

Cap'n Warren's Wards

By Joseph C. Lincoln

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CAP'N WARREN GETS A SURPRISE WHEN GRAVES DISCLOSES REASON FOR HIS VISIT

Atwood Graves, New York lawyer, goes to South Densboro, Cape Cod, to see Captain Elisha Warren. Caught in a terrific storm while on the way, he meets Cap'n Warren by accident and goes with the latter to his home.

CHAPTER II.

The Will of Abijah.

THIS is your room, Mr. Graves," said Miss Abigail Baker, placing the lighted lamp on the bureau. "And here's a pair of socks and some slippers. They belong to Elisha—Cap'n Warren, that is—but he's got more. Cold water and towels and soap are in the washstand over yonder, but I guess you've had enough cold water for one night. There's plenty hot in the bathroom at the end of the hall. You needn't hurry. Mr. Graves waited an hour and a half as 'tis. 'Twon't hurt it to wait a spell longer."

She went away, closing the door after her. The bewildered, wet and shivering New Yorker stared about the room, which, to his surprise, was warm and cozy. Radiators and a bathroom! These were modern luxuries he would have taken for granted had Elisha Warren been the sort of man he expected to find—the country magnate, the leading citizen, fitting brother to the late A. Rodgers Warren of Fifth avenue and Wall street.

But the Captain Warren who had driven him to South Densboro in the rain was not that kind of man at all. His manner and his language were as far removed from those of the late A. Rodgers as the latter's brown-stone residence was from this big, rambling house, with its deep stairs and narrow halls, its antiquated pictures and hideous, old-fashioned wall paper; as far removed as Miss Baker, whom the captain had hurriedly introduced as "my second cousin keepin' house for me," was from the dignified butler at the mansion on Fifth avenue. Certainly this particular Warren was not fitted to be elder brother to the New York broker who had been Sylvester, Kuhn & Graves' client.

It could not be; it could not. There must be some mistake. In country towns there were likely to be several of the same name. There must be another Elisha Warren.

Meanwhile Miss Abigail had descended the stairs to the sitting room. Before a driftwood fire in a big brick fireplace sat Captain Warren in his shirt sleeves, a pair of mammoth carpet slippers on his feet and the said feet stretched luxuriously out toward the blaze.

"Abbie," observed the captain, "this is solid comfort. Every time I go away from home I get into trouble, don't I? Last trip I took to Boston I lost \$30, and—"

"Lost it!" interrupted Miss Baker tartly. "If lendin' Tim Foster ain't givin' it away, then I miss my guess."

"Well," with another chuckle, "Tim don't feel that way. He swore right up and down that he wouldn't take a cent—as a gift. I offered to make him a present of \$10, but he looked so shocked that I apologized afore he could say no."

"And then lent him that thirty. Shocked! The only thing that would shock that good-for-nothin' is bein' set to work. When you get back a copper of that money I'll believe the million-nium's struck, that's all."

"Hum! Well, I'll help you believe it—that is, if I have time afore I drop dead of heart disease. What I started to say was that every time I go away from home I get into trouble. Up to Boston 'twas Tim and his 'loan. To-night it's about as healthy a sou'wester as I've ever been out in. Dan fetched in the team, has he?"

"Yes; it's in the stable. He says the buggy dash is pretty well scratched up and that it's a wonder you and that Graves man wa'n't killed. Who is he, anyhow?"

"Land knows; I don't."

"You don't know! Then what's he doin' here?"

"Changin' his duds, I guess. That's what I'd do if I looked as much like a drowned rat as he did."

"Elisha Warren, if you ain't the most provokin' thing! Don't be so unlikely. You know what I mean. What's he come here to this house for?"

"Don't know, Abbie. I didn't know he was comin' here till just as we got down yonder by Emery's corner. I asked him who he was lookin' for; he said 'Elisha Warren,' and then the tree caved in on us. Oh, come right in, Mr. Graves. I hope you're drier now."

Captain Warren sprang from the chair to greet his visitor, who was standing in the doorway.

"Yes, come right in, Mr. Graves," he urged cordially. "Set down by the fire and make yourself com'f'able. Abbie'll have somethin' for us to eat in a jiffy. Pull up a chair!"

The lawyer came forward hesitatingly.

"Thank you, captain," he said. "But afore I accept more of your hospitali-

ty I feel I should be sure there is no mistake. I have come on 'important business, and—"

"Hold on!" The captain held up a big hand. "Don't you say another word. There's just one business that interests me this minute, and that's supper. Set right down here, Mr. Graves. I'll try to keep you supplied with solid cargo, and Abbie'll tend to the moistenin'. Hope that teapot is full up, Abbie. Hot tea tastes good after you've swallowed as much cold rain as Mr. Graves and I have. * * * Father, we thank thee for these mercies set before us. Amen! * * * How's your appetite when it comes to clam pie, Mr. Graves?"

