

FIELD EUGENE

HOOSIER

LYRICS

Eugene Field

Hoosier Lyrics

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Eugene Field

Hoosier Lyrics

INTRODUCTION

From whatever point of view the character of Eugene Field is seen, genius – rare and quaint presents itself in childlike simplicity. That he was a poet of keen perception, of rare discrimination, all will admit. He was a humorist as delicate and fanciful as Artemus Ward, Mark Twain, Bill Nye, James Whitcomb Riley, Opie Read, or Bret Harte in their happiest moods. Within him ran a poetic vein, capable of being worked in any direction, and from which he could, at will, extract that which his imagination saw and felt most. That he occasionally left the child-world, in which he longed to linger, to wander among the older children of men, where intuitively the hungry listener follows him into his Temple of Mirth, all should rejoice, for those who knew him not, can while away the moments imbibing the genius of his imagination in the poetry and prose here presented.

Though never possessing an intimate acquaintanceship with Field, owing largely to the disparity in our ages, still there existed a bond of friendliness that renders my good opinion of him in a measure trustworthy. Born in the same city, both students in the same college, engaged at various times in newspaper work both in St. Louis and Chicago, residents of the same ward, with many mutual friends, it is not surprising that I am able to say of him that "the world is better off that he lived, not in gold and silver or precious jewels, but in the bestowal of priceless truths, of which the possessor of this book becomes a benefactor of no mean share of his estate."

Every lover of Field, whether of the songs of childhood or the poems that lend mirth to the out-pouring of his poetic nature, will welcome this unique collection of his choicest wit and humor.

Charles Walter Brown.

Chicago, January, 1905.

HOOSIER LYRICS PARAPHRASED

We've come from Indiany, five hundred miles or more,
Supposin' we wuz goin' to get the nominashin, shore;
For Col. New assured us (in that noospaper o' his)
That we cud hev the airth, if we'd only tend to biz.
But here we've been a-slavin' more like bosses than like men
To diskiver that the people do not hanker arter Ben;
It *is* fur Jeems G. Blaine an' *not* for Harrison they shout —
And the gobble-uns 'el git us
Ef we
Don't
Watch
Out!

When I think of the fate that is waiting for Ben,
I pine for the peace of my childhood again;
I wish in my sorrow I could strip to the soul
And hop off once more in the old swimmin' hole!

The world is full of roses, and the roses full of dew
(Which is another word for soup) that drips for me and you.

"Little Benjy! Little Benjy!" chirps the robin in the tree;
"Little Benjy!" sighs the clover, "Little Benjy!" moans the bee;
"Little Benjy! Little Benjy!" murmurs John C. New,
A-stroking down the whiskers which the winds have whistled through.

Looks jest like his grampa, who's dead these many years —
He wears the hat his grampa wore, pulled down below his ears;
We'd like to have him four years more, but if he cannot stay —
Nothin' to say, good people; nothin' at all to say!

There, little Ben, don't cry!
They have busted your boom, I know;
And the second term
For which you squirm
Has gone where good niggers go!
But Blaine is safe, and the goose hangs high —
There, little Ben, don't cry!

Mabbe we'll git even for this unexpected shock,
When the frost is on the pumpkin and the fodder's in the shock!

Oh, the newspaper man! He works for paw;
He's the liveliest critter 'at ever you saw;
With whiskers 'at reach f'om his eyes to his throat.

He knows how to wheedle and rivet a vote;
He wunst wuz a consul 'way over the sea —
But never again a consul he'll be!
He come back f'om Lon'on one mornin' in May —
He come back for bizness, an' here he will stay —
Ain't he a awful slick newspaper man?
A newspaper, newspaper, newspaper man!

You kin talk about yer cities where the politicians meet —
You kin talk about yer cities where a decent man gits beat;
With the general run o' human kind I beg to disagree —
The little town of Tailholt is good enough f'r me!

Chicago was a pleasant town in eighteen-eighty-eight,
And I have lived in Washington long time in splendid state;
But all the present prospects are that after ninety-three
The little town o' Tailholt 'll be good enough f'r me!
"I wunst lived in Indiany," said a consul, gaunt and grim,
As most of us Blaine delegates wuz kind o' guyin' him;

"I wunst lived in Indiany, and my views wuz widely read,
Fur I run a daily paper w'ich 'Lije Halford edited;
But since I've been away f'm home, my paper (seems to me)
Ain't nearly such a inflooeence ez wot it used to be;
So, havin' done with consulin', I'm goin' to make a break
Towards making of a paper like the one I used to make."

