Poems in Wartime From Volume III., The Works of Whittier: Anti-Slavery Poems and Songs of Labor and Reform

John Greenleaf Whittier

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ANTI-SLAVERY POEMS

SONGS OF LABOR AND REFORM

ΒY

JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER

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IN WAR TIME.

TO SAMUEL E. SEWALL AND HARRIET W. SEWAII, OF MELROSE.

These lines to my old friends stood as dedication in the volume which contained a collection of pieces under the general title of In War Time. The group belonging distinctly under that title I have retained here; the other pieces in the volume are distributed among the appropriate divisions.

OLOR ISCANUS queries: "Why should we Vex at the land's ridiculous miserie?" So on his Usk banks, in the blood-red dawn Of England's civil strife, did careless Vaughan Bemock his times. O friends of many years! Though faith and trust are stronger than our fears, And the signs promise peace with liberty, Not thus we trifle with our country's tears And sweat of agony. The future's gain Is certain as God's truth; but, meanwhile, pain Is bitter and tears are salt: our voices take A sober tone; our very household songs Are heavy with a nation's griefs and wrongs; And innocent mirth is chastened for the sake Of the brave hearts that nevermore shall beat, The eyes that smile no more, the unreturning feet! 1863

THY WILL BE DONE.

WE see not, know not; all our way Is night,--with Thee alone is day From out the torrent's troubled drift, Above the storm our prayers we lift, Thy will be done!

The flesh may fail, the heart may faint, But who are we to make complaint, Or dare to plead, in times like these, The weakness of our love of ease? Thy will be done!

We take with solemn thankfulness Our burden up, nor ask it less, And count it joy that even we May suffer, serve, or wait for Thee, Whose will be done!

Though dim as yet in tint and line, We trace Thy picture's wise design, And thank Thee that our age supplies Its dark relief of sacrifice. Thy will be done!

And if, in our unworthiness, Thy sacrificial wine we press; If from Thy ordeal's heated bars Our feet are seamed with crimson scars, Thy will be done!

If, for the age to come, this hour Of trial hath vicarious power, And, blest by Thee, our present pain, Be Liberty's eternal gain, Thy will be done!

Strike, Thou the Master, we Thy keys, The anthem of the destinies! The minor of Thy loftier strain, Our hearts shall breathe the old refrain, Thy will be done! 1861.

A WORD FOR THE HOUR.

THE firmament breaks up. In black eclipse Light after light goes out. One evil star, Luridly glaring through the smoke of war, As in the dream of the Apocalypse, Drags others down. Let us not weakly weep Nor rashly threaten. Give us grace to keep Our faith and patience: wherefore should we leap On one hand into fratricidal fight, Or, on the other, vield eternal right, Frame lies of law, and good and ill confound? What fear we? Safe on freedom's vantage-ground Our feet are planted: let us there remain In unrevengeful calm, no means untried Which truth can sanction, no just claim denied, The sad spectators of a suicide! They break the links of Union: shall we light The fires of hell to weld anew the chain On that red anvil where each blow is pain? Draw we not even now a freer breath. As from our shoulders falls a load of death Loathsome as that the Tuscan's victim bore When keen with life to a dead horror bound? Why take we up the accursed thing again? Pity, forgive, but urge them back no more Who, drunk with passion, flaunt disunion's rag With its vile reptile-blazon. Let us press The golden cluster on our brave old flag In closer union, and, if numbering less, Brighter shall shine the stars which still remain. 16th First mo., 1861.

"EIN FESTE BURG IST UNSER GOTT."

LUTHER'S HYMN. WE wait beneath the furnace-blast The pangs of transformation; Not painlessly doth God recast And mould anew the nation. Hot burns the fire Where wrongs expire; Nor spares the hand That from the land Uproots the ancient evil.

The hand-breadth cloud the sages feared Its bloody rain is dropping; The poison plant the fathers spared All else is overtopping. East, West, South, North, It curses the earth; All justice dies, And fraud and lies Live only in its shadow.

What gives the wheat-field blades of steel? What points the rebel cannon? What sets the roaring rabble's heel On the old star-spangled pennon? What breaks the oath Of the men o' the South? What whets the knife For the Union's life?--Hark to the answer: Slavery!

Then waste no blows on lesser foes In strife unworthy freemen. God lifts to-day the veil, and shows The features of the demon O North and South, Its victims both, Can ye not cry, "Let slavery die!" And union find in freedom?

What though the cast-out spirit tear The nation in his going? We who have shared the guilt must share The pang of his o'erthrowing! Whate'er the loss, Whate'er the cross, Shall they complain

Of present pain Who trust in God's hereafter?

For who that leans on His right arm Was ever yet forsaken? What righteous cause can suffer harm If He its part has taken? Though wild and loud, And dark the cloud, Behind its folds His hand upholds The calm sky of to-morrow!

Above the maddening cry for blood, Above the wild war-drumming, Let Freedom's voice be heard, with good The evil overcoming. Give prayer and purse To stay the Curse Whose wrong we share, Whose shame we bear, Whose end shall gladden Heaven!

In vain the bells of war shall ring

Of triumphs and revenges, While still is spared the evil thing That severs and estranges. But blest the ear That yet shall hear The jubilant bell That rings the knell Of Slavery forever!

Then let the selfish lip be dumb, And hushed the breath of sighing; Before the joy of peace must come The pains of purifying. God give us grace Each in his place To bear his lot, And, murmuring not, Endure and wait and labor! 1861.

TO JOHN C. FREMONT.

On the 31st of August, 1861, General Fremont, then in charge of the Western Department, issued a proclamation which contained a clause, famous as the first announcement of emancipation: "The property," it declared, "real and personal, of all persons in the State of Missouri, who shall take up arms against the United States, or who shall be directly proven to have taken active part with their enemies in the field, is declared to be confiscated to the public use; and their slaves, if any they have, are hereby declared free men." Mr. Lincoln regarded the proclamation as premature and countermanded it, after vainly endeavoring to persuade Fremont of his own motion to revoke it.

