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John M. Leonard

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MAGGIE POGUE JOHNSON

Early photograph of Maggie Pogue Johnson

VIRGINIA DREAMS

Lyrics for the Idle Hour

Tales of the Time

Told in Rhyme

Maggie Pogue Johnson

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By John M. Leonard

Published 1910

DEDICATION.

Dedicated
to
My husband

PREFACE

At the solicitation of a few friends, I have selected several of my poems, and if the perusal of them brings pleasure to you, dear reader, the object of this volume will have been accomplished.

M.P.J.

5

VIRGINIA DREAMS

A Dream

I had a dream one winter's
night,
It filled my soul with pure
delight;
Ne'er ran my tho'ts in strains
so sweet,
I'm filled with rapture to
repeat.

Oh could I dream that dream
again,
'Twould be a song, a sweet
refrain;
Oh could I wake to find it
true,
'Twould then my happy tho'ts
renew.

Dreams, sweet dreams of the
past,
Which o'er our lives bright
shadows cast;
Yet, sometimes in their
course they change,
And pleasure clouds they
disarrange.

What disappointments we do
meet,
In dreaming dreams, yea,
dreams so sweet;
Joy and happiness flow in
streams,--
We wake to find it but a
dream.

What is this mysterious way
In which we think we spend a
day,
Awakening ourselves amid
delight
Finding out 'tis not day but
night.

'Tis a fancy which o'er us
does creep,
When in that state of rest
called sleep,

The light of imagination
which does beam
And form what we always
term a dream.

A dream is a miniature life,
Often lived in a single night;
When pleasant, this tho't oft
does gleam,
Oh could we live just as we
dream.

6

When Daddy Cums from Wuk

Cum here, Mandy, what's you
chewin',
Take dat bread right out yo'
mouf,
Do you know what you'se
doin'?
You'se de worry ob dis hous'.

Put dat bread right on de shef
dar,
Case 'tis much as we kin do
To gib you bread at meal
time
Till hard times is fru.

En like, you shet dat safe do'!
Take dat spoon right out dem
beans!
'Member well, you git no
mo'!
Y'all de wo'st chaps eber
seen!

Yo' daddy'd be distracted
Ef he knowed jis how y'all
eat,
Case it takes mos' all his
earnings
Jis to keep you brats in meat.

Now, 'member well, you

every one,
No bread between yo' meals
you eat,
Beans nor 'taters, no not one!
Cabbage or bacon meat.

En, la sakes! here cums little
John,
Mudder's baby boy,
Wid my ham bone under
arm,
Lickin' it wid joy.

Gib it to mudder, honey,
Cum, let's wash yo' face;
Jane, you set de table,
And fix t'ings all in place.

Yo' daddy'll soon be in de do',
He'll be hungry, too,
Hurry, Jane, don't be so slow!
Ike, min' dar what you do!

7

Chillun, wash yo' faces,
Put on dem aprons new;
Be kerful, now, don't tar
dem,
What eber else you do.

Gib me my linsey dress, dar,
Does you heah, my lad?
Yo' mammy mus' be lookin'
good
When she meets yo' dad.

Jane, take de rabbit off de
stove,
De hominy en 'taters,
En git dat smalles' chiny dish,
For de stewed tomatoes.

Leabe dat gravy dish alone!
Mincin' in it on a sly,
La sakes! mussy me!
Who eat dat punkin pie?

You boys stop dat fightin'!
Sich noise I neber head,

Put de stools up to de table,
Not anodder word!

All de eatins minced in!
Dat's de kind o' luck
I seems to hab wid you kids
When daddy cums from wuk!

I Wish I Was a Grown Up Man

I wish I was a grown up man,
And then I'd get a chance,
To wear those great high
collars,
Stiff shirts, and nice long
pants.

I wish I was a grown up man,
Not too big and fat,
But just the size to look nice
In a beaver hat.

8

I'd wear the nicest vest and
gloves,
And patent leather shoes,
And all the girls would fall in
love,
And I'd flirt with whom I
choose.

I wish I was a grown up man,
I'd try the girls to please,
I'd wear a long jimswinger
coat,
Just below my knees.

I'd wear eye-glasses, too,
And wouldn't I look good?
I'd be the swellest dude
In this neighborhood.

Some day I'll be a man,
And have everything I say,
And give my heart to some

nice girl,
And then I'd go away.

The V. N. and C. I.

Near the City of Petersburg,
As seen by the passers-by,
In the neighborhood of
Ettricks,
Stands the V. N. and C. I.

A building loved by many,
Who've toiled within her
walls,
And tried to respond with
pleasure
To every beck and call.

Her situation is beautiful,
As loftily she stands
Facing the Appromattox,
So picturesque and grand.

Then in the month of
September,
As the days glide swiftly by,
Students leave their various
homes,
For the V. N. and C. I.

9

And ere many hours have
passed
They're sheltered within her
walls,
Their minds from pleasures
cast,
To answer to her calls.

And for days, weeks and
months
Earnestly they work,
On their different studies,
Trying none to shirk.

After the wintry days have
passed

The birds sweetly warble and
sing,
While students resume their
daily tasks
They're told of the coming
Spring.

And then on the campus
green,
Of V. N. and C. I. may be
seen,
Students who every day win
fame,
Playing the many outdoor
games.

Girls with tennis employed,
Always enjoy it much,
Boys with baseball o'erjoyed,
As with bat they give it a
touch.

After a few years shall have
passed,
And boys and girls have
finished their task,
No more their faces will be
seen,
Or voices heard on the
campus green.

In various sections their lots
will be cast,
Fond recollections they'll
have of the past,
As days, months and years
glide slowly by
They'll ever remember V. N.
and C. I.

Old Maid's Soliloquy

I've been upon de karpet,
Fo' lo, dese many days;
De men folks seem to sneer
me,
In der kin' ob way.

But I don't min' der foolin',
 Case I sho' is jis as fine
 As any Kershaw pumpkin
 A hangin on de vine.

I looks at dem sometimes,
 But hol's my head up high,
 Case I is fer above dem
 As de moon is in de sky.

Dey sho' do t'ink dey's so
 much,
 But I sho' is jis as fine
 As eny sweet potato
 Dat's growd up from de vine.

Dey needn't t'ink I's liken
 dem,
 Case my match am hard to
 fin',
 En I don't want de
 watermillion
 Dat's lef' upon de vine.

Case I ain't no spring chicken,
 Dis am solid talk,
 En I don't want anything
 Dat's foun' upon de walk.

Case ef I'd wanted anything,
 I'd hitched up years ago,
 En had my sher ob trouble.
 But my min' tol' me no.

I'd rader be a single maid,
 A wanderin' bout de town,
 Wid skercely way to earn my
 bread,
 En face all made ob frowns,--

Den hitched up to some
 numbskull,
 Wid skercely sense to die,
 En I know I cud'n kill him,
 Dar'd be no use to try.

So don't let ol' maids boder

you,
I'll fin' a match some day,
Or else I'll sho' 'main single,
You hear me what I say!

11

I specs to hol' my head up
high
En always feel as free
As any orange blossom
A hangin' on de tree.

Thoughts

Had I the wings of a bird,
I'd make it a constant duty
To fly far above the earth
And gaze on it's wondrous
beauty.

Had I the mind of a poet,
I'd always try to write
Poems of thrilling beauty
To fill some mind with
delight.

I'd love to stroll in distant
lands,
Among the rocks and rills,
And see the works of
Nature's hands
And gaze on the distant hills.

I'd love to listen to the birds
That sing their songs of praise
And make some poor souls
happy
In their saddest days.

It would be to my delight
To stand at the river side
And gaze on the placid water
As it slowly and playfully
glides.

I'd love to write of the
beautiful,
I'd love to write of the brave,
And read the minds of others,
And note their winning ways.

I would not judge the
beautiful
By the beauty of their faces,
By suppositions or the like,
Or their pretended graces.

12

It brings to my mind once
again
The maxim that I love,
And one of the sayings as of
old,
"Beauty is the beauty does."

Krismas Dinnah

We's invited down to brudder
Browns,
On a Krismas day,
To an ol' time Krismas
dinnah,
So de imbertation say.

De deacons en der wives was
dar,
De parson en his wife;
En all dem folks did sho' look
good,
You kin bet yo' life!

