



*Life with the James-Jammer Side Show*

# Hail, the Professor!

*By Thomas Thursday*

**(COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE)**

## CHAPTER I.

### CRAWLING FROM UNDER.

**T**HE way I see it now, a wise beezark is a bird who won't allow anybody but a boob to trim 'im. For instance and example, when two wise flippers meet they generally part with the same suit of clothes, watch, and ideas—splitting the bunk fifty-fifty. But when a yokel flaps in between 'em the score at the end of the game favors the yokel. It's been done—so have I! Simply because the contents of a booberino don't always turn out according to the label.

Boobs are born and wise boys are unmade—thanks to the boobery. And, believe me positively, the only guaranteed wise cracker on this earth and points west is the gent that plays the part of the boob. It's hard for that yamneck to loose. The case of Professor G. Tracy Younger versus the Mighty James-Jammer Shows will be taken for our text today.

Managing the side show with the James-Jammer trick was just as easy as balancing two anvils and an eel in one hand and shaving with the

other. If it wasn't one thing that upset the works it was at least six others. And, as a trouper of long standing—and sitting—I'll say that it's the safest business in the world, with but one exception, viz., marrying the second girl with your first wife as witness.

The show got off to a bad start and a worse finish. We opened at Debraw, Nebraska, and was immediately bounced for a row of native cyclones. Our white tops went down like a dumbwaiter with a broken rope. My kid show top caved in like the Panama Canal, causing six of my freaks to crawl from under, minus everything but their birthdays.

The next three stands were as quiet as a hurricane in a boiler factory. Each town contributed the Atlantic or Pacific Ocean to our welfare. In different words, it rained so watery that even the Great Lakes would have quit with disgust.

Our contribution to art and illiterature improperly opens at Frappe Center, Kansas. Fine little town! It had a circulation of about two thousand customers that were as up-to-date as the landing of the Pilgrims. The mayor wore long hair

and short ideas and spent most of his time addressing the board of aldermen. This was done by standing in front of a mirror. The burg had a Main Street that would have made Gopher Prairie look like three acres of Broadway.

Just a few minutes before we shot the first ballyhoo at the kid show, I was sitting on the stand listening to the oration of Tod Pepperday, my inside lecturer, which proved to be just another hard-luck story that made the ninety-sixth of the season. Suddenly, and without any unfair warning, our horizon was cluttered up by the appearance of a bird dressed like a whole row of Easter Sundays.

He wore spats, cane, high hat, and whiskers. His check suit was at least two years behind the times, while his flashy gloves were two years in front. He stood five-feet-eleven inches from the main floor and weighed about one hundred and fifty in the shade.

"Er—I beg, your pardon, sir," he opened, speaking to nothing less than me, "but am I addressing Doc Barnumbey, the manager of this attraction?"

"Brother," I tossed back, "you're wasting more time than a clock ticking ninety seconds to the minute. I'm not on the market for any loose-leaf History of South Sea Islanders, or the like."

"Glad to observe that you have a sense of humor," he said. "A sense of humor, my dear sir, is not only indispensable but, I might say, it is absolutely essential to a well-rounded viewpoint on life. For example, suppose that I elucidate upon the career of Emanuel Swedenborg, for the nonce."

"What's your act?" demanded Tod, inspecting the gent as if he was for sale at half price.

"My name is Professor G. Tracy Younger, B. A., LL. B., B. S., D. H. L., F. A. A.—"

"Glad to see that you know the alphabet," said Tod.

"Suppose we talk business?" went on the professor.

"We're both wide open," answered Tod. "How much can we get out of you, hey?"

"My proposition is quite extraordinary, quite. I have decided to experiment with the plain people from a psychological standpoint. In other words, gentlemen, I have prevailed upon myself to accept

a position from you at once."

Right off that bird won the lead-plated wedding ring for nerve.

"May I ask what position you have honored us by grabbing?" asked Tod, wiggling his eyebrows from assorted curiosity.

"Perhaps I have used a nomenclature that is foreign to your understanding," tossed back the professor. "What I mean to say is that I desire to sit upon one of your platforms and have your audiences observe me while I observe them. In other words, gentlemen, I wish to appear as a sort of freak."

"You won't have to sit on my platform to be convincing," said Tod.

"Furthermore," went on the complete course in nerve, "I'll accept a salary that is exceptionally modest for an idea that is both extraordinary and novel. For example, gentlemen, can you not imagine me sitting upon the platform, dressed in a white tuxedo, monocle, and a sign reading 'Professor G. Tracy Younger, Exponent of Abnormal Self-control and Will Power?'"

