

little cheaper, and I'll investigate and take bids from other companies."

He squirmed considerable and said his price was as low as he could make it, but I stood pat, took bids, and finally forced him to give me his goods, on a contract, at a price less than we had been paying.

I don't think he had a very Merry Christmas, but I do know he had a very good lesson.

Christmas, as I have always noted, is never but a week before New Years and New Years is the period of good resolutions which are to be made over again next New Years.

However, I have become slightly cynical upon the subject of Christmas and I suppose that's because I'm gettin' old. I generally found that it was a case of 'gimme' and the things I have got didn't stack up well along side of the things that I gave.

There's one thing I notice, though, that makes me feel much better than anything else and that is the old idea of Christmas is not what it used to be among rail-rodgers—a signal for a big drunk.

Each one had got it into his head that he was not having a good time unless he was annoying himself by a lot of tangle-foot and everybody else by what the tanglefoot was doing to him.

The result was that there were a lot of brokes and hang-overs soon after Christmas, who probably made resolutions on New Years, but who didn't have the money nor the nerve to keep any of them. Nowadays you don't see it. A railroad man on a spree is about as rare as a zebra in Springfield and he is about as popular as a hang nail.

Let the grouchers say what they please but the Christmases of the present day are far better than they used to be. People enjoy themselves much more like human beings—and that's a good sign.

This thing of enjoying yourself, after all, is one of the biggest matters of taste that I know. There's an official of our road that enjoys railroadin'. Every minute that he railroads he's enjoying himself. It's all play to him.

Other men like their work at the proper time, but if they had their say they'd spend most of the time doin' something else—and there are a lot of good men of that sort too.

As for me, I like to see things go on and putter around and take part in it myself, to a limited extent, and on Christmas days and holidays when I go around through the yards and shops and see them vacant and empty it sort of depresses me. I feel like there's a lot to be done that ought to be done. It don't seem natural and looks like things are out of joint generally. It's like going down to the business section of a big city on Sunday morning, with a great big lot of space lying around not being used by anyone.

The street cars boom by, like those big German cannon, and the store windows aren't worth fifteen cents.

But we have got to have breathing time. It's necessary. We get stale without it, and the only thing to do when holidays do come is to make the best of them. Sorter take a check up and see what you have done, what you have been doing, and consider whether you are really entitled to a holiday, or if you shouldn't sneak back, get on your overalls, and catch up on something which you have slighted.

When you have done bad work you are in debt. You are in debt to the man who hired you. You can't dodge that fact. It remains until you have made good, and when you are in debt, and don't try your level best to pay, you're a mighty poor excuse of a man. This is true of money, work, or obligations of any kind. The other man fulfills his part and you have to fulfill yours.

That's the trouble with this railroad business, but a lot of us don't realize it. We are all paid to do good work, we are paid to do the best we can and when we don't do it we are cheaters, or we are in debt, and a man of that sort never can amount to much.

We have got too much in the habit of recognizing a debt only as a financial transaction. That's the least part of our obligation, summing it all up. Our biggest debt is what we owe our neighbor and owe our bosses, and we only worry about our cash debts.

However, this Christmas idea of giving, without an obligation on the other side, is fine in theory. It takes us out of the present scheme of business wherein you do something for me and I'll do something for you which is a cold and callous rule. It's got as its principle, I'm going to give you something because I like you; I'm going to give you something to make you happy and if you feel happy you have repaid me.

But it's mighty hard for most of us to get that into our system and until we have got it, we are foolish to give or receive gifts of any kind.

There's a lot of talk about loyalty to the company, loyalty to the Frisco and loyalty to the boss. It's all right, but shouldn't be necessary even in the most sordid meaning. A man should be loyal to himself and he is not loyal to himself and is not looking out for his best interests unless he is doing the best he can all the time. If he is doing that, he can't help being loyal to the Frisco.

