



THE LADY OF THE BARGE

W. W. JACOBS

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**THE LADY
OF THE BARGE**

**BY
W. W. JACOBS**

The Lady of the Barge by W. W. Jacobs.

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“I thought,” said the son simply, 'that it would be better for me not to come to the dinner-table. But it happens to be my birthday, and my father would not hear of my dining alone, so we hit upon this foolish plan of dining in the dark. I'm sorry I startled you.'

“I am sorry,' said I, as I reached across the table and gripped his hand, 'that I am such a fool; but it was only in the dark that you startled me.'

“From a faint tinge in the old man's cheek and a certain pleasant softening of the poor solitary eye in front of me I secretly congratulated myself upon this last remark.

“We never see a friend,' said the old man, apologetically, 'and the temptation to have company was too much for us. Besides, I don't know what else you could have done.'

“Nothing else half so good, I'm sure,' said I.

“Come,' said my host, with almost a sprightly air. 'Now we know each other, draw our chairs to the fire and let's keep this birthday in a proper fashion.'

“He drew a small table to the fire for the glasses and produced a box of cigars, and placing a chair for the old servant, sternly bade her to sit down and drink. If the talk was not sparkling, it did not lack for vivacity, and we were soon as merry a party as I have ever seen. The night wore on so rapidly that we could hardly believe our ears when in a lull in the conversation a clock in the hall struck twelve.

“A last toast before we retire,' said my host, pitching the end of his cigar into the fire and turning to the small table.

“We had drunk several before this, but there was something impressive in the old man's manner as he rose and took up his glass. His tall figure seemed to get taller, and his voice rang as he gazed proudly at his disfigured son.

“The health of the children my boy saved!' he said, and drained his glass at a draught.”
