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Lincoln, and Other Verse

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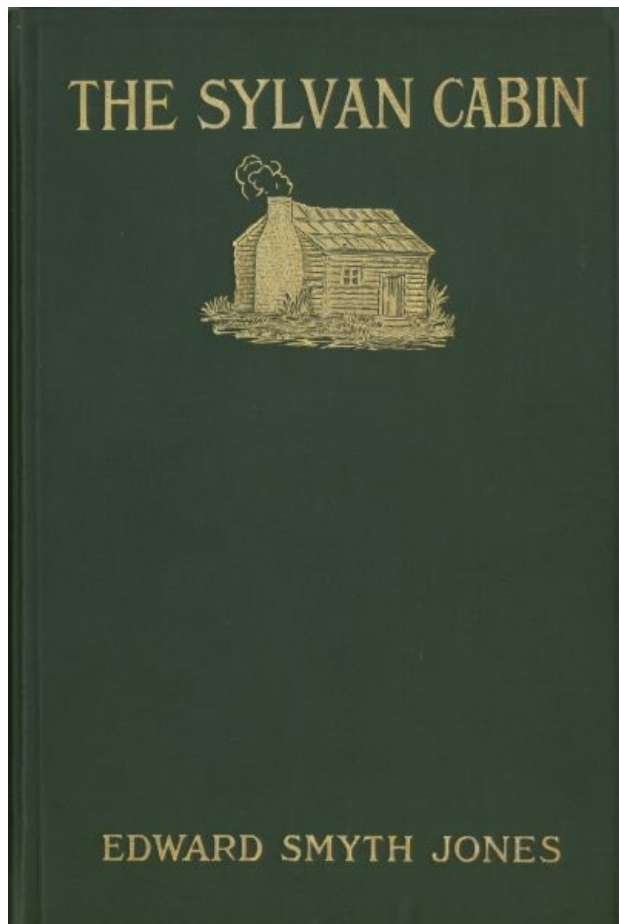
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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE SYLVAN CABIN: A CENTENARY ODE
ON THE BIRTH OF LINCOLN, AND OTHER VERSE ***



THE SYLVAN CABIN



EDWARD SMYTH JONES

THE SYLVAN CABIN

**A CENTENARY ODE ON
THE BIRTH OF LINCOLN**

AND OTHER VERSE

BY

EDWARD SMYTH JONES

WITH INTRODUCTION BY

WILLIAM STANLEY BRAITHWAITE



BOSTON

SHERMAN, FRENCH & COMPANY

1911

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SHERMAN, FRENCH & COMPANY

TO

THE HON. ARTHUR P. STONE

Justice of the Third District Court

Cambridge, Massachusetts

Edward Smyth Jones
Boston, Mass.

Edward Smyth Jones
Boston, Mass.

INTRODUCTION

A poet that comes through a unique experience, as so many poets have, and very recently as the author of this volume has, arrives through his personality rather than his work at a precipitate sort of fame that may serve his talents well or serve them ill. To know that a man was sent to jail as the consequence of a passionate desire to go to college, and that that desire involved the tramping of dusty and hungry miles, adds to the interest to the man that cannot fail in some significant way to set a glamor upon the poet. Poetry is made out of experience—the experience of dreams, of action, of desires and hopes baffled on the inexplicable sea of circumstance; in these latter the dream is as the spirit, and the man whose art becomes an expression of all he has realized in living, his experiences become something more than art, they are the subtle rendering reality that is truth.

In these poems of Mr. Jones' it is that which gives them a unique value because they are in a deeply essential manner the rendering of a human document, as all poems must be, of an individual who speaks universally. I emphasize this quality first because art registers its worth by the vitality of its substance. If the substance be vital, then its embodiment is artistically successful to the degree in which the maker has felt his experiences. These poems, then, will come to many readers with a freshness, with the appeal for a certain sympathy that will compel attention. The opening poem which celebrates the centenary of Lincoln's birth, with its fine imaginative sweep, is as good as any poem I have seen which that occasion called forth. In it is poetry that ought to assure Mr. Jones' future if circumstances permit him to cultivate an art for which nature has so obviously endowed him. "The Sylvan Cabin" in spirit may be said to characterize the author's book; that upward striving toward the ideal, which taking a personal expression in his own experience, in his own hopes, has also a larger significance in voicing the aspirations of those for whom, as is shown in many other poems, he becomes a voice, a representative.

Mr. Jones' work has already won for him the approbation of many literary people, his poems having appeared from time to time in various publications; this fact not only justifies his gathering them together in this volume, but being so recognized must fill him with a certain assurance for the future. To this I can only add that, good as these are, they give us the hope for better from one who ought certainly to go on and upward.

WILLIAM STANLEY BRAITHWAITE.

Boston, April 5, 1911.

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A CENTENARY ODE ON THE BIRTH OF LINCOLN

I

O, fairest Dame of sylvan glades,
We come to pay thee homage due,
Embrace thee softly and to kiss
Thy lovely, long-forsaken cheeks;
To smooth thy flowing silver locks
And bind about thy snowy neck
A necklace golden studded full
With rarest gems and shining pearls.

Our eyes, though sometimes dimmed with tears,
In purer lustre sparkle forth
Whene'er they fall gaze on thee!
Our ears attuned to thy sweet lay
Catch every flowing, cadent note
And bear it ever safe within
Our rapturous hearts, which gladly leap
Whene'er thy name is called!
Deep in our souls the quenchless fire
Of love full brightly burns upon
The sacred altar, set apart
For sprite commune and sacrifice;
Whose high-priest tends with loving care,
And unto thee sweet incense burns.
Our tongues most gladly sing thy praise,
And from it ne'er shall cease—till all
The land be free!

[Pg 010]

II

A century lonely hast thou stood
Here all forsaken and forgot!
All men failed thee to visit save
Some idle lover of sylvan haunts
Who trod, perchance, this hallowed spot,
And cast a pensive eye upon
This lovely glade, thy sole abode
(Full lost in these continuous woods),
And brooding o'er thy lowly lot,
Oft thus did muse: "This cabin lone
Here stands to tell the tale of him,
Back-woodsman brave, who having scaled
The mystic mountains ne'er returned
To them, though loved yet left behind;
But here he chose his last abode,
These gloomy woods whose blackness stands
Up hard against horizon's slope;
Grim, spectral, dreaded, and untrod
Save monsters great of savage mien,
That prowled, or crouched upon their prey;
Sent forth a vicious roar that fairly shook
Old Sylvania far and near, from vale
Through crag to mountain peak!

[Pg 011]

Upon this spot the redskin oft
Has danced his 'War dance' and his 'Feast,'
His face a reddish hue aglow—
Long locks with eaglets' plumes bedecked;
His bow and never-failing dart,
And scalper dangling at his side.
More brightly gleamed his wary eye,
As braves the war-whoop loudly yelled—
A sight more like the fiery fiends
From Pluto's ghastly shore returned
Than human blood and bone!

