WILLIAM WYMARK JACOBS

DEEP WATERS, THE ENTIRE COLLECTION

William Wymark Jacobs
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Содержание

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SHAREHOLDERS

Sailor man—said the night-watchman, musingly—a sailorman is like a fish he is safest when ‘e is at sea. When a fish comes ashore it is in for trouble, and so is sailorman. One poor chap I knew ‘ardly ever came ashore without getting married; and he was found out there was no less than six wimmen in the court all taking away ‘is character at once. And when he spoke up Solomon the magistrate pretty near bit ‘is ‘ead off.

Then look at the trouble they get in with their money! They come ashore from a long trip, smelling of it a’most, and they go from port to port like a lord. Everybody has got their eye on that money—everybody except the sailorman, that is—and afore he knows wot’s ‘appened, and who ‘as got it, he’s looking for a ship agin. When he ain’t robbed of ‘is money, he wastes it; and when ‘e don’t do either, he loses it.

I knew one chap who hid ‘is money. He’d been away ten months, and, knowing ‘ow easy money goes, ‘e made up sixteen pounds in a nice little parcel and hid it where nobody could find

it. That's wot he said, and p'r'aps 'e was right. All I know is, he never found it. I did the same thing myself once with a couple o' quid I ran acrost unexpected, on'y, unfortunately for me, I hid it the day afore my missus started 'er spring-cleaning.

One o' the worst men I ever knew for getting into trouble when he came ashore was old Sam Small. If he couldn't find it by 'imself, Ginger Dick and Peter Russet would help 'im look for it. Generally speaking they found it without straining their eyesight.

I remember one time they was home, arter being away pretty near a year, and when they was paid off they felt like walking gold-mines. They went about smiling all over with good-temper and 'appiness, and for the first three days they was like brothers. That didn't last, of course, and on the fourth day Sam Small, arter saying wot 'e would do to Ginger and Peter if it wasn't for the police, went off by 'imself.

His temper passed off arter a time, and 'e began to look cheerful agin. It was a lovely morning, and, having nothing to do and plenty in 'is pocket to do it with, he went along like a schoolboy with a 'arf holiday. He went as far as Stratford on the top of a tram for a mouthful o' fresh air, and came back to his favourite coffee-shop with a fine appetite for dinner. There was a very nice gentlemanly chap sitting opposite 'im, and the way he begged Sam's pardon for splashing gravy over 'im made Sam take a liking to him at once. Nicely dressed he was, with a gold pin in 'is tie, and a fine gold watch-chain acrost his weskit; and Sam could see he 'ad been brought up well by the way he used

‘is knife and fork. He kept looking at Sam in a thoughtful kind o’ way, and at last he said wot a beautiful morning it was, and wot a fine day it must be in the country. In a little while they began to talk like a couple of old friends, and he told Sam all about ‘is father, wot was a clergyman in the country, and Sam talked about a father of his as was living private on three ‘undred a year.

“Ah, money’s a useful thing,” ses the man.

“It ain’t everything,” ses Sam. “It won’t give you ‘appiness. I’ve run through a lot in my time, so I ought to know.”

“I expect you’ve got a bit left, though,” ses the man, with a wink.

Sam laughed and smacked ‘is pocket. “I’ve got a trifle to go on with,” he ses, winking back. “I never feel comfortable without a pound or two in my pocket.”

“You look as though you’re just back from a vy’ge,” ses the man, looking at ‘im very hard.

“I am,” ses Sam, nodding. “Just back arter ten months, and I’m going to spend a bit o’ money afore I sign on agin, I can tell you.”

“That’s wot it was given to us for,” ses the man, nodding at him.

They both got up to go at the same time and walked out into the street together, and, when Sam asked ‘im whether he might have the pleasure of standing ‘im a drink, he said he might. He talked about the different kinds of drink as they walked along till Sam, wot was looking for a high- class pub, got such a raging thirst on ‘im he hardly knew wot to do with ‘imself. He passed

several pubs, and walked on as fast as he could to the Three Widders.

"Do you want to go in there partikler?" ses the man, stopping at the door.

"No," ses Sam, staring.

"'Cos I know a place where they sell the best glass o' port wine in London," ses the man.

He took Sam up two or three turnings, and then led him into a quiet little pub in a back street. There was a cosy little saloon bar with nobody in it, and, arter Sam had 'ad two port wines for the look of the thing, he 'ad a pint o' six-ale because he liked it. His new pal had one too, and he 'ad just taken a pull at it and wiped his mouth, when 'e noticed a little bill pinned up at the back of the bar.

"Lost, between—the Mint and—Tower Stairs," he ses, leaning forward and reading very slow, "a gold—locket—set with—diamonds. Whoever will—return—the same to—Mr. Smith—Orange Villa—Barnet—will receive —thirty pounds—reward."

"'Ow much?" ses Sam, starting. "Thirty pounds," ses the man. "Must be a good locket. Where'd you get that?" he ses, turning to the barmaid.

"Gentleman came in an hour ago," ses the gal, "and, arter he had 'ad two or three drinks with the guv'nor, he asks 'im to stick it up. 'Arf crying he was—said 'it 'ad belonged to his old woman wot died."

She went off to serve a customer at the other end of the bar wot was making little dents in it with his pot, and the man came back and sat down by Sam agin, and began to talk about horse-racing. At least, he tried to, but Sam couldn't talk of nothing but that locket, and wot a nice steady sailorman could do with thirty pounds.

"Well, p'r'aps you'll find it," ses the man, chaffing-like. "'Ave another pint."

Sam had one, but it only made 'im more solemn, and he got in quite a temper as 'e spoke about casuals loafing about on Tower Hill with their 'ands in their pockets, and taking gold lockets out of the mouths of hard-working sailormen.

"It mightn't be found yet," ses the man, speaking thoughtful-like. "It's wonderful how long a thing'll lay sometimes. Wot about going and 'aving a look for it?"

Sam shook his 'ead at fust, but arter turning the thing over in his mind, and 'aving another look at the bill, and copying down the name and address for luck, 'e said p'r'aps they might as well walk that way as anywhere else.

"Something seems to tell me we've got a chance," ses the man, as they stepped outside.

"It's a funny feeling and I can't explain it, but it always means good luck. Last time I had it an aunt o' mine swallered 'er false teeth and left me five 'undred pounds."

"There's aunts and aunts," ses Sam, grunting. "I 'ad one once, but if she had swallered 'er teeth she'd ha' been round to me to

help ‘er buy some new ones. That’s the sort she was.”

“Mind!” ses the man, patting ‘im on the shoulder, “if we do find this, I don’t want any of it. I’ve got all I want. It’s all for you.”

