

The Cab that Waited.*

BY DON MARK LEMON.



PUTTING the envelope and drawing out the folded sheet within, he read :

BRONSON STABLES:

Send Jerry with cab to my house to take me to North Station to see a friend off, and wait till I return.

PETER RUGGLES.

He called up the foreman of the stables through the speaking-tube and gave him the order. "And mind you, Jones, see that Jerry is on time," he supplemented, for it was well known at Bronson's that Ruggles' motto was, Follow orders though it break owners. Ruggles had once threatened to sue the Bronson Stables for failing to follow orders, and the clerk had been cautioned to see that Ruggles' orders should thereafter be followed to the letter — though it might break Ruggles.

Promptly at three-thirty "Cheery" Jerry, who had faithfully served the Bronson Stables since its incipency, drew rein at the handsome stone residence of Peter Ruggles, and just then Ruggles, carrying a large magnifying glass in his hand, came hurriedly down the steps and entered the cab.

The Station was reached in about twenty minutes, and, without waiting for Jerry to dismount from his box, Peter Ruggles opened the door of the cab and leapt out.

"Wait here till I return, Jerry."

"Thim be me orders, sor, — till ye return."

"That 's my man!" Saying which, Peter Ruggles hurried into the station. He had received a telegram to the effect that a former classmate would pass through the city that afternoon, and if he would be at the North Station at four-ten he could have a few words on old times. This classmate was on his way "down East" and had with him a very fine specimen of an exceedingly rare

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beetle, which Peter Ruggles wouldn't have missed seeing for the presidency of a rubber trust. For Peter Ruggles, forty years of age, wealthy, eccentric, a bachelor and a scholar, had one passion — beetles.

The friend came, accompanied by his sister, a beautiful young lady with large gray eyes, and Peter Ruggles, drawing the magnifying glass from his pocket, proceeded to examine the beetle.

"Where did you get it?" was his first query, after a thorough scrutiny of the precious specimen.

"It was sent to me from Maine." The friend leaned over and spoke in an undertone, as one who confides to another where vast treasures are to be found. "They say there are more like it to be had down there, and I'm on my way now to find them."

Peter Ruggles gave a start, stared hard at the beetle, then at his friend; then by accident his eyes rested for a moment on the face of the young lady with the large gray eyes, and arising hastily he cried: "Others like it to be found! You certainly don't mean it!"

"I do."

"Down in Maine?"

"Down in Maine."

"Then I shall start at once for Maine!"

"Will you join us?"

Again by the merest chance the eyes of Peter Ruggles rested on the face of the young lady with the large gray eyes. "I will," he said.

The two men shook hands over the compact, and a few minutes later the train drew out for "down East," carrying Peter Ruggles' classmate, his classmate's sister, and Peter Ruggles himself, in search of an exceedingly rare variety of — beetle.

From the next station Ruggles telegraphed to his housekeeper, informing her that he would be absent from home for several weeks, and that she might shut up house for the time being and go to her sister's.

Meantime Jerry waited with his cab, and four o'clock passed; then five, then six, and still he waited. Once before the honest Irishman waited eight mortal hours for Peter Ruggles, while that gentleman was detained by a highly interesting game of whist,

and not willing to be outdone by himself, Jerry sat on his box and waited.

Seven o'clock — eight — nine — ten, — Jerry had got down once at nine and stretched his legs a bit, — but no Peter Ruggles. Eleven — twelve, — and the driver still remained like a sentry at his post. At one o'clock he left his cab a moment to get a hot drink and a bite of midnight lunch. Then he returned to his box and waited through the night, his horse falling fast asleep in the shafts.

“ Me orders are to wait, an' th' divil take me if I don't wait to Doomsday ! ” was his cheery, if half-sleepy, comment to an inquiring fellow-cabby.

With the morning Jerry was rather drowsy, in spite of the fact that he had snatched several cat-naps during the night, and was also a little disgruntled by his long vigil. He decided to telephone the stables. He did so, and the answer came : “ Will send another cab to relieve you. Orders are to wait.”

A little later the relief arrived, and Jerry turned his horse's head stableward.

When night came and with it no sign of Peter Ruggles, a messenger was sent to that gentleman's home for instructions, to learn that the housekeeper had closed up the mansion and gone to her sister's.

Again the Bronson Stables referred to the written order of their patron, and as it stated positively that the cab was to wait, the cab waited, Jerry taking the relief watch through the following night with the same cab that had driven Ruggles to the North Station.

Another day passed and no Peter Ruggles appeared ; then another ; then still another, the two cabs and their drivers waiting in turn. Then a week passed — two weeks — three weeks — one month ! At the end of the month a bill for thirty-one days and nights of cab hire was filed against Peter Ruggles, less ten per cent. discount for monthly service.

Down in Maine, Peter Ruggles, his old classmate, and a certain young lady with large gray eyes, were engaged in hunting for an exceedingly rare specimen of — beetle — and another month of delightful spring weather passed quickly by. Meantime Jerry and his relief, as well as the two cab horses, had fallen quite in

love with their peaceful and meditative occupation of waiting, and, in the beautiful line of Milton, they felt how true it is that "they also serve who only stand — or sit — and wait."

The first of July came, and still the cabs waited in their turn — how many stables could be depended upon to serve their customers so faithfully? — then came the glorious Fourth, when Jerry's horse attempted for the first time to run away.

What if he should not be waiting when Peter Ruggles returned! Jerry gasped at the thought. Then week succeeded week, until the thirty-first of July had passed, when a third monthly bill for cab service was charged to the account of Peter Ruggles.

On the morning of the second of August, as Jerry nodded peacefully on his box, a gentleman leading a lady by the arm came towards him from one of the doors of the North Station. In a moment the man on the box was all alert. He leapt down from his seat and opened the cab door, and Ruggles — for the gentleman was none other than Peter Ruggles — came forward and, hailing Jerry as if he had been gone scarcely ten minutes instead of three long months, gently deposited the lady in the cab. Then, entering the vehicle himself, holding in one hand a box which no doubt contained specimens of certain exceedingly rare beetles, Peter Ruggles thrust out his head with the brief direction, "Home, Jerry."

"Yis, sor; home!" Jerry climbed upon his box and, cracking his whip loudly, drove down the street.

The next morning at breakfast Ruggles found a bill beside his plate. It read as follows:

PETER RUGGLES, Esq.

To BRONSON STABLES, Dr.

For cab service from three P. M. May 1st, 1905,
to nine A. M. August 2d, 1905

92 days 6 hours; at \$10 per day	\$925.00
93 nights; at \$12 per night	1,116.00
	\$2,041.00
Less 10% monthly disc't	204.10
	\$1,836.90

Ruggles studied the bill awhile, then wrote across its face:
"Mistake. Have been away from home three months."

He rang for the butler, and gave him the bill. "Thompson, take this to the Bronson Stables."

The following morning Ruggles again found the bill beside his plate. It was accompanied this time by a brief note, which read :

PETER RUGGLES, Esq.

DEAR SIR:— We quote your order of May 1st—
"Send Jerry with cab to my house to take me to the
North Station to see a friend off, and wait till I return."

Jerry and the cab waited.

Respectfully,

THE BRONSON STABLES.

Ruggles' hand went to his vest pocket. "Ah!" he exclaimed. "So Jerry and the cab waited! Very well." He took out a pencil and O. K.'d the bill. Then, addressing the young lady with large gray eyes, who was seated opposite him, he said :

"Dearest, I only wish this bill were larger, for then our honeymoon would have been longer!"

