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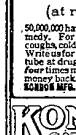

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"Tommy," she said, "I am afraid, from your looks, that you have been disturbing my pans of cream."

"Oh, no, I haven't," Tommy hastened to explain. "I just ran my tongue gently over the top."—Country Gentleman.

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Cap'n Warren's Wards

By JOSEPH C. LINCOLN

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FOREWORD

This delightful story of a Cape Cod sea captain's adventures in New York is one of the best romances from the pen of Joseph C. Lincoln. There is a real plot, and the story is full of genuine humor and splendid character drawing.

CHAPTER I.

"A Person Named Elisha Warren."

"OSTABLE!" screamed the brakeman, opening the car door and yelling his loudest, so as to be heard above the rattle of the train and the shriek of the wind. "Ostable!"

The brakeman's cap was soaked through, his hair was plastered down on his forehead, and in the yellow light from the car lamps his wet nose glistened as if varnished. The windows streamed as each succeeding gust flung its miniature freshet against them.

The passengers in the car did not seem greatly interested in the brakeman's announcement. The red-faced person in the seat nearest the rear slept soundly, as he had done for the last hour and a half. He had boarded the train at Brockton and after requesting the conductor not to "lemme git by Bayport, Bill," at first favored his fellow travelers with a song and then sank into slumber.

Mr. Atwood Graves, junior partner in the New York firm of Sylvester, Kuhn & Graves, lawyers, stirred uneasily on the lumpy plush cushion, looked at his watch, then at the time table in his hand, noted that the train was now seventy-two minutes late and for at least the fifteenth time mentally cursed the railway company, the whole of Cape Cod from Sandwich to Provincetown and the fates which had brought him there.

The train slowed down in a jerky, hiccupy sort of way and crept on till the car in which Mr. Graves was seated was abreast the lighted windows of a small station, where it stopped. Peering through the water-streaked pane at the end of his seat the lawyer saw dim silhouettes of uncertain outline moving about. They moved with provoking slowness.

Then behind the door which the brakeman, after announcing the station, had closed again, sounded a big laugh. The heartiness of it grated on Mr. Graves' nerves. What idiot could laugh on such a night as this aboard a train over an hour late?

The laugh was repeated. Then the door was flung briskly open, and a man entered the car. He was a big man, broad shouldered, inclined to stoutness, wearing a cloth cap with a visor and a heavy ulster, the collar of which was turned up. Through the gap between the open ends of the collar bristled a short grayish beard. The face above the beard and below the visor was sunburned, with little wrinkles about the eyes and curving lines from the nostrils to the corners of the mouth. The upper lip was shaved, and the eyebrows were heavy and grayish black. Cap, face and ulster were dripping with water.

"Well, I tell you, Ezra," he called over his shoulder, "if it's too deep to wade maybe I can swim. Fat floats, they tell me, and Abbie says I'm getting fleshier every day. So long."

He closed the door and, smiling broadly, swung down the aisle.

"Hello, cap'n!" cried one passenger. "What's the south shore doin' over here in this flood?"

"What's the matter, cap'n?" demanded another. "Broke loose from your moorin's, have you? Did you ever see such a night in your life?"

The man in the ulster shook hands with each of his questioners, removing a pair of wet, heavy leather gloves as he did so.

"Don't know's I ever did, Dan," he answered. "Couldn't see much of this one but its color, and that's black. I come over this mornin' to attend to some business at the courthouse—deeds to some cranberry bog property I just bought—and Judge Baxter made me go home with him to dinner. Stayed at his house all the afternoon, and then his man, Ezra Hallett, undertook to drive me up here to the depot. Talk about blind pilotin'! Whew! The judge's horse was a new one, not used to the roads; Ezra's near-sighted, and I couldn't use my glasses 'count of the rain. Let alone that, 'twas darker'n the fore hold of Noah's ark. Ho, ho! Sometimes we was in the ruts, and sometimes we was in the bushes. I told Ez we'd ought to have fetched along a dipsy lead, then maybe we could get our bearin's by soundin's. 'Couldn't see 'em if we did get 'em,' says he. 'No,' says I, 'but we could taste 'em. Man that's driven through as much Ostable mud as you have ought to know the taste of every road in town."