They went on like a couple o’ brothers arter that, especially Sam, and when they got to the Mint they walked along slow down Tower Hill looking for the locket. It was awkward work, because, if people saw them looking about, they’d ‘ave started looking too, and twice Sam nearly fell over owing to walking like a man with a stiff neck and squinting down both sides of his nose at once. When they got as far as the Stairs they came back on the other side of the road, and they ‘ad turned to go back agin when a docker-looking chap stopped Sam’s friend and spoke to ‘im.

“I’ve got no change, my man,” ses Sam’s pal, pushing past him.

“I ain’t begging, guv’nor,” ses the chap, follering ‘im up. “I’m trying to sell some-thing.”

“Wot is it?” ses the other, stopping.

The man looked up and down the street, and then he put his ‘ead near them and whispered.

“Eh?” ses Sam’s pal.

“Something I picked up,” ses the man, still a-whispering.

Sam got a pinch on the arm from ‘is pal that nearly made him scream, then they both stood still, staring at the docker.

“Wot is it?” ses Sam, at last.

The docker looked over his shoulder agin, and then ‘e put his ‘and in his trouser-pocket and just showed ‘em a big, fat gold locket with diamonds stuck all over it. Then he shoved it back

in 'is pocket, while Sam's pal was giving 'im a pinch worse than wot the other was.

"It's the one," he ses, in a whisper. "Let's 'ave another look at it," he ses to the docker.

The man fished it out of his pocket agin, and held on to it tight while they looked at it.

"Where did you find it?" ses Sam.

"Found it over there, just by the Mint," ses the man, pointing.

"As much as I can get," ses the man. "I don't quite know 'ow much it's worth, that's the worst of it. Wot d'ye say to twenty pounds, and chance it?"

Sam laughed—the sort of laugh a pal 'ad once give him a black eye for.

"Twenty pounds!" he ses; "twenty pounds! 'Ave you gorn out of your mind, or wot? I'll give you a couple of quid for it."

"Well, it's all right, captin," ses the man, "there's no 'arm done. I'll try somebody else—or p'r'aps there'll be a big reward for it. I don't believe it was bought for a 'undred pounds."

He was just sheering off when Sam's pal caught 'im by the arm and asked him to let 'im have another look at it. Then he came back to Sam and led 'im a little way off, whispering to 'im that it was the chance of a life time.

"And if you prefer to keep it for a little while and then sell it, instead of getting the reward for it, I dare say it would be worth a hundred pounds to you," 'e ses.

"I ain't got twenty pounds," ses Sam.

"'Ow much 'ave you got?" ses his pal.

Sam felt in 'is pockets, and the docker came up and stood watching while he counted it. Altogether it was nine pounds fourteen shillings and tuppence.

"P'r'aps you've got some more at 'ome," ses his pal.

"Not a farthing," ses Sam, which was true as far as the farthing went.

"Or p'r'aps you could borrer some," ses his pal, in a soft, kind voice. "I'd lend it to you with pleasure, on'y I haven't got it with me."

Sam shook his 'ead, and at last, arter the docker 'ad said he wouldn't let it go for less than twenty, even to save 'is life, he let it go for the nine pounds odd, a silver watch-chain, two cigars wot Sam 'ad been sitting on by mistake, and a sheath-knife.

"Shove it in your pocket and don't let a soul see it," ses the man, handing over the locket. "I might as well give it away a'most. But it can't be 'elped."

He went off up the 'ill shaking his 'ead, and Sam's pal, arter watching him for a few seconds, said good-bye in a hurry and went off arter 'im to tell him to keep 'is mouth shut about it.

Sam walked back to his lodgings on air, as the saying is, and even did a little bit of a skirt-dance to a pianner-organ wot was playing. Peter and Ginger was out, and so was his land-lady, a respectable woman as was minding the rest of 'is money for him, and when he asked 'er little gal, a kid of eleven, to trust 'im for some tin she gave 'im a lecture on wasting his money instead wot

took ‘is breath away—all but a word or two.

He got some of ‘is money from his landlady at eight o’clock, arter listening to ‘er for ‘arf an hour, and then he ‘ad to pick it up off of the floor, and say “Thank you” for it.

He went to bed afore Ginger and Peter came in, but ‘e was so excited he couldn’t sleep, and long arter they was in bed he laid there and thought of all the different ways of spending a ‘undred pounds. He kept taking the locket from under ‘is piller and feeling it; then he felt ‘e must ‘ave another look at it, and arter coughing ‘ard two or three times and calling out to the other two not to snore—to see if they was awake—he got out o’ bed and lit the candle. Ginger and Peter was both fast asleep, with their eyes screwed up and their mouths wide open, and ‘e sat on the bed and looked at the locket until he was a’most dazzled.

“‘Ullo, Sam!” ses a voice. “Wot ‘ave you got there?”

Sam nearly fell off the bed with surprise and temper. Then ‘e hid the locket in his ‘and and blew out the candle.

“Who gave it to you?” ses Ginger.

“You get off to sleep, and mind your own bisness,” ses Sam, grinding ‘is teeth.

He got back into bed agin and laid there listening to Ginger waking up Peter. Peter woke up disagreeable, but when Ginger told ‘im that Sam ‘ad stole a gold locket as big as a saucer, covered with diamonds, he altered ‘is mind.

“Let’s ‘ave a look at it,” he ses, sitting up.

“Ginger’s dreaming,” ses Sam, in a shaky voice. “I ain’t got no

locket. Wot d'you think I want a locket for?"

Ginger got out o' bed and lit the candle agin. "Come on!" he ses, "let's 'ave a look at it. I wasn't dreaming. I've been awake all the time, watching you."

Sam shut 'is eyes and turned his back to them.

"He's gone to sleep, pore old chap," ses Ginger. "We'll 'ave a look at it without waking 'im. You take that side, Peter! Mind you don't disturb 'im."

He put his 'and in under the bed-clo'es and felt all up and down Sam's back, very careful. Sam stood it for 'arf a minute, and then 'e sat up in bed and behaved more like a windmill than a man.

"Hold his 'ands," ses Ginger.

"Hold 'em yourself," ses Peter, dabbing 'is nose with his shirt-sleeve.

"Well, we're going to see it," ses Ginger, "if we have to make enough noise to rouse the 'ouse. Fust of all we're going to ask you perlite; then we shall get louder and louder. Show us the locket wot you stole, Sam!"

"Show—us—the—diamond locket!" ses Peter.

"It's my turn, Peter," ses Ginger. "One, two, three. SHOW—US—TH'–"

"Shut up," ses Sam, trembling all over. "I'll show it to you if you stop your noise."

