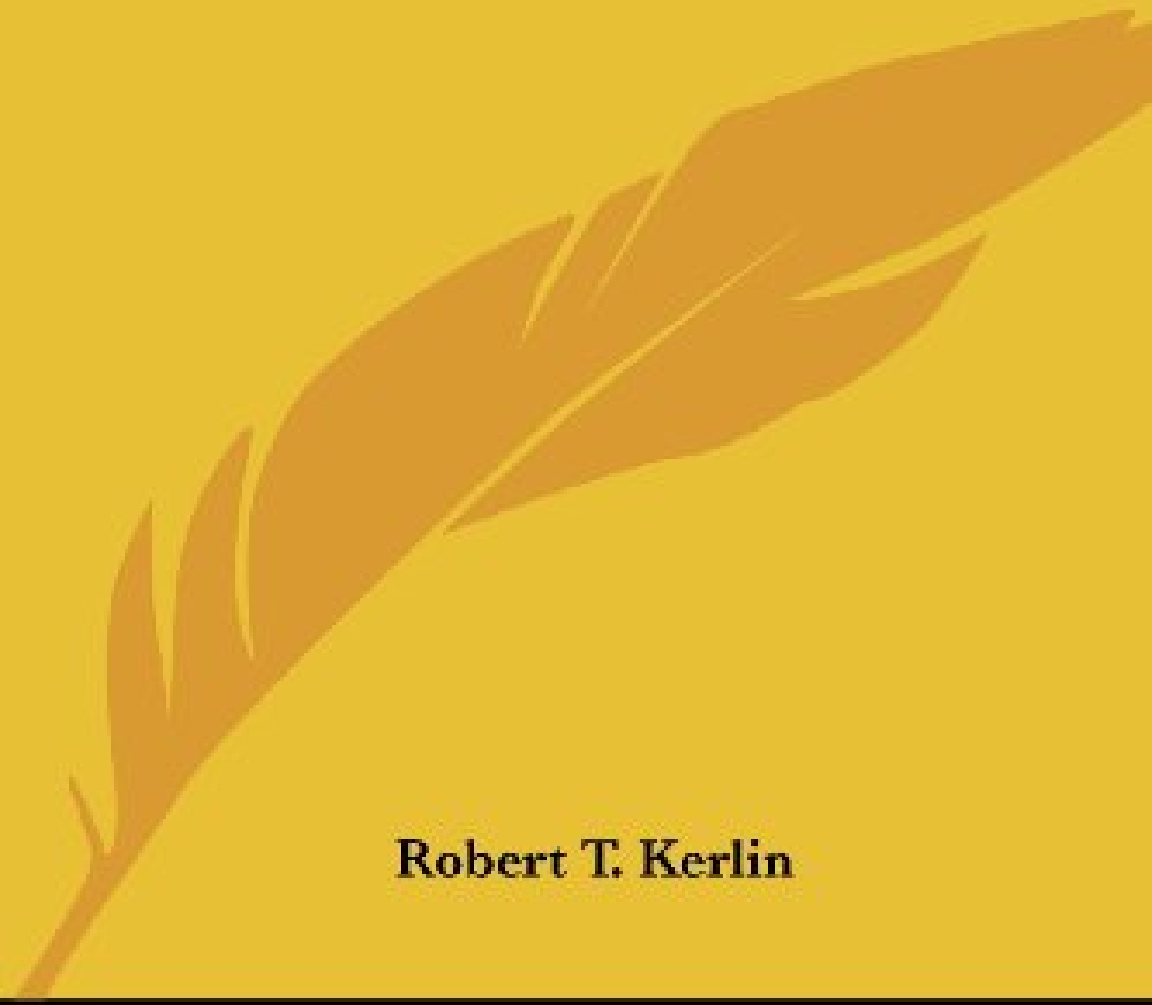
Negro Poets And Their Poems



Robert T. Kerlin

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NEGRO POETS
AND THEIR POEMS



EMANCIPATION
By
Meta Warrick Fuller

NEGRO POETS

AND THEIR POEMS

BY
ROBERT T. KERLIN
AUTHOR OF "THE VOICE OF THE NEGRO"

Still comes the Perfect Thing to man
As came the olden gods, in dreams.
J. Mord Allen.

ILLUSTRATED

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WASHINGTON, D. C.

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To the Black and Unknown Bards who gave to the world the priceless treasure of those "canticles of love and woe," the camp-meeting Spirituals; more particularly, to those untaught singers of the old plantations of the South, whose melodious lullabies to the babes of both races entered with genius-quickening power into the souls of Poe and Lanier, Dunbar and Cotter: to them, for whom any monument in stone or bronze were but mockery, I dedicate this monument of verse, budded by the children of their vision.

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PREFACE

Ad astra per aspera—that is the old Roman adage. Magnificent is it, and magnificently is it being in these days exemplified by the American Negroes, particularly by the increasing number of educated and talented American Negroes, and most particularly by those who feel the urge to express in song the emotions and aspirations of their people. A surprisingly large number is this class. Without exhausting the possibilities of selection I have quoted in this anthology of contemporary Negro poetry sixty odd writers of tolerable verse that exhibits, besides form, at least one fundamental quality of poetry, namely, passion.

The mere number, large as it is, would of course not signify by itself. Nor does the phrase "tolerable verse," cautiously chosen, seem to promise much. What this multitude means, and whether the verse be worthy of a more complimentary description, I leave to the reader's judgment. Quality of expression and character of content are of course the prepotent considerations.

While, in a preliminary section, I have passed in review the poetry of the Negro up to and including Dunbar, not neglecting the old religious songs of the plantation, or "Spirituals," and the dance, play, and nursery rhymes, or "Seculars," yet strictly speaking this is a representation of new Negro voices, an anthology of present-day Negro verse, with biographical items and critical, or at least appreciative comment.

I wish most heartily to express my obligations to the publishers and authors of the volumes I have drawn upon for selections. They are named in the Index and Biographical and Bibliographical Notes at the end of the text. But for the reader's convenience I collect their names here:

Richard E. Badger, publisher of Walter Everette Hawkins's *Chords and Discords*; A. B. Caldwell, Atlanta, Ga., publisher of Sterling M. Means' *The Deserted Cabin and Other Poems*; the Cornhill Company, publishers of

Waverley Turner Carmichael's *From the Heart of a Folk*; Joseph S. Cotter's *The Band of Gideon*; Georgia Douglas Johnson's *The Heart of a Woman*; Charles Bertram Johnson's *Songs of My People*; James Weldon Johnson's *Fifty Years and Other Poems*; Joshua Henry Jones's *Poems of the Four Seas*; Dodd, Mead and Company, publishers of Dunbar's *Poems*; the Grafton Press, publishers of H. Cordelia Ray's *Poems*; Harcourt, Brace & Company, publishers of W. E. Burghardt DuBois's *Darkwater*; Pritchard and Ovington's *The Upward Path*; the Macmillan Company, publishers of Thomas W. Talley's *Negro Folk Rhymes*; the Neale Publishing Company, publishers of Kelley Miller's *Out of the House of Bondage*; J. L. Nichols & Company, Naperville, Ill., publishers of Mrs. Dunbar-Nelson's *The Dunbar Speaker and Entertainer*, and *The Life and Works of Paul Laurence Dunbar*; the Stratford Company, publishers of Joshua Henry Jones's *The Heart of the World and Other Poems*; and Leslie Pinckney Hill's *The Wings of Oppression*. It is with their kind permission I am privileged to use selections from the books named. To *The Crisis*, *The Favorite Magazine*, and *The Messenger*, I am indebted for several selections, which I gratefully acknowledge.

To readers who are disposed to study the poetry of the Negro I would commend Dr. James Weldon Johnson's *The Book of American Negro Poetry* (Harcourt, Brace & Co.) and Mr. Arthur A. Schomburg's *A Bibliographical Checklist of American Negro Poetry* (Charles F. Hartman, New York). I am indebted to both these books and authors. To Mr. Schomburg I am also indebted for the loan of many of the pictures of the earlier poets.

R. T. K.

West Chester, Pa.
March 22, 1923.

NEGRO POETS AND THEIR POEMS

CHAPTER I

THE NEGROES HERITAGE OF SONG

As an empire may grow up within an empire without observation so a republic of letters within a republic of letters. That thing is happening today in this land of ours. A literature of significance on many accounts, and not without various and considerable merits. Its producers are Negroes. Culture, talent, genius—or something very like it—are theirs. Nor is it "the mantle of Dunbar" they wrap themselves in, but an unborrowed singing robe, that better fits "the New Negro." The list of names in poetry alone would stretch out, were I to start telling them over, until I should bring suspicion upon myself as no trustworthy reporter. Besides, the mere names would mean nothing, since, as intimated, this little republic has grown up unobserved in our big one.

It may be more for the promise held forth by their thin little volumes than for the intrinsic merit of their performance that we should esteem the verse-makers represented in this survey of contemporary Negro poetry. Yet on many grounds they should receive candid attention, both from the students of literature and the students of sociology. Recognition of real literary merit will be accorded by the one class of students, and recognition of new aspects of the most serious race problem of the ages will be forced upon the second class. Justification enough for the present survey and exhibition will be acknowledged by all who are earnestly concerned either with literature or with life.

Perhaps, unconsciously, in my comments and estimates I have not steadfastly kept before me absolute standards of poetry. But where and when was this ever done? Doubtless in critiques of master poets by master critics, and only there. In writing of contemporary verse, by courtesy called poetry, we compromise, our estimates are relative, we make allowances, our approvals and disapprovals are toned according to the known circumstances of production. And this is right.

If the prospective reader opens this volume with the demand in his mind for novelty of language, form, imagery, idea—novelty and quaintness, perhaps amusing "originality", or grotesqueness—let him reflect how unreasonable a similar demand on the part of English critics was a century ago relative to the beginnings of American poetry. Were not American poets products of the same culture as their contemporaries in England? What other language had they than the language of Shakespeare and Wordsworth, Keats and Tennyson? The same is essentially true of the American Negro—or the Negro American, if you choose. He is the heir of Anglo-Saxon culture, he has been nurtured in the same spiritual soil as his contemporary of the white race, the same traditions of language, form, imagery, and idea are his. Everything possible has been done to stamp out his own African traditions and native propensities. Therefore, let no unreasonable demand be laid upon these Negro rhymers.

Notwithstanding, something distinctive, and something uniquely significant, may be discerned in these verse productions to reward the perusal. But this may not be the reader's chief reward. That may be his discovery, that, after all, a wonderful likeness rather than unlikeness to the poetry of other races looks forth from this poetry of the children of Ham. A valuable result would this be, should it follow.

Before attempting a survey of the field of contemporary

verse it will advantage us to cast a backward glance upon the poetic traditions of the Negro, to see what is the present-day Negro poet's heritage of song. These traditions will be reviewed in two sections: 1. Untaught Melodies; 2. The Poetry of Art. This backward glance will comprehend all that was sung or written by colored people from Jupiter Hammon to Paul Laurence Dunbar.

I. Untaught Melodies

The Negro might well be expected to exhibit a gift for poetry. His gift for oratory has long been acknowledged. The fact has been accepted without reflection upon its significance. It should have been foreseen that because of the close kinship between oratory and poetry the Negro would some day, with more culture, achieve distinction in the latter art, as he had already achieved distinction in the former art. The endowments which make for distinction in these two great kindred arts, it must also be remarked, have not been properly esteemed in the Negro. In other races oratory and poetry have been accepted as the tokens of noble qualities of character, lofty spiritual gifts. Such they are, in all races. They spring from mankind's supreme spiritual impulses, from mankind's loftiest aspirations—the aspirations for freedom, for justice, for virtue, for honor and distinction.

That these impulses, these aspirations, and these endowments are in the American Negro and are now exhibiting themselves in verse—it is this I wish to show to the skeptically minded. It will readily be admitted that the Negro nature is endowed above most others, if not all others, in fervor of feeling, in the completeness of self-surrender to emotion. Hence we see that marvelous display of rhythm in the individual and in the group. This capacity of submission to a higher harmony, a grander power, than self, affords the explanation of mankind's highest reaches of thought, supreme insights, and noblest expressions.

Rhythm is its manifestation. It is the most central and compulsive law of the universe. The rhythmic soul falls into harmony and co-operation with the universal creative energy. It therefore becomes a creative soul. Rhythm visibly takes hold of the Negro and sways his entire being. It makes him one with the universal Power that Goethe describes, in famous lines, as "at the roaring loom of time, weaving for God the garment thou seest him by."

But fervor of feeling must have some originating cause. That cause is a conception—the vivid, concrete presentation of an object or idea to the mind. The Negro has this endowment also. Ideas enter his mind with a vividness and power which betoken an extraordinary faculty of imagination. The graphic originality of language commonly exhibited by the Negro would be sufficient proof of this were other proof wanting. No one will deny to the Negro this gift. Whoever has listened to a colored preacher's sermon, either of the old or the new school, will recall perhaps more than one example of poetic phrasing, more than one word-picture, that rendered some idea vivid beyond vanishing. It no doubt has been made, in the ignorant or illiterate, an object of jest, just as the other two endowments have been; but these three gifts are the three supreme gifts of the poet, and the poet is the supreme outcome of the race: power of feeling, power of imagination, power of expression—and these make the poet.

1. The Spirituals

As a witness of the Negro's untutored gift for song there are the Spirituals, his "canticles of love and woe," chanted wildly, in that darkness which only a few rays from heaven brightened. Since they afford, as it were, a background for the song of cultured art which now begins to appear, I must here give a word to these crude old plantation songs. They are one of the most notable contributions of any people,

similarly circumstanced, to the world's treasury of song, altogether the most appealing. Their significance for history and for art—more especially for art—awaits interpretation. There are signs that this interpretation is not far in the future. Dvorak, the Bohemian, aided by the Negro composer, Harry T. Burleigh, may have heralded, in his "New World Symphony," the consummate achievement of the future which shall be entirely the Negro's. Had Samuel Coleridge-Taylor been an American instead of an English Negro, this theme rather than the Indian theme might have occupied his genius—the evidence whereof is that, removed as he was from the scenes of plantation life and the tribulations of the slaves, yet that life and those tribulations touched his heart and found a place, though a minor one, in his compositions.

But the sister art of poetry may anticipate music in the great feat of embodying artistically the yearning, suffering, prayerful soul of the African in those centuries when he could only with patience endure and trust in God—and wail these mournfullest of melodies. Some lyrical drama like "Prometheus Bound," but more touching as being more human; some epic like "Paradise Lost," but nearer to the common heart of man, and more lyrical; some "Divina Commedia," that shall be the voice of those silent centuries of slavery, as Dante's poem was the voice of the long-silent epoch preceding it, or some lyrical "passion play" like that of Oberammergau, is the not improbable achievement of some descendant of the slaves.

In a poem of tender appeal, James Weldon Johnson has celebrated the "black and unknown bards," who, without art, and even without letters, produced from their hearts, weighed down with sorrows, the immortal Spirituals:

O black and unknown bards of long ago,
How came your lips to touch the sacred fire?
How, in your darkness, did you come to know
The power and beauty of the minstrel's lyre?

Who first from midst his bonds lifted his eyes?
Who first from out the still watch, lone and long,
Feeling the ancient faith of prophets rise
Within his dark-kept soul, burst into song?

So begins this noble tribute to the nameless natural poets whose hearts, touched as a harp by the Divine Spirit, gave forth "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," and "Nobody Knows de Trouble I See," "Steal Away to Jesus," and "Roll, Jordan, Roll."

Great praise does indeed rightly belong to that black slave-folk who gave to the world this treasure of religious song. To the world, I say, for they belong as truly to the whole world as do the quaint and incomparable animal stories of Uncle Remus. Their appeal is to every human heart, but especially to the heart that has known great sorrow and which looks to God for help.

It is only of late their meaning has begun to dawn upon us—their tragic, heart-searching meaning. Who in hearing these Spirituals sung to-day by the heirs of their creators can doubt what they meant when they were wailed in the quarters or shouted in wild frenzy in the camp-meetings of the slaves? Even the broken, poverty-stricken English adds infinitely to the pathos:

I'm walking on borrowed land,
This world ain't none of my home.

We'll stand the storm, it won't be long.

Oh, walk together children,
Don't get weary.

My heavenly home is bright and fair,
Nor pain nor death can enter there.

Oh, steal away and pray,
I'm looking for my Jesus.

Oh, freedom! oh, freedom! oh, freedom over me!
An' before I'd be a slave,
I'll be buried in my grave,
And go home to my Lord an' be free.

Not a word here but had two meanings for the slave, a worldly one and a spiritual one, and only one meaning, the spiritual one, for the master—who gladly saw this religious frenzy as an emotional safety-valve.

In certain aspects these Spirituals suggest the songs of Zion, the Psalms. Trouble is the mother of song, particularly of religious song. In trouble the soul cries out to God—"a very present help in time of trouble." The Psalms and the Spirituals alike rise *de profundis*. But in one respect the songs of the African slaves differ from the songs of Israel in captivity: there is no prayer for vengeance in the Spirituals, no vindictive spirit ever even suggested. We can but wonder now at this. For slavery at its best was degrading, cruel, and oppressive. Yet no imprecation, such as mars so many a beautiful Psalm, ever found its way into a plantation Spiritual. A convincing testimony this to that spirit in the African slave which Christ, by precept and example, sought to establish in His disciples. If the Negro in our present day is growing bitter toward the white race, it behooves us to inquire why it is so, in view of his indisputable patience, meekness, and good-nature. We might find in our present régime a more intolerable cruelty than belonged even to slavery, if we investigated honestly. There is certainly a bitter and vindictive tone in much of the Afro-American verse now appearing in the colored press. For both races it augurs ill.

But I have not yet indicated the precise place of these Spirituals in the world's treasury of song. They have a close kinship with the Psalms but a yet closer one with the chanted prayers of the primitive Christians, the Christians when they were the outcasts of the Roman Empire when to be a Christian was to be a martyr. In secret places, in

catacombs, they sent up their triumphant though sorrowful songs, they chanted their litanies

> "—that came
> Like the volcano's tongue of flame
> Up from the burning core below—
> The canticles of love and woe."

So indeed came the Spirituals of the African slave. These songs might in truth, to use a figure of the old poets, be called the melodious tears of those who wailed them. An African proverb says, "We weep in our hearts like the tortoise." In their hearts—so wept the slaves, silently save for these mournful cries in melody. Without means of defense, save a nature armored with faith, when assailed, insulted, oppressed, they could but imitate the tortoise when he shuts himself up in his



Inspiration
By Meta Warrick Fuller

shell and patiently takes the blows that fall. The world knew not then, nor fully knows now—partly because of African buoyancy, pliability, and optimism—what tears they wept. These Spirituals are the golden vials spoken of in Holy Writ, "full of odors, which are the prayers of saints"—an everlasting memorial before the throne of God. Other vials there are, different from these, and they, too, are at God's right hand.

A Negro sculptor, Mrs. Meta Warrick Fuller, not knowing of this proverb about the tortoise which has only recently been brought from Africa, but simply interpreting Negro life in America, has embodied the very idea of the

African saying in bronze. Under the title “Secret Sorrow” a man is represented as eating his own heart.

The interpretation in art of the Spirituals, or a poetry of art developed along the lines and in the spirit of those songs, is something we may expect the black singers of no distant day to produce. Already we have many a poem that offers striking reminiscences of them.

2. The Seculars

But other songs the Negro has which are more noteworthy from the point of view of art than the Spirituals: songs that are richer in artistic effects, more elaborate in form, more varied and copious in expression. These are the Negro’s secular songs and rhymes, his dance, play, and love-making songs, his gnomic and nursery rhymes.[1] It is not exaggeration to say that in rhythmic and melodic effects they surpass any other body of folk-verse whatsoever. In wit, wisdom, and quaint turns of humor no other folk-rhymes equal them. Prolific, too, in such productions the race seems to have been, since so many at this late day were to be found.

It comes not within the scope of this anthology to include any of these folk-rhymes of the elder day, but a few specimens seem necessary to indicate to the young Negro who would be a poet his rich heritage of song and to the white reader what essentially poetic traits the Negro has by nature. It was “black and unknown bards,” slaves, too, who sang or said these rhymes:

Oh laugh an’ sing an’ don’t git tired.
We’s all gwine home, some Mond’y,
To de honey pond an’ fritter trees;
An’ ev’ry day’ll be Sund’y.

Pride, too, and a sense of values had the Negro, bond or free:

My name's Ran, I wuks in de san';
But I'd druther be a Nigger dan a po' white man.

Gwinter hitch my oxes side by side,
An' take my gal fer a big fine ride.

After a description of anticipated pleasures and a comic interlude in dialogue, the ballad from which these two couplets are taken concludes with that varied repetition of the first stanza which we find so effective in the poems of art:

I'd druther be a Nigger, an' plow ole Beck,
Dan a white Hill Billy wid his long red neck.

Song or rhyme was, as ever, heart's ease to the Negro in every trouble. Here are two rhymes that "pack up" and put away two common troubles:

She writ me a letter
As long as my eye.
An' she say in dat letter:
"My Honey!—Good-by!"

Dem whitefolks say dat money talk.
If it talk lak dey tell,
Den ev'ry time it come to Sam,
It up an' say: "Farewell!"

Going to the nursery—it was the one room of the log cabin, or the great out-of-doors—we find the old-time Negro's head filled with a *Mother Goose* more enchanting than any printed and pictured one in the "great house" of the white child:

W'en de big owl whoops,
An' de screech owl screeks,
An' de win' makes a howlin' sound;
You liddle woolly heads
Had better kiver up,

Caze de “hants” is comin’ ’round.

A, B, C,
Doubled down D;
I’se so lazy you cain’t see me.

A, B, C,
Doubled down D;
Lazy Chilluns gits hick’ry tea.

****

Buck an’ Berry run a race,
Buck fall down an’ skin his face.

Buck an’ Berry in a stall;
Buck, he try to eat it all.

Buck, he e’t too much, you see.
So he died wid choleree.

But it is in the dance songs that rhythm in its perfection makes itself felt and that repetends are employed with effects which another Poe or Lanier might appropriate for supreme art. A lively scene and gay frolicsome movements are conjured up by the following dance songs:

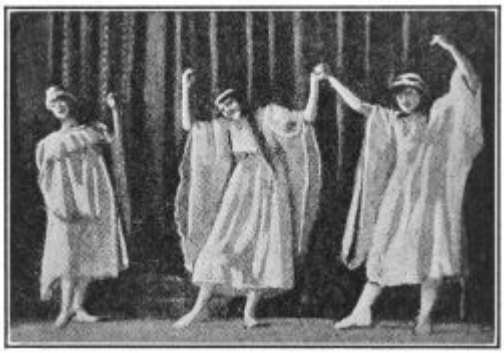
CHICKEN IN THE BREAD TRAY

“Auntie, will yo’ dog bite?”—
“No, Chile! No!”
Chicken in de bread tray
A makin’ up dough.

“Auntie, will yo’ broom hit?”—
“Yes, Chile!” Pop!
Chicken in de bread tray;
“Flop! Flop! Flop!”

“Auntie, will yo’ oven bake?”—
“Yes. Jes fry!”—
“What’s dat chicken good fer?”—
“Pie! Pie! Pie!”

"Auntie, is yo' pie good?"—
"Good as you could 'spec'."
Chicken in de bread tray;
"Peck! Peck! Peck!"



Dancers

JUBA

Juba dis, an' Juba dat,
Juba skin dat Yaller Cat. Juba! Juba!

Juba jump an' Juba sing.
Juba cut dat Pigeon's Wing. Juba! Juba!

Juba, kick off Juba's shoe.
Juba, dance dat Jubal Jew. Juba! Juba!

Juba, whirl dat foot about.
Juba, blow dat candle out. Juba! Juba!

Juba circle, Raise de Latch.
Juba do dat Long Dog Scratch. Juba! Juba!

Out of the pastime group I take a rhyme that is typically full of character, delicious in its wit and proverbial lore:

FATTENING FROGS FOR SNAKES

You needn' sen' my gal hoss apples,
You needn' sen' her 'lasses candy;

She would keer fer de lak o' you,
Ef you'd sen' her apple brandy.

W'y don't you git some common sense?
Jes git a liddle! Oh fer land sakes!
Quit yo' foolin', she hain't studyin' you!
Youse jes fattenin' frogs fer snakes!

In the love songs one finds that mingling of pathos and humor so characteristic of the Negro. The one example I shall give lacks nothing of art—some unknown Dunbar, some black Bobbie Burns, must have composed it:

SHE HUGGED ME AND KISSED ME

I see'd her in de Springtime,
I see'd her in de Fall,
I see'd her in de Cotton patch,
A cameing from de Ball.

She hug me, an' she kiss me,
She wrung my han' an' cried.
She said I wus de sweetes' thing
Dat ever lived or died.

She hug me an' she kiss me.
Oh Heaben! De touch o' her han'!
She said I wus de puttiest thing
In de shape o' mortal man.

I told her dat I love her,
Dat my love wus bed-cord strong;
Den I axed her w'en she'd have me,
An' she jes say, "Go long!"

In a very striking way these folk-songs of the plantation suggest the old English folk-songs of unknown authorship and origin—the ancient traditional ballads, long despised and neglected, but ever living on and loved in the hearts of the people. This unstudied poetry of the people, the unlettered common folk, had supreme virtues, the

elemental and universal virtues of simplicity, sincerity, veracity. It had the power, in an artificial age, to bring poetry back to reality, to genuine emotion, to effectiveness, to the common interests of mankind. Simple and crude as it was it had a merit unknown to the polished verse of the schools. Potential Negro poets might do well to ponder this fact of literary history. There is nothing more precious in English literature than this crude old poetry of the people.

There is a book of rhymes which, every Christmas season, is the favorite gift, the most gladly received, of all that Santa Claus brings. Nor so at Christmas only; it is a perennial pleasure, a boon to all children, young and old in years. This book is *Mother Goose's Melodies*. How many "immortal" epics of learned poets it has outlived! How many dainty volumes of polished lyrics has this humble book of "rhymes" seen vanish to the dusty realms of dark oblivion! In every home it has a place and is cherished. Its contents are better known and more loved than the contents of any other book. Untutored, nameless poets, nature-inspired, gave this priceless boon to all generations of children, and to all sorts and conditions—an immortal book. As a life-long teacher and student of poetry, I venture, with no fear, the assertion that from no book of verse in our language can the whole art of poetry be so effectively learned as from *Mother Goose's Melodies*. Every device of rhyme, and melody, and rhythm, and tonal color is exemplified here in a manner to produce the effects which all the great artists in verse aim at. This book that we all love—and patronize—is the greatest melodic triumph in the white man's literature.

Of like merit and certainly no less are the folk rhymes and songs, both the Spirituals and the Seculars, of the Negro. Their art potentialities are immense. Well may the aspirant to fame in poetry put these songs in his memory and peruse them as Burns did the old popular songs of Scotland, to make them yield suggestions of songs at the

highest reach of art.

II. The Poetry of Art

But another heritage of song, not so crude nor yet so precious as the Spirituals and the Folk Rhymes has the Negro of to-day. That heritage comes from enslaved and emancipated men and women who by some means or another learned to write and publish their compositions. Although the intrinsic value of this heritage of song cannot be rated high, yet, considering the circumstances of its production, the colored people of America may well take pride in it. Its incidental value can hardly be overestimated. In it is the most infallible record we have of the Negro's inner life in bondage and in the years following emancipation. Never broken was the tradition from Jupiter Hammon and Phillis Wheatley, in the last half of the eighteenth century, to Paul Laurence Dunbar and Joseph Seamon Cotter, in the end of the nineteenth, but constantly enriched by an increasing number of men and women who sought in the form of verse a record of their sufferings and yearnings, consolations and hopes.

1. Jupiter Hammon and Phillis Wheatley

Jupiter Hammon was the first American Negro poet of whom any record exists. His first extant poem, "An Evening Thought," bears the date of 1760, preceding therefore any poem by Phillis Wheatley, his contemporary, by nine years. Following the title of the poem this information is given: "Composed by Jupiter Hammon, a Negro belonging to Mr. Lloyd, of Queen's Village, on Long Island, the 25th of December, 1760." With this poem of eighty-eight rhyming lines, printed on a double-column broadside, entered the American Negro into American literature. For that reason alone, were his stanzas inferior to what they are, I should include some of them in this anthology. But the truth is that, as "religious" poetry goes,

or went in the eighteenth century—and Hammon's poetry is all religious—this Negro slave may hold up his head in almost any company.

Nevertheless, the reader must not expect poetry in the typical stanzas I shall quote, but just some remarkable rhyming for an African slave, untaught and without precedent. "An Evening Thought" runs in such stanzas as the following:

Dear Jesus give thy Spirit now,
  Thy Grace to every Nation,
That han't the Lord to whom we bow,
  The Author of Salvation.

From "An Address to Miss Phillis Wheatley, Ethiopian Poetess," I take the following as a representative stanza:

While thousands muse with earthly toys,
  And range about the street,
Dear Phillis, seek for heaven's joys,
  Where we do hope to meet.

"A Poem for Children, with Thoughts on Death," contains such stanzas as this:

'Tis God alone can make you wise,
  His wisdom's from above,
He fills the soul with sweet supplies
  By his redeeming love.

Two stanzas from "A Dialogue, Entitled, The Kind Master and the Dutiful Servant," will show how that poem runs:

MASTER

Then will the happy day appear,
  That virtue shall increase;
Lay up the sword and drop the spear,
  And Nations seek for peace.

SERVANT

Then shall we see the happy end,
  Tho' still in some distress;
That distant foes shall act like friends,
  And leave their wickedness.

Jupiter Hammon's birth and death dates are uncommemorated because unknown. Unknown, too, is his grave. But to his memory, no less than to that of Crispus Attucks, there should somewhere be erected a monument.

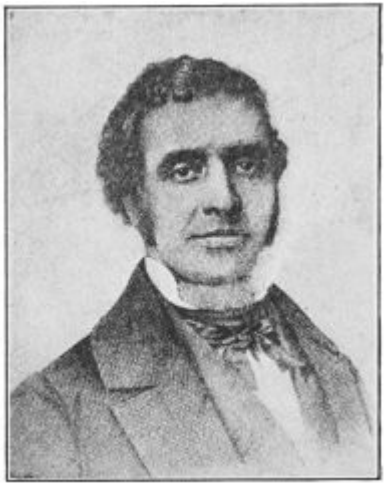


Phillis Wheatley

Since Stedman included in his *Library of American Literature* a picture of Phillis Wheatley and specimens of her verse, a few white persons, less than scholars and more than general readers, knew, when Dunbar appeared, that there had been at least one poetic predecessor in his race. But the long stretch between the slave-girl rhymer of Boston and the elevator-boy singer of Dayton was desert. They knew not of George Moses Horton of North Carolina, who found publication for *Poems by a Slave* in 1829, and *Poetical Works* in 1845. Horton, who learned to

write by his own efforts, is said to have been so fond of poetry that he would pick up any chance scraps of paper he saw, hoping to find verses. They knew not of Ann Plato, of Hartford, Connecticut, a slave girl who published a book of twenty poems in 1841; nor of Frances Ellen Watkins (afterwards Harper) whose *Poems on Miscellaneous Subjects* appeared in 1857, reaching a circulation of ten thousand copies; nor of Charles L. Reason, whose poem entitled *Freedom*, published in 1847, voiced the cry of millions of fellow blacks in bonds.

2. Charles L. Reason



Charles L. Reason

Thus bursts forth Reason's poetic cry, not unlike that of the crude Spirituals:

O Freedom! Freedom! Oh, how oft
Thy loving children call on Thee!
In wailings loud and breathings soft,
Beseeching God, Thy face to see.

With agonizing hearts we kneel,

While 'round us howls the oppressor's cry,—
And suppliant pray that we may feel
The ennobling glances of Thine eye.

The apostrophe continues through forty-two stanzas, commemorating, with appreciative knowledge of history, the countries, battle fields, and heroes associated with the advance of freedom. After an arraignment of civil rulers and a recreant priesthood, the learned and noble apostrophe thus concludes:

Oh, purify each holy court!
The ministry of law and light!
That man no longer may be bought
To trample down his brother's right.

We lift imploring hands to Thee!
We cry for those in prison bound!
Oh, in Thy strength come! Liberty!
And 'stablish right the wide world round.

We pray to see Thee, face to face:
To feel our souls grow strong and wide:
So ever shall our injured race
By Thy firm principles abide.

3. George Moses Horton

By some means or other, self-guided, the North Carolina slave, George Moses Horton, learned to read and write. His first book, *Poems by a Slave*, appeared in 1829, and other books followed until 1865. Like Hammon, and true to his race, Horton is religious, and, like Reason, and again true to his race, he loves freedom. I choose but a few stanzas to illustrate his quality as a poet:

Alas! and am I born for this,
  To wear this slavish chain?
Deprived of all created bliss,
  Through hardship, toil, and pain?

How long have I in bondage lain,
  And languished to be free!
Alas! and must I still complain,
  Deprived of liberty?
        ****
Come, Liberty! thou cheerful sound,
  Roll through my ravished ears;
Come, let my grief in joys be drowned,
  And drive away my fears.

4. Frances Ellen Watkins Harper

A female poet of the same period as Horton wrote in the same strain about freedom:

Make me a grave wher'er you will,
In a lowly plain or a lofty hill;
Make it among earth's humblest graves,
But not in a land where men are slaves.

Like Horton, she lived to see her prayer for freedom answered. Of the Emancipation Proclamation she burst forth in joy:

It shall flash through coming ages,
  It shall light the distant years;
And eyes now dim with sorrow
  Shall be brighter through their tears.

This slave woman was Frances Ellen Watkins, by marriage Harper. Mrs. Harper attained to a greater popularity than any poet of her race prior to Dunbar. As many as ten thousand copies of some of her poems were in circulation in the middle of the last century. Her success was not unmerited. Many singers of no greater merit have enjoyed greater celebrity. She was thoroughly in the fashion of her times, as Phillis Wheatley was in the yet prevalent fashion of Pope, or, perhaps more accurately, Cowper. The models in the middle of the nineteenth century were Mrs. Hemans, Whittier, and Longfellow. It is

in their manner she writes. A serene and beautiful Christian spirit tells a moral tale in fluent ballad stanzas, not without poetic phrasing. In all she beholds, in all she experiences, there is a lesson. There is no grief without its consolation. Serene resignation breathes through all her poems—at least through those written after her freedom was achieved. Illustrations of these traits abound. A few stanzas from *Go Work in My Vineyard* will suffice. After bitter disappointments in attempting to fulfil the command the "lesson" comes thus sweetly expressed:



F. E. W. Harper

My hands were weak, but I reached them out
To feebler ones than mine,
And over the shadows of my life
Stole the light of a peace divine.

Oh, then my task was a sacred thing,
How precious it grew in my eyes!
'Twas mine to gather the bruised grain
For the Lord of Paradise.

And when the reapers shall lay their grain
On the floors of golden light,
I feel that mine with its broken sheaves

Shall be precious in His sight.

Though thorns may often pierce my feet,
And the shadows still abide,
The mists will vanish before His smile,
There will be light at eventide.

How successfully Mrs. Harper could draw a lesson from the common objects or occurrences of the world about us may be illustrated by the following poem:

TRUTH

A rock, for ages, stern and high,
Stood frowning 'gainst the earth and sky,
And never bowed his haughty crest
When angry storms around him prest.
Morn, springing from the arms of night,
Had often bathed his brow with light,
And kissed the shadows from his face
With tender love and gentle grace.

Day, pausing at the gates of rest,
Smiled on him from the distant West,
And from her throne the dark-browed Night
Threw round his path her softest light.
And yet he stood unmoved and proud,
Nor love, nor wrath, his spirit bowed;
He bared his brow to every blast
And scorned the tempest as it passed.

One day a tiny, humble seed—
The keenest eye would hardly heed—
Fell trembling at that stern rock's base,
And found a lowly hiding-place.
A ray of light, and drop of dew,
Came with a message, kind and true;
They told her of the world so bright,
Its love, its joy, and rosy light,
And lured her from her hiding-place,
To gaze upon earth's glorious face.

So, peeping timid from the ground,
She clasped the ancient rock around,
And climbing up with childish grace,
She held him with a close embrace;
Her clinging was a thing of dread;
Where'er she touched a fissure spread,
And he who'd breasted many a storm
Stood frowning there, a mangled form.

A Truth, dropped in the silent earth,
May seem a thing of little worth,
Till, spreading round some mighty wrong,
It saps its pillars proud and strong,
And o'er the fallen ruin weaves
The brightest blooms and fairest leaves.

The story of Vashti, who dared heroically to disobey her monarch-husband, is as well told in simple ballad measure as one may find it. I give it entire:

VASHTI

She leaned her head upon her hand
  And heard the King's decree—
"My lords are feasting in my halls;
  Bid Vashti come to me.

"I've shown the treasures of my house,
  My costly jewels rare,
But with the glory of her eyes
  No rubies can compare.

"Adorn'd and crown'd I'd have her come,
  With all her queenly grace,
And, 'mid my lords and mighty men,
  Unveil her lovely face.

"Each gem that sparkles in my crown,
  Or glitters on my throne,
Grows poor and pale when she appears,
  My beautiful, my own!"

All waiting stood the chamberlains
To hear the Queen's reply.
They saw her cheek grow deathly pale,
But light flash'd to her eye:

"Go, tell the King," she proudly said,
"That I am Persia's Queen,
And by his crowds of merry men
I never will be seen.

"I'll take the crown from off my head
And tread it 'neath my feet,
Before their rude and careless gaze
My shrinking eyes shall meet.

"A queen unveil'd before the crowd!—
Upon each lip my name!—
Why, Persia's women all would blush
And weep for Vashti's shame!

"Go back!" she cried, and waved her hand,
And grief was in her eye:
"Go, tell the King," she sadly said,
"That I would rather die."

They brought her message to the King;
Dark flash'd his angry eye;
'Twas as the lightning ere the storm
Hath swept in fury by.

Then bitterly outspoke the King,
Through purple lips of wrath—
"What shall be done to her who dares
To cross your monarch's path?"

Then spake his wily counsellors—
"O King of this fair land!
From distant Ind to Ethiop,
All bow to thy command.

"But if, before thy servants' eyes,
This thing they plainly see,

That Vashti doth not heed thy will
  Nor yield herself to thee,

"The women, restive 'neath our rule,
  Would learn to scorn our name,
And from her deed to us would come
  Reproach and burning shame.

"Then, gracious King, sign with thy hand
  This stern but just decree,
That Vashti lay aside her crown,
  Thy Queen no more to be."

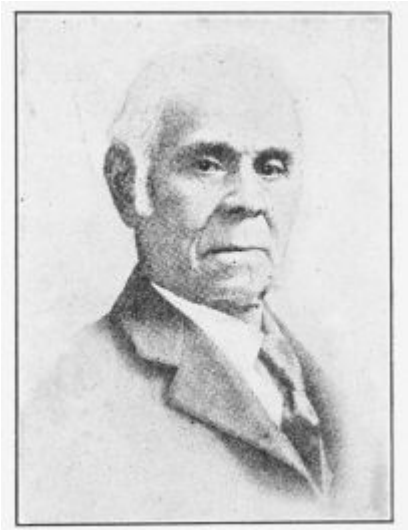
She heard again the King's command,
  And left her high estate;
Strong in her earnest womanhood,
  She calmly met her fate,

And left the palace of the King,
  Proud of her spotless name—
A woman who could bend to grief
  But would not bow to shame.

Those last stanzas are quite as noble as any that one may find in the poets whom I named as setting the American fashion in the era of Mrs. Harper. The poems of this gentle, sweet-spirited Negro woman deserve a better fate than has overtaken them.

5. James Madison Bell and Albery A. Whitman

Although this is not a history of American Negro poetry, yet a brief notice must be given at this point to two other writers too important to be omitted even from a swift survey like the present one. They are J. Madison Bell and Albery A. Whitman.



James Madison Bell

Bell, anti-slavery orator and friend of John Brown's, was a prolific writer of eloquent verse. His original endowments were considerable. Denied an education in boyhood, he learned a trade and in manhood at night-schools gained access to the wisdom of books. He became a master of expression both with tongue and pen. His long period of productivity covers the history of his people from the decade before Emancipation till the death of Dunbar. Bell's themes are lofty and he writes with fervid eloquence. There is something of Byronic power in the roll of his verse. An extract from *The Progress of Liberty* will be representative, though an extract cannot show either the maintenance of power or the abundance of resources:

O Liberty, what charm so great!
  One radiant smile, one look of thine
Can change the drooping bondsman's fate,
  And light his brow with hope divine.

