

**MANY
CARGOES**

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Many cargoes by W. W. Jacobs

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W. W. JACOBS

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BY
W. W. JACOBS

Seventh Edition.



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MANY CARGOES

A CHANGE OF TREATMENT

“YES, I’ve sailed under some ‘cute skippers in my time,” said the night-watchman; “them that go down in big ships see the wonders o’ the deep, you know,” he added with a sudden chuckle, “but the one I’m going to tell you about ought never to have been trusted out without ‘is ma. A good many o’ my skippers had fads, but this one was the worst I ever sailed under.

“It’s some few years ago now; I’d shipped on his barque, the *John Elliott*, as slow-going an old tub as ever I was aboard of, when I wasn’t in quite a fit an’ proper state to know what I was doing, an’ I hadn’t been in her two days afore I found out his ‘obby through overhearing a few remarks made by the second mate, who came up from dinner in a hurry to make ‘em. ‘I don’t mind saws an’ knives hung round the cabin,’ he ses to the fust mate, ‘but when a chap has a ‘uman ‘and alongside ‘is plate, studying it while folks is at their food, it’s more than a Christian man can stand.’

“‘That’s nothing,’ ses the fust mate, who had sailed with the barque afore. ‘He’s half crazy on doctoring. We nearly had a mutiny aboard once owing to his

wanting to hold a *post-mortem* on a man what fell from the mast-head. Wanted to see what the poor feller died of.'

"'I call it unwholesome,' ses the second mate very savage. 'He offered me a pill at breakfast the size of a small marble; quite put me off my feed, it did.'

"Of course, the skipper's fad soon got known for'ard. But I didn't think much about it, till one day I seed old Dan'l Dennis sitting on a locker reading. Every now and then he'd shut the book, an' look up, closing 'is eyes, an' moving his lips like a hen drinking, an' then look down at the book again.

"'Why, Dan,' I ses, 'what's up? you ain't larning lessons at your time o' life?'

"'Yes, I am,' ses Dan very soft. 'You might hear me say it, it's this one about heart disease.'

"He hands over the book, which was stuck full o' all kinds o' diseases, and winks at me 'ard.

"'Picked it up on a book-stall,' he ses; then he shut 'is eyes an' said his piece wonderful. It made me quite queer to listen to 'im. 'That's how I feel,' ses he, when he'd finished. 'Just strength enough to get to bed. Lend a hand, Bill, an' go an' fetch the doctor.'

"Then I see his little game, but I wasn't going to run any risks, so I just mentioned, permiscous like, to the cook as old Dan seemed rather queer, an' went back an' tried to borrow the book, being always fond of reading. Old Dan pretended he was too ill to hear what I was saying, an' afore I could take it away from him, the skipper comes hurrying down with a bag in his 'and.

"'What's the matter, my man?' ses he, 'what's the matter?'

"'I'm all right, sir,' ses old Dan, 'cept that I've been swoonding away a little.'

"'Tell me exactly how you feel,' ses the skipper, feeling his pulse.

"Then old Dan said his piece over to him, an' the skipper shook his head an' looked very solemn.

"'How long have you been like this?' he ses.

"'Four or five years, sir,' ses Dan. 'It ain't nothing serious, sir, is it?'

"'You lie quite still,' ses the skipper, putting a little trumpet thing to his chest an' then listening. 'Um! there's serious mischief here I'm afraid, the prognotice is very bad.'

"'Prog what, sir?' ses Dan, staring.

"'Prognotice,' ses the skipper, at least I think that's the word he said. 'You keep perfectly still, an' I'll go an' mix you up a draught, and tell the cook to get some strong beef-tea on.'

"Well, the skipper 'ad no sooner gone, than Cornish Harry, a great big lumbering chap o' six feet two, goes up to old Dan, an' he ses, 'Gimme that book.'

"'Go away,' says Dan, 'don't come worrying 'ere; you 'eard the skipper say how bad my prognotice was.'

"'You lend me the book,' ses Harry, ketching hold of him, 'or else I'll bang you first, and split to the skipper arterwards. I believe I'm a bit consumptive. Anyway, I'm going to see.'

"He dragged the book away from the old man, and began to study. There was so many complaints in it he was almost tempted to have something else instead of consumption, but he decided on that at last, an' he got a cough what worried the fo'c'sle all night long, an' the next day, when the skipper came down to see Dan, he could 'ardly 'ear hisself speak.

"'That's a nasty cough you 've got, my man,' ses he, looking at Harry.