

ADE GEORGE

MORE FABLES

George Ade
More Fables

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THE FABLE OF HOW UNCLE BREWSTER WAS TOO SHIFTY FOR THE TEMPTER

When Uncle Brewster had put on his Annual Collar and combed his Beard and was about to start to the Depot, his Wife, Aunt Mehely, looked at him through her Specs and shook her Head doubtfully.

Then she spoke as follows: "You go slow there in the City. You know your Failin's. You're just full of the Old Harry, and when you're Het Up you're just like as not to Raise Ned."

"I guess I can take keer of myse'f about as well as the Next One," retorted Uncle Brewster. "I've been to the Mill an' got my Grist, if any one should ask. I ain't no Greeny."

With that he started for the Train, which was due in one Hour.

As he rode toward the Great City he smoked a Baby Mine Cigar, purchased of the Butcher, and told the Brakeman a few Joe Millers just to throw out the Impression that he was Fine and Fancy.

After he had Registered at the Hotel and Swelled Up properly when addressed as "Mister" by the Clerk, he wanted to know if there was a Lively Show in Town. The Clerk told him to follow the Street until he came to all the Electric Lights, and there he would find a Ballet. Uncle Brewster found the Place, and looked in through the Hole at an Assistant Treasurer, who was Pale and wore a Red Vest.

"I want a Chair near the Band," said Uncle Brewster. "How much does one of 'em Fetch?"

"Two Dollars," replied the Assistant Treasurer, pulling down his Cuffs and then examining himself in a small Mirror at one side of the Diagram.

"Great Grief!" ejaculated Uncle Brewster. "I only paid Thirty-Five Cents for the Glass Blowers, an' I'll warrant you they beat your Troupe as bad as Cranberries beats Glue. I'll see you plumb in Halifax before I—"

"Stand aside, please," said the Assistant Treasurer.

Uncle Brewster saw a Policeman, and thought it his Duty to tell the Officer that the Theater Folks were a Pack of Robbers.

"Up an Alley," said the Policeman.

Instead of going to a Show, Uncle Brewster stood in front of a Clothing Store and watched the Wax Figures.

When he got back to his Room the Bell-Hopper came around and asked him if he cared to Sit in a Quiet Game. Uncle Brewster wanted to know whether they were Gamblers or Business Men, and the Boy said they were Business Men. It was all Friendly, with an Ante of Two Bits and the Chandelier as the Limit. Uncle Brewster said he was accustomed to playing with Lima Beans, Three for a Cent and One call Two and no fair to Bluff. The Bell-Hopper told him to Turn In and get a Good Night's Rest.

Next Morning at the Hotel he spotted a stylish little Chunk of a Woman who kept the Cigar Case and sold Books with Actress Photos on the outside.

He walked over to buy a Cigar, but he happened to see the "3 for 50c." Label and his Feet got cold.

So, instead of buying a Cigar, he conversed with the Proprietress. He seemed to be a Success with her, and ventured to say that he was a Stranger in Town and would like first-rate to go out to a Lecture or some other kind of Entertainment that Evening if he could find a Nice Girl that didn't mind

going with a Respectable Man who could give References, and besides was nearly old enough to be her Father. Then after the Lecture they could go to a First-Class Restaurant and have an Oyster Stew.

Uncle Brewster had read the Illustrated Papers in the Barber Shop out Home, and he certainly knew what was Expected of a Man who wanted to give a Gay Girl the Time of her Life.

The Cigar and Literary Girl said she would be Charmed to Accompany him only for one Thing: She said she didn't have a Hat that was Fit to Wear. She said she could tell by his Looks that he was a Gentleman that wouldn't want to go anywhere with a Lady whose Lid was Tacky. Possibly he would be willing to Stake her to a Hat.

"What would the Hat come to?" asked Uncle Brewster, somewhat Leary.

"Only Fourteen Dollars," she replied.

"I'll Think it Over," quoth Uncle Brewster, in a choking Voice, and he was so Groggy he walked into the Elevator instead of going out the Street Door.

A little while later Uncle Brewster met an Acquaintance who gave him a Complimentary Badge to the Races. He walked out to the Track, so as to make the Expense as Reasonable as possible.

