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THE
HERO AND THE SLAVE.

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BY
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BOSTON:
PRINTED BY W. F. BROWN & CO.,
No. 15 Cornhill.

THE HERO AND THE SLAVE.



'MID a group of eager gazers,
 Stood a soldier young and brave,
Who had marched through mobs and treachery,
 But had missed a martyr's grave!
He had stood with Ladd and Whitney,
 In the streets of Baltimore —
Where the Bay State's youthful Samsons
 Quelled the rebel lion's roar ;
But to-day he stood in Boston —
 In the Capitol, where fame
Sat to paint a patriot's likeness —
 Paused to write a Statesman's name.*
As a stone cut from our history
 By the unseen hands of fate,
Was the nineteenth day of April,
 Rolled against a rebel state ;
And the shock, severe and dreadful,
 As in prophet dreams of old,
Broke the feet of clay and iron —
 Felled the form of brass and gold ;

* John A. Andrew.

And 't was there within the great hall,
Many eager hearers stood —
Listening to the soldier's story,
Of that day and scene of blood.
From the group, a thousand questions
Won the soldier's kind replies,
Stirring hearts with deeds of courage,
And with pity melting eyes ;
And, still warming in his story,
Did he grow more eloquent,
Till each hearer felt a soldier,
In the strength his courage lent.
Now he told how our young soldiers
Made a front of breathing steel,
To oppose the swelling current
Of a mobocratic zeal ;
How the Bay State's dauntless heroes,
Kept the order to advance,
At each step a traitor crushing —
Death or conquest in each glance ;
Then he told how stones from windows,
Like a meteoric shower,
Fell unlooked-for on our soldiers,
Crushing some to rise no more ;
How the mob, with clubs and pistols,
Dealt assassin blows behind,
While rebellion's maddened plaudits
Rose like frenzy on the wind.

Now he told how Ladd, and Whitney,
And their other brave compeer,
Fell, o'erspread with fame's anointing —
Bravery spikenard, pure and dear,
Precious spikenard, but the vessels
Were more precious whence it flowed ;
And, though sinful hands had crushed them,
Glorious fragrance rose to God —
Told their dying words of triumph,
Which like giant arms of fate,
Swung back history's gates of glory,
For these martyrs of our State ;
Then with modest looks and gestures,
He revealed a healing wound,
Which a rebel demon gave him,
As he lay upon the ground.
Now the gazers gathered closer,
And each heart, with manly throb,
Sent its blood to cheeks of patriots,
Threatening vengeance 'gainst the mob.
'T is a debt the rebels owe us,
Said an earnest looker on,
And we'll see they pay with interest,
Ere the battle's fought and won.
'T is your title deed to honor,
Said another standing by,
Your devotion makes the record,
Which our justice won't deny ;

For the Bay State, ever faithful
To her loyal sons shall prove,
What a noble share she'll give you,
In the bosom of her love.
But just now a sable listener
Makes a passage through the crowd,
'Till he stands before the soldier —
But his presence seemed a cloud ;
For the listeners looked contemptuous,
As they fixed on him a stare,
And a person said in anger,
“ There 's a ‘ nigger ’ everywhere —
In the church, and state, and barracks,
Still his woolly head pops in ; ”
And e'en here he comes unwelcome,
Like a Ghost upon the scene.
And as if in great amazement,
Each one from the center shrank,
As the negro neared the soldier,
Lest he soiled his skin and rank.
“ Ah, my hero,” spoke the negro,
As he raised his manly brow,
“ Have we passed through blood and peril,
All to meet so happy now ;
Thanks to Him whose love impartial,
Guards the hero and the slave,
Thanks to Him, for from *our dangers*,
He alone had power to save.”

“Sir, my jaded memory fails me,”
Said the brave, with some surprise,
“But perhaps your explanation,
May remove your new disguise.”
“You shall have it,” said the negro,
Drawing nearer to the brave ;
“From the Monumental City
I have journeyed as a slave,
And when life was ebbing from you,
Through the wounds which these deplore,
'T was these sable hands that stayed it,
In the streets of Baltimore ;
When the frenzied mob were yelling,
And with stones, and bayonet,
Crushing heads, and bodies piercing,
Of the soldiers gasping yet ;
It was I who saw you falling,
And still marking where you fell,
Sought your helpless form, and dragged it
From the gates of riot's hell ;
It was I who staunched your bleeding,
With the garments of my wife ;
Torn from limbs by white men fettered,
To bind in a white man's life.
Even in the bondman's prison,
Sounds mysterious sometimes came,
Telling of old Massachusetts,
First in conflict, first in fame —