His manhood, wrapped in rayless gloom,
  At thy approach throws off its pall,

And rising up, as from the tomb,
  Stands forth defiant of the thrall.
No tyrant's power can crush the soul
  Illumed by thine inspiring ray;
The fiendishness of base control
  Flies thy approach as night from day.

Ride onward, in thy chariot ride,
  Thou peerless queen; ride on, ride on—
With Truth and Justice by thy side—
  From pole to pole, from sun to sun!
Nor linger in our bleeding South,
  Nor domicile with race or clan;
But in thy glorious goings forth,
  Be thy benignant object Man—

Of every clime, of every hue,
  Of every tongue, of every race,
'Neath heaven's broad, ethereal blue;
  Oh! let thy radiant smiles embrace,
Till neither slave nor one oppressed
  Remain throughout creation's span,
By thee unpitied and unblest
  Of all the progeny of man.

We fain would have the world aspire
To that proud height of free desire,
That flamed the heart of Switzer's Tell
(Whose archery skill none could excell),
When once upon his Alpine brow,
He stood reclining on his bow,
And saw, careering in his might—
In all his majesty of flight—
A lordly eagle float and swing
Upon his broad, untrammeled wing.

He bent his bow, he poised his dart,
With full intent to pierce the heart;
But as the proud bird nearer drew,
His stalwart arm unsteady grew,
His arrow lingered in the groove—

The cord unwilling seemed to move,
For there he saw personified
That freedom which had been his pride;
And as the eagle onward sped,
O'er lofty hill and towering tree,
He dropped his bow, he bowed his head;
He could not shoot—'twas Liberty!

Whitman, a younger contemporary of Bell's, is the author of several long tales in verse. Like Bell, he wrote only in standard English, and like him also, shows a mastery of expression, with fluency of style, wealth of imagery, and a command of the forms of verse given vogue by Scott and Byron. Both likewise write fervently of the wrongs suffered by the black man at the hands of the white. Thus far they resemble; but if we extend the comparison we note important differences. Bell has more of the fervor of the orator and the sense of fact of the historian. He adheres closely to events and celebrates occasions. Whitman invents tragic tales of love and romance, clothing them with the charm of the South and infusing into them the pathos which results from the strife of thwarted passions, the defeat of true love.

A stanza or two from Whitman's *An Idyl of the South* will exemplify his qualities. The hero of this pathetic tale is a white youth of aristocratic parentage, the heroine is an octoroon. He is thus described:

He was of manly beauty—brave and fair;
There was the Norman iron in his blood,
There was the Saxon in his sunny hair
That waved and tossed in an abandoned flood;
But Norman strength rose in his shoulders square,
And so, as manfully erect he stood,
Norse gods might read the likeness of their race
In his proud bearing and patrician face.

The heroine is thus portrayed:

A lithe and shapely beauty; like a deer,
She looked in wistfulness, and from you went;
With silken shyness shrank as if in fear,
And kept the distance of the innocent.
But, when alone, she bolder would appear;
Then all her being into song was sent
To bound in cascades—ripple, whirl, and gleam,
A headlong torrent in a crystal stream.

Only tragedy, under the conditions, could result from their mutual fervent love. The poet does not moralize but in a figure intimates the sadness induced by the tale:

The hedges may obscure the sweetest bloom—
The orphan of the waste—the lowly flower;
While in the garden, faint for want of room,
The splendid failure pines within her bower.
There is a wide republic of perfume,
In which the nameless waifs of sun and shower,
That scatter wildly through the fields and woods,
Make the divineness of the solitudes.

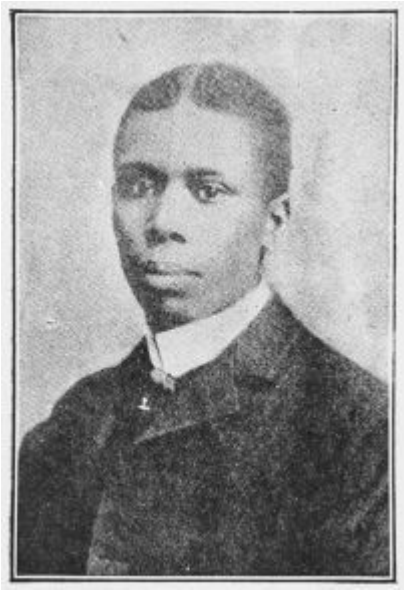
After such a manner wrote those whom we may call bards of an elder day.

6. Paul Laurence Dunbar

He came, a dark youth, singing in the dawn
Of a new freedom, glowing o'er his lyre,
Refining, as with great Apollo's fire,
His people's gift of song. And, thereupon,
This Negro singer, come to Helicon,
Constrained the masters, listening, to admire,
And roused a race to wonder and aspire,
Gazing which way their honest voice was gone,
With ebon face uplit of glory's crest.
Men marveled at the singer, strong and sweet,
Who brought the cabin's mirth, the tuneful night,
But faced the morning, beautiful with light,
To die while shadows yet fell toward the west,

And leave his laurels at his people's feet.
—*James David Corrothers.*

Less than a generation ago William Dean Howells hailed Paul Laurence Dunbar as "the first instance of an American Negro who had evinced innate distinction in literature," "the only man of pure African blood and of American civilization to feel Negro life æsthetically and express it lyrically." It is not my purpose to give Dunbar space and consideration in this book commensurate with his importance. Its scope does not, strictly speaking, include him and his predecessors. They are introduced here, but to provide an historical background. The object of this book is to exhibit the achievement of the Negro in verse since Dunbar. Even though it were true, which I think it is not, that no American Negro previous to Dunbar had evinced innate distinction in literature, this anthology, I believe, will reveal that many American Negroes in this new day are evincing, if not innate distinction, yet cultured talent, in literature.



Paul Laurence Dunbar

The sonnet to Dunbar which stands at the head of this section was composed by a Negro who was by three years Dunbar's senior. His opportunities in early life were far inferior to Dunbar's. At nineteen years of age, with almost inconsiderable schooling, he was a boot-black in a Chicago barber shop. I give his sonnet here—other poems of his I give in another chapter—in evidence of that distinction in literature, innate or otherwise, which is rather widespread among American Negroes of the present time. Dunbar himself might have been proud to put his name to this sonnet.

When this marvel, a Negro poet, so vouched for, appeared in the West, like a new star in the heavens, a few white people, a very few, knew, vaguely, that back in Colonial times there was a slave woman in Boston who had written verses, who was therefore a prodigy. The space between Phillis Wheatley and this new singer was desert. But Nature, as people think, produces freaks, or sports;

therefore a Negro poet was not absolutely beyond belief, since poets are rather freakish, abnormal creatures anyway. Incredulity therefore yielded to an attitude scarcely worthier, namely, that dishonoring, irreverent interpretation of a supreme human phenomenon which consists in denominating it a freak of nature. But Dunbar is a fact, as Burns, as Whittier, as Riley, are facts—a fact of great moment to a people and for a people. For one thing, he revealed to the Negro youth of America the latent literary powers and the unexploited literary materials of their race. He was the fecundating genius of their talents. Upon all his people he was a tremendously quickening power, not less so than his great contemporary at Tuskegee. Doubtless it will be recognized, in a broad view, that the Negro people of America needed, equally, both men, the counterparts of each other.

It needs to be remarked for white people, that there were two Dunbars, and that they know but one. There is the Dunbar of "the jingle in a broken tongue," whom Howells with gracious but imperfect sympathy and understanding brought to the knowledge of the world, and whom the public readers, white and black alike, have found it delightful to present, to the entire eclipse of the other Dunbar. That other Dunbar was the poet of the flaming "Ode to Ethiopia," the pathetic lyric, "We Wear the Mask," the apparently offhand jingle but real masterpiece entitled "Life," the incomparable ode "Ere sleep comes down to soothe the weary eyes," and a score of other pieces in which, using their speech, he matches himself with the poets who shine as stars in the firmament of our admiration. This Dunbar Howells failed to appreciate, and ignorance of him has been fostered, as I have intimated, by professional readers and writers. The first Dunbar, the generally accepted one, was, as Howells pointed out, the artistic interpreter of the old-fashioned, vanishing generation of black folk—the generation that was maimed

and scarred by slavery, that presented so many ludicrous and pathetic, abject and lovable aspects in strange mixture. The second Dunbar was the prophet robed in a mantle of austerity, shod with fire, bowed with sorrow, as every true prophet has been, in whatever time, among whatever people. He was the prophet, I say, of a new generation, a coming generation, as he was the poet of a vanishing generation. The generation of which he was the prophet-herald has arrived. Its most authentic representatives are the poets that I put forward in this volume as worthy of attention.

Dunbar's real significance to his race has been admirably expressed not only by Corrothers but in the following lines by his biographer, Lida Keck Wiggins:

Life's lowly were laureled with verses
And sceptered were honor and worth,
While cabins became, through the poet,
Fair homes of the lords of the earth.

So it was. But "honor and worth" yet remain, to be "sceptered." Such poems as these few here given from the choragus of the present generation of Negro singers will suggest the kind of honor and the degree of worth to which our tribute is due.[2]

ERE SLEEP COMES DOWN TO SOOTHE THE WEARY EYES

Ere sleep comes down to soothe the weary eyes,
Which all the day with ceaseless care have sought
The magic gold which from the seeker flies;
Ere dreams put on the gown and cap of thought,
And make the waking world a world of lies,—
Of lies most palpable, uncouth, forlorn,
That say life's full of aches and tears and sighs,—
Oh, how with more than dreams the soul is torn,
Ere sleep comes down to soothe the weary eyes.

Ere sleep comes down to soothe the weary eyes,
  How all the griefs and heartaches we have known
Come up like pois'nous vapors that arise
  From some base witch's caldron, when the crone,
To work some potent spell, her magic plies.
  The past which held its share of bitter pain,
Whose ghost we prayed that Time might exorcise,
  Comes up, is lived and suffered o'er again,
Ere sleep comes down to soothe the weary eyes.

Ere sleep comes down to soothe the weary eyes,
  What phantoms fill the dimly lighted room;
What ghostly shades in awe-creating guise
  Are bodied forth within the teeming gloom.
What echoes faint of sad and soul-sick cries,
  And pangs of vague inexplicable pain
That pay the spirit's ceaseless enterprise,
  Come thronging through the chambers of the brain,
Ere sleep comes down to soothe the weary eyes.

Ere sleep comes down to soothe the weary eyes,
  Where ranges forth the spirit far and free?
Through what strange realms and unfamiliar skies
  Tends her far course to lands of mystery?
To lands unspeakable—beyond surmise,
  Where shapes unknowable to being spring,
Till, faint of wing, the Fancy fails and dies
  Much wearied with the spirit's journeying,
Ere sleep comes down to soothe the weary eyes.

Ere sleep comes down to soothe the weary eyes,
  How questioneth the soul that other soul,—
The inner sense which neither cheats nor lies,
  But self exposes unto self, a scroll
Full writ with all life's acts unwise or wise,
  In characters indelible and known;
So, trembling with the shock of sad surprise,
  The soul doth view its awful self alone,
Ere sleep comes down to soothe the weary eyes.

Ere sleep comes down to seal the weary eyes,

The last dear sleep whose soft embrace is balm,
And whom sad sorrow teaches us to prize
For kissing all our passions into calm,
Ah, then, no more we heed the sad world's cries,
Or seek to probe th' eternal mystery,
Or fret our souls at long-withheld replies,
At glooms through which our visions cannot see,
Ere sleep comes down to seal the weary eyes.

LIFE

A crust of bread and a corner to sleep in,
A minute to smile and an hour to weep in,
A pint of joy to a peck of trouble,
And never a laugh but the moans come double;
And that is life!

A crust and a corner that love makes precious,
With the smile to warm and the tears to refresh us;
And joy seems sweeter when cares come after,
And a moan is the finest of foils for laughter:
And that is life!

****

O Mother Race! to thee I bring
This pledge of faith unwavering,
This tribute to thy glory.
I know the pangs which thou didst feel,
When Slavery crushed thee with its heel,
With thy dear blood all gory.

Sad days were those—ah, sad indeed!
But through the land the fruitful seed
Of better times was growing.
The plant of freedom upward sprung,
And spread its leaves so fresh and young—
Its blossoms now are blowing.

On every hand in this fair land,
Proud Ethiope's swarthy children stand

Beside their fairer neighbor;
The forests flee before their stroke,
Their hammers ring, their forges smoke,—
They stir in honest labor.

They tread the fields where honor calls;
Their voices sound through senate halls
In majesty and power.
To right they cling; the hymns they sing
Up to the skies in beauty ring,
And bolder grow each hour.

Be proud, my Race, in mind and soul
Thy name is writ on Glory's scroll
In characters of fire.
High 'mid the clouds of Fame's bright sky
Thy banner's blazoned folds now fly,
And truth shall lift them higher.



Ethiopia—Awakening
By Meta Warrick Fuller

Thou hast the right to noble pride,
Whose spotless robes were purified

By blood's severe baptism,
Upon thy brow the cross was laid,
And labor's painful sweat-beads made
A consecrating chrism.

No other race, or white or black,
When bound as thou wert, to the rack,
So seldom stooped to grieving;
No other race, when free again,
Forgot the past and proved them men
So noble in forgiving.

Go on and up! Our souls and eyes
Shall follow thy continuous rise;
Our ears shall list thy story
From bards who from thy root shall spring,
And proudly tune their lyres to sing
Of Ethiopia's glory.

WITH THE LARK

Night is for sorrow and dawn is for joy,
Chasing the troubles that fret and annoy;
Darkness for sighing and daylight for song,—
Cheery and chaste the strain, heartfelt and strong,
All the night through, though I moan in the dark,
I wake in the morning to sing with the lark.

Deep in the midnight the rain whips the leaves,
Softly and sadly the wood-spirit grieves.
But when the first hue of dawn tints the sky,
I shall shake out my wings like the birds and be dry;
And though, like the rain-drops, I grieved through the dark,
I shall wake in the morning to sing with the lark.

On the high hills of heaven, some morning to be,
Where the rain shall not grieve thro' the leaves of the tree,
There my heart will be glad for the pain I have known,
For my hand will be clasped in the hand of mine own;
And though life has been hard and death's pathway been dark,
I shall wake in the morning to sing with the lark.

WE WEAR THE MASK

We wear the mask that grins and lies,
It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,—
This debt we pay to human guile;
With torn and bleeding hearts we smile,
And mouth with myriad subtleties.

Why should the world be over-wise,
In counting all our tears and sighs?
Nay, let them only see us, while
We wear the mask.

We smile, but, O great Christ, our cries
To thee from tortured souls arise.
We sing, but oh, the clay is vile
Beneath our feet, and long the mile;
But let the world dream otherwise,
We wear the mask!

7. J. Mord Allen

In the year of Dunbar's death (1906), J. Mord Allen published his *Rhymes, Tales, and Rhymed Tales*. The contents are mainly in dialect, dialect that possesses, as it seems to me, every merit of that medium. There is great felicity of characterization, surprising turns of wit, quaint philosophy. In a later chapter I will give a specimen of Mr. Allen's dialect verse, here two standard English poems. In both mediums his credentials are authentic, no whit less so than even Dunbar's. Only the question arises why his muse became silent after this one utterance—for he was at the time but thirty-one years old. Perhaps poetry did not go with boiler-making, his occupation. Because of the date of his one book I place him here with Dunbar, and there are yet other reasons.

Mr. Allen affords but two standard English poems, the first and the last of his book. Such a fact marks him as of the elder day, though that day be less than a score of years

agone. The concluding poem of his book has a sweet sadness that must appeal to every heart whose childhood is getting to be far away:

COUNTING OUT

"Eeny meeny miny mo."
Ah, how the sad-sweet Long Ago
Enyouths us, as by magic spell,
With that old rhyme. You know it well;
For time was, once, when e'en your eyes
Saw Heaven plainly, in the skies.
Past twilight, when a brave moon glowed
Just o'er the treetops, and the road
Was full of romping children—say,
What was the game we used to play?
Yes! Hide-and-seek. And at the base,
Who first must go and hide his face?
Remember—standing in a row—
"Eeny meeny miny mo"?

"Eeny meeny miny mo."
How fare we children here below?
Our moon is far from treetops now,
And Heaven isn't up, somehow.
No more for sport play we "I spy";
Our "laying low" and "peeping high".
Are now with consequences fraught;
There's black disgrace in being caught.
But what's to pay the pains we take?
Let's play the game for its own sake,
And, ere 'tis time to homeward flit,
Let's get some pleasure out of it.
For death will soon count down the row,
"Eeny meeny miny mo."

Though of the elder day yet Allen is, like Dunbar, a herald of the generation that is now articulate. In this rôle of herald to a more self-assertive generation, a more aspiring and race-conscious one, he speaks with immense

significance to us in this first poem of his book, which, as being prophetic of much we now see in the colored folk of America I permit to close this summary review of earlier Negro poetry:

THE PSALM OF THE UPLIFT

Still comes the Perfect Thing to man
As came the olden gods, in dreams;
And then the man—made artist—knows
How real is the thing which seems.
Then, tongue or brush or magic pen
May win the world to loud acclaim,
But he who wrought knows in his soul
That, like as tinsel is to gold,
His work is, to his aim.

It's there ahead to him—and you
And me. I swear it isn't far;
Else, black Despair would cut us down
In the land of hateful Things Which Are.
But, just beyond our finger-tips,
Things As They Should Be shame the weak,
And hold the aching muscles tense
Through th' next moment of suspense
Which triumph is to break.

And shall we strive? The years to come,
Till sunset of eternity,
Are given to the fairest god,
The God of Things As They Should Be.
The ending? Nay, 'tis ours to do
And dare and bear and not to flinch;
To enter where is no retreat;
To win one stride from sheer defeat;
To die—but gain an inch.

CHAPTER II

THE PRESENT RENAISSANCE OF THE NEGRO

I. A Glance at the Field

Many are the forms of expression that the life of a developing people or group finds for itself—business and wealth, education and culture, political and social unrest and agitation, literature and art. It can scarcely happen that any people or group has a vital significance for other peoples or groups, or any real potency, until it begins to express itself in poetry. When, however, a race or a portion of our common race begins to embody its aspirations, its grievances, its animating spirit in song the world may well take notice. That race or portion of our common race has within it an unreckoned potency of good and evil—evil if the good be thwarted.

It is not, then, to editorials and speeches and sermons, nor to petitions, protests, and resolutions, but to poems that the wise will turn in order to learn the temper and permanent bent of mind of a people. Witness the recent history of Ireland. Her literary renascence preceded her effective political agitation. The political agitation which resulted in her independence was the work of poets. The real life of a people finds its only adequate record in song. All of a people's history that is permanently or profoundly significant is distilled into poetry.

It is to the unknown poetry of a despised and rejected people that I call attention in these pages. One of this people's poets sings:

We have fashioned laughter
Out of tears and pain,
But the moment after—
Pain and tears again.
Charles Bertram Johnson.

And when he so sings we know there is one race above all others which these words describe. Another sings:

I will suppose that fate is just,
I will suppose that grief is wise,
And I will tread what path I must
To enter Paradise.
Joseph S. Cotter, Sr.

And when he so sings we know out of what tribulations his resignation has been born. The resolution of despair cries out in the lines of another:

My life were lost if I should keep
A hope-forlorn and gloomy face,
And brood upon my ills, and weep,
And mourn the travail of my race.
Leslie Pinckney Hill.

Another singer, coming out of the Black Belt of the lower South, records the daily and life-long history of his people in these lines:

IT'S ALL THROUGH LIFE

A day of joy, a week of pain,
A sunny day, a week of rain;
A day of peace, a year of strife;
But cling to Him, it's all through life.

An hour of joy, a day of fears,
An hour of smiles, a day of tears;
An hour of gain, a day of strife,
Press on, press on, it's all through life.

Waverley Turner Carmichael.

In the poetry which the Negro is producing to-day there is a challenge to the world. His race has been deeply stirred by recent events; its reaction has been mighty. The challenge, spoken by one, but for the race, the inarticulate millions as well as the cultured few, comes thus:

TO AMERICA

How would you have us—as we are,
Or sinking 'neath the load we bear?
Our eyes fixed forward on a star?
Or gazing empty at despair?
Rising or falling? Men or things?
With dragging pace, or footsteps fleet?
Strong, willing sinews in your wings?
Or tightening chains about your feet?

James Weldon Johnson.

With slight regard for smooth words another declares his grievances, that all may understand:

Yes, I am lynched. Is it that I
Must without judge or jury die?
Though innocent, am I accursed
To quench the mob's blood-thirsty thirst?

Yes, I am mocked. Pray tell me why!
Did not my brothers freely die
For you, and your Democracy—
That each and all alike be free?

Raymond Garfield Dandridge.

So runs the dominant note of this poetry. But it would be unjust to the race producing it to convey the idea that this is the only note. The harp of Ethiopia has many strings and the brothers of Memnon are many. Sometimes the note is one of simple beauty, like that of a wild rose blossoming by the wayside. No reader could tell what race produced

such a lyric as the one following, but any reader responsive to the beauty of art and to the truth of passion would assert its excellence:

I will hide my soul and its mighty love
In the bosom of this rose,
And its dispensing breath will take
My love wherever it goes.
And perhaps she'll pluck this very rose,
And, quick as blushes start,
Will breathe my hidden secret in
Her unsuspecting heart.

George Marion McClellan.

In a Negro magazine one may chance upon a sonnet that the best poet of our times might have signed and feared no loss to his reputation, nor would there be any mark of race in its lines. To candid judgment I submit the following, from Mrs. Alice Dunbar-Nelson:

VIOLETS

I had not thought of violets of late,
The wild, shy kind that spring beneath your feet
In wistful April days, when lovers mate
And wander through the fields in raptures sweet.
The thoughts of violets meant florists' shops,
And bows and pins, and perfumed papers fine;
And garish lights, and mincing little fops,
And cabarets and songs, and deadening wine.
So far from sweet real things my thoughts had strayed,
I had forgot wide fields and clear brown streams;
The perfect loveliness that God has made—
Wild violets shy and Heaven-mounting dreams
And now unwittingly, you've made me dream
Of violets, and my soul's forgotten gleam.

It needs not that a poet write an epic to prove himself chosen of the muse. The winds of time may blow into oblivion all but five lines of an *opus magnum*, in which

five lines alone was the laborious author a poet. Wise is the poet who writes but the five lines, as here:

SUNSET

Since Poets have told of sunset,
What is left for me to tell?
I can only say that I saw the day
Press crimson lips to the horizon gray,
And kiss the earth farewell.
Mary Effie Lee.

The theme may be as old as man and as common as humanity yet it can be made to be felt as poetic by one who has the magic gift, as here:

LONELINESS

I cannot make my thoughts stay home;
I cannot close their door;
And, oh, that I might shut them in,
And they go out no more!

For they go out, with wistful eyes,
And search the whole world through;
Just hoping, in their wandering,
To catch a glimpse of you!
Winifred Virginia Jordan.

One's find may be in *The Poet's Ingle* of a newspaper, where an unknown name is attached to verses that have the charm which Longfellow found in the simple and heartfelt lays of the humbler poet. From such a poem, entitled *To My Grandmother*, by Mae Smith Johnson, I take two stanzas, the first two as beautiful as the theme evoked:

You 'mind me of the winter's eve
When low the sinking sun
Casts soft bright rays upon the snow
And day, now almost done,

In silence deep prepares to leave,
And calmly waits the signal "Go."

Your eyes are faded vestal lights
That once the hearth illumed,
Where vestal virgins vigil kept,
And budding virtue bloomed:
Like stars that beam on summer nights,
Your eyes, by joy and sorrow swept.

Less beautiful, less original, but in another way not less appealing, are these stanzas, also signed by an unknown name and taken from the Christmas number of a newspaper. They are the last stanzas but one of a poem entitled *The Child Is Found*, by Charles H. Este:

O hearts that mourn and sorrow so,
That doubt the power of God,
An angel now is bending low—
To comfort as you plod.

He speaks with tones of whispering love,
With feelings true and strong,
And sings of sweetest joys above,
For souls without a song.

Pride of race, no less than grief for wrongs endured, is one of the notes of this living verse. Eulogies of the men and women who have lived heroically for their people, giving vision, quickening aspiration, opening roads of advance, find a place in every volume of verse and in the pages of newspapers. Few white persons perhaps have paused to reflect how noteworthy this traditionary store of heroic names really is and how potent it is with the people inheriting it. Both practical and poetic uses—if these two things are different—it has. One cannot foretell to what reflections upon life the eulogist will be led ere he concludes. From an ode to Booker T. Washington, by Roscoe Riley Dungee, I take a stanza, by way of

illustration:

Yet, virtue walks a path obscure,
And honor struggles to endure,
While arrogance and deeds impure
  Adorn the Hall of Fame.
Still, power triumphs over right,
And wrong is victor in the fight;
Greed, graft, and knavery excite
  Vociferous acclaim.

It has become evident to those who have seriously studied the present-day life of the Negroes that there has been in these recent years a renascence of the Negro soul. Poetry, as these pages will show, is one of its modes of expression. Other expressions there are, very significant ones, too, expressions which are material, tangible, expressible in figures. Not of this kind is poetry. Yet of all forms whereby the soul of a people expresses itself the most potent, the most effective, is poetry. The re-born soul of the Negro is following the tradition of all races in all times by pouring itself into that form of words which embodies the most of passionate thought and feeling.

Out of the very heart of a race of twelve million people amongst us comes this cry which a Negro poet of Virginia utters as

A PRAYER OF THE RACE THAT GOD MADE BLACK

We would be peaceful, Father—but, when we must,
Help us to thunder hard the blow that's just!

We would be prayerful: Lord, when we have prayed,
Let us arise courageous—unafraid!

We would be manly—proving well our worth,
Then would not cringe to any god on earth!

We would be loving and forgiving, thus
To love our neighbor as Thou lovest us!

We would be faithful, loyal to the Right—
Ne'er doubting that the Day will follow Night!

We would be all that Thou hast meant for man,
Up through the ages, since the world began!

God! save us in Thy Heaven, where all is well!
We come slow-struggling up the Hills of Hell!
Lucian B. Watkins.

Too confidently, as we may learn, have we of the other race relied upon the Negro's innate optimism to keep him a safe citizen and a long-suffering servant. That optimism, that gaiety and buoyancy of spirit, if not indestructible in the African soul, is yet reducible to the vanishing point. There are signs of something quite different in the attitude of Negroes toward their white neighbors to-day. In their poetry this reputed optimism, where it exists, is found in union with a note of melancholy or of bitter complaint. A characteristic utterance of this mood I find in a poem entitled "The Optimist," from which I will give one-third of its stanzas:

Never mind, children, be patient awhile,
And carry your load with a nod and a smile,
For out of the hell and the hard of it all,
Time is sure to bring sweetest honey—not gall.

Out of the hell and the hard of it all,
A bright star shall rise that never shall fall:
A God-fearing race—proud, noble, and true,
Giving good for the evil which they always knew.

****

So dry your wet pillow and lift your bowed head
And show to the world that hope is not dead!
Be patient! Wait! See what yet may befall,
Out of the hell and the hard of it all.
Ethyl Lewis.

But in dark days the Negro has ever had refuges and

sources of strength for the want of which other races have been crushed. One of these refuges for them is the benignant breast of nature—the deep peace of the woods and the hills, the quiet soothing of pleasant-running water, the benediction of bright skies. A rarely-gifted woman, Mrs. Georgia Douglas Johnson, singing her own consolation, with a pathos that pierces the heart, has sung for thousands of the women of her race else dumb alike in grief and in joy, and in mingled grief and joy:

PEACE

I rest me deep within the wood,
Drawn by its silent call;
Far from the throbbing crowd of men
On nature's breast I fall.

My couch is sweet with blossoms fair,
A bed of fragrant dreams,
And soft upon my ear there falls
The lullaby of streams.

The tumult of my heart is stilled,
Within this sheltered spot,
Deep in the bosom of the wood,
Forgetting, and—forgot!

Death and the mysteries of life, the pain and the grief that flesh and soul are heirs to, the eternal problems that address themselves to all generations and races, produce in the soul of the Negro the same reactions as of old they produced in the soul of David or of Homer, or as, in our own day, in the soul of a Wordsworth or a Shelley. Of this we have a glimpse in the following lyric, from Walter Everette Hawkins:

IN SPITE OF DEATH

Curses come in every sound,
And wars spread gloom and woe around.

The cannon belch forth death and doom,
But still the lilies wave and bloom.
Man fills the earth with grief and wrong,
But cannot hush the bluebird's song.
My stars are dancing on the sea,
The waves fling kisses up at me.
Each night my gladsome moon doth rise;
A rainbow spans my evening skies;
The robin's song is full and fine;
And roses lift their lips to mine.

The jonquils ope their petals sweet,
The poppies dance around my feet;
In spite of winter and of death,
The Spring is in the zephyr's breath.

This poetry but re-affirms the essential identity of human nature under black and white skins. But it will remind most of the white race of how ignorant they have been of that black race next door that is acquiring wealth and culture and is expressing in art and literature the spirit of an aspiring people—how ignorant of their real life, their very thoughts, their completely human joys and griefs. One of their poets was cognizant of this unhappy ignorance—the source of so much harshness of treatment—when he wrote:

My people laugh and sing
  And dance to death—
None imagining
  The heartbreak under breath.
Charles Bertram Johnson.

Nothing weighs more heavily upon the soul of this race to-day than this everywhere self-betraying crass ignorance, made the more grievous to endure by the vain boast accompanying it, that "I know the Negro better than he knows himself." This poetry in every line of it is a convincing contradiction of this insulting arrogancy. Essential identity, that is the message of these poets.

This kinship of souls and essential oneness of human nature, which Shylock, speaking for a similarly oppressed and outrageously treated people, pressed home upon the Christian merchants of Venice, finds typical expression in the following lines:

We travel a common road, Brother,—
We walk and we talk much the same;
We breathe the same sweet air of heaven—
Strive alike for fortune and fame;
We laugh when our hearts fill with gladness,
We weep when we're smothered in woe;
We strive, we endure, we seek wisdom;
We sin—and we reap what we sow.
Yes, all who would know it can see that
When everything's put to the test,
In spite of our color and features,
The Negro's the same as the rest.

Leon R. Harris.

It is to be expected that, notwithstanding the Anglo-Saxon culture of the producers of this poetry, the white reader will yet demand therein what he regards as the African traits. Perhaps it will be crude, artless, repetitious songs like the Spirituals. The quality of the Spirituals is indeed not wanting in some of the most noteworthy contemporary Negro verse. From Fenton Johnson's three volumes of verse I could select many pieces that exhibit this quality united with disciplined art. For example, here is one:

I PLAYED ON DAVID'S HARP

(A Negro Spiritual)

Last night I played on David's harp,
I played on little David's harp
The gospel tunes of Israel;
And all the angels came to hear

Me play those gospel tunes,
As the Jordan rolled away.

The angels shouted all the night
Their "Glory, Hallelujah" shout;
Old Gabriel threw his trumpet down
To hear the songs of Israel,
On mighty David's harp,
As the Jordan rolled away.

When death has closed my weary eyes
I'll play again on David's harp
The last great song in life's brief book;
And all you children born of God
Can stop awhile and hear me play,
As the Jordan rolls away.

No less certain it is that many a reader will demand something more crude, more obscure, more mystical. Something, perhaps, at once ridiculous and wise—with big and strangely compounded words, ludicrously applied, yet striving at the expression of some peculiarly African idea. Of such verse I can produce no example. The nearest I can come to meeting such impossible demand is by submitting the following from William Edgar Bailey:

THE SLUMP

Mr. Self at the bat!
Well, we're all at the bat—
For one thing or other,
For this or for that.
The ball may be hurled, in the form of this plea:
"Will you please help the poor?
God, have mercy on me!"
Mr. Self stops to think;
But the ball cuts the plate—
He's aware that he slumped,
Grasps the bat,—but too late.
What you say, Mr. Ump?

Can it be? Yes, 'tis done!
"Well, I've said what I've said!"
Mr. Self,
Strike One!

Mr. Self's face is grim.
'Tis the critical test—
For his heart, conscience-sick,
Heaves stern at his breast.
The Truth must be hurled, 'tis the law of the game;
If in life or in death,
If in falsehood or shame.
Mr. Self, strike the ball—
There's a Tramp at your Gate!
Mr. Self still amazed—
And the ball cuts the plate.
Mr. Self murmured not;
The decision he knew,
"Well, you've done that before."
Sighed the Ump.
Strike Two!

There's the Beggar and Gate—
But his silver and gold,
Is amix with his blood;
A part of his soul.
The Nazarene stooped—as all Umpires will do,
With His eye on a line,
That his verdict be true—
Just a shift of the Truth,
Stern, the Nazarene tried,
But he tho't of the Cross,
And the blood from His side.
"Your decision is false;
Oh, have mercy on me."
But a voice from the sky,
Whispered low.
Strike three.

Of humorous verse there is very little produced by the Negro writers of these times. They take their vocation

seriously. When their singing robes are on it is to the plaintive notes of the flute or the dolorous blasts of the trumpet they tune their songs.

These voices, and others like them, have but lately been lifted in song, they are still youthful voices, and they are but preluding the more perfect songs they are yet to sing. One voice that is now still, silenced lately in death, at the age of twenty-three years, has sung for them all what all feel:

THE MULATTO TO HIS CRITICS

Ashamed of my race?
And of what race am I?
I am many in one.
Through my veins there flows the blood
Of Red Man, Black Man, Briton, Celt, and Scot,
In warring clash and tumultuous riot.
I welcome all,
But love the blood of the kindly race
That swarths my skin, crinkles my hair,
And puts sweet music into my soul.

Joseph S. Cotter, Jr.

"Sweet music in the soul"—that is heaven's kind gift to this people, music of sorrow and of faith; music, low and plaintive, of hope almost failing; music, clear and strong, born of vision triumphant; music, alas, sometimes marred by the strident notes of hatred and revenge. Verily, poets learn in suffering what they teach in song.

In concluding this preliminary survey it should be reiterated that, if one meets here but with the rhythms and forms, as he may think, which are familiar to him in the poetry of the white race, he should reflect that only in that poetry has the Negro had an opportunity to be educated. He has been educated away from his own heritage and his own endowments. The Negro's native wisdom should lead him back to his natural founts of song. Our educational

system should allow of and provide for this. His own literature in his schools is a reasonable policy for the Negro.

As regards the essential significance of this poetry, one of its makers, Miss Eva A. Jessye, has said in a beautiful way almost what I wish to say. Her poem shall therefore conclude this presentation:

THE SINGER

Because his speech was blunt and manner plain
Untaught in subtle phrases of the wise,
Because the years of slavery and pain
Ne'er dimmed the light of faith within his eyes;
Because of ebon skin and humble pride,
The world with hatred thrust the youth aside.

But fragrance wafts from every trodden flower,
And through our grief we rise to nobler things,
Within the heart in sorrow's darkest hour
A well of sweetness there unbidden springs;
Despised of men, discarded and alone—
The world of nature claimed him as her own.

She taught him truths that liberate the soul
From bonds more galling than the slaver's chain—
That manly natures, lily-wise, unfold
Amid the mire of hatred void of stain;
Thus in his manhood, clean, superbly strong,
To him was born the priceless gift of song.

The glory of the sun, the hush of morn,
Whisperings of tree-top faintly stirred,
The desert silence, wilderness forlorn,
Far ocean depths, the tender lilt of bird;
Of hope, despair, he sang, his melody
The endless theme of life's brief symphony.

And nations marveled at the minstrel lad,
Who swayed emotions as his fancy led;

With him they wept, were melancholy, sad;
"'Tis but a cunning jest of Fate," they said;
They did not dream in selfish sphere apart
That song is but the essence of the heart.

II. Representatives of the Present Era

I. The Cotters, Father and Son

The Father



Joseph S. Cotter, Sr.

On the Kentucky plantation where Stephen Collins Foster one June morning, when the mocking birds were singing and "the darkies were gay," composed and his sister sang, "My Old Kentucky Home," there was among those first delighted listeners who paused in their tasks to hear the immortal song at its birth a slave girl in whose soul were strange melodies of her own. Born of free people of color, she was bonded to the owner of this plantation, yet her soul was such as must be free. Faithful in her work, respectful and obedient, she was yet a dangerous character

among slaves, being too spirited. Hence her master ordered her to leave, fearing she would demoralize discipline in the quarters. She demanded to be taken away as she had been brought—in a wagon; and it was so done. It seems that one-half of her blood was African and the other half was divided between Indian and English, though it is impossible to be sure of the exact proportion. An account of her in those days by one who knew her reveals her as one of nature's poets—a Phillis Wheatley of the wash-tubs. "She was very fervent in her religious devotions"—so runs this account—"and a very hard worker. She would sometimes wash nearly all night and then have periods of prayer and exaltation. Then again during the day she would draw from her bosom a favorite book and pause to read over the wash-tub. She had a strong dramatic instinct and would frequently make up little plays of her own and represent each character vividly." Of such mothers are seers and poets born. And so in this instance it proved to be.

At the age of twenty, while yet a slave, she was married, under the common law—though marriage it was not called—to a Scotch-Irishman, a prominent citizen of Louisville, her employer at the time, who was distinguished by a notably handsome physique and a great fondness for books. Of this union was born, at Bardstown, a son, Joseph, so named for the dreamer of biblical story.

The vision-seeing slave mother, her mind running on the bondage of her people, named her son Joseph in the hope of his becoming great in the service of his people, like the Hebrew Joseph. She lived to see her hope fulfilled. The boy's earliest education was in song and story invented and sung or told by his mother. He got a few terms of school, reaching the third grade. At ten years of age he went to work in a brickyard of Louisville to help support his mother. Even there the faculty that afterwards distinguished him appears in action, to his relief in time of

trouble. Bigger boys, white and black, working in the same yard, hazed and harried him. Fighting to victory was out of the question, against such odds. Brains won where brawn was wanting. He observed that the men at their noon rest-hour, the time of his distress, told stories and laughed. He couldn't join them, but he tried story-telling in the boy group. It worked. The men, hearing the laughter, came over and joined them. The persecuted boy became the entertainer of both groups. He had won mastery by wit, the proudest mastery in the world.

Then, until he was twenty-two years of age, he was a teamster on the levee. At this time the desire for an education mastered him and he entered a night school—the primary grade. Hard toil and the struggle to get on had not killed his soul but had wiped out his acquisitions of book-knowledge. In two terms he was qualified to teach. He is now the principal of the Samuel Coleridge-Taylor High School in Louisville, the author of several books, a maker of songs and teller of stories, and a man upright in conduct and wise in counsel.

It was at Bardstown, February 2, 1861, that Joseph Seamon Cotter was born. Let Bardstown be put on the literary map of America, not because Stephen Collins Foster wrote "My Old Kentucky Home" there, but because one was born there the latchet of whose poetic shoes he was not worthy to unloose. "A poet, a bard, to be born in Bardstown—how odd, and how appropriate!" one exclaims. And *bard* seems exactly the right appellation for this song-maker and story-man. But it is not altogether so. In character bardlike, but not in appearance. Bards have long, unkempt, white hair, which mingles with beards that rest on their bosoms. Cotter's square-cut chin is clean-shaven, and his large brain-dome shows like a harvest moon. But he makes poems and invents and discovers stories, and, bard-like, recites or relates them to whatever audience may call for them—in schools, in churches, at

firesides. Minus the hairy habiliments he is a bard.

Some of Cotter's stories come out of Africa and are "different," as the word goes. Some are "current among the colored folks of Louisville." These, too, are different. Some are tragedies and some are comedies and some are tragi-comedies of everyday life among the Negroes. I will give one entire tale here, selecting this particular one because of its brevity, not its pre-eminence:

THE BOY AND THE IDEAL

Once upon a time a Mule, a Hog, a Snake, and a Boy met. Said the Mule: "I eat and labor that I may grow strong in the heels. It is fine to have heels so gifted. My heels make people cultivate distance."

Said the Hog: "I eat and labor that I may grow strong in the snout. It is fine to have a fine snout. I keep people watching for my snout."

"No exchanging heels for snouts," broke in the Mule.

"No," answered the Hog; "snouts are naturally above heels."

Said the Snake: "I eat to live, and live to cultivate my sting. The way people shun me shows my greatness. Beget stings, comrades, and stings will beget glory."

Said the Boy: "There is a star in my life like unto a star in the sky. I eat and labor that I may think aright and feel aright. These rounds will conduct me to my star. Oh, inviting star!"

"I am not so certain of that," said the Mule. "I have noticed your kind and ever see some of myself in them. Your star is in the distance."