As soon as he was in the Ring a Tout took him back of a Hot Sausage Booth and told him not to Give it Out, but Green Pill in the First Race was sure to Win as far as a man could throw an Anvil, and to hurry and get a Piece of Money on. Uncle Brewster looked at the Entries and began to Quiver. He wished that Doc Jimmison could be there to Advise him. Green Pill was 30 to 1, and the Tout had his information from a Stable Boy that slept with the Horse.

A Reckless Spirit seized Uncle Brewster. He said he would take a Chance even if he didn't know for Sure that he would Win. So he walked up to a Bookie and said to him: "I want to Bet Fifty Cents on Green Pill, and this is a Dollar here, so you want to give me Fifty Cents Change."

Whereupon the Bookie told him to Back Up and Fade and do a Disappearing Specialty.

Uncle Brewster Escaped and found himself at a Bar. He decided that he would take a Drink, because he wouldn't be Home until next Day and by that time it would be off his Breath.

So he laid his Bosom against the Brass Railing and said to the Man in White, "You might as well draw me a Glass of Beer."

"We've got it in Bottles," said the Barkeep, regarding Uncle Brewster without a sign of Enthusiasm.

"What do you git for a Bottle?" asked Uncle Brewster.

"Twenty Cents," was the Reply of the Liquor Clerk.

"Keep it," said Uncle Brewster.

Perceiving that the Race-Track was in the hands of Gougers, Uncle Brewster walked back to the Hotel. By that Time his New Shoes had Crippled him, and he decided to take the Afternoon Train for home instead of Waiting Over.

That Evening he was back at his own Fireside, with the Bunged-Up Feet resting in Carpet Slippers. As he sat and read the Poultry Magazine, Aunt Mehely looked at him sidewise, and full of Suspicion said, "I s'pose you just Played Hob there in the City."

And Uncle Brewster replied as follows: "No, Mother, I didn't Drink and I didn't Gamble. I didn't do Nothin'—not even go to a Theayter."

And as he spoke an Aureole of Virtue seemed to curdle above him, while his Countenance bore an Expression of Placid Triumph, which meant that he was the real Asbestos Paragon who had been tried in the Furnace and declared Non-Combustible.

MORAL: Some People are Good because it Comes High to be Otherwise.

THE FABLE OF THE GRASS WIDOW AND THE MESMEREE AND THE SIX DOLLARS

One Day a keen Business manager who thought nobody could Show him was sitting at his Desk. A Grass Widow floated in, and stood Smiling at him. She was a Blonde, and had a Gown that fit her as if she had been Packed into it by Hydraulic Pressure. She was just as Demure as Edna May ever tried to be, but the Business Manager was a Lightning Calculator, and he Surmised that the Bunk was about to be Handed to him. The Cold Chills went down his Spine when he caught a Flash of the Half-Morocco Prospectus.

If it had been a Man Agent he would have shouted "Sick 'em" and reached for a Paper-Weight. But when the Agent has the Venus de Milo beaten on Points and Style, and when the Way the Skirt sets isn't so Poor, and she is Coy and introduces the Startled Fawn way of backing up without getting any farther away, and when she comes on with short Steps, and he gets the remote Swish of the Real Silk, to say nothing of the Faint Aroma of New-Mown Hay, and her Hesitating Manner seems to ask, "Have I or have I not met a Friend?"—in a Case of that kind, the Victim is just the same as Strapped to the Operating-Table. He has about One Chance in a Million.

The timorous but trusting little Grass Widow sat beside the Business Manager and told him her Hard-Luck Story in low, bird-like Notes. She said she was the only Support of her Little Boy, who was attending a Military School at Syracuse, N.Y. She turned the Liquid Orbs on him and had him to the Bad. He thought he would tell her that already he had more Books at Home than he could get on the Shelves, but when he tried to Talk he only Yammered. She Kept on with her little Song, and Smiled all the Time, and sat a little Closer, and he got so Dizzy he had to lock his Legs under the Office Chair to keep from Sinking Away.

