

Light Freights

By W. W. JACOBS

A QUESTION OF HABIT

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"Winmin aboard ship I don't 'old when she was in the fo'e'sle. Per-
haps she hadn't got much to laugh about then; and while she was up there enjoying 'erself watching us chaps work, the committee was down below laying its 'eads together again."

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"By Jove! I've got it," ses the old man, suddenly. "Where's that dressin' gown your wife gave you?"

"The mate looked up. 'I don't know,' he ses, slowly. 'I've mislaid it.'

"Well, it can't be far," ses the skipper. "It's just the thing to make a frock o'."

"Nothing," roars the mate.

"Was that a box on the ear I heard?" ses the skipper.

"It was," ses the mate, grinding his teeth.

"Your ear?" ses the skipper.

"Yes," she's mad, I tell you," ses the mate. "I was sitting here quite and peaceful, when she came alongside me and slapped my face."

"Why did you box his ear?" ses the skipper.

"Because he deserved it," ses Miss Mallow.

"The skipper shook his 'ead and looked at the mate so sorrowful that he began to stamp up and down the cabin and bang the table with his fist."

"If I hadn't heard it myself, I couldn't have believed it," ses the skipper; "and you the father of a family, too. Nice example for the young men, I must say."

"Please don't say anything more about it," ses Miss Mallow; "I'm sure very sorry."

"Very good," ses the skipper; "but you understand, Mr. Jackson, that if I overlook your conduct, you're not to speak to this young lady again. Also, you must consider yourself as removed from the committee."

"Curse the committee," screamed the mate. Curse!"

"He looked all round, with his eyes starting out of 'is 'ead, and then suddenly shut his mouth with a snap and went up on deck."

"We got to Melbourne at last, and the first thing the skipper did was to give our young lady some money to go ashore and buy clothes with. He did it in a very delikit way by giving her the pay as boy, and I don't think I ever see anybody look so pleased and surprised as she did. The skipper went ashore with her, as she looked rather a odd figure to be going about, and comes back about a hour later without 'er."

"I thought perhaps she'd come aboard," he ses to Mr. Fisher. "I managed to miss her somehow while I was waiting outside a shop."

"They fidgeted about a bit, and then went ashore to look for 'er, turning up again at eight o'clock quite worried. Nine o'clock came, and there was no signs of 'er. Mr. Fisher and Mr. Scott was in a dreadful state, and the skipper sent almost every man aboard ashore to search for 'er. They hunted for 'er high and low, up and down and round about, and turned up at midnight so done up that they could 'ardly stand without holding on to something, and so upset that they couldn't speak. None of the officers got any sleep that night except Mr. Jackson, and the first thing in the direction desired, but it would take a good many carrots to accomplish much in this regard. The effect of feeding carrots is very good on the digestive system."

"Hogs need clear water and plenty of it. The amount of water they naturally use is very great. It has been found that a pig fed corn meal as a principal diet used about 900 pounds of water to 100 pounds of gain. A pig fed barley meal used 1,500 pounds of water in making 100 pounds of gain on that diet. Many pigs get little moisture outside of what they get in the slop. They should have a separate drinking tank or trough filled with water where they can drink whenever they so desire. Even if they get an abundance of slop they will drink much water."

"The appointment of a commission by the president to study farm conditions with a view to suggesting reforms that will make farm life more pleasant and wholesome has afforded the humorists of the country a new subject for their witticisms. Here is how it strikes the rhymster on the Washington Post:

"Good morning, Capt. Hart," ses one of 'em, as our old man came up with the mate.

"Good morning," ses he.

"Do you know this?" ses one of 'em, suddenly, holding out Miss Mallow's dressing gown on a walking stick.

"Good 'eavens," ses the skipper, "I hope nothing's happened to that poor gal."

"The three captains shook their heads all together.

"She is no more," ses another of 'em.

"How did it happen?" ses the skipper, in a low voice.

"She took this off," ses the first captain, shaking his head and pointing to the dressing gown.

"And took a chill?" ses the skipper, staring very 'ard.

"The three captains shook their heads again, and I noticed that they seemed to watch each other and do it all together.

"I don't understand," ses the skipper.

"There was no doubt about them two young fellers being genuine. She got fairly tired of it. She never 'ad no rest, pore thing. If she was up on deck looking over the side the third officer would come up and talk to her about the sea and the lonely lives of sailor men, and I actually 'eard Mr. Scott repeating poetry to her. The skipper 'eard it, too, and being suspicious o' poetry, and not having heard clearly, called him up to 'im and made 'im say it all over again to 'im. 'E didn't seem quite to know what to make of it, so 'e calls up the mate for 'im to hear it. The mate said it was rubbish, and the skipper told Mr. Scott that 'e was taken that way again 'e was more of it."

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"I was afraid you wouldn't," ses the first captain; "she took this off."

"So you said before," ses the skipper, rather short.

"And became a boy again," ses the other; "the wickedest and most artful young rascal that ever signed on with me."

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"He looked round at the others, and they all broke out into a perfect roar of laughter, and jumped up and down and slapped each other on the back, as if they was all mad. Then they asked which was the one who had 'ears boxed, and which was Mr. Fisher and which was Mr. Scott, and told our skipper what a nice fatherly man he was. Quite a crowd got round, an' wouldn't go away for all we could do to 'em in the shape o' buckets o' water and lumps o' coal. We was the laughing-stock o' the place, and the way they carried on when the steamer passed us two days later with the first captain on the bridge, pretending not to see that imp o' a boy standing in the bows blowing us kisses and dropping curtsies, nearly put the skipper out of 'is mind."

"How?" ses the skipper.

"Stop the draught-playing and the card-playing and the poetry," ses the mate; "the gal's getting too much at attention; she'll have 'er head turned. Put your foot down, sir, and stop it."

"The skipper was so struck by what he said, that he not only did that, but he went and forbade them two young

"Well, what is it?" ses the mate.

"It wouldn't be any good if I was to explain to you," ses the skipper; "some people's heads are too thick."

"I know they are," ses the mate.

"The committee broke up after that, but it got amiable again over breakfast next morning, and made quite a fuss over Miss Mallow."

"She went up on deck after breakfast and stood leaning against the side talking to Mr. Fisher. Pretty laugh she'd got, too, though I never noticed

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