Mr. Graves' appetite was good, and the clam pie was good. So, too, were the hot biscuits and the tea and homemade preserves and cake.

At last, when all the biscuits but one were gone and the cake plate looked like the desert of Sahara, the captain pushed back his chair, rose and led the way into the next room. Miss Baker remained to clear the table.

"Set down by the fire, Mr. Graves," urged the captain. "Nothin' like burnin' wood to look hot and com'f'able, is there? It don't always make you feel that way—that's why I put in hot water heat—but for looks and sociableness you can't beat a log fire. Smoke, do you?"

"Yes, occasionally. But, Captain Warren—"

"Here, try that. It's a cigar the judge gave me over to Ostable. He smokes that kind reg'lar, but if you don't like it throw it away. He ain't here to see you do it, so you won't be fined for contempt of court. I'll stick to a pipe if you don't mind. Now we're shipshape and all taut, I callate. Let's see. You wanted to talk business, do you?"

"Yes, I did. But before I begin I should like to be sure you are the Elisha Warren I came from New York to interview. I am an attorney. Have you—had you a brother in business in New York?"

"Hey?" The captain turned and looked his guest squarely in the eye. His brows drew together.

"I've got a brother in New York," he answered slowly. "Did he send you here?"

"Was your brother's name A. Rodgers Warren?"

"A. Rodgers? No. His name is Abijah Warren, and—wait! His middle name is Rodgers, though. Did Bijie send you to me?"

"A moment, captain. Was your brother a broker?"

"Yes. His office is or used to be on Broad street. What?"

"You have not heard from him for some time?"

"Not for eighteen years. He and I didn't agree as well as we might. Maybe 'twas my fault, maybe 'twas his. I have my own ideas on that. If you're lookin' for Bijie Warren's brother, Mr. Graves, I guess you're come to the right place. But what he sent you to me for or what he wants—for he wants somethin' or he wouldn't have sent—I don't understand."

"Why do you think he wanted somethin'?"

"Because he's Bijie Warren and I was brought up with him. When we was young ones together he went to school and I went to work. He got the frostin' on the cake, and I got the burnt part next to the pan. He went to college, and I went to sea. 'Twas later on that we—well, never mind that either. What is it he wants of me after eighteen years?"

"He wants a good deal of you, Captain Warren, or did want it."

"Did? Don't he want it now? Is Bijie dead?"

"He died ten days ago very suddenly. In a way it was a great shock to us all, yet we have known that his heart was weak. He realized it too."

"So Bijie is dead, hey?" Captain Elisha's face was very grave, and he spoke slowly. "Dead! Well, well, well!"

He paused and looked into the fire. Graves saw again that vague resemblance he had caught on the train, but had forgotten. He knew now why he noticed it.

into partnership together on a— a fool South American speculation that didn't pan out for nothin'. I didn't care for that. I took my chance same as he did. We formed a stock company all amongst ourselves, and I've got my share of the stock somewhere yet. It may come in handy if I ever want to paper the barn. But 'twan't business deals of that kind that parted us; 'twas another matter—somethin' that he did to other folks who'd trusted us and—Humph! This don't interest you, of course. Well, Bijie was well off, I know. His wife died way back in the nineties. She was one of them fashionable women, and a hayseed salt herrin' of a bachelor brother-in-law stuck down here in the sand heaps didn't interest her much—except as somethin' to forget, I s'pose. I used to see her name in the Boston papers occasionally, givin' parties at Newport and one thing another. I never envied 'em that kind of life."

"Your brother had two children by his marriage," said Mr. Graves after a moment of silence.

"Hey? Two children? Why, yes, I remember he did. Boy and girl, wa'n't they? I never saw 'em. They've grown up by this time, of course."

"Yes. The eldest, Caroline, is nearly twenty. The boy, Stephen, is a year younger. It is concerning those children, Captain Warren, that I have come to see you. In spite of the estrangement it is evident that his confidence in your judgment and integrity was supreme. His children were his idols, Captain Warren, and he has left them in your charge."

The captain's pipe fell to the hearth. "What!" he shouted. "Left his children to-me! Mr. Graves, you're—you're out of your head—or I am!"

"I say that your brother has left his two children in your care until the youngest shall become of age—twenty-one. I have a copy of his will here, and—"

"Wait, wait! Let me think. Left his children to-me—to me! Mr. Graves, had Bijie lost all his money?"

"No. He was not the millionaire that many thought him. Miss Warren and her brother will be obliged to economize somewhat in their manner of living. But with care and economy their income should be quite sufficient without touching the principal to—"

"Hold on again! The income, you say. What is that income?"