[Pg 012]

They all have gone and left no tale
But woe which hurled them ever hence
To that shore whence no bark returns.
Old Cabin, thou, a land-mark art,
Of human progress' steady march!"

Of thee

Thus has time passed with naught more said;
For man in his pedantic art
Soars far in feeble flights of song
From Nature's heart, and thus he fails
With Nature's God to hold commune!

The bard has slept, dreamed many a dream,
But failed to dream one dream of thee.
High hangs his lyre on willow reed,
And sitting 'neath yon shady nook,
He fails to catch one note of thy
Immortal song that fills the air.
Awake, O bard, from sleep so deep!
Attune thy lyre; let Nature breathe
In her immortal breath of song;
Then wilt thou sing a song most sweet,
The song by Nature's vesper choir,
Through all the countless ages sung,—
And still is singing day by day.
Then all the world will join thy sweet
Refrain in praise and ardent love
Of this fair forest Dame!

[Pg 014]

IV

The nations all their day shall have;
Yet each in turn shall rise and fall,
As falls the dark brown autumn leaf;
Or as those dread sky-kissing tides,
Which toss frail barks high upon
Some ghastly, frowning storm-beat shore,—
Though slowly, yet quite surely ebb away.

—Aye! Egypt fair once spread the Nile,
And green-bay-tree-like proudly flourished;
Her snowy sails sea-ports bedecked,
And deeply ploughed the rolling main,
Or clave the placid lakes, as does
The gentle swan, when some soft breeze
The bulrush stirs, flings its perfume
Upon the rippling silver waves!
Fair cities dotted here and there

[Pg 015]

Her vast domain. Her royal line
Of Pharaohs held the sceptre gold
Upon her all-emblazoned throne.
Now Egypt fair is wreck and ruin.
For, as fled on the flight of years,
The unrelenting Hand of time
Wiped her sweet visage off the globe!
Naught save the grim, grey pyramid,
Sublimest work of man, yet stands
To greet the rosy morn, with proud
Uplifted head, expanded chest—
A death defiant scoff at time!
Yet hoary Time in his wild rage
Of wreck and ruin, like Jove shall hurl
His fiery bolts upon the head
Of pyramid with ire, and crush
And raze it to its base with scorn!

[Pg 016]

V

Next Greece, the fairest nymph that trod
This belted globe upon, once shone
As shines the Morning Orb, long ere
The Dawn the rosy East has kissed;
High reared her sacred temples in
Olympia's shady groves, and built
There sacred altars to her gods.

Old Zeus and Phoebus oft here sat
In council with their fellow gods.
And Homer, fiery bard, was first
To smite the chords of nature's lyre;

[Pg 017]

Sweet sang he till the earth was filled
With rarest strains of rapturous song!
Then art and letters blew and blushed,
The fairest flowers of ages past,
Whose essence, spilled upon the breeze,
Is wafted still forever on
The twin deft with the flight of years;
And man in calm delight inhales
The fragrance of pure classic lore!
But Greece is gone! Her statues fair
Are mingled with the dust; each god
Has flown some fairer clime to rule,
Or, subdued, walks the dark abyss.

[Pg 018]

VI

Then Rome, the gaudy Southern Queen,
On seven rugged, rock-ribbed hills
Securely built her throne. The world
Then saw a mighty power rise
In splendor great, as does the sun
On some young, swift-winged morn of June.
A brighter dawning seemed to break;
Another life was lived,—for through
The Roman vein there coursed a blood,
A fiery burning blood of ire,
That rose and conquered all the world.
Great Cæsar led her legions forth
From victory on to victory,
And hung her royal pennons high
In tower, palace-hall, and throne;
The Roman sceptre swayed the globe.
Soft music soothed her savage ear,
Fine arts and sculptor were her toys,
And glory was her "starry crown."
But now we read the "Fall of Rome,"
The doleful lay that tells the tale
Of all who thus have passed away.

[Pg 019]

VII

To thee, fair Dame, we thus relate
The things which were but are no more;
That thou mightest know the worldly way,
And knowing, have no timid fear
To ever stir thy peaceful breast.
No fate like theirs awaits for thee;
For Fortune's maid shall tend with care
Thy every nod and beck—yes, place
Upon thy queenly brow a crown,
The "starry crown" by Freedom worn!
'Tis true no flint rock ribs thy base,
No stone thy corner marks; for that
What carest thou? For boasted pride?
Thy frame is of the sturdy oak,
Inlaid with ribs of stately pine;
The Prince and Princess twain are they
Of all Columbia's giant woods.
The sylvan songsters sing thy praise
From dawn till set of sun, and then
The nightingale, the queen of song,
In praise of thee poureth forth her lay
Till every mellow silver note,
Far floating in the silent trees,
Is taken by an elfish choir,
And chanted softly to the moon.

[Pg 020]

The eagle her wee eaglets tells
Of thee, that they may freedom love;
Then soaring full beyond the clouds,
She looks with vaunted pride on thee.
So must thy spirit fill the hearts
Of all Columbia's youth, as once
It filled old "Honest Abe," thy son,
Thy pride—the first-born of thy love.

[Pg 021]

For when each lowly lad well knows
That ever upwards he may soar,
Beyond vain tyrants' galling sway
To fairer climes where Freedom reigns:
Then will the shadow of thy wing
For aye to them a shelter be!

[Pg 022]

LIFE IN A DREAM

There is nothing so sweet as our life in our dreams,
When we soar far on fancy's swift wing;
For a thing in our dreams is all that it seems,
And the songs are so sweet that we sing.
Ah! the sun shines the brightest, and stars twinkle lightest
At the moon in her silvery beams!

There is nothing so gay as the life in our dreams,
With its joy and its laughter and mirth;
For the pleasure that teems is far greater, one deems,
Than any he finds in the earth.
There are homes are our natal, and nothing is fatal
In the beautiful land of our dreams!

[Pg 023]

There is nothing so bright as the life in our dreams,
Far away from earth's trickery chance;
There the music's wild screams and the wine in its streams
Are both lost in the song and the dance.
Oh! our joy is the sweetest and life is completest,
Ah! the life in our beautiful dreams!

There is nothing serene as the life in our dreams,
When the dove to his mate softly cooes
In the groves by the streams and the moon's silver beams,
Where the swain oft his maid gently wooes.
There the swains are the rarest and maids are the fairest,
And their love is as true as it seems!

[Pg 024]

THE MORNING STAR

TO A. B. B.

Thou art, fair maid, the Morning Star,
The guide of dawning day,
And sendest diamond sparkles far
To wake the flowers of May.

Thou makest earth to bloom anew,
A boon thou'rt wont to give,
And spillest out the morning dew,
That all may blush and live.

Thou guardest with thy hand of might,
And never showeth frown;
Earth lullest sleep when cometh night,
And wak'st her with the dawn.

Fair maiden, God hast given thee
All power near and far,—
The rosy dawning's light to be,
The brightest Morning Star.

