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UNCLE WINTHROP'S WATCH.

TWO passenger trains on the same track were approaching each other with frightful speed. A curve in the road prevented their respective conductors from being aware of their dangerous proximity. One train, from the north, to which the right of way properly belonged, was running to make up for lost time, having been by some means unusually delayed; the other, from the south, crowded on steam, in the hope of reaching a turnout before the regular train came along.

We will not harrow the feelings of the reader by minutely dealing with the scene that ensued. Take up almost any journal of the day, and you may find described very likely, its counterpart.

In the instance under notice all of the horrors incident to a collision of trains were shockingly manifested. As the two engines met in their swift career there appeared to be a sudden pause, then a rearing of the ponderous machines, like steeds met in the shock of battle, a momentary silent struggle, as if for the mastery, followed immediately by the crashing of the splintered cars, the roar of escaping steam, the shrieks of the wounded, the moans of the dying, while far and wide dismembered limbs, mangled bodies, and the wreck of the trains were indiscriminately scattered.

Soon resolute hearts and ready hands were active in rescuing the victims from the general wreck, and administering as best they could to the sufferings of the survivors.

Conspicuous among those thus humanely employed was a young man who, though evidently suffering from some injury, labored with untiring zeal. While many of his co-workers, who, in ordinary emergencies, perhaps, might have been relied on for their firmness and efficiency, were running distractedly hither and thither, accomplished but little in their hasty zeal, Henry Peabody—for such was the young man's name—remained calm and self-possessed, giving directions here, lending assistance there, until, as if by common consent, he became the recognized leader of the rescuing party. By his judicious management something like order was established among the working party, and, thus systematized, their efforts consequently were vastly more effective. The wounded were carefully removed from the ruins, and their injuries tenderly cared for, as circumstances would permit; the dead were decently disposed along the road in ghastly companionship.

While searching for victims of the disaster among the debris at the base of a slight declivity, the attention of Peabody was attracted by a faint appeal for help. He turned in the direction of the voice, but in the confused mass of matter heaped around him he could discern no trace of the speaker. Making his way among the ruins, he at last discovered an aged man, his face streaming with blood from a gash in his forehead, helplessly pinned between portions of a shattered car. In a moment Peabody was by his side, exerting his utmost efforts to release him from his painful position. He worked to a disadvantage, for one of his arms was nearly useless from a wound, the painful nature of which he became more and more conscious of as the first excitement, which had rendered him insensible to self-suffering, began to subside. Finding that he could not release the imprisoned man by his own exertions, he called to a young man of about his own age, who was seated at the foot of a neighboring tree, for assistance.

"I have enough to do to attend to my own wounds," said the person addressed, in rather a churlish tone, at the same time rising from his seat and commencing to limp away.

Seeing no other person near to whom he

could apply for aid, Peabody sprang to his side.

"See here, my friend," he said, placing his hand gently on his shoulder, "this old man is in a perilous position, and badly hurt. One of my arms is nearly useless, yours are uninjured, and the wound on your foot does not appear very serious. I need your assistance; this way, if you please."

There was not the least excitement in the speaker's voice, but there was something in his tones—something in his manner—that compelled obedience, and with ill-concealed reluctance the young man accompanied Peabody to the scene of action.

Improvising a lever from the wreck strewn around them, after considerable difficulty the sufferer was extricated. While Peabody was assisting him to the best of his ability over the obstructions in their way, his companion hobbled off, complaining piteously of his own injuries, which, instead of enlisting the sympathies of young Peabody, only called a contemptuous smile to that gentleman's face. Fortunately for the old man's comfort a more able and willing assistant just then made his appearance, and in a short time he was removed to a place where his case could receive more particular attention.

As he lay stretched out upon the green sward, his head supported by a stray cushion that Peabody had managed to secure, a more pitiable looking object could not well be imagined. His clothing was pretty much in tatters, and very much soiled, his face begrimed with soot, and the blood with the dust having caked on his face had so disguised his features that his own wife or child, if he had either, would have failed to recognize him. From the fineness of his linen, and the texture of his other garments, as well as the few words that had passed between them, Peabody surmised that he was a man of higher social standing than his present unseemly appearance indicated. This fact, however, did not influence his conduct. The beggar in his rags would have received from him equal sympathy and attention. With him suffering swept away all distinctions, and placed prince and peasant on the same level.

