

The
GREEN DIAMOND

*Panama
Limited*

to
*Chicago,
St. Louis
from
New Orleans*



Illinois Central

Two eye witness accounts of the
1916 PANAMA LIMITED.



All Concerned



It is the nature of any historical society to look back to past events, so it is especially pleasant to announce an event to which we can all look forward. That event, of course is the general membership meeting of our society which will be held Saturday, October 24, 1981 at the Chicago Heights Holiday Inn. Meeting Committee Chairman Dave Fraser has lined up an ambitious schedule. Members having movies or slide programs which they would like to show should send a description addressed to our meeting chairman at our new address listed below. Members wishing to become society officer are encouraged to write the nominating committee regarding the activities in which they are interested. Several standing committees are being formed including publications and membership.

Issue Number 5



**ILLINOIS CENTRAL
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

5566 South Elizibeth
Lombard, Illinois 60148

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Terry McMahon	- Vice President
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TRAVEL WITH THE RAMBLER

REPRINTED FROM
DECEMBER 1916 ISSUE
OF THE ILLINOIS CENTRAL
MAGAZINE

The Rambler was in high spirits, and unusually talkative for him. He had rode the new Panama Limited on its initial trip from Chicago through to New Orleans, and doubled back on the 12:30 p.m. from the latter city; saying as he did so, that, while he would have liked to have seen some of his friends in the Crescent City he really didn't have time to stop for rest or refreshment there as long as he had such a good home on the Limiteds. He was enthusiastic about the trip, and the trains in both directions, and insisted on telling me all about them. "Immediately on boarding the train in Chicago," he said, "I telephoned back to the office some instructions that I had purposely refrained from giving before leaving. This I did in order that I might seek the little shelf in the corner beside the writing desk in the observation parlor, on which the telephone rested, and enjoy the novelty of transacting a small part of my real business in that way at the last moment before departing." According to his talk, immediately after telephoning he went into the dining car for his noon-day lunch, "and say," was his enthusiastic comment, "you ought to have seen how pretty that car looked. With its soft tinted ceiling, mahogany side walls and snowy linen and glistening silverware it made a color scheme for an artist. I was the first one in. Everything was fresh and new. The waiters stood in line, each at his station along one side of the car. A beautiful bouquet of flowers was on each table. The train shed being dark the car was illuminated, and the little table lights in combination with the reflected light from above shed a warm glow over all. Really, I am not sentimental, but there was something about the whole appearance of things there that made you feel as if you were in the dining room de luxe of the finest hotel in the country. The meal that was served was of such excellence as to in no way dispel the first impressions of satisfaction and genial feeling created by the car as a whole.

"The lunch over, the next logical thing to do was to go into the buffet car, and with a magazine from off the shelf sit quietly for an hour over a cigar. The latter finished, remembering that in my hurry of the forenoon to get away I had neglected a duty that I owed my personal appearance. I went into the barber's room of the buffet car for a shave. The tonsorial artist was busy, having a man in the chair and two waiting; but as there were





comfortable seats in the room I became one on the waiting list. The time passed very quickly before my turn came, as there was something in the general tone of the shop, and in fact of the car and the entire train itself, that seemed to be conducive to good fellowship, and we that were waiting chatted and told stories in the usual way of travelers. There was a delegation on the train from a commercial association, en route for a visit to a similar organization of the Crescent City. Knowing what this meant at the southern end in the way of a probable banquet, I was not surprised, as I sat there, at seeing one of the delegation come in with a suitcase in his hand, saying that he would like to have his dress suit pressed some time at the barber's leisure, as he left home in a rush and was afraid that he had rather mussed his clothes up in a hurried packing.