Think, if you kin, of his term mos' through,
An' that ol' man wantin' a secon' term, too;
Picture him bendin' over the form
Of his consul-gineril, stanch an' grim,
Who has stood the brunt of that jimblain storm —
An' that ol' man jest wrapt up in him!
An' the consul-gineril, with eyes all bleared
An' a haunted look in his ashen beard,
Kind o' gaspin' a feeble way —
But soothed to hear the ol' man say
In a meaning tone (as one well may
When words are handy and – 's to pay):
"Good-by, John; take care of yo'*self*!"

GETTIN' ON

When I wuz somewhat younger,
I wuz reckoned purty gay —
I had my fling at everything
In a rollickin', coltish way,
But times have strangely altered
Since sixty years ago —
This age of steam an' things don't seem
Like the age I used to know,
Your modern innovations
Don't suit me, I confess,
As did the ways of the good ol' days —
But I'm gettin' on, I guess.

I set on the piazza
An' hitch around with the sun —
Sometimes, mayhap, I take a nap,
Waitin' till school is done,
An' then I tell the children
The things I done in youth,
An' near as I can (as a venerable man)
I stick to the honest truth!
But the looks of them 'at listen
Seems sometimes to express
The remote idee that I'm gone – you see!
An' I am gettin' on, I guess.

I get up in the mornin',
An' nothin' else to do,
Before the rest are up and dressed
I read the papers through;
I hang 'round with the women
All day an' hear 'em talk,
An' while they sew or knit I show
The baby how to walk;
An' somehow, I feel sorry
When they put away his dress
An' cut his curls ('cause they're like a girl's) —
I'm gettin' on, I guess!

Sometimes, with twilight round me,
I see (or seem to see)
A distant shore where friends of yore
Linger and watch for me;
Sometimes I've heered 'em callin'
So tenderlike 'nd low

That it almost seemed like a dream I dreamed,
Or an echo of long ago;
An' sometimes on my forehead
There falls a soft caress,
Or the touch of a hand – you understand —
I'm gettin' on, I guess.

MINNIE LEE

Writing from an Indiana town a young woman asks: "Is the enclosed poem worth anything?"
We find that the poem is as follows:

She has left us, our own darling —
And we never more shall see
Here on earth our dearly loved one —
God has taken Minnie Lee.

Her heart was full of goodness
And her face was fair to see
And her life was full of beauty —
How we miss our Minnie Lee!

But her work on earth is over
And her spirit now is free
She has gone to live in heaven —
Shall we weep for Minnie Lee?

Would we call our angel darling
Back again across the sea?
No! but sometime up in heaven
We will meet loved Minnie Lee.

To the question as to whether this poem is worth anything we chose to answer in verse as follows:

Sweet poetess, your poetry
Is bad as bad can be,
And yet we heartily deplore
The death of Minnie Lee.

It would have pleased us better
If, in His wisdom, He
Had taken you, sweet poetess,
Instead of Minnie Lee.

Your turn will come, however,
And swift and sure 'twill be
If you continue sending
Your rhymes on Minnie Lee.

From this we hope you will gather
A dim surmise that we
Don't take much stock in poems
Concerning Minnie Lee.

LIZZIE

I wonder ef all wimmin air
Like Lizzie is when we go out
To theaters an' concerts where
Is things the papers talk about.
Do other wimmin fret and stew
Like they wuz bein' crucified —
Frettin' a show or a concert through,
With wonderin' ef the baby cried?

Now Lizzie knows that gran'ma's there
To see that everything is right,
Yet Lizzie thinks that gran'ma's care
Ain't good enuf f'r baby, quite;
Yet what am I to answer when
She kind uv fidgets at my side,
An' every now and then;
"I wonder ef the baby cried?"

Seems like she seen two little eyes
A-pinin' f'r their mother's smile —
Seems like she heern the pleadin' cries
Uv one she thinks uv all the while;
An' she's sorry that she come,
'An' though she allus tries to hide
The truth, she'd ruther stay to hum
Than wonder ef the baby cried.

Yes, wimmin folks is all alike —
By Lizzie you kin jedge the rest.
There never was a little tyke,
But that his mother loved him best,
And nex' to bein' what I be —
The husband of my gentle bride —
I'd wisht I wuz that croodlin' wee,
With Lizzie wonderin' ef I cried.

