

## THE BLOCKING OF THE RAILROAD BY THE WINTER STORM.

BY THE REV. E. A. RAND.

**T**HE Conductor, lantern in hand, came into the car. It was not necessary to ask him if a heavy snow-storm were in progress. The windows that looked as if boys had been pelting them with handfuls of soft snow, told Ralph Cutler that this was winter's hour. The train's suspicious slowness of movement had raised the question whether the snow might not be so accumulating upon the track as to threaten to stop the train altogether, and information was very desirable.

"Conductor, please!" called out Charlie Swan, Ralph's companion in the journey. "Shall we be snowed in?"

The conductor hugged his lantern up to his breast, grinned, nodded his head, and replied concisely, "Looks so!"

Then he passed on.

Soon the train came to a significant stop. The locomotive rumbled its iron head against the drifted snow in a deep cut, panted and squirmed, backed, went ahead—stuck!

"And, Charlie, the conductor says," remarked Ralph, "that we may stop two hours. He has telegraphed from the station we have just passed, and hopes to hear from a snow plough on the other side of that drift. Yes, disappointed!"

The two young men were on their way to a district convention of church leagues, and Ralph had been set down as a speaker, on the subject of "Our Opportunities."

One section of his address he had mapped as follows:—

If we wait for special opportunities for Christian work, and take only those that come all adapted to our present condition, we may wait long. The soldier who goes out to fight only when he is in the best possible trim, and his enemy in the worst, when he can see nothing but victory ahead, may never win one. We must be willing to improve every kind of an opportunity that comes along. We must be looking up to God all the time, and be armed with that ready weapon, the sword of the Spirit, and so move out promptly."

"There," said Ralph to himself, "I was going to bring that in, and hoped it would do some good when I said it."

"Can't you act it?" a voice within quickly asked.

"What! here?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"Sing something."

"Never thought of that."

"You and Charlie are both good singers."

"Charlie," said Ralph, "let us go to the back of the car—getting out of the way of the crowd—and we will sing something."

"I'm ready, Ralph."

Charlie was one of the singers reputed to be able "to keep it up all night."

They began with "Auld Lang Syne." People were interested at once.

"That makes you feel sober," said one man to another.

"Home Again," was the next attempt.

"Ha-ha!" cried a young fellow a few seats ahead, wearing a glossy silk hat. "That is appropriate for folks snowed in and not expecting to see home for six months—ha-ha!"

A general laugh greeted his. It seemed to Ralph as if the train of his efforts had been hopelessly derailed, the car quickly becoming so boisterous.

"Don't stop," said a man encouragingly.

"Something patriotic," whispered Charlie nudging Ralph. In a clear, rich voice he started "America."

That took. People all over the car joined in the singing.

"There'll be no more sorrow there," he whispered to Ralph. So the time quickly passed by.

They were singing. "What a friend we have in Jesus," and had reached the line, "Have we trials and temptations," when a brakeman passed. He stopped near the door, looked very sober, and went out of the car.

Soon a sharp, wakening shriek from a locomotive whistle was heard.

"Snow plough's a-comin,' ladies and gentlemen," said the conductor, hurrying along, hugging his faithful lantern. "We shall soon be out of this. Much obliged for the singing."

"Yes, yes; that's so," said several.

"They ought to have kept 'Home Again' till now," observed the young man who wore the tall, glossy hat. People again laughed.

"He thinks he is a wit," said Ralph to Charlie. "I noticed that people, while we sang, paid good attention—all but that man, and he was as uneasy as a fish out of water."

"Sweet Home," Ralph. Now," whispered Charlie, giving Ralph's ribs an extra poke.

Clear and sweet, and rich and plaintive was the last singing.

Soon after the train was hurrying past the obstacles that had detained it, a stalwart snow plough going ahead and scattering the hindering flakes to right and left.

"Well, Charlie, our trip is over, and we lost our meeting. We will go to a hotel and put up, and return home in the morning," said Ralph. "Next time I shall be prepared to speak on 'lost opportunities.'"

"Have you trials and temptations?" was Charlie's answer, sung low and sweet.