"My turn in the barber's chair came in time, after which, feeling much refreshed, I bethought me to write a personal letter, and so finding the desk with the writing materials in that same car not in use, I sat down and undoubtedly surprised my correspondent by as good a letter as I knew how to write on the classy Panama Limited stationery. The afternoon had thus far worn away very quickly and I was by no means travel worn, but for the sake of a change went back into the composite car, in which were the drawing rooms and compartments in the forward end; the other end being devoted to an observation parlor. On my way to the latter, as I was going through the passage my way was blocked by a sweet little miss of about four years of age who came out of one of the compartments. I naturally smiled at her and tried to gently put her aside. But she mistaking my smile and accompanying salutation for good comradeship, was inclined not give way for my passage but to chat with me, for she held up her doll and told me that her eyes would shut. I accepted the challenge, and was talking with the little one about 'dolly,' when a lady, apparently her mother, made her appearance from the adjoining drawing room door-way and calling the child said, 'Come here, Dorothy: don't stand in the gentleman's way.' In finally passing I could not help seeing that the occupants of the drawing room and of the compartment were evidently of the same family, for several others were visible in the two rooms, the latter seemingly being used en suite. Incidentally I observed the ladies' maid of the train in the compartment, evidently busy in some sort of professional services for the ladies of the party.



New Train to the South

By Fred Ash

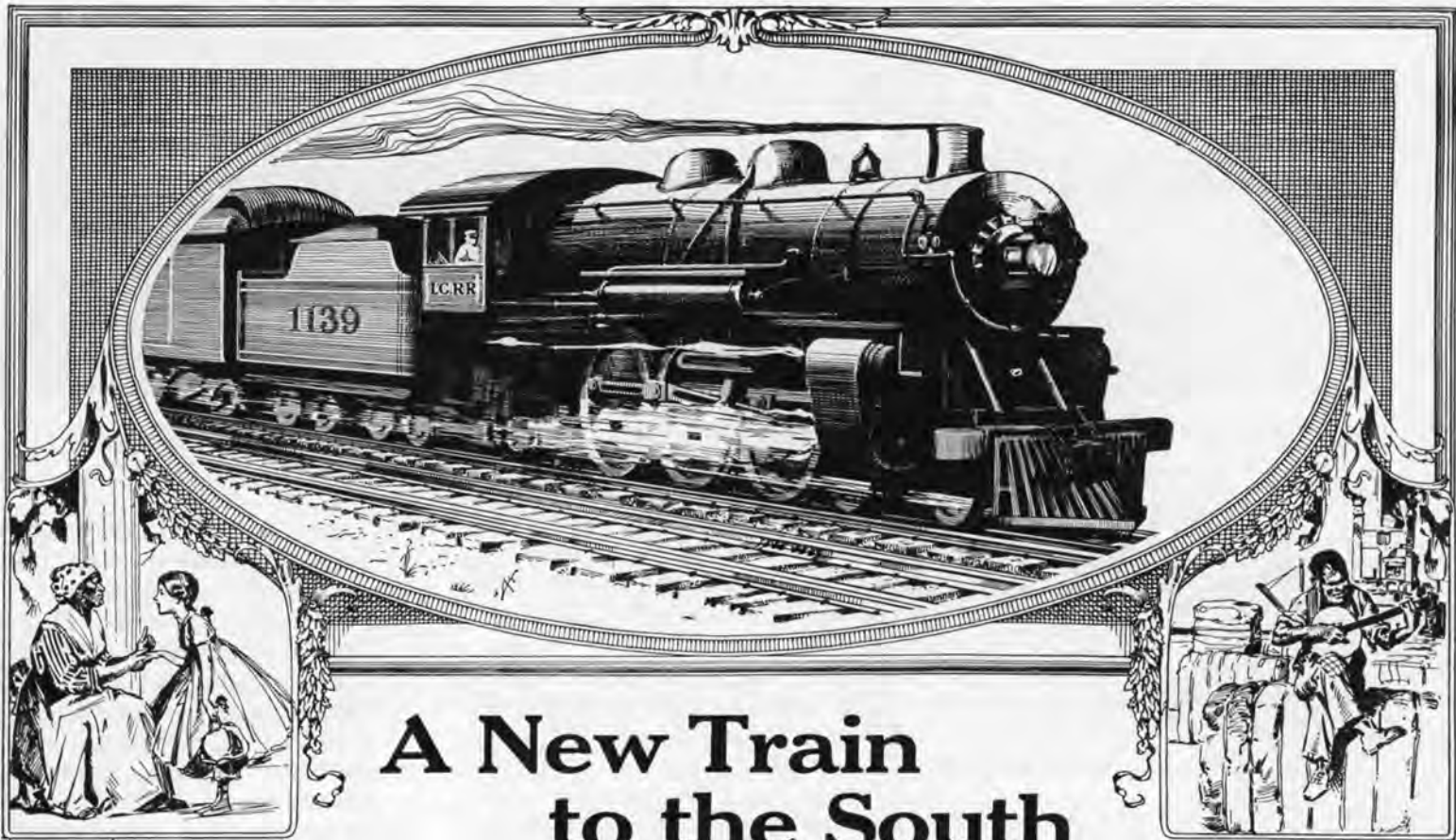
The moment when the gates to the station platform open and the crowd descends to trackside amid the muffled chant of engines and the talk of far away cities is always somewhat magical. On October 15, 1916 the passengers who traded the noontime sunlight of Chicago's lakeshore for the shadowy interior of the Central Station must have been especially spellbound. Awaiting them in sparkling reticence were the crew, the cars, and the locomotive of the newly equipped Panama Limited ready for their maiden run. Never had anything approaching the splendor of this train appeared on Illinois Central rails.

