THE GUN HAND

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PART 2: DARK HARVEST

First and foremost, my sincerest apologies for the absolutely ridiculous lateness of this issue.
The blame falls squarely on my shoulders for this one… day job, hard times, plus other circumstances I won't elaborate upon lead to this situation that puts me in the good company of CAMELOT 3000 #12 and THE DARK KNIGHT RETURNS #4, chronologically speaking, of course.

Finally, here we are. Ready to continue our journey! My thanks to all of the readers who have been (im)patiently waiting for this issue. I dedicate this issue to you, and hope that you find it to be an enjoyable read and worth the wait!

Also, please welcome our new letterer, the fabulous Natalie Jane! Natalie will hopefully be with us for the rest of the series, and I can't wait to see what typographic magic she'll cast upon our future pages! And speaking of *the rest of the series*, we are working on the third issue at this moment, and hope to get it into your hands by Summer's end at the latest.

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Editorial:
THE BIRD OF SUMMER:
"CASEY AT THE BAT"
(AS TOLD BY A MAGPIE)

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THE BIRD OF SUMMER:
CASEY AT THE BAT
(AS TOLD BY
A MAGPIE)

It might seem odd that I began this issue with Hudson P. Magpie reciting to Victor the classic baseball poem, *"Casey at the Bat"*, but I just couldn't help myself. While researching the year 1888 for *The GunHand*, I discovered for myself that the poem — known originally under its *full* title, *"Casey at the Bat: A Ballad of the Republic, Sung in the Year 1888"* — was written in the year 1888 (the year in which our story begins) by Ernest Lawrence Thayer, I knew that I had to somehow incorporate it into this issue.

Having only enough space for a few lines from the poem on Page 1 of this issue, I have chosen to include the mock-heroic poem here in its entirety for your enjoyment.

Batter Up!

The outlook wasn't brilliant for the Mudville nine that day:
The score stood four to two, with but one inning more to play,
And then when Cooney died at first, and Barrows did the same,
A pall-like silence fell upon the patrons of the game.

A straggling few got up to go in deep despair.
The rest Clung to the hope which springs eternal in the human breast;
They thought, *"If only Casey could but 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 hoodoo, while the latter was a cake;
So upon that stricken multitude grim melancholy sat,
For there seemed but little chance of Casey getting to the bat.

But Flynn let drive a single, to the wonderment of all,
And Blake, the much despisèd, tore the cover off the ball;
And when the dust had lifted, and men saw what had occurred,
There was Jimmy safe at second and Flynn a-hugging third.
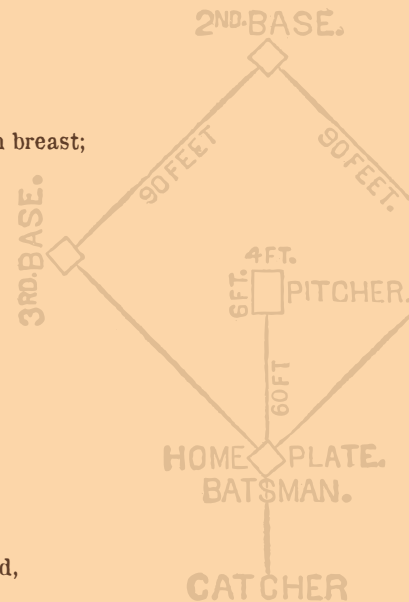
Then from five thousand throats and more there rose a lusty yell;
It rumbled through the valley, it rattled in the dell;
It pounded on the mountain and recoiled upon the flat,
For Casey, mighty Casey, was advancing to the bat.

There was ease in Casey's manner as he stepped into his place;
There was pride in Casey's bearing and a smile lit 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 writhing pitcher ground the ball into his hip,
Defiance flashed 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 on 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 dun sphere 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 favoured 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.

THE SOUTH SHALL RISE AGAIN!