hair. You could not look at her without seeing them—big brown eyes, and brown tumbled hair. Kitty was fifteen—two years younger than Jim in 187-.

Jim never went to school. They were too poor. All he knew his mother taught him and he got out of the few old books in the book-case left by the war,—odd volumes of the Waverley novels, and the *Spectator*, "Don Quixote," and a few others, stained and battered. He could not have gone to school if there had been a school to go to: he had to work: work, as Mrs. Wagoner had truthfully said, "like a common nigger." He did not mind it; a bird born in a cage cannot mind it much. The pitiful part is, it does not know anything else. Jim did not know anything else. He did not mind anything much—except chills. He even got used to them; would just lie down and shake for an hour and then go to ploughing again as soon as the ague was over, with the fever on him. He had to plough; for corn was necessary. He had this compensation: he was worshipped by two people—his mother and Kitty. If other people thought him ugly, they thought him beautiful. If others thought him dull, they thought him wonderfully clever; if others thought him ignorant, they knew how wise he was.

Mrs. Upton's eyes were bad; but she saw enough to see Jim: the light came into the house with him; Kitty sat and gazed at him with speechless admiration; hung on his words, which were few; watched for his smile, which was rare. He repaid it to her by being—Jim. He slaved for her; waited for her (when a boy waits for his

little sister it is something); played with her when he had time.

They always went to church—old St. Ann's—whenever there was service. There was service there since the war only every first and third Sunday and every other fifth Sunday. The Uptons and the Duvals had been vestrymen from the time they had brought the bricks over from England, generations ago. They had sat, one family in one of the front semicircular pews on one side the chancel, the other family in the other. Mrs. Upton, after the war, had her choice of the pews; for all had gone but herself, Jim, and Kitty. She had changed, the Sunday after her marriage, to the Upton side, and she clung loyally to it ever after. Mrs. Wagoner had taken the other pew—a cold, she explained at first, had made her deaf. She always spoke of it afterward as "our pew." (The Billings, from which Mrs. Wagoner came, had not been Episcopalians until Mrs. Wagoner married.) Carry Wagoner, who was a year older than Kitty, used to sit by her mother, with her big hat and brown hair. Jim, in right of his sex, sat in the end of his pew.

On this Sunday in question Jim drove his mother and Kitty to church in the horse cart.

The old carriage was a wreck, slowly dropping to pieces. The chickens roosted in it. The cart was the only vehicle remaining which had two sound wheels, and even one of these "wobbled" a good deal, and the cart was "shackling." But straw placed in the bottom made it fairly comfortable. Jim always had clean straw in it for his mother and sister. His mother and Kitty remarked on it. Kitty looked so well. They reached church. The day was warm, Mr. Bickersteth was dry. Jim went to sleep during the sermon. He frequently did this. He had been up since four. When service was over he partially waked—about half-waked. He was standing in the aisle moving toward the door with the rest of the congregation. A voice behind him caught his ear:

"What a lovely girl Kitty Upton is." It was Mrs. Harrison, who lived at the other end of the parish. Jim knew the voice. Another voice replied:

"If she only were not always so shabby!" Jim knew this voice also. It was Mrs. Wagoner's. Jim waked.

"Yes, but even her old darned dress cannot hide her. She reminds me of ——" Jim did not know what it was to which Mrs. Harrison likened her. But he knew it was something beautiful.

"Yes," said Mrs. Wagoner; then added, "Poor thing, she's got no education, and never will have. To think that old Colonel Duval's fam'bly's come to this! Well, they can't blame me. They're clean run to seed."

Jim got out into the air. He felt sick. He had been hit vitally. This was what people thought! and it was true. They were "clean run to seed." He went to get his cart. (He did not speak to Kitty.) His home came before his eyes like a photograph: fences down, gates gone, houses ruinous, fields barren. It came to him as if stamped on the retina by a lightning-flash. He had worked—worked hard. But it was no use. It was true: they were "clean run to seed." He helped his mother and Kitty into the cart silently—doggedly. Kitty smiled at him. It hurt him like a blow. He saw every worn place, every darn in her old dress, and little, faded jacket. Mrs. Wagoner drove past them in her carriage, leaning out of the window and calling that she took the liberty of passing as she drove faster than they. Jim gave his old mule a jerk which made him throw up his head and wince with pain. He was sorry for it. But he had been jerked up short himself. He was quivering too.

II.