The importance of this new train was aptly described in a railroad press release: "This new all-steel Panama Limited should not be confused with the Illinois Central train formerly bearing the same name. It is an additional train, and, as has been stated, it is new throughout, not only in the equipment, but in schedules and in the purpose for which it was created." The Panama Limited's history may actually be traced to February 4, 1911 when the Chicago and New Orleans Limited was renamed and placed on a 25 hour schedule. The train was christened after the Panama Canal, which was then in the process of construction and which was considered the largest engineering feat ever attempted. Great expectations were held for the future of the port of New Orleans due to the completion of the canal.

The canal was open to traffic on August 15, 1914. Over two years later the Panama Limited was re-born as a distinctly superior train. It joined the ranks of elite extra-fare all Pullman trains which were becoming the hallmark of a first class railroad. The adoption of a fast schedule and new equipment on the Queen and Crescent Limited of the Southern Railway was a particular threat to the midwest to New Orleans traffic of the Illinois Central. With the purchase of a fleet of powerful Pacific type engines and the elimination of several stops, the "new" Panama Limited cut two hours from the previous schedule. The "old" Panama Limited remained on its schedule as the New Orleans Limited southbound and the Chicago and St. Louis Limited northbound. The greatest change, however, was in the passenger cars; all - Pullman equipment was the corner stone for the unexcelled service for which the train was to be known.

The new Panama Limited was actually composed of four trainsets and twenty locomotives. The new Pacific engine, numbered 1139 through 1158, boasted 75-1/2 inch drivers and were the recent products of the American Locomotive Company's Brooks Works. The usual train consist was six cars: a buffet car, a dining car, three drawing room sleeping cars, and composite sleeping and observation car. Cars were of all steel construction and were electrically lighted.

The most lasting memories of any trip over the Illinois Central are often those of the dining car. The 1916 Panama Limited was certainly no exception. These roomy cars seated thirty-six patrons with either two or four to a table. Five overhead electric fans silently administered to the diner's



A New Train to the South

Makes its maiden trip from Chicago November 15th. It marks a new era in railroad circles. It is not only a new train, but the finest train ever operated between the North and the South.

The Panama Limited to New Orleans in 23 Hours

places Creole-land at the doorstep of the Middle West. It takes you to our Paris on the Mississippi in an over-night trip. This morning in Chicago—tomorrow, lunching, if you will, at some famous New Orleans Cafe, where such marvels of French cookery as Creole Gumbo, Cray-fish Bisque and Coffee Brulo, are at your command.

Materially faster than our own previous schedule.
Many hours faster than any other route.

Only twenty-three hours to the Crescent City; an afternoon of rest, a delicious dinner, a sound night's sleep, and the next morning already in another land, where one side of the street is a glimpse of the old world and the other a striking example of twentieth century progress.

Leaves Chicago at 12:30 P.M.—Arrives New Orleans at 11:30 the Next Morning

The Panama Limited is the streak of luxury that connects North and South. It follows much of the Old Acadian trail, by which the French Canadians sought sunny Louisiana.

It is the all-steel train palatial, carrying travelers to New Orleans en route to Cuba, Panama, Central and South America, California and Texas. Sumptuous Pullmans, compartment-drawing room-observation, and buffet cars and dining cars; superb meals, barber, shower bath, telephone service before departure, ladies maid—and only one night on the way. Eat lunch in New Orleans tomorrow.

