

That Christmas Engine

—By—
Norman McKellop
(Editor Locomotive Express)

I don't suppose it would be possible to find a toy shop, which, at Christmas-time, did not stock a few miniature railway engines. It is surprising how this machine, born very much in the yesterday, still has its fascination for the youngster of today.

In spite of competition by the super-sonic plane, the racing car, or speed-boat, it is an undoubted fact that there are thousands of youngsters in making, playing with, or watching railway trains.

Looks The Part

Possibly this is because the modern prototypes of George Stephenson's Rocket has real "stage presence." When compared with the "slinky" streamlined jets of the air, a modern locomotive sweeping round a curving stretch, with every "muscle" working in unison, and a sonorous rhythmic exhaust hitting the air, spells power—looks the part, as it were, and certainly acts the part.

One could almost say it speaks the part, too; and, obviously, it is temperamental. Watch it when it starts away on a hill. It roars with displeasure, with a whirling kicking of its slipping wheels, and a hissing anger which has to be appeased.

The railway engine has to be humoured, coaxed and occasionally flogged to do its turn. In short, it is nearer human understanding than most other machines in this age of mechanical miracles and, possibly, that is the gauge of its popularity.

Spells Romance

The old railway engine-builders were good psychologists. They gave their locomotives names which captured the imagination. I drove once an engine called "Jingling Geordie", named after a character from one of Scott's novels. In fact, it was one of a class of engines having names from those classical volumes, and, each name set the mind wandering in the fields of romance.

Modern locomotive designers, carrying on the tradition, have given us Royal Scots, Stars, Kings, Castles and Merchant Navy's while nothing more appropriate than the Flying Scotsman could possibly be found for an engine which hustles, daily, between the capital cities of England and Scotland. The names of the crack trains of today constitute an important factor in the Christmas choice of a railway engine by the modern boy.

Stimulates Imagination

Another reason for the locomotive's wide appeal, is the mystery of what happens on the footplate. So Dad buys Tommy a model train and both father and son let their imaginations roam as the engine circles the parlour floor. In imagination Dad is sweeping round the contours of the Scottish hills, on the coast of Devon, or rocketing down the East Coast in control of Mallard, and Tommy feels that if he were at the controls, the 126 m.p.h. world's record would soon be shattered.

Or both man and boy stand and watch the trains go by. Perhaps they have a favourite walk which takes them to a spot where, leaning over a bridge, they get a whiff of sulphur from a smokestack, feel the earth trembling with the thunder of wheel on rail, and then listen to that diminishing song of triumph—"I know I could do it," knew I could do it"—as another hill is kicked behind by the iron horse.

Yes, it is all so "human" in its expression, its behaviour and its effort, this steam engine—but it is on the way out.

More Efficient, Economical

Already, the jet-locomotive has arrived. I am told it is simpler, more efficient and more economical.

I know little of how it works. Superior intellects explain it something like this: "Watch a child blowing up a toy balloon. Suddenly, at the height of the 'blow', the balloon slips out of his hand and the air inside escapes with a hiss as the balloon zig-zags like a snake in the air before falling to the ground." So that's the principle on which the jet-locomotive works? It needs a lot of imagination to couple that toy balloon to the shrieking drone which splits the air from the jets we hear overhead.

Then, there is the diesel, that internal-combustion engine so like its petrol brother that it makes little difference in my conception of things. But they are smart those designers; they know how the steam locomotive appeals, so cunningly they camouflage those rows of diesel cylinders under a streamlined cover to look like a steam engine with a "nose" in front and fanciful lines drawn from nose to tail.

In the U.S.A., whole railway systems have gone over to the diesel-electrics which turn dynamos to create the current which moves the wheels. Already most of the steam shunting "pugs" are being replaced in Britain by these boxes of machinery which work without a break for a fortnight on end.

No Room For Sentiment

Quite recently, a friend of mine rejoiced because, in Sussex, he discovered a single track still being worked by steam power in this stronghold of electric trains. A welcome break in the streams of engineless carriages is how he described his find. But while I sympathise with his nostalgia, I must admit that progress cannot be denied.

There is no longer any room for sentiment. Every exhaust from the steam locomotive is 90% waste. For every pound of coal tormented, swallowed, and the price of coal these days really justifies the description "black diamonds".

While the locomotive of today is sentimentally understandable, the locomotive of tomorrow must be sensibly practical. This age which panders to my old sentiments by disguising the form of new locomotives, will soon pass away.