[Pg 025]

TO ESTELLE

Coy, sweet maid, I love so well,
Fair Estelle.
How much I love thee tongue can't tell,

Sweet Estelle.
But I love thee—love thee true—
More than violets love the dew,
More than roses love the sun—
Do I love thee, dearest one,
Dear Estelle!

Ah! my heart love's passions swell
For Estelle!
How I love my actions tell
Thee, Estelle:
That I love thy smiling face,
And thy captivating grace—
Love thy dreamy 'witching eyes
More than planets love the skies,
Wee Estelle!

Now I smite my lyre to swell
For Estelle;
Music's most entrancing spell
O'er Estelle.
With my fingers on my keys,
Like the balmy morning breeze
Stealing softly through the grain,
Will I gently wake a strain
For Estelle!

How I love my little belle,
My Estelle!
Deepest in my sacred dell
Is Estelle!
I esteem my maiden love
More than angels high above,
More than demons in the sea;
Love is light and life to me,
And Estelle!

[Pg 026]

[Pg 027]

A SONG OF THANKS

For the sun that shone at the dawn of spring,
For the flowers which bloom and the birds that sing,
For the verdant robe of the gray old earth,
For her coffers filled with their countless worth,
For the flocks which feed on a thousand hills,
For the rippling streams which turn the mills,
For the lowing herds in the lovely vale,
For the songs of gladness on the gale,—
From the Gulf and the Lakes to the Oceans' banks,—
Lord God of Hosts, we give Thee thanks!

[Pg 028]

For the farmer reaping his whitened fields,
For the bounty which the rich soil yields,
For the cooling dews and refreshing rains,
For the sun which ripens the golden grains,
For the beaded wheat and the fattened swine,
For the stallèd ox and the fruitful vine,
For the tubers large and cotton white,
For the kid and the lambkin frisk and blithe,
For the swan which floats near the river-banks,—
Lord God of Hosts, we give Thee thanks!

[Pg 029]

For the pumpkin sweet and the yellow yam,
For the corn and beans and the sugared ham,
For the plum and the peach and the apple red,
For the dear old press where the wine is tread,
For the cock which crows at the breaking dawn,
And the proud old "turk" of the farmer's barn,
For the fish which swim in the babbling brooks,
For the game which hide in the shady nooks,—
From the Gulf and the Lakes to the Oceans' banks,—
Lord God of Hosts, we give Thee thanks!

[Pg 030]

For the sturdy oaks and the stately pines,
For the lead and the coal from the deep, dark mines,
For the silver ores of a thousand fold,
For the diamond bright and the yellow gold,
For the river boat and the flying train,
For the fleecy sail of the rolling main,
For the velvet sponge and the glossy pearl,
For the flag of peace which we now unfurl,—
From the Gulf and the Lakes to the Oceans' banks,—
Lord God of Hosts, we give Thee thanks!

[Pg 031]

For the lowly cot and the mansion fair,
For the peace and plenty together share,
For the Hand which guides us from above,
For Thy tender mercies, abiding love,
For the blessed home with its children gay,
For returnings of Thanksgiving Day,
For the bearing toils and the sharing cares,
We lift up our hearts in our songs and our prayers,—
From the Gulf and the Lakes to the Oceans' banks,—
Lord God of Hosts, we give Thee thanks!

[Pg 032]

NOT YET A POET

Aye! many a rhyme my pen has flown,
In oblivion, all unknown;
Still many more, perchance, I say,
Float on in one unbroken lay—
But ask me naught of where or when,
Long as they ring in hearts of men!
Dear friend, I say these words to you,
Which through the ages will be true:
Though I have power to combine
These subtle rhymes of each sweet line—
Yet, I shall never live to see,
The title "POET" given me!

[Pg 033]

A BOUQUET

A blossom pink, a blossom blue,
Make all there is in love so true.
'Tis fit, methinks, my heart to move,
To give it thee, sweet girl, I love!
Now, take it, dear, this morn and wear
A wreath of beauty in thy hair;
Think on it, when from bliss we part—
The emblem of my wooing heart!

[Pg 034]

AN ODE TO THE SOLDIERS' AND SAILORS' MONUMENT

Thou most majestic Queen of sculptural art,
What learnèd architect designed thy throne?
Who traced thy stately form in head and heart,
And sent the sculptor forth to carve the stone?
O speak, fair Queen, for thou art not alone;
Ten thousand unseen voices join refrain
That softly floats in one melodious tone,
As sweet as any ancient harper's strain
In odes to Indiana's silent victors slain.

Thy court well marks the conquest of the West,
A citadel sprung out the forest wild,
A mecca where the pilgrims quietly rest:
Each dame's content—content each sportive child;
The fiery redmen nevermore revile,
Nor haunt the footprints of thy daring sons,

Whose noble spheres are widening all the while,
Like as some brilliant star its orbit runs
And sheds on earth its light down from a thousand suns.

[Pg 035]

Thy throne emblazoned with the rarest jewels,
Each wall adorned with battered coats of mail,
Choice relics of some bloody fields or duels,
A legend or some untold battle tale.
I see the scouts go forth upon the trail,
And soldiers charging over battlements—
The weeping mother sends to God her wail;
While passion's rage the mortal heart laments,
The dove of peace is caged in direst banishments.

But see yon arms, full flushing victory
Brings hope, and joy is ringing everywhere
Beneath the "starry banner of the free,"
That shields her children from the tyrant's snare.
The peasant turns him to his lowly fare,
The rich pursues wild phantoms at his ease,
The rustic plies his long-forsaken share,
And lo! the dove is cooing, "Peace, sweet peace;"
For Mars has snatched his bolts from out the rosy East.

[Pg 036]

And when the last familiar scene has gone,
And brightest dawn has kissed the sable night,
Then thou shalt smile on faces yet unborn,
And be to them a gleaming beacon light;
For Might shall fall and on his throne sit Right,
When bloody wars and petty strifes have ceased;
Then thou shalt don thy spotless robe of white,
And say to man as hostess of the feast:
"My brother, sheath thy sword; the end of life is peace."

[Pg 037]

TO A FADED FLOWER

To a violet that faded on my coat at Natchez, Miss. March 8th, 1902.

Alas! thou lovely floweret wee,
Fate blew a blighting breath
Upon the delicate form of thee,—
Thou'st met untimely death!
Thou blowest, blushest nevermore,
To drink the dews of night;
Thy sweet though short-lived life is o'er,
Thou seest no more the light.

'Twas vain! aye, vain! the selfish strife
That drooped thy purple crest;
Some swain or maiden took thy life,
To deck a love-lorn breast.
Ah, floweret wee, the God who made
All in the earth and sky,
Decreed that thou should blow and fade,—
All else should live and die!

[Pg 038]

Now, he who wails the floweret's fate,
And all the rest of man,
Must meet that fate, aye soon or late,
And scale their measured span.
We are but flowers that blush and blow,
As flight of years rolls on,
With time and tide's cold ebb and flow—
'Tis said—"He's dead and gone!"

