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RACE RHYMES

— BY —

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WASHINGTON, D. C.

1911
DEDICATION.

TO MY MOTHER.

Mother, Mother, how I loved thee!
And I know thou lov'dst me well;
But the gentle Saviour called thee
Home on high with saints to dwell.

Mother, gentlest of all creatures,
Patient, noble, just serene;
To me thou wert perfect, ideal;
Equal of thine, ne'er was seen.

Thou art gone! but not forgot by
Her who loved thee here on earth,
Mine the sorrow, but for thee of
Heavenly joy there is no dearth.

So I smile in resignation,
And repress the bitter pain
Since my great loss for a brief space,
Is for thee, eternal gain.
N giving to the world this brochure, the author makes no claim to unusual poetic excellence or literary brilliance. She is seeking to call attention to a condition which she, at least, considers serious. Knowing that this may often be done more impressively through rhyme than in an elegant prose dissertation, she has taken this method of accomplishing the end sought.

Each poem has been called forth by some significant event or condition in the history of the Negro in America. The theme of the group here presented—the uplift of humanity—is the loftiest that can animate the heart and pen of man; the treatment, she trusts, is not wholly unworthy. Remembering the good that has been accomplished by such familiar poems as "The Prisoner for Debt," "The Song of the Shirt," and similar ones, she sends these lines forth with the prayer that they may change some evil heart, right some wrong and raise some arm strong to deliver.

C. W. C.
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RACE RHYMES

AMERICA.

America is not another name for opportunity
To all her sons! Nay, bid me not be dumb—
I will be heard. Christians, I come
To plead with burning eloquence of truth
A brother’s cause; ay, to demand, forsooth,
The manhood rights of which he is denied;
Too long your pretense have your acts belied.

What has he done to merit your fierce hate?
I charge you, speak the truth; for know, his fate
Irrevocably is bound up with yours,
For good or ill, as long as time endures.
Torn from his native home by ruthless hands,
For centuries he tilled your fruitful lands,
In shameful, base, degrading slavery;
Your humble, patient, loyal vassal, he—
Piling your coffers high with magic gold,
Himself, the while, like cattle bought and sold.

When devastating war stalked through the land,
And dangers threatened you on every hand,
These sons whose color you cannot forgive,
Did freely shed their blood that you might live
A nation, strong and great. And will you then
Continue to debase, degrade, contemn
Your loyal children, while with smiling face
You raise disloyal ones to power and place?

Is race or color crime, that for this cause
You draft against the Negro unjust laws?
Is race or color sin that he should be
For these things treated so outrageously?
O, boastful, white American, beware!
It is the handiwork of God you dare
Thus to despise and He will you repay
With generous measure overflowing, yea,
For all the good which in his life you've wrought,
For helpful deed, or kindly, loving thought—
For every act of cruelty you've done,
For every groan which you have from him wrung,
For every infamy by him endured,
He will you all repay, be thou assured!
Not here alone ere time shall cease to be,
But likewise There, through all eternity.
A REPLY TO THOS. DIXON.

We are rising, we are coming!
See, the foeman's face grows pale;
He to check our progress onward
Spreads abroad this scandalous tale:

"Black men are not white men's equal;
All unworthy's the black race;
Savage, soulless, scarcely human,
Doomed for ever to servile place."

Shall such foul aspersions daunt us,
Will we weaken in our fight?
Never! Fighting, we will die for
Justice, God and human right.

We hurl back the defamation,
Confound theory with fact,
Prove by thought, by word, by deed,
The falseness of the vile attack.

There is earnest work before us,
There are giants to o'ercome,
Satan's angels to be vanquished,
Grievous wrong to be undone.

So we press undaunted forward,
So we plunge into the fray.
Rouse the timid lagging rearward,
Point them to the breaking day!

Will success perch on our banner,
Which we struggle to hold high?
From the valiant hosts who follow
Comes a ringing, firm, "Ay, ay!"
ATLANTA'S SHAME.

