yours for smiles,

Franklin Henry Bryant
Black Smiles
or the
Sunny Side of Sable Life
by
Franklin Henry Bryant

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by

BRYANT & RENNINGS.
D'aint no use er bein' mum,
Lougin' 'roun' er-lookin' glum,—
Make er sorrer hate tuh come;
Keep smilin'.
Got no money? — what yer keer?
Smile er smile fum ear to ear;
Heaben's happy, don't yer fear;
Keep smilin', keep smilin'.

Possums clamin' 'simmon trees;
White fokes gruntuhs fat iz cheese;
Tu'keys roostin' in duh breeze;
Keep smilin'.
Nigguh, you can't coin er trillion;
Can't you lib on watuhmilion
Big iz Gools n Vanduhbillion?
Keep smilin', keep smilin'.

Rudduh be er smiler, min,
Right widout n right widin,
Wif duh tickles 'roun' muh chin,—
Keep smilin',—
Dan to dribe an automo'
Wid er million tons er woe
Hangin' on muh heaht, you know;
Keep smilin', keep smilin'!
Grandpa's
Fireside Stories
of Slavery Days
In Six Poems
Being a
Recital of Humorous
Incidents
Characteristic
of
Negro Life
“Befo' duh War”
Well, hit's neahly Cwismus, younguns, n I s'pose you want tuh hear
Gramper 'late a Cwismus story; so each feller git his cheer.
An' of co'se now, Sal Malindy wants tuh ride on gramper's shoe,
N if she'll be quite an' pooty, she'll be gramper's sugar-doo!

Now it come about one Cwismus, Mandy says 'twas fifty-fo',
Dat ole massa's crew er nigguhs axshilly tried dem-selves, yer know.
Jeems hid stole er poun' er backker, n ole A'nt Mer-liney Wess
Toted off er ham n bacon fum ole massa's in huh dress.
BLACK SMILES.

Well, I can't begin to tell yuh what dem darkies didn't stole;
But ole massa couldn't kotch 'em dough dey wuz audacious bol'.
Mas' thought, dough, dit he'd git even; so he simply helt his bref,
'Terminated whin he kotch er nigguh, he would beat him ha'f tuh def.

Now ole Pete wuz "hoodoo doctur" on ole massa's place, you see,
N he claimed dit he could cunger white n black n bon' n free.
Graveya'd dirt, n rooster spurs, n,—shucks, I don't know what all Pete
Didn't fix up fur us nigguhs,—hands, n jacks, n rabbit feet!

Howsomeber, all dim darkies what had one er Peter's things,
Would outrun duh dogs n massa lak iz if dey went on wings.
Stealin' now wuz nachly timptin', iz der craps wuz out n froo,
No mo' work twill Febberwary, hiu hit neahly Cwismus, too!

Now hit happened Cwismus Eve night wuz er drizzlin',
freezin' cole,
Hin yuh know, I knowed ole massa would be curled up in his hole.
Hince hit fell out so dit Peter, who wuz awllus mighty hunter,
Wokes me up twixt twelb n 'leben, axed me how'd I lak some grunter!

Whin dat nigguh mentioned grunter, Mandy riz up dare in bed,
'Sistes me in boots and briches. "Ready dreckly, Petes," I said.
Mandy fixed duh pots n vessels; all duh chilluns wuz awoke
An' wuz 'joicin' to see daddy gwine tuh git some Cwis-mus poke.

Got my rabbit foot, and Peter s'plied me wif a special hand,
Made to fit dis axshil 'casion,—piece er flannel full er sand.
Peter had er flint n pine tawch,—Petes wus 'fesshnul in dis sin;
See, he knowed we need dat tawch tuh blind duh grunters in duh pen.

Now, ole massa wuz er 'spectin' sumppun nudder to come 'bout,
N whin we got to his pen, suh, ever grunter wuz turned out!
But ole Peter says, "By gummy! Squeeze yuh rabbit foot," says he,
"N jis spit upon dat flannel, n come on n foller me."

In a minit we wuz stan'in' 'fo ole massa's front-yard gate;
Dare ole Peter works his jack, n whistle low,
n din we wait
Jis er secon', n ole Rovuh, massa's big ole nigger-hound,
Walks up jis iz nice n gintly, n he stood dare friskin' round!

Din ole Peter led right on in to ole massa's garden, where
D' wuz er box off in one cawnur, n er fine young grunter dare,
Which ole massa wuz er 'zervin' 'tickly fer his New Year's Day,
Whin dey wuz er 'spectin' cumpny,
some big folks fum fur away.

"Hit him centur!" says ole Peter, iz he blinds him wid duh light;
N I raised ole massa's ax up, n I nailed him wid my might.
But he squeal once, spite er hebens! Chile, I stabbed him in duh th'oat,
Picked him up, n law, sich runnin',—me n Peter n dat shoat!
I wuz leadin' wif duh grunter, pintly flyin' 'cross duh yard,
Follered by ole cunger Peter,— man, I wuz er runnin' hard,—
Whin ole missus' blamed ole clothes-line cot me right
beneaf duh chin,
N hit lak tuh jurked muh head off; folks, hit snatched
me out er win'.