De wimmin folks was dressed
to de'f,
Wid ruffles en wid laces,
En har all hangin' down in
curls,
Wid powder on der faces.

Der dresses had such great
long trains,
We stood back wid de res',

As dey marched into de
'ception hall,
To keep from steppin on der
dress.

En de men folks wasn't fer
behin',
I'se here to tell,
Dey was dressed, too, in der
bes',
Lookin' kin' o'swell.

Dey wo' dese long jimswinger
coats,
Wid big leg pantaloons,
High silk hats wid broad red
bands,
En 'rived dar prompt at noon.

Dey wo' dem low-cut vests,
Wid great broad white
necktie,
En each man wo'an eye glass,
Stickin' on one eye.

13

Ol' man Edmond Jones was
dar,
Dressed jis like de res',
It w'ud hab tickled you so
much,
To hab seen him look his bes'.

Him en ol' man Slyback,
Was an hour behin',
Dey was ol' an walked so
slow,
Dey c'ud'n come in time.

Still, when dinnah time did
come,
Dem two was in de line,
Marehin' to de chune ob
music,
Keepin' ol' folks time.

Den dey stood up at de table,
Till de blessin' it was said,

At de tappin ob de bell,
Dey all did bow der heads.

Parson Reuben Jones was
called,
To say de blessed wuds,
En as he 'gin to cle'r his
throat,
His inmos' soul was stirred:--

"Heabenly Fodder look down
on us,
En dis earfly blessin',
We thanks De fer dis possum
roas',
All brown wid ash-cake
dressin,--

"We thanks De fer dis
sausage,
En squirrel cooked wid beans,
En all dis nice fried chicken,
Dese onions en dese
greens;--

"En as we goes to eat it,
Wilt Dou be our frien',
To keep us all from dyin',
We ax dis, en amen."

De wimmen folks was helped
fus',
To all de kins ob meat,
En den we men was helped,
As we sot dar in our seats.

14

Den we 'menced to eatin',
Dat was a stuffin' time,
Case no one said a wud
To pass away de time,--

Jis' 'cept to ax fer eatin's,
Den in a quiet way,
Dey w'ud cle'r der throats
En hab a wud to say.

You talk about folks eatin'!
But neber in my rouns'
Has I eber eat up so much
grub
As I did at brudder Browns.

De wimmen dey was near de
stove,
En I tho't dat dey wud melt,
But dey jis kept on a' eatin'
'Till dey had to loose dey
belts.

En when dem folks did git up,
Dat table was cleaned up
right,
Possum carcass, chicken
bones,
Was all dat's lef in sight.

The Negro Has a Chance

As my mind in fancy wanders,
While we figure on Life's
stage,
While in queries deep we
ponder,
O'er the past years ripe with
age;
While sipping slowly from
Life's cup,
And in tho'ts deepest trance,
This question often rises up,
"Has the Negro had a
chance?"

'Tis true, they lived one life,
Thro'out the darkened age,
When 'mid events full of
strife
They wrote upon life's page;

15

In darkest hours of the night,
Their soul would seem

entranced,
Wondering if some time in
life,
The Negro'd have a chance.

But now those days have
gone,
And on Life's page are blank,
And sons of ages newly born,
Are being placed in rank;
Just as they file in line,
To make a slow advance,
They read in front this sign,
"The Negro has a chance."

The doors are open wide,
That He may enter in,
And time ripe to decide,
Where in life he will begin;
And as he slowly turns Her
page
He gives a quickened glance,
And sees in every avenue and
age,
The Negro has a chance.

With outstretched arms the
college stands,
And with inviting voice,
She gives the Negro Her
demands,
To make befitting choice,
Of the station He would
choose in life,
To make himself advance;
Now we've cleared away the
strife,
And the Negro has a chance.

Our race needs fitted
teachers,
Their knowledge to impart,
And elevated preachers,
With the work of God at
heart;
Men whose noble work
Will have power to enhance,
Men who dare not shirk,
But bravely grasp the chance.

Then heed ye to this call,
 Which means for a race
 success,
 And what e'er may befall,
 Bravely stand the test;
 Let not fickle minds
 Check your brave advance,
 When every event shows the
 signs,
 That the Negro has a chance!

The preacher needs your aid,
 To help save Negro souls,
 For the price so dearly paid,
 That he may reach the goal;
 He begs with earnest heart
 That you lend a helping hand,
 That in this work you take a
 part,
 And heed the Lord's
 command.

The doctor gives a call
 That you come into his field,
 And as the sick and wounded
 fall
 To their weakened voice you
 yield;
 He sees your help he needs
 As o'er his field he gives a
 glance,
 And your steps he'll not
 impede,
 But the Negro give a chance.

The lawyer opens up his
 book,
 The leaves all dim with age,
 And as he gives a steady look,
 And turns from page to page,
 He sees a page all blank,
 And calls the Negro in;
 Says he, "you fall in rank,"
 In law you must begin.

The skilled mechanic works
 his way
 As he performs his part,
 He toils away from day to day

And well displays his art;

17

He loves his work with all his
soul,
And in it he confides,
But soon before he's reached
the goal,
The Negro's at his side.

The merchant takes his
stand,
With ready merchandise,
He meets the world's
demands,
And each day sells and buys;
But soon upon the scene
The Negro makes his way
And in the merchant's
scheme
He, too, must have a play.

The carpenter now stands
aside
To give the right of way
As slowly in the Negro glides,
Now he must have his day;
In carpentry he'll show his
skill,
We may see this at a glance,
His soul with ecstasy does fill,
As he sees his future chance.

The tailor in his shop we find,
And as he cuts and sews,
He has his work upon his
mind,
For the art in it he knows;
The Negro, too, has learned
this art,
And so with weary brain
He toils away with earnest
heart
That a living he may gain.

So, all these stations must be
filled
As we journey on thro' life,

And we must struggle with a
will
And aim to banish strife;
And when we've reached the
topmost round
We'll send up notes of praise
To him our happy tho'ts
resound,
To him these songs we'll
raise.

18

And Negro, yea, of Africa's
strand,
Ye strong men make
advance,
We do of you make this
demand:
With vigor grasp your
chance!
Let not these happy
moments pass,
But make good of each one,
And when you've reached the
realms at last,
And work on earth is done,--

You'll soar 'mid scenes of
beauty,
You'll live in seas of love,
When you've done your duty
To reach that land above;
And, Negro, be not far
behind,
But on, yea, on, advance!
And when you've reached
that dearer clime
You'll show you've had a
chance.

De Day Befo' Thanksgibin'

Thanksgibin' day am now at
han'
In my imagination,

I see de tuckies take a stan'
Aroun' de ol' plantation.

En jis befo' dis great, great
day,
Dey form dey selves in line,
En in a sort o' serious way,
While one am markin' time,--

Dey marches 'roun de big
hous',
De gobbler front ob line,
To sho' de folks dat dey aint
skeered
Ef 'tis Thanksgibin' time.

De lady tuckies follows on,
En, my! dey puts on airs,
As ef dey neber min's dis
worl'
Wif all it's toils en cares.

19

Dey's fixin' now to sho' off,
Case dis am de fus chance
Since dey's had much meat
on her bones
Dat dey cud hab a dance.

De gobbler gibes a gobble,
Den all de tuckies prance,
I tell you way dey wobbles,
Dey knows sumpin' 'bout a
dance.

De folks all in de big hous'
Am comin' to de do'
To see what de tuckies am
about
Dat's causin' sich a sho'.

De ol' gobbler waits
Till dey git outside de do',
Now he's lafin to hisse'f,
Case dey gwine to hab a sho'.

De ladies ob de hous'
Am now out on de lawn,
De tuckies gwine to run

dem,--
Run dem sho's you born!

Quietly dey tries to strut
'Roun de ladies ob de hous',
While dey stans dar a grinnin'
To see what dey's about.

Soon de gobbler gibes a
gobble,
En at de ladies start,
Ol' Missus, how she wobbles,
I hear de beatin' ob dey
hearts.

Dey am makin' fer de hous',
Miss Carrie front ob line,
De odder ladies follow,
While de tuckies clos' behin',

Soon dey falls into de do'
In a sort ob mos'ac style,
De gobbler heads de list,
Dey a yellin' all de while.