He put his 'and under his piller, but afore he showed it to 'em he sat up in bed and made 'em a little speech. He said 'e never wanted to see their faces agin as long as he lived, and why

Ginger's mother 'adn't put 'im in a pail o' cold water when 'e was born 'e couldn't understand. He said 'e didn't believe that even a mother could love a baby that looked like a cod-fish with red 'air, and as for Peter Russet, 'e believed his mother died of fright.

"That'll do," ses Ginger, as Sam stopped to get 'is breath. "Are you going to show us the locket, or 'ave we got to shout agin?"

Sam swallered something that nearly choked 'im, and then he opened his 'and and showed it to them. Peter told 'im to wave it so as they could see the diamonds flash, and then Ginger waved the candle to see 'ow they looked that way, and pretty near set pore Sam's whiskers on fire.

They didn't leave 'im alone till they knew as much about it as he could tell 'em, and they both of 'em told 'im that if he took a reward of thirty pounds for it, instead of selling it for a 'undred, he was a bigger fool than he looked.

"I shall turn it over in my mind," ses Sam, sucking 'is teeth. "When I want your advice I'll ask you for it."

"We wasn't thinking of you," ses Ginger; "we was thinking of ourselves."

"You!" ses Sam, with a bit of a start. "Wot's it got to do with you?"

"Our share'll be bigger, that's all," ses Ginger.

"Much bigger," ses Peter. "I couldn't dream of letting it go at thirty. It's chucking money away. Why, we might get two 'undred for it. Who knows?"

Sam sat on the edge of 'is bed like a man in a dream, then 'e

began to make a noise like a cat with a fish-bone in its throat, and then 'e stood up and let fly.

"Don't stop 'im, Peter," ses Ginger. "Let 'im go on; it'll do him good."

"He's forgot all about that penknife you picked up and went shares in," ses Peter. "I wouldn't be mean for twenty lockets."

"Nor me neither," ses Ginger. "But we won't let 'im be mean —for 'is own sake. We'll 'ave our rights."

"Rights!" ses Sam. "Rights! You didn't find it."

"We always go shares if we find anything," ses Ginger. "Where's your memory, Sam?" "But I didn't find it," ses Sam.

"No, you bought it," ses Peter, "and if you don't go shares we'll split on you—see? Then you can't sell it anyway, and perhaps you won't even get the reward. We can be at Orange Villa as soon as wot you can."

"Sooner," ses Ginger, nodding. "But there's no need to do that. If 'e don't go shares I'll slip round to the police-station fust thing in the morning."

"You know the way there all right," ses Sam, very bitter.

"And we don't want none o' your back-answers," ses Ginger. "Are you going shares or not?"

"Wot about the money I paid for it?" ses Sam, "and my trouble?"

Ginger and Peter sat down on the bed to talk it over, and at last, arter calling themselves a lot o' bad names for being too kind-'earted, they offered 'im five pounds each for their share in

the locket.

"And that means you've got your share for next to nothing, Sam," ses Ginger.

"Some people wouldn't 'ave given you any-thing," ses Peter.

Sam gave way at last, and then 'e stood by making nasty remarks while Ginger wrote out a paper for them all to sign, because he said he had known Sam such a long time.

It was a'most daylight afore they got to sleep, and the fust thing Ginger did when he woke was to wake Sam up, and offer to shake 'ands with him. The noise woke Peter up, and, as Sam wouldn't shake 'ands with 'im either, they both patted him on the back instead.

They made him take 'em to the little pub, arter breakfast, to read the bill about the reward. Sam didn't mind going, as it 'appened, as he 'oped to meet 'is new pal there and tell 'im his troubles, but, though they stayed there some time, 'e didn't turn up. He wasn't at the coffee-shop for dinner, neither.

Peter and Ginger was in 'igh spirits, and, though Sam told 'em plain that he would sooner walk about with a couple of real pickpockets, they wouldn't leave 'im an inch.

"Anybody could steal it off of you, Sam," ses Ginger, patting 'im on the weskit to make sure the locket was still there. "It's a good job you've got us to look arter you."

"We must buy 'im a money-belt with a pocket in it," ses Peter.

Ginger nodded at 'im. "Yes," he ses, "that would be safer. And he'd better wear it next to 'is skin, with everything over it. I should

feel more comfortable then."

"And wot about me?" says Sam, turning on 'im.

"Well, we'll take it in turns," ses Ginger. "You one day, and then me, and then Peter."

Sam gave way at last, as arter all he could see it was the safest thing to do, but he 'ad so much to say about it that they got fair sick of the sound of 'is voice. They 'ad to go 'ome for 'im to put the belt on; and then at seven o'clock in the evening, arter Sam had 'ad two or three pints, they had to go 'ome agin, 'cos he was complaining of tight-lacing.

Ginger had it on next day and he went 'ome five times. The other two went with 'im in case he lost 'imself, and stood there making nasty remarks while he messed 'imself up with a penn'orth of cold cream. It was a cheap belt, and pore Ginger said that, when they 'ad done with it, it would come in handy for sand-paper.

Peter didn't like it any better than the other two did, and twice they 'ad to speak to 'im about stopping in the street and trying to make 'imself more comfortable by wriggling. Sam said people misunderstood it.

Arter that they agreed to wear it outside their shirt, and even then Ginger said it scratched 'im. And every day they got more and more worried about wot was the best thing to do with the locket, and whether it would be safe to try and sell it. The idea o' walking about with a fortune in their pockets that they couldn't spend a'most drove 'em crazy.

"The longer we keep it, the safer it'll be," ses Sam, as they was walking down Hounds-ditch one day.

"We'll sell it when I'm sixty," ses Ginger, nasty-like.

"Then old Sam won't be 'ere to have 'is share," ses Peter.

Sam was just going to answer 'em back, when he stopped and began to smile instead. Straight in front of 'im was the gentleman he 'ad met in the coffee-shop, coming along with another man, and he just 'ad time to see that it was the docker who 'ad sold him the locket, when they both saw 'im. They turned like a flash, and, afore Sam could get 'is breath, bolted up a little alley and disappeared.

"Wot's the row?" ses Ginger, staring.

Sam didn't answer 'im. He stood there struck all of a heap.

"Do you know 'em?" ses Peter.

Sam couldn't answer 'im for a time. He was doing a bit of 'ard thinking.

"Chap I 'ad a row with the other night," he ses, at last.

He walked on very thoughtful, and the more 'e thought, the less 'e liked it. He was so pale that Ginger thought 'e was ill and advised 'im to 'ave a drop o' brandy. Peter recommended rum, so to please 'em he 'ad both. It brought 'is colour back, but not 'is cheerfulness.