"Well, you caught the train anyhow," observed Dan.

"Yup. If we'd been crippled as well as blind we could have done that." He seated himself just in front of the pair and glanced across the aisle at Mr. Graves, to find the latter looking intently at him.

"Pretty tough night," he remarked, nodding.

"Yes," replied the lawyer briefly. He did not encourage conversation with casual acquaintances. The latest arrival had caught his attention because there was something familiar about him. He must have seen him before.

Conversation across the aisle was brisk, and its subjects were many and varied. Mr. Graves became aware, more or less against his will, that the person called "cap'n" was, if not a leader in politics and local affairs, still one whose opinions counted. Some of those opinions as given were pointed and dryly descriptive—as, for instance, which a certain town meeting candidate was compared to a sculpin, "with a big head that sort of impresses you till you get close enough to realize it has to be big to make room for so much mouth."

The conductor entered the car and stopped to collect a ticket from his new passenger. It was evident that he, too, was acquainted with the latter.

"Evening, cap'n," he said politely. "Train's a little late tonight."

"It is—for tonight's train," was the prompt response. "But if it keeps on at the rate it's travelin' now it'll be a little early for tomorrow mornin's, won't it?"

The conductor laughed. "Guess you're right," he said. "This is about as wet a storm as I've run through since I've been on the road."

The brakeman swung open the door to shout: "Denboro! Denboro!" The conductor picked up his lantern and hurried away, the locomotive whistled hoarsely, and the train hiccuped alongside another little station. Mr. Graves, peering through his window, imagined that here the silhouettes on the platform moved more briskly. They seemed almost excited. He inferred that Denboro was a bigger and more wide awake village than Ostable.

But he was mistaken. The reason for the excitement was made plain by the conductor a moment afterward. That official entered the car, removed his uniform cap and rubbed a wet forehead with a wetter hand.

"Well, gentlemen," he said, "I've been expecting it, and here it is. Mark me down as a good prophet, will you? There's a washout a mile farther on and a telegraph pole across the track. It's blowing great guns and raining pitchforks. It'll be out of the question for us to go forward before daylight, if then. Darn a railroad man's job anyhow!"

Five minutes later Mr. Graves descended the steps of the car, his travelling bag in one hand and an umbrella in the other. As soon as both feet were securely planted on the platform he put down the bag to wrestle with the umbrella and the hurricane, which was apparently blowing from four directions at once. Feeling his hat leaving his head, he became aware that the umbrella had turned inside out. He threw the wreck violently under the train and stooped to pick up the bag. The bag was no longer there.

"It's all right," said a calm voice behind him.

"It's all right," said a calm voice behind him. "I've got your satchel, neighbor. Better beat for harbor, hadn't we? Here—this way."

The bewildered New Yorker felt his arm seized in a firm grip, and he was rushed across the platform, through a deluge of wind driven water, and into a small, hot, close smelling waiting room. When he pushed his hat clear of his eyes he saw that his rescuer was the big man who boarded the train at Ostable.

"Dirty weather, hey?" he observed pleasantly. "Sorry your umbrella had to go by the board. I see you was carryin' too much canvas and tried to run alongside in time to give you a tow, but you was dismasted just as I got there. Here's your dunnage, all safe and sound."

He extended the traveling bag at arm's length. Mr. Graves accepted his property and murmured thanks, not too cordially.

"Well," went on his companion, "here we are! And I for one wanted to be somewhere else, Caleb," turning to the station master, who came in at that moment, "any way of my gettin' home tonight?"

"'Fraid not, cap'n," was the answer. "I don't know of any. Guess you'll have to put up at the hotel and wait till mornin'."

"I'm booked for South Denboro, and that's only seven miles off. I'd swim the whole seven rather than put up at Sim Titcomb's hotel. I've been there afore, thank you! Look here, Caleb, can't I hire a team and drive over?"

"Well, I don't know. S'pose you'd start ring up Peter Shattuck and ask him. He's pretty particular about his horses, though, and I call'ate he'—

"All right. I'll ring him up. I Pete ought to get over some of his particularness to oblige me. I've helped him once or twice."

