

WIT HUMOR AND SARCASTIC FROM THE CARTONISTS AND FUNNY MEN



SOME EXCUSE NEEDED. Wife—Why did you tell the Jemsons that you married me because I was such a good cook, when you know that I can't even boil a potato? He—You had to give some excuse, dear, and I didn't know what else to say. —Illustrated Bits.

AT EITHER POLE. She—Confess, now, that you would like to see women voters at the polls. He—Should, indeed! Either of 'em, north or south. —Illustrated Bits.

ONE SATISFACTION. "Well, whoever put 'er there, she's the Stars and Stripes." —The Cleveland Leader.

HE KNEW THE KIND. The Major—Yes, she's very pretty, but the girl to marry is the girl who believes in love in a cottage. Contango—Yes; if she believes that, you could stuff her with any old thing. —Illustrated Bits.

THE REAL SOLUTION. "Then you believe that every woman should have a vote?" "No; but I believe every woman should have a voter." —Illustrated Bits.

QUEER TALES WITH A SEA FLAVOR

NO. XV. A BENEFIT By W. W. Jacobs. Copyright by Bachelier, Johnson & Bachelier. Copyright by Frederick A. Stokes Company.



In the small front parlor of No. 3, Mermaid Passage, Sunset Bay, Jackson Pepper, ex-pilot, sat in a state of indignant collapse, tenderly feeling a check on which the print of hasty fingers still lingered. The room, which was in excellent order, showed no signs of the tornado which had passed through it, and Jackson Pepper, looking vaguely round, was dimly reminded of those tropical hurricanes he had read about which would strike only the objects in the path, and leave all others undisturbed.

ing him of the fact, and indulged instead in a bitter conversation with her daughter, of which the erring Pepper was the unconscious object. In the same preoccupied fashion he got on a Baywater omnibus, and waited patiently for it to reach Poplar. Strange changes in the landscape, not to be accounted for by the mere lapse of time, led to explanations, and the conductor—a humane man, who said he had got an idiot boy at home—personally laid down the lines of his tour. Two hours later he stood in front of a small house painted in many colors, and, ringing the bell, inquired for Cap'n Crippen.

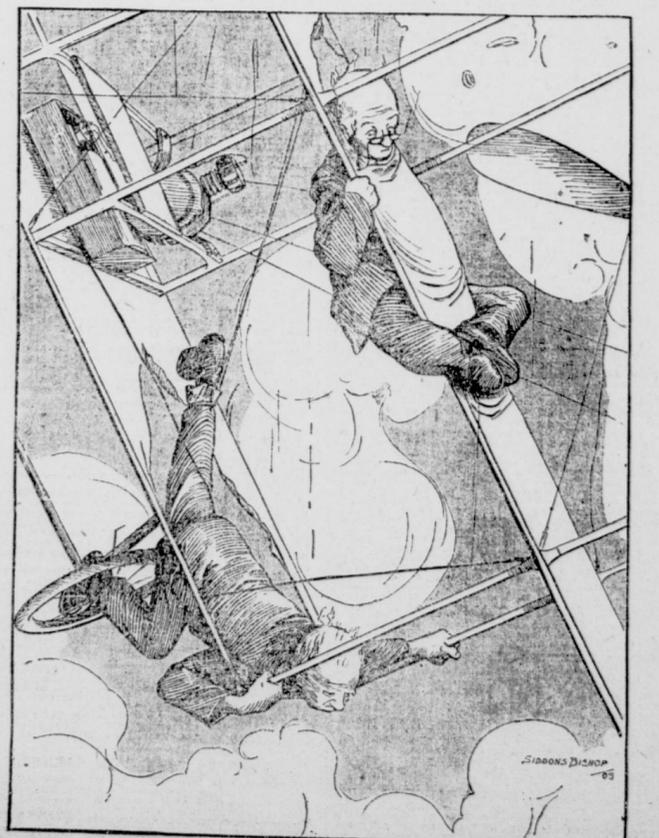


NO WONDER. Beautiful being (still unappropriated)—Really, men get so used to women, they are a cowardly set! They really seem to dread matrimony. —The Throne and Country.

"What do you mean?" demanded his wife. "It's my belief that he didn't go down with her," said Pepper, crossing over to the staircase and standing with his hand on the door. "Didn't go down with her?" repeated his wife scornfully. "What became of him, then? Where's he been this thirty years?"

