

# Old Voices



By Howard Weeden



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# OLD VOICES

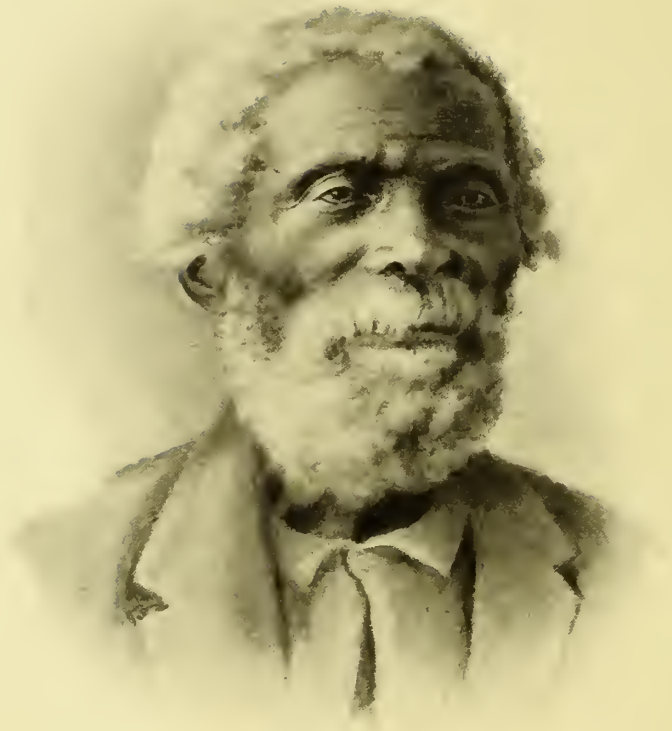
OTHER BOOKS BY  
HOWARD WEEDEN

BANDANNA BALLADS  
SONGS OF THE OLD SOUTH



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"A BOHEMIAN"



# OLD VOICES

*“For love of unforgotten times”*

By  
Howard Weeden

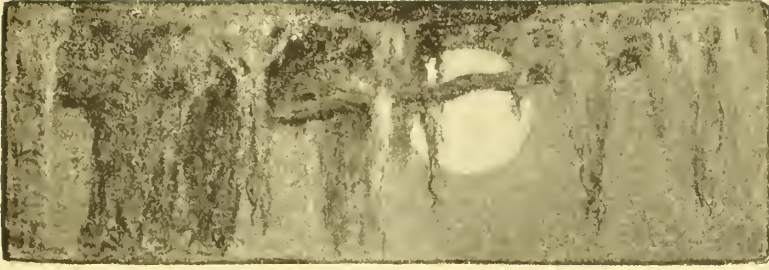


New York  
Doubleday, Page & Company  
1904

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Published, September, 1904

AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED  
TO  
JOEL CHANDLER HARRIS  
BY  
HIS GRATEFUL FRIEND  
THE AUTHOR





**T**HERE is hope for nobler things  
If such the future brings:  
But O, here's love for everything  
That long ago took wing!



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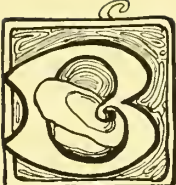
Acer Spades

The Problem

A Veteran

Vanity Fair



A  Bohemian  
C

## A BOHEMIAN

O yes! I always had a taste  
Fer takin' troubles light  
An' leavin' 'sponsibilities  
To shoulders dat is white.

All summer long, things grows so free,  
What need to work or buy?  
Dere's plenty lyin' loose aroun'  
Fer sech a worm as I.


An' when de winter comes along  
Why Christmas 'vides fer dat;  
I jes' looks up my ole white folks,  
An' passes 'round de hat!

In dis way I divides de year  
You understan' in two—  
An' trusts de summer-time to God,  
De winter-time to—you!