OUR LADY OF THE MINE

The Blue Horizon wuz a mine us fellers all thought well uv,
And there befell the episode I now perpose to tell uv;
'Twuz in the year of sixty-nine – somewhere along in summer —
There hove in sight one afternoon a new and curious comer;
His name wuz Silas Pettibone – an artist by perfession,
With a kit of tools and a big mustache and a pipe in his possession;
He told us, by our leave, he'd kind uv like to make some sketches
Uv the snowy peaks, 'nd the foam'n' crick, 'nd the distant mountain
stretches;
"You're welkim, sir," sez we, although this scenery dodge seemed to us
A waste uv time where scenery wuz already sooper-*floo*-us.

All through the summer Pettibone kep' busy at his sketchin' —
At daybreak, off for Eagle Pass, and home at nightfall, fetchin'
That everlastin' book uv his with spider lines all through it —
Three-Fingered Hoover used to say there warn't no meanin' to it —
"God durn a man," sez he to him, "whose shif'less hand is sot at
A-drawin' hills that's full of quartz that's pinin' to be got at!"
"Go on," sez Pettibone, "go on, if joshin' gratifies ye,
But one uv these fine times, I'll show ye sumthin' will surprise ye!"
The which remark led us to think – although he didn't say it —
That Pettibone wuz owin' us a gredge 'nd meant to pay it.

One evenin' as we sat around the restauraw de Casey,
A-singin' songs 'nd tellin' yarns the which wuz sumwhat racy,
In come that feller Pettibone 'nd sez: "With your permission
I'd like to put a picture I have made on exhibition."
He sot the picture on the bar 'nd drew aside its curtain,
Sayin': "I reckon you'll allow as how *that's* art, f'r certain!"
And then we looked, with jaws agape, but nary word wuz spoken,
And f'r a likely spell the charm uv silence wuz unbroken —
Till presently, as in a dream, remarked Three-Fingered Hoover:
"Onless I am mistaken, this is Pettibone's shef doover!"
It wuz a face, a human face – a woman's, fair 'nd tender,
Sot gracefully upon a neck white as a swan's, and slender;
The hair wuz kind of sunny, 'nd the eyes wuz sort uv dreamy,
The mouth wuz half a-smilin', 'nd the cheeks wuz soft 'nd creamy;
It seemed like she wuz lookin' off into the west out yonder,
And seemed like, while she looked, we saw her eyes grow softer, fonder
—
Like, lookin' off into the west where mountain mists wuz fallin',
She saw the face she longed to see and heerd his voice a-callin';
"Hooray!" we cried; "a woman in the camp uv Blue Horizon —
Step right up, Colonel Pettibone, 'nd nominate your pizen!"

A curious situation – one deservin' uv your pity —
No human, livin' female thing this side of Denver City!
But jest a lot uv husky men that lived on sand 'nd bitters —
Do you wonder that that woman's face consoled the lonesome critters?
And not a one but what it served in some way to remind him
Of a mother or a sister or a sweetheart left behind him —
And some looked back on happier days and saw the old-time faces
And heerd the dear familiar sounds in old familiar places —
A gracious touch of home – "Look here," sez Hoover, "ever'body
Quit thinkin' 'nd perceed at oncet to name his favorite toddy!"

It wuzn't long afore the news had spread the country over,
And miners come a-flockin' in like honey bees to clover;
It kind uv did 'em good they said, to feast their hungry eyes on
That picture uv Our Lady in the camp uv Blue Horizon.
But one mean cuss from Nigger Crick passed criticisms on 'er —
Leastwise we overheard him call her Pettibone's madonner,
The which we did not take to be respectful to a lady —
So we hung him in a quiet spot that wuz cool 'nd dry 'nd shady;
Which same might not have been good law, but it *wuz* the right
maneuver
To give the critics due respect for Pettibone's shef doover.

Gone is the camp – yes, years ago, the Blue Horizon busted,
And every mother's son uv us got up one day 'nd dusted,
While Pettibone perceeded east with wealth in his possession
And went to Yurrupe, as I heerd, to study his perfession;
So, like as not, you'll find him now a-paintin' heads 'nd faces
At Venus, Billy Florence and the like I-talyun places —
But no such face he'll paint again as at old Blue Horizon,
For I'll allow no sweeter face no human soul sot eyes on;
And when the critics talk so grand uv Paris 'nd the loover,
I say: "Oh, but you orter seen the Pettibone shef doover!"

PENN-YAN BILL

I

In gallus old Kentucky, where the grass is very blue,
Where the liquor is the smoothest and the girls are fair and true,
Where the crop of he-gawd gentlemen is full of heart and sand,
And the stock of four-time winners is the finest in the land;
Where the democratic party in bourbon hardihood
For more than half a century unterrified has stood,
Where nod the black-eyed Susans to the prattle of the rill —
There – there befell the wooing of Penn-Yan Bill.