In the generations to come, there will emerge the man who has never seen a Greasy Pacific or a Britannia; and it is said that "what the eye doesn't see, the heart doesn't grieve over." Ah, when that day dawns, we shall have gained perfection in land transport. But we shall have lost an institution which, through countless years, was an integral part of Christmas—the joy of Dad and Tommy working their railroad on the parlour floor.

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SERVING OF BOAR'S HEAD ONE OF OLD CHRISTMAS CUSTOMS

Of the customs that grew up around the Christmas festival in Merrie England, the serving of the boar's head was one of the most stirring. It endures to this day at Queen's college, Oxford, where the 50-pound tusked head—a lemon in its grinning jaws—is borne in on a great silver dish, escorted by trumpeters and candle bearers. In the olden days there was an appropriate chant, half carol and half ritual, that the gentlemen used to bellow at the moment the dish touched the board:

Then set down the swineyard,
The foe to the vineyard,
Let Bacchus crown his fall,
Let this boar's head and mustard
Stand for pig, goose and custard,
And so ye are welcome all.

There were tears in Holland towards the end of 1582. In order to reform the calendar, 10 days had to be dropped from the normal 365, and the last 10 days of December were cancelled. Thus, there was no Christmas in Holland that year.



(By Shirley Sargent)

Steve rolled from the bed where Marge slept and started toward the living room. The glow of Christmas tree lights betrayed the children. Young Steve—there was a boy for you—had one hand in his stocking. Julie was whispering, "Go on, see what's in it." Only Paris, the tall, older one, was quite still.

Paris turned just as Steve said "Merry Christmas," sarcastically. Young Steve, with the engaging grin, whipped around. "Hi, daddy. Can we open our presents? It's almost daylight."

"Daylight, my foot—it's barely two."

But Santa Claus has already been here.

"Bed," Steve commanded. Steve and Julie hugged him, leaving without argument, but there was defiance plain on Paris's face. Paris—darned fool name for a boy. Marge's idea. "Bed, son," Steve reiterated.

"Under the tree, dad, I don't see anything long and sort of curved."

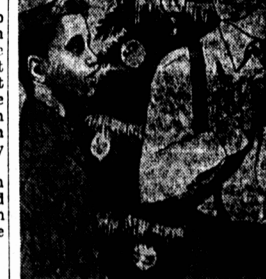
That Paris, an odd one. An eleven-year-old kid wanting a trombone. It beat Steve. "I don't either," he agreed, meeting his son's eyes. "Look, you're too old to believe in Santa Claus, and too young to realize how expensive a trombone is."

Paris looked down at the mounds of gaily wrapped packages. "Okay," he said in a flat, old-sounding voice; "so I get a couple of new shirts and Steve gets..."

Paris ground his bare foot into the rug. "Nothin'. I was just talking."

"Good night, son," Steve watched Paris out of the room before he unplugged the tree lights and sank into a worn armchair. Paris was right. Steve had everything he'd asked for piled under the tree. Even an electric train. Cost a lot to keep a kid happy these days, but a trombone... Like the one out in the trunk of the store that was going back to the store first thing Wednesday morning. A man made only so much working in a laundry, trying to save enough to buy a half interest, so Marge went ahead and bought a trombone without a by-your-leave.

First Paris had to have lessons, then a rented horn to practice on. Now he wanted one of his own. Paris, a funny kid. Never listening to the football games like Julie and even Steve did. Always wandering off for hikes and bringing home strange, ragamuffin kids.



"Look, you're too old to believe in Santa Claus."

Happy when he could tinker with all radios, happier yet when he could listen to highbrow music. That stuff, Steve didn't understand him and that was a fact. From a distance he heard the voices of carolers and, upstairs, the wavering notes of the rented trombone. That Paris! What was he trying to do? Wake everybody up?

Even as Steve swung up the stairs, to the attic, he heard the sureness in the music. At first Paris had practiced in the attic by request, but Steve had to hand it to him. He had worked hard; two-three hours a day until he could, really play. Looking in on him now, Steve saw that the rented instrument gleamed. Paris had taken care of it—wouldn't let the others touch it.

To look at his intent, happy face, you wouldn't know it was Paris whose everyday face was withdrawn, almost sullen. That playing a horn that took all your breath to blow, would give him happiness as amazing to Steve.

Paris put the trombone down when Steve touched his shoulder. "You love to play, don't you?" Steve asked.

A smile like the like of which Steve had never seen before crossed his son's face. Then, shyly, "Mr. Baxter wants me to play in the school band."

It was hard to keep his pride from showing, but Steve only said, heartily, "That's fine, Paris," before sending him back to bed.

