

A BAD SYSTEM

By W. H. Bramel.

In Nevada, in those days, men were busy. Ceremonies were short. All was haste and hurry. There was little circumlocution. Even the English language, being too cumbersome for everyday use, was compressed into a system of picturesque metaphors. Men had names, of course; but aside from a few prefixes, such as "Three-fingered," "One-eyed" and "Bench-legged," hyphenated appellations were rare. There were one or two generals, a few colonels and several captains. All the rest of us were plain Jims, Jacks, Petes and Bills.

Lincoln County had just been organized. Under the laws of Nevada, the three thousand or more recently arrived inhabitants of that county, all of whom lived at or near Pioche, were to choose a roster of county officers. The Citizens' party was born on Monday evening in Mike Doran's saloon. In twelve hours it had attained its maturity and was holding a convention. "Bud" Leeds was a candidate for the office of sheriff. Bud had been in the county only three days, but he had arrived with at least a dozen notches in the handle of his six-shooter, or in the handles of his six-shooters, to be accurate, for he was a "two-gun man," and this was his certificate of fitness for the office.

The proceedings of the convention moved in a perfunctory manner until nominations for sheriff were in order. The sheriff was the all-important officer. Auditors, recorders, tax collectors and other functionaries were looked upon as mere clerks; their offices were nothing but soft jobs. But the sheriff was to be the arm of the law—almost the law itself. In many cases he alone was to be the judge, jury and chief executioner.

A hush fell upon the convention when "Daniel Webster" mounted the dry goods box and cleared his throat. His real name was Edward Broomfield, as we afterwards learned, but we called him Daniel Webster because of his oratorical propensities. Daniel prided himself upon his oratory. Whether it was the opening of a saloon or the funeral of a man caught with marked cards, or the arrival of a mule team loaded with machinery for the mines, Daniel was master of ceremonies and at the front with a speech, which, making due allowance for drawbacks, was generally a good one.

Daniel took a drink of water, brushed back his long hair, thrust his hand into the bosom of his coat and began his oration. In a fervid manner he briefly exploited the greatness of the United States. Then, amid bolsterous cheers, the glorious achievements of Nevada were mentioned. This brought the speaker into the vicinity of Lincoln County and the "man who" section of the address began. As the speaker described the man of perfect attributes, whom he was to nominate, the men in the audience looked at the orator and glanced at each other as if they knew and were proud of the eminent citizen who was to be the candidate.

"And I tell you," the speaker continued, "the man whom I shall nominate is a white man from hat to heels. He has a happy how-dye-do for the lowest greaser in the great state of Nevada, if that greaser is square, and he has nothing but contempt for the biggest nabob in the world if that man is not square. He plays a fair game in every deal and he is afraid of no man that walks the earth. He can fight with fist or knife or gun, as a member of late lamented thugs and bullies would testify if present. He takes no man's lip and gives no man any of his. If this man is nominated his election is sure, and then every thug and bully in this county is billed for a long walk or a long sleep. With this man for our sheriff the streets of Pioche will be safe by night as well