THY error, Fremont, simply was to act A brave man's part, without the statesman's tact, And, taking counsel but of common sense, To strike at cause as well as consequence. Oh, never yet since Roland wound his horn At Roncesvalles, has a blast been blown Far-heard, wide-echoed, startling as thine own, Heard from the van of freedom's hope forlorn It had been safer, doubtless, for the time, To flatter treason, and avoid offence To that Dark Power whose underlying crime Heaves upward its perpetual turbulence. But if thine be the fate of all who break The ground for truth's seed, or forerun their years Till lost in distance, or with stout hearts make A lane for freedom through the level spears, Still take thou courage! God has spoken through thee, Irrevocable, the mighty words, Be free! The land shakes with them, and the slave's dull ear Turns from the rice-swamp stealthily to hear. Who would recall them now must first arrest The winds that blow down from the free Northwest, Ruffling the Gulf; or like a scroll roll back The Mississippi to its upper springs.

Such words fulfil their prophecy, and lack But the full time to harden into things. 1861.

THE WATCHERS.

BESIDE a stricken field I stood; On the torn turf, on grass and wood, Hung heavily the dew of blood.

Still in their fresh mounds lay the slain, But all the air was quick with pain And gusty sighs and tearful rain.

Two angels, each with drooping head And folded wings and noiseless tread, Watched by that valley of the dead.

The one, with forehead saintly bland And lips of blessing, not command, Leaned, weeping, on her olive wand.

The other's brows were scarred and knit, His restless eyes were watch-fires lit, His hands for battle-gauntlets fit.

"How long!"--I knew the voice of Peace,--"Is there no respite? no release? When shall the hopeless quarrel cease?

"O Lord, how long!! One human soul Is more than any parchment scroll, Or any flag thy winds unroll.

"What price was Ellsworth's, young and brave? How weigh the gift that Lyon gave, Or count the cost of Winthrop's grave?

"O brother! if thine eye can see, Tell how and when the end shall be, What hope remains for thee and me."

Then Freedom sternly said: "I shun No strife nor pang beneath the sun, When human rights are staked and won.

"I knelt with Ziska's hunted flock, I watched in Toussaint's cell of rock, I walked with Sidney to the block.

"The moor of Marston felt my tread, Through Jersey snows the march I led, My voice Magenta's charges sped.

"But now, through weary day and night, I watch a vague and aimless fight For leave to strike one blow aright.

"On either side my foe they own One guards through love his ghastly throne, And one through fear to reverence grown.

"Why wait we longer, mocked, betrayed, By open foes, or those afraid To speed thy coming through my aid?

"Why watch to see who win or fall? I shake the dust against them all, I leave them to their senseless brawl."

"Nay," Peace implored: "yet longer wait; The doom is near, the stake is great God knoweth if it be too late.

"Still wait and watch; the way prepare Where I with folded wings of prayer May follow, weaponless and bare."

"Too late!" the stern, sad voice replied, "Too late!" its mournful echo sighed, In low lament the answer died.

A rustling as of wings in flight, An upward gleam of lessening white, So passed the vision, sound and sight.

But round me, like a silver bell Rung down the listening sky to tell Of holy help, a sweet voice fell.

"Still hope and trust," it sang; "the rod Must fall, the wine-press must be trod, But all is possible with God!" 1862.

TO ENGLISHMEN.

Written when, in the stress of our terrible war, the English ruling class, with few exceptions, were either coldly indifferent or hostile to the party of freedom. Their attitude was illustrated by caricatures of America, among which was one of a slaveholder and cowhide, with the motto, "Haven't I a right to wallop my nigger?"

You flung your taunt across the wave We bore it as became us, Well knowing that the fettered slave Left friendly lips no option save To pity or to blame us.

You scoffed our plea. "Mere lack of will, Not lack of power," you told us We showed our free-state records; still You mocked, confounding good and ill, Slave-haters and slaveholders.

We struck at Slavery; to the verge Of power and means we checked it; Lo!--presto, change! its claims you urge, Send greetings to it o'er the surge, And comfort and protect it.

But yesterday you scarce could shake, In slave-abhorring rigor, Our Northern palms for conscience' sake To-day you clasp the hands that ache With "walloping the nigger!"

O Englishmen!--in hope and creed, In blood and tongue our brothers! We too are heirs of Runnymede; And Shakespeare's fame and Cromwell's deed Are not alone our mother's.

"Thicker than water," in one rill Through centuries of story Our Saxon blood has flowed, and still We share with you its good and ill, The shadow and the glory.

Joint heirs and kinfolk, leagues of wave Nor length of years can part us Your right is ours to shrine and grave, The common freehold of the brave, The gift of saints and martyrs.

Our very sins and follies teach Our kindred frail and human We carp at faults with bitter speech, The while, for one unshared by each, We have a score in common.

We bowed the heart, if not the knee, To England's Queen, God bless her We praised you when your slaves went free We seek to unchain ours. Will ye Join hands with the oppressor?

And is it Christian England cheers The bruiser, not the bruised? And must she run, despite the tears And prayers of eighteen hundred years, Amuck in Slavery's crusade?

Oh, black disgrace! Oh, shame and loss Too deep for tongue to phrase on Tear from your flag its holy cross, And in your van of battle toss The pirate's skull-bone blazon! 1862.

MITHRIDATES AT CHIOS.

It is recorded that the Chians, when subjugated by Mithridates of Cappadocia, were delivered up to their own slaves, to be carried away captive to Colchis. Athenxus considers this a just punishment for their wickedness in first introducing the slave-trade into Greece. From this ancient villany of the Chians the proverb arose, "The Chian hath bought himself a master."

