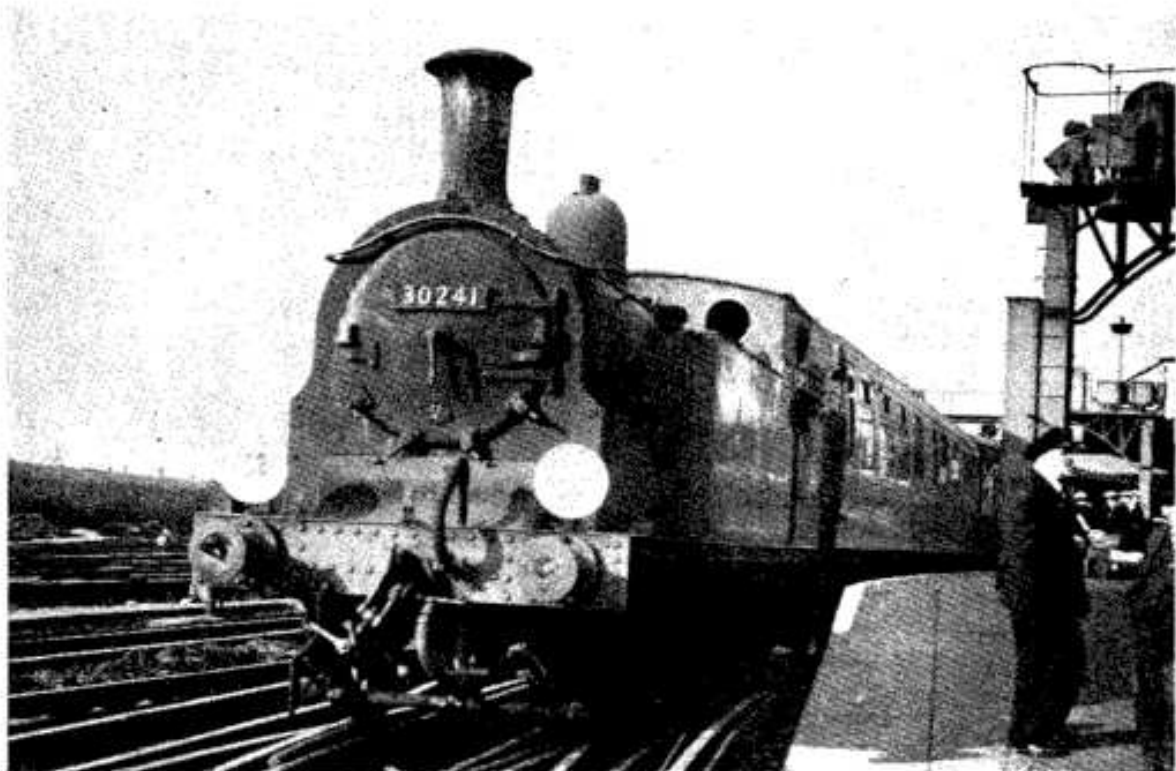


A Sentimental Journey

By HENRY MAXWELL



[Photo]

[Henry Maxwell]

The start of the journey : class " M7 " 0-4-4 tank engine No. 30241, on which the author rode, about to leave Waterloo for the carriage roads at Clapham with the empty stock train

ON a golden October afternoon I found myself at Waterloo Station about to satisfy a desire which I had entertained since boyhood. Through the courtesy of the Southern Region of British Railways, I had in my hands a locomotive pass authorising me to travel by an empty stock train from Waterloo to Clapham Junction on the footplate of one of the class " M7 " tanks.

To many, no doubt, it will seem but a modest ambition to hold, for so many years, a trifling journey in point of length and a humble engine in point of size. Not so to me, for the four miles separating Waterloo from Clapham are so charged with memories that almost every yard of them is quick with some association. And as for the " M7 " tanks, they have in my affection a place that can never be challenged by any other engine. For they were my " first love " when I was a child and knew no others, and indeed it was behind one of them that I made my first journey by steam. They and the old North London tanks at

Richmond long ago were the first engines on which my infantile eyes rested, be it said with an admiration that the years have never dimmed.

