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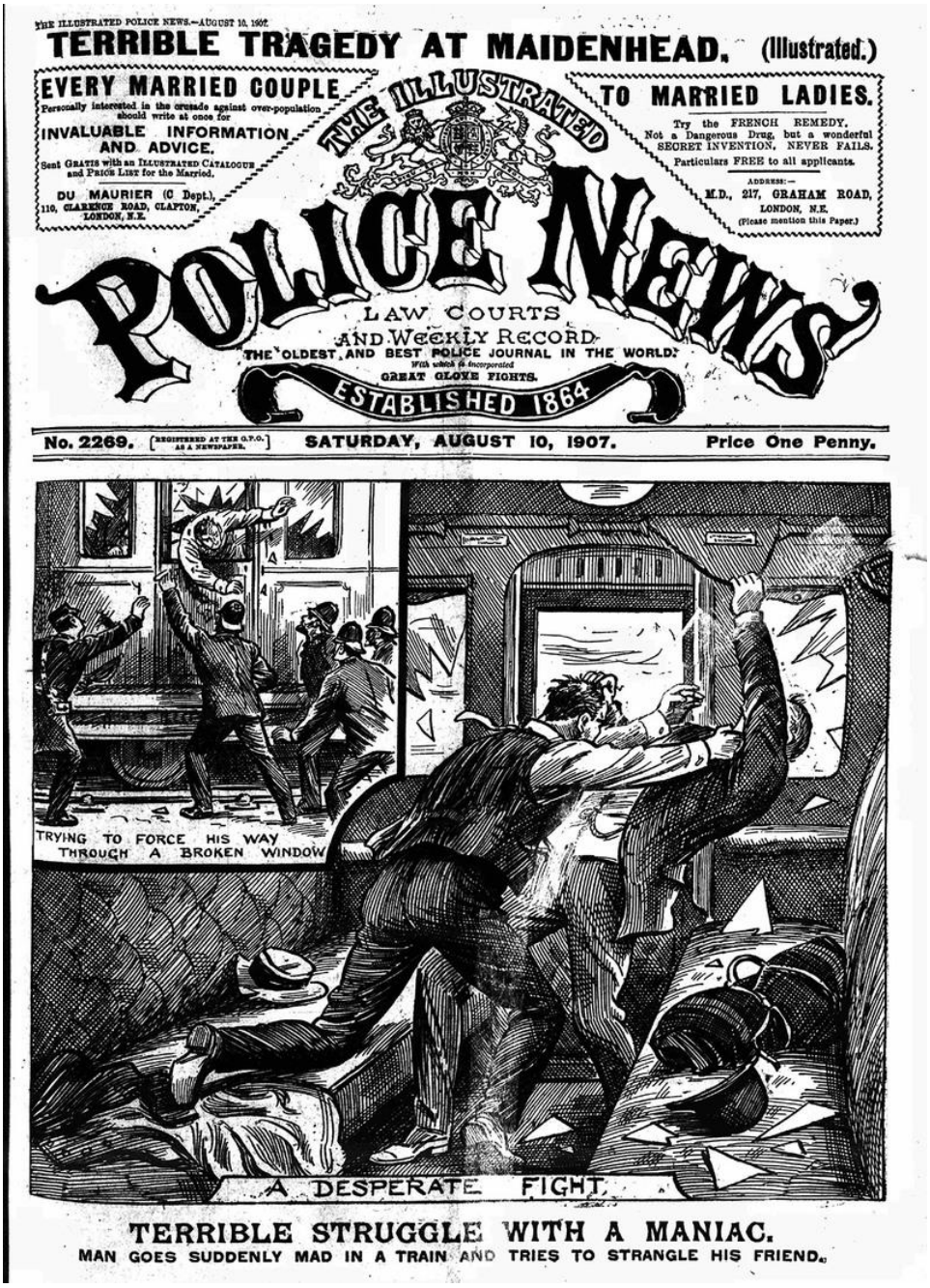

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TRYING TO FORCE HIS WAY THROUGH A BROKEN WINDOW

A DESPERATE FIGHT.

TERRIBLE STRUGGLE WITH A MANIAC.
MAN GOES SUDDENLY MAD IN A TRAIN AND TRIES TO STRANGLE HIS FRIEND.

Reading Pack: ‘Travels of the Mind and Body’

Hosted by Chloé Holland and Anne-Louise Russell

Wednesday 19th July 5.15pm
Senate House

Journal of Victorian Culture, 2016
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Shattered Minds: Madmen on the Railways, 1860–80

Amy Milne-Smith

In 1863, the *London Review* published a lengthy article on what it proclaimed was a dangerous new reality. 'Travelling express with madmen is, unfortunately, not an improbable circumstance of real life. And if there be any tendency to mania, the excitement of the rapid transit through the air is the very thing to bring it on.'[1] This author not only warned certified lunatics were getting on trains, he also cautioned that travelling by rail could make a seemingly sane man go mad. This was not an offhand or isolated remark. The 1860s were awash with fears about violence and danger on the railway.[2] Doctors warned that the intense vibrations of the railway carriage, the speed of travel, and the danger of traumatic accidents could unsettle both people's physical and mental health.[3] As Peter Bailey notes, the railway galvanized incipient fears about modernity, social interactions, and crime.[4] Yet there was even more for the Victorian man to fear on the railway; not only might you be attacked by a madman on a railway journey – you might become one.