On the following Friday the President of one of the great railway lines which cross Virginia was in his office when the door opened after a gentle knock and some one entered. (The offices of presidents of railroads had not then become the secret and mysterious sanctums which they have since become.) The President was busily engaged with two or three of the Directors, wealthy capitalists from the North, who had come down on important business. He was very much engrossed; and he did not look up immediately. When he did so he saw standing inside the door a queer figure,—long, slim, angular,—a man who looked like a boy, or a boy who looked like a man—red-headed, freckled-faced, bashful,—in a coat too tight even for his thin figure, breeches too short for his long legs; his hat was old and brown; his shirt was clean.

"Well, what do you want?" The President was busy.

It was Jim. His face twitched several times before any sound came:

"—I-w-w-w want t-t-t-to ge-get a place."

"This is not the place to get it. I have no place for you."

The President turned back to his friends. At the end of ten minutes, seeing one of his visitors look toward the door, he stopped in the middle of a sentence and glanced around.

The figure was still there—motionless. The President thought he had been out and come back. He had not.

"Well?" His key was high.

"———-I-I-w-w-want to-to get a place."

"I told you I had no place for you. Go to the Superintendent."

"——-I i've b-b-b-been to him."

"Well, what did he say?"

"S-s-s-says he ain't got any place."

"Well, I haven't any. Go to Mr. Blake."

"——-Iv'e b-been to *him*."

"Well, go to—to—" The President was looking for a paper. It occupied his mind.

He did not think any further of Jim. But Jim was there.

"—Go-go where?"

"Oh, I don't know—go anywhere—go out of *here*."

Jim's face worked. He turned and went slowly out. As he reached the door he said:

"Go-go-good-evening g-gentlemen."

The President's heart relented: "Go to the Superintendent," he called.

Next day he was engaged with his Directors when the door opened and the same apparition stepped within—tall, slim, red-haired, with his little tight coat, short trousers, and clean shirt.

The President frowned.

"Well, what is it?"

"— —I-I-I w-w-w-went to-to the S-S-Superintendent."

"Well, what about it?"

"Y-y-you told me to-to go-go to him. H-e-e ain't got any place." The Directors smiled. One of them leaned back in his chair, took out a cigar and prepared to cut the end.

"Well, I can't help it. I haven't anything for you. I told you that yesterday. You must not come here bothering me; get out."

Jim stood perfectly still—perfectly motionless. He looked as if he had been there always—would be there always. The Director with the cigar, having cut it, took out a gold match-box, and opened it slowly, looking at Jim with an amused smile. The President frowned and opened his mouth to order him out. He changed his mind.

"What is your name?"

"J-J-James Upton."

"Where from?"

Jim told him.

"Whose son are you?"

"C-C-C-Captain J-J-James Upton's."

"What! You don't look much like him!"

Jim shuffled one foot. One corner of his mouth twitched up curiously. It might have been a smile. He looked straight at the blank wall before him.

"You are not much like your mother either—I used to know her as a girl. How's that?"

Jim shuffled the other foot a little.

"R-r-run to seed, I reckon."

The President was a farmer—prided himself on it. The reply pleased him. He touched a bell. A clerk entered.

"Ask Mr. Wake to come here."

"Can you carry a barrel of flour?" he asked Jim.

"I-I'll get it there," said Jim. He leaned a little forward. His eyes opened.

"Or a sack of salt? They are right heavy."

"I-I-I'll get it there," said Jim. His form straightened.

Mr. Wake appeared.

"Write Mr. Day to give this man a place as brakeman."

"Yes, sir. Come this way." This to Jim.

Jim electrified them all by suddenly bursting out crying.

The tension had given way. He walked up to the wall and leaned his head against it with his face on his arm, shaking from head to foot, sobbing aloud.

"Thank you, I—I'm ever so much obliged to you," he sobbed.

The President rose and walked rapidly about the room.

Suddenly Jim turned and, with his arm over his eyes, held out his hand to the President.

"Good-by." Then he went out.

There was a curious smile on the faces of the Directors as the door closed.

"Well, I never saw anything like that before," said one of them. The President said nothing.

"Run to seed," quoted the oldest of the Directors, "rather good expression!"

"Damned good seed, gentlemen," said the President, a little shortly. "Duval and Upton.—That fellow's father was in my command. Died at Gettysburg. He'd fight hell."

Jim got a place—brakeman on a freight-train.

That night Jim wrote a letter home. You'd have thought he had been elected President.

It was a hard life: harder than most. The work was hard; the fare was hard; the life was hard. Standing on top of rattling cars as they rushed along in the night around curves, over bridges, through tunnels, with the rain and snow pelting in your face, and the tops as slippery as ice. There was excitement about it, too: a sense of risk and danger. Jim did not mind it much. He thought of his mother and Kitty.

There was a freemasonry among the men. All knew each other; hated or liked each other; nothing negative about it.