Symmetrical as only Dugald Drummond's engines could be, elegant, purposeful, powerful, and yet with that strange and indefinable quality of *repose* which so distinguished all that great designer's work, the little " M7s " are to my mind beyond question the finest engines of their type ever to appear. My early memories of them are on the Reading and Windsor trains, sturdily breasting the long viaduct up to the river bridge at Richmond or charging shrilly and joyously through that cavernous old station ; banking the expresses out of Waterloo, and running the empty stock trains between the terminus and Clapham. Very greatly, as a boy, used I to hanker to ride within those friendly-looking cabs and look out through those shining spectacles along those straight clean boilers towards those familiar flared-out chimneys. Now it was to be,

An inspector took charge of me at the end of No. 11 platform, lead me across several running lines and up the ramp to where No. 30241 was waiting at the head of an empty express from Bournemouth, and there handed me over to Driver E. Ennals and Fireman T. McNamara, who instantly made me welcome. There was hardly time for the introductions before the signal turned to green and it was "Right Away." There were twelve of the newest corridors behind us and the 41 engine—No. 30241 was built at Nine Elms in 1899—had quite a struggle to get started. A "West Country" was banking at the other end, however, and soon we were threading out over that great criss-cross of lines which used to curve beyond the stupendous "A" box in its great gantry, the demolition of which made the approach to Waterloo so much more open and so much less romantic, and which always seemed to me the gateway to the West.

And with every yard came the memories. Here, on the left, where the London Necropolis Company had its curious little station, and where the turntable used to be, one used so often to glimpse one of the sparkling "D15s" waiting to draw a Bournemouth express, of which they seemed to have a monopoly, and perhaps a more serious-minded "L12" as well, destined for Portsmouth, or one of the small "Hoppers." And here today, as 241 (I shall drop the 30) gets into her unhurried stride, comes one of the Eastleigh "Arthurs" backing down to take a Salisbury intermediate. Ah, the Eastleigh "Arthurs"! What a sight for sore eyes they seemed to me when they first appeared, to put an end to that hideous reign of Urie—like the return of the *ancien régime* after some abominable revolution.

I recall the first sight I had of one—*King Arthur* himself—gliding to rest at Platform 13 at the head of what was soon to become the "Atlantic Coast Express." Ah, the consolation of that moment, when one saw that urbane chimney in place of those nightmare stovepipes and gazed in rapture on that superlative Drummond tender! Not that there was not a great deal of Urie about the engine—nearly all Urie in fact—but without, and gloriously without, his blemishes. Indeed, the Eastleigh "Arthurs" are a remarkable outcome of a long and wonderful loco-

motive epoch upon the old South Western line, embodying as they do the characteristics of Drummond, Urie and Maunsell. Drummond tenders, Urie "N15" engines, but with Maunsell chimneys and steam pipes. And very beautiful they are—far more beautiful to my eye than their Scottish successors. This one proves to be No. 30451—legendary *Sir Lamorak*—whose tremendous run from Waterloo to Salisbury way back in 1925 is still the subject of reverential mention whenever the glories of the Southern are revived for chronicle.

Driver Ennals himself is an old Brighton man. He refers to the men of the Sou'-West as "Drum's men." No. 241 is a Drum's man, if ever there was one. Unaltered in all the years since first designed. Some of the later ones—those which did not have the sandbox over the front drivers—have been slightly changed by having the smokebox wings removed. One of those senseless silly alterations which have defaced so many fine engines—like the disgusting stovepipes on the very similar Macintosh tanks on the Caledonian. Why cannot mechanical engineers learn to leave well alone?

And now—a special thrill—we are approaching old Vauxhall. How many times at various periods of my life have I not stood upon its platforms, engine-watching. Here is the very spot where I saw my first "Nelson"; high-stepping down one April afternoon, if I remember rightly, with indicator shelter obscuring the front-end and an enormous test train snaking behind her huge tender. The most powerful engine in Britain at the time, and well she looked it—a truly magnificent thoroughbred, with "class" in every contour, built in the grand tradition of English locomotives, a worthy descendant of an illustrious line. I can feel again the pride and exaltation with which I regarded her. Here was something to make the hateful Great Western think—something to take the copper smile off its tapered face! Not for long, it must be confessed. When, a short time later, I witnessed my first "King" at Paddington, even I—fanatical partisan of the Sou'-Western that I was and am—had to acknowledge that Swindon had thought to some purpose.