"I'm not going to," said Pepper. "But here's his portrait. He was a big man like you, with blue eyes and a straight, handsome nose, like you. If he'd lived to now he'd be almost your age, and very likely more like you than ever. He was a sailor; you've been a sailor." The captain stared at him in bewilderment. He had a wonderful way with women, pursued Jackson hastily; "you've got a wonderful way with women. More than that, you've got the most wonderful gift for acting I've ever seen. Ever since the time when you acted in that barn at Bristol I've never seen any actor I can honestly say I've liked—never! Look how you can imitate cats—better than Henry Irving himself!" "I never had much chance, being at sea all my life," said Crippen modestly. "You've got the gift," said Pepper impressively. "It was born in you, and you'll never leave off acting till the day of your death. You couldn't if you tried—you know you couldn't!" The captain smiled deprecatingly. "Now, I want you to do a performance for my benefit," continued Pepper. "I want you to act Cap'n Budd, what was lost in the Dolphin thirty years ago. There's only one man in England I'd trust with the part, and that's you."

excitement, sat down and with shaking fingers lit his pipe. As he looked up the stalwart figure of the captain passed the window. During the next twenty minutes it passed seven times, and Pepper, coming to the not unnatural conclusion that his friend intended to pass the afternoon in the same unprofitable fashion, resolved to force his hand. "Who?" inquired his wife. "Man keeps looking in at the window," said Pepper desperately. "Keeps looking in till he meets my eye, then he disappears. Looks like an old sea captain, something." "Old sea captain?" said his wife, putting down her work and turning round. There was a strange, hesitating note in her voice. She looked at the window, and at the same instant the head of the captain again appeared above the geraniums, and, meeting her gaze, hastily vanished. Martha Pepper sat still for a moment, and then, rising in a slow, dazed fashion, crossed to the door and opened it. Mermad Passage was empty! "See anybody?" quavered Pepper. His wife shook her head, but in a strangely quiet fashion, and, sitting down, took up her knitting again. For some time the click of the needles and the tick of the clock were the only sounds audible, and the ex-pilot had just arrived at the conclusion that his friend had abandoned him to his fate, when there came a low tapping at the door. "Come in!" cried Pepper, starting. The door opened slowly, and the tall figure of Captain Crippen entered, and stood there eying them nervously. A neat little speech he had prepared failed him at the supreme moment. He leaned against the wall, and in a clumsy, embarrassed fashion lowered his gaze and stammered out the one word—"Martha!" At that word Mrs. Pepper rose and stood with parted lips, eyeing him wildly. "Jem!" she gasped. "Jem!" "Martha!" croaked the captain again. With a choking cry Mrs. Pepper ran toward him, and, to the huge gratification of her lawful spouse, flung her arms about his neck and kissed him violently. "Jem," she cried breathlessly, "is it really you? I can hardly believe it. Where have you been all this long time? Where have you been?" "Lots of places," said the captain, who was not prepared to answer a question like that off-hand; "but wherever I've been—he held up his hand theatrically—"the image of my dear lost wife has been always in front of me." "I knew you at once, Jem," said Mrs. Pepper fondly, smoothing the hair back from his forehead. "Have I altered much?" "Not a bit," said Crippen, holding her at arm's length and carefully regarding her. "You look just the same as the first time I set eyes on you." "Where have you been?" wailed Martha Pepper, putting her head on his shoulder. "When the Dolphin went down from under me, and left me fighting with the waves for life and



AREO PLAIN SAILING. "Can you bring her nose round, George? I think I can see the hospital!" —The Throne and Country.

Martha, I was cast ashore on a desert island," began Crippen faintly, "where I remained for nearly three years, when I was rescued by a bark bound for New South Wales. There I met a man from Poole who told me you were dead. Having no further interest in the land of my birth, I sailed in Australian waters for many years, and it was only lately that I heard how cruelly I had been deceived, and that my little flower was still blooming." The little flower's head being well down on his shoulder again, the celebrated actor exchanged glances with the worshipping Pepper. "If you'd only come before, Jem," said Mrs. Pepper. "Who was he? What was his name?" "Smith," said the cautious captain. "If you'd only come before, Jem," said Mrs. Pepper, in a sithered voice, "it would have been better. Only three months ago I married that object over there." The captain attempted a melodramatic start with such success that, having somewhat underestimated the weight of his fair bride, he nearly lost his balance. "It can't be helped, I suppose," he said, reproachfully, "but you might have waited a little longer, Martha." "Well, I'm your wife, anyhow," said Martha, "and I'll take care I never lose you again. You shall never go out of my sight again till you die. Never." "Nonsense, my pet," said the captain, exchanging uneasy glances with the ex-pilot. "Nonsense." "It isn't nonsense, Jem," said the lady, as she drew him to the sofa and sat with her arms round his neck. "It may be true, all you've told me, and it may not. For all I know, you may have been married to some other woman; but I've got you now, and I intend to keep you." "There, there," said the captain, as soothingly as a strange sinking at the heart would allow him. "As for that other little man, I only married him because he worried me so," said Mrs. Pepper tearfully. "I never loved him, but he used to follow me about and propose. Was it twelve or thirteen times you proposed to me, Pepper?" "I forget," said the ex-pilot shortly. "But I never loved him," she continued. "I never loved you a bit, did I, Pepper?" "Not a bit," said Pepper warmly. "No man could ever have a harder or more unfeeling wife than you was. I'll say that for you, willing." As he bore this testimony to his wife's fidelity there came a knock at the door, and upon his opening it the rector's daughter, a lady of uncertain age, entered and stood regarding with amazement the frantic but ineffectual struggles of Captain Crippen to release himself from a position as uncomfortable as it was ridiculous. "Mrs. Pepper!" said the lady, aghast. "Oh, Mrs. Pepper!" "It's all right, Miss Winthrop," said the lady addressed, calmly, as she forced the captain's flushed face on to her ample shoulder again; "it's my first husband, Jem Budd."