Hin hit flung me, hebens honey!  Slap ergainst
ole Peter, too!
Dare us niggus n dat grunter had er mash n
smash fer true.
N ole mas' n miss' come runnin', wif duh
cow-hide, light, n gun,
'Fo' we riz; — n what you reckon dat dare
pleggone Peter done?

He jis grabbed me in duh collar, n he
helt me to duh groun',
N he holluhed, "Run quick, massa!  I
done got duh skawnul down!"
Mas' n miss', bofe in deyr night-clothes,
comes er runnin', n dey say,
"Hole 'im, Peter!  Blame duh debil!  Turn him ovuh
right away."

Folks, ole Peter bent me ovuh dat dare carcus of er hog,
While ole massa wif dat cow-hide evuhlastin' walked
my log!
Yas suh; dat ole white man stood dare, n he beat n beat, by gum;
Plum furgot dit he wuz freezin' twill duh fros' hid made him numb!

Well, he had to quit ur freeze one; so he left ole Pete duh light;
Tole him dat duh tail n intruls wuz his 'ward fur actin' right!
N tuh see I skint n gutted, cut n hung dat grunter up;
N ole missus stept n brought him pint er wine out in er cup!

Well, I skint n clean duh hog, n din I cuts him up also;
N I begs while I'm er cuttin', Pete tuh·hang it up, you know,
In duh smoke-house,—n ole Peter couldn't stan' tuh heah me beg,
N I beat him out dim intruls! Poured um down my briches-leg!

I jis laid it all on Rovuh, stanin' lickin' in duh pan!
N I left ole Petes a-cussin', wif er jack out in his han'.
I went home! Duh chaps n Mandy, heah dey all come,
gethern me;
Says she, "Sam, you smells lak grunter, but no sign er poke I see!"

"Johnny," says I, "pull dis boot off. You pull disun,
Sally Ann."
Jules Mariar, come 'ere quick, gal; bring yuh poppy dat dare pan."
Jules Mariar fotch duh pan dare; John n Sal bofe made er pull;
Off dem boots come, n dem chittlins haxshilly filled dat dish-pan full!

Mandy fell right in dare on um, n duh chilluns couldn’t speak.
Bless duh Lamb! duh dad done brought um Cwismus nuff tuh last er week!
Law, dim hashlits n dim chittlins. Dough I did hab to be beat,
I hid rudduh had dim chittlins dan tuh been ole hoodoo Pete!
THE MILION SEED.

Well now, little Sal Malindy, you kin sit on gramper's knee;
N duh res' er all you younguns, you jis lis'n heah to me;
N I'll tell you all a story, showin' how it awllus pays
To be hones' n be trufeful, by a tale fum slav'ry days.

Now dis 'curred way down in Jawgy on er summuh night in June,
Whin duh milions wuz er-ripenin', whin duh nights wuz dahk er moon..
Yes, duh time I riccomembers well iz if 'twuz yistuhday;
But it happened long befo' yuh gramper's wool hid gotten gray.

Well, iz we hid worked lak good folks, all duh craps wuz done laid by,
Massa lets us hab er 'vival, nigguhs come fum fur n nigh.

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Dare it chu’ch we’d hab our preachin’, settin’ souls fum
Satan free,
N we’d stay twill neahly midnight, n jis hab er juberlee.

Now, not fur off fum duh big house, n right clost berside
duh road,
Wuz ole massa’s watuhmilions,—n dey
wuz duh bis dit growed!
N, of co’se, ’twuz hewmun na-chur,—well, it mout er been
ole Scratch,
Dat one dahk night aftuh meet-in’ brought me to dat milion
patch.

Now it seems some udduh sin-nuh had been monkeyin’
roun’ dem vines,
N ole massa, he done seed it by
duh seeds n impty rines;
N so, on dis ’ticklur evenin’ he
done gone dar wid his gun,
’Termined dat if any nigguh
come dat night, he’d hab some fun!

Of dis fac’ I wuz in ignunce! But duh Lawd am good
a heap,
Faw He knowed I sho wuz hongry, n He put ole mas’
a sleep.
THE MILION SEED.

N my moufe wuz jis er watern, slobbuhs runnin' down my chin,
Iz I felt about, er-thumpin', fer a good one to begin.

Well I run upon er small one,—jis erbout so big, you know;
Brought muh hammuh up erginst it, n right inter hit I go.
N hit all hid vanished dreckly, n I wuz is hongry still;
But says I unto muhse'f din, "Nig-guh, stay n eat yo' fill."