"Nope, I can't," admitted Tod. "What's the idea? Any stonehead can sit on a platform in a kid show and wear a white tuxedo and a monocle. What I wanna know is what kind of act do you spring—how do you earn your jack, hey?"

At that the professor looked peeved below zero. "My dear sir," he said, "I'm afraid that I forgot to mention that point. The proposition is this: You will offer, as a reward, the small sum of five hundred dollars to any one of the proletariat or intelligentsia who are able to make me smile against my iron will. I bar only tickling, uncouth flippancy, and nauseous nonsense. You now understand, I trust, that I am to be a sort of new conception of a Sober Sue. And, I may add, that you have no chance of losing the reward."

"You bet we haven't!" snorted Tod. "If we had that much jack we'd go to Palm Beach for the winter. But, say, your act listens pretty good to me. How's it strike you, Doc?"

"Dunno," I said dubiously. "There ain't much to it, outside of his name. However, I'm willing to take a chance, if the professor will accept thirty-five bones per week for doing nothing but keep sober. As to the reward of five hundred smackers—well, that's out like a match in a spring shower. Two hundred is my limit."

"That will be satisfactory," said the professor. "I do not censure you for being careful with a perfect stranger. However, when you see that your reward is safe, you may be willing to raise it to the five-hundred mark. Two hundred sounds rather cheap, don't you know."

"Hey, listen," Tod asked suddenly, "what do you get out of it besides the salary?"

"That, sir, is the very question that I wanted you to propound," replied the professor. "And I may as well state immediately that my chief object is to study human nature in the rough. I intend to write a book entitled, 'Mob Psychology; or, Is Democracy Safe?' And, gentlemen, I can think of no better institution to glean first-hand knowledge than your exhibition."

"In fact," the strange bird went on, "I would be glad to work for nothing, but unfortunately I am nothing but a poor savant with an ideal. The proffered salary, therefore, is quite acceptable. Of course, I realize that such a procedure is most extraordinary, to be sure. However, I feel certain that I shall be well repaid eventually in both honor and wealth."

Well, sir—or ma'am—when a boob boobs his way in front of Doc Barnumbey with an act that looks high class and novel, I am naturally the fella to grab the proposition at once and promptly. Therefore, and to wit, Professor G. Tracy Younger was added to the kid-show roster of attractions.

## CHAPTER II.

### BOW TO THE PROF!

**W**HEN we shot the gimmick that afternoon—I mean when we opened that afternoon—Professor G. Tracy Younger was sitting on his platform along with the rest of the attractions. His act was sandwiched between Lady Claridge, the Bearded Lady, and Colonel Barbottle, the Human Hairpin.

And I'll say that the professor looked better than a regiment of mice to an Armenian tomcat. He was wrapped up in a white tuxedo that looked so good that the tailor who made it must have tossed away the pattern. I never saw one like it since—and don't want to! In his left eye he was wearing a trick monocle, which same I imagined was nothing less than the bottom of an ex-beer

glass filed around the edge.

In the lapel of his coat the prof was sporting the finest fake carnation this side of Luther Burbank. His shoes were made to disorder and polished so brightly that they shone like a searchlight on a well-oiled pate. In his left hand he held a cane that was big enough to knock out Abel with one administration. It had a gold tip like a pack of Sawdusto cigarettes minus the extra coupons. His beard, or whiskers, appeared as neat as the bungalow of a twenty-four-hour bride waiting the simp to come home to lovey. And—  
—But let's drop that matter and switch gears to action.

I ordered the first ballyhoo at three o'clock, seeing that the entire population had by then popped onto the grounds. The boys banged the Chinese gong, twisted the siren, and made enough noise to make the late war sound like the echo of a dropped slice of cotton on a velvet board walk.

In less than no time, or sooner, we had the sum total of all the hayshakers and six-day sock wearers in front of the bally. I then instructed my outside opener, or orator, to inform the boys and girls about our great show, especially about the professor and the two hundred dollars reward for any one who could make him smile, grin, or giggle.

The idea went over big—like water over Niagara Falls. When the push heard about the easy two hundred smackers they jammed the box offices in toto—whatever that is. Fully ninety per cent strolled in at a dime a head or ten cents per whisker. The only birds that stayed out were the yapbeans who figured that a whole dime was the world's supply of money, and held on to the same so that Rockefeller would remain in poverty.

