The Madness of Mr. Lister

...By...
W. W. JACOBS

Copyright, 1905, by William W. Jacobs

OLD Jem Lister of the Susannah was possessed of two devils—the love of strong drink and avarice—and the only thing the twain had in common was to get a drink without paying for it. When Mr. Lister paid for a drink the demon of avarice masquerading as conscience preached a teetotal lecture and when he showed signs of profiting by it the demon of drink would send him hanging round public house doors cadging for drinks in a way which his shipmates regarded as a slur upon the entire ship's company. Many a healthy thirst reared on salt beef and tickled with strong tobacco had been spoiled by the sight of Mr. Lister standing by the entrance with a propitiatory smile, waiting to be invited in to share it, and on one occasion they had even seen him (him, Jem Lister, A. B.) holding a horse's head with ulterior motives.

It was pointed out to Mr. Lister at last that his conduct was reflecting discredit upon men who were fully able to look after themselves in that direction, without having any additional burden thrust upon them. Bill Henshaw was the spokesman and on the score of violence (miscalled firmness) his remarks left little to be desired. On the score of profanity Bill might recall with pride that in the opinion of his fellows he had left nothing unsaid.

"You ought to ha' been a member o' parliament, Bill," said Harry Lea, when he had finished.

"It wants money," said Henshaw, shaking his head.

Mr. Lister laughed a senile laugh, but not lacking in venom.

"That's what we've got to say," said Henshaw, turning upon him suddenly. "If there's anything I hate in this world, it's a drinking miser. You know our opinion, and the best thing you can do is to turn over a new leaf now."

"Take us all in to the Goat and Compasses," urged Lea. "Bring out some o' those sovrins you've been hoarding."

Mr. Lister gazed at him with frigid scorn and, finding that the conversation still seemed to center round his unworthy person, went up on deck and sat glowering over the insults which had been heaped upon him. His futile wrath when Bill dogged his footsteps ashore next day and revealed his character to a bibulous individual whom he had almost persuaded to be a Christian—from his point of view—bordered upon the maudlin, and he wandered back to the ship, wild eyed and dry of throat.

For the next two months it was safe to say that every drink he had he paid for. His eyes got brighter and his complexion clearer, nor was he as pleased as one of the other sex might have been when the self satisfied Henshaw pointed out these improvements to his companions and claimed entire responsibility for them. It is probable that Mr. Lister under these circumstances might in time have lived down his taste for strong drink, but that at just that time they shipped a new cook.

He was a big, cadaverous young fellow who looked too closely after his own interests to be much of a favorite with the other men forward. On the score of thrift, it was soon discovered that he and Mr. Lister had much in common, and the latter, pleased to find a congenial spirit, was disposed to make the most of him and spent, despite the heat, much of his spare time in the galley.

"You keep to it," said the graybeard impressively. "Money was made to be took care of. If you don't spend your money, you've always got it. I've always been a saving man. What's the result?"

The cook, waiting some time in patience to be told, gently inquired what it was.

"'Ere am I," said Mr. Lister, good naturedly helping him to cut a cabbage, "at the age of sixty-two with a bank book down below in my chest with one 'undered an' ninety pounds odd in it."

"One 'undered and ninety pounds!" repeated the cook, with awe.

"To say nothing of other things," continued Mr. Lister, with joyful appreciation of the effect he was producing. "Altogether I've got a little over four 'undered pounds."

The cook gasped and with gentle firmness took the cabbage from him as being unfit work for a man of such wealth.

"It's very nice," he said slowly. "It's very nice. You'll be able to live on it in your old age."

Mr. Lister shook his head mournfully, and his eyes became humid.

"There's no old age for me," he said sadly, "but you needn't tell them." And he jerked his thumb toward the forecastle.

"No, no," said the cook.

"I've never been one to talk over my affairs," said Mr. Lister in a low voice. "I've never yet took fancy enough to anybody so to do. No, my lad; I'm saving up for somebody else."

"What are you going to live on when you're past work, then?" demanded the other.

Mr. Lister took him gently by the sleeve and his voice sank with the solemnity of his subject. "I'm not going to have no old age," he said resignedly.

