

Honest Abe's Poetic Career

The United States Mail Carrier Can Stop It, So It Seems.

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WHEN I got along to Uncle Billy Drew's farmhouse the other day he bailed me from the orchard, and when he had come slowly out to the road he began:

"Look-a-here, Abe, I thought you was my friend."

"And so I am, Uncle Billy."

"But it don't look much like it."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, you've been writin' poetry for almost everybody for ten miles up and down this road, but haven't offered to write a durned line for us. I hain't said anything about it before, but I'll own up that my feelin's have been hurt."

"But you know I'd have written you a thousand poems if I'd known you



"ARE IT IS THE SWEETEST THING EVER WRITTEN."

wanted anything of that sort. Most that I have written is obituary poetry, and as you have not lost wife or children of course you have wanted nothing of the kind."

"If you'd asked me about it," he continued rather sulkily, "I could have told you that I lost an uncle about twenty years ago. It may be purty late in the day, but if all the folks along here are goun' in for obituary poetry why shouldn't we? That's what the old woman and the boys say, and that's what I say. However, as you are so dreadful busy with all the others—"

"You shall have your poetry in ten minutes," I interrupted, and I got down from my cart and went to the house with him.

It was my first poem for two days, and I had to kick myself three or four times to get my muse on the move, but when I struck my gait I rattled off the following like a barrel bumping down hill:

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To New Orleans poor Joe was bound To see the Crescent City, But if at Cairo he'd have stopped I never had penned this ditty.

He walked aboard the Nancy Jane, And in his luck he trusted, But twenty miles below Cat point The steamer up and busted.

Her boiler it was shattered, and Her hull it was demolished, And Uncle Joe was one of those Whose future was abolished.

He sleeps beneath Ohio's wave, The trumpet call awaiting, And that he is a busted man Admits of no debating.

"There you are, Uncle Billy," I said, as I finished reading the poem to him, "and what do you think of it?"

He took the paper with tender fingers and gazed at it until his tears blinded him. It was a long two minutes before he could control his voice to say:

"Abe, if I'd lost two hoags by the cholera it wouldn't have tched my feelin's as this thing has done. All I can say to you now is that I'm ten million times obleeged, but next time you come along I shall hope to prove my gratitude."

At the blacksmith shop, two miles below, I had to stop to get a loose shoe fastened, and I was sorting over my letters when I looked up and saw that the smith had tears in his eyes. I asked him if he was in pain, and told him that I always carried a bottle of relief, but he made no answer until he had fixed the shoe. Then he sat down beside me and said:

"Abe, that letter you hanied my wife the other day was from her mother in Illinois and it contained bad news."

"Nobody dead, I hope."

"Yes—her sister Sally. She died of the kick of a cow. There isn't a human bein' in the state of Illinois who can write poetry, and Martha asked me if I wouldn't ask you to get off something. We'll send a copy out west, and it will cheer us all amazingly."

"Will it do next time I come along?"

"I'm afraid not, Abe. Martha does nothing but walk around and weep, and if you put it off another day she may drown herself in the cistern. You write me something, and I'll look over the other shoes and see that they are all right."

I had to use a piece of paper flour sack and the stub of a pencil, but my muse frolicked around and enabled me to invent the following:

In a certain western state, where the beef trust makes the rate, There did dwell a maiden aged twenty years.

Her name was Sally Tripper, and to milk she was a ripper, And it's on account of that we're shedding tears.

When the sun it was a-sinking, and the chickens were a-blinking, And the whippoorwill was raising of a row,

The Sally of the dairy, with a smile just like a fairy, Would go out to do the milking of the cow.

Upon this one occasion, and without the least persuasion, And while upon a stool the girl reclined—

Yea while her tender fingers yet upon the udder lingered, That devil of a cow kicked out behind.

Poor Sally went a-sprawling and for her sister calling, And shortly she was carried off to bed, But the doctors soon announced in tones the most pronounced—

That ere the sun had risen she'd be dead.

O maiden young and fair, with a life so free from care, Be careful when a-milking you do go! Keep it ever on your mind that the cow may kick behind

When the golden sun is sinking in his glow.

The blacksmith is a strong, rugged fellow, and I did not look for sentiment in his composition. Great was my surprise, therefore, to see him burst into tears after reading the poem over to himself and to have him take me by the hand and exclaim in a broken voice:

"Abe, it is the sweetest thing ever written in all this world. It will make my wife faint away when she reads it, but as soon as she comes to she will begin to feel better and soon shake off her sadness. By thunder, but I'd give a million dollars if I had it if I could touch the human heart like you can. Your horse can cast every shoe and your cart break down every other day, but all repairs will be made at this shop free gratis."

A day or two later I learned that his wife did faint away upon reading the poem and remained in a swoon for eighteen hours, but came out of it at last to ask for fried pork and potatoes boiled with their jackets on, and after a hearty meal began to live again.

There was only one more call on my muse that day. The Widow Spicer, whose husband died nine years ago, suddenly remembered the fact as I stopped to hand out her mail, and to comfort and console her I invented the following:

Nine years ago the clammy hand Reached out and seized my Harry, And hauled him up to dwell above, And left me free to marry.

But I am still a widow and Am for my loved one grieving, And that I'll never wed again I'll keep on still believing.

Sleep, Harry; sleep and worry not, Your Martha can't forget you, And, should she change her mind and wed, She'll cease not to regret you.

The widow was comforted, the poetry worth preserving to posterity was added to, and I drove on, feeling that my day had not been lived in vain.

M. QUAD.

Not Necessarily.

"Are there really amazons in Africa?"

"I suppose so."

"When an amazon files to arms it does not necessarily mean that she is going to war, does it?"—Houston Post.

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