In queenly state she sits at the gateway of the South—
And lifts with conscious pride her stately head:
Fair Atlanta feels her worth, and her children are elate,
As thro' her streets they go with happy tread.

She has sons of many kinds, she has sons of many hues,
And she says she cares for all, but this we know,
Tho' she exacts of each alike service, revenue, respect.
The blacks get of her favor but scant show!

Yet the harder do they strive her good will and grace to win.
Keeping step with progress—forward without pause!
Gaining knowledge, getting wealth, doing all things duly meet.
Hoping thus to gain Atlanta's prized applause.

But alas! 'tis all in vain, for she hates with bitter hate
These poor blacks who aye remind her of her shames;
Of her greed for wealth and power, of her base consuming lust:
Noble striving but the more her wrath inflames.

Then to hide from honest eyes her blood-guiltiness and sin,
She most cunningly contrives a wicked plot—
Subtly spoken a base word, then this cry against the blacks
Cleaves the night! "Revenge! lynch, slaughter and spare not!"

Three awful nights she reveled in a carnival of crime,
Three days or e'er the tension was relieved;
When her thirst for blood was sated, the whole nation stood aghast,
Her cry of "Rape," no more the world deceived!
Lamentations, bitter sobs, heart-wrung groans the soft winds bore
Thro' the streets where lay the victims of her rage;
Helpless age and guiltless youth, innocence and trusting truth—
It had taken all, her fury to assuage.

Dread Atlanta nevermore can the crimson stain erase,
Nor the foul blot wipe from off fair history's scroll;
This fell deed shall e'er arise, ghost-like from the mists of time
To confront and terrify her guilty soul!

THE JIM CROW CAR.

Of all things iniquitous that evil could devise,
A thing that men of honor very justly must despise,
An institution infamous and more degrading far
Than aught I know of, fellow-men, this is the Jim Crow car.

The good, the bad, the criminal are herded there together;
Just so the skin is dark, no white would deign to question whether
The heart beneath was pure as gold or was with guilt allied;
Not worth but color designates the place where one must ride.

He may have built, of modern times, the greatest institution
For training hands; or may be of the vilest destitution
A perfect sample; but tho' he be artist, brute or sage,
It nothing counts, he goes if black into the "Jim Crow" cage.
He may have won prized scholarships from greatest schools of learning. 
The fire of genius in his soul with mighty brilliance burning; 
His culture and attainments may indeed be on a par 
With earth's greatest souls, but he, if black, must seek the "Jim Crow" car.

And shall the strong be e'er deceived with thought that might makes right? 
And shall the weak forever yield God-given right to might? 
Nay! think not, puny man, to alter one of God's fixed laws, 
For sure as darkness follows light, effect must follow cause. 
And sure as nations disregard God's changeless plan divine 
To justly deal, show mercy, love and service intertwine, 
So surely will his judgment fall with vengeance swift and true, 
On all who seek to thwart His will, His mandates to eschew.

And in His gracious message left to comfort breaking hearts 
He promises to rescue all from Satan's fiery darts 
Who keep His law: there, too, we find the blest assurance given 
There'll be no caste distinctions in the glorious realm of heaven.

Nor bond nor free, nor Greek nor Jew, Barbarian, Scythian there; 
For all are one in Christ, all children of His loving care: 
And when at last His little ones have crossed life's moaning bar, 
They'll ride in golden chariots, not in a "Jim Crow" car.
SHALL WE FIGHT THE JIM CROW CAR?

Comes the question, loud, insistent,
Borne upon the winds afar,
In the ears of black men ringing—
"Shall we fight the Jim Crow car?"

Mounts the hot blood to the forehead,
Angry passions leap to life
At remembered wrongs committed
'Gainst a mother, sister, wife.

And the milk of human kindness
In the proud heart turns to gall:
Is not every hand against them,
Every ear deaf to their call?

