

The Colored Soldiers

If the muse were mine to tempt it
And my feeble voice were strong,
If my tongue were trained to measures,
I would sing a stirring song.
I would sing a song heroic
Of those noble sons of Ham,
Of the gallant colored soldiers
Who fought for Uncle Sam!

In the early days you scorned them,
And with many a flip and flout,
Said "these battles are the white man's
And the whites will fight them out."
Up the hills you fought and faltered,
In the vales you strove and bled,
While your ears still heard the thunder
Of the foes' increasing tread.

Then distress fell on the nation
And the flag was drooping low;
Should the dust pollute your banner?

No! the nation shouted, No!
So when war, in savage triumph,
Spread abroad his funeral pall—
Then you called the colored soldiers,
And they answered to your call.

And like hounds unleashed and eager
For the life blood of the prey,
Sprung they forth and bore them bravely
In the thickest of the fray.
And where'er the fight was hottest, —
Where the bullets fastest fell,
There they pressed unblanched and fearless
At the very mouth of hell.

Ah, they rallied to the standard
To uphold it by their might,
None were stronger in the labors,
None were braver in the fight.
At Forts Donelson and Henry
On the plains of Olustee,
They were foremost in the fight
Of the battles of the free.

And at Pillow! God have mercy
On the deeds committed there,
And the souls of those poor victims
Sent to Thee without a prayer.
Let the fulness of thy pity
O'er the hot wrought spirits sway,
Of the gallant colored soldier
Who fell fighting on that day!

Yes, the Blacks enjoy their freedom,

And they won it dearly, too;
For the life blood of their thousands
Did the southern fields bedew.
In the darkness of their bondage,
In the depths of slavery's night;
Their muskets flashed the dawning
And they fought their way to light.

They were comrades then and brothers,
Are they more or less to-day?
They were good to stop a bullet
And to front the fearful fray.
They were citizens and soldiers,
When rebellion raised its head;
And the traits that made them worthy, —
Ah! those virtues are not dead.

They have shared your nightly vigils,
They have shared your daily toil;

And their blood with yours commingling

Has made rich the Southern soil.

They have slept and marched and suffered

'Neath the same dark skies as you,

They have met as fierce a foeman,

And have been as brave and true.

And their deeds shall find a record,

In the registry of Fame;

For their blood has cleansed completely

Every blot of Slavery's shame.

So all honor and all glory

To those noble Sons of Ham—

The gallant colored soldiers,

Who fought for Uncle Sam!