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PORT ROYAL, 1861.

The tent-lights glimmer on the land,
The ship-lights on the sea;
The night-wind smooths with drifting sand,
Our track on lone Tybee.

At last our grating keels outside,
Our good boats forward swing;
And while we ride the land-locked tide,
Our negroes row and sing.

For dear the bondman holds his gifts
Of music and of song;
The gold that kindly Nature sifts
Among his sands of wrong;

The power to make his toiling days
And poor home-comforts please;
The quaint relief of mirth that plays
With sorrow's minor keys.

The triumph-note that Miriam sung,
The joy of uncaged birds;
Softening with Afric's mellow tongue
Their broken Saxon words.

Another glow than sunset's fire
Has filled the West with light,
Where field and garner, barn and byre
Are blazing through the night.

The land is wild with fear and hate,
The rout runs mad and fast;
From hand to hand, from gate to gate,
The flaming brand is passed.

The lurid glow falls strong across
Dark faces broad with smiles:
Not theirs the terror, hate, and loss
That fire yon blazing piles.

With oar-strokes timing to their song,
They weave in simple lays
The pathos of remembered wrong,
The hope of better days,—

SONG OF THE NEGRO BOATMEN.

Oh, praise an' tanks! De Lord he come
To set de people free;
An' massa tink it day ob doom,
An' we ob jubilee.

De Lord dat heap de Red Sea waves
He jus' as 'trong as den;

He say de word: we las' night slaves;
To-day, de Lord's freemen.

De yam will grow, de cotton blow,
We'll hab de rice an' corn:

Oh, nebber you fear, if nebber you hear
De driber blow his horn!

Ole massa on de trabbels gone;
He leab de land behind;

De Lord's breff blow him farder on,
Like corn-shuck in de wind.

We own de hoe, we own de plow,
We own de hands dat hold;

We sell de pig, we sell de cow,
But nebber chile be sold.

De yam will grow, de cotton blow,
We'll hab de rice an' corn:

Oh, nebber you fear, if nebber you hear
De driber blow his horn!

So sing our dusky gondoliers;
And with a secret pain,
And smiles that seem akin to tears,
We hear the wild refrain.

We dare not share the negro's trust,
Nor yet his hope deny;
We only know that God is just,
And every wrong shall die.

We pray de Lord; he gib us signs
Dat some day we be free;

De Norf-wind tell it to de pines,
De wild-duck to de sea;

We tink it when de church bell ring,
We dream it in de dream;

De rice-bird mean it when he sing,
De eagle when he scream.

De yam will grow, de cotton blow,
We'll hab de rice an' corn:

Oh, nebber you fear, if nebber you hear
De driber blow his horn!

We know de promise nebber fail,
An' nebber lie de word;

So, like de 'postles in de jail,
We waited for de Lord:

An' now he open ebery door,
An' trow away de key;

He tink we lub him so before,
We lub him better free.

De yam will grow, de cotton blow,
He'll gib de rice an' corn:

So nebber you fear, if nebber you hear
De driber blow his horn!

Rude seems the song; each swarthy face,
Flame-lighted, ruder still:
We start to think that hapless race
Must shape our good or ill;

That laws of changeless justice bind
Oppressor with oppressed;
And, close as sin and suffering joined,
We march to Fate abreast.

Sing on, poor hearts! your chant shall be
Our sign of blight or bloom,—
The Vala-song of Liberty,
Or death-rune of our doom!

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