Steve went downstairs, searching under the tree until he found young Steve's electric train. The box was heavy in his hands as he considered. Toys didn't matter too much to Steve—he liked active things, in which a father could share.

When Steve came back in from the car, he felt like Santa Claus as he put the shiny leather case that was long and sort of curved under the tree. A trombone for Paris.

Walk After Supper

—By—
F. G. Goodall

That windless, foggy December night, only two days before Christmas, young Brian O'Rourke, to put off the dreaded moment, lingered over his supper. The fierce pride of the ten-year-old boy would not let him say he was terrified of what lay before him—a mile walk along the lonely beach to tend the Light-of-the-Perch.

Always before—thought Brian—Jimmy has been with me. Then I didn't mind so much, even when we passed the Danish Rath. It's a scary sort of place that big hump of dark earth where they buried those Danes, even if it was hundreds and hundreds of years ago. But Jimmy, his elder brother was in bed with feverish cold.

"What ails ye Brian?" demanded his mother. "Drink up that cocoa and be off with ye at once. 'Tis generally first y'are to finish your meals and here I've been waiting this last half hour to wash up. Is it sick ye are? Y' look pale."

Brian shook his head. "Just thinking."

"Some nonsense of leprechauns and fairies I'm sure. What will happen to the poor sailors if the light goes out, or the glass of the lantern is blackened with smoke? It's your uncle Johnny's as sea himself, too, don't forget."

"Shure he's in China!"

"China or the Channel, 'tis the one thing. You're responsible for that light, and you'll see to it. C'mon now, there's the matches and oil, and don't forget the scissors in case ye have to trim the wick."

"The oil can ye filling." Separately Brian made the excuse to stay a little longer. But the time came when he had everything ready and he could think of no other reason for delay, and reluctantly he took to the road.

As he set out he looked back at the little group of houses. On drawn window-blinds lamp-light glowed redly. In there where folks talked and read, and listened to the radio, it was warm and safe and Christmassy. Slowly he turned and trudged along the beach. The fog thinned a little. Through it, the sand-dunes loomed.

On the dunes, a dry bent-grass whispered. The tide was out, but in spite of the lack of wind, the sea hissed and grumbled at the bar. In a small pool left by the ebbing tide, a fish leaped. The sudden splash brought the heart of the boy jumping to his throat. There were sucking sounds, gurgles and the continuous "hush...hush...sh" of the sea.

The night had many weird voices that came from nowhere in particular. It had many weird forms, too; twisted things that loomed out of the fog and suddenly disappeared. Dwarfish figures moved just too far off to be sure what they were. Writhing shapes waved beseeching arms and dissolved in the mist.

Spine prickling, Brian halted.

What's that moving there! Breath held, he listened. Against his ribs his heart thumped. There—there 'tis again... something dark and tall but no sound of footsteps. Ah! there they are again, slithery footsteps. It's him... the fisherman... I know 'tis. Run... run for your life. No use... didn't he once fly faster than Mike Rafferty and Mike pedalling his bike like fury in the chapel yard saving him. He's slipped into the fog now but it's the cunning one he is... just waiting to jump out at me.

Slithery footsteps again! Sweat beading his face, Brian looked over his shoulder. Across the shingle enormous, crab sidled. Scrape, scrape went its claws on the gravel. The fog lifted a trifle. Brian breathed once more. The tall shape that had scared him showed up as the half buried sternpost of a schooner, wrecked many winters past.

Brian strode into the fog. He began to whistle; then to talk to himself.

"Show the old ghosts, I'm not afraid. My uncle Johnny's a captain and I'm going to see to the Light-of-the-Perch." Then he whistled again.

Suddenly, the defiant whistle ceased. Just ahead the ribs of another wreck stood dark as the skeleton of some monstrous animal.

"Ah shure 'tis only an old wreck," growled Brian... But is it? Swiftly he was reminded of that terrible night of storm when that barque broke her back on the bar, and crabs oozed and bits of her were tossed ashore. And the drowned men... the poor drowned sailors... didn't I see them all white and staring where they lay on the glistery seaweed.

The very smell of wet seaweed brought it all back to him, with the thought that maybe the fisherman who walked the beach at night... Scarcely drawing breath, Brian crept past the remains of the once proud barque. Nothing there; only the rustle of dry seaweed hung from the barnacle crusted timbers. Along the beach a curlew cried mournfully. Seaward, a big steamer grumbled her way through the fog. Closer inshore the shrill siren of a small craft complained to the night; echoed and re-echoed amongst the dunes.

Brian quickened his pace, and talked again to himself for company.