Madmen on the railway offered ideal material for a moral panic. The classic features of a moral panic include: apprehension; consensus; antagonism; disproportionality; and instability.[5] David Garland has recently added that the moral panic also must touch on an issue that typifies larger social anxieties and invoke moral reflection.[6] Fears of madmen on the railway demonstrate all of these qualities as a unified voice called out the potential threat of the issue, highlighting larger fears of technology, failed masculinity, and increasing rates of madness. While the sociological concept of moral panic is typically used to understand contemporary events, recent scholarship suggests the term can

1. 'Madman on the Rail', *London Review of Politics, Society, Literature, Art, and Society*, 25 July 1863, p. 93. The weekly journal was not known for particularly sensational reporting.
2. Matthew Beaumont and Michael J. Freeman, 'Introduction: Tracks to Modernity', in *The Railway and Modernity: Time, Space and the Machine Ensemble*, ed. by Matthew Beaumont and Michael J. Freeman (Bern: Peter Lang, 2007), pp. 13–42 (p. 36).
3. Thomas Wharton Jones, *Failure of Sight from Railway and Other Injuries of the Spine and Head* (London: J. Walton, 1855); William Camps, *Railway Accidents or Collisions: Their Effects upon the Nervous System* (London: H. K. Lewis, 1866); William Herbert Page, *Injuries of the Spine and Spinal Cord and Nervous Shock* (London: J. & A. Churchill, 1885).
4. Peter Bailey, 'Adventures in Space: Victorian Railway Erotics, or Taking Alienation for a Ride', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 9.1 (2004), 1–21 (pp. 4–5).
5. Erich Goode and Nachman Ben-Yehuda, *Moral Panics: The Social Construction of Deviance* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).
6. The term 'moral panic' is a rich one and David Garland's recent expanded definition is useful: see David Garland, 'On the Concept of Moral Panic', *Media Culture*, 4.1 (2008), 9–30 (pp. 10–11).

usefully be pushed back to include nineteenth-century topics.[7] The classic moral panic, drawing on latent fears and triggered by sensational events, lasts only a few months.[8] Yet in this case, because there were so many underlying issues at play, and because there seemed no easy solution to the problem, the panic cycle spread over two decades.

A flurry of articles appeared across the daily and weekly papers of seemingly sane men being driven mad by railway travel, rising as a topic in the 1860s, peaking in the 1870s, and then virtually disappearing. The alarm was widespread, as evidenced by the broad range of local and national newspapers covering such stories, and yet the crisis was certainly overblown in proportion to the number of actual attacks.[9] Unlike many railway panics that focused on anxieties about technology and danger, the piquancy of these articles came from the combination of technological progress and failed masculinity.[10] It was the spectacle of male minds breaking down that fuelled this news cycle. The aim of this article is to consider the rise and fall of the railway madman as a figure of particular anxiety.

Apprehensions of a growing epidemic of madness rose steeply in the 1860s. The number of certified lunatics under asylum care greatly outstripped the rising general population, and the problem seemed to increase every year. Many worried if madness was curable at all.[11] While the scholarship on nineteenth-century asylums and psychiatry is a well-established field, the study of lay attitudes towards insanity is an area of relatively recent research.[12] It is only since the late 1990s that scholars have turned an increasing amount of attention to representations of madness in popular culture through art, literature, popular medicine, and within the family.[13] To understand popular ideas of

7. John Springhall, *Youth, Popular Culture and Moral Panics: Penny Gaffs to Gangsta-rap, 1830–1996* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998).
8. Clive Emsley, 'Violent Crime in England in 1919: Post-War Anxieties and Press Narratives', *Continuity and Change*, 23.1 (2008), 173–95 (p. 174).
9. The actual number of attacks is often unrelated to the number of casualties. Ronald Burns and Charles Crawford, 'School Shootings, the Media, and Public Fear: Ingredients for a Moral Panic', *Crime, Law and Social Change*, 32.2 (1999), 147–68 (pp. 149–50).
10. Michael J. Freeman, *Railways and the Victorian Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 19.
11. In the second half of the century, the population doubled, whereas the number of certified lunatics quintupled; see Andrew Scull, *Social Order/Mental Disorder: Anglo American Psychiatry in Historical Perspective* (Routledge: London, 1989), p. 229. Attempts to improve and reform lunacy legislation only highlighted their failures during a series of panics around wrongful confinement culminating in Select Committees in 1859–60 and again in 1877; see Andrew Scull, *The Most Solitary of Afflictions: Madness and Society in Britain, 1700–1900* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), p. 307.
12. David Wright, 'Getting Out of the Asylum: Understanding the Confinement of the Insane in the Nineteenth Century', *Social History of Medicine*, 10.1 (1997), 137–55 (p. 144).
13. For example: Valerie Beattie, 'The Mystery at Thornfield: Representations of Madness in *Jane Eyre*', *Studies in the Novel*, 28.4 (1996), 493–505; Joel Peter Eigen, *Witnessing Insanity: Madness and Mad-Doctors in the English Court* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); Allan Ingram with Michelle Faubert, *Cultural Constructions of Madness in Eighteenth Century Writing* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Jane E. Kromm, 'The Feminization of Madness in Visual Representation', *Feminist Studies*, 20.3 (1994), 507–35; Valerie Pedlar, *'The Most Dreadful Visitation': Male Madness in Victorian Fiction* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006); Akihito Suzuki, *Madness at Home: The Psychiatrist, the Patient, and the Family in England, 1820–1860* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

madness is to look beyond explicit conversations about asylum reform or the evolution of the psychiatric profession.

In addition, despite Elaine Showalter's claims, there was an equal concern about male and female lunatics.[14] A nuanced understanding of the total numbers of asylum inmates shows a parity of male and female inmates.[15] More importantly, madness was not exceptionally imagined as female in popular culture; recent scholarship has revealed that the problems of male lunacy were also at the top of people's minds.[16] Men were particularly vulnerable to external pressures ranging from overwork, sunstroke, a life of excess, or industrialized life writ large.[17] While there is a healthy body of work that examines the experience of madness and the importance of gender, there is a strong need for additional research that further explores popular ideas of masculinity and mental illness.[18]

This particular railway panic was about mad *men*. The threat of the railway seemed particularly troubling to men's mental health, as there is not a single report of a woman losing her mind on the railway.[19] The implications of lunacy were highly gendered over the first half of the nineteenth century; augmented gender hierarchies stressed reason as a fundamental quality of manhood.[20] As Sheila Sullivan has demonstrated, mid-Victorian sensational tales of male failure were part of a larger process to firm up new models of gendered authority.[21] For men, the loss of their wits could represent the loss of their manhood: it entailed a loss of control over themselves, their families, and their participation in the state. The potential physical power of a man out of his mind was also a real threat, and this physicality emphasized that a man without a mind was

14. Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture, 1830–1980* (London: Virago, 1987).
15. Joan Busfield, 'The Female Malady? Men, Women and Madness in Nineteenth-Century Britain', *Sociology*, 28.1 (1994), 259–77 (p. 264).
16. For example: Jade Shepherd, '"One of the Best Fathers until He Went Out of His Mind": Paternal Child-Murder, 1864–1900', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 18.1 (2013), 1–19; Jessica Slijkhuis and Harry Oosterhuis, '"Paralysed with Fears and Worries": Neurasthenia as a Gender-Specific Disease of Civilization', *History of Psychiatry*, 24.1 (2013), 79–93.
17. W. F. Bynum, 'Alcoholism and Degeneration in 19th Century European Medicine and Psychiatry', *British Journal of Addiction* 79.4 (1984), 59–70.
18. The historiography on women and mental illness is both deep and varied. See, for example: Lisa Appignanesi, *Mad, Bad and Sad: A History of Women and the Mind Doctors from 1800 to the Present* (London: Virago, 2009); German E. Berrios, 'Madness from the Womb', *History of Psychiatry*, 17.2 (2006), 223–35; Hilary Marland, *Dangerous Motherhood: Insanity and Childbirth in Victorian Britain* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).
19. The only time mad women are mentioned on the railways is in the rare context of a suicide attempt.
20. Mark S. Micale, *Hysterical Men: The Hidden History of Male Nervous Illness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 102–103. In fact, Herbert Sussman has stated that the opposite of Victorian manhood was not womanhood, but madness. Herbert Sussman, *Victorian Masculinities: Manhood and Masculine Politics in Early Victorian Literature and Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 48.
21. Sheila Sullivan, 'Spectacular Failures: Thomas Hopley, Wilkie Collins, and the Reconstruction of Victorian Masculinity', in *An Age of Equipoise: Reassessing Mid-Victorian Britain*, ed. by Martin Hewitt (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), p. 85.

little more than a beast.[22] Male targets of railway lunatics also had their masculinity challenged: the confines of the railway carriage placed men in essentially powerless and even emasculating positions as victims.

Victorians had a complex relationship with their railways; they were simultaneously the ultimate symbols of progress and technological triumph and a focus for the anxiety and horrors of modern life.[23] The expansion of railway traffic around the mid-century is staggering: in 1850 the railways carried over 64 million passengers a year, rising to 320 million by 1871.[24] Wolfgang Schivelbusch's masterful *The Railway Journey* demonstrated how the railway shaped almost all aspects of life across Europe in the nineteenth century.[25] It was a disruptive innovation that transformed how people lived, establishing modern patterns of urban and suburban life.[26] From the establishment of standardized time to disrupted social interactions or the legislation of limited liability joint stock companies, few areas of life were untouched by the railway.[27] And yet the mid-Victorian railway had a bad reputation, riddled with safety concerns and accusations of corruption and collusion at the highest levels.[28] This status persisted into the 1870s despite the fact that the actual safety records were strong, and continued to improve throughout the century.[29] Scholars have highlighted this dark side of the railway, tracing how tales of massive railway fires, derailments, and collisions with their large-scale destruction and high mortality rates were a staple of newspaper coverage from the earliest days of the railways.[30] The railways thus added new concerns to everyday life, and they could also

22. The gendered history of men's mental illness is still a woefully underdeveloped field compared to the rich history cited above. See Busfield, 'The Female Malady?'; Micale, *Hysterical Men*; Pedlar, '*The Most Dreadful Visitation*', p. 15.
23. Ralph Harrington, 'The Railway Accident: Trains, Trauma, and Technological Crises in Nineteenth-Century Britain', in *Traumatic Pasts: History, Psychiatry and Trauma in the Modern Age, 1870–1930*, ed. by Mark S. Micale and Paul Lerner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 31.
24. Eric J. Evans, *The Forging of the Modern State: Early Industrial Britain* (London: Longman, 1996), p. 420.
25. Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).
26. Ian Carter, *Railways and Culture in Britain: The Epitome of Modernity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), p. 10; A. K. B. Evans and John V. Gough, 'Preface', in *The Impact of the Railway on Society in Britain: Essays in Honour of Jack Simmons*, ed. by A. K. B. Evans and J. V. Gough (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), pp. xv–xvi.
27. Carter, *Railways and Culture in Britain*, p. 10.
28. David Kent, 'Containing Disorder in the "Age of Equipoise": Troops, Trains and the Telegraph', *Social History*, 38.3 (2013), 308–27 (p. 310).
29. Ralph Harrington, 'Railway Safety and Railway Slaughter: Railway Accidents, Government and Public in Victorian Britain', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 8.2 (2003), 187–207 (pp. 187–88).
30. For example: Nicholas Daly, 'Blood on the Tracks: Sensation Drama, the Railway, and the Dark Face of Modernity', *Victorian Studies*, 42.1 (1998), 47–76; Paul Fyfe, 'Illustrating the Accident: Railways and the Catastrophic Picturesque in *The Illustrated London News*', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 46.1 (2013), 61–91; Karen M. Odden, '"Able and Intelligent Medical Men Meeting Together": The Victorian Railway Crash, Medical Jurisprudence, and the Rise of Medical Authority', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 8.1 (2003), 33–54.

add an extra *frisson* when combined with other incipient fears.[31] The railway journey was neither benign nor routine in the popular imagination. The railway was an unstable setting, often full of danger and a focus of anxieties.

An increasingly competitive newspaper marketplace led to an aggressive news cycle with editors clamouring for ever more dramatic stories, and madness was a cornerstone of sensationalism.[32] While the press often liked to critique sensation novelists, by the 1860s the narrative style of many papers echoed the best sensation thrillers.[33] Stories of violence and murder were always popular, and the stranger the better.[34] There were few settings more sensational than the Victorian railway with its iconography of steam, rails, and power.[35] Add to that uncontrolled madmen and it should come as no surprise that newspapers clambered to publish even the most minor stories where madmen and the railway intersected. The excitement of reading about railway danger while riding on the railway made the stories even more immediate.