Inside, Tod Pepperday started his lecture with Major Wamwop, the Sword Swallower. But the major's act fell as flat as an 1823 dime. The customers were all interested in the professor and the two hundred give-a-ways. They surrounded his platform like a bracelet on the ankle of the Queen of Sheba.

I began to worry whether the professor would show signs of stage fright, but there was nothing like it or near it. He sat as unmoved as the Sphinx on a quiet summer afternoon. Nonchalantly puffing at a skinny cigar, the learned man let his eyes rove over the push as if they were nothing

more than assorted landscape. I felt happy and rejoiced accordingly.

"On this platform-m-m," announced Tod, opening on the professor, "we are presenting for approval-l-l the most ree-markable specimen of human endurance—er—that ever happened! Here you see no less than Professor G. Tracy Younger, President Emmy Ritus of—ah—the University of Wafflebamm. He occupied also the chair of—er—Epidemic Encephalitis at Gypp College.

"Now understand, ladies and gentlemun," Tod went on, "that the professor is not here as an ordinary freak. No, of course not. He receives no salary from us what the so ever for the good and valid reasons that we couldn't afford to pay the professor—er—I mean to say that we couldn't hire the professor's services for any sum of gold or radium. He is here before you today to pursue his scientific studies only. He is working on his new theory of psycho—er—and stuff like that. He intends to write a book that will startle the entire world and everything.

"How the so ever, in order to put a little pep into the professor's exhibition he has suggested that we offer to any man, woman, or child in this town the large sum of two hundred dollars if he or she can make 'im smile. He wants to show you what it—er—means to have abnormal self-control and will power, and the like. In other words, he defies anybody here to make him laugh! Charlie Feetling can't do it, Mark Twain can't do it, even Bryan can't do it; so see if you can do it.

"No tickling will be permitted," Tod continued. "No bum jokes. No uncouth remarks. Remember, he's a gentleman. Your humor must be fresh and sparkling with metaphor, which you'll find in the dictionary. And, above all things, respect the professor's dignity. All right, friends, we present Professor G. Tracy Younger for your approval and attention!"

Tod jumped off the platform and stood by my side to watch the professor get away with his act. As for me, I shivered so that my teeth rattled like a flivver going over the Catskill Mountains. I wondered whether my two-hundred-dollars' worth of money was going to win, lose, or draw. Of course, two hundred ain't nothing to a showman, you understand. It's merely all of the dough that he has in or out of the world, and he wouldst like to note whither the same goeth.

Well, sir—or ma'am—the first yap-bean who tried to spear the prize was a bird who owned a goatee and a suit that would have made a hit during the times of Robert E. Lee. He first switched his tobacco into high gear, then wiggled his goatee for attention.

"Mister," he opened, "I guess I'll take a chanct. I kin win that there money with no trouble at all."

"Pray, go on, sir," moaned the professor, sober as the eighteenth amendment.

"I gotta joke that will make you laugh," went on Mr. Goatee. "Listen. Once upon a time they was a farmer hereabouts who had his chickens stole prompt regular while he slept. Y'see? So he set a trap for the culprit. He put a big rock over the doorway with a string on't.

"Idea was," the beezark went on, "that the culprit would step on the door sill and get hurted. Y'see? Wal, one night six weeks later, he heard a noise out near the coop and went to see with his gun. He sneaked up slowlike and forgot about the trap. He steps on that there combination hisself and the rock come down—kerplunk, right on his head! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Was the gentleman hurt much?" asked the professor, winning the steam-heated ice box for coolness.

After which, the little bird eased out and home to mother and the pancakes.

Well, during the next fifteen minutes, the crowd sprang every new joke on the professor that Caesar and Alexander used to roar at. The professor won three ways, and I was convinced that I had no doubt hooked a star attraction via luck.

### CHAPTER III.

#### FOR THE LOVE OF LULU.

THE next townlet on our circuit was Fedora, which same was in the State of Minnesota and collapse. Population had popped to about three thousand, then stopped popping.

Before we had shot the canvas skyward, the professor ambled up to Tod and me with a new and corking proposition.

"Are you in a mental position to entertain an idea that will increase the attendance and create

interest?"

"Any time!" said Tod and me at once.

"Well, gentlemen," went on the professor, "I have observed that this town is somewhat more up-to-date than our previous stand. I have observed, also, that Main Street has a number of bright-looking shops. And it seems to me, and I trust that you'll take kindly to the observation, that my exhibition could add interest to at least three of these stores. For example, gentlemen, suppose we were to call upon the shopkeepers and get them to offer added prizes—from their own stock—to any one who is able to make me smile?"

