

CASEY AT THE BAT.

BY PHINEAS THAYER.

IT looked extremely rocky for the Mudville nine that day;
 The score stood two to four, with but an inning left to play.
 So, when Cooney died at second, and Burrows did the same,
 A pallor wreathed the features of the patrons of the game.

A straggling few got up to go, leaving there the rest,
 With that hope which springs eternal within the human breast,
 For they thought: "If only Casey could get a whack at that,"
 They'd put up even money now, with Casey at the bat.

But Flynn preceded Casey, and likewise so did Blake,
 And the former was a puddin', and the latter was a fake,
 So on that stricken multitude a deathlike silence sat,
 For there seemed but little chance of Casey's getting to the bat.

But Flynn let drive a "single," to the wonderment of all,
 And the much-despised Blakey "tore the cover off the ball."
 And when the dust had lifted, and they saw what had occurred,
 There was Blakey safe at second, and Flynn a-huggin' third.

Then, from the gladdened multitude went up a joyous yell,
 It rumbled in the mountain-tops, it rattled in the dell;
 It struck upon the hillside and rebounded on the flat;
 For Casey, mighty Casey, was advancing to the bat.

There was ease in Casey's manner as he stepped into his place;
 There was pride in Casey's bearing, and a smile on Casey's face.
 And when, responding to the cheers, he lightly doffed his hat,
 No stranger in the crowd could doubt 'twas Casey at the bat.

Ten thousand eyes were on him as he rubbed his hands with dirt,
 Five thousand tongues applauded when he wiped them on his shirt;
 Then while the New York pitcher ground the ball into his hip,
 Defiance gleamed in Casey's eye, a sneer curled Casey's lip.

And now the leather-covered sphere came hurtling through the air,
 And Casey stood a-watching it in haughty grandeur there.
 Close by the sturdy batsman the ball unheeded sped—
 "That ain't my style," said Casey. "Strike one," the umpire said.

From the benches, black with people, there went up a muffled roar,
 Like the beating of storm waves on a stern and distant shore.
 "Kill him! Kill the umpire!" shouted some one on the stand.
 And it's likely they'd have killed him had not Casey raised a hand.

With a smile of Christian charity great Casey's visage shone;
 He stilled the rising tumult; he bade the game go on:
 He signaled to Sir Timothy, once more the spheroid flew;
 But Casey still ignored it, and the umpire said, "Strike two."

"Fraud!" cried the maddened thousands, and echo answered "Fraud!"
 But one scornful look from Casey and the audience was awed.
 They saw his face grow stern and cold, they saw his muscles strain,
 And they knew that Casey wouldn't let that ball go by again.

The sneer is gone from Casey's lip, his teeth are clenched in hate;
 He pounds with cruel violence his bat upon the plate.
 And now the pitcher holds the ball, and now he lets it go,
 And now the air is shattered by the force of Casey's blow.

Oh, somewhere in this favored land the sun is shining bright;
 The band is playing somewhere, and somewhere hearts are light.
 And somewhere men are laughing, and somewhere children shout:
 But there is no joy in Mudville—mighty Casey has struck out.