

Plantation Echoes

A COLLECTION *of* ORIGINAL
NEGRO DIALECT POEMS

By
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Dedication

THIS BOOK IS RESPECTFULLY
DEDICATED TO

MESSERS.

HOWARD BURBA
L. WALTER HARRISON
PROF. L. M. LAYTON
T. J. McCORMICK
OSMAN C. HOOPER

INTRODUCTION

The music of the American negro, the fresh and spontaneous expression of a good and care-free heart, has long been one of the most pleasing features of American life. It is human nature in its first vocal garb—original and unique, often humorous and always true to the sentiment of the singer. If there ever was an illustration of the close relationship between language and thought, it is this.

What is true of the melodies of the negro as developed in the simple existence on the plantation is also true of that other form of singing, verse-making. Among the negroes there have sprung up a number of exponents of the wisdom, wit and humor of the race. They have caught the spirit of others—the humble philosophers of their kind—and they have employed the dialect to reproduce the thought in all its quaintness and originality. One of the most notable of these exponents or interpreters is an Ohio negro, Paul Lawrence Dunbar, who has taken high rank among the poets of the day. Another is Elliott Blaine Henderson, also a son of Ohio, whose first volume of verse is herewith presented.

In much that Mr. Henderson here presents, there is the rush of expression and the jingle of words that are so characteristic of the negro. There is also humor and there is sentiment, and always that other quality which makes verse in these days readable—good cheer.

He who correctly interprets the spirit of his race serves a good cause, and it is believed that Mr. Henderson will be found to have succeeded in his undertaking to make his people better and more widely understood.

*E. G. BURKHAM,
Editor of the Columbus Dispatch, Columbus, Ohio.*

WHEN THE MOON HANGS LOW.

A straying chicken
Lost from home
Bewildered, finds
Itself a-roam.
And innocently
Stalks the ground,
Not dreaming
That a coon's around.
As evening's shadows
Gently fall,
The chicken, lonesome,
Gives a call.
A coon steals out
Soft in the night,
To catch him
For his appetite.
The night is still!
The moon is low!
Not e'en a zephyr
Seems to blow.
The coon with sack
Clutched in his hand,
Moves silently
Across the land.

The chicken gives
Another squawk!

The coon has got her
Like a hawk.
The moon now breaks
Forth into light,
The coon and chicken's
Out of sight.



SEEMS DEY'S NO PLACE.

Well er coon kin go to kollege
Git his head chucked full o' knowledge,
Till he knows ez much ez Solomon de wise.
He kin study an' summize,
Count de stars up in de skies,
Seems dey's no place
Fo' de eddeekayted coon.
Tawk erbout yo' eddeekayshun
Gittin' in de cullahd nayshun,
Gittin' "lighten" in de head an' sich ez dat,
Yo' kin larn sah, till yo' hat
On yo' head woan' fit exzac',
Seems dey's no place
Fo' de eddeekayted coon.
Eddeekayshun am all right
Ef er coon kin git er sight
'Stead o' makin' bread an' buttah by de hoe,
He kood entah any do'

Whah he's qualified to go.
Seems dey's no place
Fo' de eddeekayted coon.
He doan' allus want to hoe,
He wood like er little sho,
Fo' to git er little sweetness out o' life;
He has had er worl' o' strife,
Allus struck by trouble's knife.

Seems dey's no place
Fo' de eddeekayted coon.
All de coons kin cut dey pranks
Fo' to git into de banks,
Wid de white fo'ks fo' to handle wid dey cash
Dat wood sorter spile de hash,
Make er fraycus an' er clash.
Seems dey's no place
Fo' de eddeekayted coon.
All de coons kin go to Yale,
Larn Greek, Latin, by de bale,
Larn to numbah all de hyahs up in dey head;
Dey may read dis thing wid dread,
Nufin' else kin dey be said.
Seems dey's no place
Fo' de eddeekayted coon.
Ez I saunter 'roun' de town,
An' I skim mah eyes eroun',
Whah de white fo'ks am in business ebbry where,
Yo' kain't find er coon in dare

Wid de white fo'ks sellin' ware.
Seems dey's no place
Fo' de eddeekayted coon.



GOOD BYE, HONEY—GOOD BYE.

