

GUY CARRYL

MOTHER

GOOSE FOR

GROWN-UPS

Guy Carryl

Mother Goose for Grown-ups

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Guy Wetmore Carryl

Mother Goose for Grown-ups

TO CONSTANCE

In memory of other days,
Dear critic, when your whispered praise
Cheered on the limping pen.
How short, how sweet those younger hours,
How bright our suns, how few our showers,
Alas, we knew not then!

If but, long leagues across the seas,
The trivial charm of rhymes like these
Shall serve to link us twain
An instant in the olden spell
That once we knew and loved so well,
I have not worked in vain!

NOTE

I have pleasure in acknowledging the courteous permission of the editors to reprint in this form such of the following verses as were originally published in *Harper's Magazine*, the *Saturday Evening Post*, and the *London Sketch*.

G. W. C.

THE ADMIRABLE ASSERTIVENESS OF JILTED JACK

A noble and a generous mind
Was Jack's;
Folks knew he would not talk behind
Their backs:
But when some maiden fresh and young,
At Jack a bit of banter flung,
She soon discovered that his tongue
Was sharp as any ax.

A flirt of most engaging wiles
Was Jill;
On Jack she lavished all her smiles,
Until
Her slave (and he was not the first)
Of lovesick swains became the worst,
His glance a strong box might have burst,
His sighs were fit to kill.

One April morning, clear and fair,
When both
Of staying home and idling there
In sloth
Were weary, Jack remarked to Jill:
"Oh, what's the sense in sitting still?
Let's mount the slope of yonder hill."
And she was nothing loth.

But as she answered: "What's the use?"
The gruff
Young swain replied: "Oh, there's excuse
Enough.
Your doting parents water lack;
We'll fill a pail and bring it back."
(The reader will perceive that Jack
Was putting up a bluff.)

Thus hand in hand the tempting hill
They scaled,
And Jack proposed a kiss to Jill,
And failed!
One backward start, one step too bold,
And down the hill the couple rolled,
Resembling, if the truth were told,
A luggage train derailed.

With eyes ablaze with anger, she
Exclaimed:
"Well, who'd have thought! You'd ought to be
Ashamed!
You quite forget yourself, it's plain,
So I'll forget you, too. Insane
Young man, I'll say *oafweederzane*."
(Her German might be blamed.)

But Jack, whose linguist's pride was pricked,
To shine,
Asked: "*Meine Königin will nicht*
Be mine?"
And when she answered: "Nein" in spleen,
He cried: "Then in the soup tureen
You'll stay. You're not the only queen
Discarded for a nein!"

The moral's made for maidens young
And small:
If you would in a foreign tongue
Enthrall,
Lead off undaunted in a Swede
Or Spanish speech, and you'll succeed,
But they who in a German lead
No favor win at all.

THE BLATANT BRUTALITY OF LITTLE BOW PEEP

Though she was only a shepherdess,
Tending the meekest of sheep,
Never was African leopardess
Crosser than Little Bow Peep:
Quite apathetic, impassible
People described her as: "That
Wayward, contentious, irascible,
Testy, cantankerous brat!"

Yet, as she dozed in a grotto-like
Sort of a kind of a nook,
She was so charmingly Watteau-like,
What with her sheep and her crook;
"She is a dryad or nymph," any
Casual passer would think.
Poets pronounced her a symphony,
All in the palest of pink.

Thus it was not enigmatical,
That the young shepherd who first
Found her asleep, in ecstatic
Sighs of felicity burst:
Such was his sudden beatitude
That, as he gazed at her so,
Daphnis gave vent to this platitude:
"My! Ain't she elegant though!"

Roused from some dream of Arcadia,
Little Bow Peep with a start
Answered him: "I ain't afraid o' yer!
P'raps you imagine you're smart!"
Daphnis protested impulsively,
Blushing as red as a rose;
All was in vain. She convulsively
Punched the young man in the nose!

All of it's true, every word of it!
I was not present to peep,
But if you ask how I heard of it,
Please to remember the sheep.
There is no need of excuse. You will
See how such scandals occur:
If you recall Mother Goose, you will
Know what tail-bearers they were!

Moral: This pair irreclaimable
Might have made Seraphim weep,
But who can pick the most blamable?
Both saw a little beau peep!

THE COMMENDABLE CASTIGATION OF OLD MOTHER HUBBARD

She was one of those creatures
Whose features
Are hard beyond any reclaim;
And she loved in a hovel
To grovel,
And she hadn't a cent to her name.
She owned neither gallants
Nor talents;
She borrowed extensively, too,
From all of her dozens
Of cousins,
And never refunded a *sou*:
Yet all they said in abuse of her
Was: "She is prouder than Lucifer!"
(That, I must say, without meaning to blame,
Is always the way with that kind of a dame!)