II

Down yonder in the cottage that is nestling in the shade
Of the walnut trees that seem to love that quiet little glade
Abides a pretty maiden of the bonny name of Sue —
As pretty as the black-eyed flow'rs and quite as modest, too;
And lovers came there by the score, of every age and kind,
But not a one (the story goes) was quite to Susie's mind.
Their sighs, their protestations, and their pleadings made her ill —
Till at once upon the scene hove Penn-Yan Bill.

III

He came from old Montana and he rode a broncho mare,
He had a rather howd'y'do and rough-and-tumble air;
His trousers were of buckskin and his coat of furry stuff —
His hat was drab of color and its brim was wide enough;
Upon each leg a stalwart boot reached just above the knee,
And in the belt about his waist his weepens carried he;
A rather strapping lover for our little Susie – still,
She was his choice and he was hers, was Penn-Yan Bill.

IV

We wonder that the ivy seeks out the oaken tree,
And twines her tendrils round him, though scarred and gnarled he be;

We wonder that a gentle girl, unused to worldly cares,
Should choose a man whose life has been a constant scrap with bears;
Ah, 'tis the nature of the vine, and of the maiden, too —
So when the bold Montana boy came from his lair to woo,
The fair Kentucky blossom felt all her heartstrings thrill
Responsive to the purring of Penn-Yan Bill.

V

He told her of his cabin in the mountains far away,
Of the catamount that howls by night, the wolf that yawps by day;
He told her of the grizzly with the automatic jaw,
He told her of the Injun who devours his victims raw;
Of the jayhawk with his tawdry crest and whiskers in his throat,
Of the great gosh-awful serpent and the Rocky mountain goat.
A book as big as Shakespeare's or as Webster's you could fill
With the yarns that emanated from Penn-Yan Bill!

VI

Lo, as these mighty prodigies the westerner relates,
Her pretty mouth falls wide agape – her eyes get big as plates;
And when he speaks of varmints that in the Rockies grow
She shudders and she clings to him and timidly cries "Oh!"
And then says he: "Dear Susie, I'll tell you what to do —
You be my wife, and none of these 'ere things dare pester you!"
And she? She answers, clinging close and trembling yet: "I will."
And then he gives her one big kiss, does Penn-Yan Bill.

VII

Avaunt, ye poet lovers, with your wishywashy lays!
Avaunt, ye solemn pedants, with your musty, bookish ways!
Avaunt, ye smurking dandies who air your etiquette
Upon the gold your fathers worked so long and hard to get!
How empty is your nothingness beside the sturdy tales
Which mountaineers delight to tell of border hills and vales —
Of snaix that crawl, of beasts that yowl, of birds that flap and trill
In the wild egregious altitude of Penn-Yan Bill.

VIII

Why, over all these mountain peaks his honest feet have trod —
So high above the rest of us he seemed to walk with God;
He's breathed the breath of heaven, as it floated, pure and free,
From the everlasting snow-caps to the mighty western sea;
And he's heard that awful silence which thunders in the ear:
"There is a great Jehovah, and His bidding place is here!"
These – these solemn voices and these the sights that thrill
In the far-away Montana of Penn-Yan Bill.

IX

Of course she had to love him, for it was her nature to;
And she'll wed him in the summer, if all we hear be true.
The blue grass will be waving in that cool Kentucky glade
Where the black-eyed Susans cluster in the pleasant walnut shade —
Where the doves make mournful music and the locust trills a song
To the brook that through the pasture scampers merrily along;
And speechless pride and rapture ineffable shall fill
The beatific bosom of Penn-Yan Bill!

ED

Ed was a man that played for keeps, 'nd when he tuk the notion,
You cudn't stop him any more'n a dam 'ud stop the ocean;
For when he tackled to a thing 'nd sot his mind plum to it,
You bet yer boots he done that thing though it broke the bank to do it!
So all us boys uz knowed him best allowed he wusn't jokin'
When on a Sunday he remarked uz how he'd gin up smokin'.
Now this remark, that Ed let fall, fell, ez I say, on Sunday —
Which is the reason we wuz shocked to see him sail in Monday
A-puffin' at a snipe that sizzled like a Chinese cracker
An' smelt fur all the world like rags instead uv like terbacker;
Recoverin' from our first surprise, us fellows fell to pokin'
A heap uv fun at "folks uz said how they had gin up smokin'."
But Ed — sez he: "I found my work cud not be done without it —
Jes' try the scheme yourself, my friends, ef any uv you doubt it!
It's hard, I know, upon one's health, but there's a certain beauty
In makin' sackerfices to the stern demand uv duty!
So, wholly in a sperrit uv denial 'nd concession
I mortify the flesh 'nd fur the sake uv my perfession!"