High Class Regular Steamship Service

from New Orleans to Havana, Panama and Central America via ships of the United Fruit Company's "Great White Fleet," and to Havana via ships of the Southern Pacific. New Orleans is also the gateway to Texas, and to California via the Southern Route.

ILLINOIS CENTRAL

TICKET OFFICES: 76 West Adams Street, Scott's Hotel Ticket Offices, Central Station (Michigan Ave. and 12th St.) and 434 St., 53d St., and 63d St. Stations
Phones: Central 6270; Automatic 64-472 Address Mail Inquiries to S. G. Hatch, Passenger Traffic Manager, Chicago 1



Reprinted from the November 17, 1916 issue of the Memphis Commercial A

"The loneliest place I have ever been is in the cab of a locomotive drawing a train of human freight, and going over the rails at the rate of 60 miles an hour at the break of day.

"The Illinois Central is very proud of its new Panama Limited. The train makes the run from New Orleans to Chicago and from Chicago to New Orleans within 23 hours."

"The first train of the southbound Panama Limited left Chicago last Wednesday at noon. The train arrived in Memphis at about 1 o'clock, and in a few minutes went speeding on its way south. Prominent railroad officials, leading bankers and business men of Chicago, and leading bankers and business men of St. Louis were invited to make the initial trip. These worthies filled three cars. The first train numbered 10 cars. I was invited to make the trip from Memphis to Canton. I made the journey in the cab of the big locomotive as the personal guest of my esteemed friend, Charley Barnett, who is one of the crack engineers of the Illinois Central Railroad. The only things the train took on in Memphis were the Commercial Appeal and myself. The train arrived on the minute. Silently it came into the Grand Central Station. Engines were shifted in three minutes. It took a few more minutes to load the Commercial Appeal and we were ready. Then Barnett presented me with a pair of overalls and a big coat. I put on the big overalls and had to partially remove them in order to get into my inside pockets. There was no noise or confusion incident to the leaving. Conductor Krier, who is the son-in-law of Conductor Bill Woods, of happy memory, exchanged a word with Barnett, and without ringing a bell or the blowing of a whistle, we glided out of the train shed. There was one

stop scheduled between Memphis and New Orleans. The journey is almost continuous. We crossed Broadway and crossed lower down, Central shops and were in Nonconnah we began to speed. A few minutes we had accelerated to 60 miles an hour. The ballast was good, the road was open, and the express its soul in speed. It got a shove from the labor did not seem to be devoured a shovelful of ballast. The engine began to speed. It seemed to be solid as a rock. Barnett and he cried 'Charley' on a frosty night. So much for the rails that the train slipped. Charley gave the sand made the slip window all things but passed small towns which were ns. Their people are have a splendid historical centers of little respect to them the except units. Our Grenada. From time Central trains had but a lack and alas, the spirit of speed, a town faster than a sea was an Illinois Central in Memphis at 6 o'clock Wednesday, had the others. It is king Limited has dethroned brother was the engine train. We had a m which is just a few



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7, 1916 issue of the Memphis Commercial Appeal

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stop scheduled between Memphis and Canton. The journey is almost 200 miles long. We crossed Broadway easily, stopped at a crossing lower down, passed the Illinois Central shops and were off for Nonconnah. At Nonconnah we began to gather speed, and in a few minutes we had accumulated a stride of 60 miles an hour. The rails were heavy, the ballast was good, the ties were sound. The road was open, and the locomotive began to express its soul in speed. It made its speed easily. It got a stride and kept it. Its labor did not seem to be great. But it devoured a shovelful of coal every minute. The engine began to ride hard. The track seemed to be solid enough; I looked over at Barnett and he cried back, "sand." It was a frosty night. So much frost had settled on the rails that the engine's driving wheels slipped. Charley gave her sand. The grit of the sand made the slight jar. From my left window all things became subjective. We passed small towns which have their traditions. Their people are proud of them. They have a splendid history. These towns are the centers of little worlds, but with all respect to them they were nothing to us except units. Our first objective was Grenada. From time immemorial the Illinois Central trains had been stopping at Sardis, but alack and alas, there was a sacrifice to the spirit of speed, and we went through that town faster than a scared bird. Coming north was an Illinois Central train due to arrive in Memphis at 6 o'clock. This train until Wednesday, had the right of way over all others. It is king no more. The Panama Limited has dethroned it. Charley Barnett's brother was the engineer of the northbound train. We had a meeting point at Hardy, which is just a few miles north of Grenada,

