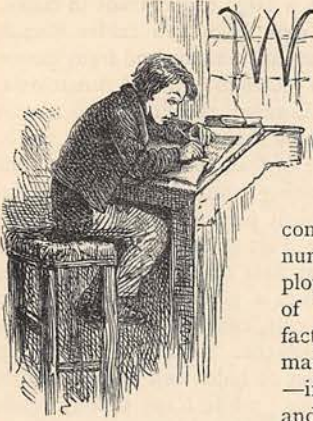


HOW TO OBTAIN A CLERKSHIP IN THE RAILWAY SERVICE.

BY A RAILWAY OFFICIAL.



E believe this is the first time that anything claiming the title of a guide to those seeking employment in the railway service has been attempted. When we come to consider the large number of persons employed in this great branch of British industry, the fact of such a want remaining so long unsupplied—in an age of competition and idea-hunting—astonishes us. Railway clerks

comprise more than 20 per cent. of the total number of railway employés; and it is from their ranks a large share of the most important and lucrative posts in the service are filled. Clerks entering the audit offices are eligible for promotion therein, or they may be transferred to the secretary's department and achieve success in the financial working of the company. A beginner may commence in the manager's office, and after a few years be appointed to superintend the management of a district of the line on which he is employed; or he may obtain the managership of some line, opening at a time when his experience is sufficiently ripe to allow him to accept the appointment without fear of failure; and finally, youths initiated into the mysteries of a booking office may be placed in charge of remunerative stations whilst comparatively young in years and in service. But it behoves all persons entering the railway service to be strictly punctual, straightforward, and honest in the discharge of their duties; for we are in a position to aver that we have never known an employé, interested in the welfare of his company, and who failed to gain the recognition his attention to the duties imposed upon him deserved.

In 1852 there were 5,418 clerks on the Irish, English, Scotch, and Welsh railways, and 7,076 miles open. In 1875 the number of railway servants reached the high figure of 274,535, the mileage being 16,658. Calculating the number of clerks employed in 1852 to work 7,076 miles with the number of miles open in 1875, we find the total number of clerks employed to be 12,755, which is, we believe, considerably short of the actual number.

An official on the Midland Railway once told us that this company had upwards of 2,000 clerks employed in their offices at Derby; but it must be borne in mind that this county town is the dépôt of the Midland Company. The London and North-Western Company employs upwards of 8,000 clerks. Their

total number of employés in 1874 was about 40,000. But we believe the greatest number of clerks employed in the railway business at one particular point to be those in the Railway Clearing House, Seymour Street, Euston Square. In this house upwards of 1,400 clerks apportion nearly seventeen millions of pounds sterling, annually, between the different railway and steam packet companies.

Youths in a position to obtain employment in the Clearing House are in the fairest way of getting on in the railway world, because, should they wish to enter the service of one particular company after a few years' service at "headquarters," they will find favourable openings where their previous experience and sound business training will enable them to outstep their compeers in the race for promotion.

Young men presenting themselves for examination at the Clearing House will be obliged to show proficiency in the following subjects:—

- a. Orthography: writing from dictation, and spelling names of towns correctly.
- b. Geography: a thorough knowledge of that of the British Isles, particularly to be able to state correctly the counties to which given towns belong, and the railway companies traversing these counties.
- c. Arithmetic: the compound rules, vulgar and decimal fractions.

Candidates under twenty and over nineteen years of age receive £55 per annum as junior clerks, but between twenty and twenty-one, at time of entrance, the salary commences at the rate of £60 a year. An annual increase of £10 is granted until the yearly salary amounts to £75, when an examination is held to test the advancement made by the clerk in knowledge of his business. This has to be gone through creditably before further increase of salary can be obtained. To any one acquainted with the intricate working of the clearing system, the necessity of such a standard being set is at once apparent. In the event of this test satisfying the authorities as to the abilities of their servant, at the end of two years or thereabouts his pay would be at the rate of £90, at which figure it remains until he is gazetted to a senior clerkship, when he advances to £120 by annual increments of £10. Any clerk who has attended to the business during his first couple of years in the Clearing House, ought to find little or no difficulty in passing the technical examination entitling him to pecuniary advancement; the frequent staff changes placing the £120 within the reach of most clerks who have served seven or eight years in the establishment. A medical examination has to be passed by all candidates for Clearing House clerkships.