The mid-Victorian newspaper panic about madmen on the railways is essentially a story about the intersection of different forms of anxiety. The reasons that a few isolated incidents created such compelling copy for newspaper editors is because they hit on a number of issues that were a focus of concern: railways, technology, lunacy, manhood. Each of these issues was stimulating enough on their own, and in combination justified the publication of even the most insignificant event. The newspaper panic will be traced in three distinct ways. The first includes stories of established lunatics' contact with the railway. Lunatics escaped their keepers both in transit and from within the asylum, and such stories emphasized the idea that the mad could be anywhere. The second section focuses on the most common reports of railway madmen: men suddenly taken with madness in the midst of an ordinary journey. These reports focused on how, in an instant, a seemingly harmless passenger could transform into a crazed and violent psychotic. Such terrifying and sudden attacks exemplified the perceived fragile boundary between madness and sanity. Finally, the article concludes by examining the calls for policy reform that often framed these stories. Unproductive demands for greater railway safety measures and the inability of the asylums to live up to the promise of cure or prevention, helped to sustain the panic. This essay highlights that one way to trace Victorians' most resonant cultural fears is to look to when anxieties intersect. In this case, fear of the railway madman not only exposes qualms over the fragile state of men's

31. Robin J. Barrow, 'Rape on the Railway: Women, Safety, and Moral Panic in Victorian Newspapers', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 20.3 (2015), 341–56.
32. Created, in large part, through technological advances and the repeal of the stamp duty. Judith Rowbotham, Kim Stevenson, and Samantha Pegg, *Crime News in Modern Britain: Press Reporting and Responsibility, 1820–2010* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 39.
33. Dallas Liddle, 'Anatomy of a "Nine Days' Wonder": Sensational Journalism in the Decade of the Sensation Novel', in *Victorian Crime, Madness and Sensation*, ed. by Andrew Maunder and Grace Moore (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 89, 97–99.
34. Kevin Williams, *Get Me a Murder a Day! A History of Mass Communications in Britain* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 1997).
35. Fiction writers could turn to the locomotive as a compelling setting as well. Ian Carter, 'The Lady in the Trunk: Railways, Gender and Crime Fiction', *Journal of Transport History*, 23.1 (2002), 46–59; Daly, 'Blood on the Tracks'.

minds and frustration at the inability to stem the lunacy problem, it also emphasizes more fundamental concerns about modernity.

A PERILOUS RIDE Soames, C *Belgravia : a London magazine*; Jan 1873; 9, British Periodicals pg. 386

A PERILOUS RIDE

BY C. SOAMES

I WAS going home 'for good,' in schoolgirl phrase. It had always been a promise made by my father that, on attaining the mature age of seventeen, I should leave school, and become the mistress of his London house. And although the date fixed had always appeared to me dreadfully distant, the intervening time had at last worn itself away, and the delightful prospect of returning home had become a 'sober certainty of waking bliss.'

I cannot say that I was sorry to leave Burgminster, where I had been at school for seven long years. Not that Miss Winter was worse, I think, than other schoolmistresses; but still, school is school; and the present style of luxurious girls' schools had not then been invented. Young ladies of the present day, who are placed at some expensive school where they are accustomed to hot meat dishes or fish on the breakfast-table, with all sorts of bread and muffins, and their choice between tea, coffee, and chocolate, would have turned up their pretty noses at the plain tea and bread-and-butter of Miss Winter's breakfast-table. *En revanche*, we were better taught, I think, and instead of the modern educational system of attending concerts and shallow lectures from pretentious 'professors,' we had solid work to do. If we did not exactly realise Wordsworth's ideal world of 'plain living and high thinking,' we had, at all events, plain living and hard work.

But all this was now to cease—or almost all. My dear father declared that he could no longer do without me for a companion; and while he was at chambers—for he was a hard-working barrister—I was to go on by easy stages with the more ornamental parts of my education, under the guidance of some reliable teachers: especially with water-colour painting, in which art my father greatly desired me to become a proficient. A charming prospect I thought it; and the vision of the dear old house in Old Burlington-street, with my father waiting to welcome me, filled my eyes with tears as I stood on the platform of the Burgminster station waiting for the train which was to convey me to all these delights.

Miss Winter never would allow any of her girls to start upon a railway journey without herself placing them in the carriage which she thought most free from moral and physical dangers; and she took care now to place me in an empty compartment about the middle of the train, with a strict injunction to the guard to allow no one else — she did not choose to say 'no gentleman' — to enter it.

As this behest was always enforced by the addition of a half-crown, the good woman felt no misgiving as to its being attended to, having entire faith in the potency of metallic attractions. But in this assumption she failed to remember that there were other half-crowns besides her own, and that the acceptance by the guard of her own douceur in no way prevented that functionary from availing himself of a similar attention from some subsequent donor.

I was glad enough to see the old town quickly become a dissolving view as we sped rapidly towards London; and as I threw myself back in the carriage of Miss Winter's choice, I began to conjure up the dreamland of happiness which lay outstretched before me. Seventeen years old, with health and a sufficiency of money; a father who loved me dearly, and who was the most charming and intelligent of companions, and around whose cozy round dinner-table constantly assembled men eminent in literature and art: what a delightful prospect it seemed, after good Miss Winter and Fräulein Braun — that materialistic and beer-loving daughter of the Fatherland—supplemented by the average prosaic, silly schoolgirls amongst whom I had lived so long! *They* would have called my dear father's associates 'fogies,' and would have infinitely preferred the haw-haw, or perhaps hee-haw, of the gilded youth who were his great abomination, and whom he had taught me to appreciate more justly.

I was still buried in my dream when the train stopped at the Carford station; and whilst my own particular guard was admitting a party of ladies into another carriage, the Carford station-master opened the door of my compartment, and a middle-aged gentlemanly-looking man got into the carriage, bearing a small black travelling-bag in his hand.

