



CASEY AT THE BAT

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*

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Written by Ernest L. Thayer and originally published in the San Francisco Examiner in the early Spring of 1888, "Casey at the Bat" made no instant hit. A few months later, however, and on the evening of August 14th in that year, young DeWolf Hopper recited it in Wallack's Theater in New York, where he was playing in "Prince Methusalem," and where a special Baseball Night had been arranged in honor of the Giants and Pop Anson's visiting White Sox. The effect was terrific. The mighty Casey leaped at once to immortal fame, and DeWolf Hopper was for the best part of fifty years called upon to recite the piece as an entr'acte wherever he appeared.

Casey at the Bat

THE OUTLOOK wasn't brilliant for the Mudville nine that day—
The score was four to two with but one inning more to play;
And so when Cooney died at first and Barrows did the same,
A sickly silence fell upon the patrons of the game.

A STRAGGLING FEW got up to go in deep despair. The rest
Clung to that hope which springs eternal in the human breast;
They thought, that if only Casey would get a whack, at that—
We'd put up even money now, with Casey at the bat.

BUT FLYNN preceded Casey, as did also Jimmy Blake,
And the former was a pudding and the latter was a fake;
So upon that stricken multitude grim melancholy 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 Blake, the much despised, tore the cover off the ball;
And when the dust had lifted, and they saw what had occurred.
There was Jimmy safe at second, and Flynn a'hugging third.

THEN FROM five thousand throats or more went up a lusty yell—
It rumbled through the valley, it rattled in the dell;
It knocked upon the mountain top and recoiled upon 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 in dirt,
Five thousand tongues applauded as he wiped them on his shirt;
Then while the writhing 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 the storm waves on a stern and distant shore
“Kill him! Kill the umpire!” shouted someone in the stand;
And it’s likely they’d have killed him had not Casey raised his 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 the pitcher, and once more the spheroid flew,
But Casey still ignored it and the umpire cried, “Strike two!”

“FRAUD!” cried the maddened thousands, and echo answered, “Fraud!”
But one scornful look from Casey and the multitude 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 lips, his teeth are clenched in hate,
He pounds with hideous 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;
Somewhere bands are playing, 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.

Copy for this version of
CASEY AT THE BAT
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*Casey "Before" and "After" drawn by
Fred Cooper*



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