"Roughly speaking, a mere estimate, about \$20,000 to \$25,000 yearly."

"Mr. Graves—Mr. Graves, are you cra— No; I asked you that before. But—\$20,000 a year! For mercy sakes, what's the principal?"

"In the neighborhood of \$500,000, I believe. Of course we had no authority to investigate thoroughly. That will be a part of your duties, but—"

"S-sh! Let me soak this into my brains a little at a time. Bijie leaves his children \$500,000, half a million, and—and they've got to economize! And I'm— * * * would you mind readin' me that will?"

The attorney drew a long envelope from his pocket, extracted therefrom a folded document, donned a pair of gold mounted eyeglasses and began to read aloud:

"First, I direct my executor hereinafter named to pay my just debts and funeral expenses as soon as may be convenient after my decease."

"Did he owe much, think likely?" asked Captain Elisha.

"Apparently not—very little beyond the usual bills of a household."

"Second, I give, devise and bequeath all my estate, both real and personal, to my brother, Elisha Warren, if he survive me, in trust nevertheless for the following purpose—to wit, to invest the same and to use the income thereof for the education and maintenance of my two children, Caroline Edgecombe Warren—"

"Edgecombe? Names for some of his wife's folks, I presume likely. Excuse me for puttin' my oar in again. Go on."

"—and Stephen Cole Warren—"

"That's his wife, sartin'. She was a Cole. I swan, I beg your pardon."

"—until the elder, Caroline Edgecombe Warren, shall have reached her twenty-first birthday, when one-half of the principal of said estate, together with one-half of the accumulated interest, shall be given to her and the trust continued for the education and maintenance of my son, Stephen Cole Warren, until he shall have reached his twenty-first birthday, when I direct that the remainder be given to him."

"Third, I appoint as testamentary guardian of my said children my said brother, Elisha Warren."

"Fourth, I appoint as sole executor of this my last will and testament my said brother, Elisha Warren."

"Fifth, imposing implicit trust and confidence in Elisha Warren, my brother, I direct that he be not required to give bond for the performance of any of the affairs or trusts to which he has been herein appointed."

"The rema' der," concluded Graves, refolding the will, "is purely formal. It is dated May 15 three years ago. I come to acquaint you with your brother's last wishes and to ascertain whether or not you are willing to accept the trust and responsibility he has laid upon you. As you doubtless know, the

state provides a legal rate of reimbursement for such services as yours will or may be. Ahem!"

"Maybe? You mean I ain't got to do this thing unless I want to?"

"Certainly. You have the right to renounce the various appointments, in which case another executor, trustee and guardian will be appointed. I realize, and I'm sure that your brother's children will realize, your hesitance in assuming such a responsibility over persons whom you have never even met."

"Yes, I guess we'll all realize it. You needn't worry about that. Look here! Do the children know I'm elected?"

"Yes. Of course the will has been read to them."

"Hum! I s'pose likely they was overcome with joy, wa'n't they?"

Graves bit his lip. Remembering the comments of Miss Caroline and her brother when they learned of their uncle's appointment, he had difficulty in repressing a smile.

"Well, what would you advise my doin'?" asked the captain.

"I'm afraid that must be answered by yourself alone, Captain Warren. Of course the acceptance of the trust will necessarily involve much trouble and inconvenience, especially to one of your—er—settled and—er—conservative— Judge merely from what you have said—your conservative habits. The estate is large, the investments are, doubtless, many and varied, and the labor of looking into and investigating them may require some technical skill and knowledge of finance. Yes."

"Um-m! Well, I judge that that kind of skill and knowledge could be hired if a feller felt like payin' fair wages, hey?"

"Oh, yes, yes! Any good lawyer could attend to that under the supervision of the executor, certainly. But there are other inconveniences to a—"

"Country jay like me. I understand. Go ahead."

"I mean that you would probably be required to spend much or all of the next two or three years in New York."

"Would, hey? I didn't know but bein' as a guardian has entire charge of the children and their money and all—I understand that's what he does have—he could direct the children fetched down to where he lived if he wanted to. Am I wrong?"

"No"—the lawyer's hesitancy and annoyance were plainly evident—"no-o. Of course that might be done. Still I—"

"You think that wouldn't cause no more rejoicin' than some other things have? Yes, yes; I callate I understand, Mr. Graves. Well, I guess you'll have to. I have built and launched this. The whole house is yours. Help yourself to it. But when I'm caught in a clove hitch I just have to set down and think myself out of it. I have to give me tonight to chew over that way, I guess, and maybe you'll excuse me."

It was after two the next morning before Captain Elisha rose from his chair by the fire and entered his bedchamber. Yet when Atwood Graves came down to breakfast he found his host in the sitting room awaiting him.