For as the maid clips off the stems
Where once the flowers have been,
So angels pluck earth's rarest gems,
Immortal souls of men!
The flower fadeth into air,
From whence its life is given—
But man's soul shining rich and rare
Ascendeth into heaven.

DAINTY DORA

TO D. M. M.

Greeks once sang a lovely song
 To their maiden Cora;
 But my lay floats soft along
 To my Dainty Dora.

Frenchmen sing of Anne Belle,
 Romans sang of Flora;
 But I sing my song to tell
 Of my Dainty Dora.

Scotchmen sing their songs to move
 Mary or Debora;
 But I sing my song of love—
 Love for Dainty Dora.

Poets now a song may give
 Psyche or Lenora;
 But I'll sing long as I live
 Just for Dainty Dora!

[Pg 040]

THE VIOLIN

Thrice hail the still unconquered King of Song!
 For all adore and love the Master Art
 That reareth his throne in temple of the heart;
 And smiteth chords of passion full and strong
 Till music sweet allures the sorrowing throng!
 Then by the gentle curving of his bow
 Maketh every mellow note in cadence flow,
 To recompense the world of all its wrong.
 Although the earth is full of cares and throes
 That tempt the crimson stream of life to cloy,
 Thou mak'st glad hearts and trip'st "fantastic toes,"
 And fillest weary souls with mirth and joy—
 The soul-entrancing cadence of thy strings
 Proclaims thee Song's unconquered "King of kings"!

[Pg 041]

WOMAN

I call thee angel of this earth,
 For angel true thou art
 In noble deeds and sterling worth
 And sympathetic heart.
 I, therefore, seek none from afar
 For what they might have been,
 But sing the praise of those which are
 That dwell on earth with men.

For when man was a tottling wee,
 Snug nestling on thy breast,
 Or sporting gay upon thy knee,
 Oh, thou who lovest him best;
 An overflowing stream of love,
 Sprung at his very birth,
 And made thee gentle as a dove,
 Fair angel of this earth.

Thou cheerest ever blithesome youth
 With songs and fervent prayers,
 And fillest heart with love and truth
 A store for future cares.
 Thou lead'st him safely in his prime,
 True guide of every stage,

[Pg 042]

And then at last, as fades the time,
Thou comfortest his age.

Like as the sunshine after rain,
Far chasing 'way the mist,
Thou soothest human grief and pain,
Fleet messenger of bliss.
In battles where the sword and shield
Full lay the mighty low,
Thou hov'rest ever o'er the field,
To ease life's ebb and flow!

[Pg 043]

Thou standest, ever standest near,
Before man's waning eyes,
An angel true to him more dear
Than all beyond the skies!
No fabled sprites of chants and creeds,
Nor myths of bygone years,
For thou suppliest all his needs
And wip'st his briny tears.

So, if he quail in desert waste
Or toss life's stormy sea,
He turns his tear-stained eye in haste
For one fond glimpse of thee.
He longs to hide beneath thy wing,
And nestle on thy breast;
He lists to hear thee softly sing
Him into peaceful rest!

[Pg 044]

Oh, sing aloud Mt. Zion's songs,
To cheer each languid heart;
For now some feeble spirit longs
Thy blessings to impart.
And thus thou keepest the Master's will,
And showest all thy worth,
Through loving kindness thou art still
The angel of this earth!

[Pg 045]

THE BACHELOR'S SONG

While I keep my lonely hall,
You are welcome one and all,
As I sing my little song;
Stay, I'll cheer you all day long—
And sow my bachelor-buttons,
And sow my bachelor-buttons.

While this world is wild with glee,
Chime I now my song to thee;
In my bosom lurks no care,
I can loiter everywhere—
And sow my bachelor-buttons,
And sow my bachelor-buttons.

Oh dear, what a happy life
For the man who has no wife,
To bind with sore distresses,
And silk and satin dresses—
While he sows his bachelor-buttons,
While he sows his bachelor-buttons.

[Pg 046]

His heart is ever merry,
His way is bright and cheery;
No peevish baby crying,
No jealous wife a-sighing—
While he sows his bachelor-buttons,
While he sows his bachelor-buttons.

Ah! praise the God who hath given
A life so much like heaven;
Quit it? Oh no, I'll never,
But live happy forever—

PUT NOTHING IN ANOTHER'S WAY

Put nothing in another's way,
Who's plodding on through life,
But fill each heart with joy each day,
With peace instead of strife.
So then let not a missent word,
Or thought, or act, or deed
Be by our weaker brother heard
To cause his heart to bleed.

Put nothing in another's way,
It clear and ample leave;
For words and actions day by day
Life's great example weave.
'Tis then not meet that we should think
That we are solely free
In manners, dress, in food, or drink,
Or fulsome revelry.

[Pg 048]

Put nothing in another's way,
Just learn the Christian part
To let a holy, sunny ray
Shine in thy brother's heart.
Help him to bear his load of care,
His soul get edified—
'Twas only for the soul's welfare
That Jesus bled and died.

Put nothing in another's way,
Ye who are sent to teach;
No dark cloud cast across the day,
Ye who the gospel preach.
Ye twain must set the truth aright
With joy and peace and love;
For in your souls shines forth the light
From Jesus Christ above.

[Pg 049]

Put nothing in another's way,
Belovèd Christian friends;
On through your toils, and cares, still pray,
Till life's fleet journey ends.
When at the resurrection dawn
Eternal life is given,
We'll get our harp, our robe, our crown,
The star-lit crown of heaven.

[Pg 050]

FLOATING WITH THE GALE

TO MY LOST BROTHER

Ships the angry sea is lashing;
But I launch my little bark,
Though the thunder peals are crashing,
And the sea is pitchy dark!
See by lightning's vivid flashing
How to shift my tattered sail—
Far across the billows dashing,
I am floating with the gale.

CHORUS

Floating, floating, floating ever
On the stormy deep blue sea,
Far from father and dear mother
And, true love, away from thee!

Go, ye zephyrs, sweetly laden,
Cheer my loved ones in their wail;
Tell my wee sweet bright-eyed maiden
I am floating with the gale!

[Pg 051]

When the siren maids are waking,
And are singing wild sea songs,
Dear, they start my heart to aching,
For its love to thee belongs.
Now my love-lorn soul is shaking
With a spell of bitter wail,
And my heart is sadly breaking,
For I'm floating with the gale!

CHORUS

Now my hopes are fading ever,
Gloom is chasing 'way the bliss;
Dear, I know that I can never
Come thy ruby lips to kiss!
But my heart will cling forever
To that love I oft did hail,
For those ties I can not sever,
Though I'm floating with the gale!

CHORUS

Dear, my heart is ever longing,
Longs surfmen my bark to save;
Through my brain these thoughts are thronging,
Of a grave beneath the wave;
Of loved ones my heart is wronging,
And the belly of the whale;
'Round my soul their ghosts are thronging,
As I'm floating with the gale!