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and the northbound train was ordered to go into the siding. We held the right of way. We had the "edge." We were overlords! And when we got to Hardy we calmly waited on the main track for a moment until George's train had taken the siding; and as he left his brother, Charles blew a blast of greeting, which also had in it a note of triumph. Riding a big locomotive is comparatively easy, if you know how. Ride it just as a boy rides horseback. Swing with the locomotive. Do not rest against a window frame or cab facing. Twenty-five years ago I rode from Memphis to Amory, Miss., with my old friend, Harry Litty. The locomotive for those times, was a big fellow. We made many stops, but we got there safely, for then Harry Litty, who, last summer made a rattling good race for a county office, and who now spends his leisure time fishing and reading, was regarded to be the speediest and the safest locomotive engineer in the south. Harry doesn't ride them any more. I met him a day or two ago and told him of my trip, and he said: "I am afraid to ride them; they scare me." My ignorance is probably the secret of my Harry's locomotive made a lot of noise and vibrated, because in those days the rails were light and joints were low. But the big fellow that Charley Barnett runs rides easily. It has a big swing. If you did not have imagination it would lull you to sleep. The only noise is the shoveling of the coal, and Mr. Short, who was the fireman, was busy all the way from Memphis to Grenada transferring coal from the tender to the fire-box. But even there Mr. Short's work has been made easier. The fire doors are opened and closed by air. At Grenada negroes came aboard and pulled the coal down. But Short's work is still hard. He transferred about ten tons of coal into the



furnace of this locomotive on the journey. You read in novels about the engineer's hands being "upon the throttle." That is in a novel. In the engine the engineer's hand is on the air brake. Barnett sets the steam lever, and then gives attention to the air. Air, you know, can stop a train almost within its length. When I rode with Litty we had a coaloil lamp for a headlight. The headlight of Barnett's locomotive the other night was electric.

"At Grenada the tank was filled with water—that is partly filled with water. The coal was drawn down closer to the engine. The cargo of Commercial Appeals was taken off and we were out for Canton. We were on the minute, but the track is so alluring for speed south of Grenada that Barnett let her go, and when we got to going good the telegraph poles began to look like iron weeds. Down below Winona day began to break and I began to feel lonely. Behind us were 150 passengers, but it seemed that we were hundreds of miles away from them. We passed villages and farm houses but they were as dead things. The night seemed to be dying, and the day was not yet born. Over in the east was the red of the sky, as not until the long run was ending did the sunlight awaken the sleeping earth. Almost silently we drew into Canton. The story of the trip had gone ahead of us. Many railroad employes were there. One negro passed a dollar to another negro, and the negro who kept the dollar had won it on a bet that Mr. Barnett would bring the Panama Limited in on time. That is exactly what Mr. Barnett did. We arrived at Canton on the second. I enjoyed the journey immensely because I slept so soundly when it was over."



Corrections

Cover photos for the previous two issues were provided by the Illinois Central Gulf railroad.

Photos of the wreck at Mounds, Illinois are from the collection of Ron Manwaring.

Continued from page 6

comfort as white jacketed waiters served "the choicest foods of the markets of North or South." Crab-avocado salad, rack of lamb, and shrimp gumbo were only a few of the dishes which quickly made Illinois Central cuisine famous.

Relaxing in the mahogany finished interior after a hearty meal and enjoying the social intercourse which travel often stimulates was the highlight of many a business or pleasure trip.

The Pullman standard sleeping cars, like the other equipment on the train were specially built for this service. Each car cost over twenty thousand dollars and were the first passenger cars of all-steel construction on the railroad. The six wheeled trucks under each end of the car weighed more than many of the wooden freight cars which waited on side tracks for the passage of the new train. Inside, the walls gleamed of mahogany while the upholstery was of soft and harmonious coloring. Each berth was supplied with special reading lamps and wardrobe hangers. The drawing rooms had the usual upper and lower berths and a sofa berth plus a connecting private toilet and lavatory. The railroad boasted that the dressing room facilities were especially commodious. An expert ladies maid was available to give special assistance to elderly ladies and to ladies traveling with children.

