

**WILLIAM
WYMARK
JACOBS**

GOOD INTENTIONS

William Wymark Jacobs

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W. W. Jacobs

Good Intentions / Ship's Company, Part 3

GOOD INTENTIONS

"Jealousy; that's wot it is," said the night-watchman, trying to sneer— "pure jealousy." He had left his broom for a hurried half-pint at the "Bull's Head"—left it leaning in a negligent attitude against the warehouse-wall; now, lashed to the top of the crane at the jetty end, it pointed its soiled bristles towards the evening sky and defied capture.

"And I know who it is, and why 'e's done it," he continued. "Fust and last, I don't suppose I was talking to the gal for more than ten minutes, and 'arf of that was about the weather.

"I don't suppose anybody 'as suffered more from jealousy than wot I 'ave: Other people's jealousy, I mean. Ever since I was married the missis has been setting traps for me, and asking people to keep an eye on me. I blacked one of the eyes once—like a fool—and the chap it belonged to made up a tale about me that I ain't lived down yet.

"Years ago, when I was out with the missis one evening, I saved a gal's life for her. She slipped as she was getting off a bus, and I caught 'er just in time. Fine strapping gal she was, and afore I could get my balance we 'ad danced round and round 'arfway acrost the road with our arms round each other's necks, and my missis watching us from the pavement. When we were safe, she said the gal 'adn't slipped at all; and, as soon as the gal 'ad got 'er breath, I'm blest if she didn't say so too.

"You can't argufy with jealous people, and you can't shame 'em. When I told my missis once that I should never dream of being jealous of her, instead of up and thanking me for it, she spoilt the best frying-pan we ever had. When the widder-woman next-door but two and me 'ad rheumatics at the same time, she went and asked the doctor whether it was catching.

"The worse trouble o' that kind I ever got into was all through trying to do somebody else a kindness. I went out o' my way to do it; I wasted the whole evening for the sake of other people, and got into such trouble over it that even now it gives me the cold shivers to think of.

"Cap'n Tarbell was the man I tried to do a good turn to; a man what used to be master of a ketch called the *Lizzie and Annie*, trading between 'ere and Shoremouth. 'Artful Jack' he used to be called, and if ever a man deserved the name, he did. A widder-man of about fifty, and as silly as a boy of fifteen. He 'ad been talking of getting married agin for over ten years, and, thinking it was only talk, I didn't give 'im any good advice. Then he told me one night that 'e was keeping company with a woman named Lamb, who lived at a place near Shoremouth. When I asked 'im what she looked like, he said that she had a good 'art, and, knowing wot that meant, I wasn't at all surprised when he told me some time arter that 'e had been a silly fool.

"Well, if she's got a good 'art,' I ses, 'p'r'aps she'll let you go.'

"Talk sense,' he ses. 'It ain't good enough for that. Why, she worships the ground I tread on. She thinks there is nobody like me in the whole wide world.'

"Let's 'ope she'll think so arter you're married,' I ses, trying to cheer him up.

"I'm not going to get married,' he ses. 'Leastways, not to 'er. But 'ow to get out of it without breaking her 'art and being had up for breach o' promise I can't think. And if the other one got to 'ear of it, I should lose her too.'

"Other one?' I ses, 'wot other one?'

"Cap'n Tarbell shook his 'ead and smiled like a silly gal.

"She fell in love with me on top of a bus in the Mile End Road,' he ses. 'Love at fust sight it was. She's a widder lady with a nice little 'ouse at Bow, and plenty to live on-her 'usband having

been a builder. I don't know what to do. You see, if I married both of 'em it's sure to be found out sooner or later.'

"'You'll be found out as it is,' I ses, 'if you ain't careful. I'm surprised at you.'

"'Yes,' he ses, getting up and walking backwards and forwards; 'especially as Mrs. Plimmer is always talking about coming down to see the ship. One thing is, the crew won't give me away; they've been with me too long for that. P'r'aps you could give me a little advice, Bill.'

"I did. I talked to that man for an hour and a'arf, and when I 'ad finished he said he didn't want that kind of advice at all. Wot 'e wanted was for me to tell 'im 'ow to get rid of Miss Lamb and marry Mrs. Plimmer without anybody being offended or having their feelings hurt.

"Mrs. Plimmer came down to the ship the very next evening. Fine-looking woman she was, and, wot with 'er watch and chain and di'mond rings and brooches and such-like, I should think she must 'ave 'ad five or six pounds' worth of jewell'ry on 'er. She gave me a very pleasant smile, and I gave 'er one back, and we stood chatting there like old friends till at last she tore 'erself away and went on board the ship.

"She came off by and by hanging on Cap'n Tarbell's arm. The cap'n was dressed up in 'is Sunday clothes, with one of the cleanest collars on I 'ave ever seen in my life, and smoking a cigar that smelt like an escape of gas. He came back alone at ha'past eleven that night, and 'e told me that if it wasn't for the other one down Shoremouth way he should be the 'appiest man on earth.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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