20

Missus calls out, Dinnah!
Come here; come here!
quick!
And kill this turkey gobbler!
Come and kill him quick!

En when I got dar, what a
sight!
De ladies in a pile,
De gobbler pickin' wife his
might
On Missus lubely chile.

I grab de gobbler by de nake,
Pull him fru de hall,
Tol' him take de las' view
Ob Missus lubely walls.

I took him to de wood pile,
Whar lay de cuttin ax,
En calls out, come here!

Ephraim chile!
En gib dis boy a whack!

Tomorrow am thanksgibin'
day,
En sho' as I is able,
Dis tuckey in some stylish
way,
Will be on Missus' table.

Ephriam raises up de ax,
En wif all his might
He gibes de fatal whack
Dat takes de tuckies life.

En Missus says till yit,
As long as she is libin',
She neber will forgit
De day befo' Thanksgibin'.

21

The Story of Lovers Leap

[At Greenbrier White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia, one of the famous resorts of the South, may be seen the historic Lovers Leap, which gave the inspiration for this poem.]

To the state of West Virginia,
During the Summer days
bright,
Countless numbers are
wending their way
To the Old Greenbrier White.

A famous resort of the South,
Which for years has held her
fame,

And dame and sage of every
age,
Honor White Sulphur's name.

'Tis here many lovers meet,
And stroll on her carpet
green,
As the eve grows old, tales of
love unfold,
And many just sweet sixteen.

Happy moments they do
spend,
Yea! moments of delight,
As hearts in union blend,
They praise Greenbrier
White.

Now for the places of
interest,
Of one I'll venture to speak,
Which seems by far most
visited,
Long known as Lovers Leap.

Where two lovers, once upon
a time,
Whose love was true and
tried,
Both with determined minds,
Ne'er to be denied,--

Climbed to this very high
precipice,
Looked o'er the rugged steep,
Decided within a few
moments,
To make the fatal leap.

Said they, "together we'll end
our lives,
Rather than to part,"
Within their minds they did
contrive
To make the fatal start.

22

All was quiet and
undisturbed,
The hour was growing late,

For a while they uttered not a
word
As they tho't to meet their
fate.

Their's was a love so true,--
Not for a day,--
Love that ever seems a new,
That never dies away.

This love began in childhood
days,
As days so glided by,
They felt that for each other
Gladly would they die.

Perhaps many minds have
wondered,
Why on this eve so late,
This maid and lad with hearts
so sad,
Decided to meet their fate.

But the parents of this couple
brave,
Firmly did object,
And tho't that both the lad
and the maid,
Their wishes should respect.

For a while o'er this they did
bother,
Why think of the trials of life,
Now comes the words of our
Father,
"Forsake all and cleave to thy
wife."

Did it not seem hard for them
to live,
Alone thro' the trials of life,
Could he on account of
others give,
The dear one he wished to
call wife?

No, "But together we'll strive
to live
Or together we'll strive to
die,

'Twill be a pleasure our lives
to give,
And so with our wishes
comply."

So, 'twas fully decided,
And on one evening late,
To the Leap they slowly
glided,
The two to meet their fate.

23

On! on! to the fatal spot,
The couple made their way,
To bring to an end the plot,
Before another day.

As they reached the craggy
edge,
The couple hand in hand,
Carried out their fatal pledge,
Their own, their last demand.

Side by side the couple lay,
Hearts that had beat as one,
Ceased upon that final day,
Their toils on earth now
done.

And e'er since that gloomy
hour
The story has not failed to
keep,
It seems some magnetic
power
Holds sway o'er the famous
Leap.

Ne'er shall the hist'ry be
forgot
By those who the story seek,
But ever famous will be the
spot,
Well-known as Lover's Leap.

Why Should the American Negro Be Proud?

Why should the American
negro be proud?
This question was asked in
tones clear and loud,
The Negro who once was in
fetters a slave
Now passes in freedom from
birth to his grave.

Why should the Negro with
eagerness yearn
For wisdom which teaches
men how to discern,
Why should they with faithful
hearts plead
Or yearn for wisdom that
they may succeed.

Does not the same God who
rules on high
Instill in the hearts of all
mankind to try,
Is not the same God the
Negro protector,
Why says, "Of persons I'm no
respector."

24

Then, should persons in
ignorance plead
To know why the Negro
wants to succeed,
When Nature's law in
common states--
That human beings have
similar traits.

The Negro for wisdom puts in
a petition,
That intelligently he too may
live;
That he may gain such
recognition
That intelligence might give.

In ignorance they lived for
years,
When they had not the
chance to learn;
That ignorance to them bro't
bitter tears,
And now for wisdom they
yearn.

The best of this race make
good their chance,
This story, schools and
colleges tell,
Each year may be seen their
steady advance
As their numbers in greatness
swell.

Then should the American
Negro be proud,
When each day he makes an
advance,
As gradually he's moved
away the cloud
Which for years denied him a
chance.

Then, why not encourage him
each day,
When he tries to make most
of his life,
And live in a friendly feeling
way,
Casting aside all malice and
strife.

Would not life be a pleasure,
If the races would manifest
Such interest in each other
That none would
advancement detest.

Would not our lives be
glorious
If friendship ruled the land,
Making our efforts victorious,
Regardless of race or clan.

What will become of the
Negro

When friendship's ebb is low,
What will make him a hero
In the midst of an embittered
foe.

25

The Negro must learn, if he
would improve,
And remove the many
defects
Which cause other races to
term him rude,
And for him to lose their
respect.

Among the White race he has
some friends
Who urge him onward each
day;
Gladly a helping hand they
lend
As he onward works his way.

Yet in the distance not afar
He sees a heavy cloud
Moving slowly o'er the land
Where Negroes are justly
proud.

Will the storm's effect prove
serious?
To know we can only wait;
For in ways almost
mysterious
Sometimes comes a nation's
fate.

Then, Negro, Oh! Negro,
cease repining,
'Tis said each cloud has a
silver lining;
Pray to the God who rules on
high,--
He has the power to clear the
sky.

It is He who rules the
universe,

And guides it's affairs for
better or worse;
All earthly affairs are in His
hands,
The whole earth moves at His
commands.

'Twas by His aid and thro' His
power
The Negro has made an
advance;
He aids them thro' their
trying hours
That they might have a
chance.

Should not the American
Negro be proud
When he has been given a
start,
And tho' he discerns some
heavy clouds,
He should toil with an
earnest heart.

Yea! toil with an earnest
heart
And deeds of evil shun,
'Tis said that we're
remembered
By all that we have done.

26

Then, Negro, toil on, act well
your part;
Bravely stand the test;
Do your duty, be earnest at
heart;
Believe what happens is best.

And when your task on earth
is done,
And time for reward is at
hand,
When at last the victory's
won,
And you view you happy
land,--

In happiness, in boundless
love,
You'll spend eternity in
realms above;
After having stood the test,
You'll enjoy, above, the rest,
sweet rest.

De Leap Yeah Party

Was you at de hall las' night,
To de Leap Yeah Party?
I reckon dat I was,
But didn't I eat hearty?

I wouldn't hab missed gwine
dar,
Fo' sumpin purty fine;
Dem folks was sholy lookin'
good,
En had one sumptuous time.

En ebery which a way you
went
About de day befo',
Some one was standin' at yo'
fence,
Or knockin' at yo' do'.

Axin dese here questions:
Is you gwine out to-night?
What color is you gwine to
w'ar,
Yaller, blue or white?

Is you gwine to twis' yo' hwar
up high,
Or let it cum down low?
Is you gwine to walk dar,
How's you gwine to go?

27

En ob all de questions,
I neber heahed befo',
As dey met me wif upon de

street,
En eben at my do'.

Till I jis took to thinkin'
As I walked aroun'
Dat dis would be de grandes'
t'ing,
Dat eber cum to town.

Case ol' an young was fixin'
En primpin' up to date,
Leaben all de wuk undone
Fo' fear dat dey'd be late.

En when I got into dat hall,
Goodness! what a sight,
De same as pictures on de
wall
De folks did look dat night.

Cud'n tell ol' folks from de
young,
Case all was lookin' gay,
Chattin' to der fellows
In a stylish kin' o' way.