HOW SALTY WIN OUT

Used to think that luck wuz luck and nuthin' else but luck —
It made no diff'rence how or when or where or why it struck;
But sev'ral years ago I changt my mind and now proclaim
That luck's a kind uv science – same as any other game;
It happened out in Denver in the spring uv '80, when
Salty teched a humpback an' win out ten.
Salty wuz a printer in the good ol' Tribune days,
An', natural-like, he fell in love with the good ol' Tribune ways;
So, every Sunday evenin' he would sit into the game
Which in this crowd uv thoroughbreds I think I need not name;
An' there he'd sit until he rose, an', when he rose he wore
Invariably less wealth about his person than before.
But once there come a powerful change; one sollum Sunday night
Occurred the tidle wave what put ol' Salty out o' sight!
He win on deuce an' ace an' jack – he win on king an' queen —
Cliff Bill allowed the like uv how he win wuz never seen!
An' how he done it wuz revealed to all us fellers when
He said he teched a humpback to win out ten.
There must be somethin' in it for he never win afore,
An' when he tole the crowd about the humpback, how they swore!
For every sport allows it is a losin' game to buck
Agin the science of a man who's teched a hump f'r luck;
An' there is no denyin' luck was nowhere in it when
Salty teched a humpback an' win out ten.
I've had queer dreams an' seen queer things, an' allus tried to do
The thing that luck apparrently intended f'r me to;
Cats, funerils, cripples, beggars have I treated with regard,
An' charity subscriptions have hit me powerful hard;
But what's the use uv talkin'? I say, an' say again;
You've got to tech a humpback to win out ten!
So, though I used to think that luck wuz lucky, I'll allow
That luck, for luck, agin a hump ain't nowhere in it now!
An' though I can't explain the whys an' wherefores, I maintain
There must be somethin' in it when the tip's so straight an' plain;
For I wuz there an' seen it, an' got full with Salty when
Salty teched a humpback and win out ten!

HIS QUEEN

Our gifted and genial friend, Mr. William J. Florence, the comedian, takes to verses as naturally as a canvas-back duck takes to celery sauce. As a balladist he has few equals and no superiors, and when it comes to weaving compliments to the gentler sex he is without a peer. We find in the New York Mirror the latest verses from Mr. Florence's pen; they are entitled "Pasadene," and the first stanza flows in this wise:

I've journeyed East, I've journeyed West,
And fair Italia's fields I've seen;
But I declare
None can compare
With thee, my rose-crowned Pasadene.

Following this introduction come five stanzas heaping even more glowing compliments upon this Miss Pasadene – whoever she may be – we know her not. They are handsome compliments, beautifully phrased, yet they give us the heartache, for we know Mrs. Florence, and it grieves us to see her husband dribbling away his superb intellect in penning verses to other women. Yet we think we understand it all; these poets have a pretty way of hymning the virtues of their wives under divers aliases. So, catching the afflatus of the genial actor-poet's muse, we would answer:

Come, now, who is this Pasadene
That such a whirl of praises warrant?
And is a rose
Her only clo'es?
Oh, fie upon you, Billy Florence!

Ah, no; that's your poetic way
Of turning loose your rhythmic torrents —
This Pasadene
Is not your queen —
We know you know we know it, Florence!

So sing your songs of women folks —
We'll read without the least abhorrence,
Because we know
Through weal and woe
Your queen is Mrs. Billy Florence!

ALASKAN BALLADRY. – III

(Skans in Love.)

I am like the wretched seal
Wounded by a barbed device —
Helpless fellow! how I bellow,
Floundering on the jagged ice!

Sitka's beauty is the steel
That hath wrought this piteous woe:
Yet would I rather die
Than recover from the blow!

Still I'd rather live than die,
Grievous though my torment be;
Smite away, but, I pray,
Smite no victim else than me!

THE BIGGEST FISH

When, in the halcyon days of old, I was a little tyke,
I used to fish in pickerel ponds for minnows and the like;
And, oh, the bitter sadness with which my soul was fraught
When I rambled home at nightfall with the puny string I'd caught!
And, oh, the indignation and the valor I'd display
When I claimed that all the biggest fish I'd caught had got away!

Sometimes it was the rusty hooks, sometimes the fragile lines,
And many times the treacherous reeds were actually to blame.
I kept right on at losing all the monsters just the same —

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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