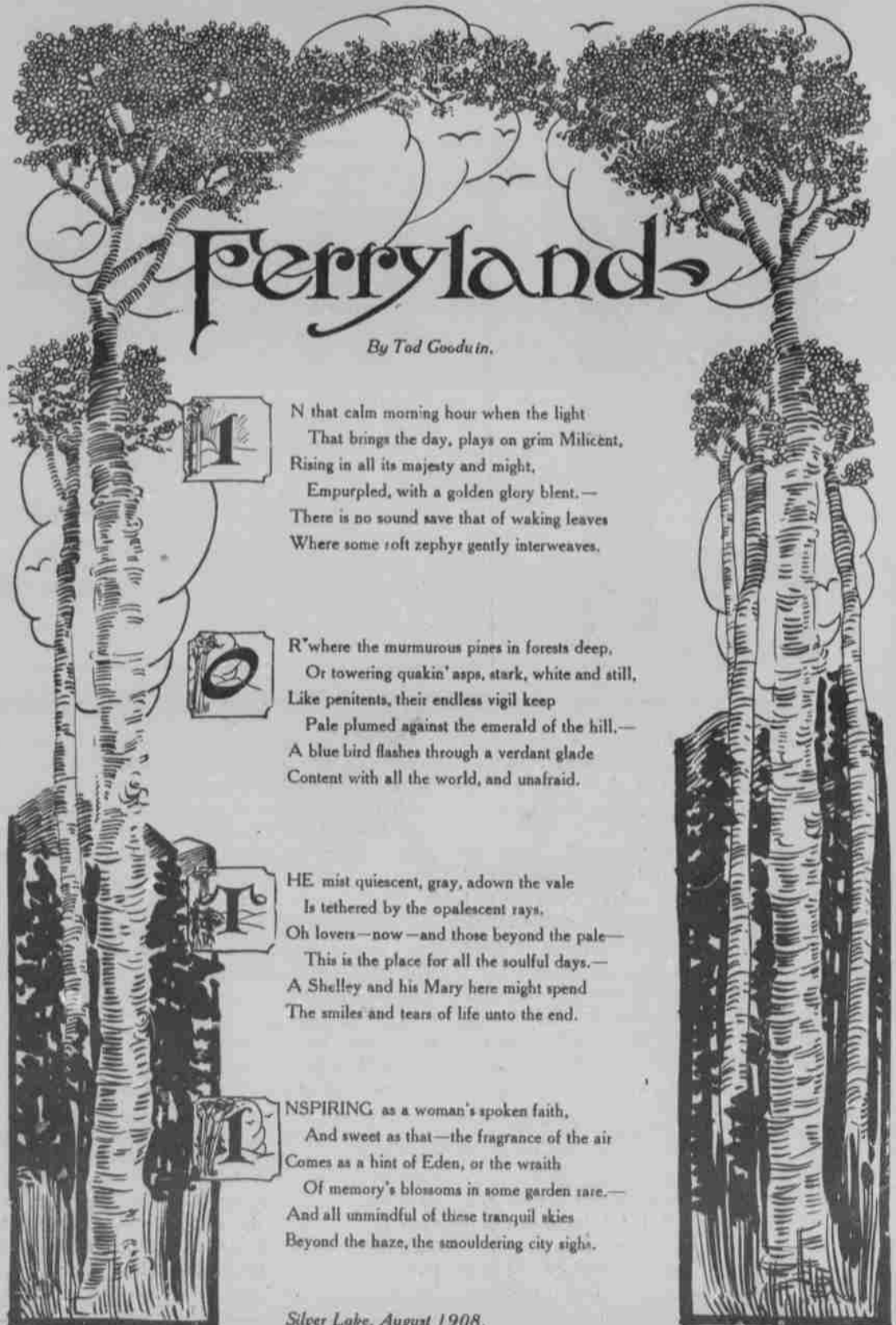
as by day and as safe for the tenderfoot, with capital to invest, as for the old timer and the town will progress to the glorious destiny that God intended. Gentlemen, I nominate Dud Manchester of Pioche and move the convention that his nomination be made unanimous." Daniel had described the kind of man the office required and amid riotous applause the motion was carried.

Daniel, elated with the success of his oratory, stepped outside the hall to get a breath of fresh air and to receive the congratulations of his friends. Bud Leeds broke through the circle of men standing there and attempted to shoot Daniel. Fortunately Bud's aim was shattered by the interference of bystanders and Daniel escaped unharmed. Bud was secured and Daniel was placed upon a fast horse and started for Austin.

Bud explained his conduct by showing that Daniel had promised to nominate him for sheriff, and, without any explanation, had wilfully broken this promise and had nominated another man. This was a sufficient excuse. Bud was released. To show that he was no craven, Bud devoted his time, enthusiasm and money to the success of Dud

Manchester. But, strange to relate, Dud seemed to take no personal interest in his campaign. Only four days intervened between the day he was nominated and the election day. The boys thought it strange that Dud was not in evidence, but as his opponent was a man clouded with the disgrace of having "crawled the floor" in a dispute over a shady gambling transaction in Virginia City, Dud's popularity grew nevertheless.

One rumor had it that Dud was sick at a ranch north of Pioche. Another rumor was that he was on his way home from Salt Lake. Bud Leeds gave it out that Dud had gone to Austin to bring his family to Pioche to live. Some of the boys confessed that they could not exactly place Dud and asked various questions about his personal appearance. To such queries various answers were given. Some of those who claimed to be intimate friends of Dud said that he was a tall, bony man with a Roman nose. Others asserted that he was a short, jolly, good natured fellow. As to his character, the universal testimony was that he was the man for the office and that a certain undesirable element would leave



I

N that calm morning hour when the light
That brings the day, plays on grim Milicent,
Rising in all its majesty and might,
Empurpled, with a golden glory blent.—
There is no sound save that of waking leaves
Where some soft zephyr gently interweaves.

O

R'where the murmurous pines in forests deep,
Or towering quakin' asp, stark, white and still,
Like penitents, their endless vigil keep
Pale plumed against the emerald of the hill.—
A blue bird flashes through a verdant glade
Content with all the world, and unafraid.

T

H E mist quiescent, gray, adown the vale
Is tethered by the opalescent rays,
Oh lovers—now—and those beyond the pale—
This is the place for all the soulful days.—
A Shelley and his Mary here might spend
The smiles and tears of life unto the end.

T

NSPIRING as a woman's spoken faith,
And sweet as that—the fragrance of the air
Comes as a hint of Eden, or the wraith
Of memory's blossoms in some garden rare.—
And all unmindful of these tranquil skies
Beyond the haze, the smouldering city sighs.

Silver Lake, August 1908.