KNOW'ST thou, O slave-cursed land How, when the Chian's cup of guilt Was full to overflow, there came God's justice in the sword of flame That, red with slaughter to its hilt, Blazed in the Cappadocian victor's hand?

The heavens are still and far; But, not unheard of awful Jove, The sighing of the island slave Was answered, when the AEgean wave The keels of Mithridates clove, And the vines shrivelled in the breath of war.

"Robbers of Chios! hark," The victor cried, "to Heaven's decree! Pluck your last cluster from the vine, Drain your last cup of Chian wine; Slaves of your slaves, your doom shall be, In Colchian mines by Phasis rolling dark."

Then rose the long lament From the hoar sea-god's dusky caves The priestess rent her hair and cried, "Woe! woe! The gods are sleepless-eyed!" And, chained and scourged, the slaves of slaves, The lords of Chios into exile went.

"The gods at last pay well," So Hellas sang her taunting song, "The fisher in his net is caught, The Chian hath his master bought;" And isle from isle, with laughter long, Took up and sped the mocking parable.

Once more the slow, dumb years Bring their avenging cycle round, And, more than Hellas taught of old, Our wiser lesson shall be told, Of slaves uprising, freedom-crowned, To break, not wield, the scourge wet with their blood and tears. 1868.

AT PORT ROYAL.

In November, 1861, a Union force under Commodore Dupont and General Sherman captured Port Royal, and from this point as a basis of operations, the neighboring islands between Charleston and Savannah were taken possession of. The early occupation of this district, where the negro population was greatly in excess of the white, gave an opportunity which was at once seized upon, of practically emancipating the slaves and of beginning that work of civilization which was accepted as the grave responsibility of those who had labored for freedom.

THE tent-lights glimmer on the land, The ship-lights on the sea; The night-wind smooths with drifting sand Our track on lone Tybee.

At last our grating keels outslide, Our good boats forward swing; And while we ride the land-locked tide, Our negroes row and sing.

For dear the bondman holds his gifts Of music and of song The gold that kindly Nature sifts Among his sands of wrong:

The power to make his toiling days And poor home-comforts please; The quaint relief of mirth that plays With sorrow's minor keys.

Another glow than sunset's fire Has filled the west with light, Where field and garner, barn and byre, Are blazing through the night.

The land is wild with fear and hate, The rout runs mad and fast; From hand to hand, from gate to gate The flaming brand is passed.

The lurid glow falls strong across Dark faces broad with smiles Not theirs the terror, hate, and loss That fire yon blazing piles.

With oar-strokes timing to their song, They weave in simple lays The pathos of remembered wrong, The hope of better days,--

The triumph-note that Miriam sung, The joy of uncaged birds Softening with Afric's mellow tongue Their broken Saxon words.

SONG OF THE NEGRO BOATMEN.

Oh, praise an' tanks! De Lord he come To set de people free;

An' massa tink it day ob doom, An' we ob jubilee. De Lord dat heap de Red Sea waves He jus' as 'trong as den; He say de word: we las' night slaves; To-day, de Lord's freemen. De yam will grow, de cotton blow,

We'll hab de rice an' corn; Oh nebber you fear, if nebber you hear De driver blow his horn!

Ole massa on he trabbels gone; He leaf de land behind De Lord's breff blow him furder on, Like corn-shuck in de wind. We own de hoe, we own de plough, We own de hands dat hold; We sell de pig, we sell de cow, But nebber chile be sold. De yam will grow, de cotton blow, We'll hab de rice an' corn; Oh nebber you fear, if nebber you hear De driver blow his horn!

We pray de Lord: he gib us signs Dat some day we be free; De norf-wind tell it to de pines, De wild-duck to de sea; We tink it when de church-bell ring, We dream it in de dream; De rice-bird mean it when he sing, De eagle when be scream. De yam will grow, de cotton blow, We'll hab de rice an' corn Oh nebber you fear, if nebber you hear De driver blow his horn!

We know de promise nebber fail, An' nebber lie de word; So like de 'postles in de jail, We waited for de Lord An' now he open ebery door, An' trow away de key; He tink we lub him so before, We hub him better free. De yam will grow, de cotton blow, He'll gib de rice an' corn; Oh nebber you fear, if nebber you hear De driver blow his horn!

So sing our dusky gondoliers; And with a secret pain, And smiles that seem akin to tears, We hear the wild refrain.

We dare not share the negro's trust, Nor yet his hope deny; We only know that God is just, And every wrong shall die.

Rude seems the song; each swarthy face, Flame-lighted, ruder still We start to think that hapless race Must shape our good or ill;

That laws of changeless justice bind Oppressor with oppressed; And, close as sin and suffering joined, We march to Fate abreast.

Sing on, poor hearts! your chant shall be Our sign of blight or bloom, The Vala-song of Liberty, Or death-rune of our doom! 1862.

ASTRAEA AT THE CAPITOL.

ABOLITION OF SLAVERY IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, 1862.

WHEN first I saw our banner wave Above the nation's council-hall, I heard beneath its marble wall The clanking fetters of the slave!

In the foul market-place I stood, And saw the Christian mother sold, And childhood with its locks of gold, Blue-eyed and fair with Saxon blood.

I shut my eyes, I held my breath, And, smothering down the wrath and shame That set my Northern blood aflame, Stood silent,--where to speak was death.

Beside me gloomed the prison-cell Where wasted one in slow decline For uttering simple words of mine, And loving freedom all too well.

The flag that floated from the dome Flapped menace in the morning air; I stood a perilled stranger where The human broker made his home.

For crime was virtue: Gown and Sword And Law their threefold sanction gave, And to the quarry of the slave Went hawking with our symbol-bird.