The buffet car was a luxury designed for men in which they could smoke, enjoy the contents of a well stocked bar, or read the magazines furnished in the car lounge. The forward third of the car was devoted to baggage, immediately followed by a barber shop which extended the full width of the car. A bath room with tub and shower facilities was located across from the buffet room containing the

attendants larder. The main room seated twenty-four in comfortable lounge chairs or at two tables. Also furnished in mahogany, the buffet car offered all of the services of a fine men's club.

The last car on the Panama Limited was a composite sleeping and observation car. It included two drawing rooms and four compartments so located that a drawing-room and a compartment, or two or more compartments could be used en-suite. At the rear of the car was a large observation parlor with comfortable floral pattern arm chairs. This room also contained a library of popular books and magazines and a writing desk stocked with gilt trimmed Panama Limited stationary. Leading from the parlor was the observation platform.

With the introduction of the new Panama Limited, the Illinois Central had three Chicago to New Orleans trains; the southbound New Orleans Special and the northbound Through Mail, trains 1 and 2, were unaffected by the new schedule. Besides the introduction of trains 7 and 8 the new timecard showed trains 207 and 208 carrying the Panama Limited name from St. Louis to Carbondale. Whether these trains carried cars other than the New Orleans to St. Louis sleeper is unknown. Farther south, the Gulf and Ship Island Railroad adjusted the schedule for their Jackson to Gulfport train even though trains 1 and 2 carried the Chicago to Gulfport through Pullman. Those trains also carried a Chicago to Eagle Pass sleeper. Trains 3 and 4 carried Chicago to Hot Springs and Chicago to San Antonio sleeping cars. The Panama Limited carried no connecting sleepers, although the Southern Pacific amended its timetable to allow passengers to connect with the Sunset Limited.

"Reaching the observation parlor I thought of another letter that I might use my leisure in writing, but watch as I did for some time for an opportunity to get at the writing desk, I was unable to do so, as it was constantly pre-empted, first by one lady and then another, all of whom seemed interested in scratching off some little note or notes on the train. However, in the observation parlor again the time passed quickly and pleasantly; in the watching of the passing landscape and in reading the magazines from the well filled shelves, so that I was much surprised on consulting my watch to note that according to an ordinary day's routine dinner time was not far away. But, for the want of my usual exercise, so largely taken in propitious times in the open, the thought of dinner did not appeal until it occurred to me to put on my heavy coat and go and sit out on the observation platform, where at least I would have the benefit of a crisp, bracing air in lieu of my usual walk before the evening meal. This I did, in company with several other gentlemen who evidently were of the same mind; and, in fact, for a little while we were joined by a lady who was a member of the party of which one of the gentlemen formed a part."



The Rambler was so enthusiastic in this telling of the train that he gave no opportunity for me to get in a word. But so much in earnest was he that I felt it incumbent upon myself to say something in recognition of his effort and to prove I was listening. So, in lieu of any better thought remarked, "All very fine, no doubt, and I am glad of it. But I fail to see wherein it was absolutely necessary for you to take any special action to produce an edge for your dinner. Judging from what I know of you, there is nothing the matter with your appetite." "No," was the laughing response, "I guess not. Anyway, I did surely eat a good dinner that night in the dining car, for the meal was temptingly served and the viands were very palatable."



"Later, as the train was lighted up, I went through the entire length of it to see it in its full illumination, and I assure you the sight was extremely gratifying. Substantial and beautifully homelike and comfortable, would by my way of epitomizing it as a whole. Some might add the word 'elegant,' but that is such an abused word that I will let it alone, although there certainly is a degree of quiet and refined elegance in the Panama Limited

that would possibly make the term admissible. But understand," he continued with emphasis, "elegance in that case would mean nothing garrish. The quiet, refined taste of the day predominates, and not the old glitter and unsubstantial showiness of the days that are now fortunately passed."

