



The best American Humorous Short Stories: Produced by Keith M. Eckrich

George Pope Morris

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THE BEST AMERICAN HUMOROUS SHORT STORIES (19th & 20th century) This volume does not aim to contain all "the best American humorous short stories"; there are many other stories equally as good, I suppose, in much the same vein, scattered through the range of American literature. I have tried to keep a certain unity of aim and impression in selecting these stories. In the first place I determined that the pieces of brief fiction which I included must first of all be not merely good stories, but good short stories. I put myself in the position of one who was about to select the best short stories in the whole range of American literature, but who, just before he started to do this, was notified that he must refrain from selecting any of the best American short stories that did not contain the element of humor to a marked degree. But I have kept in mind the wide boundaries of the term humor, and also the fact that the humorous standard should be kept second—although a close second—to the short story standard. In view of the necessary limitations as to the volume's size, I could not hope to represent all periods of American literature adequately, nor was this necessary in order to give examples of the best that has been done in the short story in a humorous vein in American literature. Probably all types of the short story of humor are included here, at any rate. Not only copyright restrictions but in a measure my own opinion have combined to exclude anything by Joel Chandler Harris—Uncle Remus—from the collection. Harris is primarily—in his best work—a humorist, and only secondarily a short story writer. As a humorist he is of the first rank; as a writer of short stories his place is hardly so high. His humor is not mere funniness and diversion; he is a humorist in the fundamental and large sense, as are Cervantes, Rabelais, and Mark Twain.

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