Gwine to leeb dis dear ol' place,
Good bye, honey; good bye!
Time's er flyin', I mus' make has'e,
Good bye, honey; good bye!
Hate to go, but I kain't say no,
It gives mah hea't er pang o' woe,
Yo' all's mah fren', not one's mah foe,
Good bye, honey; good bye!
Sistah Jane, an' uncle Joe?
Good bye, honey; good bye!
I hope we'll see us all sum mo',
Good bye, honey; good bye!
We's gittin' ol', we's gittin' gray,
Ah days am dun' fo' makin' hay,
Ah steps cum slo' we's wastin' 'way,
Good bye, honey; good bye!
We's had good times on dis ol' place,
Good bye, honey; good bye!
We's frolic'd in de possum chase,
Good bye, honey; good bye!
We's picked de cotton, hoed de co'n,
We's picked de berries spite o' thorns,
We's wocked at night, we's wocked at morn,
Good bye, honey; good bye!

Hain't dat Miss Linndy, obeah dah?
Good bye, honey; good bye!

Sho' it am; well, I declah!
Good bye, honey; good bye!
Cum an' shake de ol' man's han',
Gwine to leeb ol' massa's lan'
'Deed, Miss Linndy, yo' look gran',
Good bye, honey; good bye!
Rastus? little Rastus, chile,
Good bye, honey; good bye!
Look ee dah, jes' see him smile,
Good bye, honey; good bye!
Jes' ez natshul ez his paw,
De bes' chile dat I ebbah saw,
Got de manna's ub his maw,
Good bye, honey; good bye!
Whah is Massa, is he 'roun'?
Good bye, honey; good bye!
'Pears' I koch his footstep soun',
Good bye, honey; good bye!
I 'fess it's hard to leeb him now,
To say good bye, I doan' kno' how,
I'll shake his han', jes' make er bow,
Good bye, honey; good bye!
Mockin' bird up in de tree?
Good bye, honey; good bye!
Yo's sung er manny day to me.
Good bye, honey; good bye!

Er manny day dis hea't o' mine
Yo's cheered it wid yo' song divine,
An' made de sunlight brighter shine,

Good bye, honey; good bye!



WHAT WE GWINE TO DO?

Well, de way de thing am lookin'
To ol' Hezzeekyah Yoon,
Dis kentry's gittin' wussah
Fo' de po' and he'pless coon.
Dey lynch him on de lef',
An' dey lynch him on de right,
Dey cum an' git er niggah
In de day an' in de night.
Whut we gwine to do?
Hain't dey no whah in de lan'?
Hain't dey fo' de niggah
Not er kin' an' he'pin' han'?
Oh de niggah's got er moighty
Tuff an' thorny road to tread—
Dey's bullets, clubs an' razzahs
Allus flyin' at his head.
It's er mer'kul all de niggahs
Haben' suffer'd dat same fate.
De string up to de lamp-pos'
An' de string up to de gate.

When de signul's gibbun
Fo' to rally 'roun' de flag,
Nebbah fo' er minute
Am er niggah seed to lagg.
De niggah hain't rebelyus
Though he doan' git all things jus';

He's loyal to his kentry,
Nebbah habs betrayed his trus'.
He allus takes de bitters
'Zactly lak he does de sweet,
He goes right on light hea'ted,
Wid er tew step to his feet.
Whut we gwine to do?
Hain't dey no whah in de lan'?
Hain't dey fo' de niggah
Not er kin' an' he'pin' han'?



KAZE I KNO' I KAIN'T STOP.

Summah breezes blowin',
An' de sun am roas'in' hot!
Jes' right am de meadows
Fo' to take 'em fo' er cot!
Grasses sof' an' downy,
Am jes' like er feddah bed!
Hain't er spot dat am mo' 'vitin'
Fo' er niggah lay his head!

Ah tell yo' whut's de mattah,
Sah, de feebah's mountain high.
When ah 'fleck ub ah kun'dishyun
Makes dis niggah sot an' cry.
To hyeah de fo'ks er tawkin'
How de niggah's got to fare,
Dey mob, dey burn an' lynch him,
An' dey skin him lak er hare.
It's true dey's lots er niggahs
Dat am wurfluss to de co',
De debbul wooden' hab 'em
Even inside ub his do'.
But de Lawd in heaven knows
Dat all de niggahs hain't dat way,
Dey's lots dat's good an' hones'
An' dey nebbah goes estray.
De niggah hain't to blame—
To cum hyeah he diden' kyeah.

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