It was a bad road. Worse than the average. Twice the amount of traffic was done on the single track that should have been done. Result was men were ground up—more than on most roads. More men were killed in proportion to the number employed than were killed in service during the war. The *esprit de corps* was strong. Men stood by their trains and by each other. When a man left his engine in sight of trouble, the authorities might not know about it, but the men did. Unless there was cause he had to leave. Sam Wray left his engine in sight of a broken bridge after he reversed. The engine stopped on the track. The officers never

knew of it; but Wray and his fireman both changed to another road. When a man even got shaky and began to run easy, the superintendent might not mind it; but the men did: he had to go. A man had to have not only courage but nerve.

Jim was not especially popular among men. He was reserved, slow, awkward. He was "pious" (that is, did not swear). He was "stuck up" (did not tell "funny things," by which was meant vulgar stories; nor laugh at them either). And according to Dick Rail, he was "stingy as h—l."

These things were not calculated to make him popular, and he was not. He was a sort of butt for the free and easy men who lived in their cabs and cabooses, obeyed their "orders," and owned nothing but their overalls and their shiny Sunday clothes. He was good-tempered, though. Took all their gibes and "dev'ling" quietly, and for the most part silently. So, few actually disliked him. Dick Rail, the engineer of his crew, was one of those few. Dick "dee-spised" him. Dick was big, brawny, coarse: coarse in looks, coarse in talk, coarse every way, and when he had liquor in him he was mean. Jim "bothered" him, he said. He made Jim's life a burden to him. He laid himself out to do it. It became his occupation. He thought about it when Jim was not present; laid plans for it. There was something about Jim that was different from most others. When Jim did not laugh at a "hard story," but just sat still, some men would stop; Dick always told another harder yet, and called attention to Jim's looks. His stock was inexhaustible. His mind was like a spring which ran muddy water; its flow was perpetual. The men thought Jim did not mind. He lost three pounds; which for a man who was six feet (and would have been six feet two if he had been straight) and who weighed 122, was considerable.

It is astonishing how one man can create a public sentiment. One woman can ruin a reputation as effectually as a churchful. One bullet can kill a man as dead as a bushel, if it hits him right. So Dick Rail injured Jim. For Dick was an authority. He swore the biggest oaths, wore the largest watch-chain, knew his engine better and sat it steadier than any man on the road. He had had a passenger train again and again, but he was too fond of whiskey. It was too risky. Dick affected Jim's standing: told stories about him: made his life a burden to him. "He shan't stay on the road," he used to say.

"He's stingier'n ——! Carries his victuals about with him—I b'lieve he sleeps with one o' them Italians in a goods box." This was true—at least, about carrying his food with him. (The rest was Dick's humor.) Messing cost too much. The first two months' pay went to settle an old guano-bill; but the third month's pay was Jim's. The day he drew that he fattened a good deal. At least, he looked so. It was eighty-two dollars (for Jim ran extra runs;—made double time whenever he could). Jim had never had so much money in his life; had hardly ever seen it. He walked about the streets that night till nearly midnight, feeling the wad of notes in his breast-pocket. Next day a box went down the country, and a letter with it, and that night Jim could not have bought a chew of tobacco. The next letter he got from home was heavy. Jim smiled over it a good deal, and cried a little too. He wondered how Kitty looked in her new dress, and if the barrel of flour made good bread; and if his mother's shawl was warm.

One day he was changed to the passenger service, the express. It was a promotion, paid more, and relieved him from Dick Rail.

He had some queer experiences being ordered around, but he swallowed them all. He had not been there three weeks when Mrs. Wagoner was a passenger on the train. Carry was with her. They had moved to town. (Mr. Wagoner was interested in railroad development.) Mrs. Wagoner called him to her seat, and talked to him—in a loud voice. Mrs. Wagoner had a loud voice.

