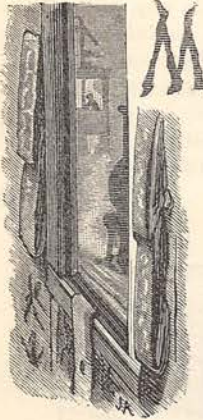


“KNOTS TO UNTIE:”—RAILWAY REGULATIONS.



MUCH has been done of late years by the various railway companies for the convenience of their passengers, and to lessen in some degree the discomforts and annoyances inseparable from travelling. For such improvements we must all feel more or less grateful, for there are few of us now but have some claim to be included among that large and ever-increasing body, the “travelling public.” There are still, however, many “knots to untie” in the tangled thread of railway regulations, which serve not only to mar the plea-

sure of our little excursions, but are the cause of a considerable amount of unnecessary worry and irritation, not to say sometimes of inconvenience and loss. It is in no spirit of carping criticism that we venture to draw attention to some of these. Our remarks are rather intended as suggestions, which perhaps some of the general managers may be willing to lay quietly to heart, with a view of finding out whether a remedy may not be provided.

There is, first, the matter of railway tickets. It is true these can now be obtained in most of our large towns at some central booking office, and much trouble and annoyance are thereby avoided. But in too many cases they are only issued at the railway stations some ten or fifteen minutes before the train for which they are taken is timed to start; and as the passenger is generally unable to have his luggage labelled until he can produce his travelling ticket, he has only a very limited time in which to perform three not unfrequently difficult operations—to get his ticket, to label his luggage, and to secure his seat. Hence much of the excitement and bustle so generally witnessed at the last moment. With regard to the luggage, would it be impossible to devise a plan by which it could, if necessary, be labelled hours beforehand? If the train by which it had to be conveyed were conspicuously indicated upon the label, it appears to us that the parcel might be safely left in an appointed place till the time arrived for its removal, and the owner thus be released from any further responsibility in the matter.

Then the present regulation as to the time of issuing tickets should certainly be modified or abolished. To say the least, a passenger should be able to obtain a ticket at any time during office hours for whatever train might be despatched to his destination during the day. But we should be glad to see some system established of issuing tickets available at whatever time the holder might wish, or, if a limit be necessary, let the regulation ordain, if it will, that the ticket can only be used some time within the year of issue. Such a plan would often prove a great convenience to travellers, without entail-

ing, we venture to think, any extra trouble or loss upon the railway company concerned. It would enable the ordinary passenger to secure his ticket, and yet to postpone his journey should occasion require it, while in the case of invalids, whose condition often changes from day to day, such a privilege would be a still greater boon. It may be objected to this that the company might occasionally lose a “fare” through tickets purchased beforehand getting transferred. To this we reply that they would as often *find* one through the instrumentality of lost tickets, and in any case, with the present means of checking they need never carry more than a single passenger for a single fare. Meanwhile, the public convenience would be greatly served, and the unseemly “crush” so often endured at the booking offices under present arrangements in great part avoided. The purchase and use of railway tickets would indeed be rendered as easy and convenient as that of postage-stamps. Why should the facilities for the conveyance of letters be greater than those for the conveyance of persons?—or rather, why should they not be as great in the latter case as in the former? If in paying for a railway ticket a person purchases the privilege of being conveyed to a certain destination, it is generally on the condition that he “starts upon the journey on the same *day* and by the same *train* for which the ticket is taken.” If he fail to fulfil this condition, he loses his money. On the other hand, he may at his convenience purchase at the post-office by means of stamps the right to send letters to any place he may desire, and avail himself of the privilege *whenever he chooses*. Might not the railway companies, without loss to themselves, take a leaf out of the post-office book in this matter?

