

PUNCH, BROTHERS, PUNCH

by
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Mark Twain
ISBN 1-60045-113-6

Listen to the following lines, and see if you can discover anything harmful in them?

Conductor, when you receive a fare,
Punch in the presence of the passenjare!
A blue trip slip for an eight-cent fare,
A buff trip slip for a six-cent fare,
A pink trip slip for a three-cent fare,
Punch in the presence of the passenjare!
Punch, brothers! punch with care!
Punch in the presence of the passenjare!

I came across these jingling rhymes a little while ago, and they took entire possession of me. I had carefully laid out my day's work the day before--I took up my pen, but all I could get it to say was, "Punch in the presence of the passenjare." My head kept humming, "A blue trip slip for an eight-cent fare, a buff trip slip for a six-cent fare," and so on and so on, without peace or respite. The day's work was ruined--I gave up and drifted downtown, and presently discovered that my feet were keeping time to that relentless jingle. I returned home, and suffered all the afternoon; suffered all through an unconscious and unrefreshing dinner; suffered and jingled all through the evening; went to bed and rolled, tossed, and jingled right along; got up at midnight frantic, and tried to read; but there was nothing upon the whirling page except "Punch! punch in the presence of the passenjare!" By sunrise I was out of my mind, and everybody was distressed at my idiotic ravings--"Punch! oh, punch! punch in the presence of the passenjare!"

Two days later I arose and went forth to fulfill an engagement with the Rev. Mr. Blank, to walk to the Talcott Tower, ten miles distant. Mr. Blank talked, talked, talked--as is his wont. I said nothing; I heard nothing. At the end of a mile, Mr. Blank said:

"Are you sick? I never saw a man look so haggard and worn and absent-minded. Say something, do!"

Drearily, without enthusiasm, I said: "Punch, brothers, punch with care! Punch in the presence of the passenjare!"

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