The Boy answered by smelling a flower and listening to the song of a bird. The Mule looked at him and said: "He is all tenderness and care. The true and the beautiful have robbed me of a kinsman. His star is near."

Said the Boy: "I approach my star."

"I am not so certain of that," interrupted the Hog. "I have noticed your kind and I ever see some of myself in them. Your star is a delusion."

The Boy answered by painting the flower and setting the notes of the bird's song to music.

The Hog looked at the boy and said: “His soul is attuned by nature. The meddler in him is slain.”

“I can all but touch my star,” cried the Boy.

“I am not so certain of that,” remarked the Snake. “I have watched your kind and ever see some of myself in them. Stings are nearer than stars.”

The Boy answered by meditating upon the picture and music. The Snake departed, saying that stings and stars cannot keep company.

The Boy journeyed on, ever led by the star. Some distance away the Mule was bemoaning the presence of his heels and trying to rid himself of them by kicking a tree. The Hog was dividing his time between looking into a brook and rubbing his snout on a rock to shorten it. The Snake lay dead of its own bite. The Boy journeyed on, led by an ever inviting star.

(Negro Tales.—Joseph S. Cotter, The Cosmopolitan Press, New York, 1912.)

Yes—Uncle Remus, in reality—and not exactly so. No copy. Not every like is the same. An Uncle Remus with culture and conscious art, yet unspoilt, the native qualities strong. And how poetic those qualities are!

Well might one expect a teacher, if he writes verse, to write didactic verse. But I think you will pronounce him to be an extraordinary teacher and verse-writer who writes as Mr. Cotter does, for example, in:

THE THRESHING FLOOR

Thrice blessed he who wields the flail
  Upon this century’s threshing floor;
A few slight strokes by him avail
  More than a hundred would of yore.

Around him lies the ripened grain
  From every land and every age;
The weakest thresher should attain
  Unto the wisdom of the sage.

Ambitious youth, this is the wealth
  The ages have bequeathed to thee.
Thou canst not take thy share by stealth
  Nor by mere ingenuity.

Thy better self must spur thee on
  To win what time has made thy own;
No hand but labor's yet has drawn
  The sweets that labor's hand has sown.

In verse presuming to be lyrical we hearken for the lyrical cry. That cry is in his lines, melodiously uttered, and poignant. For example:

The flowers take the tears
  Of the weeping night
And give them to the sun
  For the day's delight.

My passion takes the joys
  Of the laughing day
And melts them into tears
  For my heart's decay.

The sweet sadness of those stanzas lingers with one. A stanza from a poem entitled "The Nation's Neglected Child" may help us to their secret:

I am not thy pampered steed,
  I am not thy welcome dog;
I am of a lower breed
  Even than thy Berkshire hog;
I am thy neglected child—
  Make me grow, but keep me wild.

In many of Cotter's verses there is a sonorous flow which is evidence of poetic power made creative by passion. Didacticism and philosophy do not destroy the lyrical quality. In *The Book's Creed* this teacher-poet makes an appeal to his generation to be as much alive and

as creative as the creed makers of other days were. The slaves of the letter, the mummers of mere formulas, he thus addresses:

You are dead to all the Then,
  You are dead to all the Now,
If you hold that former men
  Wore the garland for your brow.

Time and tide were theirs to brave,
  Time and tide are yours to stem.
Bow not o'er their open grave
  Till you drop your diadem.

Honor all who strove and wrought,
  Even to their tears and groans;
But slay not your honest thought
  Through your reverence for their bones.

Cotter is a wizard at rhyming. His "Sequel to the Pied Piper of Hamelin" surpasses the original—Browning's—in technique—that is, in rushing rhythms and ingenious rhymes. It is an incredible success, with no hint of a tour-de-force performance. Its content, too, is worthy of the metrical achievement. I will lay the proof before the competent reader in an extract or two from this remarkable accomplishment:

The last sweet notes the piper blew
  Were heard by the people far and wide;
And one by one and two by two
  They flocked to the mountain-side.

Some came, of course, intensely sad,
And some came looking fiercely mad,
And some came singing solemn hymns,
And some came showing shapely limbs,
And some came bearing the tops of yews,
And some came wearing wooden shoes,
And some came saying what they would do,

And some came praying (and loudly too),
And all for what? Can you not infer?
A-searching and lurching for the Pied Piper,
And the boys and girls he had taken away.
And all were ready now to pay
Any amount that he should say.

So begins the *Sequel*. Another passage, near the end, will indicate the trend of the story:

The years passed by, as years will do,
  When trouble is the master,
And always strives to bring to view
  A new and worse disaster;
And sorrow, like a sorcerer,
  Spread out her melancholy pall,
  So that its folds enveloped all,
And each became her worshipper.
And not a single child was born
  Through all the years thereafter;
If words sprang from the lips of scorn
  None came from those of laughter.

Finally, the inhabitants of Hamelin are passing through death's portal, and when all had departed:

—a message went to Rat-land
      ******
And lo! a race of rats was at hand
      ******
They swarmed into the highest towers,
And loitered in the fairest bowers,
And sat down where the mayor sat,
And also in his Sunday hat;
And gnawed revengefully thereat.
With rats for mayor and rats for people,
With rats in the cellar and rats in the steeple,
With rats without and rats within,
Stood poor, deserted Hamelin.

Like Dunbar, Cotter is a satirist of his people—or certain

types of his people—a gentle, humorous, affectionate satirist. His medium for satire is dialect, inevitably. Sententious wisdom, irradiated with humor, appears in these pieces in homely garb. In standard English, without satire or humor that wisdom thus appears:

What deeds have sprung from plow and pick!
  What bank-rolls from tomatoes!
No dainty crop of rhetoric
  Can match one of potatoes.

The gospel of work has been set forth by our poet in a four-act poetic drama entitled *Caleb, the Degenerate*. All the characters are Negroes. The form is blank verse—blank verse of a very high order, too. The language, like Shakespeare's—though Browning rather than Shakespeare is suggested—is always that of a poet. The wisdom is that of a man who has observed closely and pondered deeply. Idealistic, philosophical, poetical—such it is. It bears witness to no ordinary dramatic ability.

"Best bard, because the wisest," says our Israfel. Verily. "Sage" you may call this man as well as "bard." The proof is in poems and tales, apologues and apothegms. Joseph Seamon Cotter is now sixty years of age. Yet the best of him, according to good omens, is yet to be given forth, in song, story, precept, and drama. His nature is opulent—the cultivation began late and the harvest grows richer.

The chief event of his life, I doubt not, remains to be mentioned—a very sad one. This was the untimely death of his poet-son, Joseph S. Cotter, Jr. Born of this sorrow was the following lyric:

Oh, my way and thy way,
  And life's joy and wonder,
And thy day and my day
  Are cloven asunder.

Oh, my trust and thy trust,

And fair April weather,
And thy dust and my dust
Shall mingle together.

The Son

Dead at the age of twenty-three years, Joseph S. Cotter, Jr., left behind a thin volume of lyrics, entitled *The Band of Gideon*, and about twenty sonnets of an unfinished sequence, and a little book of one-act plays. I will presently place the remarkable title-poem of his book of lyrics before the reader, but first I will give two minor pieces, without comment:



Joseph S. Cotter, Jr.

RAIN MUSIC

On the dusty earth-drum
Beats the falling rain;
Now a whispered murmur,
Now a louder strain.

Slender silvery drumsticks,

On the ancient drum,
Beat the mellow music,
Bidding life to come.

Chords of earth awakened,
Notes of greening spring,
Rise and fall triumphant
Over everything.

Slender silvery drumsticks
Beat the long tattoo—
God the Great Musician
Calling life anew.

COMPENSATION

I plucked a rose from out a bower fair,
That overhung my garden seat;
And wondered I if, e'er before, bloomed there
A rose so sweet.

Enwrapt in beauty I scarce felt the thorn
That pricked me as I pulled the bud;
Till I beheld the rose, that summer morn,
Stained with my blood.

I sang a song that thrilled the evening air,
With beauty somewhat kin to love,
And all men knew that lyric song so rare
Came from above.

And men rejoiced to hear the golden strain;
But no man knew the price I paid,
Nor cared that out of my soul's deathless pain
The song was made.

The lyrical faculty is evinced by such poems. But other singers of our day might have produced them—singers of the white race. Not so, I think, of "The Band of Gideon." Upon that poem is the stamp, not of genius only, but of Negro genius. In it is re-incarnated, by a cultured, creative

mind, the very spirit of the old plantation songs and sermons. The reader who has in his possession that background will respond to the unique and powerful appeal of this poem.

THE BAND OF GIDEON

The band of Gideon roam the sky,
The howling wind is their war-cry,
The thunder's roll is their trumpet's peal
And the lightning's flash their vengeful steel.
Each black cloud
Is a fiery steed.
And they cry aloud
With each strong deed,
"The Sword of the Lord and Gideon."

And men below rear temples high
And mock their God with reasons why,
And live in arrogance, sin, and shame,
And rape their souls for the world's good name.
Each black cloud
Is a fiery steed.
And they cry aloud
With each strong deed,
"The Sword of the Lord and Gideon."

The band of Gideon roam the sky
And view the earth with baleful eye;
In holy wrath they scourge the land
With earthquake, storm, and burning brand.
Each black cloud
Is a fiery steed.
And they cry aloud
With each strong deed,
"The Sword of the Lord and Gideon."

The lightnings flash and the thunders roll,
And "Lord have mercy on my soul,"
Cry men as they fall on the stricken sod,
In agony searching for their God.

Each black cloud
Is a fiery steed.
And they cry aloud
With each strong deed,
"The Sword of the Lord and Gideon."

And men repent and then forget
That heavenly wrath they ever met.
The band of Gideon yet will come
And strike their tongues of blasphemy dumb.
Each black cloud
Is a fiery steed.
And they cry aloud
With each strong deed,
"The Sword of the Lord and Gideon."

The reader, I predict, will be drawn again and again to this mysterious poem. It will continue to haunt his imagination, and tease his thought. The stamp of the African mind is upon it. Closely allied, on the one hand by its august refrain to the Spirituals, on the other hand it touches the most refined and perfected art; such, for example, as Rossetti's ballads or Vachel Lindsay's cantatas. It can scarcely be wondered at that the people of his race should call this untimely dead singer their Negro Lycidas.

II. James David Corrothers

THE DREAM AND THE SONG

So oft our hearts, beloved lute,
In blossomy haunts of song are mute;
So long we pore, 'mid murmurings dull,
O'er loveliness unutterable;
So vain is all our passion strong!
The dream is lovelier than the song.

The rose thought, touched by words, doth turn
Wan ashes. Still, from memory's urn,

The lingering blossoms tenderly
Refute our wilding minstrelsy.
Alas! we work but beauty's wrong!
The dream is lovelier than the song.

Yearned Shelley o'er the golden flame?
Left Keats, for beauty's lure, a name
But "writ in water"? Woe is me!
To grieve o'er floral faëry.
My Phasian doves are flown so long—
The dream is lovelier than the song!

Ah, though we build a bower of dawn,
The golden-winged bird is gone,
And morn may gild, through shimmering leaves,
Only the swallow-twittering eaves.
What art may house or gold prolong
A dream far lovelier than a song?

The lilting witchery, the unrest
Of wingèd dreams, is in our breast;
But ever dear Fulfilment's eyes
Gaze otherward. The long-sought prize,
My lute, must to the gods belong.
The dream is lovelier than the song.

Cherokee-Indian, Scotch-Irish, French, and African blood in James David Corrothers, the author of this poem, makes his complexion, he supposed, "about that of the original man." The reader has already had, at the beginning of the discussion of Dunbar, a sonnet from this poet. The sonnet, the above poem, and the others given here were published in *The Century Magazine*. Not unworthy of *The Century's* standards, the reader must say.



J. D. Corrothers

James David Corrothers was born in Michigan, July 2, 1869. His mother in giving him life surrendered her own. His father never cared for him. Sheltered for a few years by maternal relatives, he was out on the world in early boyhood, dependent on his own resources. Soon, because he was a Negro, he was a wanderer for work through several states. Often without money, friends, or food, he slept out of doors, sometimes in zero weather. At nineteen years of age, as before stated, he was shining shoes in a Chicago barber shop. There he was "discovered."

Henry D. Lloyd was having his boots shined by young Corrothers when the two fell into book talk. The distinguished writer was astonished at the knowledge possessed by one engaged in such a menial occupation. Out of this circumstance, it seems, the Negro boot-black became a student in Northwestern University at Evanston, Illinois. By mowing lawns and doing whatever odd jobs he could find he worked his way for three years in the university. Then, by the kindness of Frances E. Willard, he had a year in Bennett College, Greensboro, North

Carolina. Prior to his entrance at Northwestern there had been but one brief opportunity in his life for attending school. But the wandering youth, battling against the adverse fates, or, concretely stated, the disadvantage of being a Negro, had managed somehow to make great books his companions. Hence, he had entered what Carlyle calls "the true modern university." Hence, his literary conversation with Mr. Lloyd.

Out of those early struggles, and perhaps also out of later bitter experiences, came such poems as the following:

AT THE CLOSED GATE OF JUSTICE

To be a Negro in a day like this
Demands forgiveness. Bruised with blow on blow,
Betrayed, like him whose woe-dimmed eyes gave bliss,
Still must one succor those who brought one low,
To be a Negro in a day like this.

To be a Negro in a day like this
Demands rare patience—patience that can wait
In utter darkness. 'Tis the path to miss,
And knock, unheeded, at an iron gate,
To be a Negro in a day like this.

To be a Negro in a day like this
Demands strange loyalty. We serve a flag
Which is to us white freedom's emphasis.
Ah! one must love when truth and justice lag,
To be a Negro in a day like this.

To be a Negro in a day like this—
Alas! Lord God, what evil have we done?
Still shines the gate, all gold and amethyst
But I pass by, the glorious goal unwon,
"Merely a Negro"—in a day like *this*!

Even though his face be "red like Adam's," and even though his art be noble like that of the masters of song, yet had Mr. Corrothers, even in the republic of letters, felt the

handicap of his complexion, as this sonnet bears witness:

THE NEGRO SINGER

O'er all my song the image of a face
Lieth, like shadow on the wild, sweet flowers.
The dream, the ecstasy that prompts my powers,
The golden lyre's delights, bring little grace
To bless the singer of a lowly race.
Long hath this mocked me: aye, in marvelous hours,
When Hera's gardens gleamed, or Cynthia's bowers,
Or Hope's red pylons, in their far, hushed place!
But I shall dig me deeper to the gold;
Fetch water, dripping, over desert miles
From clear Nyanzas and mysterious Niles
Of love; and sing, nor one kind act withhold.
So shall men know me, and remember long,
Nor my dark face dishonor any song.

Death has silenced the muse of this dark singer, one of the best hitherto. That his endowment was uncommon and that his achievement, as evinced by these poems, is one of distinction, to use Mr. Howells's word, every reader equipped to judge of poetry must admit.

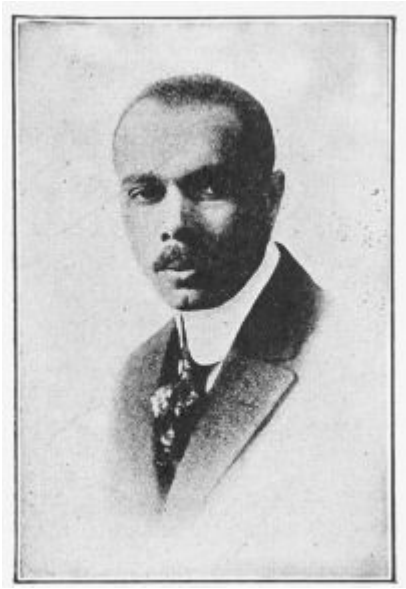
III. A Group of Singing Johnsons

In all rosters the name Johnson claims liberal space. Five verse-smiths with that cognomen will be presented in this book, and there is a sixth. These many Johnsons are no further related to one another, so far as I know, than that they are all Adam's offspring, and poets. Only three of them will be presented in this chapter: James Weldon Johnson, of Florida, author of *Fifty Years and Other Poems* (1917); Charles Bertram Johnson, of Missouri, author of *Songs of My People* (1918); Fenton Johnson, of Chicago, author of *A Little Dreaming* (1914); *Unions of the Dusk* (1915), and *Songs of the Soil* (1916). The fourth and fifth are women, and will find a place in another group;

the sixth is Adolphus Johnson, author of *The Silver Chord*, Philadelphia, 1915. The three mentioned above will be treated in the order in which they have been named.

1. James Weldon Johnson

Now of New York, but born in Florida and reared in the South, James Weldon Johnson is a man of various abilities, accomplishments, and activities. He was graduated with the degrees of A. B. and A. M. from Atlanta University and later studied for three years in Columbia University. First a school-principal, then a practitioner of the law, he followed at last the strongest propensity and turned author. His literary work includes light operas, for which his brother, J. Rosamond Johnson, composed the music, and a novel entitled *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*. Having been United States consul in two Latin-American countries, he is a master of Spanish and has made translations of Spanish plays and poems. The English libretto of *Goyescas* was made by him for the Metropolitan Opera Company in 1915. He is also one of the ablest editorial writers in the country. In the *Public Ledger's* contest of 1916 he won the third prize. His editorials are widely syndicated in the Negro weekly press. Poems of his have appeared in *The Century*, *The Crisis*, and *The Independent*.



James Weldon Johnson

Professor Brander Matthews in his Introduction to *Fifty Years and Other Poems* speaks of "the superb and soaring stanzas" of the title-poem and describes it as "a poem sonorous in its diction, vigorous in its workmanship, elevated in its imagination, and sincere in its emotion." Doubtless this will seem like the language of exaggeration. The sceptic, however, must withhold judgment until he has read the poem, too long for presentation here. Mr. Johnson's poetical qualities can be represented in this place only by briefer though inferior productions. A poem of special significance, and characterized by the qualities noted by Professor Matthews in "Fifty Years," is the following:

O SOUTHLAND!

O Southland! O Southland!
  Have you not heard the call,
The trumpet blown, the word made known

To the nations, one and all?
The watchword, the hope-word,
Salvation's present plan?
A gospel new, for all—for you:
Man shall be saved by man.

O Southland! O Southland!
Do you not hear to-day
The mighty beat of onward feet,
And know you not their way?
'Tis forward, 'tis upward,
On to the fair white arch
Of Freedom's dome, and there is room
For each man who would march.

O Southland, fair Southland!
Then why do you still cling
To an idle age and a musty page,
To a dead and useless thing?
'Tis springtime! 'Tis work-time!
The world is young again!
And God's above, and God is love,
And men are only men.

O Southland! my Southland!
O birthland! do not shirk
The toilsome task, nor respite ask,
But gird you for the work.
Remember, remember
That weakness stalks in pride;
That he is strong who helps along
The faint one at his side.

For pure lyric beauty and exquisite pathos, Wordsworthian in both respects, but no hint of imitation, the following stanzas may be set, without disadvantage to them, by the side of any in our literature:

The glory of the day was in her face,
The beauty of the night was in her eyes,
And over all her loveliness, the grace

Of Morning blushing in the early skies.

And in her voice, the calling of the dove;
Like music of a sweet, melodious part.
And in her smile, the breaking light of love;
And all the gentle virtues in her heart.

And now the glorious day, the beauteous night,
The birds that signal to their mates at dawn,
To my dull ears, to my tear-blinded sight
Are one with all the dead, since she is gone.

Yet one other poem of this fine singer's I will give, selecting from not a few that press for the restricted space. The easy flow of the verse and the ready rhyme will be remarked—and that supreme quality of good lyric poetry, austere simplicity.

THE YOUNG WARRIOR

Mother, shed no mournful tears,
But gird me on my sword;
And give no utterance to thy fears,
But bless me with thy word.

The lines are drawn! The fight is on!
A cause is to be won!
Mother, look not so white and wan;
Give Godspeed to thy son.

Now let thine eyes my way pursue
Where'er my footsteps fare;
And when they lead beyond thy view,
Send after me a prayer.

But pray not to defend from harm,
Nor danger to dispel;
Pray, rather, that with steadfast arm
I fight the battle well.

Pray, mother of mine, that I always keep

My heart and purpose strong,
My sword unsullied and ready to leap
Unsheathed against the wrong.

Arduous labors in other fields than poetry threaten to silence Mr. Johnson's muse, and that is to be regretted.

2. *Charles Bertram Johnson*

School-teacher, preacher, poet—this is Charles Bertram Johnson of Missouri. And in Missouri there is no voice more tuneful, no artistry in song any finer, than his. Nor in so bold an assertion am I forgetting the sweet voice and exquisite artistry of Sarah Teasdale. Mr. Johnson's art is not unlike hers in all that makes hers most charming. Only there is not so much of his that attains to perfection of form. On pages 52 and 63 were given two of his quatrain poems. These were of his people. But a lyric poet should sing himself. That is of the essence of lyric poetry. In so singing, however, the poet reveals not only his individual life, but that of his race to the view of the world. Another quatrain poem, personal in form, may be accepted as of racial interpretation:



Charles Bertram Johnson

SOUL AND STAR

So oft from out the verge afar
  The dear dreams throng and throng,
Sometimes I think my soul a star,
  And life a pulséd song.

Born at Callao, Missouri, October 5, 1880, of a Kentucky mother and a Virginia father, Charles Bertram Johnson attended a one-room school "across the railroad track," where—who can explain this?—he was "Introduced to Bacon, Shakespeare, and the art of rhyming." It reads like an old story. Some freak of a schoolmaster whose head is filled with "useless" lore—poetry, tales, and "such stuff"—nurturing a child of genius into song. But it was Johnson's mother who was the great influence in his life. She was an "adept at rhyming" and "she initiated me into the world of color and melody"—so writes our poet. It is always the mother. Then, by chance—but how marvelously chance comes to the aid of the

predestined!—by chance, he learns of Dunbar and his poetry. The ambition to be a poet of his people like Dunbar possesses him. He knows the path to that goal is education. He therefore makes his way to a little college at Macon, Missouri, from which, after five years, he is graduated—without having received any help in the art of poetry, however. Two terms at a summer school and special instruction by correspondence seem to have aided him here, or to have induced the belief that he had been aided. For twenty-odd years he followed the profession of teaching. For ten years of that period he also preached. The ministry now claims his entire energies, and the muse knocks less and less frequently at his door.

Yet he still sings. In a recent number of *The Crisis* I find a poem of his that in suggesting a life of toil growing to a peaceful close is filled with soothing melody:

OLD FRIENDS

Sit here before my grate,
  Until it's ashen gray,
Or till the night grows late,
  And talk the time away.

I cannot think to sleep,
  And miss your golden speech,
My bed of dreams will keep—
  You here within my reach.

I have so much to say,
  The time is short at best,
A bit of toil and play,
  And after that comes rest.

But you and I know now
  The wisdom of the soul,
The years that seamed the brow
  Have made our visions whole.

Sit here before my grate
  Until the ash is cold;
The things you say of late
  Are fine as shriven gold.

Even though one be born to sing, if circumstances have made him a preacher he may be expected to moralize his song. Whether we shall be reconciled to this will depend on the art with which it is done. If the moral idea be a sweet human one, and if the verse still be melifluous, we will submit, and our delight will be twofold—ethical and esthetical. We will put our preacher-poet of Missouri to the test:

SO MUCH

So much of love I need,
  And tender passioned care,
Of human fault and greed
  To make me unaware:

So much of love I owe,
  That, ere my life be done,
How shall I keep His will
  To owe not any one?

Truth is, Mr. Johnson is not given to preaching in verse any more than other poets. His sole aim is beauty. He assures me it is truth. Instead of admitting disagreement I only assert that, being a poet, he must find all truth beautiful. It is only for relative thinking we need the three terms, truth, goodness, and beauty.

I will conclude this presentation of the Missouri singer with a lyrical sermonette:

A RAIN SONG

Chill the rain falls, chill!
Dull gray the world; the vale
Rain-swept; wind-swept the hill;

"But gloom and doubt prevail,"
My heart breaks forth to say.

Ere thus its sorrow-note,
"Cheer up! Cheer up, to-day!
To-morrow is to be!"
Babbled from a joyous throat,
A robin's in a mist-gray tree.

Then off to keep a tryst—
He preened his drabbled cloak—
Doughty little optimist!—
As if in answer, broke
The sunlight through that oak.

3. Fenton Johnson

Dreams and visions—such are the treasures of suffering loyal hearts: dreams, visions, and song. Happy even in their sorrows the people to whom God has given poets to be their spokesmen to the world. Else their hearts should stifle with woe. As the prophet was of old so in these times the poet. As a prophet speaks Fenton Johnson, his heart yearning toward the black folk of our land:

THESE ARE MY PEOPLE

These are my people, I have built for them
A castle in the cloister of my heart;
And I shall fight that they may dwell therein.
The God that gave Sojourner tongue of fire
Has made with me a righteous covenant
That these, my brothers of the dusk, shall rise
To Sinai and thence in purple walk
A newer Canaan, vineyards of the West.
The rods that chasten us shall break as straw
And fire consume the godless in the South;
The hand that struck the helpless of my race
Shall wither as a leaf in drear November,
And liberty, the nectar God has blest,
Shall flow as free as wine in Babylon.

O God of Covenants, forget us not!

Fenton Johnson seems to be more deeply rooted in the song-traditions of his people than are most of his fellow-poets. To him the classic Spirituals afford inspiration and pattern. Whoever is familiar with those "canticles of love and woe" will recognize their influence throughout Mr. Johnson's three volumes of song. I shall make no attempt here to illustrate this truth but shall rather select a piece or two that will represent the poet's general qualities. Other poems more typical of him as a melodist could be found but these have special traits that commend them for this place.

THE PLAINT OF THE FACTORY CHILD

Mother, must I work all day?
All the day? Ay, all the day?
Must my little hands be torn?
And my heart bleed, all forlorn?
I am but a child of five,
And the street is all alive
With the tops and balls and toys,—
Pretty tops and balls and toys.

Day in, day out, I toil—toil!
And all that I know is toil;
Never laugh as others do,
Never cry as others do,
Never see the stars at night,
Nor the golden glow of sunlight,—
And all for but a silver coin,—
Just a worthless silver coin.

Would that death might come to me!
That blessed death might come to me,
And lead me to waters cool,
Lying in a tranquil pool,
Up there where the angels sing,
And the ivy tendrils cling

To the land of play and song,—
Fairy land of play and song.

THE MULATTO'S SONG

Die, you vain but sweet desires!
  Die, you living, burning fires!
I am like a Prince of France,—
  Like a prince whose noble sires
Have been robbed of heritage;
  I am phantom derelict,
Drifting on a flaming sea.

Everywhere I go, I strive,
  Vainly strive for greater things;
Daisies die, and stars are cold,
  And canary never sings;
Where I go they mock my name,
  Never grant me liberty,
Chance to breathe and chance to do.

The Vision of Lazarus, contained in *A Little Dreaming*, is a blank-verse poem of about three-hundred lines, original, well-sustained, imaginative, and deeply impressive.

In one of the newer methods of verse, and yet with a splendid suggestion of the old Spirituals, I will take from a recent magazine a poem by Mr. Johnson that will show how the vision of his people is turned toward the future, from the welter of struggling forces in the World War:

THE NEW DAY

From a vision red with war I awoke and saw the Prince of Peace
  hovering over No Man's Land.
Loud the whistles blew and thunder of cannon was drowned by
  the happy shouting of the people.
From the Sinai that faces Armageddon I heard this chant from the
  throats of white-robed angels:

Blow your trumpets, little children!
From the East and from the West,
From the cities in the valley,
From God's dwelling on the mountain,
Blow your blast that Peace might know
She is Queen of God's great army.
With the crying blood of millions
We have written deep her name
In the Book of all the Ages;
With the lilies in the valley,
With the roses by the Mersey,
With the golden flower of Jersey,
We have crowned her smooth young temples.
Where her footsteps cease to falter
Golden grain will greet the morning,
Where her chariot descends
Shall be broken down the altar
Of the gods of dark disturbance.
Nevermore shall men know suffering,
Nevermore shall women wailing
Shake to grief the God of Heaven.
From the East and from the West,
From the cities in the valley,
From God's dwelling on the mountain,
Little children, blow your trumpets!

From Ethiopia, groaning 'neath her heavy burdens I heard the music of the old slave songs.
I heard the wail of warriors, dusk brown, who grimly fought the fight of others in the trenches of Mars.
I heard the plea of blood-stained men of dusk and the crimson in my veins leapt furiously:

Forget not, O my brothers, how we fought
In No Man's Land that peace might come again!
Forget not, O my brothers, how we gave
Red blood to save the freedom of the world!
We were not free, our tawny hands were tied;
But Belgium's plight and Serbia's woes we shared
Each rise of sun or setting of the moon.
So when the bugle blast had called us forth

We went not like the surly brute of yore,
But, as the Spartan, proud to give the world
The freedom that we never knew nor shared.
These chains, O brothers mine, have weighed us down
As Samson in the temple of the gods;
Unloosen them and let us breathe the air
That makes the goldenrod the flower of Christ;
For we have been with thee in No Man's Land,
Through lake of fire and down to Hell itself;
And now we ask of thee our liberty,
Our freedom in the land of Stars and Stripes.

I am glad that the Prince of Peace is hovering over No Man's Land.

4. *Adolphus Johnson*

From the *Preface* of Adolphus Johnson's *The Silver Chord* I will take a paragraph that is more poetic and perfect in expression than any stanza in his book. Poetry, I think, is in him, but when he wrote these rhymes he was not yet sufficiently disciplined in expression. But this is how he can say a thing in prose:

"As the Goddess of Music takes down her lute, touches its silver chords, and sets the summer melodies of nature to words, so an inspiration comes to me in my profoundest slumbers and gently awakens my highest faculties to the finest thought and serenest contemplation herein expressed. Always remember that a book is your best friend when it compels you to think, disenthralls your reason, enkindles your hopes, vivifies your imagination, and makes easier all the burdens of your daily life."

IV. William Stanley Braithwaite

The critical and the creative faculties rarely dwell together in harmony. One or the other finally predominates. In the case of Mr. Braithwaite it seems to be the critical faculty. He has preferred, it seems, to be

America's chief anthologist, encouraging others up rugged Parnassus, rather than himself to stand on the heights of song. Since 1913 he has edited a series of annual anthologies of American magazine verse, which he has provided with critical reviews of the verse output of the respective year. Of several anthologies of English verse also he is the editor. Three books of original verse stand to his credit: *Lyrics of Life and Love* (1904), *The House of Falling Leaves* (1908), and *Sandy Star and Willie Gee* (1922). These dates seem to prove that the creative impulse has waned.

Verse artistry, in simple forms, reaches a degree of excellence in Mr. Braithwaite's lyrics that has rarely been surpassed in our times. Graceful and esthetically satisfying expression is given to elusive or mystical and rare fancies. I will give one of his brief lyrics as an example of the qualities to which I allude:

SANDY STAR

No more from out the sunset,
  No more across the foam,
No more across the windy hills
  Will Sandy Star come home.

He went away to search it,
  With a curse upon his tongue,
And in his hands the staff of life
  Made music as it swung.

I wonder if he found it,
  And knows the mystery now:
Our Sandy Star who went away
  With the secret on his brow.

In a number of Mr. Braithwaite's lyrics, as in this one, there is an atmosphere of mystery that, with the charming simplicity of manner, strongly suggests Blake. There is a strangeness in all beauty, it has been said. There is

commonly something of Faëryland in the finest lyric poetry. Another lyric illustrating this quality in Mr. Braithwaite is the following:

IT'S A LONG WAY

It's a long way the sea-winds blow
  Over the sea-plains blue,—
But longer far has my heart to go
  Before its dreams come true.

It's work we must, and love we must,
  And do the best we may,
And take the hope of dreams in trust
  To keep us day by day.

It's a long way the sea-winds blow—
  But somewhere lies a shore—
Thus down the tide of Time shall flow
  My dreams forevermore.

Mr. Braithwaite's art rises above race. He seems not to be race-conscious in his writing, whether prose or verse. Yet no man can say but that race has given his poetry the distinctive quality I have indicated. In this connection a most interesting poem is his "A New England Spinster." The detachment is perfect, the analysis is done in the spirit of absolute art. I will quote but two of its dozen or so stanzas:

She dwells alone, and never heeds
  How strange may sound her own footfall,
And yet is prompt to others' needs,
  Or ready at a neighbor's call.

But still her world is one apart,
  Serene above desire and change;
There are no hills beyond her heart,
  Beyond her gate, no winds that range.

Here is the true artist's imagination that penetrates to the secrets of life. No poet's lyrics, with their deceptive simplicity, better reward study for a full appreciation of their idea. So much of suggestion to the reader of the poems which follow:

FOSCATI

Blest be Foscati! You've heard tell
How—spirit and flesh of him—blown to flame,
Leaped the stars for heaven, dropped back to hell,
And felt no shame.

I here indite this record of his journey:
The splendor of his epical will to perform
Life's best, with the lance of Truth at Tourney—
Till caught in the storm.

Of a woman's face and hair like scented clover,
Te Deums, Lauds, and Magnificat, he
Praised with tongue of saint, heart of lover—
Missed all, but found Foscati!

AUTUMN SADNESS

The warm October rain fell upon his dream,
When once again the autumn sadness stirred,
And murmured through his blood, like a hidden stream
In a forest, unheard.

The drowsy rain battered against his delight
Of the half forgotten poignancies,
That settle in the dusk of an autumn night
On a world one hears and sees.

One was, he thought, an echo merely,
A glow enshadowed of truths untraced;
But the autumn sadness, brought him yearly,
Was a joy embraced.

THANKING GOD

The way folks had of thanking God
He found annoying, till he thought
Of flame and coolness in the sod—
Of balms and blessings that they wrought.

And so the habit grew, and then—
Of when and how he did not care—
He found his God as other men
The mystic verb in a grammar of prayer.

He never knelt, nor uttered words—
His laughter felt no chastening rod;
"My being," he said, "is a choir of birds,
And all my senses are thanking God."

Mr. Braithwaite is thoroughly conversant, as these selections indicate, with the subtleties and finest effects of the art poetic, and his impulses to write spring from the deepest human speculations, the purest motives of art. Hence in his work he takes his place among the few.

V. George Reginald Margetson

Under tropical suns, amid the tropical luxuriance of nature, developed the many-hued imagination of the subject of this sketch. His nature is tropical, for Mr. Margetson is a prolific bard: *Songs of Life*, *The Fledgling Bard and the Poetry Society*, *Ethiopia's Flight*, *England in the West Indies*—four published books, and more yet unpublished—are proof. No excerpts can fully reveal the distinctive quality of Mr. Margetson's poetry—its sonorous and ever-varying flow, like a mountain stream, its descriptive richness in which it resembles his native islands. For he was born in the British West Indies, and there lived the first twenty years of his life. Coming to America in 1897, his home has been in Boston or its environment since that time. Educated in the Moravian School at St. Kitts, he has lived with and in the English poets from Spenser to Byron—Byron seems to have been

his favorite—and so has cultivated his native talent. I can give here but one brief lyric from his pen.



George Reginald Margetson

THE LIGHT OF VICTORY

In the East a star is rising,
  Breaking through the clouds of war,
With a light old arts revising
  Shattering steel and iron bar.
Freedom's heirs with banners blazing,
  Emblems of Democracy,
At the magic light are gazing
  Battling with Autocracy.

Through the night brave souls are marching
  With the armies of the Free;
Where the Stars and Stripes o'er-arching
  Form a sheltering canopy.
Allies! hold a front united!
  Shaping well our destiny;
Let each brutal wrong be righted
  In the drive for Liberty!

VI. William Moore

The productions I have seen in the Negro magazines and newspapers from William Moore's pen give me the idea of a poet distinctly original and distinctly endowed with imagination. If there appears some obscurity in his poems let it not be too hastily set down against him as a fault. Some ideas are intrinsically obscure. The expression of them that should be lucid would be false, inadequate. Some poets there needs must be who, escaping from the inevitable, the commonplace, will transport us out into infinity to confront the eternal mysteries. Mr. Moore does this in two sonnets which I will give to represent his poetic work:

EXPECTANCY

I do not care for sleep, I'll wait awhile
For Love to come out of the darkness, wait
For laughter, gifted with the frequent fate
Of dusk-lit hope, to touch me with the smile
Of moon and star and joy of that last mile
Before I reach the sea. The ships are late
And mayhap laden with the precious freight
Dawn brings from Life's eternal summer isle.

And should I find the sweeter fruits of dream—
The oranges of love and mating song—
I'll laugh so true the morn will gayly seem
Endless and ships full laden with a throng
Of beauty, dreams and loves will come to me
Out of the surge of yonder silver sea.

AS THE OLD YEAR PASSED

I stood with dear friend Death awhile last night,
Out where the stars shone with a lustre true
In sacred dreams and all the old and new
Of love and life winged in a silver flight
Off to the sea of peace that waits where white,

Pale silences melt in the tranquil blue
Of skies so tender beauty doth imbue
The time with holiness and singing light.

My heart is Life, my soul, O Death, is thine!
Is thine to kiss with yearning life again,
Is thine to strengthen and to sweet incline
To peace and mellowed dream of joy's refrain.
I'll stand with Death again to-night, I think,
Out where the stars reveal life's deeper brink.

VII. Joshua Henry Jones, Jr.



Joshua Henry Jones, Jr.

Poets are born and nurtured in all conditions of life: Joseph Cotter the elder was a slave-woman's child; Dunbar wrote his first book between the runs of the elevator he tended; Leon R. Harris was left in infancy to the dreary shelter of an orphanage, then indentured to a brutal farmer; Carmichael came from the cabin of an unlettered farmer in the Black Belt of Alabama; of a dozen others the story is similar. Born in poverty, up through adversities they

struggled, with little human help save perhaps from the croons and caresses of a singing mother, and a few terms at a wretched school, they toiled into the kingdom of knowledge and entered the world of poetry. Some, however, have had the advantages afforded by parents of culture and of means. Among these is the subject of this sketch, the son of Bishop J. H. Jones, of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. He has had the best educational opportunity offered by American colleges. He is a graduate of Brown University. Writing has been his employment since graduation, and he has been on the staffs of several New England papers. His first book of poems, entitled *The Heart of the World* (1919), now in the second edition, reveals at once a student of poetry and an independent artist in verse. His second book, *Poems of the Four Seas* (1921), shows that his vein is still rich in ore.

In Chapter VIII I give his "Goodbye, Old Year." Another poem of similar technique takes for its title the last words of Colonel Roosevelt: "Turn out the light, please." The reader cannot but note the sense of proper effect exhibited in the short sentences, the very manner of a dying man. But more than this will be perceived in this poem. It will seem to have sprung out of the world-weary soul of the young poet himself. Struggle, grief, weariness in the strife, have been his also. Hence:

TURN OUT THE LIGHT

Turn out the light. Now would I slumber,
  I'm weary with the toil of day.
Let me forget my pains to number.
  Turn out the light. Dreams come to play.

Turn out the light. The hours were dreary.
  Clouds of despair long hid the sun.
I've battled hard and now I'm weary.
  Turn out the light. My day is done.

I've done life's best gloom's ways to brighten—
I've scattered cheer from heart to heart,
And where I could I've sought to righten
The wrongs of men ere day depart.

This morn 'twas bright with hope—and cheery.
This noon gave courage—made me brave.
But as the sun sank I grew weary
Till now my soul for rest doth crave.

Turn out the light. I've done my duty
To friend and enemy as well.
I go to sleep where things of beauty
In glitt'ring chambers ever dwell.

Turn out the light. Now would I slumber.
To rest—to dream—soon go we all.
Let's hope we wake soul free of cumber.
Turn out the light. Dream comrades call.

The next piece I select from Mr. Jones's first book will represent his talent in another sphere. I suggest that comparison might be made between this song in literary English and Mr. Johnson's Negro love song in dialect, page 226.

A SOUTHERN LOVE SONG

Dogwoods all a-bloom
Perfume earth's big room,
White full moon is gliding o'er the sky serene.
Quiet reigns about,
In the house and out;
Hoot owl in the hollow mopes with solemn mien.
Birds have gone to rest
In each tree-top nest;
Cotton fields a-shimmer flash forth silver-green.

O'er the wild cane brake,
Whip-poor-wills awake,
And they speak in tender voicings, Heart, of You.

Answering my call,
Through the leafy hall,
Telling how I'm waiting for your tripping, Sue.
All the world is glad,
Just because I'm mad.
Sense-bereft am I through my great love for you.

Night is all a-smile,
Happy all the while.
That is why my heart so filled with song o'erflows.
I have tarried long,
Lilting here my song.
And I'll ever waiting be till life's step slows.
Come to me, my girl,
Precious more than pearl,
I'll be waiting for you where the grapevine grows.