En you better had been
kerful,
Dar'd been one de bigges
fights
Had you called eny body ol'
folks
On dat Leap Yeah Party night.

Eben to de ol' men,
Who'd always had der canes,
To keep f'om fallin' in de
streets,
Or slippin' in de rain,--

Had flung dem all away dat
night,
En cum in struttin' too,
Wid long tail jimswingers on,
En I said, Who but you?

It wud hab tickled you so
much,
'Til you on your knees wud
fall,

Could you jis hab seed dem
folks
A settin' in dat hall.

28

Like sardines in a box,
Dem folks was holy packed,--
Hardly room to draw yo'
breaf,
'Lieve me, 'tis a fact!

De music it was playin', too,
Like ragtime at a ball,
De folks could hardly hold
dey feet,
But de parson viewed dem
all,--

En dey was skeered to move
dem,
Or make a silent tread,
So dey kept time wid de
music
By de bowin' ob de head.

When eatin' time did cum,
Dey all was at de table,
Puttin' 'way de grub,
As fas' as dey was able.

Gibin no tho't to dem aroun',
En not a wud dey said,
Stuffin' dey mouths wid
chicken,
Tater salid, ham en bread.

De odder folks wid hungry
looks,
Sot waitin' fo' der turn,
Hoping dar'd be sumpin' lef,
As dey gazed wid faces stern.

As dey finished ob der eatin',
Dey moved up f'om der
places,
En turnin' dey did meet,
A number ob smilin' faces.

Now 'twas der turn to eat,
Such a scrumagin' dey had,
En dem dat failed to git seats,
Did turn wid faces sad.

Dey soon got thro' der eatin',
Case de hour was growin' ol',
Dey head de clock a strikin',
En de mornin' hour it told.

29

Dey called out fo' der coats
en hats,
Wid faces gay en bright,
En eber dey'll remember,
Dat Leap Yeah Party night.

What's Mo' Temptin' to de Palate?

What's mo' temptin' to de
palate,
When you's waked so hard all
day,
En cum in home at ebentime
Widout a wud to say,--
En see a stewin' in de stove
A possum crisp en brown,
Wid great big sweet potatoes,
A layin' all aroun'.

What's mo' temptin' to de
palate,
Den a chicken bilin' hot,
En plenty ob good dumplin's,
A bubblin' in de pot;
To set right down to eat dem,
En 'pease yo' hunger dar,
'Tis nuffin' mo' enjoyin',
I sho'ly do declar.

What's mo' temptin' to de

palate
Den a dish ob good baked
beans,
En what is still mo' temptin'
Den a pot brimfull ob greens;
Jis biled down low wid bacon,
Almos' 'til dey's fried,
En a plate ob good ol' co'n
cakes
A layin' on de side.

What's mo' temptin' to de
palate
Den on Thanksgibin' Day
To hab a good ol' tuckey
Fixed some kin' o' way;

30

Wid cranber'y sauce en
celery,
All settin' on de side,
En eat jis 'til yo' appetite
Is sho' full satisfied.

What's mo' temptin' to de
palate,
Den in de Summer time,
To bus' a watermillion
Right from off de vine;
En set right down to eat it
In de coolin breeze,
Wif nuffin' to moles' you,
Settin' neaf de apple trees.

What's mo' temptin' to de
palate,
Den poke chops, also lam',
En what is still mo' temptin'
Den good ol' col' biled ham;
Veal chops dey ain't bad,
Put de mutton chops in line,
I tell you my ol' appetite,
Fo' all dese t'ings do pine.

What' mo' temptin' to de
palate,
When you cum from wuk at
night,
To set down to de fiah,
A shinin' jis so bright,
De ol' 'oman walks in,--

Wid supper brilin' hot,
En a good ol' cup ob coffee,
Is steamin' out de pot.

'Tis den I kin enjoy myse'f,
En eat dar by de fiah,
Case puttin' way good eatin's
Is sho'ly my desire;
Dar's nuffin dat's so temptin',
Dat to me is a treat,
Den settin' at a table
Wid plenty good to eat.

31

Dat Mule ob Brudder Wright's

Dar's plenty t'ings to write
erbout,
Bof in en out ob skool,
'Cept taken fo' a subject,
En ol' en stubborn mule.

But de one I specs to write
erbout,
Ain't ob de stubborn kin';
A fus class critter out en out,
Beats eny mule in line.

At eny kin' ob wuk he's
good,--
Kin put him to de plow,
Or take him out to haulin'
wood,
He'll wuk from hour to hour.

Hitch him wid anodder mule,
Or let him pull alone,
Eny whar you put him
Dis ol' mule is at home.

You see him to de buggy,
In de mornin's cle'r en bright,

Put him to de cart,
It is his heart's delight.

Eny whar you take him,
He'll make hisse'f at home,
Eny whar you hitch him,
He'll stan' en will not roam.

Will I tell you who he 'longs
to?
Sho, wid delight,
He is de splendid property
Ob brudder Henry Wright.

Dar's odder mules in town,
But none so gay en sry,
Hitch him to de sulky
En he kin sholy fly.

32

Not one lazy bone
Do dis mule possess,
In any kin' ob wuk
He kin stan de tes'.

Dar's plenty mules in town,
But none so out ob sight,
As dis thoro' bred Kintucky
Ob brudder Henry Wright's.

Dar's none wid no sich name,
Dat's trabbled on his way,
No, none wid no sich fame
As you read ob dem each
day.

Dar's odder mules in town,
But none kin take de flight,
Or make a steady roun'
Like dis ob Henry Wright's.

Ef you wants to see some
pacin',
Jis call on dis ol' mule,
When it cums to out right
racin'
You'd t'ink he'd been to
skool.

Dar's plenty mules aroun',
But none no whar in sight,
Not eben in dis town,
Like dis ob Henry Wright's.

No odder mule in town
Does know de roads so well,
No matter whar you take him
Dis mule can always tell.

He likes to wuk in sunshine,
He likes to wuk in rain,
At night or eben day time,
He always seems de same.

He neber jumps out ob de
road,
When de 'mobiles cum his
way,
Eny whar he has a load
Dis mule aint 'fraid to stay.

33

Nuffin cud'n skeer him,
At night or eny time,
A match fo' dis ol' mule
Wud be hard to find.

Dar's odder mules in town,
But none no whar in sight,
Dat sho cou'd win de crown
Like dis ob Henry Wright's.

Sometimes

Sometimes the days seem
dark and dreary,
We wonder what is life;
Sometimes of work we soon
grow weary,
All pleasures seem but strife.

Sometimes of aiming we

grow tired,
And finally give up all,
Leaving the mind once
inspired,
Heedless to a call.

Sometimes we give no
thought to those
Who in some way we might
aid;
Sometimes others' pains and
woes
Are at our mercies laid.

Sometimes if we'd stop to
think
And count the good deeds we
do
To help those on Poverty's
brink
We'd find them to be few.

Sometimes a good act we
might render
By saying some kind words,
To those whose hearts so
tender
By kindness has ne'er been
stirred.

Sometimes 'twould help us to
resolve
That each day while we live,
Some difficult problem we
will solve,
Or aid to others give.

34

And thus instead of
wondering,
And making all efforts strife--
Instead of always pondering,
To find out what is life,--

By our actions, by the deeds
we do,
Each day while we live,
Let them be many, or let
them be few,
We make life what it is.

To See Ol' Booker T.

Way down Souf whar de
lillies grow,
Is the lan' I wants to see,
En to dat lan' I specs to go,
Jis to see ol' Booker T.

I specs to take my faithful
mule
En hitch him to de cart,
En fo' dat famous cullered
skool
I's gwine to make a start.

I'll take a box and pack my
lunch
En start wid my ol' mule,
Case I know 'twill be a long
time
Fo' I reach dat Cullered Skool.

I wont get tired on de way,
But sing en feel so free,
Jis longin' fo' de day
To see ol' Booker T.

I hopes dat my ol' mule
Wont gib out on de way,
Befor' I reach dat skool,
Case I tell you dat wont pay.

Case dis feeble ol' man
Ain't no lad, you see,
But befo' I leaves dis lan'
I mus' see Booker T.

35

So I pray de Lawd to keep
Bof me en my ol' mule,
En spar us till we git
To dat Cullered Skool.