It had the "carrying" quality. She did not shake hands; Carry did and said she was so glad to see him: she had been down home the week before—had seen his mother and Kitty. Mrs. Wagoner said, "We still keep our plantation as a country place." Carry said Kitty looked so well; her new dress was lovely. Mrs. Wagoner said his mother's eyes were worse. She and Kitty had walked over to see them, to show Kitty's new dress. She had promised that Mr. Wagoner would do what he could for him (Jim) on the road. Next month Jim went back to the freight service. He preferred Dick Rail to Mrs. Wagoner. He got him. Dick was worse than ever, his appetite was whetted by abstinence; he returned to his attack with renewed zest. He never tired—never flagged. He was perpetual: he was remorseless. He made Jim's life a wilderness. Jim said nothing, just slouched along silenter than ever, quieter than ever, closer than ever. He took to going on Sunday to another church than the one he had attended, a more fashionable one than that. The Wagoners went there. Jim sat far back in the gallery, very far back, where he could just see the top of Carry's head, her big hat and her face, and could not see Mrs. Wagoner, who sat nearer the gallery. It had a curious effect on him: he never went to sleep there. He took to going up-town walking by the stores—looking in at the windows of tailors and clothiers. Once he actually went into a shop and asked the price of a new suit of clothes. (He needed them badly.) The tailor unfolded many rolls of cloth and talked volubly: talked him dizzy. Jim looked wistfully at them, rubbed his hand over them softly, felt the money in his pocket; and came out. He said he thought he might come in again. Next day he did not have the money. Kitty wrote him she could not leave home to go to school on their mother's account, but she would buy books, and she was learning; she would learn fast, her mother was teaching her; and he was the best brother in the world, the whole world; and they had a secret, but he must wait.

One day Jim got a big bundle from down the country. It was a new suit of clothes. On top was a letter from Kitty. This was the secret. She and her mother had sent for the cloth and had made them; they hoped they would fit. They had cried over them. Jim cried a little too. He put them on. They did not fit, were much too large. Under Dick Rail's fire Jim had grown even thinner than before. But he wore them to church. He felt that it would have been untrue to his mother and Kitty not to wear them. He was sorry to meet Dick Rail on the street. Dick had on a black broadcloth coat, a velvet vest, and large-checked trousers. Dick looked Jim over. Jim winced, flushed a little: he was not so sunburned now. Dick saw it. Next week Dick caught Jim in a crowd in the "yard" waiting for their train. He told about the meeting. He made a double shot. He said, "Boys, Jim's in love, he's got new clothes! you ought to see 'em!" Dick was graphic; he wound up: "They hung on him like breechin' on his old mule. By ——! I b'lieve he was too —— stingy to buy 'em and made 'em himself." There was a shout from the crowd. Jim's face worked. He jumped for him. There was a handspike lying near and he seized it. Some one grabbed him, but he shook him off as if he had been a child. Why he did not kill

Dick no one ever knew. He meant to do it.

For some time they thought he was dead. He laid off for over a month. After that Jim wore what clothes he chose: no one ever troubled him.

So he went on in the same way: slow, sleepy, stuttering, thin, stingy, ill-dressed, lame.

He was made a fireman; preferred it to being a conductor, it led to being an engineer, which paid more. He ran extra trips whenever he could, up and double straight back. He could stand an immense amount of work. If he got sleepy he put tobacco in his eyes to keep them open. It was bad for the eyes, but waked him up. Kitty was going to take music next year, and that cost money. He had not been home for several months, but was going at Christmas.

They did not have any sight tests then. But the new Directory meant to be thorough. Mr. Wagoner had become a Director, had his eye on the presidency. Jim was one day sent for, and was asked about his eyes. They were bad. There was not a doubt about it. They were inflamed; he could not see a hundred yards. He did not tell them about the extra trips and putting the tobacco in them. Dick Rail must have told about him. They said he must go. Jim turned white. He went to his little room, close up under the roof of a little dingy house in a back street, and sat down in the dark; thought about his mother and Kitty, and dimly about some one else; wrote his mother and Kitty a letter; said he was coming home—called it "a visit"; cried over the letter, but was careful not to cry on it. He was a real cry-baby—Jim was.

"Just run to seed," he said to himself, bitterly, over and over; "just run to seed." Then he went to sleep.

The following day he went down to the railroad. That was the last day. Next day he would be "off." The train-master saw him and called him. A special was just going out. The Directors were going over the road in the officers' car. Dick Rail was the engineer, and his fireman had been taken sick. Jim must take the place. Jim had a mind not to do it. He hated Dick. He thought of how he had pursued him. But he heard a voice behind him and turned. Carry was standing down the platform, talking with some elderly gentlemen. She had on a travelling cap and ulster. She saw him and came forward—a step:

"How do you do?" she held out her little gloved hand. She was going out over the road with her father. Jim took off his hat and shook hands with her. Dick Rail saw him, walked round the other side of the engine, and tried to take off his hat like that. It was not a success; Dick knew it.

Jim went.

"Who was that?" one of the elderly gentlemen asked Carry.

"An old friend of mine—a gentleman," she said.

"Rather run to seed—hey?" the old fellow quoted, without knowing exactly why; for he only half recognized Jim, if he recognized him at all.

They started.

It was a bad trip. The weather was bad, the road was bad, the engine bad; Dick bad;—worse than all. Jim had a bad time: he was to be off when he got home. What would his mother and Kitty do?