How my heart doth yearn,
And with anguish burn,
Hungry for sweet pains awaked with your embrace.
Starward goes my cry.
Echo hears my sigh.
Heaven itself its pity at my plight shows trace.
Parson waits to wed.
Soon the nuptials said.
I've a rose-clad cottage reared for you to grace.

The title-piece of Mr. Jones's first volume reveals his mastery of effective form and his command of the language of passionate appeal. The World War, in which the Negroes of the country gave liberally and heroically, both of blood and treasure, for democracy, quickened failing hopes in them and kindled anew their aspirations. In this poem the writer speaks for his entire race:

THE HEART OF THE WORLD

In the heart of the world is the call for peace—
Up-surging, symphonic roar.
'Tis ill of all clashings; it seeks release

From fetters of greed and gore.
The winds of the battlefields echo the sigh
Of heroes slumbering deep,
Who gave all they had and now dreamlessly lie
Where the bayonets sent them to sleep.

Peace for the wealthy; peace for the poor;
Peace on the hillside, and peace on the moor.

In the heart of the world is the call for right:
For fingers to bind up the wound,
Slashed deep by the ruthless, harsh hand of might,
When Justice is crushed to the ground.
'Tis ill of the fevers of fear of the strong—
Of jealousies—prejudice—pride.
"Is there no ideal that's proof against wrong?"
Man asks of the man at his side.

Right for the lowly; right for the great;
Right all to pilot to happiness' gate.

In the heart of the world is the call for love:
White heart—Red—Yellow—and Black.
Each face turns to Bethlehem's bright star above,
Though wolves of self howl at each back.
The whole earth is lifting its voice in a prayer
That nations may learn to endure,
Without killing and maiming, but doing what's fair
With a soul that is noble and pure.

Love in weak peoples; love in the strong;
Love that will banish all hatred and wrong.

In the heart of the world is the call of God;
East—West—and North—and South.
Stirring, deep-yearning, breast-heaving call for God
A-tremble behind each mouth.
The heart's ill of torments that rend men's souls.
Skyward lift all faiths and hopes;
Across all the oceans the evidence rolls,
Refreshing all life's arid slopes.

God in the highborn; God in the low;
God calls us, world-brothers. Hark ye! and know.

From *Poems of the Four Seas* I will take a piece that gives the Negro background for the yearning expressed in the foregoing poem:

BROTHERS

They bind his feet; they thong his hands
With hard hemp rope and iron bands.
They scourge his back in ghoulish glee;
And bleed his flesh;—men, mark ye—free.
They still his groans with fiendish shout,
Where flesh streams red they ply the knout.
Thus sons of men feed lust to kill
And yet, oh God! they're brothers still.

They build a pyre of torch and flame
While Justice weeps in deepest shame.
E'en Death in pity bows its head,
Yet 'midst these men no prayer is said.
They gather up charred flesh and bone—
Mementos—boasting brave deed done.
They sip of gore their souls to fill;
Drink deep of blood their hands did spill.

Go tell the world what men have done
Who prate of God and yet have none;
Think of themselves as wholly good,
Blaspheme the name of brotherhood;
Who hearken not as brothers cry
For brother's chance to live and die.
To keep a demon's murder tryst
They'd rend the sepulcher of Christ.

VIII. Walter Everette Hawkins

CREDO

I am an Iconoclast.

I break the limbs of idols
And smash the traditions of men.

I am an Anarchist.
I believe in war and destruction—
Not in the killing of men,
But the killing of creed and custom.

I am an Agnostic.
I accept nothing without questioning.
It is my inherent right and duty
To ask the reason why.
To accept without a reason
Is to debase one's humanity
And destroy the fundamental process
In the ascertainment of Truth.

I believe in Justice and Freedom.
To me Liberty is priestly and kingly;
Freedom is my Bride,
Liberty my Angel of Light,
Justice my God.

I oppose all laws of state or country,
All creeds of church and social orders,
All conventionalities of society and system
Which cross the path of the light of Freedom
Or obstruct the reign of Right.

This is a faithful self-characterization—such a man in reality is Walter Everette Hawkins. A fearless and independent and challenging spirit. He is the rare kind of man that must put everything to the severe test of absolute principles. He hates shams, hypocrisies, compromises, chicaneries, injustices. His poems are the bold and faithful expressions of his personality. Free he has ever been, free he will be ever, striking right out for freedom and truth. Such a personality is refreshing to meet, whether you encounter it in the flesh or in a book.



Walter Everette Hawkins

Born about thirty-five years ago, on a little farm in North Carolina, the thirteenth child of ex-slave parents, young Hawkins, one may imagine, was not opulent in this world's goods. Nor were his opportunities such as are usually considered thrilling. A few terms of miserable schooling in the village of Warrenton, the fragments of a few more terms in a school maintained by the African Methodist Church, then—"the University of Hard Knocks." In the two first-named schools the independent-spirited lad seems not to have gotten along well with his teachers, hence a few dismissals. Always too prone to ask troublesome, challenging questions, too prone to doubts and reflections, he was thought incorrigible. In his "University" he chose his own masters—the great free spirits of the ages—and at the feet of these he was teachable, even while the knocks were hardest.

A lover of wild nature and able to commune with nature's spirit, deeply fond also of communing with the world's master minds in books, Mr. Hawkins is by

necessity—while his spirit soars—the slave of routine toil, being, until recently, a mail clerk in the post office of the City of Washington. "My only recreation," he writes me, "is in stealing away to be with the masters, the intellectual dynamos, of the world, who converse with me without wincing and deliver me the key to life's riddle."

A true expression of himself I said Mr. Hawkins's poems are. In no degree are they fictions. As a companion to *Credo*, quoted to introduce him, I will give the last poem in his book, which will again set him before us as he is:

HERO OF THE ROAD

Let me seek no statesman's mantle,
  Let me seek no victor's wreath,
Let my sword unstained in battle
  Still lie rusting in its sheath;
Let my garments be unsullied,
  Let no man's blood to me cling;
Life is love and earth is heaven,
  If I may but soar and sing.

This then is my sternest struggle,
  Ease the load and sing my song,
Lift the lame and cheer the cheerless
  As they plod the road along;
And we see ourselves transfigured
  In a new and bigger plan;
Man transformed, his own Messiah,
  God embodied into man.

For the whining craven class of men Mr. Hawkins has little respect:

The man who complains
  When the world is all song,
Or dares to sit mute
  When the world is all wrong;
Who barters his freedom

Vile honors to win,
Deserves but to die
With the vilest of men.

Upon the times in which we live his judgment is severe. His condemnation, however, bears witness to that earnestness of soul and that idealism of spirit which will not let the world repose in its wickedness. From a list of several poems attesting this I select the following as perhaps the most complete in form:

THE DEATH OF JUSTICE

These the dread days which the seers have foretold,
These the fell years which the prophets have dreamed;
Visions they saw in those full days of old,
The fathers have sinned and the children blasphemed.
Hurt is the world, and its heart is unhealed,
Wrong sways the sceptre and Justice must yield.

We have come to the travail of troublous times,
Justice must bow before Moloch and Baal;
Blasphemous prayers for the triumph of crimes,
High sounds the cry of the children who wail.
Hurt is the world, and its heart is unhealed,
Wrong sways the sceptre and Justice must yield.

In the brute strength of the sword men rely,
They count not Justice in reckoning things;
Whom their lips worship their hearts crucify,
This the oblation the votary brings.
Hurt is the world, and its heart is unhealed,
Wrong sways the sceptre and Justice must yield.

Locked in death-struggle humanity's host,
Seeking revenge with the dagger and sword;
This is the pride which the Pharisees boast,
Man damns his brother in the name of his Lord.
Hurt is the world, and its heart is unhealed,
Wrong sways the sceptre and Justice must yield.

Time dims the glare of the pomp and applause,
Vainglorious monarchs and proud princes fall;
Until the death of Time revokes his laws,
His awful mandate shall reign over all.
Hurt is the world, and its heart is unhealed,
Wrong sways the sceptre and Justice must yield.

A number of Mr. Hawkins's productions reveal possibilities of beauty and effectiveness, which he had not the patience or the skill to realize. One imagines that he has never been able to bring his spirit to a submissive study of the minutiæ of metrical composition. A poet *in esse*—or *in posse*—is all that nature ever makes. And even the most free spirit must know well the traditions. Whether this iconoclast knows the Cavalier traditions of English poetry may be left to conjecture, but the following piece, illustrating Mr. Hawkins's faults and virtues as a singer, will prove his kinship to the poetic tribe of which Lovelace and Suckling were conspicuous members:

ASK ME WHY I LOVE YOU

Ask me why I love you, dear,
  And I will ask the rose
Why it loves the dews of Spring
  At the Winter's close;
Why the blossoms' nectared sweets
  Loved by questing bee,—
I will gladly answer you,
  If they answer me.

Ask me why I love you, dear,
  I will ask the flower
Why it loves the Summer sun,
  Or the Summer shower;
I will ask the lover's heart
  Why it loves the moon,
Or the star-besprinkled skies
  In a night in June.

Ask me why I love you, dear,
  I will ask the vine
Why its tendrils trustingly
  Round the oak entwine;
Why you love the mignonette
  Better than the rue,—
If you will but answer me,
  I will answer you.

Ask me why I love you, dear,
  Let the lark reply,
Why his heart is full of song
  When the twilight's nigh;
Why the lover heaves a sigh
  When her heart is true;
If you will but answer me,
  I will answer you.

IX. Claude McKay



Claude McKay

An English subject, being born and growing to manhood in Jamaica, Claude McKay, a pure blood Negro, was first discovered as a poet by English critics. In Jamaica, as early as 1911, when he was but twenty-two years of age, his *Constab Ballads*, in Negro dialect, was published. Even in so broken a tongue this book revealed a poet—on the constabulary force of Jamaica. In 1920 his first book of poems in literary English, *Spring in New Hamp-Shire*, came out in England, with a *Preface* by Mr. I. A. Richards, of Cambridge, England. Meanwhile, shortly after the publication of his first book, he had come to the United States.

Here he has worked at various occupations, has taken courses in Agriculture and English in the Kansas State College, and has thus become acquainted with life in the States. He is now on the editorial staff of the *Liberator*, New York. There has been no poet of his race who has more poignantly felt and more artistically expressed the

life of the American Negro. His poetry is a most noteworthy contribution to literature. From *Spring in New Hampshire* I am privileged to take a number of poems which will follow without comment:

SPRING IN NEW HAMPSHIRE

Too green the springing April grass,
  Too blue the silver-speckled sky,
For me to linger here, alas,
  While happy winds go laughing by,
Wasting the golden hours indoors,
Washing windows and scrubbing floors.

Too wonderful the April night,
  Too faintly sweet the first May flowers,
The stars too gloriously bright,
  For me to spend the evening hours,
When fields are fresh and streams are leaping,
Wearied, exhausted, dully sleeping.

THE LYNCHING

His spirit in smoke ascended to high heaven.
His Father, by the cruelest way of pain,
Had bidden him to his bosom once again;
The awful sin remained still unforgiven:
All night a bright and solitary star
(Perchance the one that ever guided him,
Yet gave him up at last to Fate's wild whim)
Hung pitifully o'er the swinging char.
Day dawned, and soon the mixed crowds came to view
The ghastly body swaying in the sun:
The women thronged to look, but never a one
Showed sorrow in her eyes of steely blue,
And little lads, lynchers that were to be,
Danced round the dreadful thing in fiendish glee.

THE HARLEM DANCER

Applauding youths laughed with young prostitutes

And watched her perfect, half-clothed body sway;
Her voice was like the sound of blended flutes
Blown by black players upon a picnic day.
She sang and danced on gracefully and calm,
The light gauze hanging loose about her form;
To me she seemed a proudly-swaying palm
Grown lovelier for passing through a storm.
Upon her swarthy neck, black, shiny curls
Profusely fell; and, tossing coins in praise,
The wine-flushed, bold-eyed boys, and even the girls,
Devoured her with eager, passionate gaze:
But, looking at her falsely-smiling face,
I knew her self was not in that strange place.

IN BONDAGE

I would be wandering in distant fields
Where man, and bird, and beast live leisurely,
And the old earth is kind and ever yields
Her goodly gifts to all her children free;
Where life is fairer, lighter, less demanding,
And boys and girls have time and space for play
Before they come to years of understanding,—
Somewhere I would be singing, far away;
For life is greater than the thousand wars
Men wage for it in their insatiate lust,
And will remain like the eternal stars
When all that is to-day is ashes and dust:
But I am bound with you in your mean graves,
Oh, black men, simple slaves of ruthless slaves.

Distinction of idea and phrase inheres in these poems. In them the Negro is esthetically conceived, and interpreted with vision. This is art working as it should. Mr. McKay has passion and the control of it to the ends of art. He has the poet's insight, the poet's understanding.

Perhaps the most arresting poem in this list, and the one most surely attesting the genius of the writer, is *The Harlem Dancer*. It is an achievement in portrayal sufficient by itself to establish a poetic reputation. The divination

that penetrates to the secret purity of soul, or nobleness of character, through denying appearances—how rare is the faculty, and how necessary! Elsewhere I give a poem from a Negro woman which evinces the same divine gift in the author, exhibited in a poem no less original and no less deeply impressive—Mrs. Spencer's *At the Carnival*. Here I will companion *The Harlem Dancer* with one from Mr. Dandridge, for the comparison will deepen the effect of each:

ZALKA PEETRUZA

(*Who Was Christened Lucy Jane*)

She danced, near nude, to tom-tom beat,
With swaying arms and flying feet,
'Mid swirling spangles, gauze and lace,
Her all was dancing—save her face.

A conscience, dumb to brooding fears,
Companioned hearing deaf to cheers;
A body, marshalled by the will,
Kept dancing while a heart stood still:

And eyes obsessed with vacant stare
Looked over heads to empty air,
As though they sought to find therein
Redemption for a maiden sin.

'Twas thus, amid force-driven grace,
We found the lost look on her face;
And then, to us, did it occur
That, though we saw—we saw not her.

Returning to Mr. McKay, we may assert that his new volume of verse, *Harlem Shadows*, confirms and enhances the estimate of him we have expressed.

X. Leslie Pinckney Hill



Leslie Pinckney Hill

Bearing the diploma of the Lyric Muse, Mr. Leslie Pinckney Hill, schoolmaster of Cheyney, Pennsylvania, and authentic singer, is one of the newest arrivals on the slopes of Parnassus. A first glance tells that he is an agile climber, sinewy, easy of movement, light of step, with both grace and strength. Every indication in form and motion is for some point far up toward the summit. Youthful he is, ambitious, plainly, and, in spite of a burden, buoyant. "Climber," I said. I will drop the figure. Poets were never pedestrians. Mr. Hill comes not afoot. If not on the wings of Pegasus, yet on wings he comes—*the wings of oppression*. Sad wings! yet it must be remarked that it is commonly on such wings that poets of whatever race and time rise. And Mr. Hill's race knows no other wings. On the wings of oppression the Negro poet and the Negro people are rising toward the summits of Parnassus, Pisgah, and other peaks. This they know, too, and of it they are justly proud.

In his *Foreword* Mr. Hill thus states the case of his people, and, by implication, of himself: "Nothing in the

life of the nation has seemed to me more significant than that dark civilization which the colored man has built up in the midst of a white society organized against it. The Negro has been driven under all the burdens of oppression, both material and spiritual, to the brink of desperation, but he has always been saved by his philosophy of life. He has advanced against all opposition by a certain elevation of his spirit. He has been made strong in tribulation. He has constrained oppression to give him wings."

The significant thing about these wings, in a critical view, is that they fulfill the proper function of wings—bear aloft and sustain in flight through the azure depths. Mr. Hill's wings do bear aloft and sustain: if not always, nor even ever, into the very empyrean of poetry yet invariably, seventy times, into the ampler air. Like all his race, he has suffered much; and, like all his race still, he has gathered wisdom from sorrow. As a true poet should have, he has philosophy, also vision and imagination—vision for himself and his people, imagination that sees facts in terms of beauty and presents truths with vital imagery. Add thereto craftsmanship acquired in the best traditions of English poetry and you have Hill the poet.

The merit of his book cannot be shown by lines and stanzas. As ever with true art, the merit lies in the whole effect of complete poems. Still, we may here first detach from this and that poem a stanza or two, despite the wrong to art. The first and fourth stanzas of the title-poem will indicate Mr. Hill's technique and philosophy:

I have a song that few will sing
In honor of all suffering,
A song to which my heart can bring
The homage of believing—
A song the heavy-laden hears
Above the clamor of his fears,
While still he walks with blinding tears,
And drains the cup of grieving.

******

So long as life is steeped in wrong,
And nations cry: “How long, how long!”
I look not to the wise and strong
For peace and self-possession;
But right will rise, and mercy shine,
And justice lift her conquering sign
Where lowly people starve and pine
Beneath a world oppression.

The character and temper of the Negro in those gentler aspects which make such an appeal to the heart are revealed in the following sonnet:

MATER DOLOROSA

O mother, there are moments when I know
God’s presence to the full. The city street
May wrap me in the tumult and the heat
Of futile striving; bitter winds may blow
With winter-wilting freeze of hail and snow,
And all my hopes lie shattered in defeat;
But in my heart the springtime blossoms sweet,
And heaven seems very near the way I go.

These moments are the angels of that prayer
Which thou hast breathed for many a troubled year
With bended knee and swarthy-streaming face—
“Uphold him, Father, with a double care:
He is but mortal, yet his days must bear
The world cross, and the burden of his race.”

If these poems, taken collectively, do not declare “what is on the Negro’s mind” they yet truly reveal, to the reflecting person, what has sunk deep into his heart. They are therefore a message to America, a protest, an appeal, and a warning. They will penetrate, I predict, through breast-armor of *aes triplex* into the hearts of those whom sermons and editorials fail to touch in the springs of action. Such is the virtue of music wed to persuasive words. In

strong lines of soaring blank verse, in which Mr. Hill is particularly capable, he makes a direct appeal to America in behalf of his people, in a poem entitled Armageddon:

Because ye schooled them in the arts of life,
And gave to them your God, and poured your blood
Into their veins to make them what they are,
They shall not fail you in the hour of need.
They own in them enough of you to feel
All that has made you masters in your time—
Dear art and riches, unremitting toil,
Proud types of beauty, an unbounded will
To triumph, wondrous science and old law—
These have they learned to covet and to share.

But deeper in them still is something steeled
To hot abhorrence and unmeasured dread
Of your undaunted sins against the light—
Red sins of lust, of envy and of hate,
Of guilty gain extorted from the weak,
Of brotherhood traduced, and God denied.
All this have they beheld without revolt,
And borne the brunt in agonizing prayer.

For other strains of blood that flow from times
Older than Egypt, whence the dark man gave
The rudiments of learning to all lands,
Have been a strong constraint. And they have dreamed
Of a peculiar mission under heaven,
And felt the force of unexampled gifts
That make for them a rare inheritance—
The gift of cheerful confidence in man,
The gift of calm endurance, solacing
An infinite capacity for pain,
The gift of an unfeigned humility,
Blinding the eyes of strident arrogance
And bigot pride to that philosophy
And that far-glancing wisdom which it veils,
Of joy in beauty, hardihood in toil,
Of hope in tribulation, and of wide

Adaptive power without a parallel
In chronicles of men.

A sonnet entitled *To a Caged Canary in a Negro Restaurant* will present the poet's people with the persuasiveness of pathos as the foregoing poem with the persuasiveness of reason:

Thou little golden bird of happy song!
A cage cannot restrain the rapturous joy
Which thou dost shed abroad. Thou dost employ
Thy bondage for high uses. Grievous wrong
Is thine; yet in thy heart glows full and strong
The tropic sun, though far beyond thy flight,
And though thou flutterest there by day and night
Above the clamor of a dusky throng.
So let my will, albeit hedged about
By creed and caste, feed on the light within;
So let my song sing through the bars of doubt
With light and healing where despair has been;
So let my people bide their time and place,
A hindered but a sunny-hearted race.

It would be an injustice to this poet did I convey the idea that his seventy-odd poems are exclusively occupied with race wrongs and oppression. Not a few of them bear no stamp of an oppressed or afflicted spirit, though of sorrow they may have been nurtured.

A lyric of pure loveliness is the following, entitled

TO A NOBLY-GIFTED SINGER

All the pleasance of her face
Telleth of an inward grace;
In her dark eyes I have seen
Sorrows of the Nazarene;
In the proud and perfect mould
Of her body I behold,
Rounded in a single view,
The good, the beautiful, the true;

And when her spirit goes up-winging
On sweet airs of artless singing,
Surely the heavenly spheres rejoice
In union with a kindred voice.

Schoolmaster I said Mr. Hill was. To represent his didactic quality, not his purer lyrical note, nor yet his narrative beauty, I choose the following piece:

SELF-DETERMINATION

The Philosophy of the American Negro

Four things we will not do, in spite of all
That demons plot for our decline and fall;
We bring four benedictions which the meek
Unto the proud are privileged to speak,
Four gifts by which amidst all stern-browed races
We move with kindly hearts and shining faces.

We will not hate. Law, custom, creed and caste,
All notwithstanding, here we hold us fast.
Down through the years the mighty ships of state
Have all been broken on the rocks of hate.

We will not cease to laugh and multiply.
We slough off trouble, and refuse to die.
The Indian stood unyielding, stark and grim;
We saw him perish, and we learned of him
To mix a grain of philosophic mirth
With all the crass injustices of earth.

We will not use the ancient carnal tools.
These never won, yet centuries of schools,
Of priests, and all the work of brush and pen
Have not availed to win the wisest men
From futile faith in battleship and shell:
We see them fall, and mark that folly well.

We will not waver in our loyalty.
No strange voice reaches us across the sea;

No crime at home shall stir us from this soil.
Ours is the guerdon, ours the blight of toil,
But raised above it by a faith sublime
We choose to suffer *here* and bide our time.

And if we hold to this, we dream some day
Our countrymen will follow in our way.

But though teacher Leslie Pinckney Hill is singer too. And though he has a message for America he also has music. His powers are rich, varied, cultured, and developing. His second book will be better than his excellent first.

CHAPTER III

THE HEART OF NEGRO WOMANHOOD

I. Miss Eva A. Jessye



Miss Eva A. Jessye

From newspapers I have clipt several poems by Miss

Jessye that exhibit a nature touched to the finer things of the world and of life. She has fancy, and skill in expression. I concluded section I of chapter II with a poem of hers, and I will here give two more. The first, in a lighter vein, betrays the human nature of a school-teacher in the midst of her vexations while she tries to appear above the reach of common desires.

SPRING WITH THE TEACHER

'Tis now the time of silver moon,
Of swelling bud and fancies free
As western winds, but then, ah me!
May cannot come too soon;
The rover calls in every child,
And sets his pulses running wild!

"Do stop that noise and take your seat!
Joe, learn to study quietly!
Why girl, it surely has me beat
How you forget geography!
Brazil's in Spain? Here, close that book!
What caused the Civil War, you say?—
Suzanna says somebody took
Her beads; return them right away!

"Now boy, I told you once before
To put that story book away!
I'll call the roll: Beatrice Moore,
Why were you absent yesterday?
Why yes, I heard that mocking bird.
Lee Arthur, straighten up your face!
Well, surely, class, you never heard
Of adverbs having tense and case!

"Now, James, explain the term 'per cent,'
My, my, 'tis surely not forgot!
If it were fun or devilment
You'd know it all, sir, like as not!
Who put that bent pin in my chair?

No one of course—bent pins can walk!
I'll tell you though, had I sat there
I'd make these straps and switches talk.

"A picnic on for Saturday?
(I wish that I were going, too!)
Oh, no! I couldn't get away,
I have so many things to do.
Well, there's the bell! Goodbye, goodbye,
And be good children, don't forget."—
Well, thank the Lord they're gone, but I
Can hear their joyous laughter yet.

'Tis now the time of silver moon,
Of swelling bud and fancies free
As western winds, but then, ah me!
May cannot come too soon!

Though the moral motive is rarely consistent with the artistic, yet in the next poem of Miss Jessye's I shall give there is a perfect reconciliation. Original no doubt is the idea of this poem, but Sappho, it seems to me, as one of her fragments bears witness, had meditated upon the very same idea twenty-five centuries ago.

TO A ROSEBUD

O dainty bud, I hold thee in my hand—
A castaway, a dead, a lifeless thing,
A few days since I saw thee, wet with dew,
A bud of promise to thy parent cling,
Now thou art crushed yet lovely as before,
The adverse winds but waft thy fragrance more.

How small, how frail! I tread thee underfoot
And crush thy petals in the reeking ground:
Perchance some one in pity for thy state
Will pick thee up in reverence profound—
Lo, thou art pure with virtue more intense,
Thy perfume grows from earthly detriments.

Why do we grieve? Let each affliction bear
A greater beauty springing from the sod,
May sweetness well as incense from the urn,
Which, rising high, enshrouds the throne of God.
Envoy of Hope, this lesson I disclose—
"Be Ever Sweet," thou humble, fragrant rose!

Miss Jessye, now a teacher of the piano in Muskogee, Oklahoma, was born in Kansas and was graduated from Western University. She has taken prizes in oratory, poetry, and essay-writing. Yet in her early twenties, she has a volume of verse ready for publication.

II. Mrs. J. W. Hammond



Mrs. J. W. Hammond

Self-taught, and disclaiming knowledge of books, Mrs. Hammond of Omaha, Nebraska, contributes to *The Monitor* of that city verses of musical cadences and gentle beauty. Her response to the scenes and objects of nature is that of a poetic mind. The spirit of joy sings through her verses. As a representative poem the following may be

accepted:

THE OPTIMIST

Who would have the sky any color but blue,
  Or the grass any color but green?
Or the flowers that bloom the summer through
  Of other color or sheen?

How the sunshine gladdens the human heart—
  How the sound of the falling rain
Will cause the tender tears to start,
  And free the soul from pain.

Oh, this old world is a great old place!
  And I love each season's change,
The river, the brook of purling grace,
  The valley, the mountain range.

And when I am called to quit this life,
  My feet will not spurn the sod,
Though I leave this world with its beauty rife,—
  There's a glorious one with God!

One other poem of Mrs. Hammond's I will give that is beautiful alike in feeling and treatment.

TO MY NEIGHBOR BOY

When sweet Aurora lifts her veil,
And floods the world with rosy light,
When morning stars, grown dim and pale,
Proclaim the passing of the night—
With waking bird and opening flower,
I greet with joy the new-born day—
For oft at this exquisite hour,
I hear a strange new roundelay.
No syncopating "jazz" or "blues,"
Insults my eager listening ear,
But softly as the falling dews,
The strains come stealing sweet and clear.

With lilting grace they rise above
The early traffic's sordid din—
My neighbor boy is making love
To his beloved violin.

Sometimes I catch a quivering note—
An over-burdened wordless cry.
I say: "Those are the lines he wrote
The day he told some one goodbye."
But when I hear a joyous strain
Of melody serene and clear,
I smile and say: "All's well again—
The little maiden must be near!"
But best of all I love the mood
That prompts a soft sweet minor key.
My longing soul forgets to brood,
While drinking in the melody.
My restless spirit will not rove,
Nor lose its faith in God and men,
The while my neighbor boy makes love
To his beloved violin.

III. Mrs. Alice Dunbar-Nelson

A sonnet has already been given from Mrs. Dunbar-Nelson to which I think Mrs. Browning or Christina Rossetti might have appended her signature without detriment to her fame. It is one of a series entitled *A Dream Sequence*, the rest of the sequence being as yet unpublished. Instead of pillaging this sequence, marring the effect of the individual member so dislocated, I will take from her compilation, *The Dunbar Speaker*,[3] so named for her first husband, the poet, two of her original poems. The first is a war poem, doubtless, but the occasion is immaterial. The spirit of rebellion against confinement to the petty thing while the something big calls afar might be evoked into play by any of a hundred situations.



Alice Dunbar-Nelson

I SIT AND SEW

I sit and sew—a useless task it seems,
My hands grown tired, my head weighed down with dreams—
The panoply of war, the martial tread of men,
Grim-faced, stern-eyed, gazing beyond the ken
Of lesser souls, whose eyes have not seen Death,
Nor learned to hold their lives but as a breath—
But—I must sit and sew.

I sit and sew—my heart aches with desire—
That pageant terrible, that fiercely pouring fire
On wasted fields, and writhing grotesque things
Once men. My soul in pity flings
Appealing cries, yearning only to go
There in that holocaust of hell, those fields of woe—
But—I must sit and sew.

The little useless seam, the idle patch;
Why dream I here beneath my homely thatch,
When there they lie in sodden mud and rain,
Pitifully calling me, the quick ones and the slain?
You need me, Christ! It is no roseate dream

That beckons me—this pretty futile seam,
It stifles me—God, must I sit and sew?

The second poem I shall give is also not unrelated to the recent World War, and to all war: the lights alluded to, shining across and down the Delaware for miles, are the lights of the DuPont powder mills. It is a poem of fine symmetry, highly poetic diction, and great allusive meaning—a poem that will bear and repay many readings, never growing less beautiful.

THE LIGHTS AT CARNEY'S POINT

O white little lights at Carney's Point,
  You shine so clear o'er the Delaware;
When the moon rides high in the silver sky,
Then you gleam, white gems on the Delaware.
Diamond circlet on a full white throat,
  You laugh your rays on a questing boat;
Is it peace you dream in your flashing gleam,
  O'er the quiet flow of the Delaware?

And the lights grew dim at the water's brim,
  For the smoke of the mills shredded slow between;
And the smoke was red, as is new bloodshed,
  And the lights went lurid 'neath the livid screen.

O red little lights at Carney's Point,
  You glower so grim o'er the Delaware;
When the moon hides low sombrous clouds below,
  Then you glow like coals o'er the Delaware.
Blood red rubies on a throat of fire,
  You flash through the dusk of a funeral pyre;
Are there hearth fires red whom you fear and dread
  O'er the turgid flow of the Delaware?

And the lights gleamed gold o'er the river cold,
  For the murk of the furnace shed a copper veil;
And the veil was grim at the great cloud's brim,
  And the lights went molten, now hot, now pale.

O gold little lights at Carney's Point,
You gleam so proud o'er the Delaware;
When the moon grows wan in the eastering dawn,
Then you sparkle gold points o'er the Delaware.
Aureate filigree on a Crœsus' brow,
You hasten the dawn on a gray ship's prow.
Light you streams of gold in the grim ship's hold
O'er the sullen flow of the Delaware?

And the lights went gray in the ash of day,
For a quiet Aurora brought a halcyon balm;
And the sun laughed high in the infinite sky,
And the lights were forgot in the sweet, sane calm.

Mrs. Dunbar-Nelson has not applied herself to poetry as she has to prose fiction. As a short-story writer she has special distinction.

IV. Mrs. Georgia Douglas Johnson



Mrs. G. D. Johnson

Exquisite artistry in verse, with infallible poetic content, is exhibited in Mrs. Georgia Douglas Johnson's *The Heart*

of a Woman. It is also the saddest book produced by her race. Perfect lyrical notes, the most poignant pathos—that is an exact description of it. Triple bronze cannot armor any breast successfully against its appeal. For the heart that speaks here is a heart that has known its garden of sorrows, its Gethsemane. This is the harvest of her sorrows—dreams and songs, of which she comments:

The dreams of the dreamer
  Are life-drops that pass
The break in the heart
  To the Soul's hour-glass.

The songs of the singer
  Are tones that repeat
The cry of the heart
  Till it ceases to beat.

Neither in memory nor in dreams is there a refuge for the life-wounded heart of this woman:

What need have I for memory,
  When not a single flower
Has bloomed within life's desert
  For me, one little hour?

What need have I for memory,
  Whose burning eyes have met
The corse of unborn happiness
  Winding the trail regret?

And thus of her dreams, on the last page of her book:

I am folding up my little dreams
  Within my heart to-night,
And praying I may soon forget
  The torture of their sight.

What are the experiences and what the conditions of life—what must they have been—which have had the tragic

power to make a soul "try to forget it has dreamed of stars?" The world little kens what hearts in it are breaking, and why. To the grave the secret goes with the many, one in a million betrays it in a cry. But not here is it betrayed:

SMOTHERED FIRES

A woman with a burning flame
Deep covered through the years
With ashes—ah! she hid it deep,
And smothered it with tears.

Sometimes a baleful light would rise
From out the dusky bed,
And then the woman hushed it quick
To slumber on, as dead.

At last the weary war was done,
The tapers were alight,
And with a sigh of victory
She breathed a soft—goodnight!

Not without hurt to itself may the oyster produce its pearl. These poems from the heart of a woman remind me of nothing so much as a string of pearls. Each one is witness to a bruise or gash to the spirit. The lyric cry has not been more piercing in anything written on American soil, piercing all the more for the perfect restraint, the sure artistry. It was a heart surcharged with sorrow in which these pearls of poesy took shape from secret wounds. The heart of one woman speaks in them for thousands in America, else inarticulate. "We weep," says the African proverb, "we weep in our hearts like the tortoise." Without one word or hint of race in all the book there is yet between its covers the unwritten, unwritable tragedy of that borderland race which knows not where it belongs in the world, a truly homeless race in soul. A sadder book could hardly be.

Mrs. Georgia Douglas Johnson was born in Atlanta,

Georgia, and received her academic education in Atlanta University and a musical education at Oberlin. She now lives in Washington, D. C. She is at the beginning of her career as an author. Two other books of lyrics, under the titles of *An Autumn Love Cycle*, and *Bronze*,[4] she has in preparation for the press at this time. Some of their contents have already appeared in magazines. These two new volumes will make an advance in power and in richness of content beyond *The Heart of a Woman*. They will also provide the key to the tragic mystery concealed in that book. A poem that is to appear in *Bronze* will be given in a later chapter. I will here give another. Both have already been published in magazines.

THE OCTOROON

One drop of midnight in the dawn of life's pulsating stream
Marks her an alien from her kind, a shade amid its gleam.
Forevermore her step she bends, insular, strange, apart—
And none can read the riddle of her strangely warring heart.

The stormy current of her blood beats like a mighty sea
Against the man-wrought iron bars of her captivity.
For refuge, succor, peace, and rest, she seeks that humble fold
Whose every breath is kindliness, whose hearts are purest gold.

V. Miss Angelina W. Grimké



Miss Angelina Grimké

Not less distinctive in quality than Mrs. Johnson's, and not less beautiful in artistry, are the brief lyrics of Miss Angelina W. Grimké, also of the city of Washington. If hers should be called imagist poetry or no I cannot say, but I am certain that more vivid imaging of objects has not been done in verse by any contemporary. This, too, in stanzas that suggest in their perfection of form the work of the old lapidaries. Nor is there but a surface or formal beauty. There is passion, there is beauty of idea, the soul of lyric poetry is there as well as the form. I am weighing well my words in giving this praise, and I know that not one in the thousand of those who write good verse would deserve them. But I ask the sceptical individual to re-read them after he has perused the poems themselves.

I will present several without interrupting comment:

DAWN

Grey trees, grey skies, and not a star;
Grey mist, grey hush;

And then, frail, exquisite, afar,
A hermit-thrush.

A WINTER TWILIGHT

A silence slipping around like death,
Yet chased by a whisper, a sigh, a breath;
One group of trees, lean, naked and cold,
Inking their crests 'gainst a sky green-gold;
One path that knows where the corn flowers were;
Lonely, apart, unyielding, one fir;
And over it softly leaning down,
One star that I loved ere the fields went brown.

THE PUPPET-PLAYER

Sometimes it seems as though some puppet-player.
A clenched claw cupping a craggy chin.
Sits just beyond the border of our seeing,
Twitching the strings with slow, sardonic grin.

THE WANT OF YOU

A hint of gold where the moon will be;
Through the flocking clouds just a star or two;
Leaf sounds, soft and wet and hushed,
And oh! the crying want of you.

EL BESO

Twilight—and you,
Quiet—the stars;
Snare of the shine of your teeth,
Your provocative laughter,
The gloom of your hair;
Lure of you, eye and lip;
Yearning, yearning,
Languor, surrender;
Your mouth,
And madness, madness,
Tremulous, breathless, flaming,
The space of a sigh;

Then awakening—remembrance,
Pain, regret—your sobbing;
And again quiet—the stars,
Twilight—and you.

AT THE SPRING DAWN

I watched the dawn come,
  Watched the spring dawn come.
And the red sun shouldered his way up
  Through the grey, through the blue,
Through the lilac mists.
The quiet of it! The goodness of it!
  And one bird awoke, sang, whirred
A blur of moving black against the sun,
  Sang again—afar off.
And I stretched my arms to the redness of the sun,
  Stretched to my finger tips,
    And I laughed.
Ah! It is good to be alive, good to love,
  At the dawn,
    At the spring dawn.

TO KEEP THE MEMORY OF CHARLOTTE FORTEN GRIMKÉ

Still are there wonders of the dark and day;
The muted shrilling of shy things at night,
So small beneath the stars and moon;
The peace, dream-frail, but perfect while the light
Lies softly on the leaves at noon.
These are, and these will be
Until Eternity;
But she who loved them well has gone away.

Each dawn, while yet the east is veiled gray,
The birds about her window wake and sing;
And far away each day some lark
I know is singing where the grasses swing;
Some robin calls and calls at dark.
These are, and these will be

Until Eternity;
But she who loved them well has gone away.

The wild flowers that she loved down green ways stray;
Her roses lift their wistful buds at dawn,
But not for eyes that loved them best;
Only her little pansies are all gone,
Some lying softly on her breast.
And flowers will bud and be
Until Eternity;
But she who loved them well has gone away.

Where has she gone? And who is there to say?
But this we know: her gentle spirit moves
And is where beauty never wanes,
Perchance by other streams, 'mid other groves;
And to us here, ah! she remains
A lovely memory
Until Eternity.
She came, she loved, and then she went away.

The subject of these beautiful memorial verses was not simply in feeling but in expression also a poet herself. From "A June Song" written by her I will take a stanza in evidence:

How shall we crown her bright young head?
Crown it with roses, rare and red;
Crown it with roses, creamy white,
As the lotus bloom that sweetens the night.
Crown it with roses as pink as shell
In which the voices of ocean dwell.
And a fairer queen
Shall ne'er be seen
Than our lovely, laughing June.

VI. Mrs. Anne Spencer

Who can fathom to its depths the heart of womanhood? Under the conditions of American



Mrs. Anne Spencer

life the Negro woman's heart offers difficulties peculiar to itself. These various writers—talented, cultured, with the keen sensibilities of a specially sensitive people—have given us glimpses into some of the depths, not all. A poet of the other sex, Mr. McKay, with that divination which belongs to the poet, intimates in *The Harlem Dancer*, quoted on page 128, that the index of the heart is not always in the occupation or the face:

But, looking at her falsely-smiling face,
I knew her self was not in that strange place.

No, her self was free and too noble to be smirched by the "passionate gaze of wine-flushed, bold-eyed boys." It is a paradox that has puzzled a recent white novelist. Cissie Dildine, in Mr. Stribling's *Birthright*, pilferer though she is, and sacrificer of her maidenhood, yet does not lose caste among her people. They speak affectionately of her and minister lovingly to her in jail, with no hint of reproach. It is not other standards, as the novelist intimates, that we

must apply, but only right standards, in view of circumstances.

I am able to give here a poem that may start in the reader's mind a fruitful train of reflections, tending toward profound ethical truth. The writer, Mrs. Anne Spencer of Lynchburg, Virginia, in all of her work that I have seen, has marked originality. Her style is independent, unconventional, and highly compressed. The poem which follows will fairly represent her work and at the same time open another avenue to the secret chambers of the Negro woman's heart:

AT THE CARNIVAL

Gay little Girl-of-the-Diving-Tank,
I desire a name for you,
Nice, as a right glove fits;
For you—who amid the malodorous
Mechanics of this unlovely thing,
Are darling of spirit and form.
I know you—a glance, and what you are
Sits-by-the-fire in my heart.
My Limousine-Lady knows you, or
Why does the slant-envy of her eye mark
Your straight air and radiant inclusive smile?
Guilt pins a fig-leaf; Innocence is its own adorning.
The bull-necked man knows you—this first time
His itching flesh sees form divine and vibrant health,
And thinks not of his avocation.
I came incuriously—
Set on no diversion save that my mind
Might safely nurse its brood of misdeeds
In the presence of a blind crowd.
The color of life was gray.
Everywhere the setting seemed right
For my mood!
Here the sausage and garlic booth
Sent unholy incense skyward;
There a quivering female-thing

Gestured assignations, and lied
To call it dancing;
There, too, were games of chance
With chances for none;
But oh! Girl-of-the-Tank, at last!
Gleaming Girl, how intimately pure and free
The gaze you send the crowd,
As though you know the dearth of beauty
In its sordid life.
We need you—my Limousine-Lady,
The bull-necked man, and I.
Seeing you here brave and water-clean,
Leaven for the heavy ones of earth,
I am swift to feel that what makes
The plodder glad is good; and
Whatever is good is God.
The wonder is that you are here;
I have seen the queer in queer places,
But never before a heaven-fed
Naiad of the Carnival-Tank!
Little Diver, Destiny for you,
Like as for me, is shod in silence;
Years may seep into your soul
The bacilli of the usual and the expedient;
I implore Neptune to claim his child to-day!