So I hunted 'bout n foun' er great big feller which did thump
Nachly right, n off I jurked it, n begin to hunt er stump.
Well, right off er little dis-tunce, de ole debil he'p me foun' it,
Up I walks n raise muh mil-

Lawd er mussy! Up dat stump riz, whin dat milion fell, n whoo!
Y' orter seed me straighten out, boys; bless yer soul, I nachly flew!
Faw dat "stump" wuz my ole massa! Lef' his gun, n he to' out
One way home n me ernudduh. What you reckon come erbout?

Me n him met up tergedduh jis er few feet fum duh gate, N he knowed me, kaze he holllu hed, "Hay dare, Sambo, blame you, wait!"

'Stat you, massa?" says I p'litely.

"Yas, hit's me." His flint he scratch,
Lit er candle right dare on me: "You been in my milion patch."

"Lawzee, massa!" sclaims I loudly.

"Hush!" he raise his han' n said;
Hooked me in duh neck n spenders n straight in duh big house led;
Stuck me right befo' his bureau, hel' duh candle up, n law!
Dare I wuz er stan'in' lookin' hat er seed heah on muh jaw!

'Twa'n't no use to do no lyin'; I jis had to shet my moufe.
Massa reached up fer his cowhide, n 'twuz wahm fuh me down Soufe
'Fo' he tuhned me loose, I tell yer; n he nachly fixed me so
Dat I had no inclernations tawdz dat milion patch no mo'.
But furevuh aftuh, chilluns, whin duh cowhide wuz furgot,
Dare wuz one thing I remembu’d,—deep down in my soul it’s sot;
Faw whinevuh Satan timps me, wid er mean, dishones’ deed,
I kin look right in dat bureau, n behol’ dat milion seed!
The Secret of it

What keep duh guberment er-gwine?
  What keeps dim enguns puffin’?
What keeps duh white folks all fum dyin’?
  What s’plies um wid deyr stuffin’?
What keeps duh wurl up in deys fis?
  How come dey ride n rule?
Duh secrit of it all am dis:
  Duh nigguh n duh mule!

Somehow duh nigguh n duh mule
  Inclines tuh hang tuhgedduh;
You can’t tell which duh bigges’ fool.—
  But, bud, I’m doubtin’ whedduh
Ole Dixon Lan’ whar I wuz bawn
  Would ’mount tuh ha’f er chigguh,
If all duh mules wuz dead n gawn
  To heaben wid duh nigguh.
All right, chilluns; git 'roun' gramper; Lindy, clam up in my lap.
All git quite, n den I'll tell yuh how I had a sad mishap
In duh days of antebellum, which yuh know means slav'ry time,
'Fo' duh niggers had deyr freedom; — y'all are ignunt of duh crime.

Massa had a lot er sheep now, n some dog wuz awllus roun',
N would be er-killin muttons; — mas', dough could'nt kill duh houn'.
So one day whin he wuz 'turnin', habin' made er wild-goose-chase,
He sends word down to muh cabin to come up dare to his place.

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"SHAGGY."

Co'se I went, n says he, "Sambo, I's done run, n run, n run,
Tryin' to git dat plegged cur dog in duh reach er dis here gun.—
Now, I'm gwine tuh simply trus' you wid dis weepone dit you see;—
Git each dog, n yo's duh mutton, all 'cep' one good piece fer me."

Well suh, chilluns, you kin 'majun, maybe, how big gramper felt
Wid dat muskit,—shot n powder hawns er-hangin' fum muh belt.
"Yas, suh, massa!" Y' orter hurd me,— O, I'd riz up in duh sky!
So I watched n so I waited fer dat dog dit wisht tuh die.

Seemed like dough dit somehow 'nudduh dat ole dog jis wouldn't come
Back n kill ernuudduh mutton,—Lawd, I wuz er-wantin some!
But dat skawnul stayed erway, suh;— well, I most wuz in despair,
Whin er thought popped froo muh noggin, n hit he'ped me, I declare.

Now, I had er dog name "Shaggy," n he wa'nt no count at all,—
“SHAGGY.”

"G'way fum dare' you grand old rascal,"—bless yuh, Shaggy's tushes bloom, N he bristles up dare to me,—but I raised dat gun, "Cur-boom!"

Well, dat settled it wid Shaggy; I jis hauled him by duh sash Little piece off fum duh mutton, lef' him dare fuh buzzard hash. 'Gainst er tree I lent duh muskit whilst I cut me down er pole So's to tote muh mutton handy, down I retched tuh take erhol',—

Whin, I 'clare tuh goodness gwacious, up dat blamed ole mutton rose, Froo duh briars hit went er-flyin'! but right aftuh hit I goes. Hebens, chilluns! y'orter seed us sail froo stumps n briars n ditches,— Los' muh hat n to' muh coat off, n suh, outrunned boots n briches!

Heah dat mutton went, n me too, up in down all n dat holler,— Hit seemed 'termined to be leader,—I wuz 'termined I would foller!
Well, I kotch it; — got duh booger; — drawed muh knife ercross hits thoat. 
Went on back n foun' muh briches n some pieces of muh coat.

