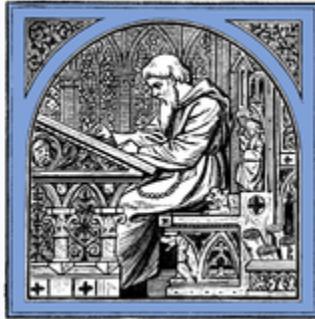


# Ralph on the Railroad.djvu/291



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fine on Mr. Gibson, who allowed him more liberty than he deserved. Yes, Ike cut out last night, and we thought you ought to know about it at once."

"That's right," nodded Ralph. "However, maybe it is better he should drop out of the affair in just that way. It will save trouble and complications. He may sometime see the errors of his ways, and turn over a new leaf."

"I doubt it," dissented Van. "I think he's an all-around bad one. What about Mr. Gibson's business, if I may ask? He's terribly anxious."

"Nothing but good news," answered Ralph heartily. "Mr. Gibson is free to introduce the Dover & Springfield Short Line Railroad to the great traveling public just as soon as he likes, now."

"Bet you he'll have it running inside of a year!" predicted the exuberant Van. "Bet you in two I'm a first-class, bang-up locomotive engineer, and you're master mechanic of the road!"

"That's a far look into the future, Van," said Ralph, with an indulgent smile. "Just now, I'm getting restless for work of 'most any kind—I wish they would put me back in the roundhouse."

There was a vigorous knock at the front door of the cottage at that moment.

Mrs. Fairbanks answered the summons. She



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