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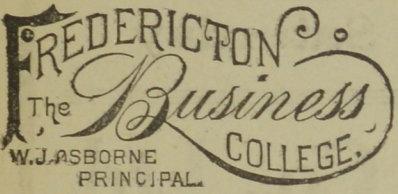
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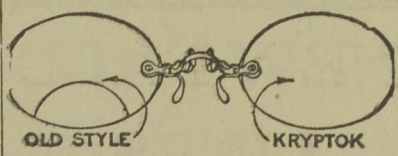
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**CY WHITTAKER'S PLACE**

"How is—er—how's the teacher?" he inquired one morning.

"How's who?"

"Why, Phoebe Dawes, the school-teacher. Smart, is she?"

"Yes, indeed. Why, she has been the most"

The doctor came in just then, and the interview terminated. It was not resumed, because that afternoon Mr. Peabody started for Boston on a business trip, to be gone some time.

And at last came the great day, the day when Captain Cy was to be taken home. He was up and about, had been out for several short walks and was very nearly his own self again.

He was in good spirits, too, at times, but had fits of seeming depression which under the circumstances were unexplainable. The doctor thought they were due to his recent illness and forbade questioning.

The original plan had been for the captain to go to Bayport in the train, but the morning set for his departure was such a beautiful one that Mr. Peabody, who had the day before returned from the city, suggested driving over. So the open carriage, drawn by the Peabody "span," was brought around to the front steps, and the captain, bundled up until, as he said, he felt like a wharf rat inside a cotton bale, emerged from the house which had sheltered him for a weary month and climbed to the back seat. The attorney got in beside him.

"All ashore that's goin' ashore," observed Captain Cy. Then to the driver, who stood by the horses' heads, he added: "Stand by to get ship under way, commodore. I'm homeward bound, and there's a little messmate of mine waitin' on the dock already, I wouldn't wonder. So don't hang around these waters no longer 'n you can help."

But Mr. Peabody smiled and laid a hand on his shoulder.

"Just a minute, captain," he said. "We've got another passenger. She came to the house last evening, but Dr. Cole thought this would be an exciting day for you, and you must sleep in preparation for it. So we kept her in the background. It was something of a job, but—Hurray! Here she is!"

Mrs. Peabody, the lawyer's wife, opened the front door. She was laugh-

ing. The next moment a small figure shot past her down the steps and into the carriage like a red hooded bombshell.

"Uncle Cyrus!" she screamed joyously. "Uncle Cyrus, it's me! Here I am!"

And Captain Cy, springing up and, shedding wraps and robes, received the bombshell with open arms and hugged it tight.

"Bos'n!" he shouted. "By the big dipper, Bos'n! Why, you little—you—"

CHAPTER XXII

HAT was a wonderful ride. Emily sat in the captain's lap—he positively refused to let her sit beside him on the seat, although Peabody urged it, fearing the child might tire him—and her tongue rattled like a sewing machine. She had a thousand things to tell—about her school, about Georgianna, about her dolls, about Lonesome, the cat, and how many mice he had caught, and about the big snowstorm.

"Georgianna wanted me to stay at home and wait for you, Uncle Cy," she said, "but I teased and teased, and finally she said I could come over. I came yesterday on the train. Mr. Tidditt went with me to the depot. Mrs. Peabody let me peek into your room last night, and I saw you eating supper. You didn't know I was there, did you?"

"You bet I didn't! There'd have been a mutiny right then if I'd caught sight of you. You little sculpin! Play-in' it on your Uncle Cy, was you? I didn't know you could keep a secret so well."

"Oh, yes, I can! Why, I know an ever so much bigger secret too. It is— Why, I most forgot! You just wait."

The captain laughingly begged her to divulge the big secret, but she shook her small head and refused. The horses trotted on at a lively pace, and the miles separating Ostable and Bayport were subtracted one by one. It was magnificent winter weather. The snow had disappeared from the road, except in widely separated spots, but the big drifts still heaped the fields and shone and sparkled in the sunshine. Against their whiteness the

pitch pines and cedars stood darkly green and the skeleton scrub oaks and bushes cast delicate blue pencilled shadows. The bay, seen over the flooded, frozen salt meadows and distant dunes, was in its winter dress of the deepest sapphire, trimmed with whitecaps and fringed with stranded ice cakes. There were a snap and a tang in the breeze which braced one like a tonic. The party in the carriage was a gay one.

"Getting tired, captain?" asked Peabody.

"Who? Me? Well, I guess not. Most home, Bos'n. There's the salt works ahead there."

They passed the abandoned salt works, the crumbling ruins of a dead industry, and the boundary stone, now half hidden in a drift, marking the beginning of Bayport township. Then, from the pine grove at the curve farther on, appeared two capped and coated figures, performing a crazy fandango.

"Who's them two lunatics," inquired Captain Cy, "whoopin' and carryin' on in the middle of the road? Has anybody up this way had a jug come by express or— Hey! What? Why, you old idiots you! Come here and let me get hold of you!"

The board of strategy swooped down upon the carriage like Trumet mosquitoes on a summer boarder. They swarmed into the vehicle, Bailey on the front seat and Asaph in the rear, where, somehow or other, they made room for him. There were handshakings and thumps on the back.

"What you doin' way up here in the west end of nowhere?" demanded Captain Cy. "By the big dipper, I'm glad to see you! How'd you get here?"

"Walked," chuckled Bailey, "frogged it all the way. Soon's Mrs. Peabody wired you was goin' to ride, me and Ase started to meet you. Want't you surprised?"

"We wanted to be the first to say howdy, old man," explained Ase. "Wanted to welcome you back, you know."

The captain was immensely pleased. "Well, I'm glad I've got so much popularity, anyhow," he said. "Guess 'twill be different when I get down street, hey? Don't call'tate Tad and Angie 'll shed the joyous tear over me. Never mind; long's my friends are glad I don't care about the rest."

The board looked at each other. "Tad?" repeated Bailey. "And Angie? What you talkin' about? Why, they— Ugh!"

The last exclamation was the result of a tremendous dig in the ribs from the Tidditt fist, Asaph, who had leaped forward to administer it, was frowning and shaking his head. Mr. Bangs relapsed into a grinning silence. West Bayport seemed to be deserted. At one or two houses, however, feminine heads appeared at the windows. One old lady shook a calico apron at the carriage. A child beside her cried "Hurray!"

"Aunt Hepsy h'istin' colors by mistake!" laughed the captain. "She ain't got her specs, I guess, and thinks I'm Heman. That comes of ridin' astern of a span, Peabody."

But as they drew near the center flags were flying from front yard poles. Some of the houses were decorated.

"What in the world"—began Captain Cy. "Land sakes! Look at the school-house, and Simmons', and—and Simp-

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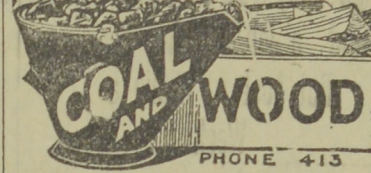
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