I fuhgot erbout duh muskit, — hit had done no good tuh me, —
Shouldered up muh big ole mutton; — muskit settin' side er tree.
Well ole massa watched n waited, wondern why I did'nt come
Right on up dare to duh big house n gib him n missus some!

Finely, he got tired er-waitin', so he walks on down to where
He had seed me stan' n shoot at; — foun' his gun n Shaggy dare!
Picked it up n pulled his knife out, n cut off ole Shaggy's tail,
Car'ed it on back to duh big house, — waitin' dare iz mad iz hail!

Dreckly, up I comes er-steppin', wif er quarter dat wuz prime!
Walked right on up in duh big house, — proudes' nigger of duh time!
“Mawnin', massa!” Y'orter seed me bow n do duh curtsey hop,
“SHAGGY.”

“Thought berhaps dit you n missus mought enjoy some mutton chop!”

Dar ole massa sot iz stunly,—didn’t eben crack er grin!
“Come ’ere, nigguh,” said he huffly; missus took duh mutton din,

N went on out to duh kitchen n lef’ me in dare wid him,—
Up he retched behind duh bureau fer his cowhide, keen n slim.

“Whar my gun, suh?” “Hit’s at home, mas’!”
“Yes hit is, fer dat’s hit dare!”
Hin he wahmed me, laws er mussy! wahmed me up fum heels to hair!
But I wouldn't er mount duh wahmin', — dough 'twuz hot iz brimstone hail,
If he hadn't to my briches sewed ole Shaggy's bushy tail!

Wif dat thing er-hangin' 'hind me, all dat whole long summuh froo; —
Evuhbody called me, "Shaggy"! n I had to take it, too.
Well, I knows you chaps is weary; so now, off to roost n sleep; —
Don't you nevuh dough furgit duh two-legged dog dat kilt duh sheep.
In days gon' by

Well, the younguns all er-snorin', so's deyr dad n mammie too;
Ebry livin' soul am sleepin', Mandy, 'cepin' me n you.
An' you hand me Sal Malindy, she kin sleep in gram-
per's arms;
N jis draw yer cheer up closter, so I kin review your charms.

Lub, duh frosts er time am white on ebry stran' n lock
er hair,
N duh years have penned deyr 'pistles in dat face once
young n fair;
N duh light no mo' am sparklin' lak duh sunshine in
yer eyes,
Which by faif am camly lookin' tawdz duh mansions in
duh skies.

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An' yo' cheeks hab lost duh roses which in young days use to bloom;
N my head lak yours is blossomed fer duh crown beyan' duh tomb.
Mandy, little Sal Malindy is duh very spit of you
When we met n loved n married, way back dare in fifty-two.

N duh dogwood tree am standin' down duh hill dare by duh spring,
Where we use to do our courtin', where we use to lub n sing,
N dat May-night when we married, missus spread a bankit dare,—
N if happy makes er angel, on dat night we wuz a pair.

I's been settin' here er-spellin' in duh Gospul writ by John,
In duh place where our ole missus use to lub to dwell upon:
"In my Father's house are many, many mansions, n I go
To prepare a place dare fer you,—" dat's duh most she read, you know.

N while thinkin' on dat Scripsher, mas' n mis' comes back to me,
N I sees um jis iz nachul iz in life day use to be.
Our ole massa,—wa'n't he 'culiar? Yit he wuz er good ole man,
IN DAYS GONE BY.

N I bleaves iz you do, Mandy, dat he'll reach duh better lan'.

One thing makes me lub ole massa,—dough he use to put me froo,—
He wuz kind to all our younguns, n he wuz so good to you.
Nebber in my life, n' I knowed him clean down twill he taken sick,
Did he eber on er ohman lay er single angry lick.

N he neber sol' er nigguh; n whin one would run erway,
He would git no dogs to ketch him;—down unto his dyin' day
Our ole massa thought it sinful thus to treat er helpless slave;—
N I have to love him fer it, dough to-night he's in his grave.

An' you know I larned to read n write er ha'f-way decent han';—
Co'se I'se told you how I larned it: John n Henry in duh san'
When we'd go er swimmin' Sundays, dey would make duh alphabit,
N I'd try tuh make duh letters, n dey'd laf twill fit to split.
Well, dey kep' er-foolin' wid me, n I tried wid all my might,
Twill it happened Mr. Sambo got duh gif' to read n write.

Whin at last ole massa kotched me, Lawd, it spoilt his earthly joys;
Co'se I had to name my teachers, n I tole him,—'twuz his boys!

Chile, you know I thought duh cowhide would in wraf on me descen';
But ole massa tuk my han', n spoke to me iz frin' to frin';
Splained to me how 'twould be dang'us fer duh fac' to become known,
Axed fer his sake n muh own sake dat I'd leab duh ink alone.
IN DAYS GONE BY.

