

Goin' Back

He stood beside the station rail,
A negro aged and bent and frail.
His palsied hands like the aspen shook,
And a mute appeal was in his look;
His every move was pained and slow,
And his matted hair was white as snow.
He noted our questioning looks, and said,
With a solemn shake of his hoary head:
"I reckon you're wonderin', an' well you may,
Whar an ol' man lak me's a goin' to-day.
I've lived in this town fur thirty years,
An' known alike my joys an' tears,
An' I've labored hard year out, year in;
But now I'm a goin' back agin
To the blue grass medders an' fiel's o' co'n
In the dear ol' State whar I was bo'n.
It's the same ol' tale that I have to tell, —

An' thar's few o' my race but knows it well, —
When fust the proclamation come
I felt too free to stay at home.
Freedom, it seemed, was a gift divine,
An' I thought the whole wide world was mine.
Then I was spry, an' my hair was black,
An' this troublesome crook wasn't in my back;
My soul was allus full o' song,
Fur my heart was light, an' my limbs was strong,
An' I wasn't afeared to show my face
To the sturdiest worker on the place.
Well, I caught the fever that ruled the day,
An', finally, northward made my way.
They said that things were better North,
An' a man was held at his honest worth.
Well, it may be so, but I have some doubt,
An' thirty years ain't wiped it out.
Thar was lots of things in the North to admire,
Though they hadn't the warmth an' passion an' fire

That all my life I'd been ust to seein'
An' thought belonged to a human bein'.

An' a thing I could'nt help but miss
Was the real ol' Southern heartiness.

But year after year I worried along,
While deep in my heart the yearnin' strong
Grew stronger an' fiercer to visit once more
The well loved scenes o' my native shore.

But money was skeerce, an' time went on,

Till now full thirty years have gone

Ere I turn my aged steps to roam

Back to my ol' Kaintucky home,

Back to the ol' Kaintucky sights,

Back to the scene o' my youth's delights,

Back whar my heart was full o' glee,

Back whar I fust found liberty.

E'en now as I think the ol' times o'er,

An' o' the joy they held in store, —

Yes, even now, on life's dark side,

My heart swells out with honest pride.

Oh, praise the Lamb, that I shall see

Once more the land so dear to me.

Don't mind an ol' man's tears, but say

It's joy, he's goin' back to-day."