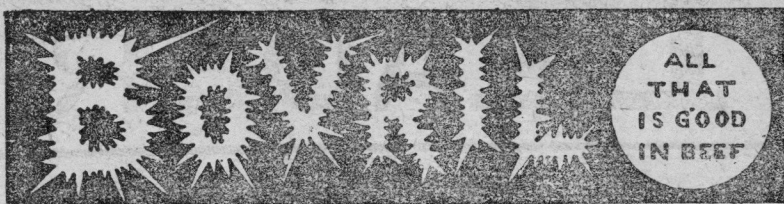


BOVRIL FLAVORS STEWS AND HASHES



Every Man For Himself
By HOPKINS MOORHOUSE

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CHAPTER XXVI.

Nip and Tuck.

Engine No. 810 was running free through the night with a big string of box-cars and gondolas tossing along behind her, dim shadows in the dark. Her powerful electric headlight threw a beam, long and bright, that burrowed into the black void far in front. But for this and the few red-glowing chinks in her firebox and the thunder of the wheels, the freight might have been some phantom reptile rushing through the land with two red eyes in its tail.

Evans, the fireman, kicked impatiently at the slash-bar and hooked the fire. The lurid glare from the white fires than curled and writhed under the crown-sheet flung wide upon flying right-of-way and the woods on either side, and played with the swirling ribbon of steam that was hissing back from the dome. Bathed in the blinding light, the fireman stood for a space, swinging his scoop with pendulum precision from fire-box to coal-tank and back again; then the whole scene went out suddenly.

Engineer Macdonald, leaning out over his arm-rest, chafed at the delay as he craned his head for the Spruce Valley grade. The line was clear as far as Indian Creek; but up there somewhere they would have to take the siding for the first section of the Limited, eastbound.

With a glance at the indicator and the gauges, the fireman jerked a blackened thumb over his shoulder towards the coal-tank. Macdonald shook his head.

"We'll fill her at Number Seven," he shouted.

They were bearing down upon the switch lights opposite Thorlakson. But Macdonald was in a hurry and too anxious to take advantage of the siding to stop for water there. The red lights flicked by again into the black.

On the time-card No. 7, the water tank farther on upon the loneliest tank on the dreariest surrounding country was inhabited save for a few

royal track men who stuck to their lonely but important posts during the blizzard months with the same persistence that carried them through the fly season. Engine 810 would take water there.

Fifteen minutes' run and Macdonald drew in his head, shut off steam, opened the sander, threw the brakeshoes against the drivers and brought everything to a shuddering standstill with the pilot slipping just past the tank, while his fireman was scrambling back amongst the coal to haul down the overhanging spout. And all of this was quite within the prosaics of the night's work.

What immediately followed was not. There was nothing in the locality to prepare them for it, while the hour was late and the night damp and disagreeable—nothing to account for the flying figure of a girl dashing wildly up the headlight's path, straight for the engine, arms waving frantic signals.

The engineer's wondering profanity scarcely had begun to flow freely before she was on top of them. Panting, wild-eyed, hair in riotous disorder, this beautiful young woman climbed up into the cab with the agility of an overpowering excitement, pouring out upon the astonished engine-men a wonderful stream of incoherent "explanations."

Evans, who never before had seen a girl on the verge of hysteria, swore deep and long under his breath, staring as if in a trance. He came to himself only when the water overflowed the manhole, and he let go of the spout with a carelessness that earned him a wetting as it lifted, dripping, back into place.

No sooner had the girl set foot on the deck than she clambered into the head brakeman's seat, nestling in alongside the boiler-head as far forward as she could get, her feet on the fireman's lunch-pail, her knees drawn up in clasped fingers and her eyes looking straight ahead out of the narrow cab window. That it might be against the rules of the road for strangers to ride on an engine apparently had not occurred to her, for she seemed to take it for granted that she was entirely welcome as long as she did not get in their way.

The fireman stared across at Macdonald and surreptitiously tapped his forehead; the engineer stared back at Evans and winked knowingly. The whole thing had taken but a few moments. A light was swinging out from the top of the cars at the rear and Macdonald opened the throttle. They were moving ahead before either of the two men could think of anything but several variations of the word "damn."

In this manner did Miss Cristy Lawson come to take her first ride on an engine. The night had been crowded with nerve-wracking excitement; but in the elation which she experienced over this unexpected way out of her difficulty, she felt renewed strength and confidence that surely would lead her through. Half an hour had been

lost, and the novelty of her surroundings pressed upon her to the temporary exclusion of everything else. Wasn't the din something awful. She had no idea that a locomotive was such a noisy place. She soon found herself getting more used to it and watched the engineer with wonder and interest. Her idea of an engineer, she found, had been formed by the illustrations in the magazines; she had pictured him in her mind as a man who sat with hand constantly on the throttle or the levers or whatever it was, bent far forward, peering keenly and steadily from beneath the visor of his greasy cap with eyes riveted unswervingly on every yard of track ahead. She was surprised, therefore, to find that this engineer seemed almost careless of attitude, leaning back in his cushioned seat, body jogging loosely to the motions of the great machine. It was only occasionally that he seemed to arouse enough interest to lean out of the window, and scarcely ever did he touch the levers in front of him. Once he actually got down from his seat and came over to the fireman's side to shout something in that grimy individual's ear, and all the while they were thundering along without any lessening of speed. What if something should appear suddenly on the track in front of them? Her heart leaped at the thought. She was

sure he could not get back in time to stop, and it was all very surprising to her.