Candidates for clerkships on the Great Northern Railway must secure a nomination from a director of the company before they can be employed in the Great Northern Company's service. The limits of age are sixteen to twenty-eight, and the subjects of the

examination to be passed comprise mercantile arithmetic—including rule of three and decimals—and writing from dictation. Candidates between the ages of twenty-one and twenty-eight receive, on entering the service, 22s. per week in the country, and 24s. per week in London. They are examined more strictly than candidates under twenty-one years, whose salaries are paid in proportion to age. For instance, a youth of sixteen entering the company's service in London receives 16s. per week for the first year, 19s. the second, 22s. the third, and thereafter his pay is annually increased 2s. per week until his eighth year, when he will be paid at the rate of 32s. weekly, further increase being regulated by his abilities. The annual increments to clerks employed throughout the country are the same as to those employed in London, but the scale of salary always remains 2s. per week lower in the provinces.

The Great Western Railway Company employ lad-clerks between the ages of fourteen and nineteen. An elementary examination is the only test of qualification. The candidate, upon passing the examination, will be required to reside with his parents (or persons appointed by them) during the term of his service as a lad-clerk, viz., five years. If the post to which he should happen to be appointed be one in which a knowledge of short-handwriting or of telegraph instruments be required, he will be obliged to learn whichever is most essential to the proper discharge of his duties.

Short-handwriting is also used by the Midland Railway Company's employés, but it is not necessary that a candidate should be acquainted with phonography when presenting himself for examination. The subjects in which a candidate is examined are—reading aloud; writing from dictation; and arithmetic, simple proportion and decimals. We are not aware of any fixed scale of salary to junior clerks in this company's service, but we may state that the average at commencing is £40 per annum. It would be very much to the advantage of youths entering business for the first time, and who purpose joining the Midland Company, if they would, in the first instance, obtain a good practical knowledge of short-handwriting, an intimacy with which would be certain to secure the possessor a much higher salary than is usually given a person having no knowledge of this time-saving art.

Candidates for apprentice-clerkships in the London and North-Western Railway Company's service must be above fifteen and under twenty years of age. An examination of a very elementary nature has to be passed before the candidate is permitted to commence work. The rate of remuneration is £26 per annum, but an intelligent youth can better himself very rapidly in this service, and attain a fair salary after a couple of years. All applications for clerkships should be addressed, in the first instance, to the General Manager at Euston Station; no further nomination being necessary than it is in the power of this gentleman to give.

The companies mentioned above are only those

having termini in London. There are also the Lancashire and Yorkshire, Caledonian, and North British Railways, in the service of which a large number of clerks are employed. The first-named company has its chief office at Manchester, and pays junior clerks at the rate of 10s. per week. The other two companies have their principal termini in Glasgow, and employ youths at indifferent salaries; the Caledonian paying 6s. a week to boy-clerks, whilst those joining the North British Company are bound by indenture for four years, the salary being £15, £20, £30, and £40 per annum, and thereafter according to merit. The examinations as to proficiency are not severe.

A few general remarks may here be made as to the regulations in effect between the railway companies and their clerks; at the same time, we think it necessary to state that these regulations are not acted up to in every minor company. Each clerk entering a company's service is to consider his first three months as a probationary period, at the end of which his services may be dispensed with if his conduct and business capacities have not given satisfaction. A month's notice of intention to resign is required, and should a company wish to dismiss a clerk from any cause, save incompetence, misconduct, or dishonesty, similar notice will be given him that his services are no longer required. Owing to the difficulty in the way of having solvent securities for the honesty of clerks in their employment, the principal companies have Guarantee Funds established, and oblige all their employés to give security for their honesty through the medium of these funds. Superannuation Funds are also in existence in some branches of the railway service, and every person joining a company which has, or is a party to, a fund of this nature, is obliged to become a member of the said fund, the subscription to which is generally five per cent. off a member's salary; one-half of this premium is, however, paid by the company. The testimonials usually required by railway companies from youths seeking employment are as to character: first, from applicant's last employer or head-master of the school at which he was educated; and secondly, from each of two housekeepers of respectability. A certificate of birth or baptism is sometimes required. No increase is made in a clerk's salary until he satisfies the senior officer under whom he works that he is deserving of it; and during illness clerks are not guaranteed more than a fortnight's salary. The companies are, however, not very penurious in such cases.