It had always been my habit from childhood to speculate upon the nature of the strangers, travelling companions, and others with whom I chanced to be thrown into contact; and I was soon deeply immersed in my favourite custom. My fellow-traveller appeared to be rather a handsome man, of perhaps forty, with a magnificent black beard, and a grave, dark, thoughtful eye of peculiar expression. Soon after seating himself he took a tiny volume from the breast-pocket of his coat, and was soon absorbed in its contents. What was he? Not a clergyman in mufti, I thought: he lacked the cheerful, holiday-making-and-enjoying kind of look which generally characterises the priesthood in travelling. A barrister would hardly be so far from his work at mid-day during term-time; and yet he seemed to belong rather to one of the professions courteously called 'learned,' than to squiredom or trade. At last I determined that he must be a physician travelling homewards from some case at which he had had to stop for the night; and the little manual in his hand I placed amongst those pocket pharmacopœias which doctors sometimes carry, and consult upon the sly during intervals of labour.

Having settled this knotty point, I relapsed again into my castle-building, when my reverie was interrupted by a hasty movement on the part of my companion, who laid aside his book with an uneasy gesture.

'I *beg* your pardon,' he addressed me, 'but did not you notice that singular swaying of the carriage? I have observed it for some time, but felt reluctant to name it.'

No; I had certainly noticed nothing of the kind, but being always prone to railway terrors, I began to forecast all kind of horrors.

'O, *yes*,' he continued, with a grave smile; '*there*, you surely must have felt *that?*'

Still I was obliged to confess my inability to detect the supposed oscillation of the carriage, although my companion protested that it was most evident, and showed great excitement about it.

'I am sure,' he said, 'that the train is overloaded; *that* is the cause of the movement, and we must do all we can to lighten it;' and before I could interpose, he had thrown his hand-bag and overcoat out of the window of the carriage.

A horrible dread now crept over me; for I felt sure that he must be insane, and I remembered, with a sickening feeling at my heart, which for a moment entirely stopped my pulse, that the train, which happened to be a fast one, would not stop before we got to London, which was nearly an hour distant. When I remembered this, I thought I must have dropped from my seat with faintness at the dreadful ordeal before me. However, I recollected having heard that mad people might be somewhat controlled by the demeanour of those they were with, and I made up my mind to sell my life as dearly as possible.

'Ah,' he pursued, 'that does not relieve the strain sufficiently. I am *afraid*,' glancing furtively at my face, 'that we shall be obliged to sacrifice ourselves for the safety of the other passengers. It is, as you know, a very large train, and very full. What a noble piece of heroism it would be to save the lives of so many helpless people, who are not, like us, acquainted with their danger! would it not?' he added, shifting his seat for one nearer to me, and keeping his large dark eyes steadily fixed upon mine.

With the utmost difficulty I resisted the temptation to scream as he seated himself next to me. '*I* shall certainly do so,' he pursued, 'but I fear that *you* may not have sufficient fortitude to do it of yourself;' and as he said the words I saw, by the nervous twitching of his hands and arms, that he was itching to give me the necessary impetus out of the window to insure the sacrifice. With a hurried prayer to Heaven for aid, I firmly grasped the elbows of the seat, and set my feet as firmly as I could against the opposite side of the carriage. I was just on the point of sobbing out a prayer for mercy to my companion, when it flashed across my mind to try the

effect of some ruse to obtain time, knowing that if I could but delay the 'sacrifice' I might be saved.

'Would it not be better,' I whispered, for I was past speaking aloud, 'to pray for the safety of our companions, instead of trusting to our own efforts to save them?' and without waiting for his reply, I poured forth heaven knows what incoherent but heartfelt prayer for the safety of *all* those who were in the train.

My words seemed to act like a charm upon my fearful companion, and taking his basilisk eyes from mine, he gradually slid down upon his knees and became to all appearance rapt in prayer. Most happily for me I had been taught from childhood to make my own prayers—to express my very own wants and desires instead of using any forms (except one) devised by others—and this habit enabled me now to keep on with a volubility which surprised myself, although, as the chance of escape increased, I could scarcely repress the sobs which rose to my throat.

In seasons of such horror minutes seem to be as long as hours, but it appeared to me that my time of probation *must* be nearly over. I managed, however, to keep on a little longer, until at last—O joy of joys!—I saw from the fast-increasing houses that we were nearing London, and my prayer was turned into a heartfelt thanksgiving for my preservation. One glimpse of my dear father's face at the station, where he had come to meet me, and then all was a blank until I found myself lying on the sofa in Old Burlington-street, with my father and good Dr. A— regarding me with troubled looks.

As soon as I was sufficiently recovered from the strain of my dreadful journey, I heard the sequel of the history. My companion turned out to have been a certain Sir H— M—, who had that morning made his escape from a lunatic asylum near Burgminster, and whose flight had occasioned the greatest alarm, as his peculiar crotchet about railway trains was well known, and had already led to at least one fatal result. The doctor, whose charge he was, had, however, succeeded at once in getting a clue to his movements, and had used the telegraph for his recapture; so that on stepping out of the train at the terminus he had walked straight into the arms of an efficient attendant, and had been safely conveyed back to his asylum. Although my escape is now many years since, I never even now enter a railway carriage without some trepidation, and I always take *especial* care never to ride in one alone with one other person of either sex, to guard against a recurrence of my perilous ride.

THE LETTER OF MY DEAD WIFE. *London society : an illustrated magazine of light and amusing literature for the hours of relaxation*, Jan. 1862-Dec. 1886; May 1872; 21, 125; British Periodicals pg. 442

The state of nervous excitement under which I laboured would have led me to attempt anything; and although I felt that at any other time I should be physically unequal to an encounter with this man, there was that within me that temporarily gave me a superhuman strength.

'I object,' I again repeated, the words oozing from between my clenched teeth.

'Your objection shall not affect my resolve in the least, and I shall smoke.' So saying, he lifted his right foot, laid it delicately across his left knee, and adjusting the fusée, rubbed it deliberately against the dry leather of the sole. The combustible portion of the match fell off. 'Confound it, the only one I had; I must wait till we get to Canterbury.'

I was so eager for a contest with this man that this was a source of intense disappointment. If I had a light about me indeed I should have presented it to him for the purpose of bringing the question to an issue.

'I imagine if you tried you would find one, sir,' I sneered.

'Can you give me a light?' he asked.

'I cannot.'

'Wait till we get to Canterbury, and I'll smoke you dry as an Egyptian mummy.'