"Not going to live!" repeated the cook, gazing uneasily at a knife by his side. "How do you know?"

"I went to a orsepittle in London," said Mr. Lister. "I've ben to two or three altogether, while the money I've spent on doctors is more than I like to think of, and they're all surprised to think that I've lived so long. I'm so chock full o' complaints that they tell me I can't live more than two years, and I might go off at any moment."

"Well, you've got money," said the cook. "Why don't you knock off work now and spend the evenin' of your life ashore? Why should you save up for your relatives?"

"I've got no relatives," said Mr. Lister. "I'm all alone. I s'pose I shall leave my money to some nice young feller, and I hope it'll do 'im good."

With the dazzling thoughts which dashed through the cook's brain the cabbage dropped violently into the saucepan and a shower of cooling drops fell on both men.

"I s'pose you take medicine?" he said at length.

"A little rum," said Mr. Lister faintly. "The doctors tell me that it is the only thing that keeps me up. O' course the chaps down there"—he indicated the forecastle again with a jerk of his head—"accuse me o' taking too much."

"What do ye take any notice of 'em for?" inquired the other indignantly.

"I s'pose it is foolish," admitted Mr. Lister, "but I don't like being misunderstood. I keep my troubles to myself, as a rule, cook. I don't know what's made me talk to you like this. I 'eard the other day you was keeping company with a young woman."

"Well, I won't say as I ain't," replied the other, busying himself over the fire.

"An' the best thing, too, my lad," said the old man warmly. "It keeps you stiddy, keeps you out of public 'ouses; not as they ain't good in moderation. I 'ope you'll be 'appy."

The cook thanked him and noticed that Mr. Lister was fidgeting with a piece of paper.

"A little something I wrote the other day," said the old man, catching his eye. "If I let you see it will you promise not to tell a soul about it and not to give me no thanks?"

The wondering cook promised, and the old man, being somewhat emphatic on the subject, backed his promise with a homemade affidavit of singular power and profanity.

"Here it is, then," said Mr. Lister.

The cook took the paper, and as he read the letters danced before him. He blinked his eyes and started again slowly. In plain black and white and nondescript colored finger marks Mr. Lister, after a general statement as to his bodily and mental health, left the whole of his estate to the cook. The will was properly dated and witnessed, and the cook's voice shook with excitement and emotion as he offered to hand it back.

"I don't know what I've done for you to do this," he said.

Mr. Lister waved it away again. "Keep it," he said simply. "While you've got it on you, you'll know it's safe."

From this moment a friendship sprang up between the two men which puzzled the remainder of the crew not a little. The attitude of the cook was as that of a son to a father; the benignancy of Mr. Lister beautiful to behold. It was noticed, too, that he had abandoned the reprehensible practice of hanging round tavern doors in favor of going inside and drinking the cook's health.

For about six months the cook, although always in somewhat straitened circumstances, was well content with the tacit bargain, and then, bit by bit, the character of Mr. Lister was revealed to him. It was not a nice character, but subtle, and when he made the startling discovery that a will could be rendered invalid by the simple process of making another one the next day he became as a man possessed. When he ascertained that Mr. Lister when at home had free quarters at the house of a married niece, he used to sit about alone and try and think of ways and means of securing capital sunk in a concern which seemed to show no signs of being wound up.

"I've got a touch of the 'art again, lad," said the elderly invalid, as they sat alone in the forecastle one night at Seacole.

"You move about too much," said the cook. "Why not turn in and rest?"

Mr. Lister, who had not expected this, fidgeted. "I think I'll go ashore a bit and try the air," he said suggestively. "I'll just go as far as the Black Horse and back. You won't have me long now, my lad."

"No, I know," said the cook. "That's what's worrying me a bit."

"Don't worry about me," said the old man, pausing with his hand on the other's shoulder. "I'm not worth it. Don't look so glum, lad."

"I've got something on my mind, Jem," said the cook, staring straight in front of him.

"What is it?" inquired Mr. Lister.

"You know what you told me about those pains in your inside?" said the cook, without looking at him.

Jem groaned and felt his side.

"And what you said about its being a relief to die," continued the other, "only you was afraid to commit suicide?"

"Well?" said Mr. Lister.

