



W.W. Jacobs - The Short Stories - Volume 5

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William Wymark Jacobs was born on September 8th, 1863 in the Wapping district of London, England. Jacobs grew up near the docks, where his father was a wharf manager. The docks and river side would be a constant theme of his writing in years to come. Although surrounded by poverty, he received a formal education in London, first at a private prep school and later at the Birkbeck Literary and Scientific Institute. His working life began with a less than exciting clerical position at the Post Office Savings Bank. Jacobs put his imagination to good use writing short stories, sketches and articles, many for the Post Office house publication "Blackfriars Magazine." In 1896 Jacobs published *Many Cargoes*, a selection of sea-faring yarns, which established him as a popular writer with a knack for authentic dialogue and trick endings. A year later he published a novelette, *The Skipper's Wooing*, and in 1898 another collection of short stories; *Sea Urchins*. These works painted vivid pictures of dockland and seafaring London full of colourful characters. By 1899, Jacobs was able to quit the post office and write full-time. He married the noted suffragist Agnes Eleanor Williams (who had been jailed for her protest activities) in 1900. They set up households both in Loughton, Essex and in central London. The publication in 1902 of *At Sunwich Port and Dialstone Lane*, in 1904, cemented Jacobs' reputation as one of the leading British authors of the new century. There followed a string of further successful publications, including *Captain's All* (1905), *Night Watches* (1914), *The Castaways* (1916), and *Sea Whispers* (1926). Though Jacobs would create little in the way of new work after 1911, he still wrote and was recognized as a leading humorist, ranked alongside such writers as P. G. Wodehouse. William Wymark Jacobs died in a North London nursing home in Hornsey Lane, Islington on September 1st, 1943.

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