[Pg 052]

CHORUS

Dear, I fain would be returning
To the cove just where thou art,
While my languid breast is burning
Light and love full out my heart!
But cruel Fate my hopes is spurning,
And winds blow against my sail;
While out Death my life is burning,
I'm still floating with the gale!

CHORUS

[Pg 053]

LULA JOHNSON'S SONG

Written in Quinn Chapel, A. M. E. Church, Ninth and Walnut Streets, Louisville, Ky., Wednesday evening, October 16th, 1907, while Miss Lula E. Johnson was singing "Ave Maria."

I have heard the mock-bird singing when the orchards were in bloom,
And the sweetness of his music made the peacock don his plume;
Ay! I've heard cock-robin-redbreast chirping on a sunny day,
And the skylark soaring skywards, merrily sing his festal lay;
And the brown thrush and the bluebird thrill their little treble notes;
All the woodland songsters pouring songs of gladness from their throats—
But not one has touched so deeply, and not one has last so long
As the ever ringing cadence of sweet Lula Johnson's song!

[Pg 054]

When the breeze has ceased to whisper and the night is soft and still,
Save the awe-provoking shrilling of the ghastly whippoorwill,
As the moonbeams pour down brightly on the woodland, hill and dale,
I oft listen at my window to the queenly nightingale;
But no song of merry woodland, neither hill, nor dale, nor dell,
Has ever smote my bosom, nor has made my spirit swell,
Like the soul-inspiring music that so softly glides along
Oh! so softly and so gently in sweet Lula Johnson's song!

[Pg 055]

Oh! my soul has caught the music, as it softly floats along—
Ah! the soul-entrancing music of sweet Lula Johnson's song!
If my feet shall ever falter, it shall cheer me on my way;
Ay, sustain and give me comfort,—make my feeble spirit gay.
All we need to have, my brothers, in our war of peace 'gainst strife,
Is the cadence of sweet music sprinkled in to sweeten life;
It will sweeten all our bitters, which now seem so very long,
If we have it soft and gentle, as sweet Lula Johnson's song.

[Pg 056]

In the lonely hours of midnight, when fair Luna 'gins to pale,
I have heard her songs a-ringing, floating softly on the gale.
And I hope when dawns the morning, when I draw my fleeting breath,
When my friends are gathered 'round me, and my eyes are closed in death—
Ere you throw the sods upon me, on my never-heaving breast,
While my body's lying silent and my soul is seeking rest—
Then I'll wing straight home to glory, for the journey won't be long,
On the spirit-wafting music of sweet Lula Johnson's song!

[Pg 057]

A TRIBUTE TO DUNBAR

The sweetest singer once thou wast, but art no more;
An elf thou wast of what thou now shalt be,
Where thou art in realms of that celestial shore;
There thou shalt sing through all eternity.
We, peerless bard, bewail thy loss
And shed heart-broken tears,
Though meekly thou hast borne thy cross
And winged the flight of years!

Thrice blessed singer, wrapped in heavenly bliss,
Of earth's poor souls thy fortune who can tell?
Perchance thy splendid lot be solely this:
To change thy lute with the angel Israfel!
If so, then smite thy golden strings
With fingers nimble, strong,
Till all along fair heaven rings
With cadence of thy song!

[Pg 058]

Thee tyrant earth once held, imprisoned soul,
That suffered tortures of relentless strife,
Fair heaven now holds within her sheltered fold,
And gives thee robe and harp—eternal life!
Grant him, O God, unfaltering breath
To sing from heaven afar
A song to cheer our souls in death—
The peerless Paul Dunbar!

[Pg 059]

WERE I A BIRD

Were I a bird free born to fly
Aloof on two wee, downy wings,
My canopy would be the sky
When rosy morn its dawning springs.

Were I a bird I'd sweetly sing
Earth's vesper song in tree-tops high,
And chant the carol of the Spring
To every weary passer by.

Were I a bird, the sweetest voice
That human ear has ever heard,—
The mocking-bird would be my choice,
For he's the sweetest singing bird!

[Pg 060]

Were I a bird my life would be
In keeping with the Will divine—
I'd sing His carols full and free
In spreading oak and cony pine!

Were I a bird through air I'd roam,

Just flitting on the morning breeze,
In search of summer's sunny dome,
To live contentedly at ease.

Were I a bird I'd sing a tune
For farmers seeking shady rest
Beneath the spreading oak in June,
In swinging boughs that rock my nest.

Were I a bird I'd scale the cliff
When dawns the bleak December day,
Far from the ice and snow I'd shift
Until the fairest day in May!

Were I a bird, a mocking-bird,
The King of birdie's singing sons,
My music would fore'er be heard
As I sweet sang to cheerless ones.

Were I a bird I'd seek my rest
When jocund Day blows out his light;
In boughs that hover o'er my nest
I'd sweetly sing, "Good Night, Good Night!"

[Pg 061]

[Pg 062]

AN ODE TO ETHIOPIA

TO THE ASPIRING NEGRO YOUTH

After years of patient study and historical research, I have made the following deductions of parts played by the Ethiopian in the annals of history, under the caption, "An Ode to Ethiopia." It is true that questions will rise regarding the racial identity of some of my characters, in view of historical statements which place them with the Caucasian race; yet I firmly believe, were impartial history written, my claims would be justified. However, Time, the great Arbiter, will finally decide the equity of my claims.

I

Thou Sovran Queen of Afric's sunny strands,
I smite my lyre to sing thy praise unsung;
In strains far sweeter than seraphic bands,
A lay deep in my bosom's core is sprung.
Fair Queen, although my years as yet be young,
Deep thoughts and musings of thy history old,
Where odes and fiery epics long have hung,
Live centuries in my immortal soul
And strike sweet Lydian measures on my harp of gold.

[Pg 063]

II

Therefore, my song floats softly up to thee,
Full soft as those sweet zephyrs of the spring,
Of which it was and is and still must be,
The sweetest of aeolian strains that ring!
I breathe it on the soft sea winds which bring
Their cooling treasures from the rolling deep;
They 'fresh my brow and make my sad heart sing
And ever lure my drowsy eyes from sleep,
And bid thy vesper chorist strictest vigil keep.

III

Of all the nations that have trod the earth,
In civil states or in the forest wild,
Thou wast the first of real enlightened birth,
Born in fair Egypt on the spreading Nile.
In valleys fertile, sunny climates mild,
Thou sternly taught the "chosen" Hebrew race—
Madonna sheltered with her Holy Child,
Who came to plead man's all unworthy case,

IV

Long ere the Grecian oped his classic lids
Or mould' true beauty with artistic hands,
Thou reared upon thy plains the lofty pyramids,
With sphinx and obelisks 'decked thy burning sands.
Aye! Queen, thou then wast hailed in all the lands
Long ere vain Babel 'fused the human tongue
In dialects rude of wild barbaric bands;
Thou soared to Wisdom's realm, her sceptre wrung,
And reigned the wisest queen the nations all among.