"Afore we tackle Abbie's pancakes and fishballs, Mr. Graves," said the captain, "let me ask you one more question. This—er—Caroline and Stephen they're used to livin' pretty well—fashionable society and the like of that, hey?"

"Yes. Their home was on Fifth avenue, and the family moved in the best circles."

"Hum! I should imagine life on twenty odd thousand a year must be pretty much all circles, one everlastin' turn your partners. Well, Mr. Graves, my circles down here are consider'ble smaller, but they suit me. I'm worth twenty odd thousand myself, not in a year, but in a lifetime. I'm selectman and director in the bank and trustee of the church. When I holler 'Boo!' the South Densboro folks—some of them, anyhow—set up and take notice. I can lead the grand march down in this neighborhood once in awhile, and I callate I'm prettier leadin' it than I would be doin' a solitary jig for two years on the outside edge of New York's best circles. And I'm mighty sure I'm more welcome. Now my eyesight's strong enough to see through a two foot hole after the plug's out, and I can see that you and Bijie's children won't shed tears if I say no to that will. No offense meant, you know; just common sense, that's all."

This was plain speaking, Mr. Graves colored, though he didn't mean to, and for once could not answer offhand.

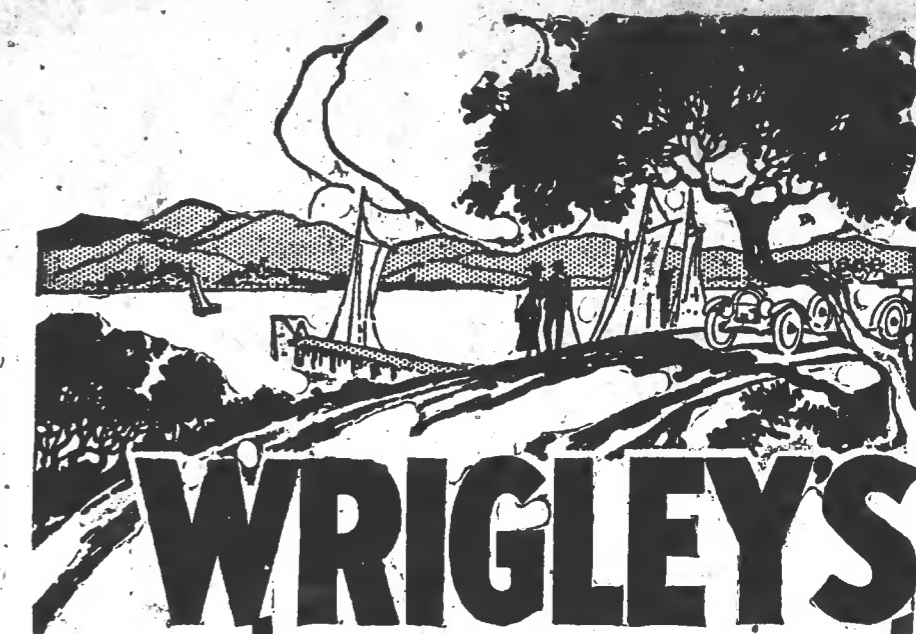
"So," continued the captain, "I'll ease your and their minds by sayin' that the way I feel now, I probably sha'n't accept the trust. I probably sha'n't. But I won't say sure I won't, because—well, because Bijie was my brother; he was that no matter what our differences may have been. And I know—I know that there must be some reason bigger than 'implicit trust' and the other May baskets for his appointment in his will. What that reason is I don't know—yet. But for a beginnin' I callate to run down to New York some time durin' the next week, take a cruise round and sort of look things over."

"Cap'n Warren causes consternation when he arrives in New York to look over the situation. The next installment tells what happened when he appeared in the metropolis."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

How Butchers Sharpened Knives.

In the sepulchers at Thebes, Egypt, butchers are represented as sharpening their knives on a round bar of metal attached to their aprons, which from its blue color is supposed to be iron.



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Victim of Chance.

Dejected by events in Russia, a young Russian officer, Capt. Nicolas Washichofst, who was staying in Paris, has committed suicide in the presence of a friend. He first withdrew five bullets from his revolver, then, after giving several turns to the barrel, said:

"Leave it to fate. I shall press the trigger twice. If one of the chambers is loaded I must die; if not, I shall live and fight."

At the second pull the hammer fell, and the bullet struck the officer in the heart.

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We had one doctor, he said 'indigestion.' I took medicine from him, but it did not seem to help me any. We had another doctor. He said it was 'neuralgia of the stomach.' I took his medicine, still there was that aching lump. Finally the doctor decided it might be a decayed tooth, and advised me to have my teeth drawn, which I did. I didn't get any better.

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