On the oppressor's side was power; And yet I knew that every wrong, However old, however strong, But waited God's avenging hour. I knew that truth would crush the lie, Somehow, some time, the end would be; Yet scarcely dared I hope to see The triumph with my mortal eye.

But now I see it! In the sun A free flag floats from yonder dome, And at the nation's hearth and home The justice long delayed is done.

Not as we hoped, in calm of prayer, The message of deliverance comes, But heralded by roll of drums On waves of battle-troubled air!

Midst sounds that madden and appall, The song that Bethlehem's shepherds knew! The harp of David melting through The demon-agonies of Saul!

Not as we hoped; but what are we? Above our broken dreams and plans God lays, with wiser hand than man's, The corner-stones of liberty.

I cavil not with Him: the voice That freedom's blessed gospel tells Is sweet to me as silver bells, Rejoicing! yea, I will rejoice!

Dear friends still toiling in the sun; Ye dearer ones who, gone before, Are watching from the eternal shore The slow work by your hands begun,

Rejoice with me! The chastening rod Blossoms with love; the furnace heat Grows cool beneath His blessed feet Whose form is as the Son of God!

Rejoice! Our Marah's bitter springs Are sweetened; on our ground of grief Rise day by day in strong relief The prophecies of better things.

Rejoice in hope! The day and night Are one with God, and one with them Who see by faith the cloudy hem Of Judgment fringed with Mercy's light 1862.

THE BATTLE AUTUMN OF 1862.

THE flags of war like storm-birds fly, The charging trumpets blow; Yet rolls no thunder in the sky, No earthquake strives below.

And, calm and patient, Nature keeps Her ancient promise well, Though o'er her bloom and greenness sweeps The battle's breath of hell.

And still she walks in golden hours Through harvest-happy farms, And still she wears her fruits and flowers Like jewels on her arms.

What mean the gladness of the plain, This joy of eve and morn, The mirth that shakes the beard of grain And yellow locks of corn?

Ah! eyes may well be full of tears, And hearts with hate are hot; But even-paced come round the years, And Nature changes not.

She meets with smiles our bitter grief, With songs our groans of pain; She mocks with tint of flower and leaf The war-field's crimson stain.

Still, in the cannon's pause, we hear Her sweet thanksgiving-psalm; Too near to God for doubt or fear, She shares the eternal calm.

She knows the seed lies safe below The fires that blast and burn; For all the tears of blood we sow She waits the rich return.

She sees with clearer eve than ours The good of suffering born,--The hearts that blossom like her flowers, And ripen like her corn.

Oh, give to us, in times like these, The vision of her eyes; And make her fields and fruited trees Our golden prophecies

Oh, give to us her finer ear Above this stormy din, We too would hear the bells of cheer Ring peace and freedom in. 1862.

HYMN,

SUNG AT CHRISTMAS BY THE SCHOLARS OF ST. HELENA'S ISLAND, S. C.

OH, none in all the world before Were ever glad as we! We're free on Carolina's shore, We're all at home and free.

Thou Friend and Helper of the poor, Who suffered for our sake, To open every prison door, And every yoke to break!

Bend low Thy pitying face and mild, And help us sing and pray; The hand that blessed the little child, Upon our foreheads lay.

We hear no more the driver's horn, No more the whip we fear, This holy day that saw Thee born Was never half so dear.

The very oaks are greener clad, The waters brighter smile; Oh, never shone a day so glad On sweet St. Helen's Isle.

We praise Thee in our songs to-day, To Thee in prayer we call, Make swift the feet and straight the way Of freedom unto all.

Come once again, O blessed Lord! Come walking on the sea! And let the mainlands hear the word That sets the islands free! 1863.

THE PROCLAMATION.

President Lincoln's proclamation of emancipation was issued January 1, 1863.

SAINT PATRICK, slave to Milcho of the herds Of Ballymena, wakened with these words "Arise, and flee Out from the land of bondage, and be free!"

Glad as a soul in pain, who hears from heaven The angels singing of his sins forgiven, And, wondering, sees His prison opening to their golden keys,

He rose a man who laid him down a slave, Shook from his locks the ashes of the grave, And outward trod Into the glorious liberty of God.

He cast the symbols of his shame away; And, passing where the sleeping Milcho lay, Though back and limb Smarted with wrong, he prayed, "God pardon him!"

So went he forth; but in God's time he came To light on Uilline's hills a holy flame; And, dying, gave The land a saint that lost him as a slave.

O dark, sad millions, patiently and dumb Waiting for God, your hour at last has come, And freedom's song Breaks the long silence of your night of wrong!

Arise and flee! shake off the vile restraint Of ages; but, like Ballymena's saint, The oppressor spare, Heap only on his head the coals of prayer.

Go forth, like him! like him return again, To bless the land whereon in bitter pain Ye toiled at first, And heal with freedom what your slavery cursed. 1863.

ANNIVERSARY POEM.

Read before the Alumni of the Friends' Yearly Meeting School, at the Annual Meeting at Newport, R. I., 15th 6th mo., 1863.

ONCE more, dear friends, you meet beneath A clouded sky Not yet the sword has found its sheath, And on the sweet spring airs the breath Of war floats by.

Yet trouble springs not from the ground, Nor pain from chance; The Eternal order circles round, And wave and storm find mete and bound In Providence.

Full long our feet the flowery ways Of peace have trod, Content with creed and garb and phrase: A harder path in earlier days Led up to God.

Too cheaply truths, once purchased dear, Are made our own; Too long the world has smiled to hear Our boast of full corn in the ear By others sown;

To see us stir the martyr fires Of long ago, And wrap our satisfied desires In the singed mantles that our sires Have dropped below.

But now the cross our worthies bore On us is laid; Profession's quiet sleep is o'er, And in the scale of truth once more Our faith is weighed.