"Excuse me, sir," said the lawyer. "Did I understand you to say you were going to South Denboro?"

"Yes. I am if the powers and Pete Shattuck 'll let me."

"You were going to drive over? May I go with you? I'm very anxious to get to South Denboro tonight. I have some very important business there, and I want to complete it and get away tomorrow. I must be back in New York by the morning following."

"Well, I don't know, Mr."—

"Graves is my name."

"I don't know, Mr. Graves. This ain't goin' to be a pleasure cruise exactly. You might get pretty wet."

"I don't care. I can get dry again when I get there. Of course I shall share the expense of the livery. I shall be greatly obliged if I may go with you. If not, I must try for a rig myself."

"Oh, if you feel that way about it, why, come ahead and welcome. I was only warnin' you, that's all. However, with me aboard for ballast, I guess we won't blow away. Wait a jiffy till I get after Pete."

He entered the ticket office and raised a big hand to the little crank of the telephone bell.

"Let's see, Caleb," he called, "what's Shattuck's number?"

"Four long and two short," answered the station master.

Graves, wondering vaguely what sort of telephone system was in use on Cape Cod, heard his prospective pilot ring the instrument for a full two seconds, repeating the ring four times altogether. This he followed with two sharp tinkles. Then came a series of shouted "Hellos!" and at last fragments of one-half of a dialogue.

"That you, Shattuck? Know who this is, don't you? Yes, that's right. Say, how many folks listen every time a bell rings on this line? I've heard no less'n eight receivers come down so far. Two of 'em went up then. Did you hear 'em? Sartin. I want to hire a team to go over home with. Tonight—sartin. I don't care. Yes, you will too. Yes, you will. Send my man back with it tomorrow. I don't care what it is, so it's got four legs and wheels."

And so on for at least five minutes. Then the captain hung up the receiver and came back to the waiting room.

"Bargain's made, Mr. Graves," he announced. "He'll turn some sort of a turnout alongside soon's he can get it harnessed. If you've got any extra storm duds in that satchel of yours I'd advise you to put 'em on. We're goin' to have a rough passage."

Just how rough it was likely to be, Graves realized when he emerged from the station to board the Shattuck buggy. Pete himself had driven the equipage over from the livery stable.

"I wouldn't do this for anybody but you, cap'n," he vociferated in what might be called a reproachful shout.

"Wouldn't do what?" replied the captain, looking first at the ancient horse and then at the battered buggy.

"Let this horse out a night like this."

"Humph! I should think night would be the only time you would let him out. There, there! Never mind. Get aboard, Mr. Graves. Put your satchel on the floor between your feet. Here, let me h'ist that boot for you."

The "boot" was a rubber curtain buttoned across the front of the buggy, extending from the dashboard to just below the level of the driver's eyes. The lawyer clambered in behind it. The captain followed, the end of the reins was passed through a slit in the boot, Mr. Shattuck, after inquiring if they were "all taut," gave the command, "Gid-dap!" and horse and buggy moved around the corner of the station out into darkness.

The view ahead, over the boot, was blackness, bordered by spidery trees, and branches whipping in the wind. Occasionally they passed houses sitting well back from the road, a lighted window gleaming cozily. And ever, as they moved, the storm seemed to gather force.

"It is blowing worse than ever, isn't it?" yelled the nervous Graves.

"Hey? No; just about the same. It's dead sou'west, and we're getting out of the woods, that's all. Up on those bare hills we catch the full force of it right off the sound. Be there pretty soon now if this Old Hundred of a horse would quit walkin' in his sleep and really move. Them lights ahead are South Denboro."

The lights were clustered at the foot of a long and rather steep hill. Down the declivity bounced and rocked the buggy. The horse's hoofs sounded hollow on the planks of a bridge. The road narrowed and became a village street, bordered and arched by tall trees which groaned and thrashed in the hurricane. The rain, as it beat in over the boot, had, so the lawyer fancied, a salty taste.

The captain bent down. "Say, mister," he shouted, "where was it you wanted to stop? Who is it you're lookin' for?"

"What?"

"I say—Heavens to Betsy—how that wind does screech! I say, where'bouts shall I land you? This is South Denboro. Whose house do you want to go to?"