"Good gracious!" said Miss Winthrop, starting. "Enoch Arden in the flesh!" "Who?" inquired Pepper, with a show of polite interest. "Enoch Arden," said Miss Winthrop. "One of our great poets wrote a noble poem about a sailor who came home and found that his wife had married again; but, in the poem, the first husband went away without making himself known, and died of a broken heart." She looked at Captain Crippen as though he hadn't quite come up to her expectations. "And now," said Pepper, speaking with great cheerfulness, "it's me that's got to have the broken heart. Well, well." "It's a most interesting case," cried Miss Winthrop; "and if you wait till I fetch my camera I'll take your portrait together just as you are." "Do," said Mrs. Pepper cordially. "I won't have my portrait took," said the captain with much acerbity. "Not if I wish it, dear?" inquired Mrs. Pepper tenderly. "Not if you keep a-wishing it all your life," replied the captain, sourly, making another attempt to get his head from her shoulder. "Don't you think they ought to have their portrait taken now?" asked Miss Winthrop, turning to the ex-pilot. "I don't see no 'arm in it," said Pepper thoughtlessly. "You hear what Mr. Pepper says," said the lady, turning to the captain again. "Surely if he doesn't mind, you ought not to." "I'll talk to him by and by," said the captain, very grudgingly. "It's up to him to be better if we kept this affair to ourselves for the present," said the ex-pilot, talking to himself in his own manner. "Well, I won't intrude on you any longer," said Miss Winthrop. "Oh! Look there! How rude of them!" The others turned hastily in time to see several heads vanish from the window. Captain Crippen was the first to speak. "Jem!" said Mrs. Pepper severely, before he had finished. "Captain Budd!" said Miss Winthrop, flushing. The incensed captain rose to his feet and paced up and down the room. He looked at the ex-pilot, and that small schemer shivered. "Easy does it, cap'n," he murmured, with a wink which he meant to be comforting. "I'm going out a little way," said the captain, after the rector's daughter had gone. "Just to cool my head." Mrs. Pepper took her bonnet from its peg behind the door, and surveying herself in the glass tied it beneath her chin. "Alone," said Crippen nervously. "I want to do a little thinking." "Never again, Jem," said Mrs. Pepper firmly. "My place by your side. If you're ashamed of people looking at you, I'm not. I'm proud of you. Come along. Come and show yourself, and tell them who you are. You shall never go out of my sight again as long as I live. Never!" She began to whimper. "What's to be done?" inquired Crippen, turning desperately to the bewildered pilot. "What's it got to do with him?" demanded Mrs. Pepper sharply. "He's got to be considered a little I s'pose," said the captain, dissembling. "Besides, I think I'd better do like the man in the poetry did. Let me go away and die of a broken heart. Perhaps it's best." Mrs. Pepper looked at him with kindling eyes. "Let me go away and die of a broken heart," repeated the captain, with real feeling. "I'd rather do it, I would, indeed." Mrs. Pepper, bursting into angry tears, flung her arms round his neck again, and sobbed on his shoulder.