As the person he now waited upon was one of the last taken from the wreck, and as those previously rescued were receiving the attention their cases demanded, Peabody devoted all his care to him.

"You will not leave me, young man?" the injured man had said in a weak voice, with an appealing glance; and when Peabody hastened to assure him he would render him all the aid in his power, he plainly manifested not a little relief.

But trifling were the ministrations the younger man could offer. Of the extent of the injuries of the sufferer he could form no judgment. The wound on the forehead, from which the blood slowly oozed, although severe, was not apparently dangerous. The patient complained much of the pressure to which he had been subjected while pinned amid the wreck. A broken leg seemed to give him the most pain, and all that Peabody could do was to arrange the limb in such a position as he deemed best adapted to mitigate the anguish it occasioned.

Immediately after the disaster occurred messengers had been despatched to the first station to telegraph to the nearest town for an extra train and for surgical aid. Impatiently the expected succor was now awaited, and a general feeling of relief was experienced when at last was heard the distant rumbling of an approaching train. When it arrived no time was lost in placing such of the victims as were in a condition to be placed upon the platform-car, of which the train was principally composed. The removal of the wounded was a painful process, but after a while it was accomplished, and the train ready to start with its ghastly freight of the dead and the living.

The gentleman rescued by Peabody was very urgent that he should accompany him on his homeward journey. He seemed to have taken a liking to him, a liking which emanated not solely from gratitude, but was mainly founded on certain personal qualities he deemed him to possess, and which had won his favor. Peabody would willingly have complied with his request, although his route lay in another direction, but it was found necessary to economize space on the train, and only those whose injuries were serious were permitted a passage. He, however, made every arrangement for the comfort of the sufferer within his power, who was stretched upon a mattress, which the forethought of the conductor had provided for the wounded.

As Peabody stood by the platform-car,

conversing with him, just before the train started, the stranger remarked:

"I feel that, under God, I am indebted for my life to you, my young friend. I can now only repay you with my poor thanks, but I trust that the opportunity will be afforded me at some future time of manifesting in another way my sense of the deep obligations under which I rest. Let me hope that the acquaintance which has been brought about by such a sad contingency, may hereafter be renewed under happier auspices."

While Peabody was disclaiming any especial merit on his part for what he had done, and expressing the gratification it afforded him that he had been enabled to render an assistance, the gentleman took from his pocket a valuable gold watch, and extending it towards him. Thinking he desired to know the time, Peabody looked at it, and said:

"It is fifteen minutes past three."

"I wish you to take it my young friend," said his companion, still holding forth the watch.

"I could not think of such a thing, my dear sir," was Peabody's reply, with a notion of dissent.

"Do not be offended with me for pressing the offer," said the stranger. "I do not ask your acceptance of the trifle as payment for your kindness. Believe me, I do not intend it as such. I offer it to you as a token of my friendship, as such only I desire you to accept it—a keepsake. I shall feel very much pained, young man, by your refusal."

Peabody could not, and did not doubt the sincerity of the speaker, still he hesitated. But the train at that moment commenced moving, the watch was thrust into his hands, and the young man felt that he could not without rudeness refuse to retain it. Hasty adieux were exchanged, and Peabody stood and watched the train with its mournful burden slowly receding—very slowly, that the jar might not aggravate the sufferings of its living occupants—with strangely complex feelings: profound sadness and regret for the affliction it bore to many a happy household, and as profound joy and gratitude for his own preservation from sudden death or serious injury.

It was some time after the train bearing the dead and wounded had departed ere those who were left behind were enabled to leave the scene of the disaster. After an hour or two of impatient waiting, however, they were taken to the nearest station, whence they were sent forward on their respective routes.

On reaching a neighboring town, Peabody at once sought surgical aid, for his arm had become extremely painful. An examination of the limb revealed the fact that it had been slightly fractured. After it had been properly dressed Henry experienced immediate relief, and was glad to be assured that he could safely continue on his journey. The next morning, therefore, he resumed his route.