## MEMORY'S FEAST

I'm sittin' here in Northern ease  
A eatin' baker's bread,  
An' sayin' grace on by-gone meals  
I ate when Southern fed—  
Dear gumbo, wid red pepper hot,  
Dear rice an' 'possum meat,  
Dear smokin' hominy, rich corn-bread,  
An' beaten biscuit sweet!

Why, Lord! it's fillin' jes' to *think*  
'Bout nourishment like dat,  
An' I can eat in dreams until  
I feels well-fed an' fat:  
An' all de thanks I tries to give  
For dis here saw-dust bread,  
Is jes' a grace to Memory—  
When I was Southern fed!







Important  edas



## IMPORTANT NEWS

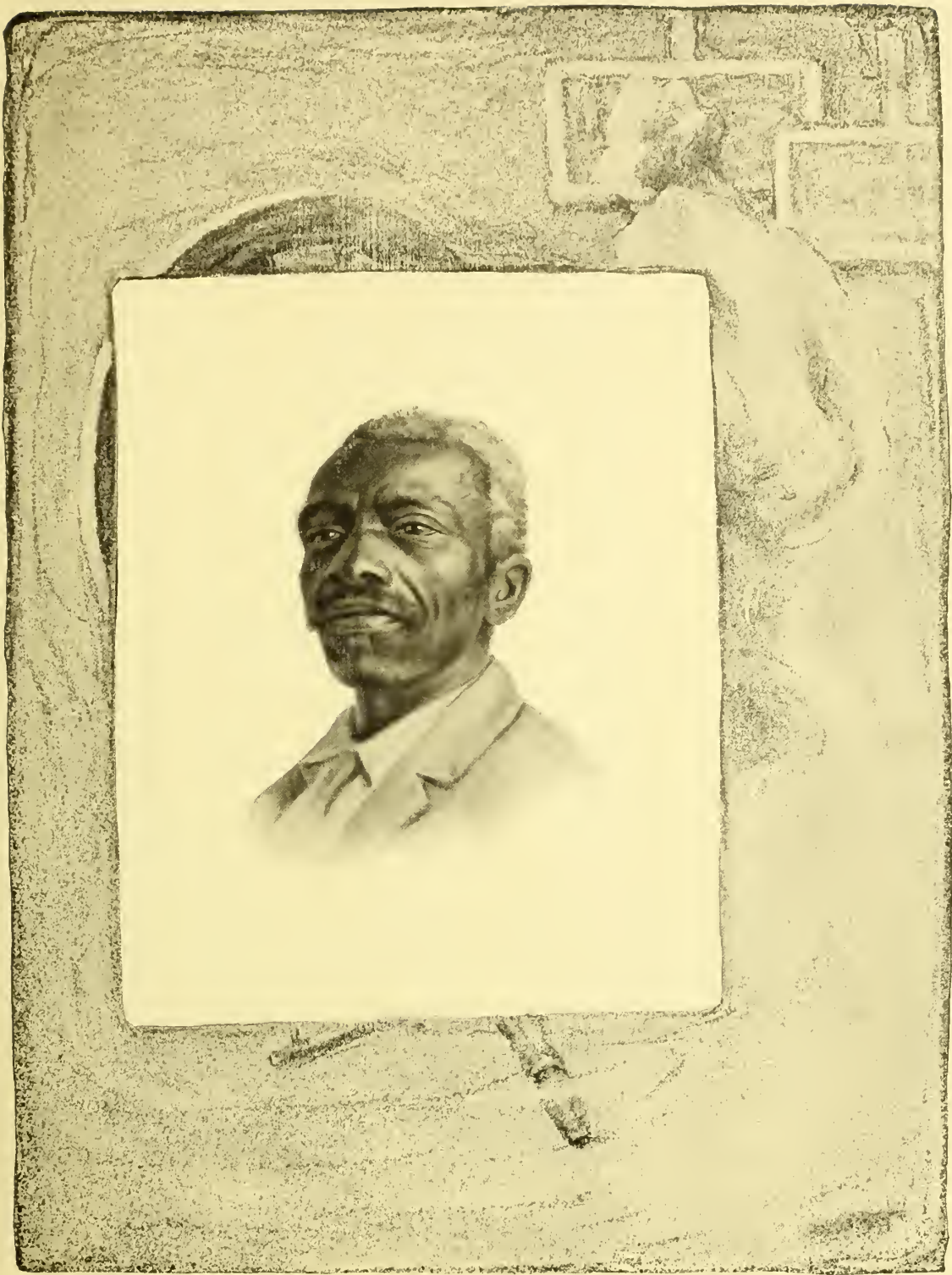
I heerd dat you was goin' back  
To ole Virginie agin,  
An' I would like to send some news  
To my ole friends an' kin:

