

SONG AND CHESTNUTS.

HE brought with him the great gift of song, and that is something to be thankful for in these doleful times. I cannot say his choice of song was of the best, but it was a song, or rather a snatch of a song; for our friend never succeeded in getting beyond two lines. The lines were:—

“She was one of the early birds
And I was one of the worms.”

This he sang with a gentle dalliance, as one who dare not venture far, but must, perforce, venture. I liked the man at once. That he was not exactly “responsible” made no difference; likes and dislikes have rarely any rational basis; they just spring up like thoughts. He was not a good singer. Again this made no difference. Perhaps it was that I am so well used to bad singing—at any rate, I liked the man, and there’s no more to be said on that head. He was discursive, too, and he evidently had a burning desire to drive home the moral of his song.

“Worms,” he said, or rather—“*Wurrms*”—“that’s what us men are—worms—bea-u-tiful worms! Alang comes the early bird, an’ whaur are we? Ay, an’ here’s a queer thing—the early bird’s generally a hen. They can dae it tae, the limmers. I’ve seen a man nabbed by yin that was whit ye might say on the pook; it mak’s nae difference, pook or no pook.”

‘She was one of the early birds
And I was one of the worms.’

“ Here, you!—you’re not allowed to sing in the car! ” This impertinent interjection was made by the conductor.

Our friend looked towards him disdainfully, then turned towards us in friendly confidence—“ No’ allowed to sing—d’ye hear that? I wonder if he wants us to greet. Ay!—an’ did ye notice hoo polite he was—the CAR! Oh, here! I’ll tell ye a guid yin—it was like this—a wumman had her wee laddie in the caur, an’ there was a block in the traffic. Efter a bit, an’ when the caurs werena movin’ aff, the wee laddie says, says he:—‘ Maw, whit’s wrang wi’ the blastit caur?’ I might here explain that blastit’s no’ the richt word, savin’ the ladies, as they say. So he says, as I telt ye afore—‘ Maw, whit’s wrang wi’ the blastit caur?’ an’ the mither, very proper-like, says to him—‘ Hoo often have I told you not to use that word; it’s CAR no’ CAUR!’ A guid yin—oh I ken—

“ She was one of the early birds
An’ I was one of the worms.”

“ No singing!”—again the conductor.

“ Wheesht! Not a word! Let us pray! Here, guerd, can ye tell me this? ”

“ What? ”

“ Who killed Cock Robin?—naw, ye canna tell me that—well, the yin that killed Cock Robin’s no’ deid yet; an’ his name’s no’ Carnera but Tam Goldie—it’s maybe a coincydance but that’s ma name tae, so I’m gi’en ye fair warnin’. That reminds me o’ anither yin:—The wee laddie says to his mither—‘ Maw, lukk at that dugg.’ ‘ Dugg!’ she says—eyein’ a wee Pomeranian—‘ that’s not a dugg; it’s a dog!’ ‘ O, it’s awfu’ like a

dugg!' said the wee laddie. Anither guid yin! Whit?—did I hear somebody sayin' it was a chestnut?"

"Ay!" replied a rather angular lady sitting in a corner—"I fell oot my credill laughin' at that yin."

"O, you fell oot your credill laughin' at that yin, did ye? It's just as weel for you to tell us; I thocht you were born like that."

"She was one of the early birds
And I was one of the worms."

"For the third and last time I'm telling you that singin's not allowed on the cars"—again the conductor.

"For the third an' last time!—that's funny. 'Is there ony man or wumman present has ony objections to this couple bein' bound thegither in the holy bonds o' matrimony?' No! Carried u'animsously, guerd!—He'll be gettin' the polis to me next. Imagine me in the dock an' that yin in the witness box—'Whit's the charge?'—'Singin' in the caur!' 'An' whit were ye singin'?'"

"She was one of the early birds
And I was one of the worms."

This time our friend sang softly, and wakened no echoes from the platform. There was a glint in his eye, however. He proceeded—"I'll be even wi' that yin yet—you wait! Ye see, he thinks I'm drunk, but I hae mair sense drunk than he has sober. I ken whaur I am, fine, an' I ken whaur I'm gaun. Talk about a terr! They're awfu' smert when they get the brass buttons on. You wait!" (Looking out) "Here, Jake, is that the Cattle Market?—Righto! I ken. Bellgrove's the next stop!—well, here goes—here goes—he thinks I canna sing—just you listen to this!"

He did not sing; he bellowed:—

*"She was one of the early birds
And I was one of the worms."*

In rushed the conductor. "Off you go this time!"

"Noo, boys! Look slippy; the guerd's speakin' to yin of yez; it's no' to me—it canna be me—it must be yin o' yous, for I'm gaun aff onywey—my station's Bellgrove."

He was coolness personified. He walked steadily to the rear platform, paused for a moment on the step, and addressed the following choice remarks to the gent in uniform—"Here, young man, I'll sing if I like an' whaur I like, an' a caur's no' a synagogue if ye want to ken; an' mair nor that, MacKinnon's no' the Pope o' Rome—pit that in yer pipe an' smoke it!"

N.B.—As I said earlier, I liked the man. I continue to do so, in spite of his imperfect metaphor. To be effective is a far rarer virtue than to be correct.