

**WILLIAM
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JACOBS**

EASY MONEY

William Wymark Jacobs

Easy Money

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W. W. Jacobs

Easy Money / Night Watches, Part 9

EASY MONEY

A lad of about twenty stepped ashore from the schooner Jane, and joining a girl, who had been avoiding for some ten minutes the ardent gaze of the night-watchman, set off arm-in-arm. The watchman rolled his eyes and shook his head slowly.

Nearly all his money on 'is back, he said, and what little bit 'e's got over he'll spend on 'er. And three months arter they're married he'll wonder wot 'e ever saw in her. If a man marries he wishes he 'adn't, and if he doesn't marry he wishes he 'ad. That's life.

Looking at them two young fools reminds me of a nevy of Sam Small's; a man I think I've spoke to you of afore. As a rule Sam didn't talk much about 'is relations, but there was a sister of 'is in the country wot 'e was rather fond of because 'e 'adn't seen 'er for twenty years. She 'ad got a boy wot 'ad just got a job in London, and when 'e wrote and told 'er he was keeping company with the handsomest and loveliest and best 'arted gal in the whole wide world, she wrote to Sam about it and asked 'im to give 'is nevy some good advice.

Sam 'ad just got back from China and was living with Peter Russet and Ginger Dick as usual, and arter reading the letter about seven times and asking Ginger how 'e spelt "minx," 'e read the letter out loud to them and asked 'em what they thought about it.

Ginger shook his 'ead, and, arter thinking a bit, Peter shook his too.

"She's caught 'im rather young," ses Ginger.

"They get it bad at that age too," ses Peter. "When I was twenty, there was a gal as I was fond of, and a regiment couldn't ha' parted us."

"Wot did part you then?" ses Sam.

"Another gal," ses Peter; "a gal I took a fancy to, that's wot did it."

"I was nearly married when I was twenty," ses Ginger, with a far-away look in his eyes. "She was the most beautiful gal I ever saw in my life; she 'ad one 'undred pounds a year of 'er own and she couldn't bear me out of her sight. If a thump acrost the chest would do that cough of yours any good, Sam—"

"Don't take no notice of 'im, Ginger," ses Peter. "Why didn't you marry 'er?"

"Cos I was afraid she might think I was arter 'er money," ses Ginger, getting a little bit closer to Sam.

Peter 'ad another turn then, and him and Ginger kept on talking about gals whose 'arts they 'ad broke till Sam didn't know what to do with 'imself.

"I'll just step round and see my nevy, while you and Peter are amusing each other," he ses at last. "I'll ask 'im to come round to-morrow and then you can give 'im good advice."

The nevy came round next evening. Bright, cheerful young chap 'e was, and he agreed with everything they said. When Peter said as 'ow all gals was deceivers, he said he'd known it for years, but they was born that way and couldn't 'elp it; and when Ginger said that no man ought to marry afore he was fifty, he corrected 'im and made it fifty-five.

"I'm glad to 'ear you talk like that," ses Ginger.

"So am I," ses Peter.

"He's got his 'ead screwed on right," ses Sam, wot thought his sister 'ad made a mistake.

"I'm surprised when I look round at the wimmen men 'ave married," ses the nevy; "wot they could 'ave seen in them I can't think. Me and my young lady often laugh about it."

"Your wot?" ses Sam, pretending to be very surprised.

"My young lady," ses the nevy.

Sam gives a cough. "I didn't know you'd got a young lady," he ses.

"Well, I 'ave," ses his nevy, "and we're going to be married at Christmas."

"But—but you ain't fifty-five," ses Ginger.

"I'm twenty-one," ses the nevy, "but my case is different. There isn't another young lady like mine in the world. She's different to all the others, and it ain't likely I'm going to let 'er be snapped up by somebody else. Fifty-five! Why, 'ow I'm to wait till Christmas I don't know. She's the prettiest and handsomest gal in the world; and she's the cleverest one I ever met. You ought to hear 'er laugh. Like music it is. You'd never forget it."

"Twenty-one is young," ses Ginger, shaking his 'ead. "'Ave you known 'er long?"

"Three months," ses the nevy. "She lives in the same street as I do. 'Ow it is she ain't been snapped up before, I can't think, but she told me that she didn't care for men till she saw me."

"They all say that," ses Ginger.

"If I've 'ad it said to me once, I've 'ad it said twenty times," ses Peter, nodding.

"They do it to flatter," ses old Sam, looking as if 'e knew all about it. "You wait till you are my age, Joe; then you'll know; why I should ha' been married dozens o' times if I 'adn't been careful."

"P'r'aps it was a bit on both sides," ses Joe, looking at 'is uncle. "P'r'aps they was careful too. If you only saw my young lady, you wouldn't talk like that. She's got the truthfulest eyes in the world. Large grey eyes like a child's, leastways sometimes they are grey and sometimes they are blue. It seems to depend on the light somehow; I 'ave seen them when they was a brown-brownish-gold. And she smiles with 'er eyes."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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