In the car in which he had taken passage he found quite a number of persons, ladies and gentlemen, who had been passengers on one of the wrecked trains, some of whom had been more or less bruised. The disaster of the preceding day was naturally the topic of conversation. The fact of their having been exposed to a common danger, and that in a greater or lesser degree the majority of them were sufferers from the collision, tended to banish all conventionalities, and to foster a general spirit of sociality among them.

When Peabody entered the car, the only seat he found unoccupied was one the back of which had been reversed. Three of the seats thus brought into neighborly juxtaposition were occupied by two young ladies and a young gentleman; and as Peabody received an intimation from the nearest lady, expressed by looks rather than words, that the seat was at his disposal, he very gladly took possession of it. He found that his three fellow-passengers had also been passengers on the train that was wrecked, and as he took his seat, he recognized in his *vis-a-vis* a young lady to whom he had rendered a slight service after the disaster. He remembered her from the self-possession she exhibited amidst the distraction and agitation that prevailed, and the readiness with which she devoted her services to the assistance of the wounded, in which occupation he had lost sight of her. The fact of Peabody's arm being in a sling afforded opportunity for inquiries as to the extent of his injuries, which led the way to further conversation, so that in a very short time he found himself engaged in quite a familiar chat with his pleasant neighbor and her lady companion. The

gentleman of the party, however, did not seem so sociably inclined.

He was a young man of about the age of Peabody, and, at a first glance, rather prepossessing in his appearance; still, there was something repellent about him, at least it so struck Peabody. What it was, had he been questioned, he could not have satisfactorily explained; yet he had not been in his company but a short time ere his first unfavorable impressions were decidedly confirmed. His face seemed somewhat familiar to him; when and where had he met with him? The fact came upon him suddenly. This was the young man who had so reluctantly aided him in extricating the gentleman from the ruins of the cars. The recognition, it may be presumed, did not tend to raise him in Peabody's opinion. Very naturally, he made inquiries about the gentleman's wounded foot, and was very curtly informed that the injury proved a slight one, and that but little, if any, ill effect was experienced from it.

From what he observed Peabody inferred that the gentleman acted as an escort to the ladies, which he subsequently learned was the case. It was very evident from his marked attentions to the lady who sat opposite to Peabody that he was either her fiancé, or that he was solicitous to ingratiate himself with her. Henry was not long in discovering that the pleasant relations which were being rapidly established between himself and his fair opposite were not particularly agreeable to the gentleman in question.

"Would you not prefer a seat by the window, Miss Weston?" he asked, half rising from his seat, interrupting an animated conversation just then in progress between Henry and the lady.

"Do not rise, Mr. Perham; no I thank you. I much prefer the one I occupy," she replied.

The answer was given pleasantly enough, yet Peabody thought he detected in the tone and manner of the speaker something like coldness, or lack of cordiality, which, for some reason, was not wholly disagreeable to him.

"For my part," remarked Miss Weston's lady companion, whom Peabody had heard addressed as Miss Leighton, "I think the view from a car window is very stupid. If one catches a bit of fine scenery, the glance is so transitory that it is more tantalizing than gratifying."

"Then the posts, fences and telegraph poles all seem to be running such a desperate race with the locomotive," added Peabody, with a smile.

"Yes, and in the distance," remarked Miss Leighton, "the houses, barns and trees seemed engaged in an endless waltz, so that one's brains are in a complete whirl while watching them."

The non-acceptance of his proposition did not seem to have a very agreeable effect on Mr. Perham, judging from the taciturnity he afterwards maintained, and which the ladies did not seem disposed to interrupt. Most assuredly, Peabody felt no inclination to disturb it.

Henry experienced a decidedly growing interest in his newly-made acquaintance. They were each endowed with more than ordinary personal charms. Although Miss Leighton would generally be considered the most attractive, from her finely developed form and beauty of features, as well as the vivacity of her disposition, still, in Peabody's eyes, her less demonstrative companion was much the more charming. If she did not talk so much, there was a point and piquancy to what she did say, that at once enlisted your attention. There was an expression in her large brown eyes when she raised them to his, and a subtle play to her features when addressing him, which, in Peabody's view, were a thousand fold more captivating.

There are men who, placed in circumstances similar to Peabody's, would have journeyed for weeks without manifesting more than the most formal civility towards those with whom chance had thrown him in contact. But Peabody had not been a day in the company of his fellow-passengers ere he had established something akin to a friendly intimacy with them. Though not what is styled a "handsome man," yet he possessed that manly fascination, that magnetic grace of speech and manners, which at once find favor not only with the fairer but the rougher sex as well.