Once Carry came (brought by the President) and rode in the engine for a little while. Jim helped her up and spread his coat for her to sit on, put his overcoat under her feet; his heart was in it. Dick was sullen, and Jim had to show her about the engine. When she got down to go back to the car she thanked him—she "had enjoyed it greatly"—she "would like to try it again." Jim smiled. He was almost good-looking when he smiled.

Dick was meaner than ever after that, sneered at Jim—swore; but Jim didn't mind it. He was thinking of some one else, and of the rain which would prevent her coming again.

They were on the return trip, and were half-way home when the accident happened. It was just "good dusk," and it had been raining all night and all day, and the road was as rotten as mud. The special was behind and was making up. She had the right of way, and she was flying. She rounded a curve just above a small "fill," under which was a little stream, nothing but a mere "branch." In good weather it would never be noticed. The gay party behind were at dinner. The first thing they knew was the sudden jerk which came from reversing the engine at full speed, and the grind as the wheels slid along under the brakes. Then they stopped with a bump which jerked them out of their seats, set the lamps to swinging, and sent the things on the table crashing on the floor. No one was hurt, only shaken, and they crowded out of the car to learn the cause. They found it. The engine was half buried in wet earth on the other side of the little washout, with the tender jammed up into the cab. The whole was wrapped in a dense cloud of escaping steam. The roar was terrific. The big engineer, bare-headed and covered with mud, and with his face deadly white, was trying to get down to the engine. Some one was in there.

They got him out after a while (but it took some time), and laid him on the ground, while a mattress was got. It was Jim.

Carry had been weeping and praying. She sat down and took his head in her lap, and with her lace handkerchief wiped his blackened and bleeding face, and smoothed his wet hair.

The newspaper accounts, which are always reflections of what public sentiment is, or should be, spoke of it—some, as "a providential"—others, as "a miraculous"—and yet others as "a fortunate" escape on the part of the President and the Directors of the road, according to the tendencies, religious or otherwise, of their paragraphists.

They mentioned casually that "only one person was hurt—an employee, name not ascertained." And one or two had some gush about the devotion of the beautiful young lady, the daughter of one of the directors of the road, who happened to be on the train, and who, "like a ministering angel, held the head of the wounded man in her lap after he was taken from the wreck." A good deal was made of this picture, which was extensively copied.

Dick Rail's account, after he had come back from carrying the broken body down to the old Upton place in the country, and helping to lay it away in the old enclosure under the big trees on the hill, was this:

"By ——" he said, when he stood in the yard, with a solemn-faced group around him, "we were late, and I was just shaking 'em up. I had been meaner'n hell to Jim all the trip (I didn't know him, and you all didn't

neither), and I was workin' him for all he was worth: I didn't give him a minute. The sweat was rolling off him, and I was damnin' him with every shovelful. We was runnin' under orders to make up, and we was just rounding the curve this side of Ridge Hill, when Jim hollered. He saw it as he raised up with the shovel in his hand to wipe the sweat off his face, and he hollered to me, 'My God! Look, Dick! Jump!'

"I looked and Hell was right there. He caught the lever and reversed, and put on the air and sand before I saw it, and then grabbed me, and flung me clean out of the cab: 'Jump!' he says, as he give me a swing. I jumped, expectin' of course he was comin' too; and as I lit, I saw him turn and catch the lever. The old engine was jumpin' nigh off the track. But she was too near. In she went, and the tender right on her. You may talk about his eyes bein' bad; but by —! when he gave me that swing, they looked to me like coals of fire. When we got him out 'twarn't Jim! He warn't nothin' but mud and ashes. He warn't quite dead; opened his eyes, and breathed onct or twict; but I don't think he knew anything, he was so mashed up. We laid him out on the grass, and that young lady took his head in her lap and cried over him (she had come and seed him in the engine), and said she knew his mother and sister down in the country (she used to live down there); they was gentlefolks; that Jim was all they had. And when one of them old director-fellows who had been swilling himself behind there come aroun', with his kid gloves on and his hands in his great-coat pockets, lookin' down, and sayin' something about, 'Poor fellow, couldn't he 'a jumped? Why didn't he jump?' I let him have it; I said, 'Yes, and if it hadn't been for him, you and I'd both been frizzin' in h—l this minute.' And the President standin' there said to some of them, 'That was the same young fellow who came into my office to get a place last year when you were down, and said he had "run to seed." 'But,' he says, 'Gentlemen, it was d——d good seed!'"

How good it was no one knew but two weeping women in a lonely house.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK "RUN TO SEED" ***

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