Disregarded all entreaties,
Stern protests unheeded are;
Impotent words or achievements,
To remove the color-bar.

Shall such base, unworthy treatment
Be by brave men tamely borne
And the title "Non-resistant,"
As a badge of honor worn?

No; by heaven, they swear it, swear it!
List ye, farthest glitt'ring star,
Ten thousand black men shout in chorus,
"We will fight the Jim Crow car."
THE SINGER AND THE SONG.

To Paul Laurence Dunbar.

For oh, his song was so sad to hear!
He sang of the millions who live in fear;
Of those who in anguish and patient pain,
Struggle for freedom but struggle in vain.

For oh, his song was so sweet to hear:
It fell like balm on the listening ear;
It told of bright skies, fragrant flowers, green trees,
And of God the Almighty—Creator of these.

For oh, his song was so blithe and gay,
"I will not hold my just anger alway;"
Tremble ye wicked ones!" Assurance blest,
And hope brought the song to these children oppressed.

For oh, his song was sublime, sublime!
A glorious burst of music divine;
"He whose endurance shall last to the end,
On him shall heaven's choicest blessings descend."

So ever he sang as he journeyed along,
Cheering the faint heart, rebuking the wrong,
Preaching to all the sweet gospel of love;
Teaching of Jesus who reigneth above.
But the singer grew weary and sank down to rest,
Where he sleeps for a space, folded close to the breast
Of old Mother Earth, the song stilled for a day,
But our hearts to its music will vibrate alway.
LINES TO GARRISON.

(Read at His Centenary Celebration, Cleveland, Ohio.)

Read at his centenary celebration, Cleveland, Ohio.
Ah, dark and grim and direful were those days,
For cursed was our fair land, and torn with cries
And groanings loud and terrible, of man
Oppressed and tortured by his brother man.
The poor, black, naked slave was worked and whipped
And scourged; held, bought and sold as chattel
At the behest of him who styled himself his owner;
His body, mind, yea e'en his very soul
Was held by cruel masters to belong to them!
"How long, O Lord, how long?" wailed these despairing ones.
As Slavery's cruel bonds grew stronger day by day,
More loathsome and unbearable!
While thus they agonized in prayer, beseeching
God, the father, for relief from this
Distressed and pitiful estate, lo!
Suddenly from out the mists of chaos
And confusion, rose a voice commanding,
Clear, loud-crying, "I am in earnest—
I will not equivocate—I will not
Retreat a single inch—And I will be heard!"
It was the voice of one who hated slavery
As he hated nothing else on earth;
It was the voice of one, who advocated Freedom for all men.
It was the voice of Garrison, the brave,
Which sounded clear above the tumult, saying—
"Tyrants as all history shows, must be destroyed!"
Alarm fell on the sleek, complacent master.
The quiet advocate of abolition likewise started!
Dared he thus boldly agitate for right,
Dared he thus forcibly denounce the wrong?
A nation listened breathless!
Again the voice came ringing, firm, emphatic—
"Are we enough to make a revolution?
No, but we are enough, one to begin;
And once begun it cannot be turned back!
I am for revolution, were I utterly alone;
I am there because I must be there;
I cannot choose but obey the voice of God!"
It was enough! A Christian nation could not, Would not listen to the voice of God. The South cried for his blood; In Boston he was mobbed; dragged thro' the streets A rope around his neck, because, forsooth. He dared to speak for Freedom, Justice, Right. But brute force cannot thrust Truth down. Nor mobs with ropes o'ercome it.