Co'se dat wuz in time er slav'ry, n I wuzn't awllus good;—
Well, I don't spoze dat er darkey in dim days jis reely could
Be iz good iz Christians orter; faw his youngsturs bound tuh eat,—
Which accounts fer stolen muttons, n my scrapes wid Hoodoo Pete.

When er feller gits er wife n chilluns nuff to number nine,—
Wif deyr stomachs awllus heavy, awllus heavy on deyr min',—
Hit's no easy job to feed um! Howsomever, you n Sam
Stood in wid ole massa's bacons; — us wuz def upon his ham!

But der Lawd is up in heaven, n ole mas' is in der ground,
N I ax muh Lawd n Sabeiour, if er-gains' duh dead be found
Any sin ur wrong by Sambo,— mut-ton, grunter, ur what not,—
Dat He'll please duh sin forgive me, n fum out duh Record blot.

You remimber well iz I do, dat po' ohman, Sindy May
Wid her pooty little baby, — how she tried to git erway
Fum duh State er Alerbamer, way back dare in fifty-three,—
Tried ter reach duh Queen's Dominions, where der people all wuz free.

N you 'mimbur, lub, you lint her dat dare bran' new wusted skirt,
Which I bought you fer yo' birfdays, n my flannel Sunday shirt,
You cut up n made her baby,
—little helpless, hongry thing,—
Made duh little chump er wrapper,
which we fixed on wid er string.

N I helped her out er Jawgy on her way to Nawf Ca'line;
Run all night, n got back home, suh, broad daylight, 'bout eight ur nine;
N I 'scaped, faw hit wuz rainin';
but had hardly made it back
When we heard duh bloodhounds yelpin', hard n fas' upon her track!

I kin see her iz dey brought her, right befo' our cabin do',
Wif her little, bloody baby, which duh hounds had kilt, you know;
N I still kin hear her screamin', iz dey driv her 'long duh road,
Bleedin' lak er beef, n naked, faw duh hounds no murcy showed.

Say, she wuz a pooty critter, wid dat long, black wavin' hair
Floatin' all eroun' her body, in dat col' Novimber air!
N it seems dat God in pity stretched duh clouds ercross duh sky,
So dim beas'ly, cruel humans moutn't see His angels cry.

Iz dey driv her by duh big house, mas' wuz stan' in' at duh gate,—
I wuz follerin' 'hind duh drivers, hince I heard him tell um, "Wait!")
Run his right han' down his pocket, n pulls up er sack er gol',—
Counted out two hundred dollars. Missus took dat bleedin' soul,

Turned duh kiver on her bed, suh;—n her face wuz wet wid tears,
Iz she stood by dyin' Sindy, in whose life n tender years
Dare wuz only shame n sorrer, wid no one to take her part
Twill 'twuz too late; — n ole missus, — chile, we thought 'twould break her heart!

Well, I guess we'll change duh subjics; see yo' cheeks n mine is wet;
Our ole mas' n mis' n Sindy, all done paid duh final debt;
N it soon will be our time to pass away n be at rest,—
"Peaceful rest," so runs duh poet, n "its waking s'premely blest."

Din dare come duh great Rebellion, hin hit's awllus seemed to me
Dat dat war wuz sent perposely fer to set duh nigguhs free.
Seems duh Lawd got tired er waitin', hearin' argermints er men,
N jis raised up grand ole Lincoln fer to wipe erway duh sin.

N you know dit John n Henry, all dim chilluns massa had,—
John wuz eberything to missus, Henry, all unto his dad,—
Went n jine duh 'Fedrit forces, spite er all deyr folks could do;—
N poor John wuz kilt at Shiloh, sixdth of Apurl, sixty-two.
IN DAYS GONE BY.

Henry fell at Chickermawger, tawdz duh close of sixty-three;
N whin it wuz told to massa, "Now I longs tuh die,"
says he.—
Well, ole missus died dat Cwismus; you wuz stan’in'
by her side,
Kaze I mimbur how you tole me dat she
lak some angel died.

Din ole massa left duh big house,— said
'twuz lonesome ober dare;
Said he’d rudder share our cabin, if we
had er room ter spare.
So we squeeze ourse’ves up closter,— n hit
wuz dis very room
Where he lived fum dat time onwuds,
twill we cared him to duh tomb.

You remimber whin duh Yankies come
along in sixty-fo’
Dat ole mas’ wuz on his def-bed,— hit set
right dare by dat do’.
Whin dat ’bellion first wuz started, he
wuz rich iz any man;
Whin he died he didn’t own er single
thing excep’ his lan’.

Whin duh Yankees come, dey stripped him; burnt duh
big house to duh groun’;
BLACK SMILES.

Took duh hogs n cows n hosses;—eberything he had dey foun'.
Co'se hit went to scrush duh 'bellion;—hin duh darkies up n lef'
Wid duh army, all excep'in' Pete n Mandy n myse'f.