'I shall.'

This closed our conversation. I leaned back into the corner of the carriage, an unaccountable hatred against this man envenoming every thought. I did not stay to reason with myself. I did not ask, Is this trifle of lighting a cigar worth so much of bad and bitter emotion? I did not admit a ray of hope that, ere we reached Canterbury, that the vengeful feeling should pass away. No; I longed with the craving of a gambler for the moment when the game was to be renewed; and no pilgrim ever desired to gaze upon the green stone at Mecca with a greater fever than I did to behold the spires of the grand old cathedral.

The shadow was upon me. The black cloud was looming overhead.

Onwards dashed and shrieked the train. Through the meadows laden with the perfume of the summer dew. Past rivulets sparkling in the golden sunlight. By villages, towards which by-and-by the mowers would wend their joyous way when the sun would be red in the West. Everything looked bright and beautiful, yet I could not share the brightness or the beauty, for grief and rage were warring in my breast, and my heart, which an hour before had been steeped in tears, was now bathing in the glow of anger. Onwards dashed the train. For a moment I was myself again; we were approaching the village of D——, where I first met her who was lost to me for ever. There stood the old church with its ivied tower, the rooks whirling round and about it as of yore, unmindful of the time when I used, with bated breath and throbbing heart, to watch her as she wended her way to offer up her pure prayers within its sacred walls. On the right lay —— Hall, where I first bathed in the inexhaustive glories of love's young dream. There the copse where I dared breathe my burning hopes. I could gaze no longer; and, burying my face in my hands, I gave myself up to one of those reveries during which the hour, the place, the circumstances of my surroundings, were utterly forgotten, and I wandered by her side as in the olden time, and all was light, and joy, and love. How long this day dream may have lasted, and why I awoke from it until the train stopped, I cannot

tell, but when I looked up, my companion was engaged in reading a letter—an ordinary looking letter, written upon pink note paper. Suddenly my attention became rivetted — closer — closer — every nerve in my body began to tingle, my heart gave one mighty bound, *for the handwriting was that of my dead wife.*

An icy sickness crept over me. The small portion I could read showed me words that should be explained, words of to me—unfathomable mystery. I felt as if I should swoon, my brain began to throb, and for a moment I was almost insensible. Then in a voice that startled me from its very hollowness, I said,

'When did you receive that letter?'

He looked up, smiled, and resumed his reading of it.

'When did you receive that letter?'

'Excuse me if I refuse to comply with your request.'

'You must tell me.'

'You're a cool hand 'pon my soul!' he exclaimed.

'I beg of you to answer my question.'

'I don't understand it.'

'My question is'—and I was as cool as ice, though my brain was on fire—'when did you receive the letter you are now engaged in reading?'

'What if I refuse to answer your question, which I consider grossly impertinent?' he replied, angrily.

'You must tell me. You must give it to me. *You* have no right to it!' I shouted.

'You are either mad or drunk, but whichever it is, you shall neither know when I received this letter, nor shall you become possessor of it as long as I can control my tongue or make use of my arms.'

He was preparing to replace it in his pocket.

Mine it should be.

Without a moment's hesitation I made a snatch at it.

He was too quick for me, but, in throwing back his hand to avoid my grasp, his fingers relaxed their hold, and the letter flew out of the open window.

We were travelling at the rate of forty miles an hour.

Houses, trees, hedges, and telegraph-posts flashed past.

The letter must be mine. It must be regained.

Houses, trees, hedges, and telegraph-posts flashed past.

The one absorbing idea rushed through my mind. I did not hesitate the tenth part of a second.

Houses, trees, hedges, and telegraph-posts flashed past.

I threw open the door, and stood upon the step.

Houses, trees, hedges, and telegraph-posts flashed past.

My companion seized my arm.

Houses, trees, hedges, and telegraph-posts flashed past.

I sprang forward.

'God save me!' I said.

A horrible crash! A million of lights!

* * * * *

When I recovered consciousness I found myself in a reclining position, and surrounded by a number of strange faces. I could not realize the situation for some moments; and when at length my reason began to assert itself the whole truth flashed upon me. I endeavoured to rise, but found so much pain in moving that I desisted.

'Do not stir, sir,' said an elderly man, who was engaged in bathing my temples. 'We've sent for a doctor, and we expect him every moment.'

As he was speaking the medical man arrived.

GOING THROUGH THE TUNNEL. Ludlow, Johnny *The Argosy : a magazine of tales, travels, essays, and poems*; Feb 1869; 7, British Periodicals pg. 123

When we went finally to the carriage there were some people in it, but our seats were left. Squire Todhetley sat down by the further door, and settled himself and his coats and his things comfortably, which he had been too flurried to do before. Cool as a cucumber was he, now the bustle was over; cool as Tod could have been. At the other door, with his face to the engine, sat a dark, gentlemanly-looking man of forty, who had made room for us to pass him as we got in. He had a large signet-ring on one hand, and a lavender glove on the other. The other three seats opposite to us were vacant. Next to me sat a little man with a fresh colour and gold spectacles, who was already reading; and beyond him, in the corner, face to face with the dark man, was a lunatic. That's to speak of him politely. Of all the restless, fidgety, worrying, hot-tempered passengers that ever put themselves into a carriage to travel with people in their senses, he was the worst. In fifteen moments he had made fifteen darts; now after his hat-box and things above his head; now calling the guard and the porters to ask senseless questions about his luggage; now treading on our toes, and trying the corner-seat opposite the Squire, and then darting back to his own. His hair was a wig, and had a decided green tinge, the effect of keeping perhaps, and his skin was dry and shrivelled as an Egyptian mummy's.

Of all snarling barks, the worst was given that moment in the Squire's face, stopping the list suddenly. The little dog, an ugly, hairy, vile-tempered Scotch terrier, had been held in concealment under the lady's jacket, and now struggled himself free. The Squire's look of consternation was good: you see, he had not known any animal was there.

"Be quiet, Wasp. How dare you bark at the gentleman? He'll not bite, sir: he ——"

"Who has got a dog in the carriage?" shrieked out the lunatic, starting up in a passion. "Dogs don't travel with passengers. Here! Guard! Guard!"

