
Pro Rege

Volume 20
Number 2 *Arts Issue*

Article 7

December 1991

Farewell, Cousin Nick

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Recommended Citation

Vanden Bosch, Mike (1991) "Farewell, Cousin Nick," *Pro Rege*: Vol. 20: No. 2, 7.

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***Farewell, Cousin Nick**

by Mike Vanden Bosch

I passed your taut grin in the coffin, pain
soon tearing my glance at these obsequies.
Your laughter is choked off by death's quick squeeze
and mourning oozes from the funeral train.
How still now that disabled Cain brain
that plotted pranks and prodded pals to tease
a weeping child, to torch a house, to sleaze
a little girl with lewd legerdemain.

Though thirty years were ruled by whiskied laughter,
death's sucked your crusty taste for crude lampoon.
"There'll be time to get serious," you said, "after
aging, for sixty some years would be soon
enough to straighten faces for hereafter."

But justice starched your fun-drenched face ere noon.

*This poem appears in the 1991 edition of *Lyrical Iowa*.