En gib our eyes de light,
Dat we can cle'rly see,

Dat Alabama lan' so bright,
En dear ol' Booker T.

I wonder ef he'll be at home,
Case I heahed he'd been to
sea,
En all de fer off lan's did
roam,
Dis same Booker T.

Dat eben kings en queens so
great
Did strive to shake his han'
En welcome Booker T.
To der native land.

Now, you know he mus' be
great;
Well, I's gwine dar to see,
En ef I git dar soon or late,
I'll ax fo' Booker T.

Dey say dat is de bigges'
skool
De same as eny town,
En neber was so many chaps
Eber seen aroun'.

Dey teaches you all kin's ob
wuk
En how to write en read,
En figger in de 'rithmetic,
En ebery t'ing you needs.

Dey teaches you to plant de
co'n,
En eben how to plow;
I tell you, man, as sho's you
born,
I'm on my way dar now.

En when I near dat skool,
En all dem chaps I see,
Dey better had keep cool,
En not make fun at me.

I sho' will bus' der heads,
Case my only plea
Is dat fo' I's dead
I mus' see Booker T.

Right in his office I will go,
En dar I'll take a seat,
En ax fo' Booker T., you
know,
En res' my w'ary feet.

I'll tell him I has jis now
'rived,
From ol' Virginny lan',
En took dat long en lonesom'
drive
To shake his willin' han'.

En dar I'll set en look at him,
En he will look at me,
En fo' my eyes get dim,
While I kin cl'erly see.

I'll take his gracious han'
Widin my trimblin' grasp,
En praise de Lawd I reached
de lan',--
I's finished up my tas'.

"I's seen dis great, great
cullered man,
I's ready now to go;
You've done a great wuk in
dis lan',
Is why I lubs you so."

So now my eyes I clos' to res',
I's happy, yea, so free;
I's took de journey, stood de
tes'
En seen ol' Booker T.

**Dedicated to Dr. W.
H. Sheppard**

[The returned
missionary, who spent
twenty years in Africa.]

On, on to the darkest
continent,
As the Adriatic sailed,
In Eighteen Hundred and
Ninety,
Many sad good-byes were
wailed.

37

When two brave sons left
their homes,
Their kindred, yea their
blood,
To wade in Africa's unknown,
And overwhelming flood.

A caucasian and a negro,
United heart and soul,
Bound for Ethiopia's soil,
Yea Africa's distant goal.

As from the New York shore
The steamer slowly starts,
Sheppard and Lapsley bade
good-bye
To sad but anxious hearts.

On, on, as the steamer glides,
'Mid the rippling water's
whirl,
On to the wild and savage
land,
The darkest in the world.

Yet, in that darkened land
Were millions, yea unfed,
Who never had been told
Of Christ the living bread.

But God had sent a message,
To these men so brave,

To go in Ethiopia's land,
And try these souls to save.

Gladly they heeded His
command,
To go 'mid danger and strife,
And work in that distant land,
Yes, at the cost of life.

And so in Ethiopia's wild,
These two men so brave,
Prayed for Ethiopia's child,
Struggling a soul to save.

For weeks, yes, months they
struggled,
Working day and night,
Until at last, how happy,--
There came a ray of light.

38

One soul had come to Christ,
One made to understand,
The blessed Savior's voice,
And heed to His command.

These leaders true and brave,
Prayed to Him on high a
prayer,
To thank Him for this
blessing,
And for His tender care.

But ere many months had
passed.
There came a sad, sad day,
A cloud o'er Africa's land was
cast,
For one had passed away.

A leader now was gone,
One whom they did love,
Rev. Lapsley had been called
To that home above.

His comrade also missed him,
For he was left alone,

To dwell in Ethiopia's land,
Afar from friends and home.

A work he had left
unfinished,
Which he had resolved to do,
But Sheppard decided by
God's aid
To carry the work on
through.

So he started out one day,
With Africa's savage band,
Determined to make his way
To the Forbidden Land.

(*) The Forbidden Land
herewith mentioned has
reference to a tribe of
savages in the interior,
known as Bakubas.

Months they spent on the
way,
To carry a ray of light
To Heathen who knew no
day,
In a land where all was night.

After toiling daily,
With Ethiopia's sons,
Many were brought to Christ,
A victors crown was won.

39

They built a house of
worship,
And toiled day after day,
Soon Ethiopia's sons
Had learned the narrow way.

They, too, began to preach,
And teach their fellowmen,
And for these blessings great
Their prayers did upward
blend.

And in this land so dark,
Where never had been light,
The lame, in Christ, were
made to walk.
The blind were given sight.

To Sheppard they gave great
praise,
He'd ventured on their soil,
And Ethiopia's sons had
raised
Thro' years of earnest toil.

For twenty years he
struggled,
In Africa's darkened land,
Giving them the light
As they heeded his
command.

Way off in Africa's land,
Let us in fancy look,
To see a heathen band,
Who'd never seen a book,--

Now preaching Christ and
teaching,
With minds all free and
bright,
All Hail to thee, oh Sheppard,
Who carried them the light.

A great work thou hast done,
To thee we give great praise,
Many laurels thou hast won
For thy remaining days.

40

De Wintah Styles

Come in, Aunt Jemima,
Oh no, 'taint wof while,

I jis been out a lookin'
At de wintah styles.

To see de change in coats,
En how de hats will be,
To go into dem stores,
La! 'tis a sight to see.

I jis stans' en looks,
En den I looks en t'inks
What will be de next t'ing
As we near de fashion's brink.

Case way back in my time,
No sich styles as dese,
Ever cums befo' de folks,--
We dressed den as we
pleased.

We wo' our linsey frocks,
En 'kerchiefs on our head,
En not dese great high hats,
Heavy's eny lead.

But de styles dis day
Am changed so from my
time,
Eberty'ing is gay,
En hiferlutin fine.

De hats dey am so bery high,
Wid feathers all aroun',
You can't tell what dey's
made of,
Or eben see de crown.

En chicken feathers, too,
Dyed blue, red and green,
En folks wid hats a struttin'
De same as eny queen.

41

De wimmen walkin' fru de
streets,
Wid diamon's in dey har,
En on dey hats ol' tuckey
tails,
A danglin' in de air.

Dey don't know de dif'rence,
Fer dey struts en primp dey
lips,
De same as dey was w'arin
De fines' ostrich tips.

En coats like long
jimswingers,
Vest, too, like de men,
Dese wimmen all de money
Dey kin git will spen'.

When dey husban's git de
money,
What I say you watch it,
De wimmen folks dey has it,
Fo' he gits it in his pocket.

I'se lookin' fer de time to cum
When dey will w'ar men's
pants,
Dey's settin' back a lookin',
En waitin' fer de chance.

Den de Lawd will say "enuf,"
En take dem up on high,
Whar he kin set de fashions
To rule dem in de sky.

Ambition

When e'er we enter Life's
open field,
Or life's duties are at hand,
When e'er to Necessity's
voice we yield,
Or heed to her just
commands.

'Tis then we need that power,
Which will aid us most in life,
And in every trying hour,
Will serve to banish strife.

42

'Tis then we need to exercise,

Those emotions of the soul,
Which will help us in our
efforts rise
And reach Life's distant goal.

'Tis then we need to
cultivate,
'Mid trying conditions,
Powers that will elevate
As real ambition.

Ambition to help the old in
life;
Ambition to aid the young,
To lift from hovels, banish
strife,
And aid every one.

To be an aid in every task,
And every petition,
As long as life shall last,
Cultivate ambition.

Christmas Times

When are the children all
happy and gay?
When do they ne'er grow
tired of play?
When do their mouths seem
like bells in chimes?
It is the merry Christmas
times.

When do the little boys all
get good?
And bring in coal and cut all
the wood,
And every command of their
parents mind,
'Tis just a week before
Christmas times.

That is the time when all of
the work
Is done without a grumble or
shirk.
The little boys then ne'er turn

and twist,
When mother says, "Son,
come here and do this."

Let the word be said, he's at
her command,
Not once does he frown, or
attempt to stand,
But goes at her bidding,
happy and gay,
For it will soon be Christmas
day.

43

And then old Santa, thro' all
the snow,
Will come to those who've
been good, you know;
Down the chimney he'll come
and will not stop,
Till he fills each stocking full
to the top.

