



Stuck Fast.

## Two Nights On a Snowbound Train

By Neil Mack

THE newspapers have been telling of blockaded railroads in various parts of Ontario, and particularly in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. Twenty feet of driven snow across the railway track is an obstruction that even the most powerful snowplow can do little against, and when the engine and plow have gone as far, and with as much force, as they can, there is nothing for it but to stay there till the road is cleared or till assistance comes from the nearest station. Snow is a hard fighter; in January an engine on one of the Nova Scotia railways was run at full speed into a heavy drift, and the result was that another engine went down and brought her back—a wreck.

Reading some of these reports of storms and blockades brought to mind an experience of my own a few years ago, when the train on which I was travelling stuck fast in a drift, and was held for nearly forty-eight hours. It was on one of the eastern roads and in the month of February, just after a heavy snow and wind storm had swept across the country from the Atlantic. "Bad weather for travelling" was what everyone said, and there was reason to think so before the journey was over.

We had gone some twenty miles, with increasing difficulty, when in an open stretch of farm country the engine and snowplow came to a stop and could be forced not a foot further. A drift of snow nearly as high as the plow itself effectually blocked the way. It was then about the middle of the afternoon, and when the word was passed through the passenger car that we were stalled, we prepared to spend the night as comfortably as possible. There were fifty or more passengers, mostly men, but including also several ladies and children.

By five o'clock everyone was hungry. But the supply of eatables was limited. From under the seats a half-dozen or so lunch baskets were brought out, which were no more than sufficient for the women and children. For the rest

of the party the resources of the news agent were drawn upon, but all he was able to furnish were some oranges and fancy biscuit. It was a light supper, and even then something must be left for next morning.

We all became very neighborly. Before, we neither knew nor cared to know one another, but now that we were "in for it," as one of the boys said, we soon became as intimate as if we had all been next-door neighbors. It was a miscellaneous party, but everyone was disposed to make the best of it. For what else could we do?

And, after all, we had a very good time that evening; at least we would have thought so had it not been that we were snowbound. We all organized ourselves into an entertainment committee. Two or three of the gentlemen read some short stories aloud; a quartette of two violins, a mouth organ, and a jew's harp was organized and did good service, while everybody who could, sang; then some games were produced and finally several of the men exchanged travellers' tales, some of which were truly wonderful. By this time, the younger folks had fallen asleep, and one by one we all picked out a place for the night. There was not much choice; the car seats were all alike, and we could do no more than pile up our coats for bedding and our valises for pillows.

In the morning we woke to find that through the night the storm had filled in the track behind us as well as ahead of us, so that we were more effectually stuck than ever. It was not a pleasant prospect for the day. But something to eat was our first concern. The little left over from the night before would make but a mouthful for half a hundred persons. Four of the men volunteered to tramp across the snow, on snowshoes found in the baggage car, and get a supply of food at the nearest farm house. They returned several hours later with bread, butter and milk, which were received almost as gladly as timely succor would be received by a famished garison.

At noon two engines, with snowplow and crew of shovellers, reached us from behind. Other engines followed, until

there were five in a line. But before they could push us ahead, the snow bank in front must be shoveled away, and the "wreckers" at once set to it. Meanwhile, the fireman was having difficulty in keeping steam up in our own engine; the water was exhausted, and in place of it the train crew fed the engine with snow.

All the rest of the day, the shovellers persevered in their almost hopeless task; and all day long we in the car tried to be cheerful. The day before, there had been some novelty in our experience, but this had gone now, and at six o'clock, with still no sign of release, we prepared for another night on the car. The second night was much like the first, only that the supply of oil gave out and the car was left in darkness.

We were stalled on Wednesday afternoon; late on Friday morning the road was cleared, and the train succeeded in getting away. It was none too soon, for, with all our supplies exhausted, another night would have been almost unbearable. You may be assured that every one of the fifty passengers was thoroughly glad when the end came to our imprisonment. As for myself, while I have never since been on a blockaded train, I have had a wholesome respect for snowbanks.

### A Use for Old Newspapers

Here is a hint that the writer got from the head clerk of a big hotel. We know the germs that lurk in dust, and how disagreeable, as well as unhealthy it is to inhale it while sweeping. Now the way that the carpet sweepers at this resort keep down the dust while wielding the broom, is to wet newspapers, wring them out slightly, and tearing off them into small pieces, scatter them all over the surface, they are going to sweep. The little dampening brightens the carpets without injuring them in the least, and the moist paper effectually keeps down the dust, or at least the greater portion of it, by catching it on itself. The paper is then burnt, which is the quickest and neatest way of getting rid of it. When brussels carpets have become somewhat dirty, the water in which the paper is wet might have a little turpentine added to it, as it has a refreshing and brightening effect, and has a tendency to keep the carpet free of insects and moths.

One way to prevent the dust from entering the throat and lungs while sweeping, is to tie a small sponge over the mouth and nose. A person can breathe all right through the porous sponge, and it takes up the dust which would otherwise be inhaled.

### "Clean"

One man can say a word and it is as superficial as a saucer, another man can use the same word and it is as profound as possible. I heard a scavenger say the other day, when he had swept a street, "Now, I think it is clean," and the very next day I heard a surgeon say the same thing. You must have your instrument "clean," but I don't think the scavenger and the surgeon used the word with precisely the same meaning. When a surgeon uses the word "clean" he uses it with almost incredible intensity. When a scavenger uses that word he means something quite different from the scavenger. They are both employing the same term, but one with almost incredible depth of power, and the other with a considerable amount of shallowness.

Well, and one can use the word "virtue," but the meanings are divided by an infinite gulf.