Peabody was blessed with the sunniest of temperaments. There was an air of health about him, mental and moral as well as physical, which is so rarely to be found in these effeminate days, and which has become doubly potent from its very rarity. Some few men there are, and

women, too, as for that matter, whom we are perfectly willing to take on trust on the most casual acquaintance, and seldom in such cases do we find our instincts at fault. Peabody possessed in an eminent degree that "open sesame" to the hearts of all with whom he came in contact.—Thrown into such genial companionship as he now found himself, the celerity with which he won the good graces of his fair neighbors would have shocked the stiff and formal notions of good old Dame Propriety, and was manifestly annoying to their gentlemanly escort.

On the afternoon of his second day's journeying, as the train was approaching the village of Rockport, very much frequented as a summer resort, Peabody learned with regret that his newly-made friends would stop at that place. His acquaintance with them had been of short duration, yet he felt that parting with them would be like taking leave of old friends. The chances were that they would never meet again, and as he gazed on the sweet face before him so full of winning grace, the thought of being forever separated from one who so completely answered to his fond ideal of woman, awoke in his heart emotions to which it had hitherto been a stranger.

An inquiry in regard to the time being made, Peabody took out his watch. It was the one presented to him by the stranger, an English hunting-case watch, with a massive gold chain attached. As Henry held it in his hand, he noticed a look of surprise in the face of Mr. Perham as he leaned forward and closely scrutinized it. Miss Weston also seemed to regard it with peculiar interest, particularly the seal attached, and he detected a meaning glance that passed between the two mentioned. Henry spoke of the rarity of the stone of which the seal was composed, and called the lady's attention to the uniqueness of its design and its exquisite workmanship. Impressed with the interest a sight of the watch had excited, he was about to state how it came into his possession, but the conductor, announcing their arrival at Rockport, interrupted him; and in the bustle that immediately ensued the subject passed from his mind.

Rockport was but a way-station, and as the stoppage of the train was brief, there was a hurried exodus from the cars of those who contemplated leaving. Peabody stepped out on the platform for a few parting words with his late fellow-passengers. Hurried as was the leave-taking, he found time to whisper a hope to Miss Weston that they should meet again, and to receive a cordial invitation to call upon her, if in the course of the summer he should be in the neighborhood of Rockport. The luxuriant bell of the engine, and the warning "all aboard" of the conductor, cut short all parting words. A hasty shaking of the ladies' hands, a cold, scarcely courteous bow from their escort, and in a few moments the little station was left far behind. Peabody resumed his late seat, but with what a strange and entire revolution of feeling! How sadly he missed the one whose presence lent a halo to the dingy car—whose parting good wishes still lingered in his ear, and whose gentle grasp still thrilled his inmost being! How wearisome seemed now the road to him, the tedium of which he could only relieve by recalling the image of one who had enthroned herself in his very heart of hearts.

"I wonder who that fellow is?" said Mr. Perham, in a cynical tone, as he and his companion stood watching the train as it left the station, in the rear door of the last car of which stood Henry Peabody, with raised hat, bowing his adieux to the ladies.

"I presume you allude to Mr. Peabody, the gentleman from whom we have just parted!" said Miss Weston, with a touch of hauteur, and a kindling of the eye, which would have caused Henry's heart to throb had he heard and seen.

"Gentleman!" sneered her companion, giving utterance in the same breath to a low but expressive "humph!"

"Most assuredly he is a gentleman, Mr. Perham," quickly responded Miss Weston, "or all of my instincts are at fault."

"Our instincts are not always to be trusted," said Perham, somewhat derisively.

"Mine can be, and are!" the lady said, very decidedly.

A carriage at that moment was in waiting to take the party to the hotel, and for the time the conversation ceased. After they were on their way, Perham remarked:

"Did you observe the watch Mr. Peabody exhibited, Miss Weston? But I know that you did, from the glance that you gave me."

"Yes, I noticed it, and was struck with its resemblance to Uncle Winthrop's."

"And the chain and that peculiar seal—perfect counterparts of your uncle's." Continued next week.