Tho' cast in prison Mocked at, jeered, yet Garrison, the great, Ceased not to plead the cause of the despised slave. He aroused a nation from its lethargy! The North viewed with dismay, the horrid beast The haughty South was nursing in its breast; Should this foul thing besmirch Columbia's name? Should free America, home of the brave, Become a noisome prison house for slaves! Not if the trenchant pen or mighty voice Of Garrison, the noble, could prevent. By day, by night, in season, out—he passionately Plead for his enslaved countrymen. So bold a leader could not long lack friends. Soon honest men became h's staunch allies. The few, became a host! The little stream Became a flood, resistless, strong, compelling! The climax came In a supreme outburst of blood and carnage. The strife was fierce, the struggle desperate; But, glory be to God, the chains were snapped. The slaves were freed, and Garrison, immortalized!

Peace to thy ashes, Honored Dead! We come today, thy grave to strew with flowers Of loving words, of honest praise; we come Ten million of thy countrymen Thy bier to consecrate with fragrant incense Welling up from grateful hearts!
FORAKER AND THE TWENTY-FIFTH.

Who helped Columbia win the day
At San Juan Hill and El Carney,
When brave men faltered in dismay?
The Twenty-fifth.

Who welcomed then, their timely aid,
Since they to charge were not afraid,
But at the foe like demons made?
Colonel Roosevelt.

And when the glorious deed was done,
The battles fought and victory won,
Who honor gave to her dark sons?
The Nation.

Who was it played the scurvy trick,
Who gave the thrust with his Big Stick
That turned bright day to darkness thick?
Our President.

Where is the place was struck the blow,
The deadly, fatal, unjust blow
Our soldier boys' proud heads bowed low?
At Brownsville.

Discharged without honor or proof of guilt
Was this the goal toward which they'd built,
The end for which their blood they'd spilt?
O, mighty God!

Charged with honor up San Juan Hill:
Discharged without honor at dread Brownsville,
Achieved so grandly—rewarded so ill,
These patriots.
And did no voice for justice cry,
None dare assail the powers high
That did the grievous wrong—none?
Ay, Brave Foraker.

Alone he braved the mighty wrath,
Alone he dared the lightning’s path;
Ha! braver champion no man hath
Than Foraker.

Defied alone the soldiers’ foes,
Himself bared to the cowards’ blows;
The price so nobly paid God knows—
And Foraker.

He suffered in a righteous cause,
Fought to uphold his country’s laws,
And won just men’s thund’rous applause.
Great Foraker.

Wherever black men’s hearts beat high
For justice, honor, liberty,
Nor name nor deed shall ever die,
Of gallant J. B. Foraker.

And if a race’s steadfast love
A race’s loyalty can prove,
No other name is loved above
The name of Foraker.
ALL HAIL! YE COLORED GRADUATES.

Tune—"All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name."
All hail, ye colored graduates
From college and from school;
May high ideals each life inspire
And service be its rule!

Let ev'ry citizen and friend
In our loved country wide,
Join in our hearty song of praise
And share our righteous pride.

We bid you go as champions brave
To fight for God and right;
And bring to those who are oppressed
Great Freedom's glorious light.

You'll find the fields for harvest ripe,
But laborers very few;
Then forth with willing hearts and strong
The evil to subdue.

Discouragements will oft confront
And seek to vanquish you;
But know that naught on earth can thwart
The man who WILLS to do.

Then forward, onward, upward go!
And as you boldly press
Your way to life's exalted heights
The Lord of Hosts will bless.
DUTY'S CALL.

Come, all ye women, come!
Help 'till the work is done.
Help to uplift!
We must sin's blight remove,
By deeds of kindness prove
The wondrous power of love.
God's greatest gift.

We must remove the ban
Placed on our fellow-man,
Thro' Satan's power;
Let us as one unite.
Darkness and wrong to fight,
Then will the glorious light
Break in God's hour.

'Tis now, we must begin;
If we our cause would win;
The foe is strong;
But we can make him quake.
His forces swerve and break
When we old earth shall shake
With victory's song.
MARCHING TO CONQUEST.

We are battling for the right with purpose strong and true;
'Tis a mighty struggle, but we've pledged to dare and do;
Pledged to conquer evil and we'll see the conflict thro'
Marching and marching to conquer.