The cry of innocent blood at last Is calling down An answer in the whirlwind-blast, The thunder and the shadow cast From Heaven's dark frown.

The land is red with judgments. Who Stands guiltless forth? Have we been faithful as we knew, To God and to our brother true, To Heaven and Earth.

How faint, through din of merchandise And count of gain, Have seemed to us the captive's cries! How far away the tears and sighs Of souls in pain!

This day the fearful reckoning comes To each and all; We hear amidst our peaceful homes The summons of the conscript drums, The bugle's call.

Our path is plain; the war-net draws Round us in vain, While, faithful to the Higher Cause, We keep our fealty to the laws Through patient pain.

The levelled gun, the battle-brand, We may not take But, calmly loyal, we can stand And suffer with our suffering land For conscience' sake.

Why ask for ease where all is pain? Shall we alone Be left to add our gain to gain, When over Armageddon's plain The trump is blown?

To suffer well is well to serve; Safe in our Lord The rigid lines of law shall curve To spare us; from our heads shall swerve Its smiting sword.

And light is mingled with the gloom, And joy with grief; Divinest compensations come, Through thorns of judgment mercies bloom In sweet relief.

Thanks for our privilege to bless, By word and deed, The widow in her keen distress, The childless and the fatherless, The hearts that bleed!

For fields of duty, opening wide, Where all our powers Are tasked the eager steps to guide Of millions on a path untried The slave is ours!

Ours by traditions dear and old, Which make the race Our wards to cherish and uphold, And cast their freedom in the mould Of Christian grace.

And we may tread the sick-bed floors Where strong men pine, And, down the groaning corridors, Pour freely from our liberal stores The oil and wine.

Who murmurs that in these dark days His lot is cast? God's hand within the shadow lays The stones whereon His gates of praise Shall rise at last.

Turn and o'erturn, O outstretched Hand Nor stint, nor stay; The years have never dropped their sand On mortal issue vast and grand As ours to-day.

Already, on the sable ground Of man's despair Is Freedom's glorious picture found, With all its dusky hands unbound Upraised in prayer.

Oh, small shall seem all sacrifice And pain and loss, When God shall wipe the weeping eyes, For suffering give the victor's prize, The crown for cross.

BARBARA FRIETCHIE.

This poem was written in strict conformity to the account of the incident as I had it from respectable and trustworthy sources. It has since been the subject of a good deal of conflicting testimony, and the story was probably incorrect in some of its details. It is admitted by all that Barbara Frietchie was no myth, but a worthy and highly esteemed gentlewoman, intensely loyal and a hater of the Slavery Rebellion, holding her Union flag sacred and keeping it with her Bible; that when the Confederates halted before her house, and entered her dooryard, she denounced them in vigorous language, shook her cane in their faces, and drove them out; and when General Burnside's troops followed close upon Jackson's, she waved her flag and cheered them. It is stated that May Qnantrell, a brave and loyal lady in another part of the city, did wave her flag in sight of the Confederates. It is possible that there has been a blending of the two incidents.

Up from the meadows rich with corn, Clear in the cool September morn.

The clustered spires of Frederick stand Green-walled by the hills of Maryland.

Round about them orchards sweep, Apple and peach tree fruited deep,

Fair as the garden of the Lord To the eyes of the famished rebel horde,

On that pleasant morn of the early fall When Lee marched over the mountain-wall;

Over the mountains winding down, Horse and foot, into Frederick town.

Forty flags with their silver stars, Forty flags with their crimson bars,

Flapped in the morning wind: the sun Of noon looked down, and saw not one.

Up rose old Barbara Frietchie then, Bowed with her fourscore years and ten;

Bravest of all in Frederick town, She took up the flag the men hauled down;

In her attic window the staff she set, To show that one heart was loyal yet.

Up the street came the rebel tread, Stonewall Jackson riding ahead.

Under his slouched hat left and right He glanced; the old flag met his sight.

"Halt!"--the dust-brown ranks stood fast. "Fire!"--out blazed the rifle-blast. It shivered the window, pane and sash; It rent the banner with seam and gash.

Quick, as it fell, from the broken staff Dame Barbara snatched the silken scarf.

She leaned far out on the window-sill, And shook it forth with a royal will.

"Shoot, if you must, this old gray head, But spare your country's flag," she said.

A shade of sadness, a blush of shame, Over the face of the leader came;

The nobler nature within him stirred To life at that woman's deed and word.

"Who touches a hair of yon gray head Dies like a dog! March on!" he said.

All day long through Frederick street Sounded the tread of marching feet.

All day long that free flag tost Over the heads of the rebel host.

Ever its torn folds rose and fell On the loyal winds that loved it well;

And through the hill-gaps sunset light Shone over it with a warm good-night.

Barbara Frietchie's work is o'er, And the Rebel rides on his raids no more.

Honor to her! and let a tear Fall, for her sake, on Stonewall's bier.

Over Barbara Frietchie's grave, Flag of Freedom and Union, wave!

Peace and order and beauty draw Round thy symbol of light and law;

And ever the stars above look down On thy stars below in Frederick town! 1863.

WHAT THE BIRDS SAID.

THE birds against the April wind Flew northward, singing as they flew; They sang, "The land we leave behind Has swords for corn-blades, blood for dew." "O wild-birds, flying from the South, What saw and heard ye, gazing down?" "We saw the mortar's upturned mouth, The sickened camp, the blazing town!

"Beneath the bivouac's starry lamps, We saw your march-worn children die; In shrouds of moss, in cypress swamps, We saw your dead uncoffined lie.

"We heard the starving prisoner's sighs, And saw, from line and trench, your sons Follow our flight with home-sick eyes Beyond the battery's smoking guns."