VII. Miss Jessie Fauset



Miss Jessie Redmon Fauset

By way of indicating the idealistic aspirations of the colored people I gave at the end of Chapter I. J. Mord Allen's poem *The Psalm of the Uplift*. For the same purpose I will give here, at the end of this chapter, a poem of the very present day from one of the most accomplished young women of the Negro race. Besides its intrinsic merit as a poem it has the further recommendation for a place in this chapter that it celebrates a woman of the black race who was the very embodiment of its noblest qualities—illiterate slave though she was. It is a splendid testimonial to her people of this later day that Negro literature is filled with tributes to Sojourner Truth. She was indeed a wonderful woman, altogether worthy to be ranked with the noble heroines of biblical story. From a Negro historian I take the following restrained account of her:[5]

Two Negroes, because of their unusual gifts, stood out with great prominence in the agitation. These were Sojourner Truth and Frederick Douglass. Sojourner Truth was born of slave parents about 1798 in Ulster County, New York. She remembered vividly in later years the cold, wet cellar-room in

which slept the slaves of the family to which she belonged, and where she was taught by her mother to repeat the Lord's Prayer and to trust in God at all times. When in the course of gradual emancipation in New York she became legally free in 1827, her master refused to comply with the law. She left, but was pursued and found. Rather than have her go back, a friend paid for her services for the rest of the year. Then came an evening when, searching for one of her children that had been stolen and sold, she found herself a homeless wanderer. A Quaker family gave her lodging for the night. Subsequently she went to New York City, joined a Methodist Church, and worked hard to improve her condition. Later, having decided to leave New York for a lecturing tour through the East, she made a small bundle of her belongings and informed a friend that her name was no longer Isabella but Sojourner. She went on her way, lecturing to people where she found them assembled and being entertained in many aristocratic homes. She was entirely untaught in the schools, but she was witty, original, and always suggestive. By her tact and her gift of song she kept down ridicule, and by her fervor and faith she won many friends for the anti-slavery cause. As to her name she said: "And the Lord gave me Sojourner because I was to travel up an' down the land showin' the people their sins an' bein' a sign unto them. Afterwards I told the Lord I wanted another name, 'cause everybody else had two names, an' the Lord gave me Truth, because I was to declare the truth to the people."

The poem follows, with the author's note on the saying of Sojourner Truth which occasioned it:

ORIFLAMME

I can remember when I was a little, young girl, how my old mammy would sit out of doors in the evenings and look up at the stars and groan, and I would say, 'Mammy, what makes you groan so?' And she would say, 'I am groaning to think of my poor children; they do not know where I be and I don't know where they be. I look up at the stars and they look up at the stars!'—Sojourner Truth.

I think I see her sitting bowed and black,
Stricken and seared with slavery's mortal scars,

Reft of her children, lonely, anguished, yet
Still looking at the stars.

Symbolic mother, we thy myriad sons,
Pounding our stubborn hearts on Freedom's bars,
Clutching our birthright, fight with faces set,
Still visioning the stars!

"Still visioning the stars"—that is the idealism of the Negro. The soul of Sojourner Truth goes marching on, star-led.

CHAPTER IV

AD ASTRA PER ASPERA

I. per aspera

I. Edward Smythe Jones



Edward Smythe Jones

It has not frequently happened in these times that a poet

has dated a poem from a prison cell, or dedicated a book of poems to the judge of a police court. Mr. Edward Smythe Jones, however, has done this, and there is an interesting story by way of explanation. From the poem alluded to it seems that Mr. Jones in his over-mastering desire to drink at the Harvard fountain of learning tramped out of the Southland up to Cambridge. Arriving travel-worn, friendless, moneyless, hungry, he was preparing to bivouac on the Harvard campus his first night in the University city, when, being misunderstood, and not believed, he was apprehended as a vagabond and thrown into jail. A poem, however, the poem which tells this story, delivered him. The judge was convinced by it, kindly entreated the prisoner, and set him free to return to the academic shades. *Ad astra per aspera.*

It was in "Cell No. 40, East Cambridge Jail, Cambridge, Massachusetts, July 26, 1910," that the unlucky bard committed to verse this story, transmuting harsh experience to the joy of artistic production. The last half of his version runs as follows:

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!

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.

“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.’

“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.

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!

Of all the Negro poets whose writings I have perused, Edward Smythe Jones is the most difficult to estimate with certainty. There is an eloquence and luxuriance of language and imagery in his stanzas which perplexes the critic and yet persuades him to repeated readings. The result, however, fails to become clear. If, with his copiousness, the reserve of disciplined art ever becomes his, and his critical faculty is trained to match his creative, then poetry of noteworthy merit may be expected from him. His deeply religious bent, his aspiration after the best things of the mind, his ambition to treat lofty themes, augur well for him.

Mr. Jones's two best poems, *The Sylvan Cabin: A Centenary Ode on the Birth of Abraham Lincoln* and *An Ode to Ethiopia: to the Aspiring Negro Youth*, are too long for insertion here. I will give a shorter patriotic ode, not included in his book, but written, I believe, during the

World War:

FLAG OF THE FREE

Flag of the free, our sable sires
  First bore thee long ago
Into hot battles' hell-lit fires,
  Against the fiercest foe.
And when he shook his shaggy mien,
  And made the death-knell ring,
Brave Attucks fell upon the Green,
  Thy stripes first crimsoning.

Thy might and majesty we hurl,
  Against the bolts of Mars;
And from thy ample folds unfurl
  Thy field of flaming stars!
Fond hope to nations in distress,
  Thy starry gleam shall give;
The stricken in the wilderness
  Shall look to thee and live.

What matter if where Boreas roars,
  Or where sweet Zephyr smiles?
What matter if where eagle soars,
  Or in the sunlit isles?
Thy flowing crimson stripes shall wave
  Above the bluish brine,
Emblazoned ensign of the brave,
  And Liberty enshrine!

Flag of the Free, still float on high
  Through every age to come;
Bright beacon of the azure sky,
  True light of Freedom's dome.
Till nations all shall cease to grope
  In vain for liberty,
Oh, shine, last lingering star of hope
  Of all humanity!

Is there, in all our American poetry, a more eloquent

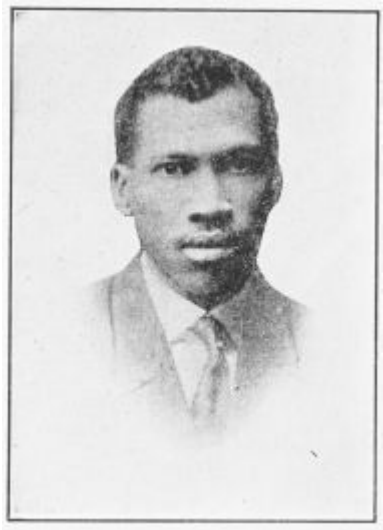
apostrophe to our flag than that, not excepting even Joseph Rodman Drake's? Perhaps the allusion to Attucks in the first stanza will require a note for the white reader. Every colored school-child, however, knows that Crispus Attucks was a brave and stalwart Negro, who, in the van of the patriots of Boston that resisted the British soldiers in the so-called "Boston Massacre," March 5, 1770, fell with two British bullets in his breast, among the first martyrs for independence:

Thus Attucks brave, without a moment's pause,
Full bared his breast in Freedom's holy cause,
First fell and tore the code of Tyranny's cruel laws—

so writes of him this same poet in his *Ode to Ethiopia*.

II. Raymond Garfield Dandridge

Twelve years ago a young house-decorator in Cincinnati was stricken down with partial paralysis, since which time he has been bedfast and all but helpless. On this bed of distress he learned what resources were within himself, powers that in health he knew not of. The fountain of poetry sprang up in what threatened to be a desert life.—The artist-nature within manifested itself in a new realm, the realm of words set to tuneful measures. This artisan, turned by affliction into a poet, is Raymond Garfield Dandridge. Again, *ad astra per aspera*.



Raymond G. Dandridge

It is not great poetry that Dandridge is giving to the world, but it is poetry. His musings shaped into rhyme reach the heart. They have sweetness and light—"the two most precious things in the world." All the art he has acquired, untaught, from his reading and unaided thinking. Naturally one would not expect that art to be flawless. His initial poem, while not literally a self-description, will serve to introduce this adopted son of the lyric Muse:

THE POET

The poet sits and dreams and dreams;
He scans his verse; he probes his themes.

Then turns to stretch or stir about,
Lest, like his thoughts, his strength give out.

Then off to bed, for he must rise
And cord some wood, or tamp some ties,

Or break a field of fertile soil,
Or do some other manual toil.

He dare not live by wage of pen,
Most poorly paid of poor paid men,

With shoes o'er-run, and threadbare clothes,—
And editors among the foes

Who mock his song, deny him bread,
Then sing his praise when he is dead.

A secret consolation is intimated in the following lines:

TO—

Though many are the dreams I dream,
They're born within a single theme.
The same kind voice I ever hear,
Instilling faith, upbraiding fear:
The same consoling smile appears
To snuff my sighs and dry my tears:
And fondest heart, of purest gold,
Is hers whose name I here withhold,
And pray naught ever change my theme,
Or wake me from my dream.

Reflections upon the deeper meanings of life and death are inevitable to one situated as Mr. Dandridge is, provided he is given to serious reflections at all. And the thoughts of such a person are apt to have value for their sincerity. Two brief meditations in rhyme, as we may call them, will represent his thinking on such themes:

TIME TO DIE

Black Brother, think you life so sweet
That you would live at any price?
Does mere existence balance with
The weight of your great sacrifice?
Or, can it be you fear the grave
Enough to live and die a slave?
O, Brother! be it better said,
When you are gone and tears are shed,

That your death was the stepping stone
Your children's children cross'd upon.
Men have died that men might live:
Look every foeman in the eye!
If necessary, your life give
For something, ere in vain you die.

ETERNITY

Vast realm beyond the gate of death,
Where craven scavengers and kings,
Alike, with passing final breath,
Relinquish claim to earthly things:

Endless, unexplored expanse,
Where souls, bereft of mortal clay,
Wander at will, in peace, perchance—
Perchance in strife, who dare would say?

Even in the confinement to which his affliction has subjected him, Mr. Dandridge has felt the strong pulse-throbs of his people's new kindled aspirations. The strength of the soul may indeed increase with the weakness of the body. These lines are surely not wanting in the passion without which "facts" are cold:

FACTS

Triumphant Sable Heroes homeward turning,
Arrayed in medals bright, and half-healed scars,
Have service, life, and limb been given earning
Trophies issued at the hand of Mars?

If your sole gain has been these "marks of battle,"
If valiant deeds insure no greater claim,
If you are still to be the herder's cattle,
Then ill spilt blood fell short of Freedom's aim.

Democracy means more than empty letters,
And Liberty far more than partly free;
Yet, both are void as long as men in fetters

Are at eclipse with Opportunity.

III. George Marion McClellan



George Marion McClellan

Aptly has Mr. McClellan entitled his book of poems *The Path of Dreams*. A dreamer is he and the home of his spirit is dreamland:

Sweet-scented winds move inward from the shore,
  Blythe is the air of June with silken gleams,
My roving fancy treads at will once more
  The golden path of dreams.

And that path leads the poet ever back to the golden days of his youth, when Southern suns and Southern moons steeped his very being in dreams and Southern birds gave him their melodies and Southern mountains lifted his soul heavenward. A wanderer upon the earth he appears to have been, and as all wanderers' hearts turn back to some loved region or spot so his to Dixie. Seldom has the longing for distant, remembered scenes, for spring's returning and for

summer's glow, been more sweetly expressed in rhyme than in the various poems of *The Path of Dreams*. And yet, sweeter songs than those are locked up in his breast, not to be sung:

The summer sweetness fills my heart with songs
I cannot sing, with loves I cannot speak.

When harsh necessity imprisons him in the city he sighs:

I think the sight of fields and shady lanes
Would ease my heart of pains.

But what contradictions poets have ever found in their experiences! The ministrants of joy but wring the cry of pain from the yearning heart. Lovely May is harder to endure, in exile, than gloomy December. The city's discordant cries may be endured, bringing neither grief nor joy, while a bird's carol may be exquisite torture:

The woodlark's tender warbling lay,
  Which flows with melting art,
Is but a trembling song of love
  That serves to break my heart.

Musing on whatever scene, the poet's thoughts are tinged with that sadness which to every sensitive nature has a sweetness in it:

The sun went down in beauty,
  While I stood musing alone,
Stood watching the rushing river
  And heard its restless moan;
Longings, vague, intenable,
  So far from speech apart,
Like the endless rush of the river,
  Went surging through my heart.

With no less sadness or beauty, and with that philosophy towards which poetry ever has a bias, our poet of dreams

thus reflects, on watching the ephemera that dart with glimmering wings in keen delight where the breezes fling the sweets of May:

Creatures of gauze and velvet wings,
With a day of gleams and flowers,
Who knows—in the light of eternal things—
Your life is less than ours?

Weary at last, it is ours, like you,
When our brief day is done,
Folding our hands, to say adieu,
And pass with the setting sun.

One must say of George Marion McClellan: "Here is a finely touched spirit that responds deeply to the mystery and charm of mountains and starry skies, and that charm and mystery he is capable of expressing in stanzas of lyric beauty." Every page of his book will confirm for the reader the estimate he may have formed from the quotations already given. Without rifling it of its choicest treasures I will put before the reader a few entire poems which I am sure will give increased delight on repeated readings:

TO HOLLYHOCKS

Gay hollyhocks with flaming bells
And waving plumes, as gently swells
The breeze upon the Summer air,
You bind me still with magic spells
When to the wind, in grave farewells,
You bow in all your graces fair.

You bring me back the childhood view,
Where arching skies and deepest blue
Stretch on in endless lengths above;
To see you so awakes anew
Long past emotions, from which grew
My wild and first heart-throbs of love.

There is in all your brilliant dyes,
Your gorgeousness and azure skies,
  A joy like soothing summer rain;
Yet in the scene there vaguely lies
A something half akin to sighs,
  Along the borderland of pain.

THE HILLS OF SEWANEE

Sewanee Hills of dear delight,
  Prompting my dreams that used to be,
I know you are waiting me still to-night
  By the Unika Range of Tennessee.

The blinking stars in endless space,
  The broad moonlight and silvery gleams,
To-night caress your wind-swept face,
  And fold you in a thousand dreams.

Your far outlines, less seen than felt,
  Which wind with hill propensities,
In moonlight dreams I see you melt
  Away in vague immensities.

And, far away, I still can feel
  Your mystery that ever speaks
Of vanished things, as shadows steal
  Across your breast and rugged peaks.

O dear blue hills, that lie apart,
  And wait so patiently down there,
Your peace takes hold upon my heart
  And makes its burden less to bear.

THE FEET OF JUDAS

Christ washed the feet of Judas!
The dark and evil passions of his soul,
His secret plot, and sordidness complete,
His hate, his purposing, Christ knew the whole,
And still in love he stooped and washed his feet.

Christ washed the feet of Judas!
Yet all his lurking sin was bare to him,
His bargain with the priest, and more than this,
In Olivet, beneath the moonlight dim,
Aforehand knew and felt his treacherous kiss.

Christ washed the feet of Judas!
And so ineffable his love 'twas meet,
That pity fill his great forgiving heart,
And tenderly he wash the traitor's feet,
Who in his Lord had basely sold his part.

Christ washed the feet of Judas!
And thus a girded servant, self-abased,
Taught that no wrong this side the gate of heaven
Was ever too great to wholly be effaced,
And, though unasked, in spirit be forgiven.

And so if we have ever felt the wrong
Of trampled rights, of caste, it matters not,
What e'er the soul has felt or suffered long,
Oh, heart! this one thing should not be forgot:
Christ washed the feet of Judas.

IN MEMORY OF KATIE REYNOLDS, DYING

O Death!
If thou hast aught of tenderness,
  Be kindly in thy touch
Of her whose fragile slenderness
  Was overburdened much
With life. And let her seem to go to sleep,
  As often does a tired child, when it has grown
Too tired to longer weep.

A rose but half in bloom—
She is too young and beautiful to die,
  But yet, if she must go,
Let her go out as goes a sigh
  From tired life and woe.
And let her keep, in death's brief space

This side the grave, the dusky beauty still
Belonging to her face.

She must have been
Of those upon the trembling lyre
Of whom the poets sung:
"Whom the gods love" and desire
Fade and "die young."
Her life so loved on earth was brief,
But yet withal so beautiful there is no cause,
But in our loss, for grief.

This poet, formerly a school principal in Louisville, Kentucky, is now in Los Angeles, California, whither he took his tubercular son—in vain—endeavoring to establish there a sanitarium for persons of his race afflicted as his son was. For the third time: *ad astra per aspera*.

IV. Charles P. Wilson

The following verses were written by a man in the Missouri State Penitentiary. He might prefer that his name be withheld. He will shortly go forth a free man and a better one—so resolved to be—with verses enough composed during his period of incarceration to make a small book:

SOMEBODY'S CHILD

Don't be too quick to condemn me,
Because I have made a bad start;
Remember you see but the surface,
And know not what's in the heart.
I may bear the marks of a sinful life,
And I may have been a bit wild;
But back of all remains this fact,
That I am somebody's child.

My cheeks by tears may be polished,
And my heart is no stranger to pain;

I know what it is to be friendless,
And to learn each affliction means gain.
I may be out in life's storm,
And misfortune around me has piled;
But kindly remember this little fact,
That I am somebody's child.

Probably to-night you'll be happy,
In some joys or pleasures you'll share:
And that very same moment may find me,
Tearfully pleading in prayer.
So don't be too harsh when you judge me,
For your judgment with God will be filed;
You would know—could you see past the surface—
That I am somebody's child.

And so a fourth time the motto—or is it a proverb?—*ad astra per aspera.*

V. Leon R. Harris

Now editor of the Richmond (Indiana) *Blade*, contributor of short-stories to *The Century Magazine*, an honored citizen and the head of a respected family, Leon R. Harris was an orphan asylum's ward. Most splendidly has he, yet in his early thirties, illustrated the old adage chosen as a heading for this chapter. His father, a roving musician, took no interest in the future poet. His mother died and left him almost in the cradle. The orphanage which became his refuge gave him at least food, shelter, and schooling to the fourth grade. Then he was given to a Kentucky family to be reared. It was virtual slavery, and the boy ran away from over-work and beatings. Making his escape to Cincinnati he was befriended by a traveling salesman and began to find himself. At eleven years of age, some of his verses were printed in a Cincinnati daily with "Author Unknown" attached. He now made his way to Berea and worked his way for two years in that good old college. Then for three years he worked his way in

Tuskegee.



Leon R. Harris

We next find him in Iowa, married; then in North Carolina, teaching school; then in Ohio, working in steel mills. This last was his employment until about two years ago. His short stories and poems are right out of his life. In the former the peonage system, prevalent in some sections of the South, and the cruelties of the convict labor camps are more powerfully portrayed than anywhere else in American literature. The following poem will represent his writings in verse:

THE STEEL MAKERS

Filled with the vigor such jobs demand,
Strong of muscle and steady of hand,
Before the flaming furnaces stand
  The men who make the steel.
'Midst the sudden sounds of falling bars,
'Midst the clang and bang of cranes and cars,
Where the earth beneath them jerks and jars,

They work with willing zeal.

They meet each task as they meet each day,
Ready to labor and full of play;
Their faces are grimy, their hearts are gay,
There is sense in the songs they sing;
While stooped like priests at the holy mass,
In the beaming light of the lurid gas,
Their jet black shadows each other pass,
And their hammers loudly ring.

What do they see through the furnace door,
From which the dazzling white lights pour?
Ah, more than the sizzling liquid ore
They see as they gaze within!
For a band of steel engirdles the earth,
Binds men to men from their very birth,
Through all that exists of any worth
There courses a steely vein.

Steamers that ply o'er the ocean deep,
Trains which over the mountains creep,
The ships of the air that dart and leap
Where the screaming eagles soar;
The plow which produces the nation's food,
The bars that keep the bad from the good,
Skyscrapers standing where forests stood,
They see through their furnace door.

They see the secretive submarines,
And the noisy, whirring big machines,
Grinding steel into numberless things
The people know and need;
The scissors that fashion wee babies' clothes,
The beds where the pallid sick repose,
The knife that the nervy surgeon holds
O'er the wounds that gape and bleed.

Yet more they see through the furnace door!
They see the bursting hot shells pour
On the battle-fields as in days of yore

The Deluge waters fell.
They see the bloody bayonet blade,
The unsheathed sword and the hand grenade,
The havoc, the wreck and the ruin made
By the steel they roll and sell.

All this through the furnace door they see
As they work and laugh—they are full and free;
Their steel has purchased their liberty
From want and the tyrant's sway.
And just as long as their gas shall burn,
In times of need will the people turn
To them for their product and they shall learn
Its value endures for aye.

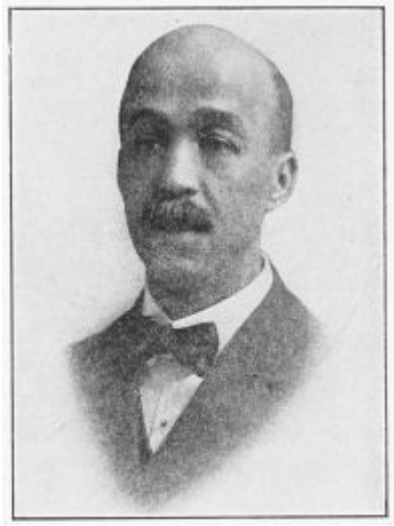
For of what they make we are servants all,
They have bound our lives in an iron thrall,
We do their bidding, we heed their call,
As they work with willing zeal.
So tap your heats with a courage bold,
You're worth to your world a thousand fold
More than the men who mine her gold,
You men who make her steel!

Intrinsic merit is in that poem, apart from the circumstance of its being written by a workman himself. As an interpretation of the life of his fellow-workmen—their imaginative, inner life—it is a human document to be reflected upon. As for the artistic quality of the verses they place you in imagination amid the sights and sounds described and they have something in them suggestive of the steel bars the men are making.

VI. Irvin W. Underhill

In what strange disguises comes ofttimes the call to nobler things! Our happiness not seldom springs out of seeming misfortune. An illustration is afforded by Mr. Irvin W. Underhill, of Philadelphia, to whom blindness brought a more glorious seeing—the seeing of truth, of

greater meaning in life, of greater beauty in the world. Out of this new vision springs a corresponding message in verse, a message not of bitterness for



Irvin W. Underhill

what might to another man, in the middle years of his life, have seemed a bitter loss, but of love, and exhortation, and encouragement. Blind, he lives in the Light. In his little book, entitled *Daddy's Love and Other Poems*, are poems witnessing to a beautiful spirit, poems of beauty. Because of its sage counsel, however, I pass over some of these lovelier expressions of sentiment and choose a didactic piece:

TO OUR BOYS

I speak to you, my Colored boys,
  I bid you to be men,
Don't put yourselves upon the rack
  Like pigeons in a pen.
Come out and face life's problem, boys,
  With faith and courage too,

And justify that wondrous faith,
  Abe Lincoln had in you.

Don't treat life as a little toy,
  A dance or a game of ball;
Those things are all right in their place,
  But they are not life's all.
Life is a problem serious,
  Give it the best you have,
Succeed in all you undertake
  And help your brother live.

If farming seems to be your call,
  Then take hold of the plough,
And stick it down into the soil
  Till sweat runs down your brow.
Then make this resolution firm:
  "I'm going to do my best,
And stick this good old plough of mine
  Down deeper than the rest."

If you're to be a carpenter
  Then train your hand and eye
To work out angles, clean and clear
  As any metal die.
Then read up on materials,
  On beauty and on style,
And prove to all, the house you build
  Is sure to be worth while.

Why sure, a banker, you can be,
  A lawyer or a priest;
Or you can be a merchant prince,
  Their work is not the least.
It makes no difference what you try
  If you would get the best,
You'll have to stick that plough of yours
  Down deeper than the rest.

Don't fawn up to another man
  And beg him for a job;

Remember that your brain and his
Were made by the same God.
So use it boys, with all your might,
With faith and courage too,
And justify that wondrous faith
Abe Lincoln had in you.

II. ad astra

I. James C. Hughes

There are tragic stories of Negro aspirants for poetic fame that read like the old stories of English poets in London in the days when the children of genius starved and died young. As typical of not a few there is the story of James C. Hughes, of Louisville, Kentucky. The Louisville *Times*, March 10, 1905, contained his picture and an article by Joseph S. Cotter in appreciation of his compositions. "This young man," writes Cotter, speaking of a collection of verses and prose sketches which Hughes then had ready for publication, "this young man has the essentials of the poet, and to me his work is interesting. It is serious, and preaches while it sings."

To illustrate the range and quality of Hughes I will quote from this article two selections, one in prose and one in dialect verse:

ASPIRATION

"True love is the same to-day as when the vestal virgins held their mystic lights along the path of virtue. Virtue wears the same vesture that she wore upon the ancient plain that led to fame immortal. Now the royal gates of honor stand ajar for men of courage, souls who will not time their spirit-lyre to suit the common chord. Our nation has known men who held within their palms our country's destiny: and, smiling in the armor of a fearless truth, have thrown away their lives. Awake, O countrymen, awake, this noble flame. The gods will fan it, and

the world shall burn with honor and pure love."

The bit of dialect verse follows, taken from a poem entitled *Apology for Wayward Jim*:

"You has offen tole us, Massy,
We's as free as we kin be;
But we needs some kind o' check, suh,
So's we'd keep on bein' free.

"Please do' whip ole Jim dis time, suh;
Marse, I 'no's you's good an' kind;
Ain't no slabery on dis 'arth, suh,
Like de slabery ob de mind.

"You has offen said obejence
Wuz de key to freedom's do'—
When we l'arned dis golden lesson
We wuz free foreber mo'.

"But you see dese darkies' minds, suh,
Ain't so flexerbul as dat,
Dey can't zackly understand, suh,
What you means by saying dat.

'Hain't but one compound solution
To dis problem, as I see;
Long's a human soul's a slabe, suh,
Ain't no way to make it free."

The young author of these selections, failing to get his book published, lost his mind and "disappeared from view." So ends his story.

II. Leland Milton Fisher

Another sad story, more frequently repeated in the lives of the writers represented in this book, is that of Leland Milton Fisher. First I shall give one of his poems, as passionately sweet a lyric as can be found in American literature:

FOR YOU, SWEETHEART

For you, sweetheart, I'd have your skies
As bright as are your own bright eyes,
And all your day-dreams warm and fair
As is the sunshine in your hair.
The Fates to you should be as kind
As are the thoughts in your pure mind,
And every bird I'd have impart
Its sweetest song to you, sweetheart.

For you, sweetheart, I'd have each dart
Sorrow fashions for your tender heart,
Thrust in my own thrice happy breast,
That yours might have unbroken rest.

If you should fall asleep and lie
So very still and quiet that I
Would know your soul had slipped away
From your divinely molded clay,
Then, looking in your fair, sweet face
I'd pray to God: "In thy good grace,
O, Father, let me sleep, nor wake
Again on earth, for her dear sake."

Born in Humbolt, Tennessee, in 1875, Fisher died of tuberculosis, ere yet thirty years of age, leaving behind an unpublished volume of poems.

III. W. Clarence Jordan

In another chapter I have written of a poet whose birthplace was Bardstown, Kentucky. W. Clarence Jordan, a Negro schoolmaster of Bardstown, now dead, wrote the following lines in answer to the questions, so frequently asked in derision, which stands as its title:

WHAT IS THE NEGRO DOING?

As we pass along life's highway,
Day by day,

Thousands daily ask the question,
"What, I pray,
Tell me what's the Negro doing?
And what course is he pursuing?
What achievements is he strewing
By the way?"

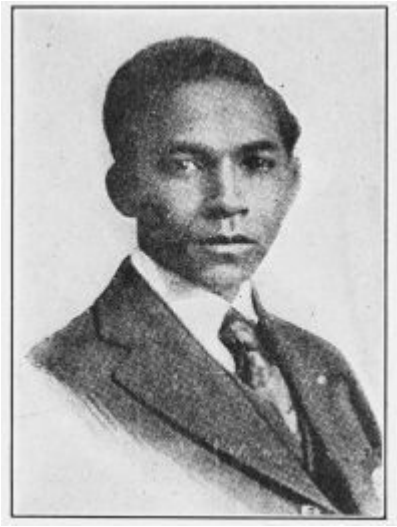
Many say he's retrograding
Very fast;
Others say his glory's fading,—
Cannot last;
That his prospects now are blighted,
That his chances have been slighted,
This his wrongs cannot be righted.
Time has passed.

Friends, lift up your eyes; look higher;
Higher still.
There's the vanguard of our army
On the hill.
You've been looking at the rear guard.
Lift your eyes, look farther forward;
Thousands are still pressing starward—
Ever will.

IV. Roscoe C. Jamison

Roscoe C. Jamison was fortunate in leaving behind him a friend at his early death, some three years since, who treasured his fugitive verses sufficiently to gather them together, though but a handful, and send them out to the world in a little pamphlet. Fortunate also was he in another friend able to write his elegy:

Too soon is hushed his silver speech,
The music dies upon his lute,
The cadence falls beyond our reach;
Too soon the Poet's lips are mute.



Roscoe C. Jamison

So wrote in this elegy, *Lacrimae Aethiopiae*, Charles Bertram Johnson, of this untimely dead singer. Hardly a score of poems are in this pamphlet, yet enough are here to reveal a poet in the making. Jamison was a better poet, even in these imperfect pieces, than many a writer of better verses. Here are the ardent impulses and here are the glowing ideas from which poetry of the higher order springs. The art, however, is undisciplined, grammar, metre, and rhymes are sometimes at fault. However, bold strokes of poetry atone, the effects are the effects of a real poet. Sometimes one finds in the small collection a poem that is all but perfect, a production that might have come from a maturer craftsman. I venture to put him to the test in the following poem:

CASTLES IN THE AIR

I build my castles in the air.
  How beautiful they seem to me,
Standing in all their glory there,
  Like stars above the sea!

I watch them with admiring eyes,
For in them dwells life's fondest hope:
If they be swept from out the skies,
In darkness I must grope.

They hold life's joys, life's sweetest dreams;
They make the weary years seem bright.
As one guided by bright starbeams
I struggle through the night.

Sometimes from out the skies they fall,
And my soul shrieks in its pain;
But from the heights I hear Hope's call,
"Arise and build again."

What though life be with sorrow filled
And each day brings its load of care,
I'm happy still while I can build
My castles in the air!

Who but will say, despite the metrical defects, this is a real poem? Another poem will show his art at a better advantage, while the pathos is of another kind, very touching pathos it is, too:

A SONG

I loved you, Dear. I did not know how much,
Until the silence of the Grave lay cold
Between us, and your hand I could not touch,
And your sweet face, oh! never more behold.

I loved you, Dear. I did not know how true,
Until in other eyes I found no light;
I know—alas!—my Spirit without you
Must drift forever in a starless night!

A different kind of merit, the merit of intense reprobation of cruel arrogancy in the one race and of treacherous cowardice in the other, is exemplified in *The Edict*. Triumphant faith, which is the Negro's peculiar

heritage, asserts itself in such a way, in the final stanza, as to lift the poem to the heights of moral feeling.

THE EDICT

All these must die before the Morning break:
They who at God an angry finger shake,
Declaring that because He made them White,
Their race should rule the world by sacred right.
They who deny a common Brotherhood—
Who cry aloud, and think no Blackman good—
The blood-cursed mob always eager to take
The rope in hand or light the flaming stake,
Jeering the wretch while he in death pain quakes—
All these must die before the Morning breaks.

All these must die before the Morning breaks:
The Blackmen, faithless, whose loud laughter wakes
Harsh echoes in the most unbiased places.
They who choose vice, and scorn the gentle graces—
Who by their manners breed contemptuous hate,
Suggesting jim-crow laws from state to state—
They who think on earth they may not find
An ideal man nor woman of their kind.
But from some other Race that ideal take—
All these must die before the Morning break!

We know, O Lord, that there will come a time,
When o'er the World will dawn the Age Sublime,
When Truth shall call to all mankind to stand
Before Thy throne as Brothers, hand in hand,
Be not displeased with him who this song makes—
All these must die before the Morning breaks!

If lyric poetry be self-revealment—and such it is, or it is nothing—we can learn from the following poem how deep a sorrow at some time in his life this poet must have experienced:

HOPELESSNESS

Had you called from the fire, or from the sea,
From 'mid the roaring flames, or dark'ning wave,
With eagerness I then had come to thee,
To perish with thee if I could not save.

But now helpless I sit and watch you die,
There is no power can save, the doctors say;
I lift my eyes unto the silent sky,
And wonder why it is that mortals pray.

The title-poem of the booklet, *Negro Soldiers*, is no doubt Jamison's masterpiece. It is worthy of the universal admiration it has won from those who know it.

CHAPTER V

THE NEW FORMS OF POETRY

The newer methods in poetry—free-verse, rhythmic strophes, polyphonic prose—have been tried with success by only a few Negroes. Of free-verse particularly not many noteworthy pieces have come from Negro poets. Well or ill, each may judge according to his taste. But the objection has been made that the Negro verse-makers of our time are bound by tradition, are sophisticated craftsmen. More independence, more differentness, seems to be demanded. But the conditions of their poetic activity seem to me in this demand to be lost sight of. They are as much the heirs of Palgrave's Golden Treasury as their white contemporaries. And the Negro is said to be preëminently imitative—that is, responsive to environing example and influence. One requirement and only one can we lay upon the Negro singer and that is the same we lay upon the artists of every race and origin. However, for artistic freedom he has an authority older than free-verse, and that authority is not outside his own race. It is found in the old plantation melodies—rich in artistic potentiality beyond exaggeration.

I. FREE-VERSE

In Negro newspapers and magazines, rarely as yet in books, are to be found some free-verse productions of which I will give some specimens. From Will Sexton I shall quote here two brief poems in this form and in a later chapter another (p. 233). His Whitemanesque manner will be remarked. These brief pieces will suggest a poet of some force:

Songs of Contemporary Ethiopia

THE BOMB THROWER

Down with everything black!
Down with law and order!
Up with the red flag!
Up with the white South!
I am America's evil genius.

THE NEW NEGRO

Out of the mist I see a new America—a land of ideals.
I hear the music of my fathers blended with the "Stars and Stripes Forever."
I am the crown of thorns Tyranny must bear a thousand years—
I am the New Negro.

Another vers-librist of individual quality is Andrea Razafkeriefo. He is a prolific contributor to *The Negro World*, the newspaper organ of the Universal Negro Improvement Society. This paper regularly gives a considerable portion of a page of each issue to original verse contributions. One of Mr. Razafkeriefo's recent free-verse poems is the following, in which the style seems to me to be remarkably effective:

THE NEGRO CHURCH

That the Negro church possesses
Extraordinary power,
That it is the greatest medium
For influencing our people,
That it long has slept and faltered,
Failed to meet its obligations,
Are, to honest and true thinkers,
Facts which have to be admitted.

For these reasons there are many
Who would have the church awaken
And adopt the modern methods
Of all other institutions.
Make us more enlightened Christians,
Teach us courtesy and English,
Racial pride and sanitation,
Science, thrift and Negro history.

Yea, the preacher, like the shepherd,
Should be leader and protector,
And prepare us for the present
Just as well as for the future;
He should know more than Scriptures,
And should ever be acquainted
With all vital, daily subjects
Helpful to his congregation.

Give us manly, thinking preachers
And not shouting money-makers,
Men of intellect and vision,
Who will really help our people:
Men who make the church a guide-post
To the road of racial progress,
Who will strive to fit the Negro
For this world as well as heaven.

In another chapter I give one of Mr. Razafkeriefo's poems in regular stanzas of the traditional type. It is but just to state that his productions exhibit a great variety of forms. His moods and traits, too, are various. There is the

evidence of ardent feeling and strong conviction in most he writes.



Langston Hughes

This poet gets his strange name (pronounced rä-zäf-ker-rāf) from the island of Madagascar. His father, now dead, "falling in battle for Malagasy freedom," before the poet's birth, was a nephew of the late queen of Madagascar, Ranavalona III. His mother, a colored American, was a daughter of a United States consul to Madagascar. The poet was born in the city of Washington in 1895 and now resides in Cleveland, Ohio.

To a young student in Columbia University we are indebted for some of the most symmetrical and effective free-verse poems that have come to my attention. His name is Langston Hughes. For information about him I refer the reader to the first index, at the end of this book. This poem appeared in *The Crisis*, January, 1922:

THE NEGRO

I am a Negro:
  Black as the night is black,
Black like the depths of my Africa.

I've been a slave:
  Cæsar told me to keep his door-steps clean,
I brushed the boots of Washington.

I've been a worker:
  Under my hand the pyramids arose.
I made mortar for the Woolworth building.

I've been a singer:
  All the way from Africa to Georgia I carried my sorrow songs.
I made ragtime.

I've been a victim:
  The Belgians cut off my hands in the Congo.
They lynch me now in Texas.

I am a Negro:
  Black as the night is black,
Black like the depths of my Africa.

Other specimens of free-verse have been given on pages 67, 102, and 119. In every instance the poet's choice of this form seems to me justified by the particular effectiveness of it.

II. Prose Poems

I. W. E. Burghardt DuBois



W. E. B. DuBois

The name of no Negro author is more widely known than that of W. E. Burghardt DuBois. Editor, historian, sociologist, essayist, poet—he is celebrated in the Five Continents and the Seven Seas. It is in his impassioned prose that DuBois is most a poet. *The Souls of Black Folk* throbs constantly on the verge of poetry, while the several chapters of *Darkwater* end with a litany, chant, or credo, rhapsodical in character and in free-verse form. In all this work Dr. DuBois is the spokesman of perhaps as many millions of souls as any man living.

"A Litany at Atlanta," placed as an epilogue to "The Shadow of the Years" in *Darkwater*,[6] should be read as the litany of a race. Modern literature has not such another cry of agony:

A LITANY AT ATLANTA

O Silent God, Thou whose voice afar in mist and mystery hath

left our ears an-hungered in these fearful days—

Hear us, good Lord!

Listen to us, Thy children: our faces dark with doubt are made a mockery in Thy Sanctuary. With uplifted hands we front Thy Heaven, O God, crying:

We beseech Thee to hear us, good Lord!

We are not better than our fellows, Lord; we are but weak and human men. When our devils do deviltry, curse Thou the doer and the deed,—curse them as we curse them, do to them all and more than ever they have done to innocence and weakness, to womanhood and home.

Have mercy upon us, miserable sinners!

And yet, whose is the deeper guilt? Who made these devils? Who nursed them in crime and fed them on injustice? Who ravished and debauched their mothers and their grandmothers? Who bought and sold their crime and waxed fat and rich on public iniquity?

Thou knowest, good God!

Is this Thy Justice, O Father, that guile be easier than innocence and the innocent be crucified for the guilt of the untouched guilty?

Justice, O Judge of men!

Wherefore do we pray? Is not the God of the Fathers dead? Have not seers seen in Heaven's halls Thine hearsed and lifeless form stark amidst the black and rolling smoke of sin, where all along bow bitter forms of endless dead?

Awake, Thou that steepest!

Thou art not dead, but flown afar, up hills of endless light, through blazing corridors of suns, where worlds do swing of good and gentle men, of women strong and free—far from cozenage,

black hypocrisy, and chaste prostitution of this shameful speck of dust!

Turn again, O Lord; leave us not to perish in our sin!

From lust of body and lust of blood,—
Great God, deliver us!
From lust of power and lust of gold,—
Great God, deliver us!
From the leagued lying of despot and of brute,—
Great God, deliver us!

A city lay in travail, God our Lord, and from her loins sprang twin Murder and Black Hate. Red was the midnight; clang, crack, and cry of death and fury filled the air and trembled underneath the stars where church spires pointed silently to Thee. And all this was to sate the greed of greedy men who hide behind the veil of vengeance.

Bend us Thine ear, O Lord!

