

Uncle Jeff's Dream of Wealth

UNCLE Jeff Gordon has lived in Washington, a free man, almost as many years as he lived in Georgia as a slave. His short, bow legs still take him nimbly about his work, although his curly wool has been snow-white for a generation. He has outlived all his sons and daughters, and only scattered grandchildren remain of his once numerous family. Now he dwells alone in a little shack on a back lot, with not even a dog to keep him company.

A weather-beaten sign on the front of the hut announces that an expressman is to be hired there, and promises speedy performance of any work ordered. But when one sees the ancient horse that hauls Uncle Jeff's more ancient cart, wonder ceases at slow fulfilment of promise.

One ailment seriously afflicts the otherwise cheerful expressman. He has rheumatism, and the frequent damp, muggy days of the national capital bring him no little suffering. The other day he was struggling painfully along with a load of miscellaneous duffle for a man who has employed him at intervals for a good many years. Just as the load reached its destination the employer came up. It was a raw, miserable day, and he was sorry that the old darky had to be out in it.

"Good morning, Uncle Jeff," he said. "How 's the rheumatism to-day?"

"Pow'ful bad dis mawnin', sah; pow'ful bad."

"I'm sorry you have to work such weather as this, Jeff," said the employer. "You ought to have a home where you could take it easy."

The old darky chuckled and scraped in recognition of the friendly thought. "Yes, sah," he said; "got ter wo'k shore, rain er shine. Sometimes I des wish I had 'nough money not ter wo'k no more, nebber."

"How much do you think it would take, Jeff, to fix you for life? Ten thousand dollars?"

"Ten t'ousan' dollars!" Uncle Jeff fairly gasped at the thought. "Law bless you, sah, what ebber dis nigger gwine do wif all dat money?"

"Ten thousand too much, eh? Well, how about one thousand? What would you do if you had that?"

Uncle Jeff leaned against the fence and pondered. Manifestly no such vision of wealth had ever formed part of his day-dreams.

"A whole t'ousan' dollars," he said, after a while, "all mine? Yes, sah, ef I had dat pile, I'd go out hyah by dese hyah woods, an' I'd git me a li'l' piece o' groun', an' a li'l' house, an' I'd git me a pig, an' des a few chickens, an' two dawgs."

"Two dogs, Uncle Jeff! What would you want with two dogs?"

"What a man want wif two dawgs? Why, any man need two dawgs. Yes, sah, got ter hab two. Cain't no ways git erlong sho't er two."

"But what for, Jeff? What would you do with them?"

"Why, sah, one dawg fer de house, an' one dawg fer de yahd."

"What's the use of a dog in the yard when you have one in the house, Uncle Jeff?"

"Des ter gib de countehsign, sah; dat all. Ef sompin' come erlong in de night, dat dawg in de yahd he gib de countehsign ter dat dawg in de house, an' dat dawg in de house he des wake up ole Jeff an' de gun, an' we gwine right out dah in de yahd an' fine out what dar is. Yes, sah, me an' de gun we git de countehsign an' we gwine right out."

P. S.—The man who told me the Uncle Jeff story saw the old darky again a day or so ago, and told him that the story of the two dogs had been written and sold to a magazine.

"No!" said Uncle Jeff. "Is dat so? Say, Boss, I got ter be mighty car'ful ahter dis how I talk."

O. K. Davis.



Drawn by Mark Fenderson

Friday Interpolates Crusoe

"Is Friday unlucky?" asked Friday of Crusoe.

"It is," he replied. "I imagined you knew so."

"I did not," said Friday, "and think it a shame

That Crusoe,

Who knew so,

Should give me that name,

And that is, O Crusoe,

What makes me boohoo so!"

An Idyl of the New York Horse Exchange

HE stood in the crowded auction sale,
 Weary and weak and old,
 The ghost of an old-time thoroughbred,
 Waiting his turn to be sold.

Perchance he dreamed of races run
 In the light of a vanished day,
 When he carried the odds, in "the sport of
 kings,"
 For lords and ladies gay.

But, instead of banners waving fair
 And the grand-stand's ringing cheer,
 A crowd that laughed, with quip and jest,
 And the shout of the auctioneer.

They harnessed him into a hansom cab,
 And buckled the breeching tight.
 They drew the check-rein hard and fast,
 And saw that all was right.

They lashed him once, with a parting jeer,
 And prodded him, just for a joke;
 But they did n't know the Clingstone blood
 And the spirit that never broke.

He took the bit between his teeth,
 And started with a rear.
 He snapped the check-rein, with a snort,
 And bucked the breeching clear.

He kicked the blooming dashboard off,
 And started in to run,
 While only the man behind the cab
 Remained to see the fun.

As though once more adown the stretch
 He heard the grand-stand yell,
 From Central Park to Union Square
 He faltered not nor fell.

But true to the Clingstone blood he ran,
 Cheered by the frenzied throng.
 They telephoned to the City Hall,
 "Still fresh, and coming strong!"

They fired a volley into his brain.
 Ah, Stranger, do not scoff:
 A dauntless spirit passed to rest
 As he kicked life's harness off.

Edward Bacon.



Drawn by E. Warde Blaisdell

THE CANDID FRIEND

COMIC ARTIST (sadly): It's funny I can't sell that joke.
 CANDID FRIEND: If 't was funny, you could sell it.

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