"And heard and saw ye only wrong And pain," I cried, "O wing-worn flocks?" "We heard," they sang, "the freedman's song, The crash of Slavery's broken locks!

"We saw from new, uprising States The treason-nursing mischief spurned, As, crowding Freedom's ample gates, The long estranged and lost returned.

"O'er dusky faces, seamed and old, And hands horn-hard with unpaid toil, With hope in every rustling fold, We saw your star-dropt flag uncoil.

"And struggling up through sounds accursed, A grateful murmur clomb the air; A whisper scarcely heard at first, It filled the listening heavens with prayer.

"And sweet and far, as from a star, Replied a voice which shall not cease, Till, drowning all the noise of war, It sings the blessed song of peace!"

So to me, in a doubtful day Of chill and slowly greening spring, Low stooping from the cloudy gray, The wild-birds sang or seemed to sing.

They vanished in the misty air, The song went with them in their flight; But lo! they left the sunset fair, And in the evening there was light. April, 1864.

THE MANTLE OF ST. JOHN DE MATHA.

A LEGEND OF "THE RED, WHITE, AND BLUE," A. D. 1154-1864.

A STRONG and mighty Angel,

Calm, terrible, and bright, The cross in blended red and blue Upon his mantle white.

Two captives by him kneeling, Each on his broken chain, Sang praise to God who raiseth The dead to life again!

Dropping his cross-wrought mantle, "Wear this," the Angel said; "Take thou, O Freedom's priest, its sign, The white, the blue, and red."

Then rose up John de Matha In the strength the Lord Christ gave, And begged through all the land of France The ransom of the slave.

The gates of tower and castle Before him open flew, The drawbridge at his coming fell, The door-bolt backward drew.

For all men owned his errand, And paid his righteous tax; And the hearts of lord and peasant Were in his hands as wax.

At last, outbound from Tunis, His bark her anchor weighed, Freighted with seven-score Christian souls Whose ransom he had paid.

But, torn by Paynim hatred, Her sails in tatters hung; And on the wild waves, rudderless, A shattered hulk she swung.

"God save us!" cried the captain, "For naught can man avail; Oh, woe betide the ship that lacks Her rudder and her sail!

"Behind us are the Moormen; At sea we sink or strand There's death upon the water, There's death upon the land!"

Then up spake John de Matha "God's errands never fail! Take thou the mantle which I wear, And make of it a sail."

They raised the cross-wrought mantle, The blue, the white, the red; And straight before the wind off-shore The ship of Freedom sped. "God help us!" cried the seamen, "For vain is mortal skill The good ship on a stormy sea Is drifting at its will."

Then up spake John de Matha "My mariners, never fear The Lord whose breath has filled her sail May well our vessel steer!"

So on through storm and darkness They drove for weary hours; And lo! the third gray morning shone On Ostia's friendly towers.

And on the walls the watchers The ship of mercy knew, They knew far off its holy cross, The red, the white, and blue.

And the bells in all the steeples Rang out in glad accord, To welcome home to Christian soil The ransomed of the Lord.

So runs the ancient legend By bard and painter told; And lo! the cycle rounds again, The new is as the old!

With rudder foully broken, And sails by traitors torn, Our country on a midnight sea Is waiting for the morn.

Before her, nameless terror; Behind, the pirate foe; The clouds are black above her, The sea is white below.

The hope of all who suffer, The dread of all who wrong, She drifts in darkness and in storm, How long, O Lord I how long?

But courage, O my mariners Ye shall not suffer wreck, While up to God the freedman's prayers Are rising from your deck.

Is not your sail the banner Which God hath blest anew, The mantle that De Matha wore, The red, the white, the blue?

Its hues are all of heaven, The red of sunset's dye, The whiteness of the moon-lit cloud, The blue of morning's sky. Wait cheerily, then, O mariners, For daylight and for land; The breath of God is in your sail, Your rudder is His hand.

Sail on, sail on, deep-freighted With blessings and with hopes; The saints of old with shadowy hands Are pulling at your ropes.

Behind ye holy martyrs Uplift the palm and crown; Before ye unborn ages send Their benedictions down.

Take heart from John de Matha!--God's errands never fail! Sweep on through storm and darkness, The thunder and the hail!

Sail on! The morning cometh, The port ye yet shall win; And all the bells of God shall ring The good ship bravely in! 1865.

LAUS DEO!

On hearing the bells ring on the passage of the constitutional amendment abolishing slavery. The resolution was adopted by Congress, January 31, 1865. The ratification by the requisite number of states was announced December 18, 1865.

IT is done! Clang of bell and roar of gun Send the tidings up and down. How the belfries rock and reel! How the great guns, peal on peal, Fling the joy from town to town!

Ring, O bells! Every stroke exulting tells Of the burial hour of crime. Loud and long, that all may hear, Ring for every listening ear Of Eternity and Time!

Let us kneel God's own voice is in that peal, And this spot is holy ground. Lord, forgive us! What are we, That our eyes this glory see, That our ears have heard the sound!

For the Lord

On the whirlwind is abroad; In the earthquake He has spoken; He has smitten with His thunder The iron walls asunder, And the gates of brass are broken.

Loud and long Lift the old exulting song; Sing with Miriam by the sea, He has cast the mighty down; Horse and rider sink and drown; "He hath triumphed gloriously!"

Did we dare, In our agony of prayer, Ask for more than He has done? When was ever His right hand Over any time or land Stretched as now beneath the sun?

How they pale, Ancient myth and song and tale, In this wonder of our days, When the cruel rod of war Blossoms white with righteous law, And the wrath of man is praise!

Blotted out All within and all about Shall a fresher life begin; Freer breathe the universe As it rolls its heavy curse On the dead and buried sin!

It is done! In the circuit of the sun Shall the sound thereof go forth. It shall bid the sad rejoice, It shall give the dumb a voice, It shall belt with joy the earth!

