

Cap'n Warren's Wards

By Joseph C. Lincoln

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THE CAPTAIN'S PLANS FOR CELEBRATING CAROLINE'S BIRTHDAY GO ASTRAY.

Synopsis.—Armed Graves, New York lawyer, goes to South Denboro, Cape Cod, to see Captain Elisha Warren. Caught in a terrible storm while on the way, he meets Cap'n Warren by accident and goes with the latter to his home. The lawyer informs Cap'n Warren that his brother, whom he had not seen for eighteen years, has died and named him as guardian of his two children, Caroline aged twenty, and Stephen, aged nineteen. The captain tells Graves he will go to New York and look over the situation before deciding whether he will accept the trust. The captain's arrival in New York causes commotion among his friends and his aristocratic friends. The captain makes friends with James Pearson, a reporter; then he consults with Sylvester, head of Graves' firm. The captain decided to accept his brother's trust. Sylvester is pleased, but Graves expresses disgust and dismay. Pearson calls and is surprised for he had known the young Warrens and their father. Caroline came to the captain's home when her father was hurt by an auto. The captain finds that the sufferer's expenses until his death. Pearson tells the captain of a difference he had with Rogers Warren because he refused to help the latter in a shady transaction.

CHAPTER IX—Continued.

When Caroline returned her uncle told her of his visitor. She seemed unforgotten pleased, but regretted that she had not been there. "He was such a friend of father's," she said, "that seeing him here would be almost like the old days. And so many of those whom we thought were his friends and ours have left us."

Stephen had never been very popular, and his absence at college still further reduced the number of young people who might be inclined to call. Not calling confirmed Caroline's belief that she and her brother were deliberately shunned because of their change in circumstances, and she grew more sensitive and proudly respectful in consequence. Naturally she turned for comfort to those who remained faithful, the Duns in particular. They were loyal to her. Therefore, with the intensity of her nature, she became doubly loyal to them. The rector of St. Denis dropped in frequently, and others occasionally, but she was lonely. She craved the society of those nearer her own age.

Pearson's coming, then, was psychologically apt. When he made his next call upon Captain Elisha he found the latter out, but his niece at home, she welcomed him cordially and insisted upon his waiting until her guardian returned. The conversation was at first embarrassing for the ex-reporter. She spoke of her father, and Pearson—the memory of his last interview with the latter fresh in his mind and painfully aware that she had nothing of it—felt guilty and like a hypocrite. But soon the subject changed, and when the captain entered the library he found the pair laughing and chatting like old acquaintances, as, of course, they were.

Captain Elisha, paying no attention to his friend's shakes of the head, invited the niece to be present at the reading of the latest addition to what he called "mine and Jim's record book in sea yarn."

"It's really mine, you understand," Caroline, he observed, "with a joint interest in the firm—in it you can call the one that does all the talking in silent—and Jim don't do nothing, but make it up and write it and get the profits. Course, you mustn't mention this to him, 'cause he thinks he's the author and 'twould hurt his feelings."

"He's quite right," declared Pearson emphatically. "If the thing is ever



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finished and published he will deserve all the credit. His advice had already made it. This uncle of yours, Miss Warren," he added, turning to her, "is like the editor of a paper who has been hired more stories than over I could invent."

The captain, fearful that his niece might take the statement seriously, hastened to protest.

"He's just fooling Caroline," he said. "All I've done is to tell her and talk and talk. I've used up more of his time than she could use. He ought to be sent to the water, even in print, it's time to muzzle me, same as a dog in July. The yarn is Jim's altogether, and it's mighty interesting—to me anyhow."

"I'm sure it will be to me also," said

the young lady. "Captain Warren has told me all about it. Mr. Pearson, am I very eager to hear the story?"

"There!" Captain Elisha slapped his knee. "There, Jim!" he exclaimed. "You hear that? Now you've got to be quiet. Anchor's aweigh! Heave ahead and get under way."