Much has been done of late years, and undoubtedly with good results all round, to encourage and develop the passenger traffic by means of numerous so-called “pleasure trips” and “excursions.” The “trips” are taken and the “excursions” made, but we doubt whether the passengers in all cases derive as much “pleasure” from them as they are led to anticipate. The day is one of excitement and bustle, hurry and confusion; the passengers are oftentimes far too numerous for the accommodation provided for them; the pace is slow, the stoppages frequent, the delays many. The interval left for “enjoyment” between the time of reaching the destination and the hour for returning home is all too long for some, all too short for others, and the day is wound up with a repetition of the morning’s journey, but free of its excitement and anticipation, and with the usual concomitants of headache and weariness. “Catch me goin’ by that ‘scursion again if you can!” is not unfrequently the summing-up of the day’s enjoyment. The fact that the excursionists can only go and return by a particular train, although others may be traversing the distance many times during the day with plenty of vacant seats, does not add to the general comfort. If this regulation were withdrawn, the overcrowding of the single train

at present available would be considerably lessened, and the comfort of all increased, without, so far as we see, adding either to the expense incurred by the company or to the labour devolving upon their servants. We will illustrate this by a simple example. When the Agricultural Exhibition was held at Reading the summer before last, two farmers who had gone to it by an excursion train returned home a few hours earlier than they had intended. On giving up their tickets, they were informed that they were not entitled by them to

latter, the "return" portion of the ticket should entitle the holder to similar advantages, as regards date and train, as the first. Quite as many excursionists would be secured as passengers in this way as by the present plan. We go so far as to believe that, with the increased facilities, the number would even be larger. The comfort of both travellers and officials would be vastly increased, "excursions" would be far more generally popular, "pleasure-trips" by family parties and others more frequently undertaken, advan-



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have returned by that train, and yet it was one which was comparatively empty. Had a hundred other excursionists returned at the same time, the train would scarcely have been inconvenienced, and the crowding of the regulation train would have been diminished to that extent with advantage. If, as we have suggested above, the system of making railway tickets available at any time the purchaser might choose were generally adopted, the issue of excursion tickets might well be conducted on a different principle. Instead of the present method a day might be fixed—say once a week, fortnight, or month—on which tickets for excursion purposes might be obtained at the lesser rates, available at any hour the holder might select, and by any of the ordinary trains. The tickets might be issued, as desired, for either the single or double journey. If the

tage would accrue to the company, and benefit to the public at large. If it be objected that, after all, only what are commonly spoken of as "third-class passengers" would be benefited by such arrangements, we answer:—(1) That the passenger traffic returns on all the principal railways show that this class is everywhere becoming an increasingly important one, and that any additional facilities and encouragement that may be given to its members to travel cannot fail to benefit both them and the companies concerned; and (2) that many second and even first-class passengers would more frequently take advantage of, and benefit by, the system of excursion tickets, if granted to them with corresponding advantages and on similar conditions to those we have already indicated.

The regulation which withholds from passengers the

privilege of breaking their journey is another knot which surely needs untying, and the task is one which ought not to present any great difficulties. It would be an immense boon to many a traveller to be able to pause for awhile at the chief towns or other interesting places on his way. It would be especially so in the case of summer tourists (who, in fact, are already allowed this privilege on some lines), but at all times it would afford a means of pleasure, as well as instruction, to many. Multitudes of travellers would of course,

of passengers. Hundreds of medical men would, we are sure, bear strong testimony to the absolute necessity in many cases of these train lavatories, and to the injury which is inflicted upon many sufferers by their absence. Is not this a matter on which some careful attention might usefully be bestowed?

Whether the ventilation of trains cannot be more satisfactorily effected by other means than that of the side windows only is a matter worthy of careful consideration. It is abundantly manifest that with from



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have neither the inclination nor the leisure to loiter thus upon their way, but in the numerous instances where it would be otherwise, means for conceding the privilege might, we fancy, be easily devised without unduly complicating the company's arrangements.

Among many other matters which present themselves to our mind, there is one point to which we should be particularly glad to direct the attention of railway companies, and one which hitherto appears to have been entirely overlooked. We allude to the provision of carriages for, respectively, ladies or gentlemen only, and fitted up, if possible, on the plan of the lavatories on board ship. If not added to the more strictly local trains, one of each should at least be attached to all those employed for long journeys, and would conduce much to the comfort and convenience

eight to ten persons occupying, sometimes for hours together, a small compartment of the size usual in railway carriages, the air must become vitiated to a fearful extent unless the windows are constantly left open. To this many passengers strongly object, and not unfrequently with good reason. Others, again, as greatly dislike to be kept confined during the greater part of their journey in so small a space with an insufficiency of fresh air. To this cause, indeed, must be ascribed much of the languor and fatigue consequent on railway travelling, not to mention the feeling of sickness experienced by many. No doubt much may be done by mutual forbearance and endurance on the part of the passengers themselves to reduce the evil to a minimum; but this is not enough. Some other remedy should be provided.

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