To call out for the guard when a train is going at full speed is generally useless. The lunatic had to sit down again; and the lady, so to say, defied him, coolly avowing that she had hid the dog from the guard on purpose, and staring him in the face while she said it.

After this there was a lull, and we went speeding along, the lady talking now and again to the Squire. She seemed to want to get confi-

"I do not know where the blame lies," observed the lord. "Not with my servant, I think: he is attentive, and has been with me some years."

"I'll know where it lies," retorted the lunatic. "I'm a director on the line, though I don't often travel on it. This *is* management, this is. A few minutes more, and we shall be in the dark tunnel."

"Of course it would have been satisfactory to have a light; but it is not of so much consequence," said the nobleman, wishing to soothe him. "There's no danger in the dark."

"No danger! No danger, sir! I think there is danger. Who's to know that dog won't spring out and bite us? Who's to know there won't be an accident in mid-tunnel? A light is a protection against having our pockets picked, if it's a protection against nothing else."

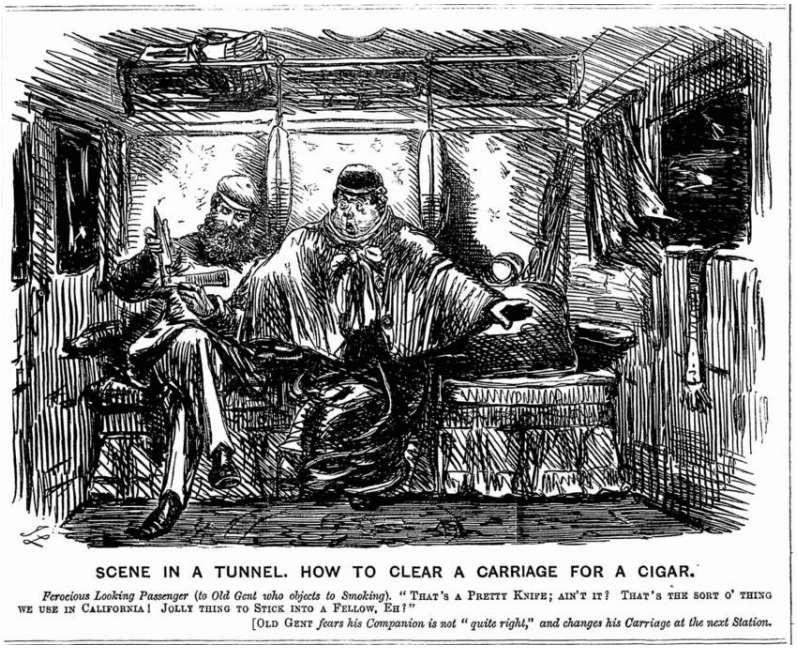
"I fancy our pockets are pretty safe to-day," said the lord, glancing round at us with a good-natured smile; as much as to say that none of us looked like thieves. "And I certainly trust we shall get through the tunnel in safety."

In a twinkling the lamp was lighted and we were off again. The lady and her dog were quiet now: he was out of sight; she leaned back to go to sleep. The Squire put his head against the curtain, and shut his eyes to do the same; the little man, as before, never looked off his book; and the lunatic frantically shifted himself every two minutes between his own seat and that of the opposite corner. There were no more tunnels and we went smoothly on to the next station. Five minutes allowed there.

The little man, putting his book in his pocket, took up a black leather bag from above his head, and got out; the lady, her dog hidden still, prepared to follow him, wishing the Squire and me, and even the lunatic with a forgiving smile, a polite good morning. I had moved to that end, and was watching the lady's wonderful back-hair as she stepped out, when all in a moment the Squire sprang up with a shout and a cry, and jumped out nearly upon her, calling out that he had been robbed. She dropped the dog, and I thought he must have caught the lunatic's disorder and become frantic.

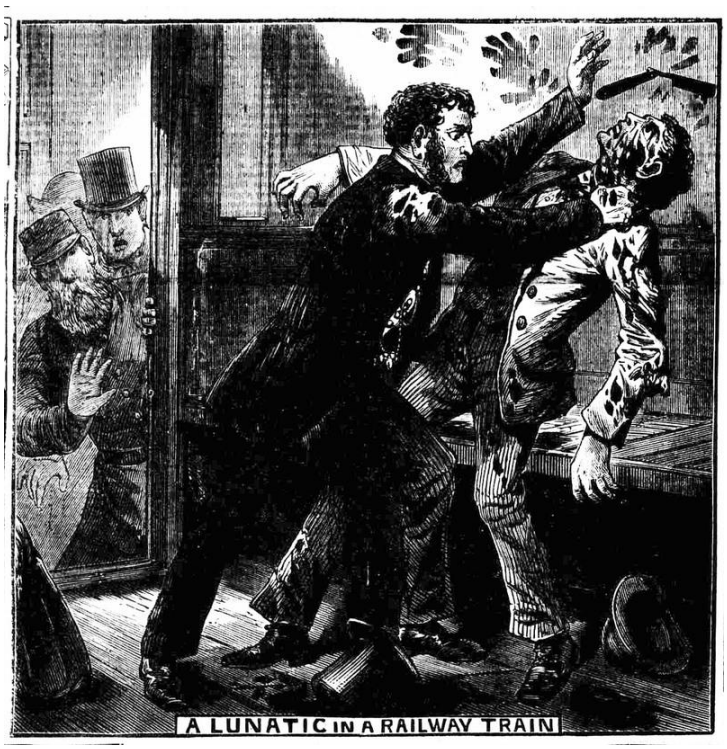
It is of no use attempting to describe exactly what followed. The lady, snatching up her dog, shrieked out that perhaps she had been robbed too; she laid hold of the Squire's arm, and went with him into the station-master's room. And there we were: us three; and the guard, and the station-master, and the lunatic, who had come pouncing out too at the Squire's cry. The man in spectacles had disappeared for good.