"I—I'm not sure that I can get out."

"I'm looking for one of your leading citizens, Elisha Warren is his name."

"What?"

"Elisha Warren, I"—

He was interrupted. There was a sharp crack overhead, followed by a tremendous rattle and crash. Then down upon the buggy descended what to Graves appeared to be an avalanche of scratching, tearing twigs and branches. They ripped away the boot and inprobe and jammed him back against the seat, their sharp points against his breast. The buggy was jerked forward a few feet and stopped short.

He heard the clatter of hoofs and shouts of "Whoa!" and "Stand still!" He tried to rise, but the tangle of twigs before him seemed impenetrable, so he gave it up and remained where he was. Then after an interval came a hail from the darkness:

"Hi, there! Mr. Graves, ahoy! Hurt, be you?"

"No." The lawyer's tone was doubtful. "No-o, I—I guess not. That you, captain?"

"Yes, it's me. Stand still, you foolhead! Quit your hoppin' up and down!" These commands were evidently addressed to the horse. "Glad you ain't hurt. Better get out, hadn't you?"

"I—I'm not sure that I can get out. What on earth has happened?"

"Tree limb carried away. Lucky for us we got the brush end 'stead of the butt. S'pooch down and see if you can't wriggle out underneath. I did."

Mr. Graves obediently "scooched." After a struggle he managed to slide under the tangle of branches and at length stood on his feet in the road beside the buggy.

Graves found his companion standing at the horse's head, holding the frightened animal by the bridle. The rain was descending in a flood.

"Well," gasped the agitated New Yorker, "I'll be hanged if this isn't"—

"Ain't it? But say, Mr. Graves, who did you say you was comin' to see?"

"Oh, a person named Elisha Warren! He lives in this forsaken hole somewhere, I believe. If I had known what an experience I must go through to reach him I'd have seen him at the devil."

From the bulky figure at the horse's head came a chuckle.

"Humph! Well, Mr. Graves, if the butt of that limb had fetched us instead of t'other end I don't know but you might have seen him there. I'm Elisha Warren, and that's my house over yonder where the lights are."

Cap'n Warren gets a shock when he learns the business that has brought Graves from New York to see him. The lawyer's mission is disclosed in the next installment.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

The Automobilist.

The man in front drives like mad all day, and the ladies sit still and look at the scenery. Man at the wheel has no time for that. When they stop for the night, he's too tired for conversation.—Atlantic.

A NERVOUS BREAKDOWN

Miss Kelly Tells How Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound Restored Her Health.

Newark, N. J.—"For about three years I suffered from nervous breakdown and got so weak I could hardly stand, and had headaches every day. I tried everything I could think of and was under a physician's care for two years. A girl friend had used Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound and she told me about it. From the first day I took it I began to feel better and now I am well and able to do most any kind of work. I have been recommending the Compound ever since and give you my permission to publish this letter."—Miss FLO KELLY, 476 So. 14th St., Newark, N. J.

The reason this famous root and herb remedy, Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, was so successful in Miss Kelly's case was because it went to the root of her trouble, restored her to a normal healthy condition and as a result her nervousness disappeared.

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SUDDENLY REVISED HIS CODE

Exponent of Masculine Street-Car Courtesy Felt Himself Justified Making Exception.

The stout man on the Wade Park car turned to his companion.

"I've formulated a new code of masculine courtesy," he said, "and pledged myself to observe it. When I am fortunate enough to get a seat in a car I hang onto it—with three exceptions. I'll give it up to an elderly woman, to a woman carrying a child and to a sick person. I draw the line at these exceptions. It's my street car courtesy code, revised to date and in line with prevailing conditions."

He stoped suddenly and stared at a plainly dressed woman who stood close by. Then he quickly arose and gave her his seat.

When the two men left the car the other man said to his friend. "How did you happen to give your seat to that woman?"

"I've enlarged my code."

"Your inflexible code. Yes, but why?"

"That woman has a husband, a son, or brother in the army. But probably you didn't notice it?"

"Notice what?"

"Her service badge."—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

England now has more than 4,775,000 women wage earners.

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