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BOX CAR NO. 1414.

BY M. QUAD. COPYRIGHT, 1900, BY C. B. LEWIS.

You have read of adventures and mysteries connected with locomotives, but on the B. and G. road we had a plain, ordinary freight car which came to be talked about more than all the rest of the rolling stock put together. It was a stoutly built box car, painted a dark brown, and the number on sides and ends was 1414. The first trip of the car was down to Petersburg, to be loaded with wheat. There were six empty cars in all on the train, all wheat cars, and they were in the middle of a string of 30 cars. Fifteen miles north of Petersburg was the crossing of the M. P. road. At the crossing all trains had to slacken speed, and when this particular train drew near steam was shut off, and the speed of 20 miles an hour was reduced to ten. No car had ever jumped the track at the crossing, but on this occasion No. 1414 broke away from the car ahead and behind, jumped the tracks and ran a distance of 50 feet over the hard baked earth, to bring up against a switchman's shanty and demolish it. No other car left the tracks. The division superintendent and master mechanic swore that it was utter nonsense to talk of a single car cutting itself out of a train in that fashion, but they had to swallow their words. The only damage to No. 1414 was the broken couplings and when pulled back on the tracks she was ready to move right off. No reason could be given why she had cut loose, and there was considerable gossip over the incident.

The next affair in the history of the box car occurred about a month later and gave her a ghostly standing the whole length of the line. She had been unloaded at Beamer's Station and left on the siding to be picked up. It happened that she was the only car there, and when the station agent closed for the night he saw that her wheels were securely blocked against the rising wind. At midnight, under the driving influence of a gale, that car climbed over a tie with all her wheels, ran up to the switch, jumped the track at the frog, and after plowing along for 50 feet she took the rails of the main track and went scooting to the east. She had a clear road to Elmer, 30 miles away, but she didn't travel the whole distance. If she had, she would have smashed into the express. Five miles from Elmer No. 1414 left the rails at what was called the Big Culvert, took a header off the stone bridge into the creek and next day was found a quarter of a mile down stream. Charges were made against the station agent for carelessness, but he had had help to block the wheels. The big cedar tie was at hand with the marks of the wheels as they had ground over it. It was easy to trace the car from the frog to where she had gradually climbed up on the main track. There had been no carelessness, but there was mystery. There was nothing wrong with the rails where the car had left the main track, and when the car itself was found and overhauled she hadn't been damaged to the amount of 5 cents.

Railroad men like a mystery regarding car or locomotive, but railroad officials detest one. When No. 1414 was hauled back on the track, the men were for branding her with the title of "Ghost," but an order went up and down the line to keep hands off. Give a car or an engine a bad name, and you pave the way to somebody being killed. While no one dared chalk mark this car, her eccentricities became known over every mile of the road, and employees were gossiping as to what she would do next. The next thing after jumping the culvert was a tragedy. She had been loaded with shelled corn in bulk at Romersville for Chicago, and before the doors were closed four hoboes ensconced themselves among the corn. It was a 24 hours' ride, and they had a soft bed of it. No. 1414 was attached to a freight train about 7 o'clock in the evening and was the last car, or next to the caboose. No one was really afraid of her, but there was a bit of uneasiness as she was picked up, and special care was taken to see if her brakes were in good order and her journal boxes well packed. Away she went with the others, and nothing happened until the train reached Iron Hill. It had to side track there for a passenger train and to pick up three or four cars. In backing down the long siding No. 1414 suddenly left the track, breaking loose from the car ahead and the caboose behind and running off at right angles. Fortunately, she did not run over the main track, but took the other direction and brought up against the coal dump and reared up on end. She stood up there like a ladder planted against a house and had to be reported as a job for the wrecking crew. Next day, when she was hauled back on the track and inspected the dead bodies of the hoboes were discovered. They had been smothered under the corn.

The master mechanic set to work to discover why No. 1414 was a track jumper. This was her third jump, and it was suspected that something must be wrong with her wheels. She was

taken to the shop and fitted with trucks, and axles and wheels were inspected down to a fine hair. The wheels were absolutely true, and were the axles and the bang of trucks. No better box car was built, but No. 1414 was not sent on the road for a few weeks. The officials waited until the gossip had died out. There was talk of giving her a new number, but that would have been admitting that she was a "queer" car. After a vacation of eight weeks the car was loaded with flour for Wellsville and made the trip without incident. She was reloaded with shocks for a Chicago cooper, but not without an adventure. There was a rich old widower at Wellsville named Carney, and he had a lovely daughter named Mary. While the girl was in love with a young fellow named Phillips, the father wanted her to marry a man of his own choice. The result was an elopement and perhaps the only one of the kind ever heard of. With the connivance of the station agent Phillips and the girl were locked up in No. 1414, provided with food and water, and while the wrathful old father was riding over the highways with a shotgun in his hands and blood in his eye the happy lovers were on their way to Chicago to be married.