"I suppose," interrupted Snap-Shot Bill, who had wandered in and heard the last of this peroration, "that you were so enamored with the 'refined brilliancy,' as you would express it, that you found all about you on that train that you forgot to go to bed." "Nothing of the kind," said the Rambler, with a genial smile, possibly with the thought of having a more attentive audience in Bill than he had thus far in me, "I went to bed all right." "Compartment or drawing room?" was Bill's somewhat impudently put question, as he settled down in a chair by the side of the Rambler's desk, and, drawing his feet up on the rounds of the chair began to gather from his pocket the "makings" of a cigarette. "Neither, but a straight double berth, and an upper one at that," was the reply. "And by the way," he added, "I was rather glad of one little feature in connection with the sleeping car equipment that I found on the Limited. I refer to the split curtains of the sections. You see a lady had the lower berth of my section, and I could not but think as I went up the stepladder into my upper that she, who had evidently retired some time before, felt more comfortable with the thought that the two sections were individually curtained." "Thoughtful man," remarked Snap-Shot Bill in an undertone as he blew a cloud of smoke through his nostrils from the cigarette which he had made and lighted. "But I suppose you had chatted with her in the course of the afternoon by virtue of being a seat mate, just to enliven the journey a bit for her," he continued, with a little wink at me. "Didn't lay eyes on her," protested the Rambler. "From the time the porter deposited my grip in the seat on boarding the train, I was in the observation room or the buffet car all the afternoon and evening," was the somewhat terse answer. To this Bill, with mock severity, retorted, "How mean." "Keep still, will you Bill?" I expostulated, "the Rambler has got himself to bed on that train and perhaps he will be asleep in a minute so that I can slide out. He has had me cornered here for a long time, and while I am interested in the train I really have to do some work once in a while." "O, you don't have to go yet," retorted the Rambler, "it's true I did go to sleep rather



quickly and slept soundly thereafter. Not before, however, the thought occurred to me of the contrast between what I should call the human side of the train, as expressed by the general interior and its animation as I had seen it during the afternoon and evening and its purely mechanical aspect from the outside as it sped along in the night. There is not much more to say. We arrived at New Orleans on the dot and I left there on the return trip also on the dot. The last was but a repetition of the first except that I noticed more particularly than on the down trip how popular and busy the ladies' maid was as I passed from time to time from one portion of the train to the other. She had several manicures, besides which it was surprising to note how many small attentions she found to give the ladies in various parts of the train, and how many little commissions the ladies thought of for her to execute.



"It was on the return trip however, that to freshen up a bit from my hours of travel, after being shaved by the barber in the buffet car, I tried the shower bath adjoining his room. It was decidedly restful and," --here he stopped talking and looked quizzically but smilingly at Snap-Shot Bill. That irrepressible had reached over and fished a piece of paper from off the Rambler's desk and, with a half comical and half serious expression on his face, was busily writing on it. Falling into his mischievous mood, the Rambler waited until Bill was through, and then patiently and expectantly awaited my reading of what Bill had written, the latter passing the slip to me when he had finished. After reading it, I passed it without comment over to the Rambler who burst into a hearty laugh as he read, "The Rambler took a bath on this date."



The Rambler seemed to have talked himself out as to his trip on the Panama Limited, and notwithstanding the jocose vein that Bill had injected into the narrative, aided slightly perhaps by myself, I really was interested in hearing what he had said about it; for I had seen the Panama Limited when on exhibition and was greatly taken with it. So I said, as Bill and I started to go, "There is no doubt, Rambler, but what the phrase used on the invitations to visit the exhibition of the Panama is correct. You will remember it was claimed that it was 'An Impressive, Perfect, Modern Train.'" "By the way," exclaimed the Rambler, "I forgot one little thing. You know I am interested in a certain commercial stock and watch for it in the market reports every day, for if it goes right I hope eventually to

make a little something out of it. So just before No. 8 started from New Orleans I telephoned a broker, asking him what the quotation was that morning. I was answered by some clerk who was evidently not familiar with the figures, for instead of telling me what the latter were, he simply said, 'You say you are on the Panama Limited? Why don't you look on the market sheet posted in the Buffet Car?' This last I had not noticed for I had not been in that car since boarding the train at New Orleans. But you can imagine I felt pretty good on the way up on finding by that sheet that my stock had advanced a sufficient number of points to make my investment a profitable one."