V

Thou first taught man the mystic sciences probe,
To scan earth's apex, median, and base;
Thou, too, inscribed the belt around the globe,
And made deep tracings on its hoary face.
Well fixed each angle, arc, and line in place,
Then soared thou far into the "milky way,"
Far in the bright, celestial span of space,
Where orbs and planets all their homage pay
Unto the sun, the ever reigning "King of Day."

[Pg 065]

VI

Once in great splendor did thy Pharaohs rule
In Egypt, with her glory flown of yore;
They laid foundations of the mundane school,
And taught the art of governmental lore.
And then from thy great military store
Thou sent the gallant Hannibal to war,
Taught Romans tactics never known before,
And filled their hearts with ever-cowering awe,
And bowed their haughty heads to thy majestic law.

VII

But in this age is writ another story;
Then pen of arrogant, vain Caucasian sage,
Has thee full robbed of thy immortal glory,
And smeared thy name on History's sacred page!
Forsooth, the Book, once closed for many an age,
Is opened by thy sons—though fraught with pain—
The curtain's drawn; they rise upon the stage;
And their valiant deeds and blood shall wash the stain
As clean as April showers wash the dusty plain.

[Pg 066]

VIII

I sing now of thy heroes of today,
Thy sturdy warriors and thy gallant knights,
Who charge into the thickest of the fray,
And die for country and their free-born rights,—
For orphans, widows and their little mites.
Thus, Attucks brave, without a moment's pause,
(While reeled the Nation in her darkest plights)
Full bared his breast in Freedom's holy cause,
First fell and tore the code of Tyranny's cruel laws!

IX

Now, if my lay is yet not sweet enough,
I'll bid a gentler, subtler strain awake,
And sing of fights with Jackson on the Gulf
And Perry's hard-fought battle on the Lake!
Of fights in fen and moor and hoary brake,
On Lookout Mountain and the rolling main—
Through searing blasts of bleak December's flake,

And drenching torrents of fair April's rain:
Their valiant deeds are springing ever up amain!

[Pg 067]

X

They fought, the Union from State's Rights to free;
At Vicksburg, Wagner, and Port Hudson lent
Their aid; their deeds at Pillow and Olustee
Rose surge on surge like ocean billows rent!
The praises of the gallant Ninth and Tenth
Will ever rise and soft float to the sky—
They bagged Old Bull in Rocky Mountain tent;
Then stormed the Spanish block-housed Hills on high,
And bade the tyrant Spaniard's heaving heart to die!

XI

"High time, my Haitian islet must be free!"
Great Touissant thus his declaration tacks;
Then drives proud Frenchmen into the yawning sea—
"The bravest whites, by bravest of the blacks."
Brave Maceo pursues the Spanish packs,
And Aguinaldo, in the mountain wilds,
Pours shot and shell into the tyrants' backs—
They save her throne and Freedom on them smiles,
True heroes, and the Fathers of their sunlit Isles!

[Pg 068]

XII

Thy sons have triumphed in the Halls of State;
Hamilton and Douglas were the first to gain,
With lightning eye and tongue of thunder great,
The civic lead of thy illustrious train.
Next Bruce and Revels, senatorial twain;
John Lynch and Small emit a brilliant light,
And Langston, Pinchback, Cheatham all remain;
With Dancy, Vernon, Anderson, and White,
Liang Williams, Lyons, Terrell stand for "Civic Right."

XIII

In science's realm with Banneker we start,
Then read on Medicae's emblazoned wall:
"Dan Williams here first stitched the human heart!"
Close by the names of Curtis, Boyd, and Hall.
But others list'd and heard Invention's call,
In all its sweetness of the days of yore,
And Woods, the greatest foreman of them all,
Shouts on his voyage with Black and Baltimore:
"We come! we come! good Dame, thy region to explore!"

[Pg 069]

XIV

"I, too," said 'Monia Lewis, "can make a man!"
Then mould' his form with most artistic ease—
But all aeolian strains Blind Tom could scan,
And play as softly as the South Sea breeze
Upon his major and his minor keys!
Good Douglas gently wakes the violin's song,
And White leads home the zephyrs from the seas;
While Coleridge-Taylor with an art more strong
Full finds the key-note of Dame Nature's vesper song!

XV

If shady nooks in Poesy's realm they choose,
Or barks to drift the smooth, prosaic stream,
There Phillis held communion with the Muse,
And Chesnutt woke the "Colonel" from his dream!
Max Barber, Thompson, Knox and Fortune beam;
Great Braithwaite scales the classic mountain heights,

And Cooper, like a beacon light, will gleam;
While Dunbar, sun-like, sheds his holy lights
In dazzling splendor on his solar satellites!

[Pg 070]

XVI

These brilliant names shall never fade away:
Emblazoned in the sacred Hall of Fame,
They shall remain till dawns that direful Day,
The valid seal beneath thy sacred name.
Deft Tanner, artist, ever blazing flame,
With Pickens, Bruce and Locke of classic dell,
Old Truth and Harper, Yates and Ruffin came,
And Walker, Terrell, Williams, known so well
Long ere Marie had taught the hoary world to spell!

XVII

The learned Scarborough writes the classic Greek;
Dean Miller thinks in calculations cold;
While Cogman writes the annals of the meek,
DuBois reveals the secrets of the Soul!
But all shall read in letters gilded gold:
"Who teaches head and heart and hands, has won
The priceless boon, the guerdon of the goal,
The portion due thy most illustrious son,
Tuskegee's seer and sage, the noble Washington!"

[Pg 071]

XVIII

Thy songs inspire and cheer the human soul,
Still plodding forth in search of Beulah's vale;
Lead wondering lambs into the Master's fold,
When Flora Burgeon's notes far float the gale!
Though Patti Brown we loud applaud and hail,
And Hackley's voice is heard in every land,—
Black Patti is the queenly nightingale
That leads the chorus, as they singing stand
As Miriam stood, to sing thee to the "Promised Land!"

XIX

I see the Prophet's mandate to the land,
In golden letters glit'ring in the sky:
"Fair Ethiopia shall stretch forth her hand,
Her sons shall sway the earth long ere they die!"
As swift as lightnings with the storm-clouds fly,
To light the path celestial feet have trod:
So be thy soaring to the realms on high,
When mortal feet no more shall tread this sod,
And thy holy spirit wings its homeward flight to God!

[Pg 072]

TO J. S. B.

On seeing her December 25th, 1904, after two years' travel.

Take, fair maid, these simple lines
From my pen;
Think of strollings 'neath the pines,
Which have been—
Long and lonesome were the days
We were apart,
But may Love, now, have her sways,—
Bind heart to heart!
O'er main to isle and back to land
Have I been;
Beheld on either hand
A maiden queen:
But none with captivating charms
Like thine;

None to nestle in her arms,
Love of mine!
Charms unto thee God gave
To banish strife;
To glorify and save
One sweet life—
Take this, dear, before we part
From this bliss;
'Tis but love flowing from my heart,
Thine to kiss!

[Pg 073]

THE MAYOR'S RING

I hold a token in my hand,
A very tiny thing;
And yet within its golden band
A thousand memories cling.

