

father, who usually spent the winter in the East, or, at least, in Salt Lake City, making only two or three visits to the gulch during the colder half of the year.

This winter, however, the mine had called for close attention, and Mr. Morton had persuaded his family to stay with him in his snug cabin on the mountain, where Harold had found life by no means dull. "At any rate I'd like to give somebody a present this Christmas that would really make 'em feel glad I was around."

Just then a shout of excitement among the men and boys collected in holiday attire at the ore house aroused his attention, and made him run to join them, forgetting his somewhat romantic worries in an instant.

The mines in these mountains were all at great height, as silver lodes in the West are very likely to be, and the gulch itself was too steep and rugged to allow of building a railway into it. From its head, where the principal mines were clustered, to its foot, and a branch of one of the Utah railroads came up, there ran a tramway about eight miles long.

The grade of this road was very steep—perhaps 300 feet to the mile—and it was laid well up on the mountain-side, swinging in a great curve around the head of the gulch, then coming pretty straight down past where Harold lived, until it turned sharply around the rocky headland a mile below him, and followed the ins and outs of the hill side to its lower end.

This steep and winding tramway answered well enough, because all heavy loads came down, nothing going up except empty cars or light loads of provisions, and so forth. The cars were rude boxes about five feet long and half as wide, mounted on small low wheels. Three or four of them would be filled with ore somewhere up the track, and linked together into a short train. Then a man would mount the load, and loosen the brakes by moving a lever. Their weight would cause the heavy cars to start down hill at once, and would keep them running, the conductor controlling their speed by tightening or loosening the lever of the brake as he wished.

To go faster than ten miles an hour was thought unsafe, and when, as occasionally happened, a car broke loose and ran away down the grade alone, great damage was sure to follow.

The empty cars gathered at the bottom were hauled slowly up by tandem teams of mules, meeting and passing the down trains on side tracks. Harold's place was a sort of half way station.

In coming down, these cars ran swiftly by their own weight, and no trip could be more exciting. It was as good as coasting, and very much like it, except that you had a mule to pull you back.

To-day, of course, was a holiday, and no cars were supposed to be running,

yet surely there was one coming down the track from the head of the gulch. It could not be made out very well at first, but soon came into plain view, spinning along the great half-circle which the track took at the head of the valley.

"It's a runaway passenger-car!" yelled a man in the excited group with whom Harold was watching the escapade.

"There's somebody aboard—two of 'em!" was the next discovery. "Why don't they slow up? They'll jump the track sure, and it's no joke of a fall they'd get down the rocks along there."

"Maybe the brake's busted."

"No," Harold cried out; "it's Larsen's babies, and they don't know enough. I suppose they have been playing on the car, and turned it loose."

"Larsen's kids!" exclaimed the whole crowd. "They're gone 'coons."

What was to be done? If anything, it must be quickly.

The little car, rocking and jolting under its fearful speed, but holding to the track almost by a miracle, was spinning towards the group of men at a great rate.

In two minutes more it would be there, if before that time it had not leaped the track, and hurled into the ravine the two little girls who had sunk down between the seats, and were clinging to each other's necks in a frenzy of fright.

"Get a big rope," yelled one man. "Hold it in front of the car, and catch her in the slack."

Several men started at this suggestion to bring a cable. Perhaps the plan might have succeeded if it had been tried, but Harold felt, with a heart that almost stopped beating in horror, that the time was too short.

Then a thought struck him.

Beside the station was a side track, on which several ore cars were standing. He waited to ask nobody's advice, but sprang to the switch, opened it, and, with a strength he wondered at afterwards, pushed one of these empty cars forward upon the main track, closing the switch with one hand, and jogging the car with the other, he clambered in and began moving down the main track ahead of the runaway, which was chasing him like a thunder-bolt.

"I have half a minute the start," he said to himself, as he glanced back. "If only I can get well under way, I can catch it and slow up safely. If it overtakes me too soon, it'll bounce me off the track, and then—good-by all of us!"

He was rolling faster and faster every rod. His brakes were wide open, and already he was making twenty miles an hour—a perilous speed; but the babies behind him were running sixty, and one of their axles was ablaze.

Two seconds later they were so near that he could see the whites of their terrified eyes staring wildly from under their yellow curls. The lad never re-

membered how much he had disliked them half an hour ago. He was too full of the possibility of saving their lives and restoring them to their mother—a Christmas present worth even his making! In a twinkling now the wild car would strike his, and the dreaded precipice was hardly a rifle shot away.

