

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:

We mourn for him, poor Uncle Joe,
Whose fate was full of sadness,
Who took a Pittsburg steamer and
Bailed down the stream in gladness.

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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
obliged, 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 some-
thing. 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 shed-
ding tears.

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

Then 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 re-
clined—

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 senti-
ment 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 ad-
ded to, and I drove on, feeling that my
day had not been lived in vain.

M. QUAD.

Not Necessarily.

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rica?"

"I suppose so."

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