He gave 'em both the slip next morning; which was easy, as Ginger was wearing the locket, and, arter fust 'aving a long ride for nothing owing to getting in the wrong train, he got to Barnet.

It was a big place; big enough to 'ave a dozen Orange Villas,

but pore Sam couldn't find one. It wasn't for want of trying neither.

He asked at over twenty shops, and the post-office, and even went to the police-station. He must ha' walked six or seven miles looking for it, and at last, 'arf ready to drop, 'e took the train back.

He 'ad some sausages and mashed potatoes with a pint o' stout at a place in Bishopsgate, and then 'e started to walk 'ome. The only comfort he 'ad was the thought of the ten pounds Ginger and Peter 'ad paid 'im; and when he remembered that he began to cheer up and even smile. By the time he got 'ome 'e was beaming all over 'is face.

"Where've you been?" ses Ginger.

"Enjoying myself by myself," ses Sam.

"Please yourself," ses Peter, very severe, "but where'd you ha' been if we 'ad sold the locket and skipped, eh?"

"You wouldn't 'ave enjoyed yourself by yourself then," ses Ginger. "Yes, you may laugh!"

Sam didn't answer 'im, but he sat down on 'is bed and 'is shoulders shook till Ginger lost his temper and gave him a couple o' thumps on the back that pretty near broke it.

"All right," ses Sam, very firm. "Now you 'ave done for yourselves. I 'ad a'most made up my mind to go shares; now you sha'n't 'ave a ha'penny."

Ginger laughed then. "Ho!" he ses, "and 'ow are you going to prevent it?"

"We've got the locket, Sam," ses Peter, smiling and shaking

his ‘ead at ‘im.

“And we’ll mind it till it’s sold,” ses Ginger.

Sam laughed agin, short and nasty. Then he undressed ‘imself very slow and got into bed. At twelve o’clock, just as Ginger was dropping off, he began to laugh agin, and ‘e only stopped when ‘e heard Ginger getting out of bed to ‘im.

He stayed in bed next morning, ‘cos he said ‘is sides was aching, but ‘e laughed agin as they was going out, and when they came back he ‘ad gorn.

We never know ‘ow much we’ like anything till we lose it. A week arterwards, as Ginger was being ‘elped out of a pawnshop by Peter, he said ‘e would give all he ‘adn’t got for the locket to be near enough to Sam to hear ‘im laugh agin.

PAYING OFF

My biggest fault, said the night-watchman, gloomily, has been good nature. I've spent the best part of my life trying to do my fellow-creeturs a good turn. And what do I get for it? If all the people I've helped was to come 'ere now there wouldn't be standing room for them on this wharf. 'Arf of them would be pushed overboard—and a good place for 'em, too.

I've been like it all my life. I was good-natured enough to go to sea as a boy because a skipper took a fancy to me and wanted my 'elp, and when I got older I was good-natured enough to get married. All my life I've given 'elp and advice free, and only a day or two ago one of 'em wot I 'ad given it to came round here with her 'usband and 'er two brothers and 'er mother and two or three people from the same street, to see her give me "wot for."

Another fault o' mine has been being sharp. Most people make mistakes, and they can't bear to see anybody as don't. Over and over agin I have showed people 'ow silly they 'ave been to do certain things, and told 'em wot I should ha' done in their place, but I can't remember one that ever gave me a "thank you" for it.

There was a man 'ere 'arf an hour ago that reminded me of both of these faults. He came in a-purpose to remind me, and 'e brought a couple o' grinning, brass-faced monkeys with 'im to see 'im do it. I was sitting on that barrel when he came, and arter two minutes I felt as if I was sitting on red-'ot cinders. He

purtended he 'ad come in for the sake of old times and to ask arter my 'ealth, and all the time he was doing 'is best to upset me to amuse them two pore objecks 'e 'ad brought with 'im.

Capt'in Mellun is his name, and 'e was always a foolish, soft-'eaded sort o' man, and how he 'as kept 'is job I can't think. He used to trade between this wharf and Bristol on a little schooner called the Firefly, and seeing wot a silly, foolish kind o' man he was, I took a little bit o' notice of 'im. Many and many a time when 'e was going to do something he'd ha' been sorry for arterwards I 'ave taken 'im round to the Bear's Head and stood 'im pint arter pint until he began to see reason and own up that I was in the right.

His crew was a'most as bad as wot he was, and all in one month one o' the 'ands gave a man ten shillings for a di'mond ring he saw 'im pick up, wot turned out to be worth fourpence, and another one gave five bob for a meerschaum pipe made o' chalk. When I pointed out to 'em wot fools they was they didn't like it, and a week arterwards, when the skipper gave a man in a pub 'is watch and chain and two pounds to hold, to show 'is confidence in 'im, and I told 'im exactly wot I thought of him, 'e didn't like it.

"You're too sharp, Bill," he says, sneering like. "My opinion is that the pore man was run over. He told me 'e should only be away five minutes. And he 'ad got an honest face: nice open blue eyes, and a smile that done you good to look at."

"You've been swindled," I ses, "and you know it. If I'd been done like that I should never hold up my 'ead agin. Why, a child o'

five would know better. You and your crew all seem to be tarred with the same brush. You ain't fit to be trusted out alone."

I believe 'e told his 'ands wot I said; anyway, two bits o' coke missed me by 'arf an inch next evening, and for some weeks not one of 'em spoke a word to me. When they see me coming they just used to stand up straight and twist their nose.

It didn't 'urt me, o' course. I took no notice of 'em. Even when one of 'em fell over the broom I was sweeping with I took no notice of 'im. I just went on with my work as if 'e wasn't there.

I suppose they 'ad been in the sulks about a month, and I was sitting 'ere one evening getting my breath arter a couple o' hours' 'ard work, when one of 'em, George Tebb by name, came off the ship and nodded to me as he passed.

"Evening, Bill," he ses.

"Evening," I ses, rather stiff.

"I wanted a word with you, Bill," he ses, in a low voice. "In fact, I might go so far as to say I want to ask you to do me a favour."

I looked at him so 'ard that he coughed and looked away.

"We might talk about it over a 'arf-pint," he ses.

"No, thank you," I ses. "I 'ad a 'arf-pint the day before yesterday, and I'm not thirsty."

He stood there fidgeting about for a bit, and then he puts his 'and on my shoulder.

"Well, come to the end of the jetty," he ses. "I've got something private to say."

I got up slow-like and followed ‘im. I wasn’t a bit curious. Not a bit. But if a man asks for my ‘elp I always give it.

“It’s like this,” he ses, looking round careful, “only I don’t want the other chaps to hear because I don’t want to be laughed at. Last week an old uncle o’ mine died and left me thirty pounds. It’s just a week ago, and I’ve already got through five of ‘em, and besides that the number of chaps that want to borrow ten bob for a couple o’ days would surprise you.”