der. The pilot, obeying the frenzied injunctions of his friend's eye, drew down the blind. "The rector's quite a crowd outside," he remarked. "I don't mind," said his wife amiably. "They'll soon know who he is." She stood holding the captain's hand and stroking it, and whenever his feelings became too much for her put her head down on his waistcoat. At such times the captain glared fiercely at the ex-pilot, who, being of a weak nature, was unable, despite his anxiety, to give his risible faculties that control which the solemnity of the occasion demanded. The afternoon wore slowly away. Miss Winthrop, who disliked scandal, had allowed something of the affair to leak out, and several visitors, including a local reporter, called, but were put off till the morrow, on the not unnatural plea that the long separated couple desired a little privacy. The three sat silent, the ex-pilot, with wrinkled brows, trying hard to decipher the lip language in which the captain addressed him whenever he had an opportunity, but could only dimly guess its purport, when the captain pressed his huge fist into the service as well. Mrs. Pepper rose at length, and went into the back room to prepare tea. As she left the door open, however, and took the captain's hat with her, he built no hopes on her absence, but turned furtively to the ex-pilot. "What's to be done?" he inquired in a fierce whisper. "This can't go on." "I'll have tea," whispered the other. "Now, look here," said Crippen menacingly. "I'm going into the kitchen to make a clean breast of it. I'm sorry for you, but I've done the best I can. Come and help me to explain." He turned to the kitchen, but the other, with the strength born of despair, seized him by the sleeve and held him back. "I can't help it," he whispered breathlessly. "I can't help it," said Crippen, shaking him off. "Serve you right." "And she'll tell the folks outside, and they'll kill you," continued Pepper. The captain sat down again, and confronted him with a face as pale as his own. "The last train leaves at eight," whispered the pilot hurriedly. "It's desperate, but it's the only thing you can do. Take her for a stroll up by the fields near the railway station. You can see the train coming in for a mile off nearly. Time yourself carefully, and make a bolt for it. She can't run." The entrance of their victim with the tea tray stopped the conversation; but the captain nodded acceptance behind her back, and then, with a forced gaiety, sat down to tea. For the first time since his successful appearance he became loquacious, and spoke so freely of incidents in the life of the man he was impersonating that the ex-pilot sat in a perfect fever lest he should blunder. The meal finished, he proposed a stroll, and, as the unsuspecting Mrs. Pepper tied on her bonnet, slipped his leg, and winked confidently at his fellow conspirator. "I'm not a walker," said the innocent Mrs. Pepper, "so you must go slow." The captain nodded, and, at Pepper's suggestion, left by the back way, to avoid the gaze of the curious. For some time after their departure Pepper sat smoking, with his anxious face turned to the clock, until at length, unable to endure the strain any longer, and not without a sportsmanlike idea of being in at the death, he made his way to the station, and placed himself behind a convenient coal truck. He waited impatiently, with his eyes fixed on the road up which he expected the captain to come. He looked at his watch. Five minutes to eight, and still no captain. The platform began to fill, a porter seized the big bell and rang it lustily; in the distance a patch of white smoke showed. Just as the watcher had given up all hope, the figure of the captain came in sight. He was swaying from side to side, holding his hat in his hand, but doggedly racing the train to the station. "He'll never do it!" groaned the pilot. Then he held his breath, for three or four hundred yards behind the captain Mrs. Pepper pounded in pursuit. The train rolled into the station; passengers stopped in and out; doors slammed, and the guard had already placed the whistle in his mouth, when Captain Crippen, breathing strenuously, came stumbling blindly on to the platform, and was hustled into a third class carriage. "Close aboard that, sir," said the station master as he closed the door. The captain sank back in his seat, fighting for breath, and turning his head, gave a last triumphant look up the road. "All right," said the station master kindly, as he followed the direction of the other's eyes and caught sight of Mrs. Pepper. "We'll wait for your lady."

Jackson Pepper came from behind the coal truck and watched the train out of sight, wondering in like manner how long that tender-hearted porter, who had heard the news, made bold to come up and put a friendly hand on his shoulder. "You'll never see her again, Mr. Pepper," he said sympathetically. The ex-pilot turned and regarded him fixedly, and the last bit of spirit he was ever known to show flashed up in his face as he spoke. "You're a blamed idiot!" he said rudely. SUBURBAN AMENITIES. Little Girl—Papa would like to borrow your dog. Subbs—Tell your father I'm sorry, but I've made a rule never to let it go off my premises. But, if he likes to see it on our own lawn, it's at his disposal any time.—Boston Transcript. EVIDENTLY A CONNOISSEUR. "Biggins is a connoisseur in cigars." "He must be. Otherwise he might make an occasional mistake and give away a good one."—Washington Star. AFRAID OF CONSEQUENCES. Dog-Hater (tremulously)—See here, sir, will that dog bite me? Dog Owner (serenely)—Do you suppose he has no instinct of self-preservation?—Baltimore American. SAUCE FOR THE GOOSE. Visitor—Who is that crazy man yelling and struggling so? Hospital Attendant—He isn't crazy. That's Dr. Sabre, the celebrated surgeon. They brought him here yesterday, and the doctors have just ordered an operation.—Puck.