In the pale, still morning we looked upon the deed. We stopped our ears and held our leaping hands, but they—did they not wag their heads and leer and cry with bloody jaws: *Cease from Crime!* The word was mockery, for thus they train a hundred crimes while we do cure one.

Turn again our captivity, O Lord!

Behold this maimed and broken thing, dear God: it was an humble black man, who toiled and sweat to save a bit from the pittance paid him. They told him: *Work and Rise!* He worked. Did this man sin? Nay, but someone told how someone said another did—one whom he had never seen nor known. Yet for that man's crime this man lieth maimed and murdered, his wife naked to shame, his children to poverty and evil.

Hear us, O Heavenly Father!

Doth not this justice of hell stink in Thy nostrils, O God? How long shall the mounting flood of innocent blood roar in Thine ears and pound in our hearts for vengeance? Pile the pale frenzy of blood-crazed brutes, who do such deeds, high on Thine Altar, Jehovah Jireh, and burn it in hell forever and forever!

Forgive us, good Lord; we know not what we say!

Bewildered we are and passion-tossed, mad with the madness of a mobbed and mocked and murdered people; straining at the armposts of Thy throne, we raise our shackled hands and charge Thee, God, by the bones of our stolen fathers, by the tears of our dead mothers, by the very blood of Thy crucified Christ: What meaneth this? Tell us the plan; give us the sign.

Keep not Thou silent, O God.

Sit not longer blind, Lord God, deaf to our prayer and dumb to our dumb suffering. Surely Thou, too, art not white, O Lord, a pale, bloodless, heartless thing!

Ah! Christ of all the Pities!

Forgive the thought! Forgive these wild, blasphemous words! Thou art still the God of our black fathers and in Thy Soul's Soul sit some soft darkenings of the evening, some shadowings of the velvet night.

But whisper—speak—call, great God, for Thy silence is white terror to our hearts! The way, O God, show us the way and point us the path!

Whither? North is greed and South is blood; within, the coward, and without, the liar. Whither? To death?

Amen! Welcome, dark sleep!

Whither? To life? But not this life, dear God, not this. Let the cup pass from us, tempt us not beyond our strength, for there is that clamoring and clawing within, to whose voice we would not listen, yet shudder lest we must,—and it is red. Ah! God! It is a red and awful shape.

Selah!

In yonder East trembles a star.

Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, saith the Lord!

Thy Will, O Lord, be done!

Kyrie Eleison!

Lord, we have done these pleading, wavering words.

We beseech Thee to hear us, good Lord!

We bow our heads and hearken soft to the sobbing of women and little children.

We beseech Thee to hear us, good Lord!

Our voices sink in silence and in night.

Hear us, good Lord.

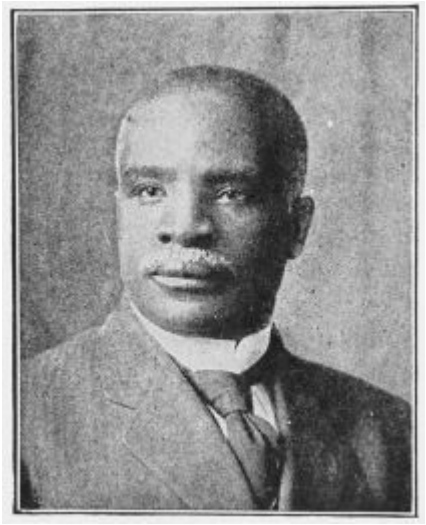
In night, O God of a godless land!

Amen!

In silence, O Silent God.

Selah!

II. Kelly Miller



Kelly Miller

Dr. Kelly Miller is professor of sociology in Howard University. He has been professor of mathematics. He is the author of several prose works—able expositions of aspects of inter-racial problems. It is rumored that he is a poet. However that may be, his admirable volume of essays entitled *Out of the House of Bondage* concludes with a strophic chant, highly poetical, and poured forth with the fervor of some old Celtic bard, triumphant in the vision of a new day dawning:

I SEE AND AM SATISFIED

The vision of a scion of a despised and rejected race, the span of whose life is measured by the years of its Golden Jubilee, and whose fancy, like the vine that girdles the tree-trunk, runneth both forward and back.

I see the African savage as he drinks his palmy wine, and basks in the sunshine of his native bliss, and is happy.

I see the man-catcher, impelled by thirst of gold, as he entraps his simple-souled victim in the snares of bondage and death, by use of force or guile.

I see the ocean basin whitened with his bones, and the ocean current running red with his blood, amidst the hellish horrors of the middle passage.

I see him laboring for two centuries and a half in unrequited toil, making the hillsides of our southland to glow with the snow-white fleece of cotton, and the valleys to glisten with the golden sheaves of grain.

I see him silently enduring cruelty and torture indescribable, with flesh flinching beneath the sizz of angry whip or quivering under the gnaw of the sharp-toothed bloodhound.

I see a chivalric civilization instinct with dignity, comity and grace rising upon pillars supported by his strength and brawny arm.

I see the swarthy matron lavishing her soul in altruistic devotion upon the offspring of her alabaster mistress.

I see the haughty sons of a haughty race pouring out their lustful passion upon black womanhood, filling our land with a bronzed and tawny brood.

I see also the patriarchal solicitude of the kindly-hearted owners of men, in whose breast not even iniquitous system could sour the milk of human kindness.

I hear the groans, the sorrows, the sighings, the soul striving of these benighted creatures of God, rising up from the low grounds of sorrow and reaching the ear of Him Who regardeth man of the lowliest estate.

I strain my ear to supernal sound, and I hear in the secret chambers of the Almighty the order to the Captain of Host to break his bond and set him free.

I see Abraham Lincoln, himself a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, arise to execute the high decree.

I see two hundred thousand black boys in blue baring their breasts to the bayonets of the enemy, that their race might have some slight part in its own deliverance.

I see the great Proclamation delivered in the year of my birth of which I became the first fruit and beneficiary.

I see the assassin striking down the great Emancipator; and the house of mirth is transformed into the Golgotha of the nation.

I watch the Congress as it adds to the Constitution new words, which make the document a charter of liberty indeed.

I see the new-made citizen running to and fro in the first fruit of his new-found freedom.

I see him rioting in the flush of privilege which the nation had vouchsafed, but destined, alas, not long to last.

I see him thrust down from the high seat of political power, by fraud and force, while the nation looks on in sinister silence and acquiescent guilt.

I see the tide of public feeling run cold and chilly, as the vial of racial wrath is wreaked upon his bowed and defenceless head.

I see his body writhing in the agony of death as his groans issue from the crackling flames, while the funeral pyre lights the midnight sky with its dismal glare. My heart sinks with heaviness within me.

I see that the path of progress has never taken a straight line, but has always been a zigzag course amid the conflicting forces of right and wrong, truth and error, justice and injustice, cruelty and mercy.

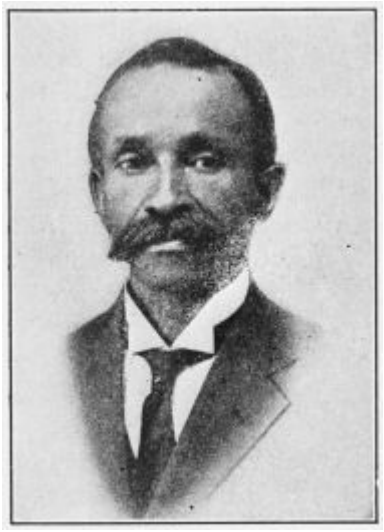
I see that the great generous American Heart, despite the temporary flutter, will finally beat true to the higher human impulse, and my soul abounds with reassurance and hope.

I see his marvelous advance in the rapid acquisition of knowledge and acquirement of things material, and attainment in the higher pursuits of life, with his face fixed upon that light which shineth brighter and brighter unto the perfect day.

I see him who was once deemed stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted, now entering with universal welcome into the patrimony of mankind, and I look calmly upon the centuries of blood and tears and travail of soul, and am satisfied.

III. Charles H. Conner

As a companion piece to this litany and this vision I will present another vision that for calm, clear beauty of style takes us immediately back to *Pilgrim's Progress*. The author calls it a sermonette, and it is one of three contained in a very small book entitled *The Enchanted Valley*. But the author is no preacher. He is a ship-yard worker in Philadelphia—I almost said a "common" worker. But such workmen were never common, anywhere, at any time. Charles Conner wears the garb and wields the tools of a common workman, but he has most uncommon visions. He is a seer and a philosopher. He has informed me that there is American Indian blood in his veins. From the mystical and philosophical character of his writings, both prose and verse, I should have expected an East Indian strain. Twice have I visited his humble habitation, and each time it was a visit to the Enchanted Valley.



Charles H. Conner

THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT IN THE NATURAL WORLD

At the dawning of a day, in a deep valley, a man awoke.

It was a valley of treasures that everywhere abounded.

He opened his eyes, and beheld the greensward bedecked with many colored jewels that sparkled in the light.

His ears caught the medley of sounds, that awoke innumerable echoes; and with the balmy air peopled the valley with delights. How he came there, or why, he knew not; nor scarcely thought or cared.

As he gazed upon the multitude of things, in his heart upsprung desire; and he gathered the treasures that lay around, till his arms were full, and his body decked in all their bright array.

Then the sun went down behind the hill; and the vale grew dark; and the night air chill; and the place grew solemn, silent, still.

A new thing then, to mortal ken, seemed hovering on the threshold near. A strange, fantastic thing, it crept, intangible, nearer, nearer swept, the pallid, startling face of Fear!

But, the night brings sleep at last—and dreams; and day follows night; and sunshine follows storm throughout the length of days. But a trace of the dreams remains, like the faintly clinging scent that marks a hidden trail; and so, because of his dreams, the man's desire reached out, and scaled the lofty peaks that walled him in.

His pleasant valley seemed too narrow and confined.

So, with his treasures fondly pressed to his beating heart, he tried to scale the heights.

He scrambled and struggled with might and main, slipped and arose; and fell again and again. The spirit was willing, and valiant, and brave; but the treasure encumbered it with fatal hold; and held him bound, as with fold on fold a corpse is held in its lowly grave. So, try as he might, he could not rise much higher than one's hands can reach; and one by one, his gathered treasures lost their brightness and their charm; as gathered flowers wilt and fade; and his arms weary from the burden that they bore, let fall and scattered lie, little by little, more and more of the things he had gathered and vainly prized. And each thing lost was so much lightness gained, enabling him to mount a little higher up the rugged steep. And so it was till night was come again at last; and worn and weary, he sank down to sleep and rest.

And, as he slept, his arms relaxed their hold; and down the steep his dwindling treasures rolled, till the last of them found their natural level and resting place, the lower stretch of ground. 'Twas then a strange sight met my gaze, long to be remembered in the coming days of trial and endeavor.

From out that sleeping form a luminous haze arose, airy and

white; and glowed within it an amber fire, as it mounted higher, higher; and, as it arose, it had the appearance of a man; and its countenance was the countenance of him that slept. Thus up and up it winged its flight, until above the highest peak 'twas lost to sight. I pondered the matter in wonder and awe, until long past the midnight hour, how that a soul at last gained its longed for power to win the distant height.

There is a kingdom of earth, and of water and of air.

Each has its own. The heavier cannot rise above its level, to the next and lighter zone.

The treasures of the soul's desire, were treasures of earth, whose lightest joys were too heavy and too gross to be sustained in the finer, rarer atmosphere; and thus were as a leaden weight that anchored the soul to earth, without its being at all aware that the things it thought so pleasant and so fair, were shackles to bind it hard and fast; and make it impossible for it to gain the region that instinctively it felt and knew was the rightful place of its abode.

IV. William Edgar Bailey

Yet one more prose-poem I will give, as a sort of coda to the series. It is taken from a paper-covered booklet entitled *The Firstling*, by William Edgar Bailey, from which *The Slump*, on page 65, was taken:

TO A WILD ROSE

The wild rose silently peeps from its uncouth habitation, thrives and flourishes in its glory; its fragrant bud bows to sip the nectar of the morning. Its delicate blossom blushes in the balmy breeze as the wind tells its tale of adoration. Performing well its part, it withers and decays; the chirping sparrow perches serenely on its boughs, only to find it wrapped in sadness and solemnity—yet its grief-stained leaf and weather beaten branches silently chant euphonic

choruses in natural song, in solemn commemoration of its faded splendor.

Dead, yes dead—but in thy hibernal demise dost thou bequeath a truth eternal as the stars. I saw thee, Rose, when the elf of spring hung thy floral firstling upon that thorny bower and robed thy ungainly form in a garb of green, and, Rose, thou wert sweet!

I saw the same vernal sprite pay homage to thy highbrowed kinsman in yonder stench-bestifled dell, and, in his pause of an instant, baptized its sacred being in the same aromatic blood. I saw thee, Rose, in thy autumnal desolation, when the Storm-God was wont to do thee harm, laid waste thy foliage, and cast at thy feet, as a challenge, his mantle of snow, and the Law of Non-resistance was still unbroken.

Tell me thy story, Rose! Do the stars in their unweary watch breathe forth upon thee a special benediction from the sky? Or did the wind waft a drop of blood from the Cross to thy dell to sanctify thy being? Oh, leave me not, thou Redeemer of the Woods, to plod the way alone! My Nazarene, grant but to me a double portion of thy humble pride—and in my tearful grief permit thou me to pluck a fragrant thought from thy thorny bosom!

V. R. Nathaniel Dett

Primarily a composer and pianist, Mr. Dett exemplifies the close kinship of poetry and music, for in the former art as well as in the latter he exhibits a finely creative spirit. To speak first of his compositions for the piano, the following works are widely known and greatly admired by lovers of music: “Magnolia Suite,” “In the Bottoms Suite,” “Listen to the Lambs,” “Marche Negre,” “Arietta,” “Magic Song,” “Open Yo’ Eyes,” and “Hampton, My Home by the

Sea." Mr. Dett took a degree in music at Oberlin Conservatory of Music, and a Harvard prize in music (1920). The musical endowment for which his race is celebrated is cultured and refined in him and guided by science. The basis of his brilliant compositions is to be found in the folk melodies of his people. The musical genius of his people expresses itself through him with conscious, perfected art. To sit under the spell of his performance of his own pieces is to acquire a new idea of the Negro people.



R. Nathaniel Dett

The same refined and exalted spirit reveals itself in Mr. Dett's verse as in his music. Having this combination of gifts, he cannot but raise the highest expectations. I present in this place a poem in blank verse of nobly contemplative mood, suggesting far more, as the best poems do, than it says:

AT NIAGARA

—No, no! Not tonight, my Friend,
I may not, cannot go with you tonight.
And think not that I love you any less
Because this now I'd rather be alone.
My heart is strangely torn; unwonted thoughts
Have so infused themselves into my mind
That altogether there is wrought in me
A sort of hapless mood, whose phantom power
Born perhaps of my own fantasies
Has ta'en me. By its subtle spell
I'm wooed and changed from what's my natural self.
I am so possessed I can but wish
For nothing else save this and solitude.
If in companionship I sought relief
Yours indeed would be the first I'd seek.
There is none other whom I so esteem,
None who quite so perfect understands.
Your presence always is a soothing balm,
—Ne'er failing me when troubled. But tonight,
Forgive me, Friend—I'd rather be alone.
Leave me, let me with myself commune.
Presently if no change come, I shall go
Stand in the shadowed gorge, or where the moon
Throws her silver on the rippling stream,
List to the sounding cataract's thundering fall,
Or hark to spirit voices in the wind.
For methinks sometimes that these strange moods
Are heaven-sent us by the jealous God
Who'd thus remind us that no human love
Can fully satisfy the longing heart:
Perhaps an intimation sent to souls
That he would speak somewhat, or nearer draw.
Therefore I'll to Him. Talking waters, stars,
The moon and whispering trees shall make me wise
In what it is He'd have my spirit know.
And Nature singing from the earth and sky
Shall fill me with such peace, that in the morn
I'll be the gay glad self you've always known.
Urge me no further, now you understand.
A nobler friend than you none ever knew—

But not this time. Tonight I'll be alone;
And if from moonlit valley God should speak,
Or in the tumbling waters sound a call,
Or whisper in the sighing of the wind,
He'll find me with an undivided heart
Patient waiting to hear; but Friend,—alone.

CHAPTER VI

DIALECT VERSE

The reader of these pages may ask: "But where is the Negro's humorous verse? Here is the pathos, where is the comedy of Negro life?" It may also be asked where the dialect verse is, and the dramatic narratives and character pieces that made Dunbar famous.

The present-day Negro poets do not, as has been asserted, spurn dialect. Many of them have given a portion of their pages to character pieces in dialect, humorous in effect. Whether those who have excluded such pieces from their books have done so on principle or not I cannot say. In general, however, these writers are too deeply earnest for dialect verse, and the "broken tongue" is too suggestive of broken bodies and servile souls. But by those who have employed dialect its uses and effects have been well understood. Dialect, as is proven by Burns, Lowell, Riley, Dunbar, often gets nearer the heart than the language of the schools is able to do, and for home-spun philosophy, for mother-wit, for folk-lore, and for racial humor, for whatever is quaint and peculiar and native in any people, it is the only proper medium. Poets of the finest art from Theocritus to Tennyson have so used it. Genius here as elsewhere will direct the born poet and instruct him when to use dialect and when the language that centuries of tradition have refined and standardized and encrusted with poetic associations. There is a world of poetic wealth in the strangely naïve heart of the rough-schooled Negro for

which the smooth-worn, disconsonanted language of the cabin and the field is beautifully appropriate. There is also another world of poetic wealth in the Negro of culture for which only the language of culture is adequate. To such we must say: "All things are yours."

While, as remarked, many Negro verse-writers have used dialect occasionally, in the ways indicated, Waverley Turner Carmichael has made it practically his one instrument of expression in his little book entitled *From the Heart of a Folk*. A representative piece is the following:

MAMMY'S BABY SCARED

Hush now, mammy's baby scaid,
Don' it cry, eat yo' bread;
Nothin' ain't goin' bother you,
Does', it bothers mammy too.

Mammy ain't goin' left it 'lone
W'ile de chulen all are gone;
Hush, now, don' it cry no mo'e,
Ain't goin' lay it on de flo'.

Hush now, finish out yo' nap,
W'ile I make yo' luttle cap;
Blessid luttle sugar-pie,
Hush now, baby, don' it cry.

Mammy's goin' to make its dres',
Go to sleep an' take yo' res';
Hush now, don' it cry no mo'e,
Ain't goin' lay you on de flo'.

Carmichael was born at Snow Hill, Alabama, and in the Industrial Institute there received the rudiments of an education, which was added to by a summer term at Harvard. Since the book mentioned I have seen nothing from his pen.

The elder Cotter in *A White Song and a Black Song* gives us in the second part several dialect pieces in the most successful manner. Several are satirical, like the following:

THE DON'T-CARE NEGRO

Neber min' what's in your cran'um
So your collar's high an' true.
Neber min' what's in your pocket
So de blackin's on your shoe.

Neber min' who keeps you comp'ny
So he halfs up what he's tuk.
Neber min' what way you's gwine
So you's gwine away from wuk.

Neber min' de race's troubles
So you profits by dem all.
Neber min' your leaders' stumblin'
So you he'ps to mak' dem fall.

Neber min' what's true to-morrow
So you libes a dream to-day.
Neber min' what tax is levied
So it's not on craps or play.

Neber min' how hard you labors
So you does it to de en'
Dat de judge is boun' to sen' you
An' your record to de "pen."

Neber min' your manhood's risin'
So you habe a way to stay it.
Neber min' folks' good opinion
So you have a way to slay it.

Neber min' man's why an' wharfo'
So de worl' is big an' roun.
Neber min' whar next you's gwine to
So you's six foot under groun'.

Raymond Garfield Dandridge in *The Poet and Other Poems* has included a handful of dialect pieces which prove him a master of this species of composition. I will select but one to represent this class of his work here:

DE INNAH PART

I 'fess Ise ugly, big, an' ruff,
Mah voice is husky, mannah's gruff;
But, mah gal sed, "Neb mine yore hide,
I jedged you by yore inside side";
An' sed, dat she hab alwuz foun',
De gole beneaf de surfuss groun'.

She claims dat offen rail ruff hides
Am boun' erroun' hi' grade insides;
W'ile sum dat 'pear "sharp ez a tack"
Kinceals a heart dat's hard an' black;
An', to prove her way ob thinkin',
Gibs fo' zample Abeham Linkin.

Ole "Hones' Abe," so lank an' tall,
Worn't no parlah posin' doll:
Yet he stood out miles erbove
Uddah men, in truf an' love.
An' in han'lin' 'fairs of state,
Proved de greates' ob de great.

In makin' great men, Nature mus'
Fo' got erbout de beauty dus'
An' fashun dem frum nachel clay,
De gritty kine, dat doan decay.
But, mos' her time she spent, I know,
Erpon de parts dat duzen show.

Two poems by Sterling M. Means, one in standard English and one in dialect may well be placed here side by side for comparison as being identical in theme and feeling, and differing but in manner. They are taken from his book entitled *The Deserted Cabin and Other Poems*:

THE OLD PLANTATION GRAVE

'Tis a scene so sad and lonely,
'Tis the site of ancient toil;
Where our fathers bore their burdens,
Where they sleep beneath the soil;
And the fields are waste and barren,
Where the sugar cane did grow,
Where they tilled the corn and cotton,
In the years of long ago;

And along the piney hillside,
Where the hound pursued the slave,
In the dreary years of bondage,
There he fills an humble grave.

THE OLD DESERTED CABIN

Dis ole deserted cabin
Remin's me ob de past;
An' when I gits ter t'inkin',
De tears comes t'ick an' fast.

I wunner whur's A'nt Doshy,
I wunner whur's Brur Jim;
I hyeahs no corn-songs ringin',
I hyeahs no Gospel hymn.

Dis ole deserted cabin
Am tumblin' in decay;
An' all its ole-time dwellers
Hab gone de silent way.

Dey voices hushed in silence,
De cabin drear an' lone;
An' dey who used ter lib hyeah
Long sense is dead an' gone.

J. Mord Allen's poems and tales in dialect are worthy of distinction. They are executed in the true spirit of art. I should rank his book, elsewhere named, as one of the few

best the Negro has contributed to literature. I will give here one specimen of his dialect verse:

A VICTIM OF MICROBES

NOTE.—Physicians are agreed that laziness is a microbe disease.

Go en fetch er lawyer, 'Tilda,
'Kaze I wants ter make mah will;
Neenter min' erbout de doctor—
'Tain't no use ter take er pill.—
Chunk up de kitchen fire,
En fetch mah easy-ch'er,
En put er piller in it:
Maybe I'll git better hyeah.
I done hyeahed de doctor say it—de doctor hisse'f said it—
I'm plumb chock full o' microbes en mah time's ercomin' quick.
So, 'stid o' up en fussin' wid me fer bein' lazy,
Yer'd better be er nussin' me, 'kaze I'm jes' mighty sick.

I 'spec' I must er cotch it
Back in Tennessee;
'Kaze, fur ez I kin 'member,
I wuz bad ez I could be—
P'intly hated hoein' 'taters—
Couldn't chop er stick o' wood—
Couldn't pick er sack o' cotton—
Never wuz er lick o' good.
En de folks dey called me lazy—my own mammy called me lazy
When, 'stid o' gwine plowin', I wuz fishin' in de creek;
Took en tole de white folks 'bout it, en made er heap o' trouble,
En all fer want o' medersun—me bein' mighty sick.

So, now yer knows de reason
Why I'm always loafin' 'roun',
When jobs is runnin' after men
In ev'y part o' town.
Dar's patches on mah breeches,
En you's er sight ter see;
Dat's de work o' dem same microbes,

En it kain't be laid on me.
'Kaze de doctor he explained it, en de doctor's book explained it,
En some Latin words explained it, en explained it mighty quick
—
It's mah lights er else mah liver, er maybe, its mah stomach—
It's somep'n in mah insides, en it sho' has made me sick.

En so, I hope yer'll git yerse'f
Er washin', now, er two,
Er get er job o' scrubbin'
Er somp'n else ter do;
'Kaze dat doctor p'intly showed me
So I couldn't he'p but tell
Dat dem microbes got me han' en foot
En I jes' kain't git well.
Darfo' I hope yer'll he'p me ter pass mah las' days easy,
En keep er fire in de stove en somep'n in de pan.
I know it's hard ter do it, en I'm sorry I kain't he'p yer;
But me 'n de doctor bofe knows I'm er mighty sick man.

James Weldon Johnson entitled a section of his book *Jingles and Croons*. Among these pieces, so disparagingly designated, are to be found some of the best dialect writing in the whole range of Negro literature. Every quality of excellence is there. The one piece I give is perhaps not above the average of a score in his book:

MY LADY'S LIPS AM LIKE DE HONEY
(Negro Love Song)

Breeze a-sighin' and a-blowin',
Southern summer night.
Stars a-gleamin' and a-glowin',
Moon jus shinin' right.
Strollin', like all lovers do,
Down de lane wid Lindy Lou;
Honey on her lips to waste;
'Speck I'm gwine to steal a taste.

Oh, ma lady's lips am like de honey,

Ma lady's lips am like de rose;
An' I'm jes like de little bee a-buzzin'
'Round de flowers wha' de nectah grows.
Ma lady's lips dey smile so temptin',
Ma lady's teeth so white dey shine,
Oh, ma lady's lips so tantalizin',
Ma lady's lips so close to mine.

Bird a-whistlin' and a-swayin'
In de live-oak tree;
Seems to me he keeps a-sayin',
"Kiss dat gal fo' me."
Look heah, Mister Mockin' Bird,
Gwine to take you at yo' word;
If I meets ma Waterloo,
Gwine to blame it all on you.

Oh, ma lady's lips am like de honey,
Ma lady's lips am like de rose;
An' I'm jes like de little bee a-buzzin'
'Round de flowers wha' de nectah grows.
Ma lady's lips dey smile so temptin',
Ma lady's teeth so white dey shine,
Oh, ma lady's lips so tantalizin',
Ma lady's lips so close to mine.

Honey in de rose, I 'spose, is
Put der fo' de bee;
Honey on her lips, I knows, is
Put der jes fo' me.
Seen a sparkle in her eye,
Heard her heave a little sigh;
Felt her kinder squeeze mah han',
'Nuff to make me understan'.

Numerous other writers would furnish quite as good specimens of dialectical verse as those given. This medium of artistic expression is not being neglected, it is only made secondary and, as it were, incidental. By perhaps half of the poets it is not used. With a few, and they of no little

talent, it is the main medium. Among this few, Carmichael has been named; S. Jonathan Clark, of Dublin, Mississippi, and Theodore Henry Shackelford, of Jamaica Plains, New York, are others.

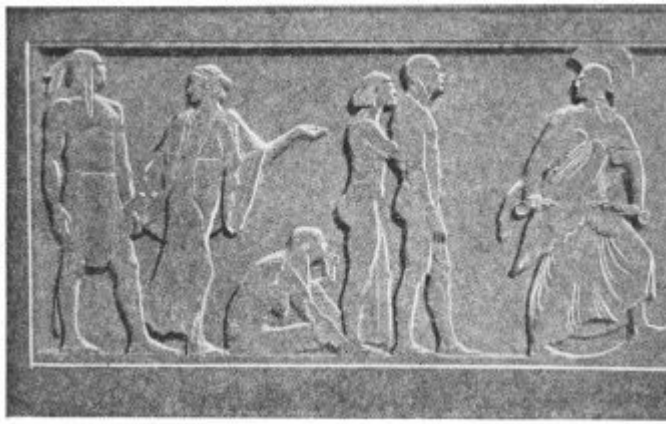


Theodore Henry Shackelford

Shackelford, with little schooling, displays a versatility of talent. His own pen has illustrated with interesting realistic sketches his book entitled *My Country and Other Poems*, and for some of his lyrics he has written music. A large proportion of his pieces are in dialect, much in the spirit of Dunbar. His best productions in standard English are ballads. He tells a tale in verse with Wordsworthian simplicity and feeling. Mr. Clark is a school principal, with the education that implies. He has not yet published a book.

CHAPTER VII

THE POETRY OF PROTEST



Equality and Justice for All
(Photograph of a panel of the Carl Schurz Monument)

As elsewhere intimated there is being produced in America a literature of which America, as the term is commonly understood, is not aware. It is a literature of protest—protest sometimes pathetic and prayerful, sometimes vehement and bitter. It comes from Negro writers, in prose and verse, in the various forms of fiction, drama, essay, editorial, and lyric. It is only with the lyric form that we are here concerned. Of that we shall make a special presentation, in this chapter.

An artistic and restrained expression of the protest against irrational color prejudice, in the plaintive, pathetic key, is found in the following free-verse poem by Winston Allen:

THE BLACK VIOLINIST

I touched the violin,
I, whose hand was black,
I touched the violin
In a grand salon.
I touched the violin
In a Russian palace.
I touched the violin

And the dream-born strains
Chanted by the Congo
Soared to Heaven's chambers.

Could I touch the violin?
I, whose hand was black?
And bring to life dream music?
Men had taunted me,
Age-worn months: their jeers
Snapped to bits my heartstrings,
Snapped my inner soul;
And the sting of living
Tortured me the livelong day.

Sometimes the protest runs in a lighter vein—as thus, in verses entitled:

OLD JIM CROW

Wherever we live, it's right to forgive,
It's wrong to hold malice, we know,
But there's one thing that's true, from all points of view,
All Negroes hate old man Jim Crow.

His home is in hell; he loves here to dwell;
We meet him wherever we go;
In all public places, where live both the races,
You'll always see Mr. Jim Crow.

Be we well educated, even to genius related,
We may have a big pile of dough,
That cuts not a figger, you still are a nigger,
And that is the law with Jim Crow.
The Nashville Eye.

But the Negro is seldom humorous these days on the subject of racial discriminations. Occasionally, in dialect verse, he still makes merry with the foibles or over-accentuated traits of certain types of the Negro. In general, however, the Negro verse-smith goes to his work with a grim aspect. He is there to smite. Sometimes the anvil

clangs, more mightily than musically. But there is precedent.

A stanza each from two poems somewhat intense will serve to show the character of much verse in Negro newspapers. The first is from verses entitled "Sympathy," by Tilford Jones:

Mourn for the thousands slain,
The youthful and the strong;
Mourn for the last; but pray,
For those hung by the mobbing throng.
Pray to our God above,
To break the fell destroyer's sway,
And show His saving love.

The second is the last stanza of a poem entitled *Shall Race Hatred Prevail?* by Adeline Carter Watson.

By the tears of Negro mothers,
By the woes of Negro wives,
By the sighs of Negro children,
By your gallant snuffed-out lives,
By the throne of God eternal;
Standing hard by Heaven's gate,
Ye shall crush this cursed, infernal,
Western stigma: groundless hate!

The following two poems have a world of pathos for every reflecting person, in the unanswered question of each. The first is by Mrs. Georgia Douglas Johnson:

TO MY SON

Shall I say, "My son, you are branded in this country's pageantry,
Foully tethered, bound forever, and no forum makes you free?"
Shall I mark the young light fading through your soul-
enchanneled eye,
As the dusky pall of shadows screen the highway of your sky?
Or shall I with love prophetic bid you dauntlessly arise,
Spurn the handicap that binds you, taking what the world denies?

Bid you storm the sullen fortress built by prejudice and wrong,
With a faith that shall not falter in your heart and on your tongue!

The second is by Will Sexton:

TO MY LOST CHILD

It is well, child of my heart, the rosebush drops its petals on your grave.
It is well, child of my heart, the sparrow sings to you when Aurora has rouged the sky.
In your trundle bed deep in the bosom of the earth you can dream pleasanter dreams than I.
You have never felt the sting of living in a white man's civilization and beneath a white man's laws.
You have never been forced to dance to the music of hate played by an idle orchestra.
You have never toiled long hours and bowed and scraped for the chance to breathe.
In your dreams you wonder in the Heaven beyond the skies with the God civilization rebukes.
Tell me, little child, are you not happy in that realm no white man can enter?

In much of this utterance of protest, this arraignment of the white man's civilization that rebukes God, there may be more passion than poesy. But out of such passion, as it were a rumbling of thunder, the lightning will one day leap. A poet born and reared in South Carolina, Joshua Henry Jones, Jr., appeals from man's inhumanities to God's prevailing power in passionate stanzas of which this is the first, the rest being like:

They've lynched a man in Dixie.
  O God, behold the crime.
And midst the mad mob's howling
  How sweet the church bells chime!
They've lynched a man in Dixie.
  You say this cannot be?
See where his lead-torn body

Mute hangs from yonder tree.

This or a similar lynching provoked the following lines from another, Walter Everette Hawkins, in a poem entitled *A Festival in Christendom*. After relating that the white people of a certain community were on their way to church on the Sabbath day, the poem continues:

And so this Christian mob did turn
From prayer to rob, to lynch and burn.
A victim helplessly he fell
To tortures truly kin to hell;
They bound him fast and strung him high,
They cut him down lest he should die
Before their energy was spent
In torturing to their heart's content.
They tore his flesh and broke his bones,
And laughed in triumph at his groans;
They chopped his fingers, clipped his ears
And passed them round as souvenirs.
They bored hot irons in his side
And reveled in their zeal and pride;
They cut his quivering flesh away
And danced and sang as Christians may;
Then from his side they tore his heart
And watched its quivering fibres dart.
And then upon his mangled frame
They piled the wood, the oil and flame.
Lest there be left one of his creed,
One to perpetuate his breed;
Lest there be one to bear his name
Or build the stock from which he came,
They dragged his bride up to the pyre
And plunged her headlong in the fire,
Full-freighted with an unborn child,
Hot embers on her form they piled.
And they raised a Sabbath song,
The echo sounded wild and strong,
A benediction to the skies
That crowned the human sacrifice.

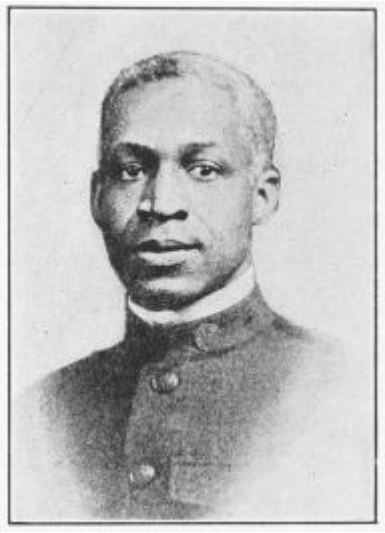
Few are the poets quoted or mentioned in this volume who have not contributed to this literature of protest. James Weldon Johnson, whose predominant motive is artistic creation, affords more than one poem in which the note of protest is sounded in pathos. Pathos is indeed the characteristic note of the great body of Negro verse. Aided by the two preceding extracts to an understanding of Johnson's point of view, the reader will appreciate the following poem, remarkable for that restraint which adds to the potency of art:

THE BLACK MAMMY

O whitened head entwined with turban gay,
O kind black face, O crude, but tender hand,
O foster-mother in whose arms there lay
The race whose sons are masters of the land!
It was thine arms that sheltered in their fold,
It was thine eyes that followed through the length
Of infant days these sons. In times of old
It was thy breast that nourished them to strength.
So often hast thou to thy bosom pressed
The golden head, the face and brow of snow;
So often has it 'gainst thy broad, dark breast
Lain, set off like a quickened cameo.
Thou simple soul, as cuddling down that babe
With thy sweet croon, so plaintive and so wild,
Came ne'er the thought to thee, swift like a stab,
That it some day might crush thine own black child?

There died in Fort McHenry hospital, February, 2, 1921, a soldier-poet of the Negro race, who had been called "the poet laureate of the New Negro," his name Lucian B. Watkins. He deserved the title, whatever may be the exact definition of "the New Negro." For in his lyrics, of many forms, racial consciousness reached a degree of intensity to which only a disciplined sense of art set a limit.—He was born in a cabin at Chesterfield, Virginia, struggled in the usual way for the rudiments of book-knowledge, became a

teacher, then a soldier. His health was wrecked in the World War. He died before his powers were matured.—Short and simple are the annals of the poet. Before one of his intenser race poems I shall give his last lyric cry, uttered but a few days before his lingering death:



Lucian B. Watkins

My fallen star has spent its light
And left but memory to me;
My day of dream has kissed the night
Farewell, its sun no more I see;
My summer bloomed for winter's frost:
Alas, I've lived and loved and lost!

What matters it to-day should earth
Lay on my head a gold-bright crown
Lit with the gems of royal worth
Befitting well a king's renown?—
My lonely soul is trouble-tossed,
For I have lived and loved and lost.

Great God! I dare not question Thee—
Thy way eternally is just;

This seeming mystery to me
Will be revealed, if I but trust;
Ah, Thou alone dost know the cost
When one has lived and loved and lost.

The following sonnet, entitled "The New Negro," will serve to represent much of Watkins's verse:

He thinks in black. His God is but the same
John saw—with hair "like wool" and eyes "as fire"—
Who makes the visions for which men aspire.
His kin is Jesus and the Christ who came
Humbly to earth and wrought His hallowed aim
'Midst human scorn. Pure is his heart's desire;
His life's religion lifts; his faith leads higher.
Love is his Church, and Union is its name.

Lo, he has learned his own immortal rôle
In this momentous drama of the hour;
Has read aright the heavens' Scriptural scroll
'Bove ancient wrong—long boasting in its tower.
Ah, he has sensed the truth. Deep in his soul
He feels the manly majesty of power.

The protest not infrequently takes the form of entreaty and appeal, sometimes the form of an invocation of divine wrath upon the doers of evil. The following poem from Watkins, unique and effective in form and biblical phrasing, is the kind of appeal that will not out of the mind:

A MESSAGE TO THE MODERN PHARAOHS

(Loose him and let him go—John 11.44)

"Loose him!"—this man on whom you plod
Beneath your heel hate-iron-shod;
His silent sorrow troubles God—
"Let him go!"

There will be plagues, wars will not cease,—

There cannot be a lasting peace
Until this being you release—
"Let him go!"

Each doomful kingdom—throne and crown—
Built on the lowly fettered down,
Shall perish—lo, the heavens frown—
"Let him go!"

Naught but a name is Liberty,
Naught but a name—Democracy,
Till love has made each mortal free—
"Let him go!"

"Loose him!" He has his part to play
In Life's Great Drama, day by day,—
He has his mission, God's own way,—
"Let him go!"

"Loose him!" 'Twill be your master rôle,
'Twill be your triumph and your goal:
'Twill be the saving of your soul—
"Let him go!"

Mr. Hawkins, whom I have quoted, entitled his book *Chords and Discords*. What did he mean by "discords"? Perhaps a disparagement of his muse's efforts at music. Perhaps, and rather, something in the content, for the contrasts are sharp, the tones are piercing. These "discords" abound in contemporary Negro verse. Between the octave and the sestet of the following sonnet, by Mrs. Carrie W. Clifford, the discord is of the kind that stabs you:

AN EASTER MESSAGE

Now quivering to life, all nature thrills
At the approach of that triumphant queen,
Pink-fingered Easter, trailing robes of green
Tunefully o'er the flower-embroidered hills,

Her hair perfumed of myriad daffodils:
Upon her swelling bosom now are seen
The dream-frail lilies with their snowy sheen,
As lightly she o'erleaps the spring-time rills.
To black folk choked within the deadly grasp
Of racial hate, what message does she bring
Of resurrection and the hope of spring?
Assurance their death-stupor is a mask—
A sleep, with elements potential, rife,
Ready to burst full-flowered into life.

The Negro's deep resentment of his wrongs has found its most artistic expression in the verse of a poet who came to us from Jamaica—Mr. Claude McKay. In another chapter I have given the reader an opportunity to judge of his merits. He will be represented here by a sonnet, written, I believe, shortly after the race-riot in the national capital, July, 1919. It has been widely reprinted in the Negro newspapers.

IF WE MUST DIE

If we must die, let it not be like hogs
  Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot,
While round us bark the mad and hungry dogs,
  Making their mock at our accursed lot.
If we must die—oh, let us nobly die,
  So that our precious blood may not be shed
In vain; then even the monsters we defy
  Shall be constrained to honor us, though dead!

Oh, kinsmen! We must meet the common foe;
  Though far outnumbered, let us still be brave,
And for their thousand blows deal one death-blow.
  What though before us lies the open grave?
Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack,
  Pressed to the wall, dying, but—fighting back!