“I ain’t so easy surprised,” I ses, shaking my ‘ead.

“It ain’t safe with me,” he ses; “and the favour I want you to do is to take care of it for me. I know it’ll go if I keep it. I’ve got it locked up in this box. And if you keep the box I’ll keep the key, and when I want a bit I’ll come and see you about it.”

He pulled a little box out of ‘is pocket and rattled it in my ear.

“There’s five-and-twenty golden goblins in there,” he ses. “If you take charge of ‘em they’ll be all right. If you don’t, I’m pretty certain I sha’n’t ‘ave one of ‘em in a week or two’s time.”

At fust I said I wouldn’t ‘ave anything to do with it, but he begged so ‘ard that I began to alter my mind.

“You’re as honest as daylight, Bill,” he ses, very earnest. “I don’t know another man in the world I could trust with twenty-five quid— especially myself. Now, put it in your pocket and look arter it for me. One of the quids in it is for you, for your trouble.”

He slipped the box in my coat-pocket, and then he said ‘is mind was so relieved that ‘e felt like ‘arf a pint. I was for going

to the Bear's Head, the place I generally go to, because it is next door to the wharf, so to speak, but George wanted me to try the beer at another place he knew of.

"The wharf's all right," he ses. "There's one or two 'ands on the ship, and they won't let anybody run away with it."

From wot he said I thought the pub was quite close, but instead o' that I should think we walked pretty nearly a mile afore we got there. Nice snug place it was, and the beer was all right, although, as I told George Tebb, it didn't seem to me any better than the stuff at the Bear's Head.

He stood me two 'arf-pints and was just going to order another, when 'e found 'e 'adn't got any money left, and he wouldn't hear of me paying for it, because 'e said it was his treat.

"We'll 'ave a quid out o' the box," he ses. "I must 'ave one to go on with, anyway." I shook my 'ead at 'im.

"Only one," he ses, "and that'll last me a fortnight. Besides, I want to give you the quid I promised you."

I gave way at last, and he put his 'and in 'is trouser-pocket for the key, and then found it wasn't there.

"I must ha' left it in my chest," he ses. "I'll 'op back and get it." And afore I could prevent 'im he 'ad waved his 'and at me and gorn.

My fust idea was to go arter 'im, but I knew I couldn't catch 'im, and if I tried to meet 'im coming back I should most likely miss 'im through the side streets. So I sat there with my pipe and waited.

I suppose I 'ad been sitting down waiting for him for about ten minutes, when a couple o' sailormen came into the bar and began to make themselves a nuisance. Big fat chaps they was, and both of 'em more than 'arf sprung. And arter calling for a pint apiece they began to take a little notice of me.

"Where d'you come from?" ses one of 'em. "'Ome," I ses, very quiet.

"It's a good place—'ome," ses the chap, shaking his 'ead. "Can you sing 'Ome, Sweet 'Ome'? You seem to 'ave got wot I might call a 'singing face.'"

"Never mind about my face," I ses, very sharp. "You mind wot you're doing with that beer. You'll 'ave it over in a minute."

The words was 'ardly out of my mouth afore 'e gave a lurch and spilt his pint all over me. From 'ead to foot I was dripping with beer, and I was in such a temper I wonder I didn't murder 'im; but afore I could move they both pulled out their pocket-'ankerchers and started to rub me down.

"That'll do," I ses at last, arter they 'ad walked round me 'arf-a-dozen times and patted me all over to see if I was dry. "You get off while you're safe."

"It was my mistake, mate," ses the chap who 'ad spilt the beer.

"You get outside," I ses. "Go on, both of you, afore I put you out."

They gave one look at me, standing there with my fists clenched, and then they went out like lambs, and I 'eard 'em trot round the corner as though they was afraid I was following. I felt

a little bit damp and chilly, but beer is like sea-water—you don't catch cold through it—and I sat down agin to wait for George Tebb.

He came in smiling and out 'o breath in about ten minutes' time, with the key in 'is 'and, and as soon as I told 'im wot had 'appened to me with the beer he turned to the landlord and ordered me six o' rum 'ot at once.

"Drink that up," he ses, 'anding it to me; "but fust of all give me the box, so as I can pay for it."

I put my 'and in my pocket. Then I put it in the other one, and arter that I stood staring at George Tebb and shaking all over.

"Wot's the matter? Wot are you looking like that for?" he ses.

"It must ha' been them two," I ses, choking. "While they was purtending to dry me and patting me all over they must 'ave taken it out of my pocket."

"Wot are you talking about?" ses George, staring at me.

"The box 'as gorn," I ses, putting down the 'ot rum and feeling in my trouser-pocket. "The box 'as gorn, and them two must 'ave taken it."

"Gorn!" ses George. "Gorn! My box with twenty-five pounds in, wot I trusted you with, gorn? Wot are you talking about? It can't be—it's too crool!"

He made such a noise that the landlord wot was waiting for 'is money, asked 'im wot he meant by it, and, arter he 'ad explained, I'm blest if the landlord didn't advise him to search me. I stood still and let George go through my pockets, and then I told 'im

I 'ad done with 'im and I never wanted to see 'im agin as long as I lived.

"I dare say," ses George, "I dare say. But you'll come along with me to the wharf and see the skipper. I'm not going to lose five-and-twenty quid through your carelessness."

I marched along in front of 'im with my 'ead in the air, and when he spoke to me I didn't answer him. He went aboard the ship when we got to the wharf, and a minute or two arterwards 'e came to the side and said the skipper wanted to see me.

The airs the skipper gave 'imself was sickening. He sat down there in 'is miserable little rat-'ole of a cabin and acted as if 'e was a judge and I was a prisoner. Most of the 'ands 'ad squeezed in there too, and the things they advised George to do to me was remarkable.

"Silence!" ses the skipper. "Now, watchman, tell me exactly 'ow this thing 'appened."

"I've told you once," I ses.

"I know," ses the skipper, "but I want you to tell me again to see if you contradict yourself. I can't understand 'ow such a clever man as you could be done so easy."

I thought I should ha' bust, but I kept my face wonderful. I just asked 'im wot the men was like that got off with 'is watch and chain and two pounds, in case they might be the same.

"That's different," he ses.

"Oh!" ses I. "'Ow?"

"I lost my own property," he ses, "but you lost George's, and

‘ow a man like you, that’s so much sharper and cleverer than other people, could be had so easy, I can’t think. Why, a child of five would ha’ known better.”

“A baby in arms would ha’ known better,” ses the man wot ‘ad bought the di’mond ring. “‘Ow could you ‘ave been so silly, Bill? At your time o’ life, too!”