So, after all, loyalty to the Frisco is nothing but a form of self-interest, or even selfishness and I'm sure, as far as the Frisco is concerned, the best Christmas gift it could ask from any of its employes would be that each and every one of them would do their best to earn what they are paid.

On the other hand there will be no obligations on either side as result of this, but the benefit to the employes should be far greater than the benefit to the Frisco.

You get in the habit of doing the best you can and keep your brain working and you'll find it's like physical exercise which strengthens the muscles -it strengthens the moral muscles.

This is A B C talk, I know, it's commonplace and its the common place things we don't think of often enough, though I'm not strong for high-brow stuff anyhow.

I find this high-brow stuff, after it is all boiled and simmered down, is very much like a conversation two men had years ago as to how long a man's legs should be. They argued it from every point, maybe in Greek, maybe in Latin and maybe in French, but they couldn't decide until a man came in by the name of Abraham Lincoln, and they asked him how long a man's legs should be, and Abe says that he thought they should be long enough to reach from his body to the ground - and the argument bogged down right there.

I never hear of this deep sea thinking that I don't think of this story, and feel there is some little common sense way of handling it so as to make it as simple as two and two are four, but we let ourselves get caught up, as it were, fanning the air, making a big dust, until we are all milling around in a circle and the little horse-sense proposition of it all is in the center, far away from where we are running.

These are a few choice Christmas sentiments culled from observation and worry.

I want to wish Bud Turner, Bob Holland, Jim Shea and John Forster, as well as lots of my younger friends on the Frisco, a very Merry Christmas, a very Happy Christmas and a very Happy New Year.



BALLAST

- ☞ A Christmas Sentiment—Happy is the friend of a railroad purchasing officer who does not smoke.
- ☞ “Move Forward” is a slogan applied to bigger things than street cars.
- ☞ Energy gets, as well as moves tonnage.
- ☞ It is astonishing how a little economy will often prevent a large waste.
- ☞ 1914 was in many instances a series of warnings of things to avoid in 1915.
- ☞ This is the time we add, subtract and try to balance and then try to justify the net result.
- ☞ Telling why you did it is not always telling how you did it.
- ☞ Giving is the atonym of receiving—combined they spell Christmas for most of us.
- ☞ It has been discovered by railroad experts that the greatest lubricant is courtesy.
- ☞ Peace nowadays seems to be in piecemeal.
- ☞ The confident man is not necessarily a confidence man.

A BIG COON HUNT.

The second annual coon and 'possum hunt of the bill desk was held in the Famous Big Timber of Shawnee, Kans., just eight miles out of Kansas City, Saturday night, November 21. The bill clerks forgot all about "OS&D'S," errors in rates and classification, cast all trouble to the wind, and sallied forth for one blessed night, care free and joyous, to commune with mother Nature. The night was ideal for the sport, and the master of hounds (Lon Ivory, the porter), predicted that we were going to get some game.

He proved to be a good prophet, for we had hardly entered the timber before the dogs treed. The tree was "shinned" and a big fat 'possum was shaken out and put in the game bag. We were very proud of him, for he was not a common "'possum", but the real Irish article, the kind that do not drop their O's.

We hear old "Drum" giving tongue about a quarter away, and when the rest of the pack chimed in, a symphony orchestra wasn't in the running. His deep baying told us he had treed, and then the scramble to get there first. It was soon found that he had a big coon up a good sized hollow tree. We cut the tree, which was no job (as all the bill clerks are skilled in woodcraft), and then came the battle royal, with honors even between old "Drum" and "Rusty". We placed Mr. Coon in a good strong sack and started for more game, when some one shouted the tree was a bee tree. Sure enough it was, and when we split it open we got two galvanized iron pails of the finest comb honey you ever saw.

In the meantime the dogs had treed again, and we picked up a couple of 'possums more. It was getting to be a habit. The dogs treed another coon and we got him, and were arguing about who was the best hand with an axe, when the

dogs treed another 'possum. To settle the argument we decided to cut the tree instead of climbing it.