"It used to worry me," continued the cook earnestly. "I used to say to myself, 'Poor old Jem,' I ses, 'why should he suffer like this when he wants to die?' It seemed 'ard."

"It is 'ard," said Mr. Lister. "But what about it?"

The other made no reply, but, looking at him for the first time, surveyed him with a troubled expression.

"What about it?" repeated Mr. Lister, with some emphasis.

"You did say you wanted to die, didn't you?" said the cook. "Now, suppose—suppose"—

"Suppose what?" inquired the old man sharply. "Why don't you say what you're a-going to say?"

"Suppose," said the cook, "some one what liked you, Jem—what liked you, mind—'eard you say this over and over again an' see you sufferin' and 'eard you groanin' and not able to do nothin' for you except lend you a few shillings here and there for medicine or stand you a few glasses o' rum—suppose they knew a chap in a chemist's shop?"

"Suppose they did?" said the other, turning pale.

"A chap what knows all about p'isons," continued the cook—"p'isons what a man can take without knowing it in 'is grub. Would it be wrong, do you think, if that friend I was speaking about put it in your food to put you out of your misery?"

"Have—you—been—putting—p'ison—in—my—wittles?" demanded Mr. Lister.

"Wrong!" said Mr. Lister, with glassy eyes. "Wrong! Look 'ere, cook"—

"I don't mean anything to give him pain," said the other, waving his hand. "You ain't felt no pain lately, 'ave you, Jem?"

"Do you mean to say"—shouted Mr. Lister.

"I don't mean to say anything," said the cook. "Answer my question. You ain't felt no pain lately, 'ave you?"

"Have — you — been — putting — p'ison — in — my — wittles?" demanded Mr. Lister in trembling accents.

"If I 'ad, Jem, supposin' that I 'ad," said the cook in accents of reproachful surprise, "do you mean to say that you'd mind?"

"Mind?" said Mr. Lister with fervor. "I'd 'ave you 'ung!"

"But you said you wanted to die!" said the surprised cook.

Mr. Lister swore at him with startling vigor. "I'll 'ave you 'ung!" he repeated wildly.

"Me!" said the cook artlessly. "What for?"

"For giving me p'ison!" said Mr. Lister frantically. "Do you think you can deceive me by your roundabouts? Do you think I can't see through you?"

The other, with a sphinxlike smile, sat unmoved. "Prove it," he said darkly. "But supposin' if anybody 'ad been givin' you p'ison, would you like to take something to prevent its acting?"

"I'd take gallons of it," said Mr. Lister feverishly.

The other sat pondering, while the old man watched him anxiously. "It's a pity you don't know your own mind, Jem," he said, at length. "Still, you know your own business best. But it's very expensive stuff."

"How much?" inquired the other.

"Well, they won't sell more than two shillings' worth at a time," said the cook, trying to speak carelessly. "But if you like to let me 'ave the money I'll go ashore to the chemist's and get the first lot now."

Mr. Lister's face was a study in emotions, which the other tried in vain to decipher.

Then he slowly extracted the amount from his trousers' pocket and handed it over without a word.

"I'll go at once," said the cook, with a little feeling, "and I'll never take a man at his word agin, Jem."

He ran lightly up on deck and, stepping ashore, spat on the coins for luck and dropped them in his pocket. Down below Mr. Lister, with his chin in his hand, sat in a state of mind pretty evenly divided between rage and fear.

The cook, who was in no mood for company, missed the rest of the crew by two public houses and, having purchased a baby's teething powder and received the label, had a congratulatory drink or two before going on board again. A chatter of voices from the forecastle warned him that the crew had returned, but the tongues ceased abruptly as he descended, and three pairs of eyes surveyed him in grim silence.

"What's up?" he demanded.

"Wot 'ave you been doin' to poor old Jem?" demanded Henshaw sternly.

"Nothin'," said the other shortly.

"You ain't been p'isoning 'im?" demanded Henshaw.

"Certainly not," said the cook emphatically.

"He sez you told 'im you p'isoned 'im," said Henshaw solemnly, "and he give you 2 shillings to get something to cure 'im. It's too late now."

"What?" stammered the bewildered cook.