Ring and swing, Bells of joy! On morning's wing Send the song of praise abroad! With a sound of broken chains Tell the nations that He reigns, Who alone is Lord and God! 1865.

HYMN FOR THE CELEBRATION OF EMANCIPATION AT NEWBURYPORT.

NOT unto us who did but seek The word that burned within to speak, Not unto us this day belong The triumph and exultant song. Upon us fell in early youth The burden of unwelcome truth, And left us, weak and frail and few, The censor's painful work to do.

Thenceforth our life a fight became, The air we breathed was hot with blame; For not with gauged and softened tone We made the bondman's cause our own.

We bore, as Freedom's hope forlorn, The private hate, the public scorn; Yet held through all the paths we trod Our faith in man and trust in God.

We prayed and hoped; but still, with awe, The coming of the sword we saw; We heard the nearing steps of doom, We saw the shade of things to come.

In grief which they alone can feel Who from a mother's wrong appeal, With blended lines of fear and hope We cast our country's horoscope.

For still within her house of life We marked the lurid sign of strife, And, poisoning and imbittering all, We saw the star of Wormwood fall.

Deep as our love for her became Our hate of all that wrought her shame, And if, thereby, with tongue and pen We erred,--we were but mortal men.

We hoped for peace; our eyes survey The blood-red dawn of Freedom's day We prayed for love to loose the chain; 'T is shorn by battle's axe in twain!

Nor skill nor strength nor zeal of ours Has mined and heaved the hostile towers; Not by our hands is turned the key That sets the sighing captives free.

A redder sea than Egypt's wave Is piled and parted for the slave; A darker cloud moves on in light; A fiercer fire is guide by night.

The praise, O Lord! is Thine alone, In Thy own way Thy work is done! Our poor gifts at Thy feet we cast, To whom be glory, first and last! 1865.

AFTER THE WAR.

THE PEACE AUTUMN.

Written for the Fssex County Agricultural Festival, 1865.

THANK God for rest, where none molest, And none can make afraid; For Peace that sits as Plenty's guest Beneath the homestead shade!

Bring pike and gun, the sword's red scourge, The negro's broken chains, And beat them at the blacksmith's forge To ploughshares for our plains.

Alike henceforth our hills of snow, And vales where cotton flowers; All streams that flow, all winds that blow, Are Freedom's motive-powers.

Henceforth to Labor's chivalry Be knightly honors paid; For nobler than the sword's shall be The sickle's accolade.

Build up an altar to the Lord, O grateful hearts of ours And shape it of the greenest sward That ever drank the showers.

Lay all the bloom of gardens there, And there the orchard fruits; Bring golden grain from sun and air, From earth her goodly roots.

There let our banners droop and flow, The stars uprise and fall; Our roll of martyrs, sad and slow, Let sighing breezes call.

Their names let hands of horn and tan And rough-shod feet applaud, Who died to make the slave a man, And link with toil reward.

There let the common heart keep time To such an anthem sung As never swelled on poet's rhyme, Or thrilled on singer's tongue.

Song of our burden and relief, Of peace and long annoy; The passion of our mighty grief And our exceeding joy! A song of praise to Him who filled The harvests sown in tears, And gave each field a double yield To feed our battle-years.

A song of faith that trusts the end To match the good begun, Nor doubts the power of Love to blend The hearts of men as one!

TO THE THIRTY-NINTH CONGRESS.

The thirty-ninth congress was that which met in 1565 after the close of the war, when it was charged with the great question of reconstruction; the uppermost subject in men's minds was the standing of those who had recently been in arms against the Union and their relations to the freedmen.

O PEOPLE-CHOSEN! are ye not Likewise the chosen of the Lord, To do His will and speak His word?

From the loud thunder-storm of war Not man alone hath called ye forth, But He, the God of all the earth!

The torch of vengeance in your hands He quenches; unto Him belongs The solemn recompense of wrongs.

Enough of blood the land has seen, And not by cell or gallows-stair Shall ye the way of God prepare.

Say to the pardon-seekers: Keep Your manhood, bend no suppliant knees, Nor palter with unworthy pleas.

Above your voices sounds the wail Of starving men; we shut in vain * Our eyes to Pillow's ghastly stain. **

What words can drown that bitter cry? What tears wash out the stain of death? What oaths confirm your broken faith?

From you alone the guaranty Of union, freedom, peace, we claim; We urge no conqueror's terms of shame.

Alas! no victor's pride is ours; We bend above our triumphs won Like David o'er his rebel son.

Be men, not beggars. Cancel all By one brave, generous action; trust

Your better instincts, and be just.

Make all men peers before the law, Take hands from off the negro's throat, Give black and white an equal vote.

Keep all your forfeit lives and lands, But give the common law's redress To labor's utter nakedness.

Revive the old heroic will; Be in the right as brave and strong As ye have proved yourselves in wrong.

Defeat shall then be victory, Your loss the wealth of full amends, And hate be love, and foes be friends.

Then buried be the dreadful past, Its common slain be mourned, and let All memories soften to regret.

Then shall the Union's mother-heart Her lost and wandering ones recall, Forgiving and restoring all,--

And Freedom break her marble trance Above the Capitolian dome, Stretch hands, and bid ye welcome home November, 1865.

* Andersonville prison.

** The massacre of Negro troops at Fort Pillow.

THE HIVE AT GETTYSBURG.

IN the old Hebrew myth the lion's frame, So terrible alive, Bleached by the desert's sun and wind, became The wandering wild bees' hive; And he who, lone and naked-handed, tore Those jaws of death apart, In after time drew forth their honeyed store To strengthen his strong heart.