“That’s neither ‘ere nor there,” ses the skip-per. “The watchman has lost twenty-five quid belonging to one o’ my men. The question is, wot is he going to do about it?”

“Nothing,” I ses. “I didn’t ask ‘im to let me mind the box. He done it of ‘is own free will. It’s got nothing to do with me.”

“Oh, hasn’t it?” ses the skipper, drawing ‘imself up. “I don’t want to be too ‘ard on you, but at the same time I can’t let my man suffer. I’ll make it as easy as I can, and I order you to pay ‘im five shillings a week till the twenty-five pounds is cleared off.”

I laughed; I couldn’t ‘elp it. I just stood there and laughed at ‘im.

“If you don’t,” ses the skipper, “then I shall lay the facts of the case afore the guv’nor. Whether he’ll object to you being in a pub a mile away, taking care of a box of gold while you was supposed to be taking care of the wharf, is his bisness. My bisness is to see that my man ‘as ‘is rights.”

“‘Ear, ‘ear !” ses the crew.

“You please yourself, watchman,” ses the skipper. “You’re such a clever man that no doubt you could get a better job to-morrow. There must be ‘eaps of people wanting a man like you.

It's for you to decide. That's all I've got to say—five bob a week till pore George 'as got 'is money back, or else I put the case afore the guv'nor. Wot did you say?"

I said it agin, and, as 'e didn't seem to understand, I said it once more.

"Please yourself," 'e ses, when I 'ad finished. "You're an old man, and five bob a week can't be much loss to you. You've got nothing to spend it on, at your time o' life. And you've got a very soft job 'ere. Wot?"

I didn't answer 'im. I just turned round, and, arter giving a man wot stood in my way a punch in the chest, I got up on deck and on to the wharf, and said my little say all alone to myself, behind the crane.

I paid the fust five bob to George Tebb the next time the ship was up, and arter biting 'em over and over agin and then ringing 'em on the deck 'e took the other chaps round to the Bear's Head.

"P'r'aps it's just as well it's 'appened," he ses. "Five bob a week for nearly two years ain't to be sneezed at. It's slow, but it's sure."

I thought 'e was joking at fust, but arter working it out in the office with a bit o' pencil and paper I thought I should ha' gorn crazy. And when I complained about the time to George 'e said I could make it shorter if I liked by paying ten bob a week, but 'e thought the steady five bob a week was best for both of us.

I got to 'ate the sight of 'im. Every week regular as clockwork he used to come round to me with his 'and out, and then go and treat 'is mates to beer with my money. If the ship came up in

the day-time, at six o'clock in the evening he'd be at the wharf gate waiting for me; and if it came up at night she was no sooner made fast than 'e was over the side patting my trouser-pocket and saying wot a good job it was for both of us that I was in steady employment.

Week arter week and month arter month I went on paying. I a'most forgot the taste o' beer, and if I could manage to get a screw o' baccy a week I thought myself lucky. And at last, just as I thought I couldn't stand it any longer, the end came.

I 'ad just given George 'is week's money—and 'ow I got it together that week I don't know—when one o' the chaps came up and said the skipper wanted to see me on board at once.

"Tell 'im if he wants to see me I'm to be found on the wharf," I ses, very sharp.

"He wants to see you about George's money," ses the chap. "I should go if I was you. My opinion is he wants to do you a good turn."

I 'ung fire for a bit, and then, arter sweeping up for a little while deliberate-like, I put down my broom and stepped aboard to see the skipper, wot was sitting on the cabin skylight purtending to read a newspaper.

He put it down when 'e see me, and George and the others, wot 'ad been standing in a little bunch for'ard, came aft and stood looking on.

"I wanted to see you about this money, watchman," ses the skipper, putting on 'is beastly frills agin. "O' course, we all feel

that to a pore man like you it's a bit of a strain, and, as George ses, arter all you have been more foolish than wicked."

"Much more," ses George.

"I find that you 'ave now paid five bob a week for nineteen weeks," ses the skipper, "and George 'as been kind enough and generous enough to let you off the rest. There's no need for you to look bashful, George; it's a credit to you."

I could 'ardly believe my ears. George stood there grinning like a stuck fool, and two o' the chaps was on their best behaviour with their 'ands over their mouths and their eyes sticking out.

"That's all, watchman," ses the skipper; "and I 'ope it'll be a lesson to you not to neglect your dooty by going into public-'ouses and taking charge of other people's money when you ain't fit for it."

"I sha'n't try to do anybody else a kindness agin, if that's wot you mean," I ses, looking at 'im.

"No, you'd better not," he ses. "This partickler bit o' kindness 'as cost you four pounds fifteen, and that's a curious thing when you come to think of it. Very curious."

"Wot d'ye mean?" I ses.

"Why," he ses, grinning like a madman, "it's just wot we lost between us. I lost a watch and chain worth two pounds, and another couple o' pounds besides; Joe lost ten shillings over 'is di'mond ring; and Charlie lost five bob over a pipe. 'That's four pounds fifteen—just the same as you."

Them silly fools stood there choking and sobbing and patting

each other on the back as though they'd never leave off, and all of a sudden I 'ad a 'orrible suspicion that I 'ad been done.

"Did you see the sovereigns in the box?" I ses, turning to the skipper.

"No," he ses, shaking his 'ead.

"'Ow do you know they was there, then?" ses I.

"Because you took charge of 'em," said the skipper; "and I know wot a clever, sharp chap you are. It stands to reason that you wouldn't be responsible for a box like that unless you saw inside of it. Why, a child o' five wouldn't!"

I stood there looking at 'im, but he couldn't meet my eye. None of 'em could; and arter waiting there for a minute or two to give 'em a chance, I turned my back on 'em and went off to my dooty.

MADE TO MEASURE

Mr. Mott brought his niece home from the station with considerable pride. Although he had received a photograph to assist identification, he had been very dubious about accosting the pretty, well-dressed girl who had stepped from the train and gazed around with dove-like eyes in search of him. Now he was comfortably conscious of the admiring gaze of his younger fellow-townsmen.

"You'll find it a bit dull after London, I expect," he remarked, as he inserted his key in the door of a small house in a quiet street.

"I'm tired of London," said Miss Garland. "I think this is a beautiful little old town—so peaceful."

Mr. Mott looked gratified.

"I hope you'll stay a long time," he said, as he led the way into the small front room. "I'm a lonely old man."

His niece sank into an easy chair, and looked about her.

"Thank you," she said, slowly. "I hope I shall. I feel better already. There is so much to upset one in London."

"Noise?" queried Mr. Mott.

"And other things," said Miss Garland, with a slight shudder.