He looked round anxiously at the men. They were all very grave, and the silence became oppressive.

"Where is he?" he demanded.

Henshaw and the others exchanged glances.

"He's gone mad," said he slowly.

"Mad?" repeated the horrified cook, and, seeing the aversion of the crew, in a broken voice he narrated the way in which he had been victimized.

"Well, you've done it now," said Henshaw, when he had finished. "He's gone right orf 'is 'ed."

"Where is he?" inquired the cook.

"Where you can't follow him," said the other slowly.

"Heaven?" hazarded the unfortunate cook.

"No; skipper's bunk," said Lea.

"Oh, can't I follow 'im?" said the cook, starting up. "I'll soon 'ave 'im out o' that."

"Better leave 'im alone," said Henshaw. "He was that wild we couldn't do nothing with 'im, singin' an' lerin' and crying all together—I certainly thought he was p'isoned."

"I'll swear I ain't touched him," said the cook.

"Well, you've upset his reason," said Henshaw. "There'll be an awful row when the skipper comes aboard and finds 'im in 'is bed."

"Well, come an' 'elp me to get 'im out," said the cook.

"I ain't going to be mixed up in it," said Henshaw, shaking his head.

"Don't you, Bill," said the other two.

"Wot the skipper 'll say I don't know," said Henshaw. "Anyway it'll be said to you, not us."

"I'll go and get 'im out if he was five maidmen," said the cook, compressing his lips.

"You'll harve to carry 'im out, then," said Henshaw. "I don't wish you no 'arm, cook, and perhaps it would be as well to get 'im out afore the skipper or mate comes aboard. If it was me I know what I should do."

"What?" inquired the cook breathlessly.

"Draw a sack over his head," said Henshaw impressively. "He'll scream like blazes as soon as you touch him and rouse the folks ashore if you don't. Besides that, if you draw it well down it'll keep his arms fast."

The cook thanked him fervently and, routing out a sack, rushed hastily on deck, his departure being the signal for Mr. Henshaw and his friends to make preparations for retiring for the night so hastily as almost to savor of panic.

The cook, after a hasty glance ashore, went softly below with the sack over his arm and felt his way in the darkness to the skipper's bunk. The sound of deep and regular breathing reassured him, and without undue haste he opened the mouth of the sack and gently raised the sleeper's head.

"Eh? Wha'"—began a sleepy voice.

The next moment the cook had hugged him and, gripping him tightly round the middle, turned a deaf ear to the smothered cries of his victim as he strove to lift him out of the bunk. In the exciting time which followed he had more than one reason for thinking that he had caught a centipede.

"Now, you keep still," he cried breathlessly. "I'm not going to hurt you."

He got his burden out of bed at last and staggered to the foot of the companion ladder with it. Then there was a halt, two legs sticking obstinately across the narrow way and refusing to be moved, while a furious humming proceeded from the other end of the sack.

Four times did the exhausted cook get his shoulder under his burden and try and push it up the ladder, and four times did it wriggle and fight its way down again. Half crazy with fear and rage, he essayed it for the fifth time and had got it halfway up when there was a sudden exclamation of surprise from above and the voice of the mate sharply demanding an explanation.

"What the blazes are you up to?" he cried.

"It's all right, sir," said the panting cook. "Old Jem's had a drop too much and got down aft, and I'm getting 'im for'ard again."

"Jem?" said the astonished mate. "Why, he's been sitting up here on the fore hatch. He came aboard with me."

"Sitting," began the horrified cook—"sitt— Oh, Lor'!"

He stood with his writhing burden wedged between his body and the ladder and looked up despairingly at the mate.

"I'm afraid I've made a mistake," he said in a trembling voice.

The mate struck a match and looked down.

"Take that sack off," he demanded sternly.

The cook placed his burden upon its feet and, running up the ladder, stood by the mate, shivering. The latter struck another match, and the twain watched in breathless silence the writhings of the strange creature below as the covering worked slowly upward. In the fourth match it got free and revealed the empurpled visage of the master of the Susannah. For the fraction of a second the cook gazed at him in speechless horror, and then, with a toneless cry, sprang ashore and ran for it, hotly pursued by his enraged victim. At the time of sailing he was still absent, and the skipper, loath to part two such friends, sent Mr. James Lister, at the urgent request of the anxious crew, to look for him.