Two weeks later the car cut up rusty again. She was loaded with agricultural implements and bound west and was in the middle of a train. After running along as smoothly as you please for 30 miles she suddenly balked—that is, her wheels gripped the rails as if both brakes had been twisted by a giant's hand, fire flew from the rails, and as the coupling on the next car ahead gave way, the train broke in two, and there was cussing to beat the band. There was no earthly excuse for such conduct on the part of 1414. Her journals were well packed, the brakes off and the track all right. When the train was coupled up, she moved off with the other cars like a snake going over the grass, but after a ten mile run she gripped again and again broke the train. She was tried again, and for the third time she cut up rusty. This happened near a siding, and she was cut out of the train and pulled in and left there. In the cutting out not one of her wheels would turn. They simply slid along the rails. When the conductor reported the adventure he was given to understand that such stories didn't go. It was held that his train crew ought to have sense enough to discover what was wrong, and the five of them barely escaped a ten day lay off. They escaped it because a mechanic was sent down from the shops who reported that, while he could find nothing wrong with the car, she had certainly gripped and balked and broken the train, as reported. When hauled off the siding, she rolled to her destination without causing the slightest trouble.

It had become certain that car No. 1414 was a "queer critter," and everybody along the line was busy guessing what would happen next. Two weeks after her fit of sulks she was billed for Chicago with a load of potatoes. She had rolled along for 100 miles without the slightest hitch when the freight train going east passed the express going west, both under full speed on the double tracks. Of a sudden No. 1414 cast one of her fore wheels. It was on the inner side, and that wheel went smashing into the drawing room car and killed three passengers. It is not once in ten years on any railroad that a car wheel flies off; it was one chance in a million that this wheel should fly off at that particular spot and that particular angle, but that was what happened. Strangely enough, the freight train was not wrecked. Even with a wheel gone the car held to the rails and made a run of ten miles. There was a cry of "hoo-doo" all along the line, but the car was repaired and run out again. She was an object of curiosity from end to end of the road, and there were engineers who said they would rather have a ghost in the cab than that car in the train behind.

It was a month before No. 1414 made another kick. Then she gripped the rails and broke a train, and that on a down grade. She was heavily loaded with grindstones, and as a siding happened to be handy, she was shoved off by herself. This siding was half a mile long and ended at a morass. A buffer had been placed at that end, of course, but four hours after the car had been left, and as another train was ready to pick her up, she could not be found. There was the siding, but where was the car? There had been no wind of account, but when they came to closely investigate they found that car No. 1414 had run down on the buffer with force enough to uproot it and had then taken a header into the quagmire. A corner of it was still visible, but before the wreckers got there the entire body of the car was ten feet below the surface and still going down. It might have perhaps been recovered and its freight saved, but when the superintendent was told how things were he telegraphed to the wreckers: "If she doesn't come easy, let her go to—!"

I don't know whether she went as far down as that or not, but the last soundings placed her at 35 feet, and she was given up as a total loss, and everybody felt relieved. Dancing Masters a Thousand Years. Chinese newspapers are a Chinese puzzle. But, as in the press of more civilized regions, the advertisement columns are singularly illustrative of the life of the people. The way in which the heathen Chinese adheres to the calling of his forefathers is shown in an announcement in a weekly of large circulation in the Celestial land. A celebrated dancing master, Hung Foo-Choo, announces that he is to hold a religious service, to which he invites all and sundry, in honor of the thousandth anniversary of the death of his ancestor, who was the first of the family to take up the profession.

SOUTH DAKOTA'S WIND CAVE.

It is So Extensive That Some People Say the State is Hollow.

The good people of South Dakota regard Wind cave as the tenth wonder of the world. From surface indications it would seem that a large part of the state is hollow. It was discovered in 1877 by a notorious character known as "Lame Johnny," who distinguished himself on several occasions by holding up the Deadwood stage and ambushing caravans of unwary travelers. His lack of prudence in one of these adventures resulted in a "necktie party" which ended Johnny's career, so that he was not able to profit by his discovery. J. B. McDonald rediscovered the phenomenon in 1884 by finding a large gap in the plain through which the wind was pouring out with great force, like the draft of a chimney. There are similar vent holes at frequent intervals over the prairie, and the people of this neighborhood claim that several have been opened within the last few years.

The cave is divided into chambers. It is asserted that more than 3,000 different rooms have already been discovered, varying in size from 12 feet in diameter to over three acres, and this is believed to be only a small portion of the cavern. The cave ceiling is not so high that of Mammoth cave, and the geologic formations are not as wonderful as those of Laramy, but it has many attractions, and one in particular—the dryness of the atmosphere—which is said to afford instant and complete relief to asthmatic people. The temperature of the cave is about 45 degrees the year round, being unaffected by the variations of the thermometer outside, but the variations of the barometer are sharply perceptible. When the mercury rises on the outside, a current of air flows into the cave and follows a certain direction. When the glass falls, this current changes and the air flows in another direction. This phenomenon has not been studied by competent meteorologists, but it is so apparent that it attracted the attention of the early explorers of the canyon.

The effect of the air on the cave upon asthmatic people is equally peculiar. A sufferer from that disease finds immediate relief upon entering the cave, and there will be no return of the trouble for several days after. This has suggested the possibility of a permanent cure for such as can have the privilege of visiting the cave frequently.