All the noble things of life we'll teach our girls and boys,
Warn them of its pitfalls and reveal its purest joys,
Counsel, guide and keep them from the evil that destroys
As we go marching to conquest.

Loving confidence and trust must mark our intercourse,
Harmony and unity will our success enforce;
Seeking guidance from the Lord of good, the boundless source,
As we go marching to conquest.

Come and join our anthem then and raise a mighty shout,
Sing it with such fervor as will put our foes to rout,
Sing it with conviction strong, dispelling every doubt,
As we go marching to conquest.

Women, when our work is o'er and we to rest have gone,
May our efforts doubled, trebled, still go sweeping on,
And the voices of millions swell the volume of our song,
As they go marching to conquest.

Chorus:
Hurrah, hurrah, we'll shout the jubilee;
Hurrah, hurrah, we'll set the captives free,
Ignorance, distrust and hate at our approach shall flee,
Marching and marching to conquest.
MY BABY.

(On Reading "Souls of Black Folk.")

Who loves my baby? Ah, who loves him not,
    My beautiful baby, who lies fast asleep;
His dimpled brown limbs softly press his white cot.
    And angels, God's messengers, guard o'er him keep.

Who hates my baby? Ah, merciful God,
    Thy children—his brothers whose faces are white;
"Black skin is a crime: pass thou under the rod."
    They cry! "This is our country, and might makes us right."

My baby! immortal soul, dark tho' he be;
    Where shall I take him for safety and peace,
Where in this land of the brave and the free
    Shall baby and I find of terror surcease?

Justice, I ask for my baby is all,
    And freedom to grow and expand all his powers;
Then right give the verdict—to stand or to fall—
    While Hatred of Race before Righteousness cowers.

Then, if my dark baby, unworthy be found,
    Incompetent, lustful, unfaithful or base,
I'll abide by the verdict and utter no sound
    Agree that beneath is my dark baby's place.

But glory to God! who my dark baby gave
    A mind, soul and being like unto his own
And sent his dear son my brown baby to save
    From the seeds of corruption the Tempter has sown.

Right my baby will place side by side with your child,
    And Right will erase from your heart that fierce hate;
Will you abide by the verdict of Right? Will the wild
    And ignoble prejudice die e'er too late?

For be thou assured, God's bright angels will guard
    My baby so brown, to the heavenly portal,
White soul, not white face, shall there gain its reward,
    For Right keeps the gate to the City Immortal.
CHARACTER OR COLOR—WHICH?

What is blood, or what is birth?
What is black or white?
Or small or great, or rich or poor?
Just so the man's all right?

O, vain and haughty white man, why
Of ancestry prate so?
Can you in tracing your descent,
Farther than Adam go?

Why boasts of culture? Well you know,
Ere to your present state
Of progress and renown you'd come,
(With statesmen wise and great—)

The blacks had splendidly achieved
Long centuries before;
Their monuments, unrivaled still,
Adorn old Afric's shore.

No adventitious circumstance
Can fix a people's station,
Integrity's the thing that counts
In any man or nation.

Then modestly let's run our course—
All hist'ry tells the story:
No race but has its page of shame,
None lacks its page of glory.

So what is blood or what is birth?
What is black or white?
Or great or small, or rich or poor,
Just so the man's all right?
"The Dreamers are the Saviours of the World."