The General Condemnation of So-Called Patent or Secret Medicines

of an injurious character, which indulge in extravagant and unfounded pretensions to cure all manner of ills, and the

National Legislation Enacted to Restrict Their Sale

have established more clearly than could have been accomplished in any other way

The Value and Importance of Ethical Remedies.

Remedies which physicians sanction for family use, as they act most beneficially and are gentle yet prompt in effect, and called ethical, because they are of

Known Excellence and Quality and of Known Component Parts.

To gain the full confidence of the Well-Informed of the world and the approval of the most eminent physicians, it is essential that the component parts be known to and approved by them, and, therefore, the California Fig Syrup Company has published for many years past in its advertisements and upon every package a full statement thereof. The perfect purity and uniformity of product which they demand in a laxative remedy of an ethical character are assured by the California Fig Syrup Company's original method of manufacture, known to the Company only.

There are other ethical remedies approved by physicians, but the product of the California Fig Syrup Company possesses the advantage over all other family laxatives that it cleanses, sweetens and relieves the internal organs on which it acts, without disturbing the natural functions or any debilitating after effects and without having to increase the quantity from time to time.

This valuable remedy has been long and favorably known under the name of Syrup of Figs, and has attained to world-wide acceptance as the most excellent of family laxatives, and as its pure laxative principles, obtained from Senna, are well known to physicians and the Well-Informed of the world to be the best of natural laxatives, we have adopted the more elaborate name of Syrup of Figs and Elixir of Senna, as more fully descriptive of the remedy, but doubtlessly it will always be called for by the shorter name of Syrup of Figs; and to get its beneficial effects, always note, when purchasing, the full name of the Company—California Fig Syrup Co.—plainly printed on the front of every package, whether you simply call for Syrup of Figs, or by the full name, Syrup of Figs and Elixir of Senna, as Syrup of Figs and Elixir of Senna is the one laxative remedy manufactured by the California Fig Syrup Company, and the same heretofore known by the name, Syrup of Figs, which has given satisfaction to millions. The genuine is for sale by all leading druggists throughout the United States in original packages of one size only, the regular price of which is fifty cents per bottle.

Every bottle is sold under the general guarantee of the Company, filed with the Secretary of Agriculture, at Washington, D. C., the remedy is not adulterated or misbranded within the meaning of the Food and Drugs Act, June 30th, 1906.

CALIFORNIA FIG SYRUP CO.

San Francisco, Cal.
U. S. A.

Louisville, Ky. New York, N. Y.
London, England.

Summons.

In the Circuit Court of the State of Oregon for the County of Lane.

Oregon Eastern Railway Company, a corporation, Plaintiff,

vs.

James M. Keeney, Mary S. Keeney, his wife, William D. Keeney, unmarried, John B. Keeney, Ellen Keeney, his wife, Martha E. Handsaker, and Nelson Handsaker, her husband, Benjamin F. Keeney and Charity A. Keeney, his wife, Andrew A. Keeney and Alice R. Keeney, his wife, Thomas P. Keeney and Lillian Keeney, his wife, Defendants

To William D. Keeney, Martha E. Handsaker, Nelson Handsaker, Andrew A. Keeney, Alice R. Keeney, Thomas P. Keeney and Lillian Keeney, defendants:—

In the name of the State of Oregon You and each of you are hereby required to appear and answer the complaint filed against you in the above entitled action and court, on or before the expiration of six successive weeks from the first publication of this summons, the first publication thereof being on the 30th day of April, 1907 and if you fail so to appear and answer, for want thereof the plaintiff will apply to the court for the relief demanded in said complaint herein, to-wit: that an assessment be had of the damages which will result to the defendants by reason of the taking of the property hereinafter described, and that upon payment by plaintiff into court of the damages so assessed, judgment be given appropriating the following right-of-way to plaintiff:

Commencing at a point where the located centre line of the Oregon Eastern Railway intersects the west line of the SE¼ of the SE¼ of Sec. 28, T. 19, S. R. 1 E., W. M., at or near engineer's survey station "L," No. 1540+82.0, said beginning point being more definitely described as a point in the westerly boundary line of the property of the heirs of A. J. Keeney, deceased, north 0 degrees 46½ minutes, east 79.7 feet from the southwest corner of said property, and south 0 degrees 46½ minutes west 1269.3 feet from the northwest corner of said property, thence continuing south 0 degrees 46½ minutes west to a point that is 30 feet distant measured at right angles southwesterly from said located centre line, thence southwesterly parallel to said centre line and 30 feet distant measured at right angles southwesterly therefrom to a point in the southerly boundary line of said property, thence south 89 degrees 52 minutes east along said southerly boundary line crossing said located centre line at or near engineer's survey station "L," 1542+15.0, said point being distant south 89 degrees 52 minutes east 167.3 feet from the southwest corner of said property, and distant north 89 degrees 52 minutes west 1214.4 feet from the southeast corner of said property, said corner being common to sections 27, 28, 33 and 34, Tp. 19, S. R. 1 e., W. M., thence continuing south 89 degrees 52 minutes easterly to a point that is 30 feet distant at right angles northeasterly from said located centre line, thence northwesterly and parallel to said centre line and 30 feet distant at right angles northeasterly therefrom to a point in said westerly boundary line of said property; thence south 0 degrees 46½ minutes west along said westerly boundary line to a point at or near engineer's survey station "L," 1540+82.0, being a strip of land that lies between two lines drawn parallel to said located centre line of railway, one of which lines is 30 feet northeasterly and the other distant 30 feet southwesterly from said located centre line, containing an area of .183 acres.

Also commencing at a point in the west line of the SE¼ of the SE¼ of Sec. 28, Tp. 19, S. R. 1 E., W. M., said point being in the westerly boundary line of the property of the heirs of A. J. Keeney, deceased, north 0 degrees 46½ minutes, east 42.53 feet from the southwest corner of said property, and south 0 degrees 46½ minutes west 1266.47 feet from the northwest corner of said property; thence south 0 degrees 46½ minutes west to the southwest corner of said property, thence south 89 degrees 52 minutes east along the southerly boundary of said property 58.02 feet to a point distant 30 feet southwesterly at right angles from the located centre line of said railway; thence northwesterly parallel to and 30 feet distant southwesterly from said located centre line to point of beginning, being a strip of land lying southwesterly from a line drawn parallel and distant 30 feet southwesterly at right angles from said located centre line, containing .027 acres

Also commencing at a point in the west line of the SE¼ of the SE¼ of Sec. 28, Tp. 19, S. R. 1 E., W. M., being in the west boundary line of said property of the heirs of A. J. Keeney, distant north 0 degrees 46½ minutes east 116.87 feet from the southwest corner of said property and south 0 degrees 46½ minutes west 1232.13 feet from the northwest corner of said property; thence southeasterly parallel to said located centre line of railway and 30 feet distant measured at right angles northeasterly therefrom to a point distant north 89 degrees 52 minutes west 1164.17 feet from the southeast corner of said property, and distant south 89 degrees 52 minutes east 157.53 feet from the southwest corner of said property of the heirs of A. J. Keeney, thence continuing south 89 degrees 52 minutes east along said south boundary line to a point distant 50 feet measured at right angles northeasterly from said located centre line, thence northwesterly and parallel to said centre line and 50 feet distant at right angles northeasterly therefrom to a point in the west boundary line of said property; thence south 0 degrees 46½ minutes west along said west boundary line to point of beginning, being a strip of land between two lines drawn parallel to said located centre line, one of which is 30 feet northeasterly and the other 50 feet northeasterly from said located centre line, containing an area of 0.1 acres.

This summons is served on you by publication thereof in the Eugene Daily Guard, once a week for six successive weeks, the first publication thereof being in the issue of April 30th, 1907, by order of the Hon. L. T. Harris, judge, duly made and entered on the 29th day of April, 1907.

W. D. FENTON and
J. M. PIPES,
Attorneys for Plaintiff.

First insertion, April 30, 1907.
Last insertion, June 11, 1907.

Rogue River apples at the Eugene Grocery.

Subscribe for the DAILY GUARD.