Race consciousness has recently attained an extraordinary pitch in the Negro, and there seems to be no

prospect of any abatement. The verse-smiths one and all have borne witness to a feeling of great intensity on all subjects pertaining to their race—the discriminations and injustices practised against it, the limitations that would be imposed upon it, the contumelies that would offend it. Ardent appeals are therefore made to race pride and ardent exhortations to race unity. The ancient rôle of the poet whereby he is identified with the prophet is being resumed by the enkindled souls of black men. With their natural gift for music and eloquence, with their increasing culture, with their building up of a poetic tradition now in process, with this intensification of race consciousness, almost anything may be expected of the Negro in another generation.

CHAPTER VIII

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS

I. Eulogistic



Mae Smith Johnson

Altogether admirable is the disposition of Negro verse-writers to eulogize the notable personages of their race, the men and women who have blazed the trail of advance. The mention of Attucks, Black Sampson, Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, and others like these, all practically unknown to white readers, is frequent, and reverential odes and sonnets to Douglass, Toussaint L'Ouverture, Washington, Dunbar, are many and enthusiastic. Here as elsewhere, however, I refrain from giving mere titles and from comments on productions merely cited. The reader will find such poems as I allude to in every poet's volume. I refer to this body of eulogistic verse only to suggest to the reader who takes up the writings of the American Negroes that he will learn that they have a heritage of heroic traditions from which poetry springs in every race.

Instead of giving here such specimens of poetic eulogy as I have alluded to, however, I shall give a few poems of a more general significance, poems of appeal or tribute to the entire black race or poems of affectionate tribute to individuals. A free-verse poem entitled "The Negro," by Mr. Langston Hughes, on page 200, may be recalled. Here is a sonnet with the same title, by Mr. McKay, which appeared in *The People's Pilot*, published in Richmond, Va.:

THE NEGRO

Think ye I am not fiend and savage too?
  Think ye I could not arm me with a gun
And shoot down ten of you for every one
  Of my black brothers murdered, burnt by you?
Be not deceived, for every deed ye do
  I could match—outmatch: am I not Afric's son,
Black of that black land where black deeds are done?
  But the Almighty from the darkness drew
My soul and said: Even thou shalt be a light
  Awhile to burn on the benighted earth;
Thy dusky face I set among the white

For thee to prove thyself of highest worth;
Before the world is swallowed up in night,
To show thy little lamp; go forth, go forth!

From another Virginia magazine, also now defunct, *The Praiseworthy Muse*, of Norfolk, I take the following poem, signed by John J. Fenner, Jr.:

RISE! YOUNG NEGRO—RISE!

Ho! we from slumber wake!
Rise! young Negro—rise!
Begin our daily task anew—
Thank God we're spared to—
Rise! young Negro—rise!

Thy task may be an humble one.
Rise! young Negro—rise!
However great, however small,
Honesty and respect for all—
Rise! young Negro—rise!

Each has a race to run.
Rise! young Negro—rise!
Enter now while we're young,
Though weak and just begun.
Rise! young Negro—rise!

Our banner flown will some day read:
Rise! young Negro—rise!
Victory's ours! We've won the race.
Then let us live in God by grace.
Rise! young Negro—rise!

In spirit and in form both these productions seem to be quite noteworthy. The first has in it something darkly and terribly ominous, while the second has all the fervor of religion in its youth. The class of poems to follow will afford a contrast. They will bear witness to that pride of race, perhaps, which we of the white race have

commended to the colored people:

DAYBREAK

Awake! Arise! Men of my race—
I see our morning star,
And feel the dawn breeze on my face
Creep inward from afar.

I feel the dawn, with soft-like tread,
Steal through our lingering night,
Aglow with flame our sky to spread
In floods of morning light.

Arise, my men! Be wide-awake
To hear the bugle call
For Negroes everywhere to break
The bands that bind us all.

Great Lincoln, now with glory graced,
All Godlike with the pen,
Our chattel fetters broke and placed
Us in the ranks of men.

But even he could not awake
The dead, nor make alive,
Nor change stern Nature's laws, which make
The fittest to survive.

Let every man his soul inure
In noblest sacrifice,
And with a heart of oak endure
Ignoble, arrant prejudice.

Endurance, love, will yet prevail
Against all laws of hate;
Such armaments can never fail
Our race its best estate.

Let none make common cause with sin,
Be that in honor bound,
For they who fight with God must win

On every battleground.

Though wrongs there are, and wrongs have been,
And wrongs we still must face,
We have more friends than foes within
The Anglo-Saxon race.

In spite of all the Babel cries
Of those who rage and shout,
God's silent forces daily rise
To bring his will about.

George Marion McClellan.

THE NEGRO WOMAN

Were it mine to select a woman
As queen of the hall of fame;
One who has fought the gamest fight
And climbed from the depths of shame;
I would have to give the sceptre
To the lowliest of them all;
She, who has struggled through the years,
With her back against the wall.

Wronged by the men of an alien race,
Deserted by those of her own;
With a prayer in her heart, a song on her lips
She has carried the fight alone.
In spite of the snares all around her;
Her marvelous pluck has prevailed
And kept her home together—
When even her men have failed.

What of her sweet, simple nature?
What of her natural grace?
Her richness and fullness of color,
That adds to the charm of her face?
Is there a woman more shapely?
More vigorous, loving and true?
Yea, wonderful Negro woman
The honor I'd give to you.

Andrea Razafkeriefo.

THE NEGRO CHILD

My little one of ebon hue,
  My little one with fluffy hair,
The wide, wide world is calling you
  To think and do and dare.

The lessons of stern yesterdays
  That stir your blood and poise your brain
Are etching out the simple ways
  By which you must attain.

An echo here, a memory there,
  An act that links itself with truth;
A vision that makes troubles air
  And toils the joy of youth.

These be your food, your drink, your rest,
  These be your moods of drudgeful ease,
For these be nature's spur and test
  And heaven's fair decrees.

My little one of ebon hue,
  My little one with fluffy hair,
Go train your head and hands to do,
  Your head and heart to dare.

Joseph S. Cotter, Sr.

THE MOTHER

The mother soothes her mantled child
  With plaintive melody, and wild;
A deep compassion brims her eye
  And stills upon her lips the sigh.

Her thoughts are leaping down the years,
  O'er branding bars, through seething tears:
Her heart is sandaling his feet
  Adown the world's corroding street.

Then, with a start, she dons a smile,
His tender yearnings to beguile;
And only God will ever know
The wordless measure of her woe.

Georgia Douglas Johnson.

The foregoing poems are generic in character, the following, specific. And yet there is much in these also that is typical and universal:

TO A NEGRO MOTHER

I hear you croon a little lullaby,
I see you press his little lips to yours,
Again old scenes come to my memory,
As if Love's stream had gained the long lost shores;
As if the tidal wave of human good
Had thrown o'er me the mantle of control;
As if the beauty of true motherhood
Had gained the premise of my common soul.

The poet's heart is yet within your breast,
The captain's sword unconsciously you wield;
You know the sculptor's masterpiece the best,
Thro' you the master painter is revealed.
In you there dwells the Race's latent power—
The power to make, the power to break apart;
The power to lift, the power again to lower
That burnished shield that guards the Race's heart.

And am I speaking as in hapless rhymes
Of things at least that may not come to pass?
Or is it not the spirit of the times
All things that savour power to amass?
Canst thou not see within thine own pure soul
That which thy Race and all the world awaits,
The master-leader who will reach the goal
And hew with sword of flame the city gates?

O Negro mother, from the dust arise,
Take up your task with grace and fortitude,

Knowing the goal is not the azure skies,
But here, and now, for thine own Race's good.
Create anew the captains of the past;
Build in your soul the Ethiopian power,
That when the mighty quest is gained at last,
O Negro mother, fame shall be your dower.

Ben E. Burrell.

TO MY GRANDMOTHER

You 'mind me of the winter's eve
When low the sinking sun
Casts soft bright rays upon the snow
And day, now almost done,
In silence deep prepares to leave,
And calmly waits the signal "Go."

Your eyes are faded vestal lights
That once the hearth illumed,
Where vestal virgins vigil kept,
And budding virtue bloomed:
Like stars that beam on summer nights,
Your eyes, by joy and sorrow swept.

Asleep, one night, an angel kissed
Your hair and on the morn
The raven threads were silv'ry gray;
The angel fair had borne
Your youth away ere it you missed
And left old age to bless your way.

Smile on, for when you smile, it seems
I cannot do a wrong;
Your smiles go with me all the while
And make life one sweet song;
And oft at night my troubled dream
Grows gay at thoughts of your bright smile.

Dark Africa with Caucasian blood
To tinge your veins combined,
Your proud head bowed to slavery's thrall,

Your hands to toil consigned.
The Lord of hosts becalmed the flood,
The God Omnipotent o'er all.

Your ears have heard the din of war,
The martial tramp of feet,
Your voice has risen to your God
In supplications sweet.
May angels kiss each furrowed scar
Upon your brow where care has trod.

God bless the hands all withered now
By age and weary care.
God rest the feet that sought the way
To freedom bright and fair.
God bless thy life and e'er endow
Thee with new strength each new-born day.

Mae Smith Johnson.

EBON MAID AND GIRL OF MINE

The sweetest charm of all the earth
Came into being with her birth.
All that without her we would lack
She is in purity and black.

The pansy and the violet,
The dark of all the flowers met
And gave their wealth of color in
The sable beauty of her skin.

Glad winds of evening are her face,
Gentle with love and rich in grace;
The blazing splendors of her eyes
Are jewels from the midnight skies.

Her hair—the darkness caught and curled,
The ancient wonder of the world—
Seems, in its strange, uncertain length,
A constant crown of queenly strength.

Her smile, it is the rising moon,

The waking of a night in June;
Her teeth are tips of white, they gleam
Like starlight in a happy dream.

Her laughter is a Christmas bell
Of "peace on earth and all is well!"
Her voice—it is the dearest part
Of all the glory in her heart.

The height of joy, the deep of tears,
The surging passion of the years,
The mystery and dark of things,
We feel their meanings when she sings.

Her thoughts are pure and every one
But makes her good to look upon.
Daughter of God! you are divine,
O, Ebon Maid and Girl of Mine!

Lucian B. Watkins.

I will conclude this section with a very well rhymed tribute to two Negro bards between whom there was a friendship and a correspondence similar to that which existed between Burns and Lapraik. The writer, James Edgar French, was a native of Kentucky, studied for the ministry, and died early:

DUNBAR AND COTTER

Dunbar and Cotter! foster-brothers, ye,
Nurst at the breast of heav'nly minstrelsy!
The first two Negroes who have dared to climb
Parnassus' mount, and carve your names in rhyme;
Who, over icy walls of prejudice,
Where twice ten thousand gorgon monsters hiss,
Did scale the peak and make the steep ascent;
For which great feat ye had small precedent.
There were who said: "The Negro is not fit
To write good prose, much less to rhyme with wit";
That nothing ever Negroes could inspire
With Spenser's fancy or with Shakespere's fire:

With Dryden's vigor, with the ease of Pope,
To weave the iambic pentametric rope,
But ye, immortal sons of Afric, ye
Have proved these charges gross absurdity;
That old Dame Nature's no respecter in
Regard to person or the hue of skin.
Omnific God, at whose fiatic hand
Did primogenial light deluge the land;
Whose word supreme did out of chaos draw
A world, and order made its guiding law,
Bequeath'd like talents to the black and white;
To read form'd some and others made to write;
To govern these, and those to governed be,
And you, great twain, endued with poesy!

James Edgar French.

II. Commemorative and Occasional

From this body of Negro verse which I have been describing and giving specimens of may be selected pieces commemorative of days and seasons that are quite up to the standard of similar pieces provided for white children in their school-readers. These selections will further illustrate the variety of themes and emotional responses in this body of contemporary verse.

The first selection hardly needs any allowance to be made for it, I think, on the score that it was written by a girl only sixteen years of age:

CHRISTMAS CHEER

'Tis Christmas time! 'Tis Christmas time!
Dear hallowed name of every clime!
How each one's heart now happy feels,
How each one's face fresh joy reveals
As Christmas Day is drawing near
The merriest day of all the year!

Old spite and hate, the scowl, the sneer
Are vanquished, all, by kindly cheer,

And friendships nigh forgot and cold
Glow warm again as once of old.
Man's worries cease, his hope returns,
His breast with love now brighter burns;
So, Christmas cheer! Oh, Christmas cheer!
A hearty welcome to you here.

A welcome through the world where trod
The source of joy, the Son of God,
The Lowly One who from above
First warmed cold earth with gladsome love:
Who still proclaims with golden voice,
"Peace on earth! Rejoice! Rejoice!"

Corinne E. Lewis.

If the reader is disposed to make comparisons he might recall, without very great detriment to the following poem, Tennyson's famous stanzas on the same theme. It is in the effective manner of the poems already given from its author:

GOODBYE OLD YEAR

Goodbye, Old Year. Here comes New.
You've done wonders; now you're through;
Adding wisdom to the ages,
Making history's best pages;
Rest and slumber with the sages.
Good-bye, Old Year. Welcome, New.

Goodbye, Old Year. Welcome, New.
Off with false hopes; on with true.
Nations raise a mighty chorus,
Rich intoning, grand, sonorous,
Blithe and gladsome, sad, dolorous;
Goodbye, Old Year. Welcome, New.
Off with false hopes. On with true.

Goodbye, Old Year. Hail the New.
Goodbye, hatreds. Wrongs, adieu.
Down Life's lane, with high or lowly,

Weak, or strong, sin-cursed, or holy,
Time is reaping—trudging slowly.
Goodbye, Old Year. Hail the New.
Goodbye, hatreds. Wrongs, adieu.

Goodbye, Old Year. Come in, New.
Stout hearts look for light to you.
Rising hopes new scenes are staging;
Brotherhood our thoughts engaging.
Dreams of Peace hide battle raging.
Goodbye, Old Year. Come in, New.
Stout hearts fondly look to you.

Joshua Henry Jones, Jr.

The remainder of the series will be given without comment:

THE MONTHS

January

To herald in another year,
  With rhythmic note the snowflakes fall
Silently from their crystal courts,
  To answer Winter's call.
Wake, mortal! Time is winged anew!
  Call Love and Hope and Faith to fill
The chambers of thy soul to-day;
  Life hath its blessings still!

February

The icicles upon the pane
  Are busy architects; they leave
What temples and what chiseled forms
  Of leaf and flower! Then believe
That though the woods be brown and bare,
  And sunbeams peep through cloudy veils,
Though tempests howl through leaden skies,
  The springtime never fails!

March

Robin! Robin! call the Springtime!
  March is halting on his way;
Hear the gusts. What! snowflakes falling!
  Look not for the grass to-day.
  Ay, the wind will frisk and play,
  And we cannot say it nay.

April

She trips across the meadows,
  The weird, capricious elf!
The buds unfold their perfumed cups
  For love of her sweet self;
And silver-throated birds begin to tune their lyres,
While wind-harps lend their strains to Nature's magic choirs.

May

Sweet, winsome May, coy, pensive, fay,
  Comes garlanded with lily-bells,
And apple blooms shed incense through the bow'r,
  To be her dow'r;
While through the leafy dells
  A wondrous concert swells
To welcome May, the dainty fay.

June

Roses, roses, roses,
Creamy, fragrant, dewy!
  See the rainbow shower!
Was there e'er so sweet a flower?
I'm the rose-nymph, June they call me.
  Sunset's blush is not more fair
  Than the gift of bloom so rare,
Mortal, that I bring to thee!

July

Sunshine and shadow play amid the trees

In bosky groves, while from the vivid sky
The sun's gold arrows fleck the fields at noon,
Where weary cattle to their slumber hie.
How sweet the music of the purling rill,
Trickling adown the grassy hill!
While dreamy fancies come to give repose
When the first star of evening glows.

August

Haste to the mighty ocean,
List to the lapsing waves;
With what a strange commotion
They seek their coral caves.
From heat and turmoil let us oft return,
The ocean's solemn majesty to learn.

September

With what a gentle sound
The autumn leaves drop to the ground;
The many-colored dyes,
They greet our watching eyes.
Rosy and russet, how they fall!
Throwing o'er earth a leafy pall.

October

The mellow moon hangs golden in the sky,
The vintage song is over, far and nigh
A richer beauty Nature weareth now,
And silently, in reverence we bow
Before the forest altars, off'ring praise
To Him who sweetness gives to all our days.

November

The leaves are sere,
The woods are drear,
The breeze, that erst so merrily did play,
Naught giveth save a melancholy lay;
Yet life's great lessons do not fail

E'en in November's gale.

December

List! List! the sleigh bells peal across the snow;
The frost's sharp arrows touch the earth and lo!
How diamond-bright the stars do scintillate
When Night hath lit her lamps to Heaven's gate.
To the dim forest's cloistered arches go,
And seek the holly and the mistletoe;
For soon the bells of Christmas-tide will ring
To hail the Heavenly King!

H. Cordelia Ray.

WHILE APRIL BREEZES BLOW

(A Song for Arbor Day.)

Come, let us plant a tree today—
Forsake your book, forsake your play,
Bring out the spade and hie away
While April breezes blow.

Your life is young, and it should be
As full of vigor as this tree,
As fair, as upright and as free,
While April breezes blow.

Come, let us plant a tree to stand
Both fair and useful in the land,
Supremely tall and nobly grand
A strong and trusty oak.

Dig deep and let the long roots hold
A firm embrace within the mold:
And may your life in truth unfold
A strong and trusty oak.

Come, let us plant a supple ash,
A tree to bend when others crash,
And stand when vivid lightnings flash,
And clouds pour down the rain:

So while we plant we'll learn to bend
And hold our ground, tho' storms descend
Throughout our life, and lightnings rend,
And clouds pour down the rain.

Then let us plant these trees between
A graceful spruce in living green,
That e'en in winter days is seen
Like changeless springtime still:

And so may you as years go by,
And winter comes and snowflakes fly,
Be yet in heart, and mind and eye,
Like changeless springtime still.

Bring out the spade and hie away,
And let us plant a tree today
While skies are bright and hearts are gay,
And April breezes blow.

In other days 'neath April skies,
Around this tree may joyful cries
And happy children's songs arise,
While April breezes blow.

D. T. Williamson.

A NATION'S GREATNESS

What makes a nation truly great?
Not strength of arms, nor men of state,
Nor vast domains, by conquest won,
That knew not rise nor set of sun;
Nor sophist's schools, nor learned clan,
Nor laws that bind the will of man,—
For these have proved, in ages past,
But futile dreams that could not last;
And they that boast of such today,
Are fallen, vanquished in the fray,
Their glory mingled with the dust,
Their archives stained with crime and lust;
And all that breathed of pomp and pride,

Like the untimely fig, has died.
One thing, alone, restrains, exalts
A nation and corrects its faults;
One thing, alone, its life can crown
And give its destiny renown.
That nation, then, is truly great,
That lives by love, and not by hate;
That bends beneath the chastening rod,
That owns the truth, and looks to God!

Edwin Garnett Riley.

THANKSGIVING

My heart gives thanks for many things—
For strength to labor day by day,
For sleep that comes when darkness wings
With evening up the eastern way.
I give deep thanks that I'm at peace
With kith and kin and neighbors, too;
Dear Lord, for all last year's increase,
That helped me strive and hope and do.

My heart gives thanks for many things;
I know not how to name them all.
My soul is free from frets and stings,
My mind from creed and doctrine's thrall.
For sun and stars, for flowers and streams,
For work and hope and rest and play,
For empty moments given to dreams—
For these my heart gives thanks today.

William Stanley Braithwaite.

I will conclude this anthology with a selection from our Madagascar poet, Andrea Razafkeriefo, which, in a happy strain, conveys a very good philosophy of life—which is especially the Afro-American's:

RAINY DAYS

On rainy days I don't despair,
But slip into my rocking chair;

With my old pipe and volume rare
And wade in fiction deep.
The pitter-patter of the rain
Upon the roof and window pane
Comes like a lullaby's refrain,
Till soon I'm fast asleep.

I'm grateful for the rainy days:
'Tis only then my fancy plays,
And mem'ry wanders back and strays
O'er paths I loved so dear.
The lightning's flash, the thunder's peal
Convinces me that God is real;
And it's a wondrous thing to feel
That he is really near.

Of the manifold and immense significance of poetry as a form of spiritual expression the Negro American has lately become profoundly aware, as this presentation must amply reveal. Not only the industrial arts are the objects of his ambition, according to the far-looking doctrine of Tuskegee, but as well those arts which are born of and express the spiritual traits of mankind, the fine arts—music, painting, sculpture, dramatics, and poetry. In them all the Negro is winning distinction. In consequence it would seem that there must dawn upon us, shaped by the poems of this collection, a new vision of the Negro and a new appreciation of his spiritual qualities, his human character. A profounder human sympathy with a greatly hampered, handicapped, and humiliated people must also ensue from such considerations as these poems will induce. One of the poets here represented cries out, as if from a calvary, "We come slow-struggling up the hills of Hell." Another, in milder but not less appealing tone, cries: "We climb the slopes of life with throbbing hearts."

This appeal, expressed or implicit throughout the entire range of present-day Negro verse, an appeal sometimes angrily, sometimes plaintively uttered, an appeal to

mankind for fundamental justice and for human fellowship on the broad basis of kinship of spirit, may fittingly be the final note of this anthology:

We climb the slopes of life with throbbing hearts.

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Allen, J. Mord.—Born, Montgomery, Ala., March 26, 1875. Schooling ceased in the middle of high-school. Since seventeen years of age a boiler-maker. Home, St. Louis, Mo. Authorship: *Rhymes, Tales and Rhymed Tales*, Crane and Company, Topeka, Kas., 1906. 48-50, 223-226.

Allen, Winston.—230.

Bailey, William Edgar.—Born, Salisbury, Mo. Educated in the Salisbury public schools. Authorship: *The Firstling*, 1914. 65-67, 213-214.

Bell, James Madison.—Born, Gallipolis, Ohio, 1826. Educated in night schools after reaching manhood. Prominent anti-slavery orator, friend of John Browne. *Poetical Works*, with biography by Bishop B. W. Arnett, 1901. 32-37.

Braithwaite, William Stanley.—Born, Boston, Mass., 1878. Mainly self-educated. His three books of original verse are: *Lyrics of Life and Love*, 1904; *The House of Falling Leaves*, 1908; *Sandy Star and Willie Gee*, 1922. In *Who's Who*. 105-109, 263.

Burrell, Benjamin Ebenezer.—Born, Manchester Mountains, Jamaica, 1892. Descended from Mandingo kings on his father's side, and on his

mother's from Cromantees and Scotch. Contributor to *The Crusader* and other magazines. 249-250.

Carmichael, Waverley Turner.—Born, Snow Hill, Ala. Educated in the Snow Hill Institute and Harvard Summer School. Authorship: *From the Heart of a Folk*, The Cornhill Company, Boston, 1918. 53 219-220.

Clifford, Carrie W.—Born, Chillicothe, Ohio. Educated at Columbus, O. Has done much editorial and club work. Authorship: *The Widening Light*, Walter Reid Co., Boston, 1922. 240.

Conner, Charles H.—Born, Grafton, N. Y., 1864. Father, a slave who found freedom by way of the underground railway. Mainly self-educated. Worker in the ship-yards, Philadelphia. Authorship: *The Enchanted Valley*, published by himself, 1016 S. Cleveland Ave., Philadelphia, 1917; contributor to magazines. 209-213.

Corbett, Maurice Nathaniel.—Born, Yanceyville, N. C., 1859. Educated in the common schools and Shaw University. Served in North Carolina Legislature. Delegate to numerous political conventions. Clerk in Census Bureau, then in the Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C., until stricken with paralysis in 1919. Authorship: *The Harp of Ethiopia*, Nashville, 1914. This is an epic poem of about 7,500 rhymed lines, narrating the entire history of the Negro in America. It is a noteworthy undertaking.

Corrothers, James David.—Born, Michigan, 1869. Educated at Northwestern University, Evanston, Ill., and at Bennett College, Greensboro, N. C., Minister of the Zion Methodist Episcopal Church. Died, 1919. Books: *Selected Poems*, 1907; *The Dream and the Song*, 1914. 37, 85-89.

Cotter, Joseph Seamon, Jr.—Born, Louisville, Ky., 1895. Died, 1919. Books: *The Band of Gideon*, Cornhill

Company, 1918; another volume of poems now in press. 67-68, 70, 80-84.

Cotter, Joseph Seamon, Sr.—Born, Bardstown, Ky., 1861. Educated in Louisville night school (10 months). Now school principal in Louisville, member of many societies, author of several books: *A Rhyming*, 1895; *Links of Friendship*, 1898; *Caleb, the Degenerate*, 1903; *A White Song and a Black One*, 1909; *Negro Tales*, 1912. In *Who's Who*. 52, 70-80, 220-221, 248-249.

Dandridge, Raymond Garfield.—Born, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1882. Educated in Cincinnati grammar and high schools. First devoted to drawing and painting until paralytic stroke, 1911. Authorship: *The Poet and Other Poems*, Cincinnati, 1920. 54, 169-173, 221-223.

Dett, R. Nathaniel.—Born of Virginia parents at Drummondsville, Ontario, Canada, October 11, 1882; studied in various colleges and conservatories in Canada and the United States. Director of music at Lane College, Mississippi, Lincoln Institute, Missouri, and at Hampton Institute, Virginia, his present position. 214-217.

DuBois, W. E. Burghardt.—Born, Great Barrington, Mass., 1868. Education: Fisk University, A. B.; Harvard, A. B., A. M., and Ph. D.; Berlin. Professor of economics and history in Atlanta University, 1896-1910. Now editor of *The Crisis*, New York, Books: *The Souls of Black Folk*, 1903; *Darkwater*, 1919, and numerous others. In *Who's Who*. 201-205.

Dunbar, Paul Laurence.—1872-1906. 37, 38-48.

Dunbar-Nelson, Alice Ruth Moore (née).—Born, New Orleans, 1875. Education: in New Orleans public schools and Straight University, and later in several northern universities. Taught in New Orleans, Washington, and Brooklyn, and other cities.

Married Paul Laurence Dunbar, 1898. At present Managing Editor of Philadelphia and Wilmington *Advocate*. Books: *Violets and Other Tales*, New Orleans, 1894; *The Goodness of St. Rocque*, Dodd, Mead & Co., 1899; *Masterpieces of Negro Eloquence*, 1913; *The Dunbar Speaker and Entertainer*, 1920. Contributor to numerous magazines. 144-148.

Dungee, Roscoe Riley.—58.

Este, Charles H.—57.

Fauset, Miss Jessie.—Born, Philadelphia. Education: A. B., Cornell, Phi Beta Kappa; A. M., University of Pennsylvania; student of the Guilde Internationale, Paris. Interpreter of the Second Pan-African Congress. Literary Editor of *The Crisis*. 160-162.

Fenner, John J., Jr.—245.

Fisher, Leland Milton.—Born, Humboldt, Tenn., 1875. Died, under thirty years of age, at Evansville, Ind., where he edited a newspaper. Left behind an unpublished volume of poems. 189-190.

Fleming, Mrs. Sarah Lee Brown.—*Clouds and Sunshine*, The Cornhill Company, Boston, 1920.

French, James Edgar.—Born in Kentucky, studied for the ministry, died young. 253-254.

Grimké, Miss Angelina Weld.—Born, Boston, Mass., 1880. Educated in various schools of several states, including the Girls' Latin School of Boston and the Boston Normal School of Gymnastics. Now teacher of English in the Dunbar High School, Washington, D. C. Authorship: *Rachel*, a prose drama, Cornhill Co., Boston, 1921; poems and short stories uncollected. 152-156.

Grimké, Mrs. Charlotte Forten.—Born, Philadelphia, 1837 (née Forten). Educated in the Normal School at Salem, Mass. She was a contributor to various magazines, including *The Atlantic Monthly* and *The New England Magazine*. Poems uncollected.

155-156.

Hammon, Jupiter.—Born, c. 1720. "The first member of the Negro race to write and publish poetry in this country." Extant poems: *An Evening Thought*, 1760; *An Address to Miss Phillis Wheatley*, 1778; *A Poem for Children with Thoughts on Death*, 1782; *The Kind Master and the Dutiful Servant* (date unknown.) These are included in Oscar Wegelin's *Jupiter Hammon, American Negro Poet*, New York, 1915. 20-21, 23.

Hammond, Mrs. J. W.—Home, Omaha, Neb. Occupation: Trained nurse. 142-144.

Harper, Mrs. Frances Ellen Watkins (née).—Born, Baltimore, Md., of free parents, 1825. Died, Philadelphia, 1911. Educated in a school in Baltimore for free colored children, and by her uncle, William Watkins. Married Fenton Harper, 1860. From about 1851 devoted herself to the cause of freedom for the slaves. Authorship: *Poems on Miscellaneous Subjects*, Philadelphia, 1857; *Poems*, Philadelphia, 1900. 26-32.

Harris, Leon R.—Born, Cambridge, Ohio, 1886. First years spent in an orphanage, where he got the rudiments of education. Then was farmed out in Kentucky. Running off, he made his way to Berea College and later to Tuskegee, getting two or three terms at each. Now editor of the Richmond (Indiana) Blade. Authorship: numerous short stories in magazines; *The Steel Makers and Other War Poems* (pamphlet), 1918. 63-64, 180-184.

Hawkins, Walter Everette.—Born, Warrenton, N. C., 1886. Educated in public schools. Since 1913 in the city post-office of Washington D. C. Authorship: *Chords and Discords*, Richard G. Badger, Boston, 1920. 62, 119, 126, 234-235, 240.

Hill, Leslie Pinckney.—Born, Lynchburg, Va., 1880. B. A. and M. A. of Harvard. Teacher at Tuskegee;

formerly principal of Manassas (Va.) Industrial School; now principal of Cheyney (Pa.) State Normal School. Authorship: *The Wings of Oppression*, The Stratford Company, Boston, 1921. 52, 131-138.

Horton, George M.—Born, North Carolina. Authorship: *Poems by a Slave*, 1829. *Poetical Works*, 1845. Several volumes from 1829 to 1865. 25.

Hughes, James C.—187-189.

Hughes, Langston.—Born, Joplin, Mo., February 1, 1902. Ancestry, Negro and Indian; grand-nephew of Congressman John M. Langston. Education: High School, Cleveland, O., one year at Columbia University; traveled in Mexico and Central America. Contributor to magazines. Home, Jones's Point, N. Y. Contributor to *The Crisis*. 199-201.

Jamison, Roscoe C.—Born, Winchester, Tenn., 1886; died at Phœnix, Ariz., 1918. Educated at Fisk University. Authorship: *Negro Soldiers and Other Poems*, William F. McNeil, South St. Joseph, Mo., 1918. 191-195.

Jessye, Miss Eva Alberta.—Born, Coffeyville, Kan., 1897. Educated in the public schools of several western states; graduated from Western University, 1914. Director of music in Morgan College, Baltimore, 1919. Now teacher of piano, Muskogee, Okla. 68-69, 139-142.

Johnson, Adolphus.—*The Silver Chord*, Philadelphia, 1915. 104-105.

Johnson, Charles Bertram.—Born, Callao, Mo., 1880. Educated at Western College, Macon, Mo.; two summers at Lincoln Institute; correspondence courses, and a term in the University of Chicago. Educator and preacher. Authorship: *Wind Whisperings* (a pamphlet), 1900; *The Mantle of Dunbar and Other Poems* (a pamphlet), 1918; *Songs of My People*, 1918. Home, Moberly, Mo. 52,

63, 95-99.

Johnson, Fenton.—Born, Chicago, 1888. Educated in the public schools and University of Chicago. Authorship: *A Little Dreaming*, Chicago, 1914; *Visions of the Dusk*, New York, 1915. *Songs of the Soil*, New York, 1916. Editor of *The Favorite Magazine*, Chicago. 64-65, 99-103.

Johnson, Mrs. Georgia Douglas.—Born, Atlanta, Ga. Educated at Atlanta University, and in music at Oberlin. Home, Washington, D. C. Books: *The Heart of a Woman*, the Cornhill Co., Boston, 1918; *Bronze*, B. J. Brimmer Co., Boston, 1922. 61, 148-152, 232-233, 249.

Johnson, James Weldon.—Born, Jacksonville, Fla., 1871. Educated at Atlanta and Columbia Universities. United States consul in Venezuela and Nicaragua. Author of numerous works. Original verse: *Fifty Years and Other Poems*, the Cornhill Company, Boston, 1917. In *Who's Who*. 54, 90-95, 226-227, 235-236.

Johnson, Mrs. Mae Smith (née).—Born, Alexandria, Va., 1890. Now Secretary at the Good Samaritan Orphanage, Newark, N. J. Contributor of verse to papers and magazines. The grandmother of the poet escaped from slavery in Virginia. She lived to be ninety-two years old. 57, 251-252.

Jones, Edward Smythe.—Authorship: *The Sylvan Cabin and Other Verse*, Sherman, French & Co., Boston, 1911. 163-169.

Jones, Joshua Henry, Jr.—Born, Orangeburg, S. C., 1876. Educated Central High School, Columbus, O., Ohio State University, Yale, and Brown. Has served on the editorial staffs of the Providence *News*, The Worcester *Evening Post*, Boston *Daily Advertiser* and Boston *Post*. At present he is on the staff of the Boston *Telegram*. Authorship: *The Heart of the World*, the Stratford Company, Boston, 1919;

Poems of the Four Seas, the Cornhill Company, Boston, 1921. 113-119, 234, 256-257.

Jones, Tilford.—231-232.

Jordan, W. Clarence.—190-191.

Jordan, Winifred Virginia.—Contributor to *The Crisis*. 56.

Lee, Mary Effie.—Contributor to *The Crisis*. 56.

Lewis, Corinne E.—Student in the Dunbar High School, Washington, D. C. 255.

Lewis, Ethyl.—60-61.

McClellan, George Marion.—Born, Belfast, Tenn., 1860. Educated at Fisk University, Nashville, Tenn., of which he became financial agent. Later, principal of the Paul Dunbar School, Louisville, Ky. Authorship: *The Path of Dreams*, John P. Morton, Louisville, Ky., 1916. 55, 173-179, 246-247.

McKay, Claude.—Born, Jamaica, 1889. Has resided in the United States ten or eleven years. Till lately on the editorial staff of the *Liberator*. Books: *Constab Ballads*, London, 1912; *Spring in New Hampshire*, London, 1920. 126-131, 241-242, 244.

Margetson, George Reginald.—Born, 1877, at St. Kitts, B. W. I. 109-111.

Means, Sterling M.—Authorship: *The Deserted Cabin and Other Poems*, A. B. Caldwell, publisher, Atlanta, 1915. 222-223.

Miller, Kelly.—Born, Winsboro, S. C., 1863. Educated at Howard and Johns Hopkins Universities. Degrees: A. M. and LL. D. Professor and dean in Howard University. Books: *Race Adjustment*, 1904; *Out of the House of Bondage*, Neale Publishing Co., New York, 1914. In *Who's Who*. 206-209.

Moore, William.—Contributor to *The Favorite Magazine*. 111-112.

Ray, H. Cordelia.—Authorship: *Poems*, The Grafton Press, New York, 1910. 257-260.

Razafkeriefo, Andrea.—Born, Washington, D. C., 1895, of Afro-American mother and Madagascaran father. Educated only in public elementary school. Regular verse contributor to *The Crusader* and *The Negro World*. 197-198, 247-248, 263-264.

Reason, Charles L.—Born in New York in 1818. Professor at New York Central College in New York and head of the Institute for Colored Youth in Philadelphia. Authorship: *Freedom*, New York, 1847. 23-24.

Riley, Edwin Garnett.—Contributor to many newspapers and magazines. 262.

Sexton, Will.—Contributor to magazines. 197, 233-234.

Shackelford, Otis.—Educated at Lincoln Institute, Jefferson City, Mo. Authorship: *Seeking the Best* (prose and verse). The verse part of this volume contains a poem of some 500 lines entitled "Bits of History in Verse, or A Dream of Freedom Realized," modeled on *Hiawatha*.

Shackelford, Theodore Henry.—Born, Windsor Canada, 1888. Grandparents were slaves in southern states. At twelve years of age had had only three terms of school. At twenty-one entered the Industrial Training School, Downington, Pa., and graduated four years later. Studied a while at the Philadelphia Art Museum. Authorship: *My Country and Other Poems*, Philadelphia, 1918. Died, Jamaica, N. Y., February 5, 1923. 228.

Spencer, Mrs. Anne.—Born, Bramwell, W. Va., 1882. Educated at the Virginia Seminary, Lynchburg, Va. Contributor to *The Crisis*. 156-159.

Underhill, Irvin W.—Born, Port Clinton, Pa., May 1, 1868. In boyhood, with irregular schooling, assisted his father, who was captain of a canal boat. At the age of 37 suddenly lost his sight. Author of *Daddy's Love and Other Poems*, Philadelphia. Home, Philadelphia. 184-187.

Watkins, Lucian B.—Born, Chesterfield, Virginia, 1879. Educated in public schools of Chesterfield, and at the Virginia Normal and Industrial Institute, Petersburg. First teacher, then soldier. Books: *Voices of Solitude*, 1907, Donohue & Co., Chicago; *Whispering Winds*, in manuscript. Died, 1921. 59, 236-239, 252-253.

Watson, Adeline Carter.—232.

Wheatley, Phillis.—Born in Africa, 1753. Brought as a slave to Boston, where she died in 1784. Many editions of her poems in her lifetime. *Poems and Letters*, New York, 1916. 23-24.

Wiggins, Lida Keck.—Authorship: *The Life and Works of Paul Laurence Dunbar*, J. L. Nichols & Company, Naperville, Ill. 41.

Whitman, Albery A.—Born in Kentucky in 1857. Began life as a Methodist minister. Authorship: *The Rape of Florida*, *Not a Man and Yet a Man*, and *Twasnita's Seminoles*. 32, 35-36.

Williamson, D. T.—260-261.

Wilson, Charles P.—Born in Iowa of Kentucky parents, 1885. Printer and theatrical performer. 179-180.

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FOOTNOTES:

[1] Happily a great number of these, about three hundred and fifty, accompanied by an essay setting forth their nature, origin, and elements, are now made accessible in *Negro Folk Rhymes*, by Thomas W. Talley, of Fisk University; the Macmillan Company, publishers, 1922.

[2] We are enabled to give the following poems by the kind permission of Dodd, Mead and Company, the publishers of Dunbar's works.

[3] *The Dunbar Speaker and Entertainer*, containing the best prose and poetic selections by and about the Negro Race, with programs arranged for special entertainments. Edited by Alice Moore Dunbar-Nelson. J. L. Nichols & Co., Naperville, Ill.

[4] *Bronze* has now been published. See Index of Authors.

[5] *A Short History of the American Negro.* By Benjamin Brawley. The Macmillan Company.