When his task is o'er he takes
his stand
Gazing at little ones in
Dreamland,
Who in that land, all happy
and gay,
Their minds all fixed on
Christmas day.

And in a few hours, with
merry hearts,
Little ones out of their warm
beds dart,
All happy and gay, hearts full
of cheer,
To see what's been bro't by
Santa dear.

How happy is each little
mind,
When every stocking full they
find,
And presents scattered on
the floor,
How could they ever ask for
more?

No, no, but for many a year,
Christmas time to them will
be dear,
And e'en in their prayers they
make a pause
And ask many blessings on
Santa Claus.

De Men Folks ob Today

Ob all de subjects I kin read,
Or reason on so well,
De one I cum tonight to
plead,
Is de one I likes to tell.

'Tis all about dese men folks,
Who's losin' all dey sense,
You needn't look at me and
sneer,
Case it's a lack fer common
sense.

Dey's done los' all dey
manners, too,
En nebber rais' de hats,
Dis losin' sense, jis thrills me
thru',
Dey's wo's den eny chaps.

44

Why, when I was a comin' up,
En I aint so ol' as yit,
De men folks didn't seem sich
bluffs,
En neber had sich fits,--

As de men folks ob today,
Puttin' on sich style,
In der hiferlutin' way,
Goodness, 'taint wof while.

Case when you courts de
wimmen,
Dey don't lub you fo' yo' clo's,

Dat wud be a sinnin',
En ebery body knows.

Dey lubs you fo' yo' winnin'
ways,
En not fo' dressin' fine,
Lub fo' clo's dese days don't
pay,
Is what's been on my min'.

You stylish dudes who's
settin' roun',
Ef you wants to marry,
Take off dem stylish frocks en
gowns,
Use common sense, don't
tarry.

Put on some good ol' wukin'
clo's,
En git yo' se'f a job,
En don't be hangin' 'roun
each day,
Wid some lazy mob.

You take dis good advice,
You, Dick, Tom en Harry,
En soon you'll hab a wife,
Ef you wants to marry.

De People's Literary

Well, well, you's cum at las'--
Cum in and hab dis seat;
Walkin's sich a tiresom' tas'
I'll fix a bite to eat.

45

It's been a week o'mo'
Since I seed yo' lubely face;
En when I spied you at de do',
Wid all dat hat en lace,--

I said it sho' is Mandy Lee,
En my! but I was glad,
Till my po' heart did jump wid

glee,
As do a little lad.

Tell me, honey, whar's you
bin,
You sho' is lookin' sweet;
It seems as do de win'
Jis blowed you off de street.

What makes you keep a
singin',
Why don't you answer me?
Yo' heart mus' be a ringin',
Songs dat's full ob glee.

"Now, hush, Aunt Lou, you's
makin fun,
I ain't so awful fine,
But Jim West my heart has
won,
En dis here am de sign."

He's gwine out to-night,
To de People's Literary,
En tol' me look cle'n out ob
sight
En not to act contrary.

Ef you lubs me, Mandy Lee,
Cum to de chu'ch to-night,
Lookin' purty as kin be,
Yo' eyes all shinin' bri't.

When I looks at you dat
night,
Ef you greet me wid a smile,
You mean yo' lub is sho' alri't,
I'll be one happy chile.

So I jis dressed to-night fo'
him,
Case he seems to lub me so,
I sholy do t'inks heaps ob
him,
But hates to tell him so.

So I'se gwine out to-night
To sho' my lub is tru';
My heart is happy en so light,
I don't know what to do.

En dat People's Literary,
Am sumpin fine, fo' sho';
De chu'ch am always packed
Way back to the do',

En when dey sing dem songs
Yo' soul, it seems to rise,
Till you see de angel throngs
Way up in de skies.

En when dey calls de roll
Folks answer wid a speech,
'Twould tak' a 'mence big
scroll
To sum up what dey teach.

Dey sings de nices' songs
You eber heahd befo',
I heahs dem all day long
As I goes from do' to do'.

Dey makes big speeches, too,
En dey soun' so bery high,
You'd t'ink dey's wrote by
some one
Dwellin' in de sky.

I jis can't tak' de time
To tell de r'al good
Dese t'ings is on de min',
En specs I neber cud.

But dis People's Literary
I hopes may neber die;
En dat eben folks contra'y
Will strive to make a try.

I specs to larn to speak en
sing,
En say big speeches, too,
To mak' dem chu'ch walls
ring
Lik' chimin' bells anew.

En when de part is bro't in,
 Mandy Lee's big name
 Will shine among de res',
 Ringin' out wid fame.

You sho' will laf, but taint no
 use,
 I'll sho' be clos' behin'
 When de People's Literary
 Stars begin to shine.

Superstitions

I ain't superstitious,
 But dis I sho' do know,
 Dat ef a rooster walks his se'f
 up
 En crows right in y'o do',
 Dar's sho' someone a comin'
 Say jis what you might,
 Dar'll be a stranger at yo'
 hous'
 Fo' de cumin' ob de night.

I ain't superstitious,
 But dis I know is tru',
 Say what you will, en do what
 you'll do;
 Ef yo' lef' han' itches,
 You may t'nk it funny,
 But you sho' soon gwine er
 git
 A little sum ob money.

I ain't superstitious,
 'Tis ignance I'll vow,
 But sho's you're born,
 Dis is tru' some how,
 Dat ef you starts a place,
 En has to turn back,
 En fo'gits to make a cross,
 En spit right in yo' track,

Some bad luck sho' will
follow,
Dis t'ing sho' is tru',
Ef you don't believe me,
I tell you what to do:
Jis go some whar fo' fun,
En den turn back to see,
Some bad luck sho' will
follow,
'Tis tru' as it kin be.

I ain't superstitious,
But I tell you what I've seen,
Ef you eats at a table
Whar dar's jis thirteen,
You min' what I say,
As sho's dar's a sky
One ob dat thirteen
Will be sho to die.

I ain't superstitious
But here's annoder fact,
En dis t'ing sho is tru'
No matter whar you's at,
Dat if you starts a place
En a black cat crosses you
'Tis sho en sartin bad luck
No matter what you do.

I can't superstitious
En sho I ain't to blame
But if you cum in one do' ob
de hous'
En don't go out de same
Your min', it sho is bad luck,
You kin turn dis way en dat
But bad luck sho will follow
No matter whar you's at.

I ain't superstitious
But some t'ings I do know,
Ef you sweeps yo' hous' out
arter dark
'Tis bad luck fo' you sho,

En please don't spill no salt,
It jis as sho is tru'
Dat sumpin's gwine to
happen,
Min' what I say, too.

I ain't superstitious
But I tell you fus en las'
It sho is awful luck
To break a lookin' glass;
Bad luck fo' seven years
Is de title read;
Dat sho is one t'ing dat I
fears--
One t'ing dat I dread.

I ain't superstitious
But dis ain't no lie,
Ef a bird flies in de hous'
Dars some one gwine to die;
'Tis jis as true as it kin be
En when you see de bird
Some one's gwine to leabe
dat hous',
Case die am de word.

I ain't superstitious
But let yo' lef' eye quiver,
Trouble sho will follow,
You jis well 'gin to shiver;
En let yo' lef' foot itch
'Tis jis as tru' fo' sho,
You jis well pack yo' satchel,
Case on strange lan' you mus'
go.

I ain't superstitious,
But dis I sho do know,
In de ebening arter dark
Ef you hears a rooster crow
Hasty news am cumin,
'Tis tru' as it kin be,
En you jis well wa'r a long
face
En set en wait to see.

I ain't superstitious,

It's ign'ance, 'tis a fact;
It jis sho's, too,
Dat fo' 'telligence you lack,
But when settin at de table,
La sakes! don't sneeze,
It's a sho sign ob death,
Say what you please.

I ain't superstitious
En eberybody knows
Dat I ain't superstitious
Eny whar I goes,
But y'all sho kin tell
En read between de lines,
I ain't superstitious
But I do beliebe in signs.

Poet of Our Race

[Dedicated to the
memory of Paul
Laurence Dunbar.]

Oh, Poet of our Race,
We reverence thy name
As thy hist'ry we retrace,
Which enfolds thy
widespread fame.
And called thee up with Him
to dwell
On that Celestial shore.

