

**THE HANDLING OF
RAILWAY SUPPLIES. THEIR
PURCHASE AND
DISPOSITION**

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The Handling of Railway Supplies. Their Purchase and Disposition by Marshall M. Kirkman

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MARSHALL M. KIRKMAN

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PREFACE.

The intelligence and fidelity exercised in the purchase, care and use of railway supplies, influences directly the cost of construction and operating, and affect, therefore, the reputations of officers and the profits of owners. Accounting officers are also interested in the subject, as it is connected with the details of their office. To many (perhaps the bulk of railway officers) the handling of railway supplies is an unknown quantity. The subject needs elucidation on many accounts.

The supplies of a company are understood to comprise the material in store not yet charged to any operating or construction account. In attempting to suggest safeguards for the faithful and economical use of material, I am led into a discussion of the best means of preserving it after it passes into the hands of employes, as its loss or wasteful use in such cases directly affects the original supply. This enlarges the subject greatly, and enhances its importance.

M. M. KIRKMAN.

CHICAGO, ILL., April 30th, 1887.

THE PURPOSE OF MY BOOKS.

The question is asked me daily, how I, a busy man working for another, find time to write books in addition to my regular work. The question is pertinent, and I wish to answer it here. All my writings up to this time have referred to my business, and have had for their purpose the advancement of the interests of my employer. If he has derived no benefit therefrom, then I have simply fallen into the mistake, made by so many men occupying positions of trust, of over-estimating my services in his behalf. And in reference to the immediate scope of my writings, they are intended, it is proper to say, wholly for the young and advancing class among railroad men; for those who lack opportunities of learning; for those who desire to know the subtleties of railroad affairs, yet are prevented by their restricted position. The interests of railway companies require the widest diffusion of knowledge among this class, but, unfortunately, there are no present opportunities by which it may be acquired, except as they pick it up piecemeal, here and there. These books are intended, so far as their limited scope applies, to supply this deficiency. The Managers of railways have no wants in this direction, and I have never been able to write anything that I thought especially meriting their regard; their great talent and opportunity make their knowledge cosmopolitan; make them teachers; the natural exponents of railway policy and practice. I have noticed, however, that the general knowledge of railway affairs possessed by them had a tendency to make its exposition appear unnecessary, a work of supererogation. This is the natural error that men fall into whose appetite is losing its elasticity through over-use, the mistake of successful men, of men whose ambition is gratified. They forget that the stale platitudes of to-day were to them the hidden mysteries of yesterday; that what is common-place to them, is the source of the liveliest curiosity to their less favored brethren.

M. M. K.

METHOD OF GIVING INSTRUCTIONS.

There is nowhere in the world an equal body of men possessing higher integrity and intelligence than the men who operate our railroads. They are, practically, a unit in their efforts to serve their employers faithfully. They comprise an army, and in order to be handled effectively must work under explicit orders.

Now, there are two ways of giving an order. One says "You Must." This will do, if we are on hand to see that it is observed, and possess the requisite authority; otherwise, such an order is like firing into the sea. A few conscientious men will observe an order of this kind from principle. The mass, however, do not regard it, except so far as punishment attends neglect. The reason is, not that they are wilfully disobedient, but that they are busied with other matters and, not understanding its necessity, neglect it. No one, if left to himself, will carry out an order of which he does not understand the force.

The other way to give an order is to accompany it with an explanation of its purpose and necessity. By this method the person addressed becomes a party to the transaction. The order not only appeals to his sense of authority, but to his judgment and fidelity. There are, therefore, three reasons for expecting its observance, in such event, while there is only one in the other case.

In many instances explanation is unnecessary and improper. The person addressed understands this quite as well as any one. But a great system like a railway that is dependent upon co-operative effort cannot be carried on unless there is concurrent knowledge among those who do the work. It is not only necessary to tell them that they must do a particular thing, but it is necessary to tell them the reason. This is the plan I have observed in my books.

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THE HANDLING OF RAILWAY SUPPLIES.

CHAPTER I.

PROPERTY.

Envy is the peculiar and predominating curse of our day and if the Commandments were to be re-written at this time, the sin of covetousness would probably be the first-named, instead of the last. Nothing in the history of the Jews reflects more credit upon them than the fact that this sin was esteemed the least of their vices. Its enormous importance at the present time grows out of a false conception of the relations that men were intended to occupy towards each other by the Creator. It grows out of a mistaken belief that through "cramming" and other processes, the dull and worthless may be made the equals of those upon whom God has stamped the highest attributes. Out of the truism, that all men are equal before the law, has grown a belief that they are equal in everything. Hence the jealousy and rage of the improvident, the incapable and the worthless, towards those who through their wisdom or self-denial are able, while supporting themselves, to add to the capital of the world.

The desire to be rich is laudable, but to desire a thing because our neighbor has it, is base. The secret of man's happiness is contentment, coupled with an honest