The prizes to be gained, and the positions to be coveted in the railway service, are not so few and far between as might be supposed. When we are aware that the secretary of a line 200 miles in extent draws an income of £1,300 a year, and that a secretaryship may, in the course of time, be obtained by any young aspirant who has average tact, the fact comes home that the railway business presents a fair field for displaying one's abilities, and gaining recognition when merited. The salaries of secretaries, and other high-placed railway officers, vary considerably according to the work done by the company employ-

ing them. Though the secretary is the first officer in a company, he is not always the best paid. In some instances a manager draws a larger salary. We know a company paying its secretary £500 and its general manager £700 per annum. Another pays its secretary £800 and the general manager £600. The managers follow the secretaries in rank, and are subdivided into two branches, traffic managers and goods managers. The former take precedence of the latter, and throughout Great Britain and Ireland draw salaries varying from £500 to £1,200 per annum; the goods managers being in the receipt of salaries

ranging from £300 to £800, and sometimes more. Accountants draw from £300 to £900; district managers, from £300 upwards. Chiefs of audits are not so well paid for their work as they might be. Their salaries commence at £250 and rarely exceed £500. As to the more immediate results, we believe a youth of fifteen or sixteen will attain £120 or £130 per annum by the time he has reached twenty-six or twenty-seven years of age, and provided he has attended to his business carefully during the ten or eleven years he may have spent in a company's service.



“SENT TO SIBERIA.”



FOR a century and a half no tidings which come from the North have been more familiar to the world than this. Since the days of Peter the Great it has been the doom of thousands—gentle and simple—high and low—criminals, the vilest—patriots, the loftiest—dreamers most imprudent. Every year it has been calculated that, on an average, over 10,000 Russian subjects cross the Oural Mountains on their way to this Asiatic land of bondage. In 1874, nearly 15,000 wended their way thither; and this year the number cannot be less, and may be more. The words convey to the mind of Southern Europe all that is most repulsive in penal banishment. Instinctively the imagination of the newspaper reader, whose eye catches the words in a Reuter's telegram, recalls the “Exiles of Siberia.” He pictures to himself long, dreary troops of “unfortunates” trudging through the snows, or perishing of hunger and cold and misery long before they reach the mines of the Oural or the Jasper quarries of Yekaterinburg. He hears the clank

of the chains and the moans of the exiles, and the crack of the Bashkir Cossack's whip, as he drives along the victims of the “Third Section of the Imperial Chancellery” to lead a cheerless existence and die a felon's death amid the desolation of Siberia.

Even in Russia there is a dread of the name which is not altogether inspired by its penal terrors, with which the refractory subjects of the Czar are only too familiar. In reality, our ideas of Siberia are like the majority of popular impressions transmitted by tradition, altogether beside the truth. With the winter's snows we should contrast the flower-covered plains of summer, the luxuriant corn-fields and purple vineyards of autumn. Mines there are, and very rich mines too, but there are also noble cities, splendid mansions, and society as polished as any in Europe.

Siberia may be described as one immense plain, bounded on the south by mountains, but gradually getting lower and lower as it approaches the north, until, along the shores of the Frozen Ocean, it is one dreary flat, little raised above the level of the sea. The region to the west of the Yenisei presents one monotonous level, unbroken by hills of any sort, covered in its north-western part by forests, though for the greater extent this province is steppe or upland plain. Much of this consists of dry sand, salt-