Aye! thrice ten thousand memories cling
Of signal victories won,
Enshrined within this little ring,
Reward of duty done.

I ever shall this token prize,
And wear it with true grace—
The tie that binds the kindred ties
Of friendship race to race.

And when I soar full through the skies,
Yet ever will I cling
Within the gates of Paradise
This sacred little ring!

[Pg 074]

WHAT'S THE USE?

Oh! What is living but moving about,
Buoyed up with hope and crushed down by doubt?
What is the draught of breath we harp on as life?
Naught but a sip of peace, a cup full of strife—
What's the use?

What is the place we call our home, "sweet home"?
Naught but a span of space where one may roam:
Night's pitchy corner; a hard crust of bread;
Cot for your feeble limbs, pillow your head—
What's the use?

Now, what is loving but acting a fool?
And what is quitting?—Producing a rule:
Break short the flight of Dan Cupid's swift dart,
Aimed at the core of an innocent heart!
What's the use?

[Pg 075]

Say, what is marrying but getting in trouble?
Trifling 'way joy while your sorrow is double?
What, then, is your state my friend, after you've wed?
Naught but a vial of wrath poured upon your head!
What's the use?

Ah! what is batching but living a man;
Sporting and sleeping—just running his plan?
Come when he's ready, and go when he please—
Brain's full of joy, his heart is at ease—
See, that's the use!

[Pg 076]

O GOD, WILT THOU HELP ME IN SCHOOL?

On Saturday, March 1, 1902, I left Alcorn and went home in order to earn money enough to defray my expenses for the year 1902-03. I began work as soon as I reached home and labored on father's farm until the last week in June, 1902. I had seen by that time that there was nothing to be realized from that source but disheartening failure.

I then acted as agent for the "Zion Record," published by Rev. R. A. Adams, 39 St. Catherine Street, Natchez, Miss., until August 20, 1902. Knowing that there was a dormitory to be built for girls at Alcorn, I went there, hoping to get work and to be there when school opened. On arriving, I failed to get employment. I had no money. The Boarding Hall was run by boys who stayed over summer. Finding I was unemployed, they refused to let me take meals with them. There I was—friendless and penniless—without a bite of bread and nowhere to lay my head. To drive the wolf of starvation away and to keep from being devoured, I made arrangements with President Lanier to cut wood for something to eat, until school opened Sept. 2, 1902.

[Pg 077]

When school opened, the Faculty met the first day and distributed the positions to the eligibles. On going down to the Hall to take my first meal, to my surprise I found I had been awarded the position of waiter. To hold a position, or even remain on the Campus, one must matriculate within three days after school starts, if there when it opens, or after he arrives, if not. I then wrote home for the matriculation fee (\$13), as I had labored there all summer. As that letter was sealed my destiny was sealed in it. It was one that hauled my anchor of hope; yes, one to bring glad tidings of great joy and crowning success, or the gloom of disastrous failure. Thus, having my hope sealed, I wrote across it "In Haste!"

The night of its return was a dark, rainy one. As all sat discussing different events that had transpired since the new session had begun, suddenly a whistle was heard. How our hearts throbbed with gladness as we exclaimed, "There, that's the mail!" Dear reader, you cannot imagine how overjoyed I was. I knew that bag contained a letter for me; so anxious was I to receive it I did not trust anyone, but rushed to the office, and ere long my name was called.

[Pg 078]

I opened it then and there, with an eager look for a green piece of paper styled a "Money Order." I looked, but found it not. All hope vanished; joy faded; and gloom hovered over me—a feeling I never before had, nor since, and I hope never again to have, electrified my body. It was then raining at full headway: the lightnings flashed; the thunders pealed out peal after peal, each succeeding one louder than the first. By this time all had gone to bed but me. I thought thought after thought, prayed prayer after prayer, sent up cry after cry, shed tear after tear. I went to bed, but could not sleep. I then thought of this subject: "O God, Wilt Thou Help Me in School?" After writing it, my feelings were changed, the gloom was dispelled, and 'Smiling Hope' returned with joyous tidings of happiness and a blissful future.

O, God to Thee, who knowest all things,
To Thee each being his praises brings,
In heaven, or earth, or sea, or sky—
To-night to Thee I raise my cry.

[Pg 079]

To-night as Thou doth know the why,
The why I make each tearful sigh—
Hast Thou not crowned and blest my way?
Why'st Thou forsaken me to-day?

To-night while in my deepest grief,
I calmly wait Thy sweet relief;
Thou knowest I have done my best,
Oh, give my pondering soul some rest.

To-night, O God, grant all to know,
For man to reap he first must sow;
To know to have both bread and wine
He must reap all at harvest time.

To-night, O God, to Thee I plead,
Thou must protect me, guide and lead
Through this which is my darkest night
To a day when Thou shalt give me light.

[Pg 080]

To-night my soul does bleed with pain,
As murky clouds drip down the rain!
O God, heal me of this heart ache,
For thy dear Son Christ Jesus' sake.

To-night me compass grief and fears,
To-night while drip heart-broken tears;

There seems to be no one to save
My weeping soul from chilly grave.

To-night as I, Thy servant, pray
To Thee, to turn my darkness day,
And change my many blinding fears
To brighter hope for future years.

O restless soul, thou canst not sleep,
For, ship-like, thou art tossed the deep;
Aye, tossed by surge of mighty wave,
With none to share and none to save.

[Pg 081]

O God, in Thee I now believe,
Since life in Thee I do receive;
I pray Thee now with trembling fear
To my sad soul draw near, draw near.

O God, Thou knowest this night I dread,
As 'twere to number me with the dead—
I plead to Thee as by a rule,
O God, wilt Thou help me in school?

To-night, O God, the darkest gloom
Hangs o'er me like a cloud to doom;
I cry while sitting on this stool—
O God, wilt Thou help me in school?

This wide world o'er my mind doth roam,
So many miles away from home,
With thoughts thread-like wound in a spool—
O God, wilt Thou help me in school?

[Pg 082]

Dear Lord, I ask of Thee one boon,
Pure as the light of "harvest moon";
And cry as when bathed in a pool—
O God, wilt Thou help me in school?

While time and tide flow o'er my mind,
For wisdom, Lord, I ever pine;
But not in folly of a fool—
O God, wilt Thou help me in school?

Oh, may I now look up and smile,
As children, mirthful all the while,
When playing in the shade so cool—
O God, wilt Thou help me in school?

When life's long journey nears its end,
And friend so dear must part from friend,
To bathe deep in Thy living pool—
O God, wilt Thou help me in school?

[Pg 083]

Oh days of woe, oh do relent,
For all my sins I now repent,
To bathe in Siloam's ancient pool—
O God, right now help me in school.

Ah, when this stormy life is o'er,
I'll moor my bark on th' eternal shore;
Then shall I cross life's mortal pool,
And God will then help me in school!

