

**WILLIAM  
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FAIRY GOLD

William Wymark Jacobs

**Fairy Gold**

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# W. W. Jacobs

## Fairy Gold / Ship's Company, Part 4

### FAIRY GOLD

"Come and have a pint and talk it over," said Mr. Augustus Teak. "I've got reasons in my 'ead that you don't dream of, Alf."

Mr. Chase grunted and stole a side-glance at the small figure of his companion. "All brains, you are, Gussie," he remarked. "That's why it is you're so well off."

"Come and have a pint," repeated the other, and with surprising ease pushed his bulky friend into the bar of the "Ship and Anchor." Mr. Chase, mellowed by a long draught, placed his mug on the counter and eyeing him kindly, said—

"I've been in my lodgings thirteen years."

"I know," said Mr. Teak; "but I've got a partikler reason for wanting you. Our lodger, Mr. Dunn, left last week, and I only thought of you yesterday. I mentioned you to my missis, and she was quite pleased. You see, she knows I've known you for over twenty years, and she wants to make sure of only 'aving honest people in the 'ouse. She has got a reason for it."

He closed one eye and nodded with great significance at his friend.

"Oh!" said Mr. Chase, waiting.

"She's a rich woman," said Mr. Teak, pulling the other's ear down to his mouth. "She—"

"When you've done tickling me with your whiskers," said Mr. Chase, withdrawing his head and rubbing his ear vigorously, "I shall be glad."

Mr. Teak apologized. "A rich woman," he repeated. "She's been stinting me for twenty-nine years and saving the money—my money!—money that I 'ave earned with the sweat of my brow. She 'as got over three 'undred pounds!"

"Ow much?" demanded Mr. Chase.

"Three 'undred pounds and more," repeated the other; "and if she had 'ad the sense to put it in a bank it would ha' been over four 'undred by this time. Instead o' that she keeps it hid in the 'Ouse."

"Where?" inquired the greatly interested Mr. Chase.

Mr. Teak shook his head. "That's just what I want to find out," he answered. "She don't know I know it; and she mustn't know, either. That's important."

"How did you find out about it, then?" inquired his friend.

"My wife's sister's husband, Bert Adams, told me. His wife told 'im in strict confidence; and I might 'ave gone to my grave without knowing about it, only she smacked his face for 'im the other night."

"If it's in the house you ought to be able to find it easy enough," said Mr. Chase.

"Yes, it's all very well to talk," retorted Mr. Teak. "My missis never leaves the 'ouse unless I'm with her, except when I'm at work; and if she thought I knew of it she'd take and put it in some bank or somewhere unbeknown to me, and I should be farther off it than ever."

"Haven't you got no idea?" said Mr. Chase.

"Not the leastest bit," said the other. "I never thought for a moment she was saving money. She's always asking me for more, for one thing; but, then women alway do. And look 'ow bad it is for her—saving money like that on the sly. She might grow into a miser, pore thing. For 'er own sake I ought to get hold of it, if it's only to save her from 'erself."

Mr. Chase's face reflected the gravity of his own.

"You're the only man I can trust," continued Mr. Teak, "and I thought if you came as lodger you might be able to find out where it is hid, and get hold of it for me."

"Me steal it, d'ye mean?" demanded the gaping Mr. Chase. "And suppose she got me locked up for it? I should look pretty, shouldn't I?"

"No; you find out where it is hid," said the other; "that's all you need do. I'll find someway of getting hold of it then."

"But if you can't find it, how should I be able to?" inquired Mr. Chase.

"'Cos you'll 'ave opportunities," said the other. "I take her out some time when you're supposed to be out late; you come 'ome, let yourself in with your key, and spot the hiding-place. I get the cash, and give you ten-golden-sovereigns—all to your little self. It only occurred to me after Bert told me about it, that I ain't been in the house alone for years."

He ordered some more beer, and, drawing Mr. Chase to a bench, sat down to a long and steady argument. It shook his faith in human nature to find that his friend estimated the affair as a twenty-pound job, but he was in no position to bargain. They came out smoking twopenny cigars whose strength was remarkable for their age, and before they parted Mr. Chase was pledged to the hilt to do all that he could to save Mrs. Teak from the vice of avarice.

It was a more difficult undertaking than he had supposed. The house, small and compact, seemed to offer few opportunities for the concealment of large sums of money, and after a fortnight's residence he came to the conclusion that the treasure must have been hidden in the garden. The unalloyed pleasure, however, with which Mrs. Teak regarded the efforts of her husband to put under cultivation land that had lain fallow for twenty years convinced both men that they were on a wrong scent. Mr. Teak, who did the digging, was the first to realize it, but his friend, pointing out the suspicions that might be engendered by a sudden cessation of labour, induced him to persevere.

"And try and look as if you liked it," he said, severely. "Why, from the window even the back view of you looks disagreeable."

## **Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.**

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