

THE BRAKEMAN BOY.

A NOBLE AND ORIGINAL POET FINDS A NEW AND ELEVATING THEME.

Hail, Poet!

Do not mistake this apostrophe as intended for any of the staple brands of poets.

But very likely the printer will omit my carefully planted comma, and then you will begin to think my Hail Poet is one of the Beautiful Snow Poet's younger brothers.

Drive such a fatal presentiment away from you, even as you drive a big nail away from you when you are taking special pains to hammer it into a board.

The Poet whom I hail is, although a writer of original poetry, one who has set up in business in a new shop and is worthy of being given a fair trial before purchasing elsewhere.

Perchance he has in times gone by written obituary verses, and thus cast a gloom over a whole village newspaper office.

Mayhap his soul in earlier days went forth occasionally in ecstasy and foolscap paper on "childhood scenes," when it should have confined its attentions to the weird wood-pile and the pensive potato-patch.

Quite possibly he has already tried to improve on "When the spring-time comes, Gentle Annie!"

But I feel sure he has for some time back been sorry for it all and mighty glad he got off with his life and the nucleus of a fresh supply of reason.

That nucleus is going to be cultivated on experimental principles, and the first crop is a promising argury that my poet is going over a pretty big field.

His first job under the new management is entitled "The Railway Freight Brakeman."

I do not approve of the commonplace, un-rhythmical title, but yet I recognize the sterling honesty of the poet in his refusal to pander to vitiated sentimentality by omitting the word "freight," and so having readers jump at the conclusion that he was dealing with the baggage-smasher.

I give the first stanza with a thrill of pride, pathos and—and—almost any other word you can think of beginning with "p":—

Dust-grimmed features, weather-beaten,
Hands that show the scars of toil;
Do you envy him his station,
Patient tiller of the soil?

Har, there are some thousands of captious critics waiting for the appearance of our poet in book form, in order to fall upon him and beat him with staves—musically speaking.

I kindly anticipate these savage hordes by admitting that you can find a little fault with this production if you study it over carefully for days and dream on it. The word "grimmed," for instance, might look just as well not so much turned up—that is to say with not so much "M" about it. Of course you must attribute the reference to the brakeman's "station" as purely metaphorical, and having no connection with a "police station." "Tough job," or some other nicely rounded phrase, might have been substituted with propriety.

In the storm or in the sunshine
He must mount the speeding train,
Ride outside at post of duty,
Heedful not the drenching rain.

If my poet will assure me he does not carry a gun, except as a justifiable means of defence against Toronto policemen, I might quietly point out that he is a little wrong in facts in this stanza. Really, I have seen the train stop often and often for the brakeman at even way stations, so that he actually does not have to "mount the speeding train." But of course this may always have been when he and the conductor had been off together getting a drink. Again, a well-regulated freight brakeman knows enough to come out of the worse part of the rain to lead the conductor a

chew. His great difficulty, it seems to me, is not so much striking the caboose as bobbing under the bridges. I hope my poet will take this observation in a christian spirit, while I pursue the theme another step:—

Do not scorn to greet him kindly,
He will give you smile for smile,
Though he's nothing but a brakeman,
Do not deem him surely vile.

Now we reach the very ground-plan of this great structure of sentiment! Yes, "nothing but a brakeman." But, oh! How many of his innocent companions in youth have become bank presidents, or government detectives, or civil service hirelings? "Give him smile for smile," by all means—so long as the flask hangs out. And then your dog can ride free. Now, follow me over and I'll turn up this sod neatly:—

Speak to him in kindly language,
Though his clothes are coarse and plain;
In his fearless bosom beats the
Heart that feels both joy and pain.

Yes, and you had generally best speak to him in that way for other reasons—unless you know all the stations on the run. Brakemen are susceptible to kind treatment,—which they invariably receive at the hands of the Railway Company's officers. The word "course" conveys the idea of his speed through space—race-course speed, you see.

But at this stage of the trip I shall present you with the next stanza—no, on second thoughts I will not. I must draw the line here in justice to the Editor of the *Barrie Gazette*, for whose paper the Grand Ode was composed, and who is now anxiously waiting for purchasers of several thousand extra copies of that issue to make their appearance with angel smiles on their faces and subscription money in their hands.

WAYLAI D CORRESPONDENCE.

DEAR SIR JOHN,

Your favor of the 11th to hand. Many thanks for your valuable pointers. Some of them are, I admit, a little new to me, and if I were at all conscientious I might hesitate before attempting to carry my election by such means, but, as you remark, a conscientious man has no business in politics. That running in two constituencies is a great racket. My difficulty will be to find two constituencies; you must remember that I am running for President of the United States, not for Maine only, though the latter will doubtless be my mainstay, whether elected or not. True, as you suggest, I might try Mexico, Patagonia, Angora, or some other contiguous Republic. Well, I'll consult Bob about it.

Previous to receiving your letter I had not attached so much importance to the use of bank notes in an election, as I now think such a scheme demands. The fact of your having carried all your elections by this method is sufficient evidence that money is a powerful ally in an election campaign. I, too, think it would be a good idea to buy up a few State Legislatures, and when we get fairly organized I shall send for you to come over and engineer matters in that direction.

Yours prospectively,
J. G. BLAINE,
Pres. U.S.A.

DEAR HARDY,—Reached London three days ago. Miller arrived here last night. He sought an interview with me at once. He had the audacity to propose a compromise of this boundary question, and wanted me to assent to a very questionable agreement which he had drawn up. I told him I would take it into my most serious consideration, or words to that effect. Of course you know what that meant, as you have at least upon one occasion heard me make use of a similar expression. Case comes on next week. Ontario is sure to

win. McCarthy is awakening to a keen realization of his position. The spectacle of a representative of an Ontario county crossing the Atlantic to endeavor to argue away territory equal in extent and value to one half his Province, is as humiliating as it is unprecedented.

Tell Cartwright to get off that Independence horse until I get through here. A little policy, you know, is necessary sometimes.

Yours,
O. MOWAT.

DEAR LANSLOWNE,—I propose to accompany the Science Association to Canada in August. To protect me from the rigorosity of your climate, I have given instructions to have my wardrobe made up as follows: Ten sealskin overcoats, lined with impervious goose hide, and trimmed with double back-acting, self-feeding coal oil stoves; eight Persian lamb caps, with patent reversible, 18-inch boiler plate ear flaps, and extension peaks. The latter are constructed of the best Bessemer steel, and I think will be a good protection for the face in mild weather. On extreme days I shall be compelled to stay in my hotel.

My youngest son will accompany me. He is passionately fond of skating, and I am sure he will enjoy his visit to Canada in August, as he will have an opportunity of indulging in his favorite sport.

Will you kindly inform me if the costumes above described will be in any way adequate to preserve life in your climate.

Yours, etc.,
FITZNOODLE, B.A. A.S.

"What does 'Good Friday' mean?" asked one Halsted-street urchin of his companion. "You'd better go home and read your Robinson Crusoe," was the withering reply.—*Chicago Sun.*

The oldest spark arrester—the old man's boot.—*Scissors.* It never gives satisfaction.—*Electric Light.* No; but it always gives the young man an awful desire to go home.—*Warsaw Wasp.*



THE SMALLEST EDITOR ON EARTH
(Not in the Dime Pavilion.)