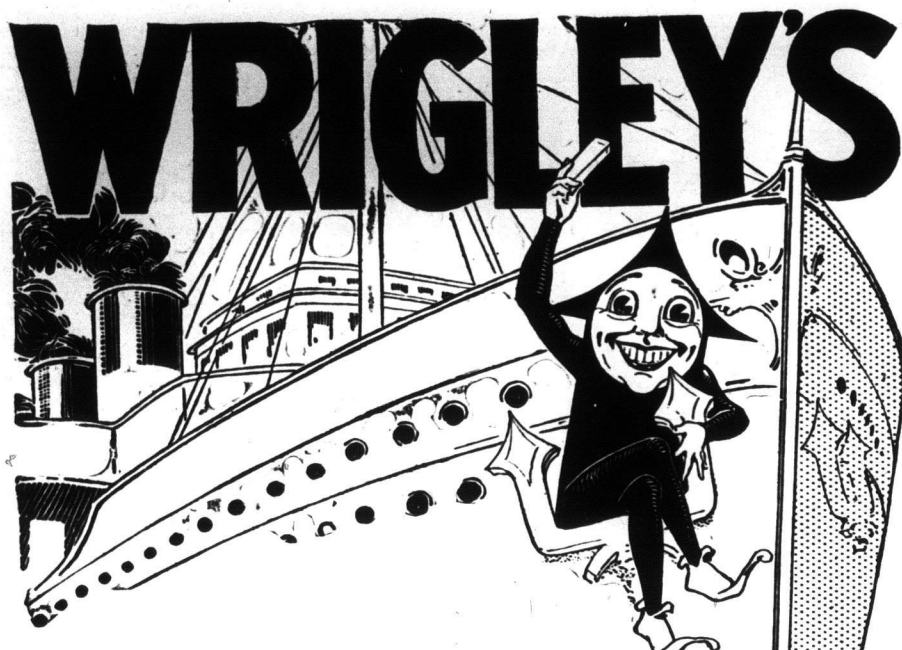




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POWDERS

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"Drink this here down," says Uncle Emsley, handing me the glass of water. "You've rid too far to-day, Jud, and got yourself over-excited. Try to think about something else now."

"Do you know how to make them pancakes, Uncle Emsley?" I asked.

"Well, I'm not as apprized in the anatomy of them as some," says Uncle Emsley, "but I reckon you take a sifter of plaster of paris and a little dough and saleratus and corn meal, and mix 'em with eggs and buttermilk as usual. Is old Bill going to ship beeves to Kansas City again this spring, Jud?"

"That was all the pancake specifications I could get that night. I didn't wonder that Jackson Bird found it uphill work. So I dropped the subject and talked with Uncle Emsley a while about hollow-corn and cyclones. And then Miss Willella came and said 'good night,' and I hit the breeze for the ranch."

"About a week afterwards, I met Jackson Bird riding out of Pimienta as I rode in, and we stopped in the road for a few frivolous remarks."

"Got the bill of particulars for them flapjacks yet?" I asked him.

"Well, no," says Jackson. "I don't seem to have any success in getting hold of it. Did you try?"

"I did," says I, "and 'twas like trying to dig a prairie dog out of his hole with a peanut hull. That pancake receipt must be a jookalorum, the way they hold on to it."

"I'm most ready to give it up," says Jackson, so discouraged in his pronouncements that I felt sorry for him; "but I did want to know how to make them pancakes to eat on my lonely ranch," says he. "I lie awake of nights thinking how good they are."

"You keep on trying for it," I tells him, "and I'll do the same. One of us is bound to get a rope over its horns before long. Well, so-long, Jackey."

"You see, by this time we was on the peacefullest of terms. When I saw that he wasn't after Miss Willella I had more endurable contemplations of that sand-haired snoozer. In order to help out the ambitions of his appetite I kept on trying to get that receipt from Miss Willella. But every time I would say 'pancakes' she would get sort of remote and fidgety about the eye, and try to change the subject. If I held her to it she would slide out and round up Uncle Emsley with his pitcher of water and hip-pocket howitzer."