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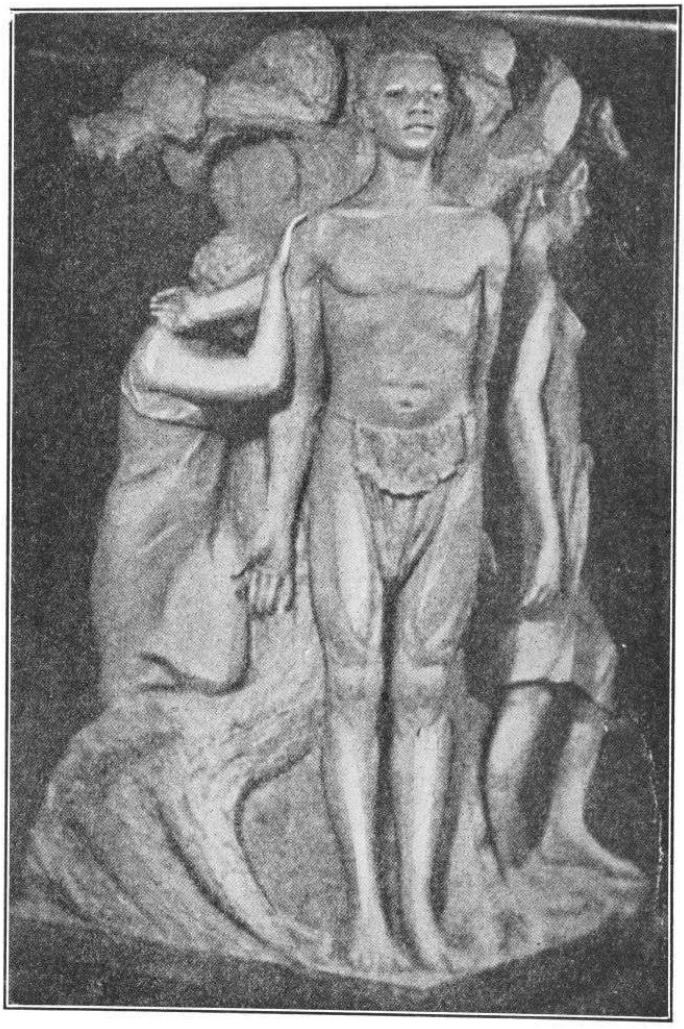
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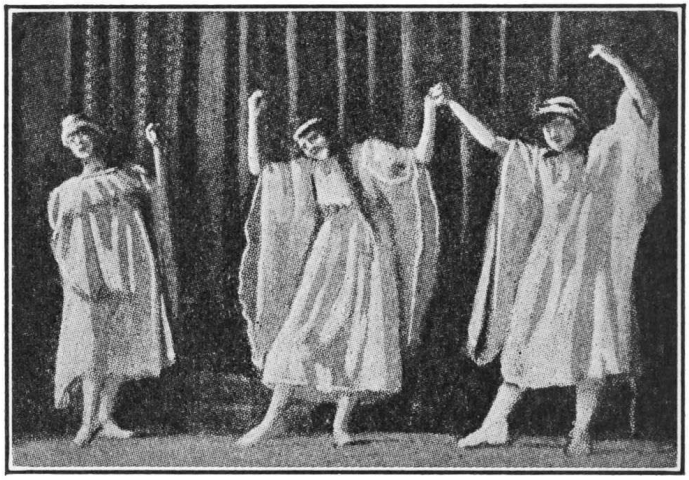
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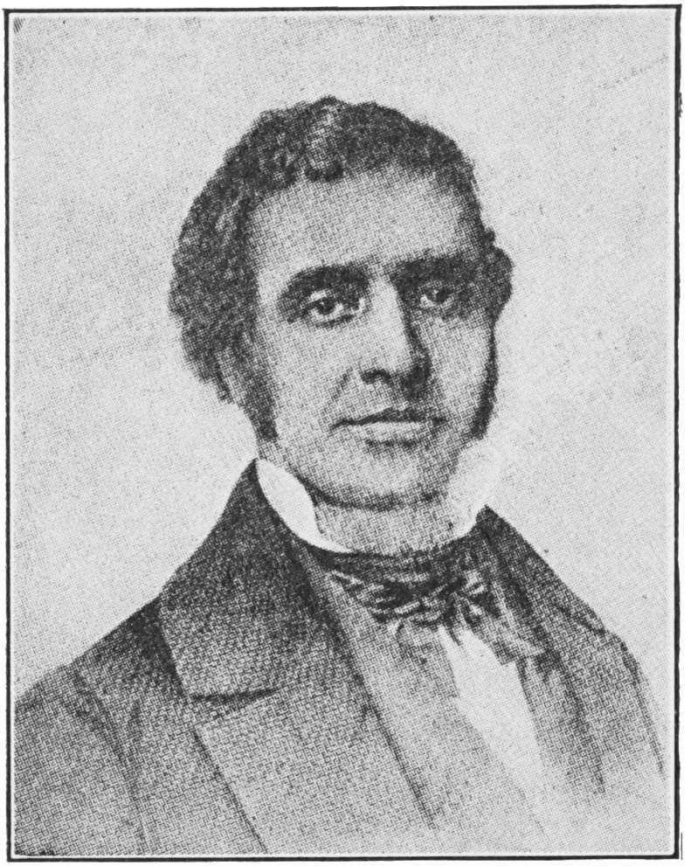
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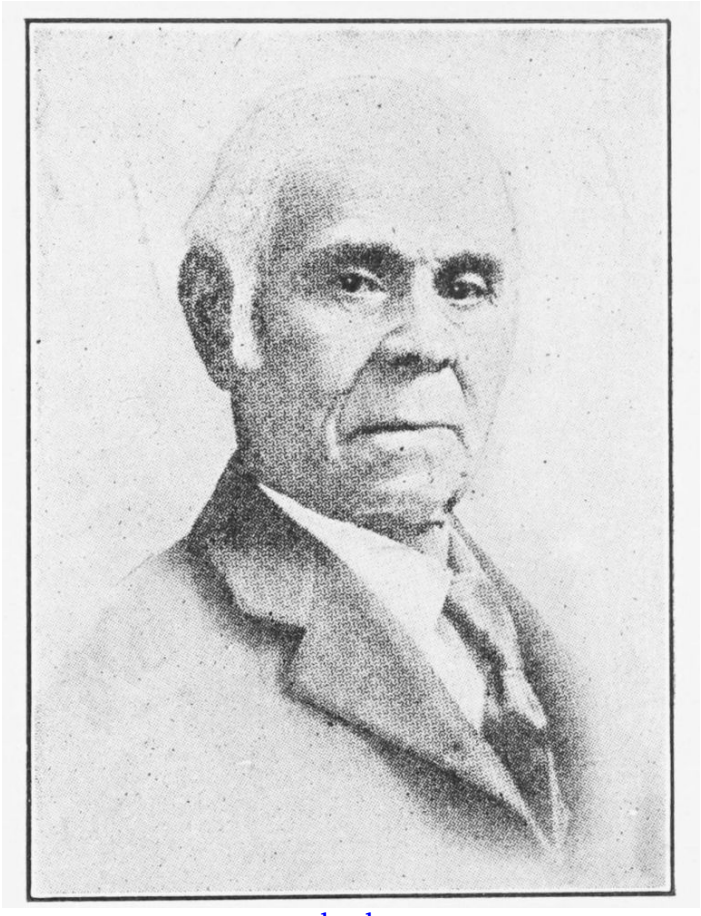
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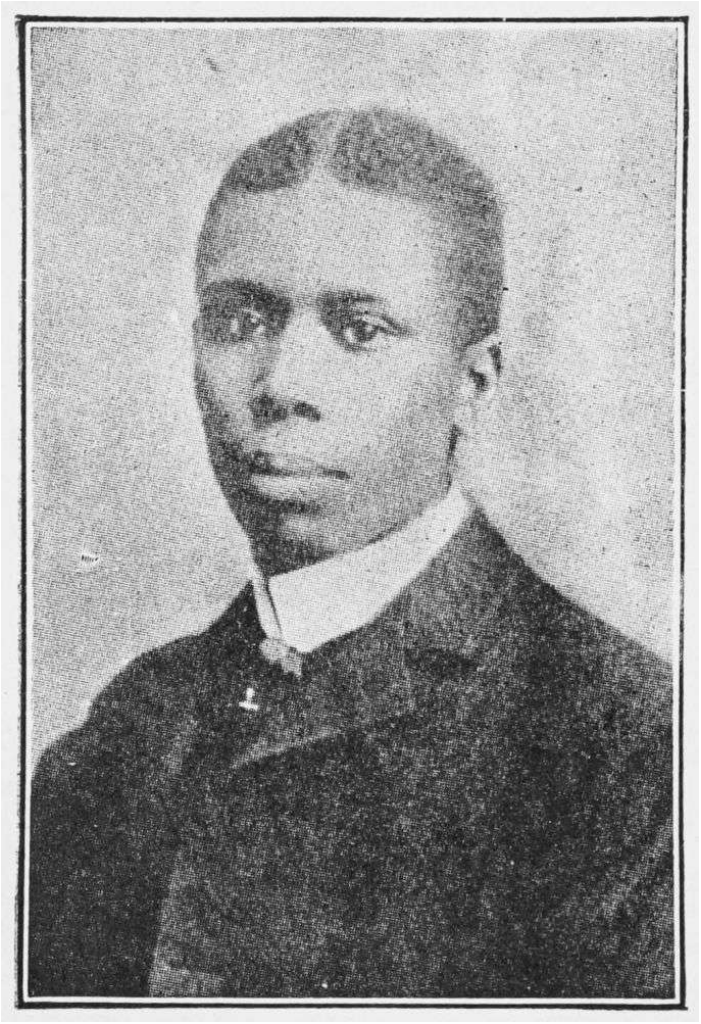
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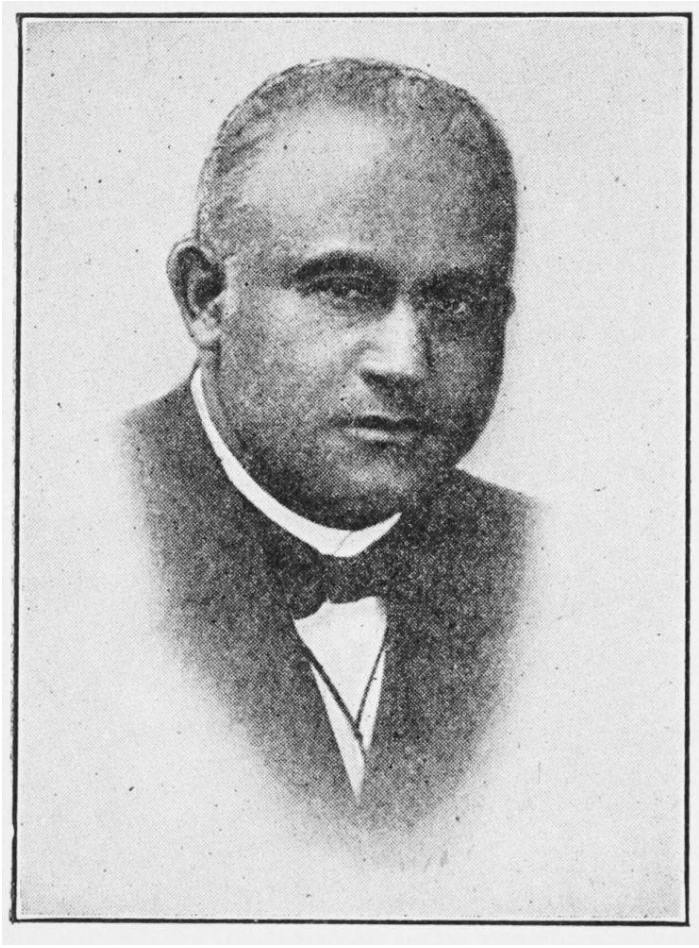
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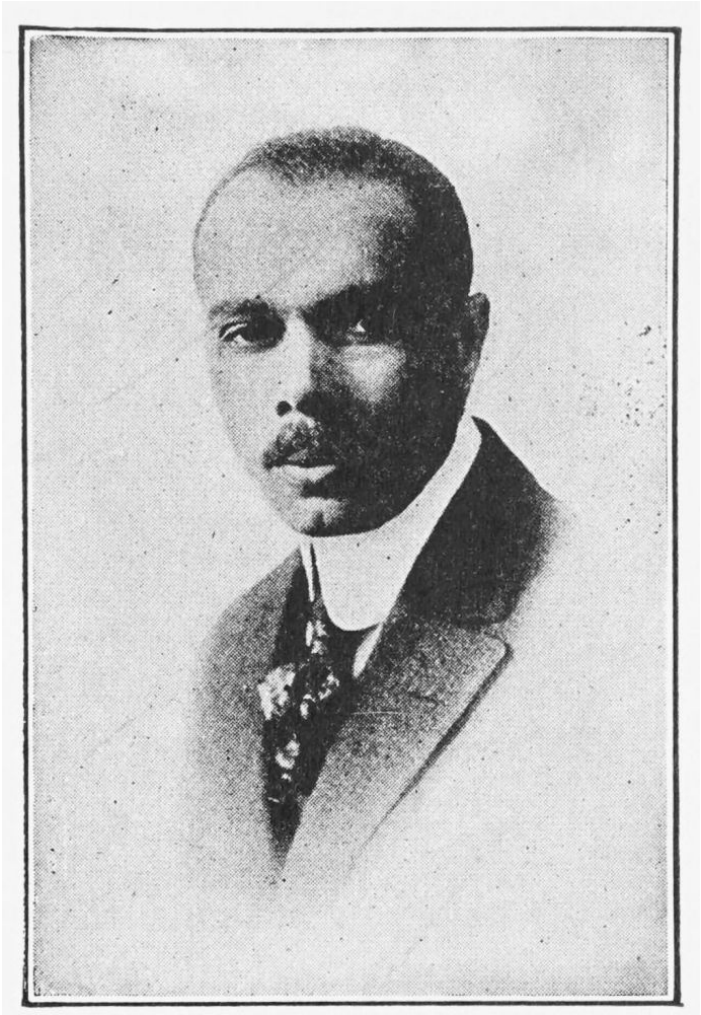
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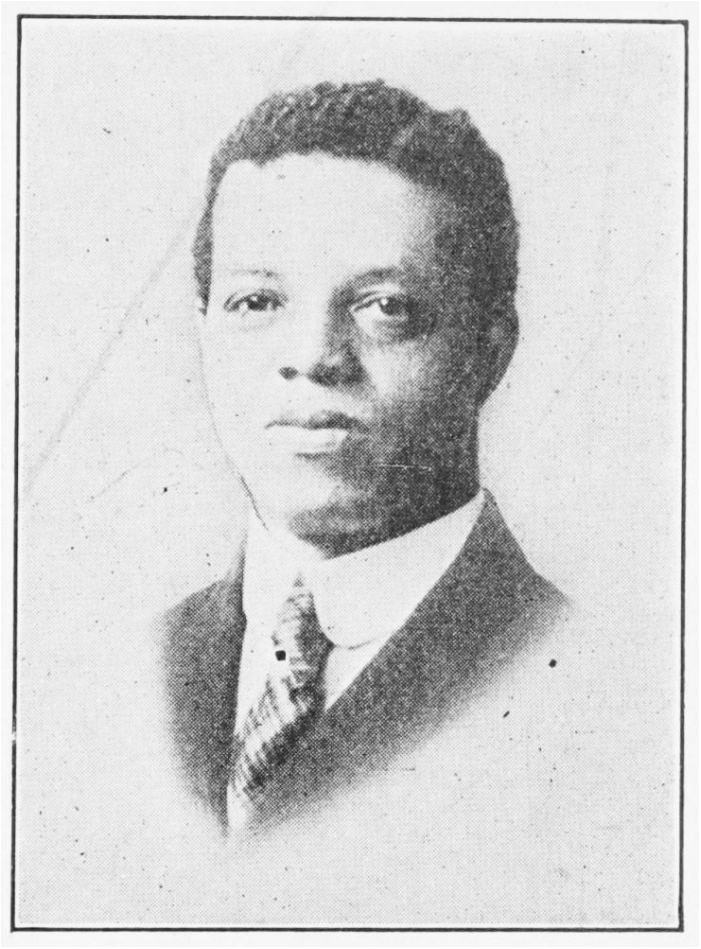
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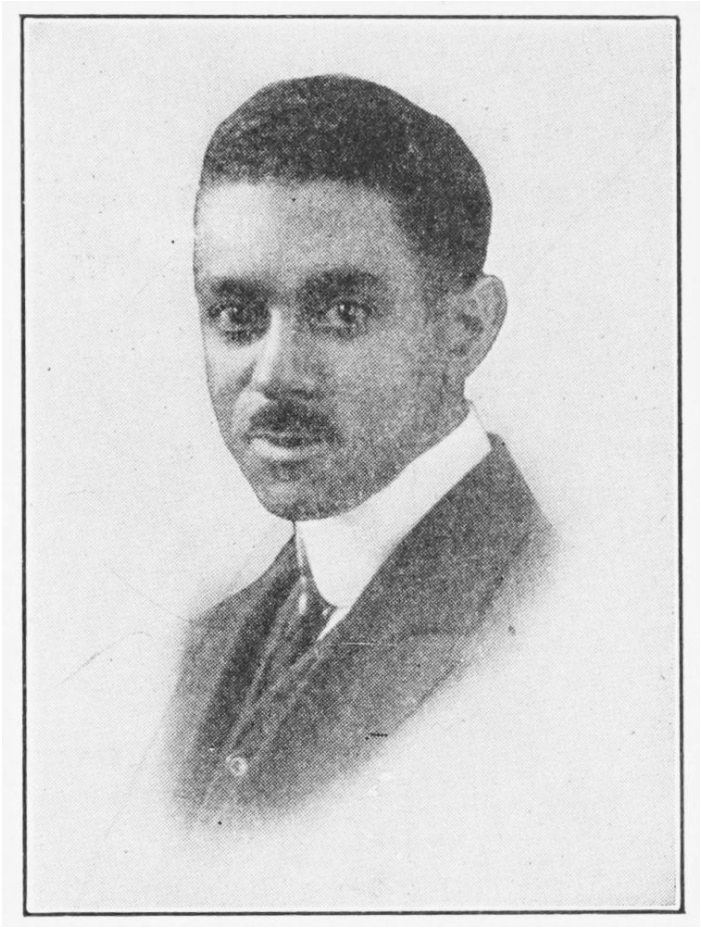
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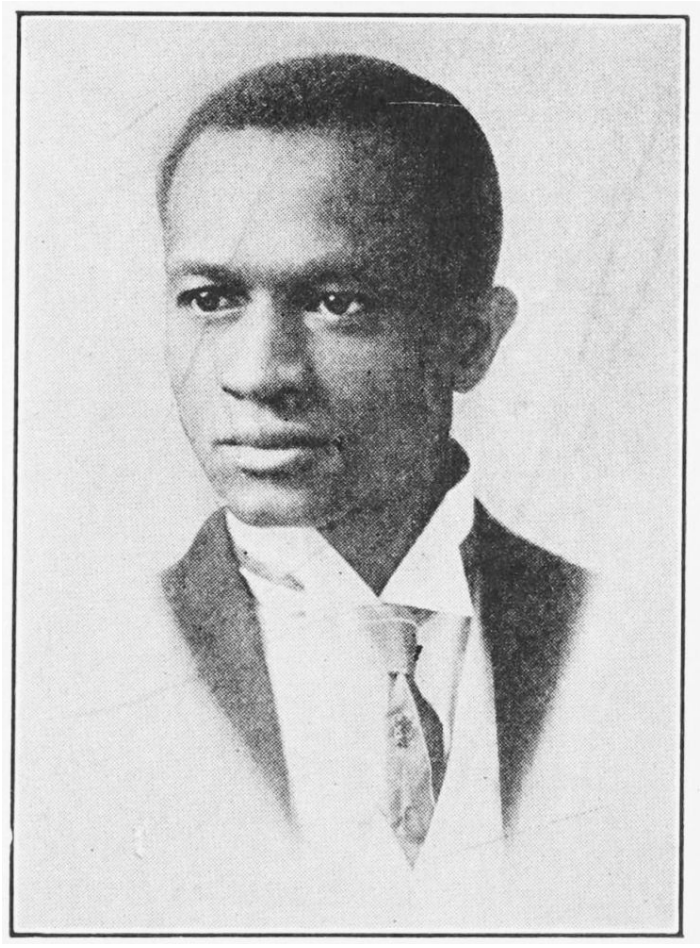
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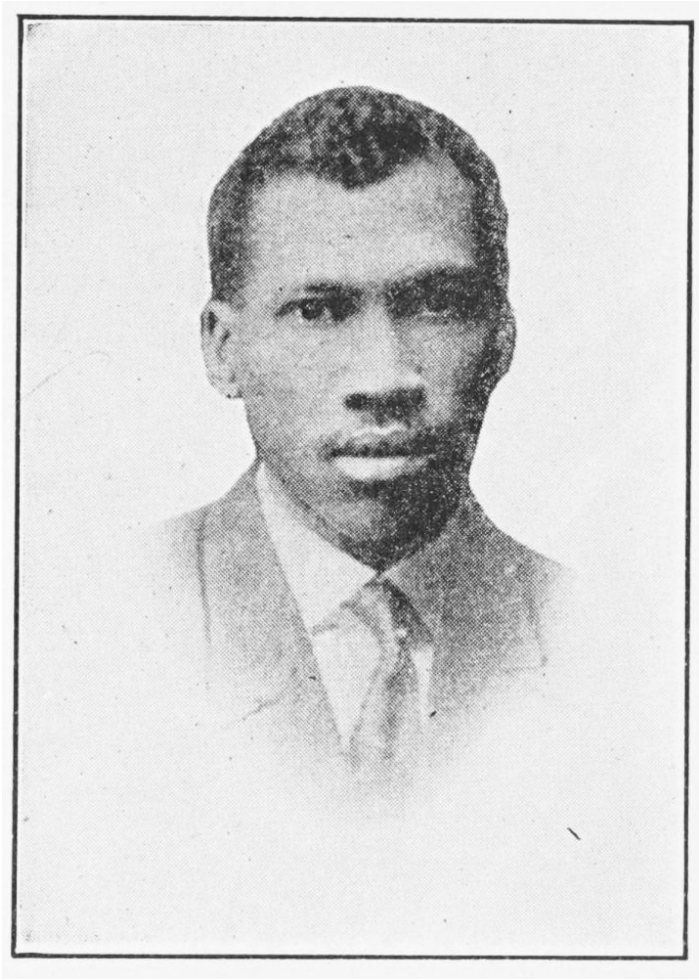
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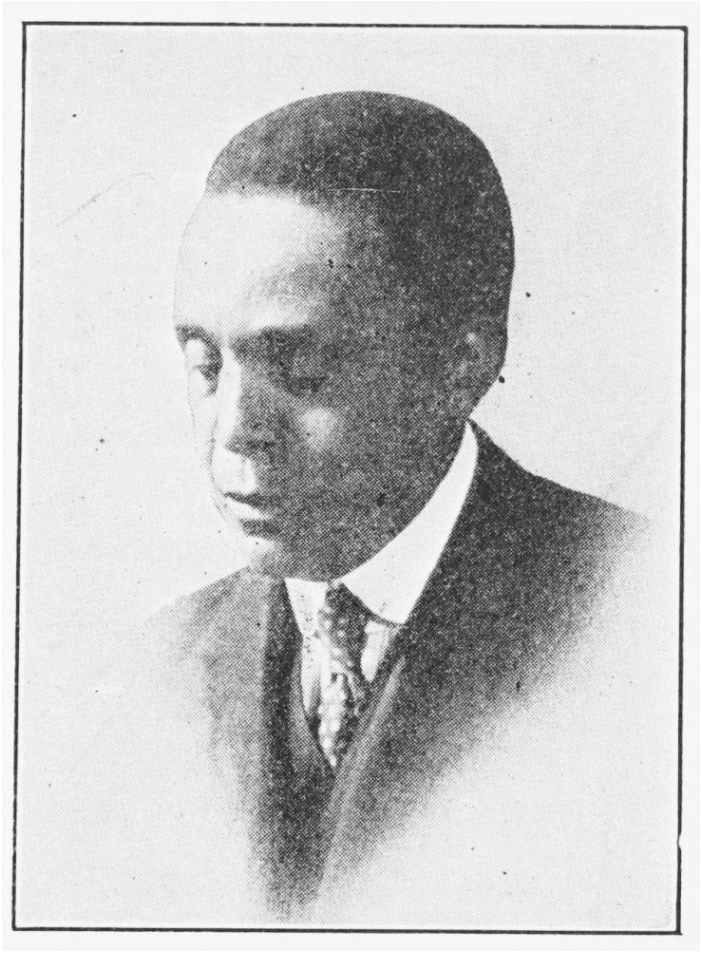
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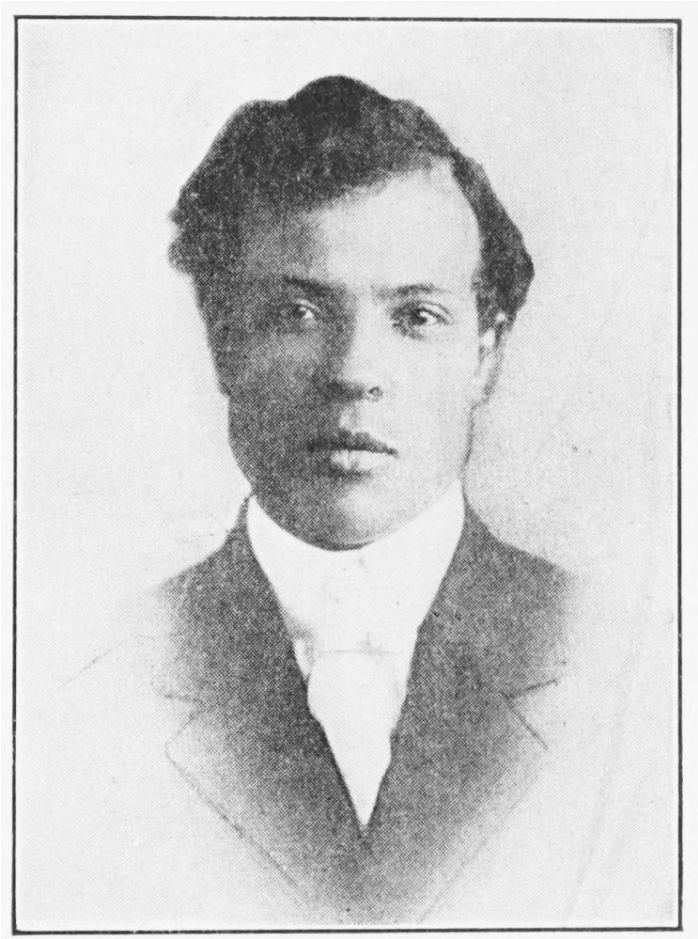
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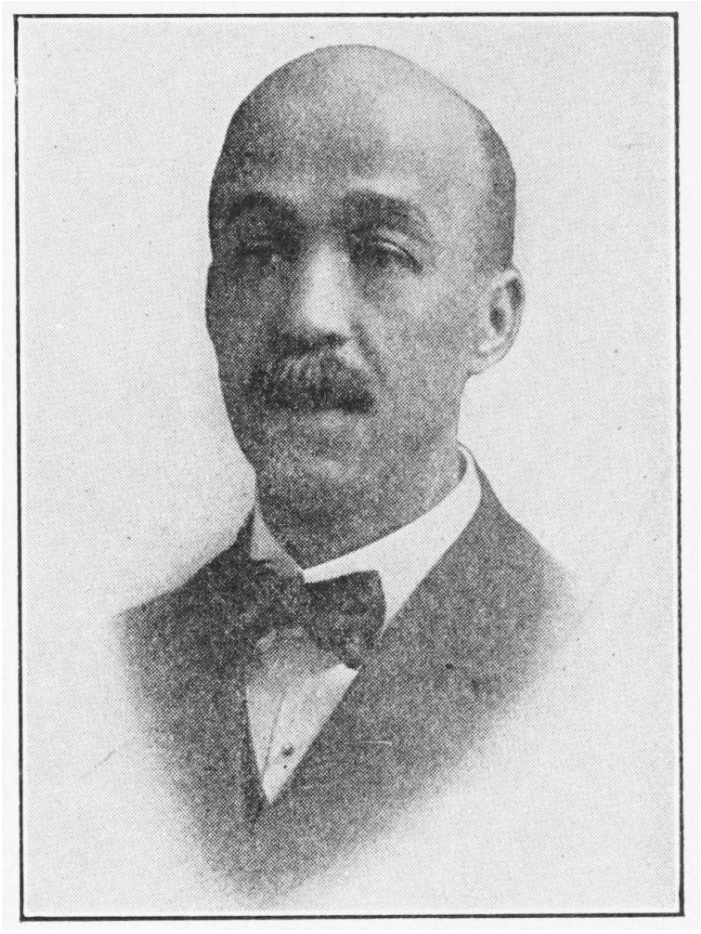
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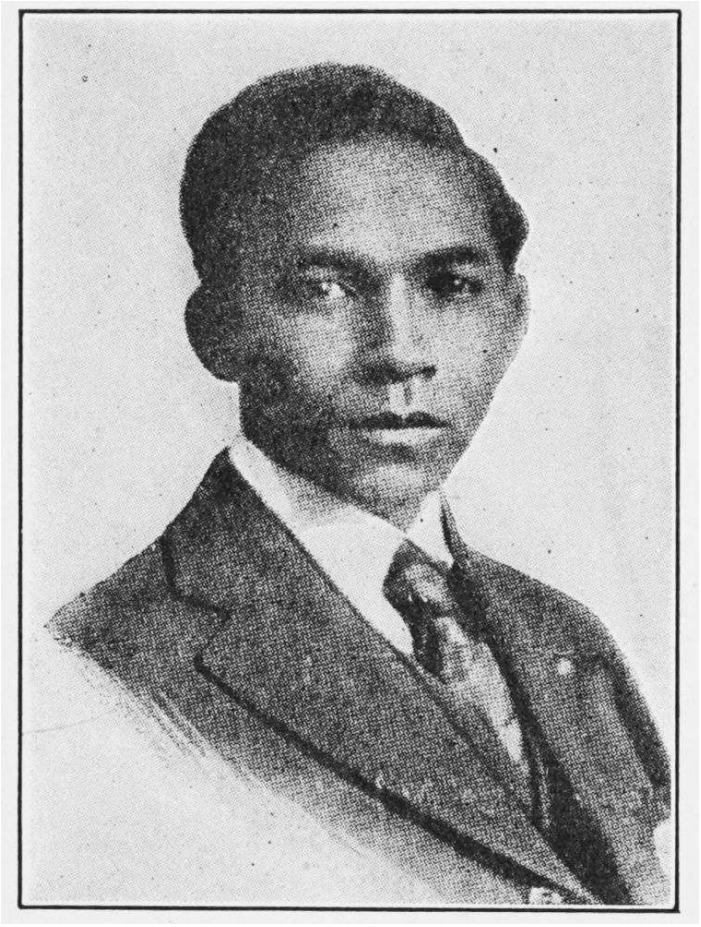
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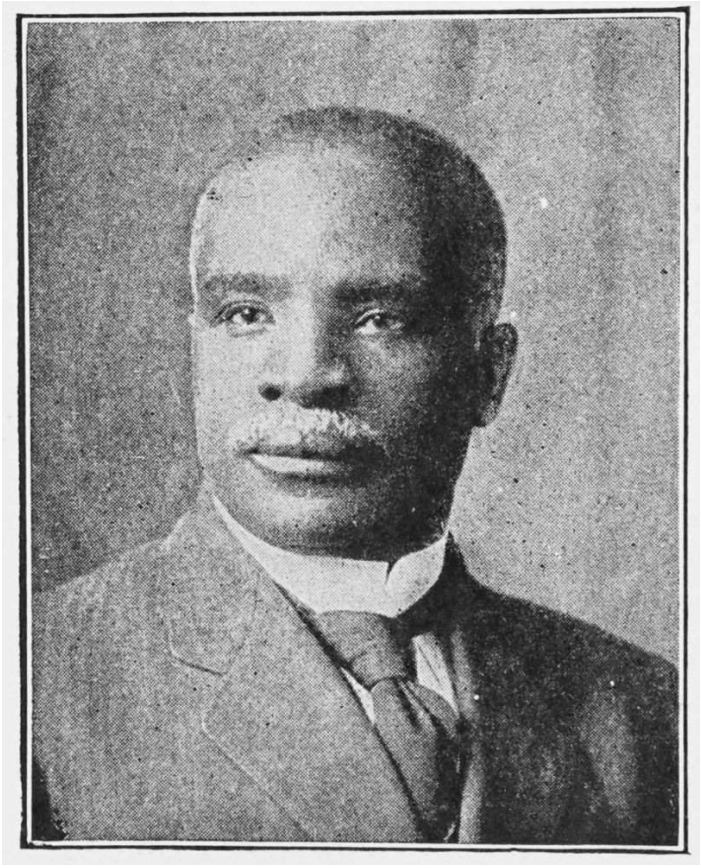
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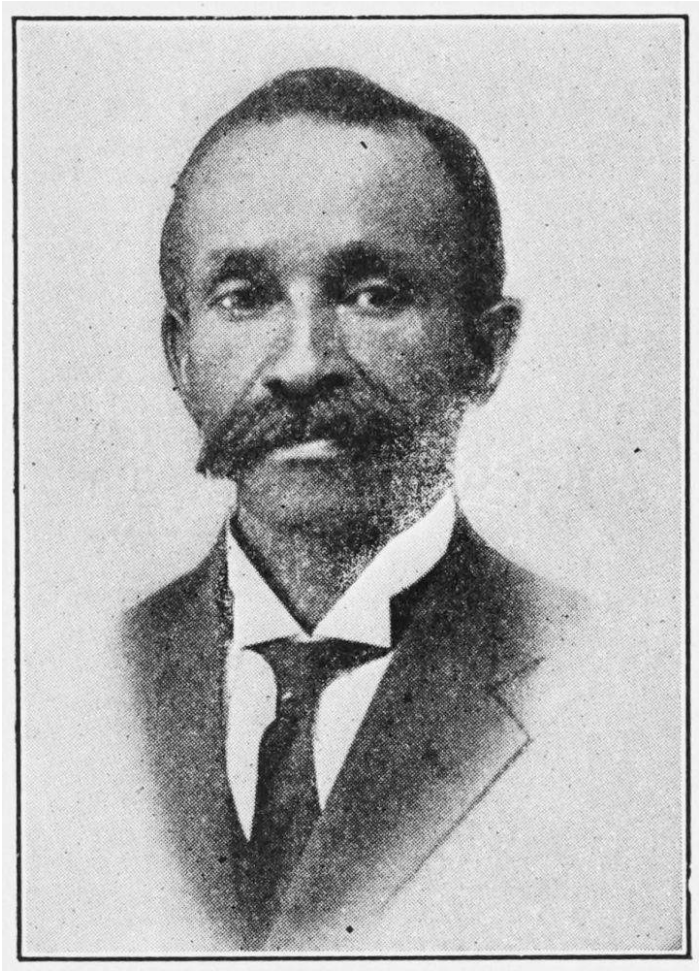
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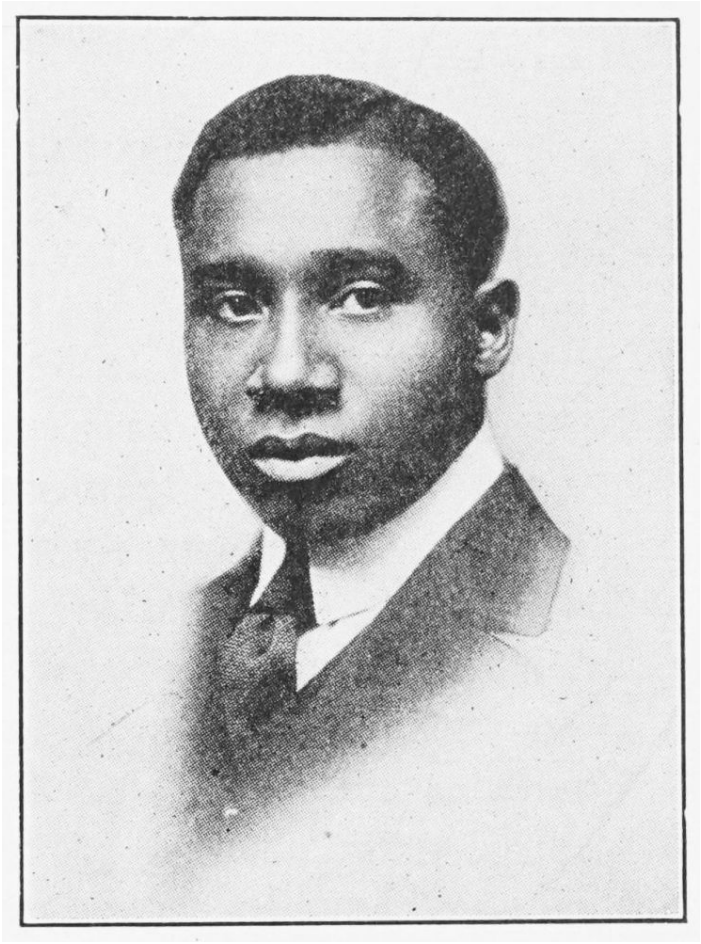
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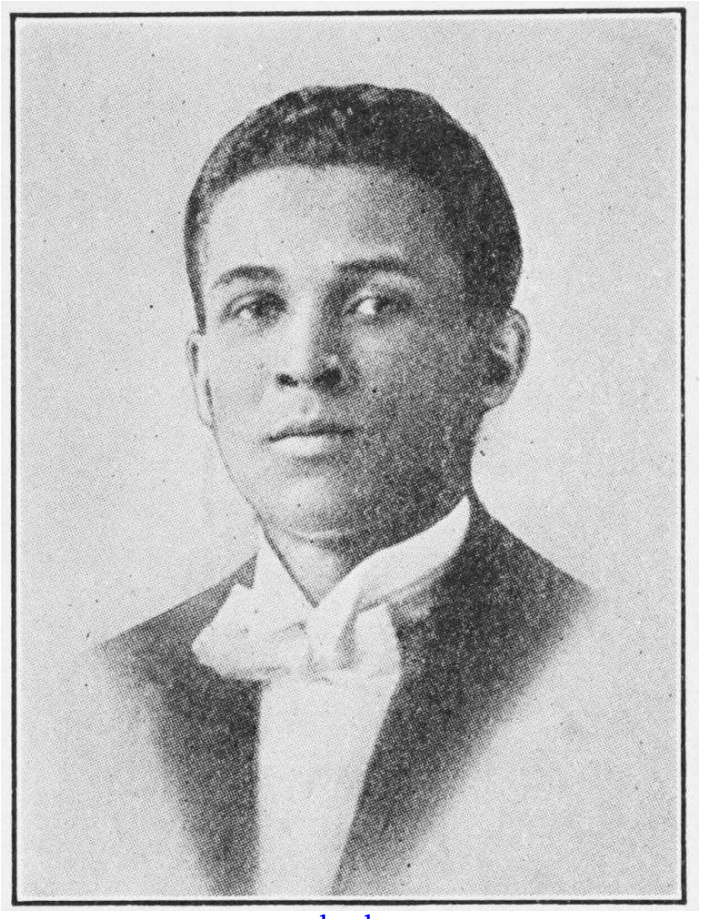
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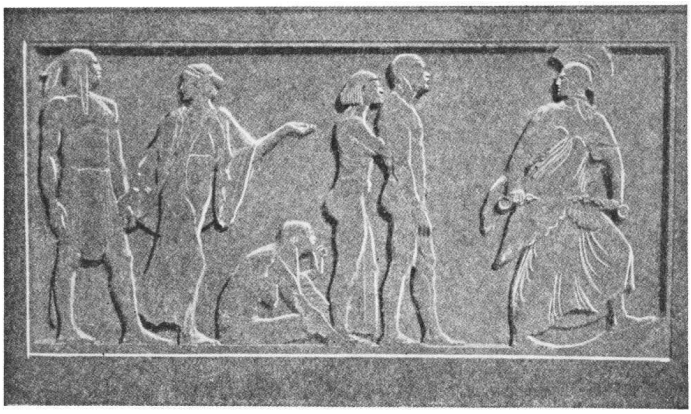
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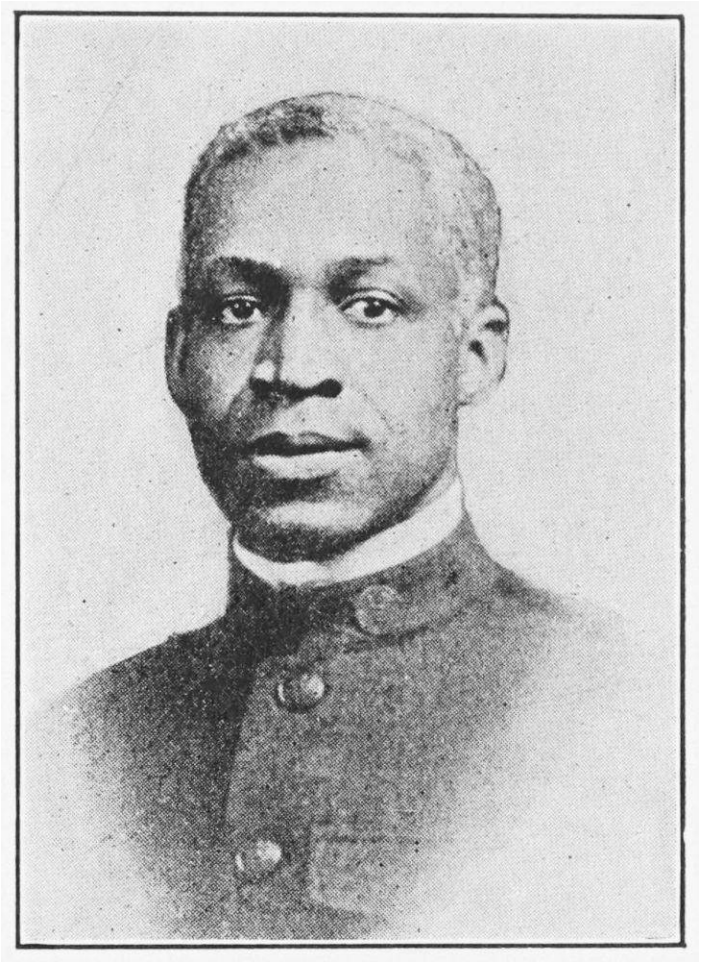
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