Then, even as I see a "Nelson," running light, approaching us at Loco-

motive Junction, the signals go against us and Driver Ennals brings us to a stand. For a moment or two it is quiet in the cab. Sounds reach us from outside. The gauge marks 140, and I think how exactly like a patient old horse No. 241 looks, standing there awaiting the signal to start again and to tug at her heavy load with an almost imperceptible dip of her boiler as though she were putting her old head down to get a good pull on the shafts.

Very soon a train is heard approaching from Clapham, and here running tender first comes another veteran, one of the "H15s," another class that has fortunately escaped alteration throughout its long and honourable life, and incidentally the only agreeable-looking engine Urie ever built. I have a strong regard for the "H15s," and among my countless memories of them two stand out.

We are leaving Waterloo one morning soon after the electrification of the Richmond line, and on the adjoining track a long and heavy corridor express is starting for Bournemouth. Nimbly accelerating, our electric soon overhauls the labouring giant at its head and into my appreciative vision comes my very first "H15." Dieted on "The Wonder Book of Railways," my imagination has been fired by the adjective "mammoth," much in vogue in those exhilarating pages. Excitedly I demand of my mother, does she think, will she confirm, that such an engine really is a "mammoth"? She does and will, and then the train is left panting behind us. Our flight, of course, though swift, is short. Comes the Vauxhall stop, and as we are starting again and just clear of the platforms the air is filled with a reverberating thunder, and there, already in the long stride of its express career, dismissing the presumption of upstart electrics with a contemptuous drift of steam, the "mammoth" overtakes us with a majestic finality that inspires even as it extinguishes.

The other memory is of a homeward holiday journey from Devon in the autumn of 1916. From Salisbury another "H15" is taking us to London. Rolling inwards from Clapham along this very road, we begin leisurely to overhaul a long hospital train, probably coming up from Southampton. Neck and neck the coaches run—corridor to corridor—so that signs and even words can be

exchanged between the two trains. One boy, white as a corpse, forces a smile in response to my excited signals and tries, but is too weak, to wave. Eagerly I turn round to my mother, to see if she has noticed, and am startled to find her in tears.

We get our signal and the journey is resumed. No. 241 has a little difficulty getting the brakes off the train but once she does so she recovers her gait with remarkable steadiness and absence of strain. Here on the left the smoke and grime of Nine Elms looms into sight, as always with its alignment of mighty silhouettes and vague tantalising shapes which might be anything or nothing. In all the near four miles of exciting possibilities which this teeming stretch of line signifies to those railway-minded, it has always seemed to me that the very nub or crown is Waterloo Siding. Here, where the great engines from the sheds attend the signal to go up to the terminus and set forth on their schedules, or stand—their journeys done—waiting permission to return to their stables, is surely the most fabulously rewarding of all sidings in the world?

Scarcely have I ever passed it without seeing some great machine standing tensed upon its track, a spectacle of might and majesty. Here I beheld my first "Merchant Navy," for the shock of which I was fortunately prepared, and here too my first "Q1"—for the shock of which nothing in the world could prepare one. And here, as memory delves further back, have I seen a shining array of vanished giants and visions splendid, whose presence will always haunt this siding for me—Drummonds, Uries, Maunsells, in all their glittering liveries and with all their cherished names and numbers, and in which only old No. 241 and her hard-working, long-enduring sisters have a participation even longer than my own.

We drift down to West London Sidings, taking our train slowly through the carriage washing plant, and even as I call Driver Ennal's attention to his old love, the Brighton line, coming in on the left, the past presents itself once again to the present in the delightful shape of the veteran Pullman car *Myrtle*, sole survivor of the fabulous "Southern Belle" of 1908, the erstwhile glory of the

B.S.C.R., now serving as a buffet car
the "Normandy Express," which
happens to be standing in the carriage
house.

The journey is all but over. In the last
few hundred yards we are overtaken by
an *Lamorak*, with a train of three coaches,
which disappears in a flurry of steam on the
down fast through the station, dreaming
perhaps of the loads he once took over
the mighty grades of Hewish and
St. Martin and those hurricane whirlwind

descents along the valley of the Axe.
Very gently, silently and tranquilly,
under Driver Ennal's skilled hand, old
No. 241 glides down her appointed
carriage road and comes to rest—as I
do—with a sigh.