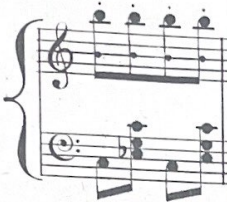


NARROW GAUGE VERSE

from A. SULLIVAN

"I AM E

Fig. 1.



"HORNPIPE"



WHY was there always something human, something appealingly funny, about railways, especially, of course, about narrow gauge railways?

They inspired much laughter and much affectionate poetry, and it seems to me that bus services will never do that (no matter how efficient) unless Dr. Andrews, like Lord Moyné, offers prizes to the poets.

The best-sung was, thanks to Percy French, the West Clare Railway, but other lines have inspired other poets. Proinsias O Connulain of Radio Eireann was, for instance, recently putting forth a programme on The Train That Didn't Like Towns, in the course of which Tommy Duffy of Derry sang the praises of The Oul Bunscrana Train, and Proinsias has shown me a fascinating piece of verse sent to him by Mrs. R. Flynn of Kiltyhugh, Ballinamore, County Leitrim.

It's about the narrow gauge that once ran from Dromod to Belturbet, via Mohill and Ballinamore. There was a branch which the local people called The Tramway, from Ballinamore to Drumshanbo; Mrs. Flynn says that the branch had to be seen to be believed. It ran, as so many of the old narrow gauge lines did, with the road, crossing and re-crossing without ever giving any warning. It was slow, inefficient and generally beloved. These railways, indeed, were the children's toys of the age of machines.

Mrs. Flynn says: "We all loved it and many were the tears shed when it closed down a couple of years ago. It ran through my father's small farm and I can recall seeing the train stop and one of the engine's personnel shoeing our flock of turkeys off the track."

The song—it's as good as Percy French—was, it seems, written by a teacher in the locality forty or fifty years ago. Some local references need explanation: "Chapel Lane," "Canaboe," etc. are streets in Ballinamore. The engines were called after monarchy: King

Edward, Queen Victoria. The "Irish Royal" meant the Royal Fusiliers (or would it be just the R.I.C.?) and Sergeant O'Brien was stationed in Ballinamore for years.

Ye jovial tourists, who seek the purest And grandest scenery in all the land, Pray, pay attention whilst here I mention A mode of travelling that will suit you grand. 'Tis not the motor I aim to vote for, Nor premier cycle, though all the rage, No, my advice is whatever the price is, Go buy a ticket on the Narrow Gauge.

Just travel by it, 'twill take you quiet, The best of company you are sure to meet, The donkey dealers and fowl retailers Of Chapel Lane, Canaboe and The grand directors and line inspectors, And local pressmen so cute and sage, They travel gratis, whatever that is, While others stump up on the Narrow Gauge.

All nature's charms in all her forms Along the line will enchant the view, St. Kevin's gander saw nothing grander When around through Wicklow of old he flew; Moore's "Lalla Rookh" is a beautiful book With blooming flowers on every page, But Sharon's roses can't match the posies That deck the borders of the Narrow Gauge.

Green hills and mountains, clear rills and fountains, With placid lakes the hills between; Monastic ruins, the wicked doings Of cursed Cromwell and the Virgin Queen. Historians tell us of what befell us In ancient times, persecution's age, Ere people spoke of a locomotive Or knew the comforts of the Narrow Gauge.

When going to Dromod there still are some'd Prefer to sit behind Dooner's Grey, Going to Belturbet they surely curb it, The brakes are on all the blessed way. If to Drumshanbo you by the tram go No slower passage you can engage; Jack Redsey's donkey, they call him Spunky,

Would beat King Edward on the Narrow Gauge.

The "Irish Royal" might shout disloyal,

So here my meaning I should define:

King Ned's an engine was made at Bingen,

Fair lovely Bingen on the Rhine.

So Sergeant Brien, a cute and sly one,

May seek promotion by some other stage,

Else him I'll sentence to due repentance

And twenty miles on the Narrow Gauge.

'Twas my intention much more to mention,

Though half its praises I haven't sung,

Big babies bawling and Mollies calling,

With click-click-click, tele-graphic tongue.

But sweet as the thrushes on trees and bushes

Or pet canary in gilded cage,

When I have leisure I'll sing with pleasure

The countless beauties of the Narrow Gauge.

Perhaps in some future Radio Eireann programme, we may hear a recording of this masterpiece.

WINDOW



Fig. 2

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SURGEON TO BE HONOURED

The medical staff of the Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital, Dublin, will today make a presentation to Mr. T. O. Graham, on the occasion of his retirement as senior surgeon at the hospital. Mr. Graham, who joined the hospital in 1908 has been senior surgeon at the hospital since 1918. He is a past president of the Royal College of Surgeons and Royal Academy of Medicine and is still a member of the Council of the R.C.S.