[Pg 084]

BEHIND THE BARS

I am a pilgrim far from home,
A wanderer like Mars,
And thought my wanderings ne'er should come,
So fixed behind the bars!

I left my sunny Southern home
Beneath the silver stars;
A northward path began to roam,
Not seeking prison bars.

I sought a higher, holier life,
Which never virtue mars;
But Fate had spun a net of strife
For me behind the bars!

My mother's lowly thatched-roofed cot
My nobler senses jars;
And so I seek to aid her lot,
But not behind the bars!

[Pg 085]

'Tis said, forsooth, the poet learns
Through sufferings and wars
To sing the song which deepest burns
Behind the prison bars!

Thus I resign myself to Fate,
Regardless of her scars;
For soon she'll open wide the gate
For me behind the bars.

I plead to you, my fellow man,
For all who wear the tars;
To lend what little help you can
To us behind the bars.

O God, I breathe my prayer to Thee,
Who never sinner bars:
Set each immortal spirit free
Behind these prison bars!

[Pg 086]

HARVARD SQUARE

'Tis once in life our dreams come true,
The myths of long ago,
Quite real though fairy-like their view,
They surge with ebb and flow;
Thus thou, O haunt of childhood dreams,
More beauteous and fair
Than Nature's landscape and her streams,
Historic Harvard Square.

My soul hath panted long for thee,
Like as the wounded hart
That vainly strives himself to free
Full from the archer's dart;
And struggled oft all, all alone
With burdens hard to bear,
But now I stand at Wisdom's throne
To-night in Harvard Square.

[Pg 087]

A night most tranquil,—I was proud
My thoughts soared up afar,
To moonbeams pouring through the cloud,
Or some lone twinkling star;
And musing thus, my quickened pace
Beat to the printery's glare,
Where first I saw a friendly face
In classic Harvard Square.

"Ho! stranger, thou art wan and worn
Of journey's wear and tear;
Thy face all haggard and forlorn,
Pray tell me whence and where?"
"I came—from out—the Sunny South—
The spot—on earth—most fair,"
Fell lisping from my trembling mouth—
"In search—of—Harvard Square."

[Pg 088]

"Here rest, my friend, upon this seat,
And feel thyself at home;
I'll bring thee forth some drink and meat,
'Twill give thee back thy form."
And then I prayed the Lord to bless

Us, and that little lair—
Quite sure, I thought, I had found rest
Most sweet in Harvard Square.

"I came," I said, "o'er stony ways,
Through mountain, hill and dale,
I've felt old Sol's most scorching rays,
And braved the stormy gale;
I've done this, Printer, not for gold,
Nor diamonds rich and rare—
But for a burning in my soul
To learn in Harvard Square.

[Pg 089]

"I've journeyed long without a drink
Nor yet a bite of bread,
While in this state, O Printer, think—
No shelter for my head.
I mused, 'Hope's yet this side the grave'—
My pluck and courage there
Then made my languid heart bear brave—
Each throb for Harvard Square."

A sound soon hushed my heart's rejoice—
"The watchman on his search?"
"No!" rang the printer's gentle voice,
"Deak' Wilson in from church.
O'er there, good 'Deak'," the printer said,
"The wanderer in that chair,
Hath come to seek the lore deep laid
Up here in Harvard Square."

[Pg 090]

"It matters not how you implore,
He can no longer stay;
But on the night's 'Plutonian shore,'
Await the coming day.
I'm sorry, sir," he calmly said,
"Though hard, I guess 'tis fair,
Thou hast no place to lay thy head—
Not yet in Harvard Square!"

"Good night!" he said, and we the same—
I sighed, "Where shall I go?"
He soon returned and with him came
An officer and—Oh!
"Now sir, you take this forlorn tramp
With all his shabby ware,
And guide him safely off the 'Camp'
Of dear old Harvard Square."

[Pg 091]

As soon as locked within the jail,
Deep in a ghastly cell,
Methought I heard the bitter wail
Of all the fiends of hell!
"O God, to Thee I humbly pray
No treacherous prison snare
Shall close my soul within for aye
From dear old Harvard Square."

Just then I saw an holy Sprite
Shed all her radiant beams,
And round her shone the source of light
Of all the poets' dreams!
I plied my pen in sober use,
And spent each moment spare
In sweet communion with the Muse
I met in Harvard Square!

[Pg 092]

I cried: "Fair Goddess, hear my tale
Of sorrow, grief and pain."
That made her face an ashen pale,
But soon it glowed again!
"They placed me here; and this my crime,
Writ on their pages fair:—
'He left his sunny native clime,
And came to Harvard Square!'"

"Weep not, my son, thy way is hard,
Thy weary journey long—
But thus I choose my favorite bard
To sing my sweetest song.
I'll strike the key-note of my art
And guide with tend'rest care,
And breathe a song into thy heart
To honor Harvard Square.

[Pg 093]

"I called old Homer long ago,
And made him beg his bread
Through seven cities, ye all know,
His body fought for, dead.
Spurn not oppression's blighting sting,
Nor scorn thy lowly fare;
By them I'll teach thy soul to sing
The songs of Harvard Square.

"I placed great Dante in exile,
And Byron had his turns;
Then Keats and Shelley smote the while,
And my immortal Burns!
But thee I'll build a sacred shrine,
A store of all my ware;
By them I'll teach thy soul to sing
'A place in Harvard Square.'

[Pg 094]

"To some a store of mystic lore,
To some to shine a star:
The first I gave to Allan Poe,
The last to Paul Dunbar.
Since thou hast waited patient, long,
Now by my throne I swear
To give to thee my sweetest song
To sing in Harvard Square."

And when she gave her parting kiss
And bade a long farewell,
I sat serene in perfect bliss
As she forsook my cell.
Upon the altar-fire she poured
Some incense very rare;
Its fragrance sweet my soul assured
I'd enter Harvard Square.

[Pg 095]

Reclining on my couch, I slept
A sleep sweet and profound;
O'er me the blessed angels kept
Their vigil close around.
With dawning's smile, my fondest hope
Shone radiant and fair:
The Justice cut each chain and rope
'Tween me and Harvard Square!

*Cell No. 40, East Cambridge Jail,
Cambridge, Mass., July 26, 1910*

THE END

[Pg 096]

Though man through life so swiftly wends,
And o'er its journey runs his race;
Though rough, or smooth, or 'round the bends,
In distance putting fleetest friend:
Alas! there comes a halting place,
A place of rest—the journey's end!

[Pg 097]

Transcriber's Notes

Original variations in spelling, hyphenation, and punctuation have been retained except for the following three changes:

Page 29: A comma was added after banks for consistency.
(From the Gulf and the Lakes to the Oceans' banks,—)

Page 62: Caucasin was changed to Caucasian
(statements which place them with the Caucasian race;)

Page 65: Pharaohs changed to Pharaohs.
(Once in great splendor did thy Pharaohs rule)

Page 22: In the line: "There are homes are our natal, and nothing is fatal," the first "are" may be a typo for "our." Left unchanged.

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