I wuz glad dey scrushed duh 'bellion ;—to duh victor b'longed duh spoil;
But it hurt me, chile, to see um 'stroy so many years er toil,
N to see um burn duh big house: dar wuz nuffin else so dear
Unto us, excep' dis cabin,—dear ole cabin! hit's still here.

Whin dey lef', ole massa called me, n I went n tuk his han';
Says he, "Sam, I see dey lef' you;—wonder if dey lef' duh lan'?"
"Yas, suh, massa," says I sadly; de ole man wuz layin' low;
N he says, "Now, Sam, I'm dyin', n dare's one thing 'fo' I go

"Dat I 'zires to leab here wid you." N he pulled dis Bible out
Fum his piller, wid dis paper, which of co'se you knows about.—
"Dis my will fer you n Mandy,"—(you wuz somewhere out'er-do's)—
"Lay me side yo' good ole missus,—all duh Yankees lef' is yo's;—

"Good bye, Sambo!" Dim duh las' words dat on earfe he eber said;
Closed his eyes, n 'fo' I knowed it, our ole massa,—he wuz dead.
N I kinnnot keep fum thinkin', if in heaben bright n fair Chris' has 'pared a single mansion, mas' n mis' am got one dare.

An' duh years am fastiy flyin'; hain't none lef' but me n you;
N we soon mus' leave our cabin, n accep' er mansion too.—
 Lis'n here at Sal Malindy,—hain't she mo' din mawtul, say? —
Well, I bleave I's read er Scripsher; so den, Mandy, s'pose we pray.
Now, befo' we leave duh table, all you youngsters git plum quite,
Faw I see I'll hab to show you what is wrong n what is right.
Co' se we kin excuse Malindy; she is gramper's baby yit;
But hit's time you udder younguns wuz er larnin' little bit.

I remimber whin er youngster, lak you youngsters is terday,
How my mammie taught me manners in a 'culiar kind er way.
One er mammie's ole time 'quaintance,—Missus Dooney wuz her name,—
Wuz one night our mammie's cumpny,—mammie, co' se, prepared fer same.
Mammie fixed her cookin' vessels; me n Son n little Sis,
We wuz heppin' 'roun' er-doin' little dat n little dis,
Faw our mammie had duh sifter, n wuz makin' up some dough,
Which would soon turn inter biskits,—Law
—we all wuz smart, you know.

Faw hit wuzn't custymary whin I wuz er-comin' up,—er
'Cep' hit wuz whin we had cumpny,—to hab biskits hot fer supper.
N of co'se, on sich ercasions, mammie'd only bake er few,
N she nachly 'spec' us younguns to put up wid one er two.

Now, hit happened whin dim biskits reached duh table on dat night,
Dat my exercise had s'plied me wif er whalein' appur-tite!
'Zerves n biskits on duh table! Honey, I could skasely wait
Fer my mammie to adminstur,—I jis had to pass muh plate.

N Mis' Dooney,—good ole lady,—fawked er biskit off fer me;
N she had to keep er-fawkin' twill she'd fawked off one, two, free;—
“PASS DAT BISKIT.”

Hin hit wuzn’t many minutes ’fo’ I ’plies fer number fo’;—
Mammie frowns n han’ me cold one,—drapped dat blame thing on duh flo’!

“Hab er biskit, Sister Dooney,” mammie said, n I turned blue,
Iz she shoved der plate up to her, dare wuz only ’main-in’ two.
“Not quite ready, Sister Mandy”—n she pass duh plate tuh son;
“In er minit,” ’splains Mis’ Dooney, “I will try ernudder one.”

I had bit dat ole cold biskit,—tough ernuff to choke er goat,—
N I don’t know how I swallud, but I swallud, cleared muh th’oat,
N I looks it Missus Dooney, faw I see duh biskit she’s
Workin’ on am gettin’ scacer: says I, “Pass duh biskits, please.”

Missus Dooney kep’ er tawkin’, n er munchin’ on her bread;
She n mammie kep’ er tawkin’, jis iz if I’d nuthin’ said.
“Pass der biskits, please ma’am,” says I, little louder din befo’;—
Law, you orter seed how mammie frowned up dare,—jis sorter so.

Missus Dooney nebber heard me,—dat's duh way dat she let on,—
N her little piece er biskit in er minute would be gone;

N dare wa'n't but one mo' lef', suh;—man, I stretched up in muh cheer,—
Says I wif muh fawk uplifted, "Pass dat biskit, don't yer hear?!"

Yas suh, chilluns, bet yer money, dat dare biskit come to me!
"Hab some mo'," says mammie to her. "No, I thank yer, Sis," says she.
Mammie says, "Jis come in front, din; dain't no use fer you to wait."
N iz soon iz dey had gone out, 'zerve-dish sot right in muh plate!
"PASS DAT BISKIT."

Mammie come on back dare dreckly,—jis iz hot iz bees n ants;—
Up she hists me fum dat table, n she rolls me out muh pants,—
Hitched my head up 'twix her knees, suh, great big luther strop assisted,
N whin she had 'formed her duty, all dem biskits done dijisted.