Jes' look up my ole Daddy please,  
An' my ole Mammy too;  
An' say to dem I said to you  
I sont my Howdy-do!

An' if you sees some fine white folks  
Wid blood dats navy-blue,  
Jes' say to dem I said to you,  
I sont my Howdy-do!

An' please find Brother Washington—  
He married me an' Lou—  
An' say to him I said to you  
I sont my Howdy-do!

An' if dat Lou herself should still  
Be knockin' round dere too,  
Why you can 'low I said to you  
I sont my Howdy-do!





Almoilet

## A TOILET

Sometimes you'd think dat Mammy  
was

De most tremendous mad,  
De way she knocks an' cuffs me  
round

An' calls me Satan-bad;

An' all de time, betwixt de cuffs,  
She's wroppin' of my hair,  
An' greasin' of my ashy face  
An' studyin' what I'll wear;

An' den she puts on my red dress—  
De one she lately make,—  
An' bof of us jes' switches off  
Together to a wake!







Pantry and ulpit

## PANTRY AND PULPIT

How did I come to preach, you ask?

Well, dis here way in part:

'Twas bein' Master's butler, Sir,

Dat gave me my first start.

For after Freedom, when I turned

For better jobs to search,

My table-manners was so good,

I settled on de Church.

An' so I took to preachin', an'

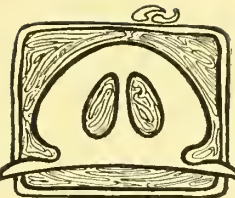
It's jes' about dis size:

It's been my good ole butler-wits

Dat's made me pulpit-wise!





Qle  istis' Way

An Old



arden

## AN OLD GARDEN

I wonder if your memory holds  
A garden old like mine—  
Within its midst, a summer-house  
As lovely as a shrine?

Around *mine* bloomed a world of flowers,  
That scented every breeze;  
And all life's noises have not drowned  
The murmur of its bees.

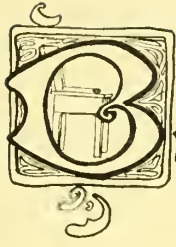
And where the roses thickest grew  
And bloomed the deepest red,  
A group of lonely head-stones marked  
Some long-forgotten Dead.

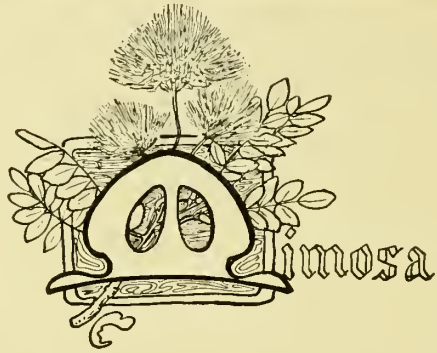
And there we children lingered oft  
And mused upon each grave,  
With all the passion for the Past  
A happy Present gave.

And now another Past has crept  
About the old, and spread—  
Till nothing but a Verse will bloom  
In that old garden dead!