First to brave king George's power,
And defend the nation's laws,
First to give the negro freedom,
And the last to leave his cause.
When I saw her son a stranger,
Helpless, wounded, and alone,
I remembered Massachusetts,
And I did what I have done.
Yes, that name so dear to bondmen,
Prompted risk of life for you,
And your safety well rewards me
For the dangerous interview."
"O, you are my life's preserver,
And whate'er my state or mood,
You shall be the constant idol
Of a soldier's gratitude.
Yes, your words awaken memory,
Which awakened, now recalls,
Every tone, and act, and feature,
Of the friend my soul extols ;
O! 't was you who proved the hero,
Mid the bloody scenes that day,
Risking life, and dealing mercy,
In the chaos of the fray ;
For your acts were voluntary,
While the soldier's deeds were done
'Neath the iron spur of orders,
Which nor weak, nor brave, could shun ;

And my acts should prove my feelings,
Better than my tongue can tell,
Had I wealth to guide that courage,
Which 'mid dangers shone so well.
Still these Christian men around you
Are the guardians to whose care
I commit you, as to Christians,
With a soldier's heartfelt prayer.”
Then he turned to those around him,
While his eyes were growing bright,
With the gems of grateful feeling —
All too pure for vulgar sight —
And he said in tones that trembled :
“Freemen, there a freeman stands,
With his deed of manumission,
Snatched from riot's guilty hands ;
From these gilded halls I journeyed
Into slavery's dark Bastile,
Thoughtless of the hearts of bondmen,
Till he taught my own to feel —
Taught me how to feel those terrors
Which our fathers' weakness gave,
Into hands to-day as murderous
To the white man as the slave.
Starting from his life-long prison,
Did this bondman make his way ;
To this grand old hall of justice,
Where sweet freedom holds her sway ;

I went there to lose my freedom —
He comes here in search of his ;
He restored mine when I lost it,
And shall we do less that this ?
In his conflict with condition,
He a double conquest gains ;
Conquers hate of white-faced haters —
Conquers bondage and its chains ;
Shall he now a deadlier conflict,
Wage with color's hateful ban,
Or, assisted by our justice
Stand up every inch a man.
Let us by our manly dealing
Quell the cry of prejudice,
Which drives to proscriptive darkness
Even such a gem as this ;
For, though still my highest glory
Was to shed a patriot's blood,
Here I learn my highest lesson,
God's great truth of brotherhood,
And henceforth the name of negro
Loses all of its disgrace,
For the hero's deeds may blossom
From the stem of any race.”
Thus he ended, as an order
Called him to his moving ranks ;
Thus the slave and hero parted,
Without further time for thanks.

Then the negro's form retreated
Down the granite steps alone,
And the group all breathed more easy
That the national ghost had gone.

Public fetes and private soirees
Spread their boards by day and night,
Where the soldier was the idol
Of each honor and delight ;
Where he passed, the deafening plaudits
Told a hero passed that way ;
Where he stopped, a crowd adoring
Paused its fickle vows to pay.
Martial music broke the silence
Of the night in serenade —
Panegyric pure and lofty
Wove her garlands for his head,
Beauty shed her light around him —
Glory held aloft her flame ;
And his footsteps pressed the branches
Scattered by the hand of fame.
But the negro, lone and weary
With his flight from Baltimore,
Still roamed through the streets of Boston,
Begging help from door to door.
Skill of pleading won him nothing —
Skill of labor won him less ;

Skill in bearing scorn and hatred
Was his only great success.
Homeless was he in the city,
Where his noble deed was known —
Friendless, almost in the presence
Of the Bay State's rescued son.
Feasts and honors sprung delighting
At the warrior's every move ;
But his Saviour's skin denied him
Mercy's sweet reward of love.

Let us pause in haste of boasting
Until justice gives us breath,
Lest while building tombs of prophets
We a prophet put to death.
Let us cease our jeers and tauntings —
Round the negro's cross are sent
Forked flames of threatening vengeance,
While the nation's veil is rent.
Henceforth freedom knows no order
Of peculiar scribes and priests ;
Round her altars love and justice,
Or destruction, wait their feasts.
Let us learn that slavery's Neros
Fiddling o'er devouring flame,
Where the negro's form is fuel
O'er a white man does the same.

Let us learn that foul rebellion
'Gainst all manhood, still seeks cause
Through the negro's degradation
To o'erthrow the white man's laws.
Shall our hatred of the negro
Bred by those who *hate us* worse,
Make our State, and race, and nation,
Subjects of their double curse?
Love of masters — we have lost it —
Love of slaves we too may lose,
Then these former foes uniting
Gains a strength which we abuse.
Shall a color loved in all things,
Save when in a negro's face,
Shut us out from love of nations —
Make us scorned by every race?
No! when impious hands are shattering
Altars which our fathers built,
Let us save the golden censors —
Let them take the blood of guilt!
Let us take the stones of freedom —
Let them take the untempered clay!
We can build a nobler structure
Without help of such as they.
And when clears the smoke of battle —
When the noise of strife shall cease,
Let the form of freedom, shining
In the robes of light and peace,

Lift the negro from prostration,
Worn by sufferings and despair!
And ascend the nation's Tabor,
To remain transfigured there,
With the white man and the negro,
Standing one on either side,
Hear Jehovah's benediction,
Sounding o'er creation wide!