When the tree fell and the bird was put in the sack, we forgot all about who was the best man with an axe, for we had cut a persimmon tree that was simply loaded with the finest persimmons we ever saw. We gathered a bushel and decided to make camp, for the score so far was four 'possums and two coons, and a bushel of persimmons, and we each had about as much as we could carry around.

Two of the boys went to the creek to get water, and took a large galvanized iron pail with them. One of them crawled out on a big log so as to get the clear water, and he dipped the bucket in the creek at the same time a big bull headed catfish was going up stream with a wagon load of produce for the early morning market. Well, the catfish got his head wedged in the bucket, and in trying to back out, he ran his fins through the side of the pail, and we had a fine forty pound catfish without even ruining the pail, for the holes were right up at the top.

We built a rousing big fire, and had a swell feed after which we started for town. Just got to the edge of the timber when we heard a terrible commotion behind us, stopped to see what it was, and out came a strapping big 'possum, mad as a hornet. Wanted to know what kind of a bum bunch of bill clerks we were that would make him run his legs off to catch up with us, when we should have called on him. Oh, he abused us something scandalous, and one of the boys, (Estes Quirk), said no 'possum could talk to him like that, and live happy afterward. While he was shedding his coat, the 'possum walked up and untied the sack and crawled in, so what else could we do but take him with us. My, but he he had a

grouch for we could hear him grumbling and mumbling to himself all the way into Kansas City.

Now comes the best part, the banquet following the hunt. We had the four 'possums prepared by an old negro "mammy", and when the twenty invited guests assembled around the festive board, and the covers were raised, the bill clerks felt mighty proud of the feast they had prepared. Did you ever have the good fortune to attend a 'possum supper? You remember how luscious they look, swimming in nice brown gravy, and nestling among the sweet potatoes, the whole forming a picture that can not be described, but has to be tasted.

Gee whiz! 'possum, sweet potatoes, corn

pone and cider just hard enough to give zest, besides the trimmings. A man is indeed a fortunate critter to get in on such a combination, and the guests voted the Bill Clerks as royal entertainers, and the best coon and 'possum hunters on the system.

The Kansas City bill desk always gives a good account of itself, but when it comes to coon and 'possum hunting, we do claim (in all modesty), to be in a class all to ourselves, for this is a true account of the hunt we PLANNED,

but

what we Got was a bad cold apiece, and some experience.

ONE OF THE BUNCH.

C. W. FUNK.

Ozark Records.

Superintendent C. H. Baltzell of the Ozark Division has issued a letter to trackmen on his division congratulating them on the splendid manner in which the work of laying eighteen miles of 90-pound rail, from Mile post 300 to 318, was accomplished.

The work of laying this rail was begun October 6 and was completed November 25. Two hundred men, employed on the job, worked every day except Sunday during the entire period and not a single injury to any of them was noted on the Safety First reports.

This is an evidence of the close supervision the work received from those in charge of it and proves conclusively that Safety First principles were firmly instilled in the minds of the laborers.

There are various kinds of snobbery, but one of the worst is that which affects to despise common things.

Abraham Lincoln, who had not a shred of the snob in his makeup, once said, "The Lord must love the common people; he made so many of them."

One Way of Helping.

The chairman of the Georgia Railroad Commission has notified the railroads operating in Georgia that because of a realization of the decrease in operating revenues of the various lines the commission will not impose on any of the roads subject to its jurisdiction any expenditures for new stations, warehouses, terminal facilities and the like. The chairman sets forth that the commission is thoroughly cognizant of the dilemma confronting the carriers in their present crisis and will hold in abeyance such orders as would further add to their financial embarrassment.

Which commends itself to the man who is an advocate of fair play and not inclined to "hit another when he is already down". The action could be followed profitably in all States.

N. H. Kruse is appointed roadmaster of the Springfield Sub-Division, including the Monett and Springfield terminals and the Chadwick Branch, with headquarters at Springfield, Mo., effective December 2. Mr. Kruse succeeds H. Aaron, transferred.