



### THE POWER OF THE BRAKES.

BY M. A. ADAMS.

Some time ago, in a trip across the continent, I had the pleasure of riding for many hours on a locomotive through the finest passes in the Rocky Mountains. The most thrilling part of it was not as we climbed slowly upward, higher and higher among the mighty snow-clad peaks, nor even when we gained the crest and could see through the clear air summit after summit rising sublime in the distance. No; the thrill came when, after a pause, as if to gain strength, the locomotive, with its long train of cars—a weight of countless tons added to its own heavy mass—began to go down, down the steady grade that did not end for hours. It was actually terrifying to see the slope of the track ahead, and think of the mass and weight of the cars behind. If for one moment control were lost, how terrible was the bare imagination of what must follow!

Yet the engineer, though keenly attentive to his work, did not look in the least

worried or afraid. He even conversed with me as we went down the descent, so that I gradually lost my fear, and began to enjoy the magnificent scenery that came into view at every turn. We plunged into the tunnels, we crossed high, slender bridges over mountain streams two hundred feet below, we crept along the sides of ledges, we threaded one ravine after another—always down, but steadily, easily, safely. Before the run was over, not a thrill of fear was left, and I was as much at my ease as the engineer himself. The secret of our safety, when he explained it to me, was simple enough. The air-brake, strong and secure, made these steep passes as little dangerous as an ordinary level track; and, though care was necessary, fear had long ago been lost.

What does the air-brake do, you ask. It controls the train, absolutely. It can stop it short at any point and at any moment. The engineer need not go an inch faster than he chooses, for his hand on the lever dominates the entire train. If

his hand were not steady, if the brake were not strong, if the train once broke from control, certain destruction, upon such grade, would follow; but as it is, engineer and passengers are as safe as if in their parlors at home; and this is proved by the curious fact that an accident insurance policy taken out for railroad travel is cheaper than if taken out by a stay-at-home person. The risks of the railroad, since the air-brake was invented, are less than the risk of falling from a window or catching fire from a stove.

I have thought a good deal, since my ride, of the moral side of the air-brake. When I see a boy or girl whose temper is not under control, the question rises hauntingly: "How about that temper in the difficult crises that must come, sooner or later, to every life? When absolute control is needed over herself, will that girl be able to put the brakes on? Will that lad, when his very life depends upon mastering his passion, be able to rule it?" When I notice a bad habit, I wonder whether the brakes can be clapped on it by the young owner, or whether it will take him on to ruin. The air-brake of self-control, if it is out of order, means danger every hour till it is in working trim again. Are we learning to apply it. Can we stop short on any dangerous track?

Suppose we try our air-brakes, and see how far we can depend on them: and, if we find that they are out of order, let us make it our first business to set them right, for the time will come when we shall need them, and when, if we cannot use them, some terrible catastrophe of character will be the result.

### BEDTIME.

Three little girls are weary,  
Weary of books and play;  
Sad is the world and dreary,  
Slowly the time slips away;  
Six little feet are aching,  
Bowed is each little head,  
Yet they are up and shaking  
When there is mention of bed.

Bravely they laugh and chatter,  
Just for a minute or two;  
Then, when they end their clatter,  
Sleep comes quickly to woo.  
Slowly their eyes are closing,  
Down again drops ev'ry head;  
Three little maids are dozing,  
Though they're not ready for bed.

That is their method ever,  
Night after night they protest,  
Claiming they're sleepy never,  
Never in need of their rest;  
Nodding and almost dreaming,  
Drowsily each little head  
Still is for ever scheming  
Merely to keep out of bed.