

58 YEARS OF THRILLING SERVICE

Steady Work and Good Pay Attracted Conductor Kinne
Who Became Near Match-Maker

WHEN J. B. Kinne joined the Erie family 58 years ago the railroad was broad gauge, links and pins held the cars together, block signals were unheard of, oil lamps provided light and coal burning stoves supplied heat. He has seen all these give way to standard gauge, air-brakes, automatic train control, electric light, steam heat and air-conditioning.

When he retired the other day after service of 58 years and four months, Mr. Kinne was asked why as a young man he chose railroading as a career and why he stuck to it so long, a twinkle came into his eyes. "Healthy and steady work and good pay," he explained, "were my reasons for taking up railroading. I remained in the game because our officials were kind and patient with us, corrected our mistakes and gave us a chance to make good."

Mr. Kinne, who lives at 32 State street, Hornell, N. Y., entered the service as a freight trainman March 18, 1879. When he retired at the age of 76 he was happy to receive a nice letter from Vice President R. E. Woodruff who had been his general manager in earlier years.

"I was eighteen when I started," Mr. Kinne reminisced, "and looking back over my long career of more than 58 years I am bound to say that I would do the same thing all over again. It has been a fascinating time and the officers of the railroad from the president down to the divisional men have always shown a fine disposition to co-operate with us in the ranks.

Starting as a freight trainman, Mr. Kinne was promoted to extra freight conductor five years later and was given a regular crew in 1889. His first passenger service was as extra conductor on the Pan American Special running to the exposition in Buffalo in 1901.

Mr. Kinne had the distinction of serving the two President Roosevelts, first as special conductor on the train carrying President Theodore Roosevelt from Waverly to Jamestown and return, and again as conductor on the special train carrying President Franklin D. Roosevelt over the Susquehanna division from Jamestown to Binghamton.

Veteran Kinne has had many thrilling experiences in his long contact with the public on trains but the one he likes to recall best concerns trying his hand as match-maker. It was while he was running on trains 3 and 4 between Salamanca and Jersey City that a male traveler with a ticket to Cuba approached him one morning as the train was leaving Salamanca. "He said he would like to talk to me rather confidentially," Conductor Kinne explained, "and after leaving Olean I told him I had time to listen to his story. He was a widower, had a good farm and showed me a bank book with a \$5500 balance and said he had been to see a lady who had answered his advertisement for housekeeper but that she wasn't strong enough to do a farmer's housework.

"He knew that I met many people and he thought that I might be able to help him. He said he wanted a housekeeper that he might be able to marry, that he lived near a school house and had no objection to a widow with one or two children. He seemed like an honest man and gave me his name and address.

"I thought it over and kept my eyes open. I canvassed the field and finally found a widow who had lost her husband and home and was living with her people but who preferred a home of her own. I gave her my traveler's address. They corresponded and he went to see her and I thought I had made a match. Sometime after I got a letter from the man saying that Louise, the first name of the woman, had quit writing and asking me if I would go to see her in his behalf, telling her that she was losing a chance for a good home. He promised to reimburse me for any expense and loss of time but I felt that I had done all that I could in bringing them together and thus ended so far as I know my match-making career.

"When I entered the service the Erie was broad gauge track. We had single track between Adrian and one mile east of Rathbone and a third rail from Waverly to Buffalo because the Lehigh Valley used our track. I think it was early in 1880 that a third rail was laid between Waverly and Jersey City and as (Continued on page 38)



J. B. Kinne



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58 Years of Thrilling Service

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I recall it was the first Sunday in June, 1880 that the Allegheny division was changed from broad to standard gauge.

"What changes I have seen for the better! I mean changes for greater safety of property and men. But even in those earlier days the management was alive to the importance of safety. I remember the first conductor I ran with telling me that self-preservation was the first and most important thing to keep in mind. It was the same as today, think before acting, and I have never forgotten it.

"There were more hazards in those early days and I sometimes wonder if railroad men and the public today realize the improvements that have been made for their convenience and safety. When I started with broad and standard gauge cars in service it was necessary to use three links, crooked links and s's for couplings, and the hand brake to control trains, especially in slippery weather. We often put ashes out of the caboose stove on the first cars ahead of the caboose and cinders from the rear end of the engine tender on the first cars behind the engine

tender before leaving the terminal, using extra precaution to avoid slipping from one car to another while setting the brakes to control the train.

"It was necessary to have train under control entering yard limits. Freight trains standing inside of yard limits were not required to be protected by flagman regardless of weather conditions, except in time of first class train. The only protection at Painted Post, AQ, HO, OG and Binghamton for trains crossing Erie main line tracks was a red ball on a high pole raised and lowered by a rope. This ball was kept in a box on the ground when no trains were crossing. In dense fog it was sometimes necessary to come to a full stop before the engineer could see whether the ball was up or down. Later a green ball was attached to the same rope. This governed trains on the main line. When the red ball was up the green was down, and when the green ball was up the red was down. This proved to be a help to keep trains moving.

"At 7 P.M. each day trains for the following 24 hours were marked up on a blackboard in the program room at the west end of the old depot in Hornell. We had no trainmaster. The conductor picked his own trainman. Your work had to please the conductor if you remained on the crew. Engineers knew the conductor and his crew and it gave them more confidence if they knew the crew would have the train under control approaching yard limits and junction points.

"With the advent of air-brakes control of trains was placed in the hands of engineers. Patent couplers soon followed and with these two improvements the hazards of the trainman's life was lessened. With automatic signals there should be no rear end collisions."

Talks With the Old Man

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can to defeat such legislation, because such laws are clearly not in the interest of all.

"The 70-car train limit bill has been advocated as a safety measure, yet statistics show that the railroads are becoming more safe year by year. Fewer men are killed or hurt with longer trains

now than there were with the shorter trains 15 years ago. The only three men that were killed last year in the whole United States by a run-in shock were on trains of 18 cars or less; none of them occurred to employes on long trains."

The Old Man paused a moment and then said, "Gaffney, take our own railroad for example. The Susquehanna Division has more long trains than most divisions. The figures show that over half of their trains have more than 70 cars, yet last year there were only seven men in road service injured on that division and three of them were on trains of less than 70 cars. Then take the Kent Division where three-quarters of the trains have less than 70 cars with about the same total number of trains as the Susquehanna Division. There were eleven men injured on that division, ten of them being on trains of less than 70 cars. This speaks for itself.

"To limit trains to 70 cars would not promote safety to railroad employees. It would cause more grade crossing accidents because of more trains, and would cost the railroads a tremendous increase in expenses, which they cannot afford to pay. With the recent increase in rates of pay to all employees, we are having a hard time to get along now and it will only be through an increase in freight rates that most railroads can 'weather the storm.' I feel sure that when our employees look at the situation squarely they will see that a 70-car limit law is not to their advantage; and when they consider all the factors—better working conditions, increased pay, the advantages to them of having the railroad prosperous, they will do what they can to stop it.

"The majority of the employees on the railroad have nothing to gain by increasing the company's expenses needlessly and many of them have a great deal to lose. It is impossible to pay out more money than we take in for any extended period; it simply means that some way must be found to reduce expenses, and each craft and group of employees can figure that out for themselves."

By taking revenge, a man is but even with his enemy; but in passing over it he is superior.

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