

Baseball Poems

L. Frank Baum

Why?

“Say, mother, why is the town so gay?
Why do the men wear an anxious look—
Why do they rush through their business? say,
Why do they struggle by hook or crook
To push all business out of the way?
Why do all their pockets ring
With the tinkle of silver within?
Why do they laugh in a nervous way
And jump when a friend ‘I’ll take you!’ does say?”

“Hush, hush, my child, I’m ashamed to own
That an Aberdeen boy you’re born and grown!
Can you not guess why papa dear
Bolted his breakfast and fled for fear
He’d not get down in time to hear
The “pointers” whispered from ear to ear?
Shame! Shame! that I to my boy must say
St. Paul plays Aberdeen today!”

Aberdeen Daily News, 25 July 1889

The Kids and the Goose Eggs.

THE PROLOGUE

Nine little kids went out to play
A game of ball on yesterday,
And each one wanted for to hit
The St. Paul man a little bit.

46 *Baum's Road to Oz*

Nine full-grown men went out to play
Our little kids on this same day.
Each one was swelling big with pride
(And had a swollen head beside).

THE GAME

"Say, mother, what makes them look so big?"
"It's what they're stuffed with, my darling kid."
"Say, mother, what made Howe drop that ball?"
"Hush, hush, my child, it's a muff—that's all."
"But ma, why are our boys so dejected?"
"They're getting eat up—but it's what I expected."
"But look! what's the "0" mean on Aberdeen's score?"
"It's a goose egg, my boy, and you'll see many more."
"Old gal, what makes Mike Cody so glum?"
"It's because he's forgot his chewing gum."
"What makes our kids get done up so?"
"They've too big a job on hand, you know."

EPILOGUE

"Who's that man talking about base ball?"
"Hist, boy! that's Manager Barnes of St. Paul."
"What's that he says?" "It's a splendid game.
And Aberdeen should be proud of the same.
They made us play ball, all right,' says he."
"And for once he told—the truth," says she!
Aberdeen Daily News, 26 July 1889

Two Pictures.

I.

With one tremendous, deaf'ning roar
Ten thousand throats proclaim
Chicago has the biggest score,
And Anson's won a game!

One Old Cat!
Batter's at the bat.
Pitch and catch~ the batter's out!
Laugh and run and slide and shout~
A very merry game is that,
And they call it
One Old Cat!



Baseball remained an important part of Baum's life even after he left Dakota. This verse about a schoolyard ball game appeared in Father Goose, His Book, illustrated by William W. Denslow and published in 1899.

48 *Baum's Road to Oz*

Ten thousand hats are toss'd in air,
Their owners all aflame
With rapture, for they're well aware
That "Uncle's" won a game.

Throughout the city flies the news
That tells the city's fame,
While pandemonium ensues—
For Anson's won a game!

All business worries are forgot,
E'en politics seem tame;
Who cares for Cuba's woes a jot
Since Anson's won a game?

II.

But hark! what means this muttered growl,
This darksome look, this lowering scowl?
The "rooter's" ceased his joyous howl
And hangs his head in shame.

And o'er the city falls a gloom
Unequaled save in gruesome tomb;
The reason is, we've met our doom
And Anson's lost a game!

Chicago Sunday Times-Herald, 17 May 1896

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