THIS HORSE COULD COUNT.

He Understood the Meaning of the Fire Alarm Strokes.

"If there is any animal that knows more than a horse," remarked a member of the fire department the other day, "I'd like to see it. I mean one that knows more than a smart horse, for there are fool horses as well as fool people and one in awhile we get one of these fool horses in the fire department. But I will say that our horses, as a rule, are pretty smart and knowing."

"I remember one we had in this company some years ago that actually could count. George was his name, if I remember rightly, and George was one of those horses that never did any more work than he was obliged to. Not that he couldn't, but just because, like some people you run across, he was opposed to looking for work. Well, every company in the fire department has a certain district to cover on first alarms—that is, every company responds to certain boxes on the first alarm and doesn't go to others except on special or general alarms.

"Well, sir, we didn't have George many months before that horse came to know our district just as well as any of the men. He knew the boxes we went out to on the first alarm, and it is a fact that that horse got so that he'd wait and count the first round before he'd budge out of his stall. If the box was not in our district, George would walk leisurely to his place, but if it was one we were due at on the first alarm he would rush down to his place.

"In those days we had to hitch up on every alarm that came in, whether it was in our district or not, and stand hitched for 15 or 20 minutes. George knew this, of course, and that was why he'd always take his time going to his place when the box wasn't in our district. And it's a fact that if he was eating when an outside box came in, he'd just keep on eating until the foreman yelled out to bring him down to his place.

"Of course, now and then George would miscount the box, and rush to his place on a box not in our district. But when he did make a mistake like that, which was precious seldom, that horse would get so mad and feel so bad about it that he wouldn't get over it for a day or so."

Let Him Try the Shovel.

"The average typewriter works harder than a man who shovels coal," said a youth who ought to know. "Let me prove this to you by cold figures," he continued. "The average typewriter carriage weighs four pounds. The average operator lifts the carriage five times a minute. This means that he lifts 20 pounds every minute, or 1,200 pounds every hour. If he is lucky, he works but eight hours a day. The carriage is lifted on an average seven inches every time it is raised, or 175 feet every hour, or about a quarter of a mile each day. But, as the hand travels through as much space in lowering as in raising the carriage, and as the strain is as great, we must double these figures, which means that the average operator lifts over two tons 14 inches each day, or two pounds one-half mile."

No Fault to Find.

"See here," he said to the groom, "are you the man who put the saddle on Miss Jennie's horse?"

"Yes, sir. Anything wrong, sir?"

"It was loose, very loose. She had no sooner mounted than the saddle slipped, and if I hadn't caught her she would have been thrown to the ground."

"I'm very sorry, sir."

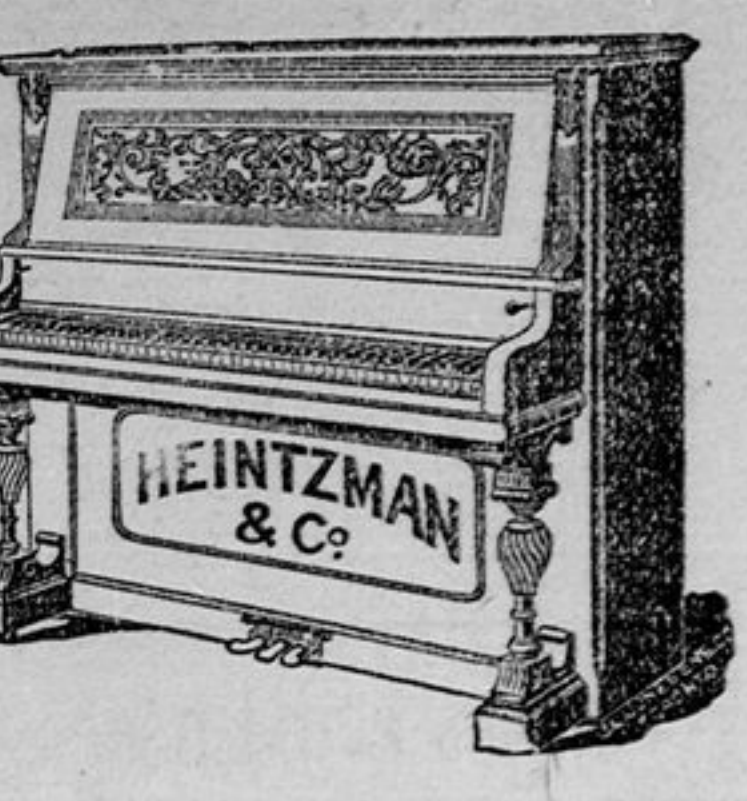
"But I did catch her," went on the young man meditatively. "I caught her right in my arms, and—Here's a dollar for you, John. Do you suppose you could leave the girl loose when we go riding again tomorrow?"—Chicago Times-Herald.

The Lesser Evil.

"Dr. Killiam told me today," said the president of the life insurance company, "that young Pincenny owes him a bill of \$200 which he can't collect. I think we had better pay it."

"What?" cried the treasurer. "Are you joking?"

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