The Squire's pocket-book was gone. He gave his name and address at once to the station-master: and the guard's face lighted with intelligence when he heard it, for he knew the Squire by reputation. The pocket-book had been safe just before we entered the tunnel; the Squire was certain of that, having felt it. He had sat in the carriage with his coat unbuttoned, rather thrown back; and nothing could have been easier than for a practised thief to draw it cleverly out, under cover of the darkness.

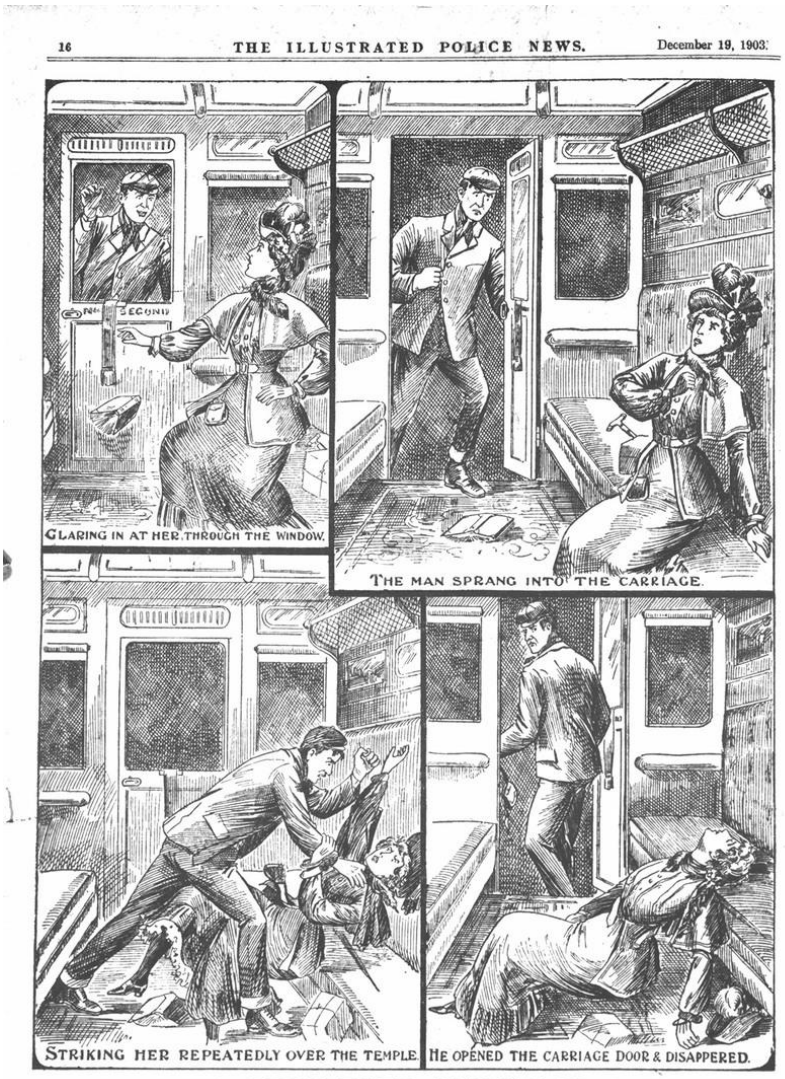


Scene in a Tunnel. How to Clear a Carriage for a Cigar.

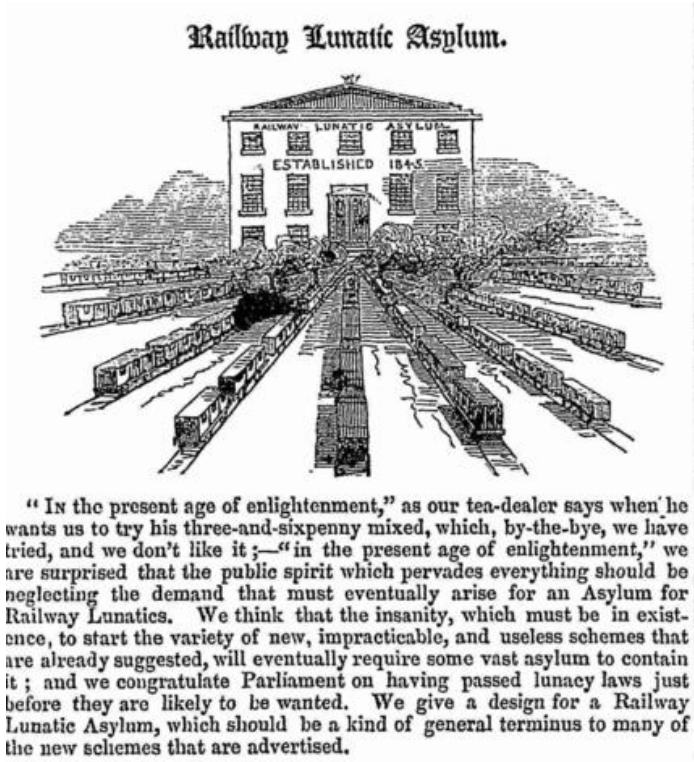
Punch Historical Archive (London, England), Sat, January 09, 1864; pg. 20



"A Lunatic in a Railway Train', *Illustrated Police News*, Saturday 4 August 1877.



"A Lady's Desperate Plight In A Train: Fearful Struggle With a Supposed Madman", *Illustrated Police News* Saturday 19 December 1903.



Railway Lunatic Asylum. (Identified from the contributor ledgers: Gilbert a'Beckett)
Punch Historical Archive (London, England), Saturday, October 18, 1845; pg. 177; Issue 223.

Some Questions to Consider

1. How does the image of the madman on the train engage with anxieties relating to 'travels of the mind and body'?

2. What does the fear of developing symptoms of madness from travelling on a train say about Victorian notions of space, identity, and time? Are these fears still valid in the technological advances today?

3. The reading pack includes excerpts from 3 examples of fictional engagement with anxieties about madmen on the railways. How is travel depicted as a mentally and physically transformative process in these texts (or other Victorian popular fiction that you have encountered)?

4. How were contemporary anxieties regarding the male ideal and economic legitimacy of Britain addressed in these popular narratives, in which madness, masculinity, and travel were linked?

5. What connections have you found in Victorian popular fiction between train travel and issues relating to class/gender/race?