Dead seemed the legend: but it only slept To wake beneath our sky; Just on the spot whence ravening Treason crept Back to its lair to die, Bleeding and torn from Freedom's mountain bounds, A stained and shattered drum Is now the hive where, on their flowery rounds, The wild bees go and come.

Unchallenged by a ghostly sentinel, They wander wide and far, Along green hillsides, sown with shot and shell, Through vales once choked with war. The low reveille of their battle-drum Disturbs no morning prayer; With deeper peace in summer noons their hum Fills all the drowsy air.

And Samson's riddle is our own to-day, Of sweetness from the strong, Of union, peace, and freedom plucked away From the rent jaws of wrong. From Treason's death we draw a purer life, As, from the beast he slew, A sweetness sweeter for his bitter strife The old-time athlete drew! 1868.

HOWARD AT ATLANTA.

RIGHT in the track where Sherman Ploughed his red furrow, Out of the narrow cabin, Up from the cellar's burrow, Gathered the little black people, With freedom newly dowered, Where, beside their Northern teacher, Stood the soldier, Howard.

He listened and heard the children Of the poor and long-enslaved Reading the words of Jesus, Singing the songs of David. Behold!--the dumb lips speaking, The blind eyes seeing! Bones of the Prophet's vision Warmed into being!

Transformed he saw them passing Their new life's portal Almost it seemed the mortal Put on the immortal. No more with the beasts of burden, No more with stone and clod, But crowned with glory and honor In the image of God!

There was the human chattel Its manhood taking; There, in each dark, bronze statue, A soul was waking! The man of many battles, With tears his eyelids pressing, Stretched over those dusky foreheads His one-armed blessing.

And he said: "Who hears can never Fear for or doubt you; What shall I tell the children Up North about you?" Then ran round a whisper, a murmur, Some answer devising: And a little boy stood up: "General, Tell 'em we're rising!"

O black boy of Atlanta! But half was spoken The slave's chain and the master's Alike are broken. The one curse of the races Held both in tether They are rising,--all are rising, The black and white together!

O brave men and fair women! Ill comes of hate and scorning Shall the dark faces only Be turned to mourning?--Make Time your sole avenger, All-healing, all-redressing; Meet Fate half-way, and make it A joy and blessing! 1869.

THE EMANCIPATION GROUP.

Moses Kimball, a citizen of Boston, presented to the city a duplicate of the Freedman's Memorial statue erected in Lincoln Square, Washington. The group, which stands in Park Square, represents the figure of a slave, from whose limbs the broken fetters have fallen, kneeling in gratitude at the feet of Lincoln. The group was designed by Thomas Ball, and was unveiled December 9, 1879. These verses were written for the occasion.

AMIDST thy sacred effigies Of old renown give place, O city, Freedom-loved! to his Whose hand unchained a race.

Take the worn frame, that rested not Save in a martyr's grave; The care-lined face, that none forgot, Bent to the kneeling slave.

Let man be free! The mighty word He spake was not his own; An impulse from the Highest stirred These chiselled lips alone.

The cloudy sign, the fiery guide, Along his pathway ran, And Nature, through his voice, denied The ownership of man.

We rest in peace where these sad eyes

Saw peril, strife, and pain; His was the nation's sacrifice, And ours the priceless gain.

O symbol of God's will on earth As it is done above! Bear witness to the cost and worth Of justice and of love.

Stand in thy place and testify To coming ages long, That truth is stronger than a lie, And righteousness than wrong.

THE JUBILEE SINGERS.

A number of students of Fisk University, under the direction of one of the officers, gave a series of concerts in the Northern States, for the purpose of establishing the college on a firmer financial foundation. Their hymns and songs, mostly in a minor key, touched the hearts of the people, and were received as peculiarly expressive of a race delivered from bondage.

VOICE of a people suffering long, The pathos of their mournful song, The sorrow of their night of wrong!

Their cry like that which Israel gave, A prayer for one to guide and save, Like Moses by the Red Sea's wave!

The stern accord her timbrel lent To Miriam's note of triumph sent O'er Egypt's sunken armament!

The tramp that startled camp and town, And shook the walls of slavery down, The spectral march of old John Brown!

The storm that swept through battle-days, The triumph after long delays, The bondmen giving God the praise!

Voice of a ransomed race, sing on Till Freedom's every right is won, And slavery's every wrong undone 1880.

GARRISON.

The earliest poem in this division was my youthful tribute to the great reformer when himself a young man he was first sounding his trumpet in Essex County. I close with the verses inscribed to him at the end of his

earthly career, May 24, 1879. My poetical service in the cause of freedom is thus almost synchronous with his life of devotion to the same cause.

THE storm and peril overpast, The hounding hatred shamed and still, Go, soul of freedom! take at last The place which thou alone canst fill.

Confirm the lesson taught of old--Life saved for self is lost, while they Who lose it in His service hold The lease of God's eternal day.

Not for thyself, but for the slave Thy words of thunder shook the world; No selfish griefs or hatred gave The strength wherewith thy bolts were hurled.

From lips that Sinai's trumpet blew We heard a tender under song; Thy very wrath from pity grew, From love of man thy hate of wrong.

Now past and present are as one; The life below is life above; Thy mortal years have but begun Thy immortality of love.

With somewhat of thy lofty faith We lay thy outworn garment by, Give death but what belongs to death, And life the life that cannot die!

Not for a soul like thine the calm Of selfish ease and joys of sense; But duty, more than crown or palm, Its own exceeding recompense.

Go up and on thy day well done, Its morning promise well fulfilled, Arise to triumphs yet unwon, To holier tasks that God has willed.

Go, leave behind thee all that mars The work below of man for man; With the white legions of the stars Do service such as angels can.

Wherever wrong shall right deny Or suffering spirits urge their plea, Be thine a voice to smite the lie, A hand to set the captive free! By John Greenleaf Whittier

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