"Go on!" said Tod and me.

"For instance," cooed the professor, "the jeweler would offer a diamond to any man or woman who caused me to lose my austere equilibrium. The clothier would present a good suit to either sex who won the prize. The leather-goods merchant is to give, let us say, a steamer trunk or a bag of excellent material."

"Sounds good," I admitted; "but what, may I ask, do they get out of it, hey?"

"Ah, that's the point, my dear Mr. Barnumbey. The benefit to them may be summed up in one word; a word that all energetic business men know to be the most enterprising and virile word in the dictionary; a word that enlivens sales; a word—"

"For the love of Lulu, spring it!" Tod cried.

"Advertising!" vociferated the professor with much enthusiasm.

"Fine!" I agreed. "But how?"

"Quite simple," assured the professor. "For example, each shopkeeper who subscribes to our idea will have his name painted on a sign, announcing that he will present a valuable prize. This will add interest to the store. The prize, incidentally, will be displayed in his window, with a like sign. Do I make things clear, gentlemen?"

"You sure do!" said Tod. "How about it, Doc?"

"Let's go," I says; "let's go!"

Within the next ten minutes the three of us had hit the main stem, or street, and bounced into the town jeweler's. When we entered he was busy taking the last three-quarters of his afternoon siesta. A rusty safe nestled against the left wall and looked as if nothing but a bird with a half-

ounce tack hammer could crack it. The two show cases enveloped beads, wrist watches, wedding rings, diamond rings, et cetera, et cetera, and dust.

When the professor sprang the big idea, the boss couldn't see it with a flash light. He said "No" exactly four hundred and thirteen times. But the professor was one of that kind of beezarks that could sell hair tonic to a billiard ball. He fired ideas and pep at the proprietor so fast that the prop threw up both hands and agreed to give his half-carat diamond as the prize. Which settled that.

We next tried the town clothier. The joint was entitled "Pennypackers Pavilion For All." It was a sort of co-ed proposition. Suits for both the fighting and the fitting sexes.

The boss proved to be as up-to-date as the Battle of Blenheim. Refused to listen to the professor for more than a minute. Claimed that the last show that played Fedora was managed by Jesse James and Cole Younger. So the professor had to shoot twenty minutes' worth of conversation into both ears of that bird. In the end, the boss was tickled pretty to put up as a prize the best suit in the house—male or female. Which settled that.

The last and third flipper to abdicate to the big idea was no other than the chief leather-goods merchant of the town. He must have sold more of the stuff than any one else, seeing that he was all alone.

The proprietor was a nice old fellow. Professor talked into both ears for ten minutes before the boss yanked out his ear trumpet. Spiel was repeated then and was sold to the last adjective. Boss promised to put up his best steamer trunk as a prize. So now everything's all set for the last act.

## CHAPTER IV.

### AN ASTOUNDING EFFORT.

WE opened that afternoon to a large and indistinguished audience of Fedoraites. The first ballyhoo brought in everybody but the dandelions and crickets. The home-spun folks assaulted the box offices with dimes that hadn't had any exercise for years. I had increased my prize to five hundred dollars, figuring that I had less chance of losing than a bird who sells the

movie rights to the Indian Ocean.

The professor sat on the platform in full regalia, with white tuxedo, whiskers, monocle, and nerve. A great little sign had been painted extra specially for the added prizes with the names of the shopkeepers in black type.

Tod ascended the platform and, seeing that the push was overanxious; to cop the assorted allurements, deliberately posed for effect and the ladies. After feeling assured that all the seeker sex had put him down as the true successor to the late Apollo Belvedere, Tod twisted his neck, hemmed, hawed, coughed, and then tossed 'em the old spiel.

"And now, kind friends of the beautiful town of Fedora," concluded Tod, "you have the opportunity of a lifetime to earn, or win, the greatest collection of prizes ever offered by the enterprising merchants of this ideal town, along with the five hundred dollars put up by this management. No profanity will be allowed, gents—remembah! No tickling will be tolerated, ladies—remembah! Just say something funny, that's all—just say something comical. All—ready, ladees and gentlemun. I submit Professor G. Tracy Younger for your efforts."

Tod bowed almost like a gentleman and then bounced off the platform. As for me, I began to shiver so that I thought we was playing Greenland or the North Pole. Not that I cared anything for the five hundred smackerinos, understand. But if that learned fathead smiled—well, let's switch the subject.