Thy sorrows here on earth,
Yea, more than thou could'st
bear,
Burdened thee from birth
E'en in their visions fair.

And thou, adored of men,
Whose bed might been of
flowers,
With mighty stroke of pen
Expressed thy sad, sad hours.

51

Thou hast been called above,
Where all is peace and rest,

To dwell in boundless love,
Eternally and blest.

And, yet, thou still dost linger
near,
For thy words, as sweetest
flowers,
Do grow in beauty 'round us
here
To cheer us in sadest hours.

Thy thoughts in rapture seem
to soar
So far, yea, far above,
And shower a heavy
downpour
Of sparkling, glittering love.

Thou, with stroke of mighty
pen,
Hast told of joy and mirth,
And read the hearts and souls
of men
As cradled from their birth.

The language of the flowers,
Thou hast read them all,
And e'en the little brook
Responded to thy call.

All Nature hast communed
And lingered, yea, with thee,
Their secrets were entombed
But thou hast made them
free.

Oh, Poet of our Race,
Thou dost soar above;
No paths wilt thou retrace
But those of peace and love.

Thy pilgrimage is done,
Thy toils on earth are o'er,
Thy victor's crown is won,
Thou'lt rest forever more.

To Professor Byrd Prillerman

[President of West
Virginia Colored
Institute.]

Dar's a skool in West
Virginny,
Dat I hears dem call de Farm,
Whar dey raises ebery t'ing to
eat,
En has de bigges' barns,--
Whar de ho'ses en de cows,
In restin' spend de night,
And w'ar away de hours,
To dey own heart's delight.

'Tis dar dey teaches
ebery t'ing
In de wuken line,
As much as folks kin well take
in
Upon de common min';
Dey l'arns you how to cook,
Dey l'arns you how to sew;
In fact, dey teaches
ebery t'ing
Dat you wants to know.

Has you eber seed de
president
Ob dat skool, de Farm?
De man who bosses
ebery t'ing,
From de skool room to de
barn;
I tell you he's a great man,
To meet him you kin see
De 'telligence beamin' from
his face
As blossoms from a tree.

He's hammered on de
chillun's heads,
Fo', lo, dese thirty years,
Poundin' knowledge in dem
'Mid dumbness en 'mid fears;

He's bro't dem from de dunce
stool
Ob ignance en disgrace,
En trained dem in his skool
To lead folks ob de race.

53

He's one de oldes' teachers,
In West Virginny State,
En what dat man don't know
Ain't worthy to relate;
So, when you wants to go to
skool
To be sho to l'arn,
Go to dat Cullered Institute
Dat some folks call de Farm.

Sister Johnson's Speech

I went to chu'ch, 'tother
night,
De silvah moon was shinin'
bright;
Brudder Johnson en his wife
was dar,
Dey went wif Jane en me en
ma.

Sister Johnson, she jumped
up to speak,
She said dat sinners ought to
seek
To git the 'ligon ob de soul
Dat shined out in dem bright
as gol'.

She said dat sinners ob dis
day
Tho't so ob dress en looked
so gay
Dat when it cum de Lawd to
seek
Dey hearts and souls was
pow'ful weak.

En, too, so Sister Johnson

said,
De Lawd He am de staff en
bread;
He feeds de soul, en fills it,
too,
En makes you eber feel anew.

She said, you little gals en
boys
Who sets in chu'ch en makes
a noise,
You needs to come into de
fol'
En git de 'ligon ob de soul.

You needs to fix yo' soul up
new,
You better min' what I say,
too,
You frisky little gals and boys,
Who likes to set and make a
noise.

54

Sister Johnson she speaked
what she know'd
Case she has trabbled on de
road,
En speaked to folk in
crowded hous',
Where chillun set jis like a
mouse.

She's speaked to folks in
cities, too,
En towns en villages a few;
She tol' dem 'bout dey low
disgrace
En tried to raise folks ob de
race.

She says she means to set a
zample
En gibe you folks a little
sample
Ob how to serve de Lawd
outright,
In mornin' or de darkes'
night.

De Lawd He made de shinin'
moon
To light you fru dis worl' ob
gloom;
He made de sun to shine fru
day
En light you on de narrow
way.

He made dis worl' so cle'r en
bright,
He made de darkness ob de
night;
He made de grass to look so
green
En de snow dat 'pears so
white and clean.

En, brudders, as I now do
speak,
My voice am gitten low en
weak,
But I hopes my talk will be a
blessin'
En dat from it you'll l'arn a
lesson.

En as I goes from place to
place,
I'll try to raise folks from
disgrace,
En soun' my notes in cleares'
tones,
Befor' I takes de train fer
home.

I'll let dem know I takes my
stan'
Fer 'spectability ob de lan'
En ef dey still keeps on der
ways,
A mighty fog I specs to raise.

James Hugo Johnston

On a hill near Petersburg,
Facing the old historic town,
There lives a model Negro--
One who's won renown.

A man we should be proud
of--
President of a school;
He holds full sway in his
modest way,
Of reserved and dignified
rule.

'Tis just such men the world
needs,
One whose record stands
Unblemished by a darkened
deed,
Clear, wavering thro' the
land.

Live on, thou brave and
honored sire,
That many thy paths may
retrace,
To keep them from the
deepened mire
Of folly and disgrace.

Live on, thou noble son of
Ham--
On, on, thro life's rugged
ways;
With steps clear and
unfaltering,
Deserving of thy praise.

The Strawberry

At first we see the tiny leaves
And no one at their coming
grieves,
But watch so eager each day

and hour
For the coming of the little
flower.

Each day, then, to the
strawberry bed
The feet of little ones do
tread
And around the bed they
gather soon,
Watching for the strawberry
bloom.

56

The little blossoms so sweet
and small
They watch until each petal
falls;
How happy they feel, then;
oh, how merry,
When they find the first
strawberry.

Happier beings were never
seen
As they gaze on the little
berry green,
With happy hearts and faces
strange,
Wondering when it's color
will change.

After a few days shall have
passed
Still resuming their daily task
To the strawberry bed again
they tread
To see who can find a
strawberry red.

And as they find them, how
happy at heart,
As strawberries in their little
mouths dart;
Romp about, full of frolic
and glee,
With little mouths full as they
can be.

Soon they leave the

strawberry bed
After eating all the berries
red,
Thanking God, and Heaven
above,
For the little berries that they
love.

As We Sow We Shall Reap

As we go about the toils of
life,
As we witness each day, it's
burdens and strife,
Thinking not of days of the
future or past,
Knowing not where in life our
lots may be cast.--

'Tis then in life's broad and
fertile field,
In tho'tlessness to fate we
yield;
Not deeming it wise our
tho'ts to cast
On any works or deeds of the
past.

Still tho'tlessly we struggle
along
Amid Life's great and fearless
throng;
Thro' darkened caves, o'er
rugged steeps,
Thinking not that as we sow
we reap.

57

But later on, when years have
flown,
And of life's cares we've
weary grown,
'Mid silence, tho'ts in our
minds do creep,
That as we've sown, we now
do reap.

We think of our heavy
burdens and cares,
It seems to us more than we
can bear;
It pains our heart, we utter a
groan,
Yet, we're reaping what we
have sown.

Oh, if we only could blot out
the past,
And e'en it's memory in some
sea cast,
Oh, could we but live this life
again,
Such burdens would not on
our minds remain.

But now our eyes are dim
with age,
We near the last line of life's
page,
We'll seal it's contents with a
groan,--
Reaping-reaping what we
have sown.

Before your eyes grow dim
with age,
You, who are on Life's busy
stage,
Each day you labor, do
mindful keep,
That as you sow you will
surely reap.

What's de Use ob Wukin in de Summer

Time at All

What's de use ob wukin in de
Summer time at all,
When de sun am bilin' hot en
de sweat begins to fall;
What's de use ob diggin' in de

fields ob co'n en 'taters,
Plantin' squash en beans en
pickin' ripe tomatoes.

What's de use ob pickin' in de
field's ob huckleberries,
Or pullin' at de trees, pickin'
off de cherries;
What's de use ob wukin or
plowin' in de heat,
Eatin' ha'f-cooked meals en
blisterin' yo' feet.