When she had him in the Hypnotic State she pushed the Silver Pencil into his Right Hand, and showed him where to sign his Name. He wrote it, while the dim Sub-Consciousness told him that probably he was the Softest Thing the Lady Robber had Stood Up that Season. Then she recovered the Pencil, which he was confusedly trying to put into his Vest Pocket, and missing it about Six Inches, and with a cheery Good By she was gone.

He shook himself and took a Long Breath, and asked where he was. Then it all came back to him and he felt Ornerly, and called himself Names and roasted the Office Boy in the Next Room, and made a Rule that hereafter Nobody could get at him except by Card, and if any Blonde Sharks in Expensive Costumes asked for him, to call up the Chief and ask for a Squad.

He was so Wrothy at himself for being Held Up that he could not find any Consolation except in the Fact that he had seen on the List of Subscribers the name of nearly every well-known married Citizen above the Age of 35. He was not the Only One. She had Corralled the Street.

When the Man came around to deliver the seven-pound copy of "Happy Hours with the Poets," and he paid out his Six Silver Pieces for a queer Volume that he would not have Read for Six an Hour, he hated himself worse than ever. He thought some of giving the Book to the Office Boy, by way of Revenge, but he hit upon a Better Use for it. He put it back into the Box and carried it Home, and said to his Wife, "See what I have Bought for you."

It occurred to him that after getting a Present like that, she ought to let him stay out every Night for a Month. But she could not see it that Way. He had to tell her that Some Women never seem to Appreciate having Husbands to Grind and Toil all day, so as to be able to purchase Beautiful Gifts for them. Then she told him that all the Women of her Acquaintance had received these Books as Presents, and a crowd of Married Men must have been given a Club Rate. Then he Spunked up and said that if she was going to look a Gift Horse in the Mouth, they wouldn't Talk about it any more.

In the meantime the Grass Widow was living at the Waldorf-Astoria.

MORAL: *Those who are Entitled to it Get it sooner or later.*

THE FABLE OF THE HONEST MONEY-MAKER AND THE PARTNER OF HIS JOYS, SUCH AS THEY WERE

The Prosperous Farmer lived in an Agricultural Section of the Middle West. He commanded the Respect of all his Neighbors. He owned a Section, and had a Raft of big Horses and white-faced Cows and Farm Machinery, and Money in the Bank besides. He still had the first Dollar he ever made, and it could not have been taken away from him with Pincers.

Henry was a ponderous, Clydesdale kind of Man, with Warts on his Hands. He did not have to travel on Appearances, because the whole County knew what he was Worth. Of course he was Married. Years before he had selected a willing Country Girl with Pink Cheeks, and put her into his Kitchen to serve the Remainder of her Natural Life. He let her have as high as Two Dollars a Year to spend for herself. Her Hours were from 6 A.M. to 6 A.M., and if she got any Sleep she had to take it out of her Time. The Eight-Hour Day was not recognized on Henry's Place.

After Ten Years of raising Children, Steaming over the Washtub, Milking the Cows, Carrying in Wood, Cooking for the Hands, and other Delsarte such as the Respected Farmer usually Frames Up for his Wife, she was as thin as a Rail and humped over in the Shoulders. She was Thirty, and looked Sixty. Her Complexion was like Parchment and her Voice had been worn to a Cackle. She was losing her Teeth, too, but Henry could not afford to pay Dentist Bills because he needed all his Money to buy more Poland Chinas and build other Cribs. If she wanted a Summer Kitchen or a new Wringer or a Sewing Machine, or Anything Else that would lighten her Labors, Henry would Moan and Grumble and say she was trying to land him in the Poorhouse.

They had a dandy big Barn, painted Red With White Trimmings, and a Patent Fork to lift the Hay into the Mow, and the Family lived in a Pine Box that had not been Painted in Years and had Dog-Fennel all around the Front of it.

The Wife of the Respected Farmer was the only Work Animal around the Place that was not kept Fat and Sleek. But, of course, Henry did not count on Selling her. Henry often would fix up his Blooded Stock for the County Fair and tie Blue Ribbons on the Percherons and Herefords, but it was never noticed that he tied any Blue Ribbons on the Wife.