The first native to try his wit at grabbing off the loot was a corker, if judged by his appearance from the outskirts. He nestled in the third row of the audience, stood at least three heads above the tallest competitor, and weighed about ninety pounds perpendicularly.

His face was the headquarters for a complete set of whiskers that would have made no less than nine Civil War generals look fresh from a barber's. He had an eye like a whole family of eagles and a nose that would have made a yard rule look like a match. He was incased in a brand-new 1899 tweed suit that hung upon him like father's overalls on the line. He no more than opened his froglike mouth than I felt positive that the prizes was his.

"Professor," opened up this baby, "I'm

gonna, now, make you laugh. Y'see?"

"That, sir, is your privilege," tossed back the professor, serious as a returned check.

"I want you, now, to look me plumb in the face," went on the wizard of looks.

Good night, and the so forth! I felt sure that the swag was lost. A marble-faced bird would have cracked at a single glance.

"Delighted to do so," obliged friend professor. "Is my gaze straight enough to suit?"

"Yeah," agreed Mr. Whiskers. "Now, listen. I'm gonna tell you a joke that I heard President Grant once tell Napoleon while they was sailing around on Noah's Ark. I wasn't, now, there, but I hearded just the same. Y'see?"

"Did I understand you to say that you heard without hearing?" asked the professor.

"Yeah—ha, ha!" laughed the stone-head. "That's purty funny, ain't it? But that ain't the joke—yet. Listen, now. While Grant was telling the joke to Napoleon, George Washington come in and sat down. I saw Washington come in but I wasn't there. Y'see?"

Well, I saw at once and promptly that we had in our midst a blue-ribbon boob that was liable to do considerable damage to a certain number of prizes. The audience began to titter like a Swedish cook with a cop in the kitchen, and I felt sure that the old professor was due for slaughter.

"Now listen!" went on the almanac comedian. "Jes' when Washington come in, the other door opened suddentlike and who should enter but Mr. Shakesbeer. I saw him with my own eyes—but I weren't there. Y'see?"

"Remarkable!" ejaculated the professor. "So you observed something that you didn't observe. Is that it?"

"Hey, listen, Doc," whispered Tod, "you better grab a stake and bounce that bird for a row of center poles before he busts up the show! He's as dangerous as a fire eater with celluloid teeth. Let's toss 'im out before it's too late!"

"Don't worry, Tod," I said; "I think that the professor can stand more'n a million dollars' worth of that kind of infant comedy. Let the boob rave on."

"Are yer listening?" howled the complete comic section.

"Certainly; please continue," replied the professor.

"Now, jes' as soon as Mr. Shakesbeer comes in through the basement window, I wrote home and told the missus—that's the wife, see?—and she sent me back a tellygram saying as how our pet calf just gave birth to cow triplets. Y'understand, now, I didn't see the tellygram, but that was what I read anyway. Y'see?"

"I understand perfectly," said the professor. "You say that you read a telegram from your wife without seeing it. Very well—please go on."

By this time the entire assortment of customers were roaring like a hooched hyena. In fact, I'm obliged to let go a grin myself, not from what the boob says, but from the face on him when he says it. As he glooped his little piece, he wiggled his ears, shimmied his whiskers, and opened his mouth like a bullhead out of water for a week.

"Now listen, professor," goes on the comic section, "I'm, now, gointa make you laugh! As I already says, I saw General Shakesbeer coming through the window and the door. Yeah—right through the door he come through the window. Y'see?"

At that I thought the professor would abdicate and toss in the sponge. But the professor was still sober. He merely raised his eyebrows a few inches, scratched his bean, and then whistled softly.

"My dear sir," he said to the rube comedian, "I think that your brain would make an excellent study for pathological students. Why not aid science?"

"And now listen," went on the pest, "just as soon as Mr. Shakesbeer got into the house he, now, he stumbled plumb over Alexander the Great. Yeah—ha, ha! But that ain't the joke—yet."

"Shut up, you old fool!" solo'd a peeved lady in the rear. "Give women folks a chance to win the prizes, can't you? I declare to goodness, I ain't never heard no man talk so much before. Give me a chance, and shut up!"

"Aw, go ahead!" snorted the waterlogged humorist. "But you ain't got no show, you ain't. Because if I can't make 'im smile, then nobody kin!"

"Well, I can try; so there!" snapped back Little Red Riding Hood. All of which settled the would-be prize grabber. He folded up his goatee

and silently stole away.