58

What's de use ob habin
houses in de summer time,
'Tis plenty good out doors
when de blessed sun do
shine;
When de fields is clothed wid
green, de meadow en de
lane,
You need no kin' ob shelter
'cept in fallin' ob de rain.

'Tis mighty hard a wukin
when de sun am beamin'
down
En not a spot ob coolness to
be seen aroun',
When ebery way you turn, de
sun am shinin' hot,
En ebery inch ob flesh am a
bu'nin' spot.

'Tis mighty hard a walkin' in
fields ob turned up groun',
For miles en miles a plantin',
out ob hearin' ob de town,
A sowin' ob de wheat or
plantin' ob de co'n;
It sho is bitter meat en hard
wuk sho's you born.

'Tis fearful hard a-stayin' in
de field de livelong day,
When de hours am slowly
passin' en you hab so long to
stay;
En you wuk so bery hard
when you stop you hardly

know

De way to take fer home dat
wont seem kin' o' slow.

But arter t'inkin' ober all de
change is got to cum,
I spec's I'll take de Summer,
wid all de shinin' sun;
Case when de winter sets his
foot upon dis naked earf,
He brings about much
sadness to take de place of
mirf.

Den de hard times cum a
peepin' en a movin' in fer
sho,
Sho'in' ob his grinnin' teeth,
knockin' at yo' do';
'Tis den he tries to rob yo' ob
trunk en clo's,
En soon you fin' yo'se'f
a-settin' out ob do's.

De chills dey soon cum ober
you, you fin' no whar to go,
As you wander 'long about de
street en seek from do' to
do';
No wuk to do, no shelter, not
a crus' ob bread to eat,
No good warm clo's to sooth'
de chill, no shoes fer naked
feet.

'Tis den I see de use ob wukin
in de sun,
It matters not how hot, no
day I'll eber shun;
'Tis den I see de need ob
plantin' wheat en co'n,
En puttin' up fer winter, 'tis a
fact, as sho's you born.

59

'Tis den I know de need ob
drappin' squash en 'taters,
Plantin' beets, en plantin'

beans en pickin' ripe
tomaters;
'Tis den I see de good old
need ob pickin' huckleberries,
En pullin' down de limbs
a-gatherin' ob de cherries.

For all dis helps, I tells you,
when Winter cums wid col',
En starts His round ob
freezin' en starvin' many
souls;
It keeps away old hunger
when He cums wid starin
face,
En leaves you a sufferin' en
starvin' in disgrace.

En now I'll tell you one en all,
de Summer time am hot,
I'd sooner be a little warm
den freezin' 'bout in spots;
I'd radder be out in de field
when de sun an beamin'
down,
En wuk de blisters on my
hand as I make a weary
round.

I'll take ol' Summer any time
on my list fer sho,
Den fool wid winter in His
wrath when He knocks upon
de do';
I'll take de heat en sweat en
plant de fields ob co'n,
Radder'n face ol' Winter's
breff in de coolness ob de
morn.

No day will eber 'pear so
long, no field so bu'nin' hot,
But what I'll plant de c'on en
fill in ebery spot;
No idle moments will I spar'
but days ob earnest toil,
To sho de blessed benefits ob
wukin in de soil.

Case Summer time to me am
dear en 'tis den I spec's to

wuk
En ef I has de time to spar'
'tis Winter time I'll shirk;
I'll try to 'scape His freezin'
days en b'ar me burdens free,
Take Winter time in all His
ways but Summer time fer
me.

The Lost Teddy Bear

Well, Teddy, I have found
you,
It's been one week to-day
Since I missed you, Teddy
dear,
While in the yard at play.

60

I wandered far and wide,
And knew not where to go
To find you, Teddy, dear,
But, oh, I missed you so.

I know some naughty boy
Stole you, dear, from me,
And if I only knew
Who that boy could be,--

I'd scold him, yes, I'd scold
him,
And I'll just bet he'd not dare
To interfere again
With my dear little Teddy
bear.

And, oh, you were so nice
and clean,
One would scarcely know
That you were the same little
Teddy
Lost one week ago.

But still I welcome you, my
dear,
And will wash you nice and
clean

And try forget that you were
lost
And believe it all a dream.

So, again I embrace you,
Teddy,
For I love you just the same,
And tho' you look so dirty,
'Twas the boy, you ain't to
blame.

Meal Time

Liza! call dat chile
En make her wash her face
En cum on to de table
So Pap can say de grace.

You let de chillun hab der
ways
And soon dey'll manage you,
Ef you don't try to check
dem,
Come on, Bob en Sue!

61

Yo'all set up to de table,
'Twill take a ha'f a day
To get y'all to yo' meals,
Cumin in dat way.

Don't make sich noise wid
dem stools!
Does you hear me, Jane?
Ef 'twarn't fer we ol' folks
You chill un wud raise Cain.

Set up straight dar, Jimbo!
We all is ready, Pap!
Stop dat whisperin' Lisha!
En pull off dat air cap.

Yo' all cud'n sho keep still
'Till Pap cud say de grace;
I don't know what's gwine to

cum
Ob dis young cullud race.

Sal! git de spoon en git mo'
hash--
Don't spill it on de flo';
Take up all de co'n cakes,
I t'ink Pap wants some more.

Abe, don't stuff yo' mouf so
full,
You sho kin git some mo';
Be kerful wid dat buttermilk--
Don't spill it on de flo'.

En pass de cakes aroun',
Don't t'ink all 'bout yo' self;
Try to l'arn some manners,
You ugly little elf.

You kids done eat enuf!
Git up from dat table
En clean dem dishes up
As fas' as you is able.

En you sweep de kitchen
good,
Be quick about it, too;
'Twill be time fer anodder
meal,
Befo' you chaps git thro'.

62

Dedication Day
[Read at the dedication
of the new Mt. Zion
Baptist Church,
Staunton, Va.]

What means this vast
assemblage here,
Of people great and grand,
Who've come to us from afar
and near,

At the heed of one's
command.

Why come ye to Mt. Zion's
walls,
Ye folks in grand array?
"We've heeded to the
pastor's call,
'Tis Dedication Day."

List! hear ye not those songs,
Which pour forth streams of
love?
It seems that some angelic
throng
Has sent them from above.

Why are these souls with
music stirred,
What means all this, I pray?
Can it be you haven't heard,
'Tis Dedication Day?

The work of a hand is
finished,
The toil of a day is done,
One's labor is diminished,
Yet a great work to be done.

We stand 'mid beauty and
splendor,
And gaze on these sacred
walls,
While our hearts many
thanks do tender,
To Him who dost heed our
calls.

You've struggled, yea, toiled
unceasing,
To complete a glorious work,
Each day new efforts
increasing,
Daring not shrink nor shirk.

Part of your toils are at an
end,
And part, yea, just begun,
As your feeble efforts blend,
In love to the Holy One.

And now you have assembled
here,
'Mid efforts good and great,
With happy hearts, minds full
of cheer,
A gift to dedicate.

To dedicate, means to give to
God,
And may He who inspires us
to live
And trod each day earth's
lowly sod,
Instill in us power to give.

And as we our minds in
holiness lift,
We offer to Him above,
A sacred, yea, a noble gift,
In high honor of His love.

For 'twas He who gave you
power
To erect this building grand,
A monument to tower,
A glory to this land.

Let all unite in these songs,
Yea, your feeble voices lift,
And help this mighty throng,
To dedicate this gift.

And thank your God above
For the true-hearted leader
sent;
He's led seven years in love,
Calling sinners to repent.

He's toiled for Mt. Zion's
daughters and sons
That they might a true people
be,
That they live in love to the
Holy One,
Has been his prayer and
constant plea.

'Tis Moses He sent to lead

you,
That you heed His gentle
command,
He'll lead you safely thro',
Till you've reached the
promised land.

A man inspired by God,
He a noble work has done;
He'll reap his just reward,
When the harvest time has
come.

64

And to Mt. Zion's daughters
and sons
I pray that your life may be,
An emblem of the Holy One,
From strife and malice free.

And may the good Savior
above,
Bless this congregation great,
As they in prayers and songs
of love,
This building dedicate.

And to all who've helped in
the cause,
You've won for yourself
renown;
I pray you abide in His laws,
He'll add many stars to your
crown.