

SNAKE SURE ENOUGH.

On a night express recently a man who had the appearance of an amateur naturalist, was a passenger in the smoking carriage. He got on at a back country station carrying a heavy box, which he deposited on the seat beside him and promptly fell asleep.

Among the other passengers were two commercial travellers who relieved the tedium of the night by frequent nips from a black bottle. One of the two soon fell asleep, but the other, who evidently possessed a more formidable capacity for stimulants, clung to the bottle till his wandering gaze attested his condition. Just as the train passes a station the traveller who was awake suddenly emitted a howl and grasped his companion by the shoulder.

"Great heavens, Charley, did you see that?" he asked in terror, as he crept up on the car seat with both feet.

"Ugh," remarked Charley, nonchalantly, half opening his eyes.

"Wake up, for God's sake," the other went on feverishly. "There's a snake under the seat. I think it's a snake, anyhow, and I want you to tell me whether it is or not."

"I'll wish snakes," said Charley, with one eye entirely open. "You got 'em, Luke. Tol' you what'd happen if you didn't quit."

"Don't kid me, Charley," said Luke, imploringly. "Wake up and see him for yourself."

But Charley by this time felt a yielding substance passing over his shoes, and with a wail of terror he rose to the occasion and joined Luke on top of the car seat. Aroused by the noise, the other passengers rubbed their sleepy eyes and, once awake, began making jests at the expense of the terror stricken travellers.

"I thought them fellers would be seein' things afore long," remarked a farmer.

"Snakes is so common," put in another. "Why don't you spring a crocodile or two on us?"

"Well, I never saw a man with the rams before," a third began, but just then he felt something crawling over his feet, and with a snort of fear, he crept up on the window sill.

One by one the other passengers joined the minority on the carriage seats, till at length a vote on the snake question would have resulted unanimously in the affirmative. The sleepy brakeman, who was dozing near the stove, finally awoke, and

catching a glimpse of a dark object wiggling across the aisle carpet, he opened the door with a whoop and disappeared. The brakeman told the conductor that a snake was loose in the forward carriage and that official went to the carriage door demanding:

"What's the matter in there? You're spoilin' them seats. Git down."

"There's a snake loose in here," came back the unanimous response. "Come in and catch him. That's what you get your salary for."

"Catch your own snakes," he retorted angrily at the wild-eyed commercials. "I ain't in the snake catching business."

Despairing of succour from this source the passengers turned their attention to their own number. By this time there was but one person in the car who was not up on his seat, and that was the man with the box, who still slept peacefully in his corner. All sorts of devices were tried to wake him up. Hats, newspapers and books were tossed at him, and finally a well-directed umbrella hit him in the eye and made him jump to his feet with an oath.

"Great blazes!" he roared, as he rubbed his injured eye and caught a glimpse of the passengers standing on their seats. "Is this a branch office of a lunatic asylum, or simply a gang of drunken fools?"

"Get up on your seat," he was adjured. "There's a snake loose in the carriage."

"Snake loose!" he exclaimed. "Guess it's my Jim. Rattler is he? About five feet long? Yes, that's him. Had him in the box, you know, but he must have crawled out while I was asleep."

"You're an infernal idjit," shouted the farmer. "I'll have the law on you."

"Throw him out."

"Push him off."

"Squash his old tame snake."

The man who owned the box silenced the outcry with a wave of his hand.

"Gentlemen," he remarked, "I'm sorry this ain't a tame snake, but as a matter of fact, still has his eye teeth, and you'll find him ready for business. Better stay up on your seats till I find him."

Slowly and methodically he prodded under the seats till a warning rattle located the frolicsome Jim. Then, reaching recklessly under the seat, he grasped and hauled out a five-foot rattler, which he lugged back to the box in the corner. After securely clamping the box, he sat down again and quickly fell into a doze. One by one the passengers came down from the carriage seats, but few could sleep while the threatening box was in the car. When the next station was reached the man with the box woke up and started for the door.

"Sorry my Jim disturbed you, gentlemen," he called back from the platform. Fact is, I forgot to say he is only a toy snake, made up largely of spring and India rubber. One simply winds the spring and he will crawl around till he's run down. If I had time I would explain this ingenious device which I have just patented. But I get off here. Au revoir."

After that the silence was not broken until the train reached the terminus.



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