So because he could not well refuse the author reluctantly began to read and, as usual, his narrative friend to interrupt and comment. Caroline listened, her eyes twinkling. When the reading and the arguments were at an end she declared it was all splendid.

"I positively refuse to permit another installment to be submitted unless I am—on deck. That's the proper phrase, isn't it, captain?"

"Aye, aye, your honor. Jim, we've shipped a new second mate, and she's going to be with her self. You hear me?"

She and the young man became better acquainted at each succeeding "littery-clatter," as the latter called them, and she was longed for him at their former home he had missed her favorably, largely because of her desire to like any one whom her father fancied. She understood her father's feelings, and his memory to her was sacred. She would have forgiven and did forgive any wrong he might have done her, even his brother's appointment as guardian, and she was not at all understanding. Unlike Stephen, who merely resented the whole affair and said bitter things concerning his parent, she believed he had done what he considered right. If her feeling against Captain Elisha had been based upon the latter's acceptance of that appointment when he should have realized his unfitness. And his living with them had disgraced his unworldly country ways made her blind to his good qualities.

The Morality matter touched her sensitive, and she saw more clearly. But she was very far from considering him an equal or better than what Mrs. Cogswell's son-in-law, an "encombrance," even yet. She forced herself to be kind and to give him more of her society, though she did not accompany him on his walks or out of door excursions.

One evening while a clinic was in progress Mrs. Dunn and Malcolm owned a nice looking at him in surprise. "Yes," she answered, "it is. How did you know?"

"Why, I remember, told me that old Graves, the lawyer man, that he told me that he had written about it."

"Yes," she answered, "it is. How did you know?"

"Caroline," he said, "Sunday is your birthday, isn't it?"

"Yes," she answered, "it is. How did you know?"

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He rose to help her with the heavy coat. As he lifted it from her shoulders he bent forward and caught a glimpse of her face.

"There, there," he said hastily. "Don't feel bad, dearie. I didn't mean to hurt your feelings. Excuse me, I was thinking out loud, sort of."

She did not answer at once, but turned away to remove her cap. Then she answered, without looking at him.

"He never forget them," she said. "Course he didn't. Well, you see, I didn't forget either."

It was an unfortunate remark, inasmuch as it drew, in her mind, a comparison between her handsome, dignified father and his rude, uncultured brother. The contrast was ever present in her thoughts, and she did not need to be reminded of it. She made no reply.

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while protesting to be harassed by business cares, sacrificed them to the extent of devoting at least a part of each twenty-four hours to the young lady's society. She was rarely allowed to be alone with her uncle, a circumstance which troubled her much less than it did him. He missed the evenings which he had enjoyed so much, and the next consultation over the adventures of Pearson's "Uncle Jim" and his "Mary" seemed flat and uninteresting without criticism and advice. The author himself noticed the difference.

"Not!" he exclaimed, throwing the manuscript aside in disgust. "It's not, isn't it? If I can't turn out better stuff than that I'd better quit. And I thought I was pretty decent, too, until tonight."

Captain Elisha shook his head. "It don't seem quite so shipshape somehow," he admitted, "but I guess I'll let 'em say my head's full of other things just now. I'm puzzled most to death to know what to do for Caroline's birthday. I want to get her something she'll like, and I don't want to get anything under the sun. Say, Jim, you've been working too hard yourself. Why don't you take tomorrow off and cruise around the stores and pick out a present. Come ahead—"

They spent the next afternoon in that "cruise," visiting department stores, jewelers and art shops innumerable. Captain Elisha was hard to please, and his comments characteristic. He finally selected a neck chain set with tiny emeralds.

Captain Elisha planned to surprise his niece with the gift at breakfast on the morning of her birthday, but, after reflection, decided to postpone the presentation until dinner time. The inevitable dinner when the theme serves the duty of caring for the girl

and her brother during the major part of the day. The yellow car appeared at the door at 10 o'clock and bore the two away. Caroline assured her guardian, however, that the captain returned in season for the evening meal.

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