There never was jolli-
Er colley
Than Old Mother Hubbard had found,
Though cheaply she bought him,
She'd taught him
To follow her meekly around:
But though she would lick him
And kick him,
It never had any effect;
He always was howling
And growling,
But goodness! What could you expect?
Colleys were never to flourish meant
'Less they had plenty of nourishment,
All that he had were the feathers she'd pluck
Off an occasional chicken or duck.

The colley was barred in
The garden,
He howled and he wailed and he whined.
The neighbors indignant,
Malignant
Petitions unanimous signed.
"The nuisance grows nightly,"
Politely
They wrote. "It's an odious hound,

And either you'll fill him,
Or kill him,
Or else he must go to the pound.
For if this howling infernally
Is to continue nocturnally —
Pardon us, ma'am, if we seem to be curt —
Somebody's apt to get horribly hurt!"

Mother Hubbard cried loudly
And proudly:
"Lands sakes! but you give yourselves airs!
I'll take the law to you
And sue you."
The neighbors responded: "Who cares?
We none of us care if
The sheriff
Lock every man jack of us up;
We won't be repining
At fining
So long as we're rid of the pup!"
They then proceeded to mount a sign,
Bearing this ominous countersign:
"Freemen! The moment has come to protest
And Old Mother Hubbard delendum est!"

They marched to her gateway,
And straightway
They trampled all over her lawn;
Most rudely they harried
And carried
Her round on a rail until dawn.
They marred her, and jarred her,
And tarred her
And feathered her, just as they should,
Of speech they bereft her,
And left her
With: "*Now* do you think you'll be good!"

The moral's a charmingly pleasing one.
While we would deprecate teasing one,
Still, when a dame has politeness rebuffed,
She certainly ought to be collared and cuffed.

THE DISCOURAGING DISCOVERY OF LITTLE JACK HORNER

A knack almost incredible for dealing with an edible
Jack Horner's elder sister was acknowledged to display;
She labored hard and zealously, but always guarded jealously
The secrets of the dishes she invented every day.
She'd take some indigestible, unpopular comestible,
And to its better nature would so tenderly appeal
That Jack invoked a benison upon a haunch of venison,
When really she was serving him a little leg of veal!

Jack said she was a miracle. The word was not satirical,
For daily climbing upward, she excelled herself at last:
The acme of facility, the zenith of ability
Was what she gave her brother for his Christmas Day repast.
He dined that evening eagerly and anything but meagerly,
And when he'd had his salad and his quart of Extra Dry,
With sisterly benignity, and just a touch of dignity,
She placed upon the table an unutterable pie!

Unflagging pertinacity, and technical sagacity,
Long nights of sleepless vigil, and long days of constant care
Had been involved in making it, improving it, and baking it,
Until of other pies it was the wonder and despair:
So princely and so prominent, so solemn, so predominant
It looked upon the table, that, with fascinated eye,
The youth, with sudden wonder struck, electrified, and thunder struck,
Could only stammer stupidly: "Oh Golly! What a pie!"

In view of his satiety, it almost seemed impiety
To carve this crowning triumph of a culinary life,
But, braced by his avidity, with sudden intrepidity
He broke its dome imposing with a common kitchen knife.
Ah, hideous fatality! for when with eager palate he
Commenced to eat, he happened on an accident uncouth,
And cried with stifled moan: "Of it one plum I tried. The stone of it
Had never been extracted, and I've broke a wisdom tooth!"

Jack's sister wept effusively, but loudly and abusively
His unreserved opinion of her talents he proclaimed;
He called her names like "driveller" and "simpleton" and "sniveller,"
And others, which to mention I am really too ashamed.
The moral: It is saddening, embarrassing, and maddening
A stone to strike in what you thought was paste. One thing alone
Than this mischance is crueller, and that is for a jeweller

To strike but paste in what he fondly thought to be a stone.

THE EMBARRASSING EPISODE OF LITTLE MISS MUFFET

Little Miss Muffet discovered a tuffet,
(Which never occurred to the rest of us)
And, as 'twas a June day, and just about noonday,
She wanted to eat – like the best of us:
Her diet was whey, and I hasten to say
It is wholesome and people grow fat on it.
The spot being lonely, the lady not only
Discovered the tuffet, but sat on it.

A rivulet gabbled beside her and babbled,
As rivulets always are thought to do,
And dragon-flies sported around and cavorted,
As poets say dragon-flies ought to do;
When, glancing aside for a moment, she spied
A horrible sight that brought fear to her,
A hideous spider was sitting beside her
And most unavoidably near to her!

Albeit unsightly, this creature politely
Said: "Madam, I earnestly vow to you,
I'm penitent that I did not bring my hat. I
Should otherwise certainly bow to you."
Though anxious to please, he was so ill at ease
That he lost all his sense of propriety,
And grew so inept that he clumsily stepped
In her plate – which is barred in Society.

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