Bet yo' life, I sho' remimbud, youngsturs, evuh aftuh dat,
Dit whin 'zerves wuz on duh table, dey wuz dare to be looked at!
N 'bout takin' las' er victuals,—mammie sho' did me convince
'Fo' I got back in dim briches!—I'se had manners evuh since.
Make ace, younguns; me n grammer wants you to be still n quite,
N to listen to duh story dat I'm gwine tuh 'late tuh-night.
Sal Malindy, whar you, honey? Dat's er sweet gal, come to gramp; —
Well din, go on to yo' grammer, you audacious little scamp.

Dis wuz in duh days of actions, iz we used to call um den,
Whin we all b'longed to duh white folks, n wuz slaves instid er men.
N it wuz 'long in Novimbuh, 'simmon season wuz on han',
N sweet taters baked wid 'possum wuz duh go in Dixie Lan'.

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N of co’se, you all know ’possum, whin hit’s baked right good n brown,
Wid duh stuffius n duh taters floatin’ in duh grease eroun’,
Wif er few red pods er pappah, so’s tuh make hit sorter hot,
Is duh bes’ stuff dat er ohman evuh put in pan ur pot.

Now ouh dog, his name wuz Bulljuh,—smartuh dog hain’t wo’ er hide,
Faw dat houn’ would sho’ kotch possums,—n I’m sorry yit he died.
Well, on dis Novimbuh evening, long befo’ duh clock struck eight,
Bulljuh treed, n I goes to him,—great big possum, sho’ iz fate!

Up I clamed up ’mungst duh ’simmons, vygrusly I shook der lim’,
Down he come, n good ole Bulljuh butters biskets dare wid him!
I gets down you know n feel him, hin he wuz jis rollin’ fat;
’Way we went back to duh cabin, skint him ’fo’ ’yo’ mought say, Scat!

Mandy had duh pots er bilein’ time I got duh possum clean,
N I turned him ovuh to huh, dumped him in duh grub-machine.
N I'll tell yuh, dat dare grammer 'zackly done huh dooty, too;
Whin she fixed er possum, sonny, hit wuz cooked now, hin hit's troo.

She wuz on duh whole plantation, bes' cook on ole massa's place,
N whin she got froo er cookin', done me good to ax duh grace;
N when possum decked duh table,—well I'll jis be took n hung
If I wuzn't skeert whin swallun dat I'd swaller teefs n tongue.

But to 'turn to dis heah possum. Sizely iz duh clock struck nine,
Dat dare booger wuz er-lookin' axshilly, nachully, 'zackully fine!
"Yas, he done now," grammer says, n slices off his hams, you know,
Kase we greed to treat duh white folks; done it mos'ly fer a show.

Well, yer grammer got her bonnet, put dim hams upon er plate,
N went on up to duh big house.—Lawd, I poss'ibly couldn't wait
Twill she come back, so I slip in to duh kitchen,— n I sware!
Bendin' right above dat possum, wuz some feller, smackin' dare!

Folks, I jis slip right up on him,—jis muh socks on, co'se you know,—
N I kicked duh skawnul so hard dat I sprained muh lef' big toe;
Knocked him slap across duh oven settin' dare upon duh coals,—
Law, I riz him fum dat possum! 'Way out in duh flo' he rolls.

But you mought er seed me lookin', iz ole massa riz up dare,
N snatched off er piece er scantlin', n begin tuh cuss n sware!
"Mussey, massa," I 'gin pleadin', "Law, I didn't spoze 'twuz you!"
"Well, you'll spoze 'twuz me, ber golly, by duh time dit I gits froo."

Oh, he wool me 'roun' dare scant'rous, wif dat piece er timbuh, chile;
All duh darkies heard me hollern n come runnin' fer er mile.
But duh lickin didn't hurt me ha'f is much iz I pre-
tended;—
I wuz sholy mort'ly skeert, dough, my probation days wuz ended.

Well when he got froo er-beatin', off he go upon his hoss.
Mandy come, n us n Bulljuh made up fer duh time we loss
Foolin' 'roun' bein' good to white fokes;—evuh possum Bulljuh kotched
Aftuh dat, you bet yer dolluh, white fokes' tushes never to'ched.

Mandy says, "Sam, ax duh blessin'," iz down to duh dish we sot,
Kaze dare wuz er plenty possum still remainin' in duh pot.
Says I, "Massa Jesus, please suh, bless dis possum fer ouh sake,
N may dat which mas' n miss' got gib um bofe duh stumuck-ache!"
Cover's turned and bed is ready, and I'm in my "nighty" dressed;
"Napper" sends the "gapers" for me, and they lull me off to rest;
But before I leave for "Dreamland," just before I reach the bed,
I am kneeling, and my mother's soft, warm hands are on my head.