So ran the legend writ in letters bold,
Upon a page whereon in idle hour,
My listless gaze did chance to rest. Straightway
A magic thrill thro' all my being ran
And all my powers of mind became at once
Instinct with leaping life. Again I gazed—
Again with eagerness the page I scanned:
Unchanged, the words still boldly graven there
"The Dreamers are the Saviours of the World."
"And can it be," I thought, this ancient page
Doth to my own sweet wild imaginings
Lend confirmation strong. Would this bright world
Be but a barren waste, a wilderness;
Its human creatures scarcely one remove
From birds and beasts, and creeping, crawling things;
Instead of beirgs, as great God declared
But little lower than the angels formed.
Did not the Dreamer—Sculptor, Poet, Sage—
Keep ever brightly burning life's ideals
As beacon lights to comfort, cheer and guide
The weary travelers o'er life's rugged way?
Still motionless I sat, still pondered o'er
The words this ancient tome did speak, dramatic
And profound, as 'twere an oracle.
The book, unheeded, fell from my lax hand,
And back with lightning speed my fancy flew
O'er space and time immense and limitless.
Before mine eyes a panorama spread,
Showing the great of earth since time began.
I saw bold Caesar and Napoleon,
St. Francis of Assisi, Socrates,
Shakespeare and Froebel, Michael Angelo
And all the sacred host of mighty dead.
Before me moved the pageant of the years
In ghostly pomp and grandeur. I saw again
The youthful Joseph, Dreamer of Israel;
Despised of his brethren, cursed and roughly used
Because he dreamed the truth they could not grasp.
And then, I saw the dream fulfilled, while they,
The former scoffers, bent the suppliant knee,
In silent tribute to the Dreamer's power.
When busy Martha cumbered with much care
Complained that Mary at the Saviour's feet
In dreamland sat, the gentle Christ replied,
"Mary hath chosen the better part." I saw
Columbus, bold and unafraid, set out
Come true. Douglass, the slave—the martyr, Brown,
And Harriet Beecher Stowe, the prophetess.
Each dreaming of a country free from rule
Of grasping greed and heartless tyranny,
In patience wrought, to bring to pass the dream
Which men derided—called impossible:
When lo! while yet they mocked, it came to pass!
"Dreamers," I thought, whose dreams have changed
the world!
So must it ever be. The Dreamer comes
In every age unvalued and condemned.
The Doers trooping come, with boisterous haste
Millions to one lone Dreamer: failing him,
No single revolution of the wheel
Of progress marks advance, for he alone
Can move the world and bring a revelation.
The true Idealist does not spend his time
In vain and idle musings; nor does he flee
Unfavorable conditions, as a slave,
For quarters more secure and genial:
But rather, he is one who patiently
And often painfully his life doth shape
Harmonious with an inward purpose true,
Striving against cold materialism to make
The glorious vision in whose light he lives
Shine strong and bright before the eyes of men
Whose sight less clear discerning is than his.
'Tis true that dreams are but the evidence
Of things unseen—realities which all
Shall one day see and know. Dream lofty dreams,
And as you dream, O, Friend, shall you become
What you desire, you shall obtain; and what
You shall aspire unto you shall achieve.
Your vision is the promise of what you
Shall one day be; your ideal but the prophecy
Of what you shall at last unveil!
Then cherish well your vision, cherish fondly
Your ideals, O great and noble Dreamer!
WE'LL DIE FOR LIBERTY.

We are children of oppression who are struggling to be free
From injustice, and the galling yoke of color-tyranny;
Our small band is facing bravely a relentless enemy.
But we go fighting on.

For liberty we'll bare our breasts, and this our cry shall be:
"Equal rights and equal justice, equal opportunity."
Undaunted we will face the foe and fight right valiantly
To victory marching on.

In the name of Christ our Lord who suffered death upon the tree,
And of the Constitution, our proud country's guarantee,
And of the flag which over all should wave protectingly
We'll strike for liberty.

Thus strongly fortified in right we'll strive triumphantly,
Till the glorious light of Freedom's torch shall flame from sea to sea;
And all the children of our land shall dwell in amity,
As Truth goes marching on.

Then list, ye Sons of Morning, to a weaker brother's plea,
And harken, Hosts of Darkness, to our Heaven-inspired decree:
As He died to make men holy we will die for liberty,
Thou, God, the issue keep.

Chorus: Glory, glory, hallelujah! ||
We'll die for liberty!
|| Repeat three times.