And yet Henry was a Man to be Proud of. He never Drank and he was a Good Hand with Horses, and he used to go to Church on Sunday Morning and hold a Cud of Tobacco in his Face during Services and sing Hymns with Extreme Unction. He would sing that he was a Lamb and had put on the Snow-White Robes and that Peace attended him. People would see him there in his Store Suit, with the Emaciated Wife and the Scared Children sitting in the Shadow of his Greatness, and they said that she was Lucky to have a Man who was so Well Off and lived in the Fear of the Lord.

Henry was Patriotic as well as Pious. He had a Picture of Abraham Lincoln in the Front Room, which no one was permitted to Enter, and he was glad that Slavery had been abolished.

Henry robbed the Cradle in order to get Farm-Hands. As soon as the Children were able to Walk without holding on, he started them for the Corn-Field, and told them to Pay for the Board that they had been Sponging off of him up to that Time. He did not want them to get too much Schooling for fear that they would want to sit up at Night and Read instead of Turning In so as to get an Early Start along before Daylight next Morning. So they did not get any too much, rest easy. And he never Foundered them on Stick Candy or Raisins or any such Delicatessen for sale at a General Store. Henry was undoubtedly the Tightest Wad in the Township. Some of the Folks who had got into a Box through Poor Management, and had been Foreclosed out of House and Home by Henry and his Lawyer, used to say that Henry was a Skin, and was too Stingy to give his Family enough to Eat, but most People looked up to Henry, for there was no getting around it that he was Successful.

When the Respected Farmer had been Married for Twenty Years and the Children had developed into long Gawks who did not know Anything except to get out and Toil all Day for Pa and not be paid anything for it, and after Henry had scraped together more Money than you could load on a Hay-Rack, an Unfortunate Thing happened. His Wife began to Fail. She was now Forty, but the Fair and Fat did not go with it. At that Age some Women are Buxom and just blossoming into the Full Charm of Matronly Womanhood. But Henry's Wife was Gaunt and Homely and all Run Down. She had been Poorly for Years, but she had to keep up and do the Chores as well as the House-Work, because Henry could not afford to hire a Girl. At last her Back gave out, so that she had to sit down and Rest every Once in a While. Henry would come in for his Meals and to let her know how Hearty all the Calves seemed to be, and he began to Notice that she was not very Chipper. It Worried him more than a little, because he did not care to pay any Doctor Bills. He told her she had better go and get some Patent Medicine that he had seen advertised on the Fence coming out from Town. It was only Twenty-Five cents a Bottle, and was warranted to Cure Anything. So she tried it, but it did not seem to restore her Youth and she got Weaker, and at last Henry just had to have the Doctor, Expense or No Expense. The Doctor said that as nearly as he could Diagnose her Case, she seemed to be Worn Out. Henry was Surprised, and said she had not been Complaining any more than Usual.

Next Afternoon he was out Dickering for a Bull, and his Woman, lying on the cheap Bedstead, up under the hot Roof, folded her lean Hands and slipped away to the only Rest she had known since she tied up with a Prosperous and Respected Farmer.

Henry was all Broken Up. He Wailed and Sobbed and made an Awful Fuss at the Church. The Preacher tried to Comfort him by saying that the Ways of Providence were beyond all Finding Out. He said that probably there was some Reason why the Sister had been taken right in the Prime of her Usefulness, but it was not for Henry to know it. He said the only Consolation he could offer was the Hope that possibly she was Better Off. There did not seem to be much Doubt about that.

In about a Month the Respected Farmer was riding around the Country in his Buck-Board looking for Number Two. He had a business Head and he knew it was Cheaper to Marry than to Hire one. His Daughter was only Eleven and not quite Big Enough as yet to do all the Work for five Men.

Finally he found one who had the Reputation of being a Good Worker. When he took her over to his House to Break Her In, the Paper at the County Seat referred to them as the Happy Couple.

MORAL: Be Honest and Respected and it Goes.

THE FABLE OF WHY SWEETIE FLEW THE TRACK

Once there were two Married People who used "Lovey" and "Pet" when they were in Company, and as soon as they were at Home they Threw Things at each other. She used to watch him through a Hole in the Curtain to see if he Flirted with any Women as he walked up the Street, and he bribed the Hired Girl to tell him Everything that happened while he was off the Reservation.