"One day I galloped over to the store with a fine bunch of blue verbenas that I cut out of a herd of wild flowers over on Poisoned Dog Prairie. Uncle Emsley looked at 'em with one eye shut and says: 'Haven't ye heard the news?'"

"'Cattle up?' I asks."

"'Willella and Jackson Bird was married in Palestine yesterday,' says he. 'Just got a letter this morning.'"

"I dropped them flowers in a cracker barrel, and let the news trickle in my ears and down toward my upper left-hand shirt pocket until it got to my feet."

"Would you mind saying that over again once more, Uncle Emsley?" says I. "Maybe my hearing has got wrong, an you only said that prime heifers was 4.80 on the hoof, or something like that."

"'Married yesterday,' says Uncle Emsley, 'and gone to Waco and Niagara Falls on a wedding tour. Why, didn't you see none of the signs all along? Jackson Bird has been courting Willella ever since that day he took her out riding.'"

"Then," says I, in a kind of yell, "what was all this zezzaparoola he give me about pancakes? Tell me that."

"When I said 'pancakes' Uncle Emsley sort of dodged and stepped back."

"Somebody's been dealing me pancakes from the bottom of the deck," I says, "and I'll find out. I believe you know. Talk up," says I, "or we'll mix a panful of batter right here."

"I slid over the counter after Uncle Emsley. He grabbed at his gun, but it was in a drawer, and he missed it two inches. I got him by the front of his shirt and shoved him in a corner."

"Talk pancakes," says I, "or be made into one. Does Miss Willella make 'em?"

"She never made one in her life, and I never saw one," says Uncle Emsley, soothing. "Calm down, now, Jud—calm down. You've got excited, and that wound in your head is contaminating your sense of intelligence. Try not to think about pancakes."

"Uncle Emsley," says I, "I'm not wounded in the head except so far as my

natural cogitative instincts run to runs. Jackson Bird told me he was calling on Miss Willella for the purpose of finding out her system of producing pancakes, and he asked me to help him get the bill of lading of the ingredients. I done so, with the results as you see. Have I been soddled down with Johnson grass by a pink-eyed snoozer, or what?"

"Slack up your grip on my dress shirt," says Uncle Emsley, "and I'll tell you. Yes, it looks like Jackson Bird has gone and humbugged you some. The day after he was riding with Willella, he came back and told me and her to watch out for you whenever you got to talking about pancakes. He said you was in camp once where they were cooking flapjacks, and one of the fellows cut you over the head with a frying pan. Jackson said that whenever you got overhot or excited, that wound hurt you and made you kind of crazy, and you went to raving about pancakes. He told us to just get you worked off of the subject and soothed down, and you wouldn't be dangerous. So, me and Willella done the best by you we knew how. Well, well," says Uncle Emsley, "that Jackson Bird is sure a seldom kind of a snoozer."

During the progress of Jud's story he had been slowly but deftly combining certain portions of the contents of his sacks and cans. Toward the close of it he set before me the finished product—a pair of red-hot, rich-hued pancakes on a tin plate. From some secret hoarding place he also brought a lump of excellent butter and a bottle of golden syrup.

"How long ago did these things happen?" I asked him.

"Three years," said Jud. "They're living on the Mired Mule Ranch now. But I haven't seen either of 'em since."

"Did you make these cakes by the famous recipe?" I asked.

"Didn't I tell you there wasn't no receipt?" said Jud. "The boys hollered pancakes till they got pancake hungry, and I cut this receipt out of a newspaper. How does the truck taste?"

"They're delicious," I answered. "Why don't you have some too, Jud?"

"I was sure I heard a sigh."

"Me?" said Jud. "I don't never eat 'em."

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