

In most of Don Marquis's japes, a still small voice speaks in the mirthquake:

If you try too hard to get a thing, you don't get it.

If you sweat and strain and worry the other ace will not come—the little ball will not settle upon the right number or the proper colour—the girl will marry the other man—the public will cry, Bedamned to him! he can't write anyhow!—the cosmos will refuse its revelations of divinity—the Welsh rabbit will be stringy—you will find there are not enough rhymes in the language to finish your baliade—the primrose by the river's brim will be only a hayfever carrier—and your fountain pen will dribble ink upon your best trousers.

But Don Marquis's mind has two yolks (to use one of his favourite denunciations). In addition to these comic or satiric shadows, the gnomon of his Sun Dial may be relied on every now and then to register a clear-cut notation of the national mind and heart. For instance this, just after the United States severed diplomatic relations with Germany:

This Beast we know, whom time brings to his last rebirth
Bull-thewed, iron-boned, cold-eyed and strong as Earth. . .
As Earth, who spawned and lessoned him,
Yielded her earthy secrets, gave him girth,
Armoured the skull and braced the heavy limb—
Who frowned above him, proud and grim,
While he sucked from her salty dugs the lore
Of fire and steel and stone and war:
She taught brute facts, brute might, but not the worth