They did not Mocha and Java worth a Cent.

The Cardboard Motto in the Dining Room said, "Love One Another," but they were too Busy to Read.

He had a Clearing on the top of his Head and wore Side-Whiskers and bore a general Resemblance to the Before in an Ad for a Facial Treatment, and yet she suspected that all the Women in Town were Crazy to steal him away from her.

Likewise, inasmuch as she was the same Width all the way up and down, the same as a Poster Girl, and used to sport a Velvet Shroud with Black Beads on it, and could wield a Tooth-Pick and carry on a Conversation at the same time, he knew that sooner or later some Handsome Wretch with Money would try to Abduct her.

Sometimes he would bring a Friend Home to Dinner, and then if the Friend extended himself and told the Missus how well she was looking or Perjured himself over her Hand-Painting, Papa would get a Grouch and hide in the Corner.

Then she would Fan herself rapidly and ask, "Aren't you well, Dear?"

Dear would force one of those Dying-Martyr Smiles and reply, "I am quite well, Puss."

Then Puss would tell the Visitor that Baby was simply ruining his Health through Devotion to his Employers, but they didn't seem to Appreciate him at all.

After the Visitor went away there would be Language all over the Shop, and the poor Hired Girl would lock the Door and write to the Intelligence Office for a new Place.

Truly, it was a Happy Little Home, with the Reverse English.

She would Frisk his Wardrobe every day or two, looking for Evidence, and he would compel her to Itemize her Accounts so that he might be sure she was not giving Jewelry to the Iceman.

She would find a certain Passage in a Book, relating to Man's Cruelty and Woman's Silent Suffering, and then she would Mark the Passage and put it where he could Find it. Then when he Found it, he would Mark it "Rot!" and put it where She could find it, and then she would Weep and write Letters to Lady Authors telling them how Sad and Lonely she was.

But all the Time they kept up an Affectionate Front before their Acquaintances. They thought it better to avoid Scenes in Public; and although each knew that the other was False and had ceased to Love, they could not bring themselves to think of a Separation or a Divorce on account of the Cat—their Cat! The Cat must never know.

However, one of his Business Associates was On. He was a Bachelor and had lived at a European Hotel for Years, and he knew just how to Arbitrate a Domestic Scrap. So he sat down one day and gave the Husband a Good Talking-To. He said it was a Shame that such Nice People should have their Differences when it was so easy to be Happy. With that he handed over a Slew of Platitudes and Proverbs, such as: "A Soft Answer Turneth Away Wrath," "It takes Two to Make a Quarrel," "Think Twice before you Speak once," *et cetera*.

The Gist of his heart-to-heart Talk was that any Husband could stop Rough House Proceedings and shoot all kinds of Sweetness and Light into the sassiest Mooch a Wife ever got on to herself, if only he would refuse to Quarrel with her, receive her Flings without a Show of Wrath, and get up every Morning ready to Plug for a Renaissance of their Early Love.

Oh, but it was a Beauty Bright System! The European Hotel Bachelor said it couldn't Lose.

The Husband decided to give it a Trial. That very Afternoon he met his Wife, who had come out in her long Fawn-Colored Coat that fell straight in the Back. She had her Upper Rigging set, and was trying to Blanket everything on the Street. He flashed a Smiling Countenance, and said he was glad to see her. Then, instead of asking her When she left the House, and Where she had been since then, and How Soon she expected to go Home again, he told her she was looking Unusually Charming. She was Startled.

He handed her a Ten and told her to have a Good Time. Now, usually, when she wanted any Pin Money, she had to Pry it out of him.

On her way home her Mind was in a Tumult. Why had he given her the Con Speech and all that Money? What was the Ulterior Motive? What had he been Doing that he should attempt to Coddle her into a Forgiving Mood? Did he Fear that she would get next to his Past? Huh?

He just couldn't Fool her. She knew Something was Doing. Else why should he try to Fix her?