Curiously her eyes roved over all the levers and queer instruments. Certainly an engineer must have to carry a terrible lot in his head to know how to manage them. There was a little knob, for instance; if she were to give it a pull, something would happen somewhere, an explosion perhaps,—dear knows what! She watched the hand of the indicator on the boilerhead fluttering around the figure 190. She studied the liquid in the glass tubes. A little apparatus, too, that looked like a small whistle. Was it a whistle and when did they blow it? Steam was bubbling out of a joint in a pipe right at her side; the hot water dribbled on her dress once when she leaned too far over and she caught the fireman grinning at her.

She laughed light-heartedly, taking a child-like joy out of this new and thrilling experience. She could not help marvelling at the unconcern with which these men attended to their work; they were perfectly at home on this rolling engine.

Didn't it rock and jerk about, though? It was enough to tear out the rails almost, it seemed to her, and her pulses quickened at the thought that if anything should break! But it did not seem to, somehow.

The fireman's gloved hand seized the chain on the feed-door again and jerked it open. She watched him toiling with his scoop, the white glare beating upon the rugged lines of his face till it was a wonder he could stand that fierce heat. There was a funny black smudge running across his nose, and when he bent his back she saw that a buckle was missing from his overalls and he had substituted a piece of coarse twine. Was he married? If he was, why didn't his wife look after those buckles? He worked hard enough to deserve to have little things like that look after for him. Why, she'd heard they even shovelled as much as a whole ton of coal on a single trip!

The lurch of the engine as they swung around a curve drew her attention to the track which was sweeping in upon them with dizzy continuity. Out there, ahead of the big black body of the locomotive, the fumeled path of the headlight streamed away into the unknown. Far up the track the white mile-boards on the poles caught it, ran toward them, flashed at them and skipped out of sight behind. Tall weeds nodded in it as they swept past. It was a long time before the rails, in the distance, bath and second then the beam plunged down at as he and went exploring ready, glided across a valley the rabbit sat in the middle of the great light in the distance that threatened to be a threat.

away in sudden, high, white tuft vanished in the grass. But as the novelty of all this wore off, her mind reverted to the thing that she was trying to do. The speeding engine, the flying track, became merely the accessories which were carrying her nearer and nearer her goal—a telegraph operator.

The fireman's watch hung on a hook alongside and the hands showed twenty-five minutes past midnight. It was standard time both here and in Toronto; so that would be the time at The Recorder office also—12.25 p.m. They would be well into the rush of the night's work now. The boys would be in from assignments and pounding out "copy" in the city room. The wires would be warming up and the "fimsy" arriving at the telegraph editor's desk in bunches, and old man Jeffreys would be reaching in the left bottom drawer of his scarred old desk for his little package of bread and cheese with an apple or a banana on top of it; he always ate that twenty-five minutes after midnight, just before the linotype men and the rest of the composing-room staff, who ate at the all-night restaurant around the corner, straggled back to their work.

Cristy began to wonder over the things she must do and to arrange them in the order she must do them. The very first thing would be the messages to McAllister and Brennan; there must be no delay in getting the police into action. If they could surprise their quarry over at Waring's house on the Island—catch them in the middle of it—it would provide a dramatic climax to the sensational story. She could trust her editor not to overlook any such opportunity and her eyes sparkled as she pictured the uproar that would follow those messages in The Recorder office. The old place would be buzzing and the whole staff on the jump like a bunch of excited kids!

Impatiently she peered out ahead, looked for lights down the track, glanced continually at the hands of the watch. She ran hastily over the strong features of the sensation, marshalling her facts, getting the general scheme of the story into her head in proper newspaper style and planning a strong "lead."

She became so engrossed in this that not until a vibrant shudder passed through the engine did she notice. The engineer was leaning out the window on his side of the cab, one hand on a lever. She threw a quick glance out the narrow window in front of her and saw that they were bowling down a straight stretch of track and that far ahead in the darkness were little specks of light.

A station! It must be the station at last! Anxiously she watched the far-away dots arrange themselves slowly into switch-lights beside the track.

(Minard's Liniment for Dandruff.)

The larger lights on the right—those would be station windows. Another light, a red one—the order board was out against them and the train would have to stop!

She cried out in her excitement and satisfaction. She felt like opening the narrow window, rushing out along the running-board to the front of the engine and cheering!

They were beginning to slow up now. A man came out and stood on the platform, some papers in his hand. She could see him quite plainly in his shirtsleeves in the glare of the powerful headlight. That must be the night operator—the Mecca of all her hopes. The hands of the fireman's watch indicated 12.30.

They rolled in beside the platform and the long string of freight cars bumped, groaned, squeaked and stopped. A lantern came bobbing along the tops of the cars from the rear. The conductor dropped off the caboose and jogged forward beside his train. Macdonald drew in his head and looked across the cab. But the seat was empty. The girl had slipped away already and presently he caught sight of her, disappearing into the station.

(To be continued.)

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