"I hope the Perch light hasn't gone out," he said. Through the fog showed the gap in the dunes where marshy slab-land oozed across the beach, and little muddy streams twisted to the sea. "The Danish Rath!" gasped Brian, and halted to listen.

"Yes, there they are, there's the tap-tap-tap of marching feet..." He forced himself to go on. As he approached the sombre mound, the feet of Brian dragged. He thought: This is where the fierce men in winged helmets are seen fighting and drinking. Jimmy can jeer at me if he likes, but I know better. It's them the Danes! I with my own eyes seen their flickery blue fires that Jimmy says is just the gas from the marsh? I wish he were here now. What's that—that white thing gliding by the Rath? There's an-

other and another. It's the Dane! Run—Run before they get you. What, run towards that place? I daren't... I can't. They're watching me... I know they are. See, they're together now... talking... watching. I can't go on... I'll run back home. But the light on the Perch? There's that siren again... closer now. What would the coward I am? He'd never take me to sea like he promised. Sailors aren't scared!

Wild cries of disturbed swans goading him, gasping and sobbing, Brian ran—ran past the fearsome Rath until he was safe, for the ghostly warriors never left the gap in the dunes where disaster had overtaken them... everyone knew that.

The tide had turned and rushed to possess the land. With it came a breath of air that twisted the fog into white ropes. The snarling sea, with white talons tore at the bar. Seaward, to the northward now, the big steamer growled, but the shrill scream of the smaller vessel did not sound any more. Here it was utterly desolate. Even the sand dunes had gone, leaving on one side dreary marshland, and on the other, bleak beach; beyond stretched the cold, restless sea. Around the face of Brian the fog wrapped dank fingers.

He shivered, for this was where the phantom fisherman was said to enter walk. All about were groans, sighs and wails and a furtive whispering. Brian strained to catch what was said, but

couldn't. Somewhere ahead sounded a faint cry and crunch of feet on shingle. The heart of the boy seemed to pound within him.

"No mistaking that cry," he whispered. "No bird that. Even Jimmy would say so."

Feet dragging, Brian forced himself to go on—onwards towards the Light-of-the-Perch, gripping the can of oil more firmly. The light—the light—the light, beat inside his head, and became mixed with the other weird sounds and that one thin cry. Suddenly, through the fog he saw the fuzzy blob of the light, and yes, it was flickery, and the glass of the lantern blackened with smoke. Perch with its narrow ladder leading up to the lantern. At the foot of the ladder, he stumbled, halted and bent to tie the unfastened lace of his boot.

When he straightened, horror held him rigid. Before him oil-skins dripping, tired eyes mournful under the shadow of his sou'wester, stood a fisherman. The flame of the lamp leaped up, then went out.

"Would ye be tellin' me where there's a house, son?" asked the fisherman. "I'm from Arklow, and me mates are standing by our boat—she's ashore about a mile beyant here."

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CHRISTMAS CHOIR... Junior members of a church choir lift their voices in song during the annual Christmas candlelight service. Truly, they represent the spirit of Christmas.

CHRISTMAS GAME

Snappdragon was a favorite Christmas game in England more than 200 years ago, it is still played in modified form in England and America.

The original game called for a quantity of raisins to be deposited in a large bowl or dish. Brandy or some other spirit was poured over the fruit and ignited. The bystanders then endeavored to grasp a raisin, by plunging their hands through the flames. A carol, called "The Song of Snappdragon," accompanied the game.



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T.V. Trials

63	62	61	60	59	58	57	56	55
64	POOR RECEPTION DEDUCT 10	43	44	45	SCIENCE TALK DEDUCT 5	54		
65	40	41	42	46	47	48		
66							49	52
67	39	38	37	36	35	34	50	51
68	27	28	HEALTHY ADD 15	33	VARIETY PROGRAMME ADD 30			
69	26	29	30	31	32		5	4
70	25						6	3
71	24	23	22	PRODUCER ASSEN DEDUCT 5			7	2
72	BALLET ADD 20	21					10	9
73	CAMERA OUT OF ACTION DEDUCT 10	20					11	8
74	HOME	17					12	7
		16	15	14			13	6

All you need to play "T.V. Trials" are a dice and some counters—or coloured buttons will do. Each player throws the dice and moves his counter according to the number he scores. When a counter lands on a star, it must be moved back or forward, as indicated. The award of a small prize for the winner (who is, of course, the player finishing first) makes the game still more exciting.

Kissing under the mistletoe originated in Babylonian times. Mistletoe was considered to be the sacred plant of Mylitta, the goddess of love and beauty, and kissing under the milky-white berries was a religious duty. It is not so today...