As soon as he came Home that Evening she Accused him and said she knew All. Instead of Countering with the usual Gibe, he told her that she was the Only Woman he had ever Loved and would she go to a Show that Evening? She went, thinking that perhaps the Other Woman might be there and she could detect some Signal passing between them. While at the Theater he fanned her and explained the Plot, and was all Attention. They rode Home in a Cab, because he said a Car wasn't good enough for His Queen. After they were at Home he asked her to sing the Song he had liked so much in the Old Days, "My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean." This was Conclusive Proof to her that the Hussy's Name was Bonnie.

Next Morning before he started away he Kissed her, and it wasn't any Make-Believe such as you see in Comic Opera. It was a genuine Olga Nethersole Buss, full of Linger and Adhesion. To cap the Climax he said he would stop in and order some Violets.

As soon as the Door slammed she Staggered toward the Kitchen, holding on to the Furniture here and there, the same as a Sardou Heroine. In the Kitchen was a Box of Rough on Rats. Hastily Concealing it beneath the loose Folds of her Morning Gown, she went to her Room and looked in the Mirror.

Ah, when he saw that Cold, White Face, then he would be Sorry. Upon Second Thought, this didn't seem to be a Moral Certainty, so she Weakened and had the Girl take the Poison and Hide it. She said she would Live—Live to Forget his Perfidy.

That day she went back to Mamma, and took the Cat with her.

When he came Home in the Twilight he found no Wife, no Cat—only a Scribbled Note saying that he could no longer Deceive her; that she had seen through his Diabolical Plan to Lull her Suspicions, and that she was no longer Safe in the Same House.

When the Deserted Husband went to the Friend and told him what had Happened, the Wise Bachelor said:

"I see. You did not go at her Strong enough."

MORAL: *They don't know Anything about it.*

THE FABLE OF THE EX-CHATTEL AND THE AWFUL SWAT THAT WAS WAITING FOR THE COLONEL

In one of the States of the Sunny South there stood a war-time House that had six white Columns along the Veranda, and the Chimney ran up the outside of the Wall.

This House was the Abode of a Colonel who had a silver-gray Goatee and the Manners of the Old School. All the First Families in the State were related to him, and therefore he was somewhat Particular as to who Lined Up with him when he took his Toddy.

He was proud of his Ancestry, and he carried the Scars to prove that he would Resent an Insult.

Now it happened that the Thirteenth Amendment signified nothing to him. He had been Reconstructed, but it didn't Take.

While on a Business Trip to the North he stopped at a Gaudy Hotel with all kinds of Mirrors and Onyx Stairways.

The Head Waiter at this Hotel was a Colored Gentleman with a False Front and a Dress Suit that fit him too soon. His Name was Mr. Winfield. He was President of the Colored Waiters' Union, Vice-President of the Republican County Central Committee, and Regal Commander of the Princes of Ethiopia.

His Honors lay Heavily upon him. He showed People where to sit in the Dining Room, and those who failed to Obey usually had to wait fifteen or twenty Minutes for their Vermicelli.

Mr. Winfield favored his Feet somewhat, which caused him to walk Syncopated, but, everything considered, he was quite Important and fairly Warm.

One morning the Colonel went into the Dining Room, and after he had seated himself he called Mr. Winfield to him and said he wanted some Hot Biscuit. At the same time he addressed Mr. Winfield as a Black Hound. Mr. Winfield did not know that this was a Term of Endearment in Apahatchie County, so he picked up a Silver Fruit Dish and bounced it against the Colonel's Head.

The Colonel arose and pulled his Persuader, expecting to make it a Case of Justifiable Homicide, but two Waiters named George and Grant grabbed him and backed him up against the Wall.

There were other guests in the Dining Room, but they did not jump in with any Gun Plays and make it a Race War, because Apahatchie County was Eight Hundred Miles away. One of them Co-Operated to the extent of Ringing three times for a Policeman.

The Officer of the Law who arrived in a few Minutes was Mr. Otis Beasley, Most Worshipful Scribe of the Princes of Ethiopia, of which Mr. Winfield was the Regal Commander.

Mr. Beasley walked up to Mr. Winfield, and placing his Left Hand on his Brow, said, "Hail, Brother."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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