"I am not going half fast enough," he thought, with an agonizing picture of home faces flashing across his eyes, and a fleeting temptation in his heart to leap out into the safety of a snow-bank and leave both cars to their fate. But he put this feeling away with the next thought, and fixed his mind on his work.

Grasping the upright handle of the brake with one hand, he clutched the grimy and creaking old box with the other, and waited the instant that should tell whether he was to catch and hold and slow down to safety that runaway passenger-car with Larsen's yellow-haired babies, or whether they all should go over the cliff together.

It seemed an hour, that brief second of expectation, while the headland loomed almost overhead. Then came a shock, a frightful lurch and rumble, a hard grip upon the jerking brake-rod, a blinding sort of pause, and Harold realized that he was still upright upon the track, that his car was grinding its way to a sudden stoppage at the curve, and that he and the babies were safe on the very brink of the awful rocks.

Perhaps you may not call this feat a very great thing to do; but the men up the gulch thought it was just that, and nothing less. None of them expected to see any one of the three come back alive from that fearful ride.

It happened just at the moment when Harold leaped into his car and pushed off, that his father came out of the house and caught a distant glimpse of him. Supposing his boy would be surprised and dashed to pieces before he could get out of the road of the runaway, and not waiting to be told that Harold knew this car was coming, and had placed himself in front of it to try to catch it, Mr. Morton ran down the rough tramway as fast as he could go, followed by the whole crowd.

Both cars shot quickly out of sight, but the men hastened on, fearing every moment to come upon a wreck. You can imagine something of their joy when they saw Harold, safe and sound, standing beside the passenger-car, comforting as well as he could the screaming infants who clung about his neck.

Mr. Morton folded his big arms tightly around the three, when the workmen pressed up to shake Harold's hand and slap him on the back, pretending not to see the tears on their Superintendent's weather-beaten cheek. Harold notified these, though, and again seized his father's hand.

"Does mother know?" he asked anxiously. "And will she fret? Bill Smiley,"—turning to one of the boys—"please run and tell her I'm all right."

"No—need of that," Mr. Morton exclaimed; "she doesn't know in what peril her brave boy has put himself."

"Brave?" Harold repeated, in a wondering tone. "Why, there wasn't anything else to do. It ain't worth bragging about."

That woke up a big miner who had heard plenty of boasting, but didn't often meet with modesty.

"Well, blow me over the range, if here ain't a feller as don't know he's got more sand than this 'ere whole chicken-hearted camp!"

So these dozen men made the rocky walls of that valley ring with such cheers as you would hardly expect to hear from three times their number. Harold was lifted on to the front seat of the car, beside the babies, while the excited men began to push him back up the track in the grandest style they could arrange on so short a notice.

Little Billy Smiley, taking a hint, scampered off ahead; and when the procession came near home Mrs. Morton was seen waiting. The men broke into a trot, and cheered again as the platform was reached, and the lad leaped off to be clasped in his mother's arms.

"I'm glad you didn't know, or wasn't around," Harold confessed to her; for then, perhaps, I should not have dared."

"There wa'n't none o' the rest of us had the nerve, madam," said the big miner; "and I tell you them kids would ha' gone over the cliff, sure as shootin' if it had't been for your son."

"Oh, you're all making too much of this little thing," Harold broke in. "But what about those same 'kids'?"

"Well, somebody would better take them home, I suppose," his father answered.

"Let's all go!" exclaimed Harold. "We can hitch up the mules and take you along, mother. You'll go, won't you?"

"If you would like it."

Five minutes later, therefore, the Mortons and several of the men had mounted the car, and were jogging up the snow-borded tramway.

When they reached the head of the gulch, where were the mines and the little settlement in which the Larsens lived, nobody was on the lookout, and apparently neither car nor children had been missed. So Mrs. Morton and Harold walked to the house, and knocked at the door, leaving the little ones outside. A voice called, "Come in," and they entered.

It was a bare, dark, log cabin of two small rooms, in the further one of which, as they knew, stood Mr. Larsen's bed. A half-dead fire smouldered on the hearth, and at first their dazzled eyes could distinguish nothing else, but they saw that this room also contained an extra bed, upon which lay the wife of the injured workman, as helpless as he.

"Are you sick, too?" exclaimed Mrs. Morton.

"Yes'in. I've bin sick since mornin'."