## CHAPTER V.

### FAREWELL AND AU REVOIR.

**W**ILL you give me a chance, professor, dear?" began the new-edition, female-bound, prize seeker as soon as the ginkerino who had told of Shakesbeer, Napoleon, Grant, and so forth and so on, was out of sight.

"Why, delighted!" answered the professor. "I'd be charmed to listen to any amusing thing you would care to say."

"Thanks, dear professor," said the lady. "First, I do so want to say that I think you are the handsomest he-man I've ever seen!"

Boy, bring the lady the gold-plated lead pipe for female diplomacy! I saw at once that this gem of beauty was no stranger to the ungente art of man taming.

"Do you know, professor, dearest, that I think you have the most lovingest and bestest and neatest whiskers of all the nice-looking men folks in the wide, wide world?"

At that the professor began to squirm and appear uneasy. Me, too.

"Your deep blue eyes remind me so much of my own dear husband," went on the man mauler. "And your nose is really wonderful! Really, I could love a man like you to death!"

"Hey, Mrs. Lady," shouted Tod, "are you trying to win a husband or a prize—which?"

"And, oh, yes, professor," cooed the successor to Cleopatra, "I was reading a novel last night named 'Bessie's Beau Brummel; or, Love Will Blind the Way,' and the hero was just like you!"

The professor blushed and looked nervous. Me, too.

"You should read that novel, professor," went on the vampological female. "In the second chapter, Rosabelle takes her lover in her arms and asks him to marry her. Wasn't that just lovely? I read it over ten times. And, do you know, professor, I feel as if I could love you just like that? What is more, I already feel that I have known you for years and years and—"

Bam! The professor's face turned red, white, and purple. He opened his jaws, closed 'em,

opened ‘em, closed ‘em, and then—good-by prizes, farewell five-hundred smackers, au revoir everything! The big fathead didn’t laugh—he roared. Roared at absolutely nothing that any sane man would even grin about!

“Oh, glory be—glory be!” sang the lady, jumping up and down like stock quotations on flivver springs. “I won the prizes—I won the prizes—I won—”

The customers were overjoyed, underjoyed, and betweenjoyed. A little flipper collapsed at my feet and moaned. I looked down and discovered that he was the jeweler, the bird who lost nothing less than a half-carat diamond on the deal. I peeked around in a daze and noted Tod holding up another birdie by the collar. He was the clothier, and the baby who was due to lose a suit. As to the leather-goods fella, I guess he ducked outside to collapse where there was more room.

Well, owing to the paper and space shortage, I’ll say that the victorious female collected my five hundred, the half-carat diamond, a suit of clothes, and a steamer trunk within less than an hour. As to Professor G. Tracy Younger, I can assure the audience that the same was chased off the lot with the aid of a stake and ten razorbacks.

## CHAPTER VI.

HA, HA!

**J**UST a moment! I didn’t get the end of that story until two years after—but you won’t have to wait that long.

I had finished the season with the Jones-McCauley Biggest and Best, et cetera, et cetera, and was riding home on the Santa Fe with a bird named Joe Malone. Joe had managed the side

show that season with no less than the Mifflin-Macklin Carnival. We began to swap tales, cigars, and the like.

“Y’ know, Doc,” said Joe as the train jumbled along, “the showman who thinks he’s a wise bird often wakes up and figures the net loss.”

“Well?” I demanded.

“For instance, I got trimmed like a fringe at the very start of the season, and by a fella I thought was a genuine grade-A boob-bean. Called himself a college bird. Says he wanted to write a book, and wanted to act as Smileless Man to get some dope on it. Got me to put up five hundred bones as prize for any yamneck that could make ‘im smile. See? Then the sucker got six of the shopkeepers of Kneecap Center to offer a prize each, and then—”

“Ha, ha,” I exploded, “I bet I know the rest of the story! The same thing happened to Mike Fargo with the Kole-Kinker Circus last year. Listen! Didn’t some little lady win the prizes, hey?”

“Yeah,” said Joe, “she sure did! And with the greatest line of hokum in the world. Said she’d like to marry ‘im, love ‘im and—”

“And didn’t she say that the professor reminded her of her dear husband?” I asked—not that I was interested!

“Yeah—how do you know that?”

“Same thing happened to Mike Fargo,” I said. “How do you figure it out, hey?”

“Now I got it!” snapped Joe, banging me on the knee with his rough mitt. “The lady was that beezark’s husband!”

“Sure thing,” I said. “But how any old showman could fall for a stunt like that is a mystery to me!”

And it is.