Mr. Mott sighed in sympathy with the unknown, and, judging by his niece's expression, the unknowable. He rearranged the teacups, and, going to the kitchen, returned in a few minutes with a pot of tea.

"Mrs. Pett leaves at three," he said, in explanation, "to look after her children, but she comes back again at eight to look after my supper. And how is your mother?"

Miss Garland told him.

"Last letter I had from her," said Mr. Mott, stealing a glance at the girl's ring-finger, "I understood you were engaged."

His niece drew herself up.

"Certainly not," she said, with considerable vigour. "I have seen too much of married life. I prefer my freedom. Besides, I don't like men."

Mr. Mott said modestly that he didn't wonder at it, and, finding the subject uncongenial, turned the conversation on to worthier subjects. Miss Garland's taste, it seemed, lay in the direction of hospital nursing, or some other occupation beneficial to mankind at large. Simple and demure, she filled the simpler Mr. Mott with a strong sense of the shortcomings of his unworthy sex.

Within two days, under the darkling glance of Mrs. Pett, she had altered the arrangements of the house. Flowers appeared on the meal-table, knives and forks were properly cleaned, and plates no longer appeared ornamented with the mustard of a previous meal. Fresh air circulated through the house, and, passing from Mrs. Pett's left knee to the lumbar region of Mr. Mott, went on its beneficent way rejoicing.

On the fifth day of her visit, Mr. Mott sat alone in the front parlour. The window was closed, the door was closed, and Mr.

Mott, sitting in an easy chair with his feet up, was aroused from a sound nap by the door opening to admit a young man, who, deserted by Mrs. Pett, stood bowing awkwardly in the doorway.

"Is Miss Garland in?" he stammered.

Mr. Mott rubbed the remnants of sleep from his eyelids.

"She has gone for a walk," he said, slowly.

The young man stood fingering his hat.

"My name is Hurst," he said, with slight emphasis. "Mr. Alfred Hurst."

Mr. Mott, still somewhat confused, murmured that he was glad to hear it.

"I have come from London to see Florrie," continued the intruder. "I suppose she won't be long?"

Mr. Mott thought not, and after a moment's hesitation invited Mr. Hurst to take a chair.

"I suppose she told you we are engaged?" said the latter.

"Engaged!" said the startled Mr. Mott. "Why, she told me she didn't like men."

"Playfulness," replied Mr. Hurst, with an odd look. "Ah, here she is!"

The handle of the front door turned, and a moment later the door of the room was opened and the charming head of Miss Garland appeared in the opening.

"Back again," she said, brightly. "I've just been–"

She caught sight of Mr. Hurst, and the words died away on her lips. The door slammed, and the two gentlemen, exchanging

glances, heard a hurried rush upstairs and the slamming of another door. Also a key was heard to turn sharply in a lock.

"She doesn't want to see you," said Mr. Mott, staring.

The young man turned pale.

"Perhaps she has gone upstairs to take her things off," he muttered, resuming his seat. "Don't—don't hurry her!"

"I wasn't going to," said Mr. Mott.

He twisted his beard uneasily, and at the end of ten minutes looked from the clock to Mr. Hurst and coughed.

"If you wouldn't mind letting her know I'm waiting," said the young man, brokenly.

Mr. Mott rose, and went slowly upstairs. More slowly still, after an interval of a few minutes, he came back again.

"She doesn't want to see you," he said, slowly.

Mr. Hurst gasped.

"I—I must see her," he faltered.

"She won't see you," repeated Mr. Mott. "And she told me to say she was surprised at you following her down here."

Mr. Hurst uttered a faint moan, and with bent head passed into the little passage and out into the street, leaving Mr. Mott to return to the sitting-room and listen to such explanations as Miss Garland deemed advisable. Great goodness of heart in the face of persistent and unwelcome attentions appeared to be responsible for the late engagement.

"Well, it's over now," said her uncle, kindly, "and no doubt he'll soon find somebody else. There are plenty of girls would

jump at him, I expect."

Miss Garland shook her head.

"He said he couldn't live without me," she remarked, soberly.

Mr. Mott laughed.

"In less than three months I expect he'll be congratulating himself," he said, cheerfully. "Why, I was nearly cau—married, four times. It's a silly age."

His niece said "Indeed!" and, informing him in somewhat hostile tones that she was suffering from a severe headache, retired to her room.

Mr. Mott spent the evening by himself, and retiring to bed at ten-thirty was awakened by a persistent knocking at the front door at half-past one. Half awakened, he lit a candle, and, stumbling downstairs, drew back the bolt of the door, and stood gaping angrily at the pathetic features of Mr. Hurst.

"Sorry to disturb you," said the young man, "but would you mind giving this letter to Miss Garland?"

"Sorry to disturb me!" stuttered Mr. Mott. "What do you mean by it? Eh? What do you mean by it?"

"It is important," said Mr. Hurst. "I can't rest. I've eaten nothing all day."

"Glad to hear it," snapped the irritated Mr. Mott.

"If you will give her that letter, I shall feel easier," said Mr. Hurst.

"I'll give it to her in the morning," said the other, snatching it from him. "Now get off."

Mr. Hurst still murmuring apologies, went, and Mr. Mott, also murmuring, returned to bed. The night was chilly, and it was some time before he could get to sleep again. He succeeded at last, only to be awakened an hour later by a knocking more violent than before. In a state of mind bordering upon frenzy, he dived into his trousers again and went blundering downstairs in the dark.

"Sorry to—" began Mr. Hurst.

Mr. Mott made uncouth noises at him.

"I have altered my mind," said the young man. "Would you mind letting me have that letter back again? It was too final."

"You—get—off!" said the other, trembling with cold and passion.

"I must have that letter," said Mr. Hurst, doggedly. "All my future happiness may depend upon it."

Mr. Mott, afraid to trust himself with speech, dashed upstairs, and after a search for the matches found the letter, and, returning to the front door, shut it on the visitor's thanks. His niece's door opened as he passed it, and a gentle voice asked for enlightenment.

"How silly of him!" she said, softly. "I hope he won't catch cold. What did you say?"

"I was coughing," said Mr. Mott, hastily.

"You'll get cold if you're not careful," said his thoughtful niece. "That's the worst of men, they never seem to have any thought. Did he seem angry, or mournful, or what? I suppose you

couldn't see his face?"

"I didn't try," said Mr. Mott, crisply. "Good night."

By the morning his ill-humour had vanished, and he even became slightly facetious over the events of the night. The mood passed at the same moment that Mr. Hurst passed the window.

"Better have him in and get it over," he said, irritably.

Miss Garland shuddered.

"Never!" she said, firmly. "He'd be down on his knees. It would be too painful. You don't know him."