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“Now I lay me down to sleep,” I hear that mother gently say,
And repeating what she’d tell me, learned my infant lips to pray.
Often as I say, “Our Father,” still that mother’s face I see,
Just as when I was her “tootsy,” with my head upon her knee.

And when down to sleep I lay me, when my lips in death be dumb,—
When I sleep that sleep she’s sleeping, till the Prince of Life shall come;
If I wake to life immortal, and with her bright glory share,
It will be because that mother’s love is living in that prayer.
AN ODE TO MOTHER EARTH.

[The inscription of this ode is made to the fairest flower of the GREAT MOTHER of whom I sing, Daisy.]

Sweet Muse, bequeath my pen thy lasting charm,
Soon shall my lips be dumb, my heart be still.
While life bestows its strength unto my arm,
Grant thou my ink thy living charm to thrill
The souls of men. These words with beauty fill,
That men may pause amidst life's fevered, ruinous rush
And see in Mother Earth thy pictured will.
What blossoms here, forbid that Time should crush
When sleeps my lonely soul in Death's eternal hush.

O Earth, enduring Mother of us all!
How fair, how lovely still thy wondrous face!
Who knows thy years, save God? Who can recall
Time when thy mundane bounds were born to space?
Thou wast thy Maker's bride and formed to grace
His Universe; Jehovah chose thee for His own;
Thou left His love, forsook thy Lord's embrace
For Man, thy most unworthy son; to groan
For him,—vain, wretched worm,—thou queen of heaven's throne!

For him thy tender, loving bosom bleeds;
Thy form, once wrapped in Glory's robes, I see
Clad now in rags of woe for Man's misdeeds:
Still down the ages rings thy whispered plea,
"Father, forgive!" What mother's love can be
Like thine, O Dolor Mater! Millennials of tears
Have washed thy cheeks; the scourge of sin on thee
Hath left its scars, and on thy face appears
The furrowed field which Death hath ploughed through all thy years.

And yet how beautiful thou art, O earth!
How generous in thy grief! How great!
What beauties to thy bosom owe their birth!
What charms are thine, thou miracle of Fate!
Thy husband is thy God, and on thee wait
Angellic hosts, all armed with bright, celestial steel;
These guard thy first and glorious estate
Until thy travail end, until thou feel
Our Father's kiss upon thy cheek and wear His seal.
AN ODE TO MOTHER EARTH.

And I have loved thee, Mother Earth; I'm thine.
Thy soul, thy lot, thy likeness, all I claim;
Thy fate, thy griefs, thy hopes, thy prayers are mine;
I love, and own, thy nature and thy name.
May God forbid that e'er a blush of shame
Should kiss the crimson in thy grief-stained cheek
For deed of mine. Be mine the noble aim,
The purpose lofty, pure; be mine to seek
The secrets of thy joy, and not a sorrow wreak.

Enchanting is thy loveliness in life!
Thy beauteous form in Ocean's ruffled blue
Bespeaks thy royalty, proclaims thee wife
Unto Jehovah, and in all thy sorrows true.
Oft have I thought, as gently to my view
Thou wouldst unfold as unto one beloved thy breast,—
Oft have I thought, and with the thought I grew,
That on thy brow Creation's crown should rest,
Since thou of all the countless worlds art loveliest.

And what is Man, that thou shouldst him regard?
A wanderer from thy love; his chosen lot
So often cast in sin; a heart as hard,
Unfeeling as the stone; his day a blot
Upon the calendar of Time; forgot
As soon as sinks his sun; his friends rejoice to weep
For him in death,—in life they love him not.
THY love endures: back to thy arms we creep,
Sad wrecks of sin, and rest in thy beloved sleep.

The guiltiest thy heart forgives and spreads,
   The lovely mantle of forgetfulness
Above the deeds of shame that crown our heads,
   Above our sins, too dark to e'en to God confess.
   Such monumental love no words express,
No bosom save thy own couldst bear. Without a dream
   To tincture guilt with well-deserved distress;
Devoid of hope, if Justice be supreme;
We sleep, whilst pleads thy living love, "O God, re-
   deem!"

And soon shall dawn thy morn of restoration.
   For thee the tender heart of God doth yearn;
Thou'lt share with Him, the Sovereign of creation,
   The gifts which love for Man didst make thee spurn.
   Thy God shall come to thee; and thy return
To favor with thy Lord will wake to ecstasy
   The dwellers of the universe; they shall discern
When thou shalt mount thy pristine throne to be
Queen with thy God, what love was thine, and envy thee.

Expectant Earth, when folded in thy breast,—
   When I shall sleep with all thy children dead,—
AN ODE TO MOTHER EARTH.

When Death, thy silent messenger of rest,
    Shall raise thy flag of truce above my head;
I hope to wake enraptured from my bed
To see thee crowned, to see thee robed in golden flame,
    To hear from angels' lips the summons read
That welcomes thee to God.  I hope to claim
A sweeter tongue to sing the love that crowns thy name.