

Peter and His Hat

The Outlook was brilliant on the Mendo piste that day:
The score stood twelve to twelve with Pete in fine array.
And then when Frank shot wide again, and Higgins 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, if only Donald could get a better whack at that -
We'd put up even money, now, with Peter and his hat.

But Don preceded Peter, an ordinary bloke,
And the former was a lulu and the latter was a joke;
So upon that stricken multitude grim melancholy sat,
For there seemed but little chance for Peter and his hat.

But Don let fly a shot, that all petanquers dig,
Awakened ancient Mikey, tore the paint right off the pig;
And when the dust had lifted, and the men saw what had occurred,
There was Frank agape in shock and Higgins quite unheard.

Then from 5,000 throats and more there rose a lusty yell;
It rumbled through the valley, it rattled in the dell;
It knocked upon the mountain and recoiled upon the flat,
For Peter, mighty Peter, was advancing with his hat.

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

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 Higgins bit his nails down to the quick,
Defiance gleamed in Donald's eye, a sneer curled Peter's lip.

And now the shining stainless sphere came hurtling through the air,
And Peter stood a-watching it in haughty grandeur there.
Close by the sturdy Frank-man the ball unheeded sped-
"That ain't my style," said Peter. "Missed one," our Higgins 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.
"You decrepit lazy loafer!" shouted someone on the stand;
And its likely they'd a-killed him had not Peter raised his hand.

With a smile of Christian charity great Peter's visage shone;
He stilled the rising tumult; he bade the game go on;
He sighted to the piglet, and once more the spheroid flew;
But Peter missed again and our Higgins said, "Strike two."

"Fraud!" cried the maddened thousands, and echo answered fraud;
But one scornful look from Peter and the audience was awed.
They saw his face grow stern and cold, they saw his muscles strain,
And they knew that Peter wouldn't miss the pig again.

The sneer is gone from Donald's lip, his teeth are clenched in hate;
He pounds with cruel violence his hat upon his pate.
And now the petanquer holds the boule, and now he lets it go,
And now the air is shattered by the force of Peter's throw.

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 Mendo piste - mighty Peter has struck out.