"Don't want to," said Mr. Mott.

He finished his breakfast in silence, and, after a digestive pipe, proposed a walk. The profile of Mr. Hurst, as it went forlornly past the window again, served to illustrate Miss Garland's refusal.

"I'll go out and see him," said Mr. Mott, starting up. "Are you going to be a prisoner here until this young idiot chooses to go home? It's preposterous!"

He crammed his hat on firmly and set out in pursuit of Mr. Hurst, who was walking slowly up the street, glancing over his shoulder. "Morning!" said Mr. Mott, fiercely. "Good morning," said the other.

"Now, look here," said Mr. Mott. "This has gone far enough, and I won't have any more of it. Why, you ought to be ashamed of yourself, chivvying a young lady that doesn't want you. Haven't you got any pride?"

"No," said the young man, "not where she is concerned."

"I don't believe you have," said the other, regarding him, "and

I expect that's where the trouble is. Did she ever have reason to think you were looking after any other girls?"

"Never, I swear it," said Mr. Hurst, eagerly.

"Just so," said Mr. Mott, with a satisfied nod. "That's where you made a mistake. She was too sure of you; it was too easy. No excitement. Girls like a man that other girls want; they don't want a turtle-dove in fancy trousers."

Mr. Hurst coughed.

"And they like a determined man," continued Miss Garland's uncle. "Why, in my young days, if I had been jilted, and come down to see about it, d'you think I'd have gone out of the house without seeing her? I might have been put out—by half-a-dozen—but I'd have taken the mantelpiece and a few other things with me. And you are bigger than I am."

"We aren't all made the same," said Mr. Hurst, feebly.

"No, we're not," said Mr. Mott. "I'm not blaming you; in a way, I'm sorry for you. If you're not born with a high spirit, nothing'll give it to you."

"It might be learnt," said Mr. Hurst. Mr. Mott laughed.

"High spirits are born, not made," he said. "The best thing you can do is to go and find another girl, and marry her before she finds you out."

Mr. Hurst shook his head.

"There's no other girl for me," he said, miserably. "And everything seemed to be going so well. We've been buying things for the house for the last six months, and I've just got a good rise

in my screw."

"It'll do for another girl," said Mr. Mott, briskly. "Now, you get off back to town. You are worrying Florrie by staying here, and you are doing no good to anybody. Good-bye."

"I'll walk back as far as the door with you," said Mr. Hurst. "You've done me good. It's a pity I didn't meet you before."

"Remember what I've told you, and you'll do well yet," he said, patting the young man on the arm.

"I will," said Mr. Hurst, and walked on by his side, deep in thought.

"I can't ask you in," said Mr. Mott, jocularly, as he reached his door, and turned the key in the lock. "Good-bye."

"Good-bye," said Mr. Hurst.

He grasped the other's outstretched hand, and with a violent jerk pulled him into the street. Then he pushed open the door, and, slipping into the passage, passed hastily into the front room, closely followed by the infuriated Mr. Mott.

"What—what—what!" stammered that gentleman.

"I'm taking your tip," said Mr. Hurst, pale but determined. "I'm going to stay here until I have seen Florrie."

"You—you're a serpent," said Mr. Mott, struggling for breath. "I—I'm surprised at you. You go out before you get hurt."

"Not without the mantelpiece," said Mr. Hurst, with a distorted grin.

"A viper!" said Mr. Mott, with extreme bitterness. "If you are not out in two minutes I'll send for the police."

"Florrie wouldn't like that," said Mr. Hurst. "She's awfully particular about what people think. You just trot upstairs and tell her that a gentleman wants to see her."

He threw himself into Mr. Mott's own particular easy chair, and, crossing his knees, turned a deaf ear to the threats of that incensed gentleman. Not until the latter had left the room did his features reveal the timorousness of the soul within. Muffled voices sounded from upstairs, and it was evident that an argument of considerable length was in progress. It was also evident from the return of Mr. Mott alone that his niece had had the best of it.

"I've done all I could," he said, "but she declines to see you. She says she won't see you if you stay here for a month, and you couldn't do that, you know."

"Why not?" inquired Mr. Hurst.

"Why not?" repeated Mr. Mott, repressing his feelings with some difficulty. "Food!"

Mr. Hurst started.

"And drink," said Mr. Mott, following up his advantage. "There's no good in starving yourself for nothing, so you may as well go."

"When I've seen Florrie," said the young man, firmly.

Mr. Mott slammed the door, and for the rest of the day Mr. Hurst saw him no more. At one o'clock a savoury smell passed the door on its way upstairs, and at five o'clock a middle-aged woman with an inane smile looked into the room on her way aloft with a loaded tea-tray. By supper- time he was suffering

considerably from hunger and thirst.

At ten o'clock he heard the footsteps of Mr. Mott descending the stairs. The door opened an inch, and a gruff voice demanded to know whether he was going to stay there all night. Receiving a cheerful reply in the affirmative, Mr. Mott secured the front door with considerable violence, and went off to bed without another word.

He was awakened an hour or two later by the sound of something falling, and, sitting up in bed to listen, became aware of a warm and agreeable odour. It was somewhere about the hour of midnight, but a breakfast smell of eggs and bacon would not be denied.

He put on some clothes and went downstairs. A crack of light showed under the kitchen door, and, pushing it open with some force, he gazed spellbound at the spectacle before him.

"Come in," said Mr. Hurst, heartily. "I've just finished."

He rocked an empty beer-bottle and patted another that was half full. Satiety was written on his face as he pushed an empty plate from him, and, leaning back in his chair, smiled lazily at Mr. Mott.

"Go on," said that gentleman, hoarsely. Mr. Hurst shook his head.

"Enough is as good as a feast," he said, reasonably. "I'll have some more to-morrow."

"Oh, will you?" said the other. "Will you?"

Mr. Hurst nodded, and, opening his coat, disclosed a bottle

of beer in each breast-pocket. The other pockets, it appeared, contained food.

"And here's the money for it," he said, putting down some silver on the table. "I am determined, but honest."

With a sweep of his hand, Mr. Mott sent the money flying.

"To-morrow morning I send for the police. Mind that!" he roared.

"I'd better have my breakfast early, then," said Mr. Hurst, tapping his pockets. "Good night. And thank you for your advice."

He sat for some time after the disappearance of his host, and then, returning to the front room, placed a chair at the end of the sofa and, with the tablecloth for a quilt, managed to secure a few hours' troubled sleep. At eight o'clock he washed at the scullery sink, and at ten o'clock Mr. Mott, with an air of great determination, came in to deliver his ultimatum.

"If you're not outside the front door in five minutes, I'm going to fetch the police," he said, fiercely.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.