The Old  Biscuit Block



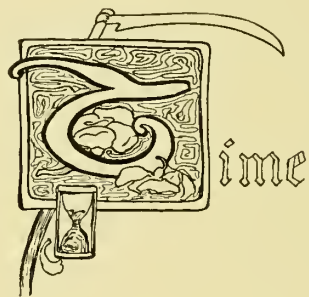
Blooms

The South-winds shake the mimosa awake  
With a shiver as soft as rain;  
The South-wind dies, the mimosa sighs  
And sinks to silence again.

And oh, but the scent that is faintly lent,  
By the stirred mimosa bloom!  
One's heart nearly breaks with the thought  
it awakes,  
Oh tender, oh cruel perfume!



The  alate Drop

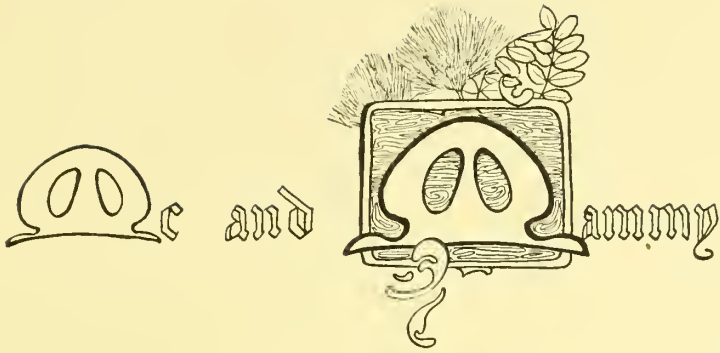


She brought away the rose he gave  
Once from a garden fair,  
With eyes that saw but that one rose  
Of all the roses there.

Now when the patient summers bring  
Their chastened roses red,  
She sees and loves them all because  
Of one rose—long since dead!







ALBLOSE

Song

## A ROSE SONG

When Sylvia wears a snowy rose  
Upon her lovely breast,  
I marvel that the rose remains  
So white in such a nest:  
I'd glow till every petal pale  
Had flushed to warmest pink  
And show her in a splendid blush  
How deep a rose could think!

When Sylvia wears a crimson rose  
Above her dainty ear,  
I wonder how the rose keeps calm  
With Sylvia's smile so near:  
I'd loose me from the silken hair  
Where she had bade me lie,  
And fall—all red and passionate—  
At Sylvia's feet to die!







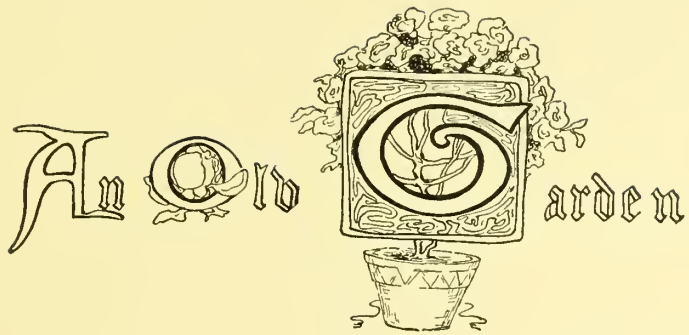
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arden

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ALBROSE Song

ALBLOSE

Song

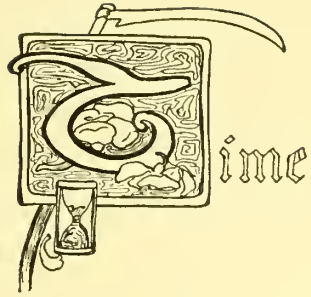
## A ROSE SONG

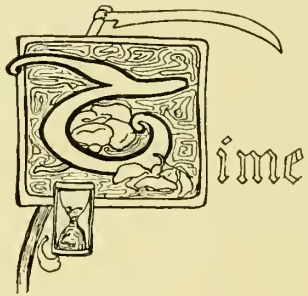
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Christmas Cuttings



Christmas

Cuttings

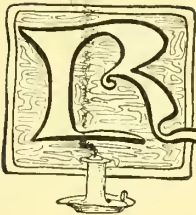
## CHRISTMAS ETCHINGS

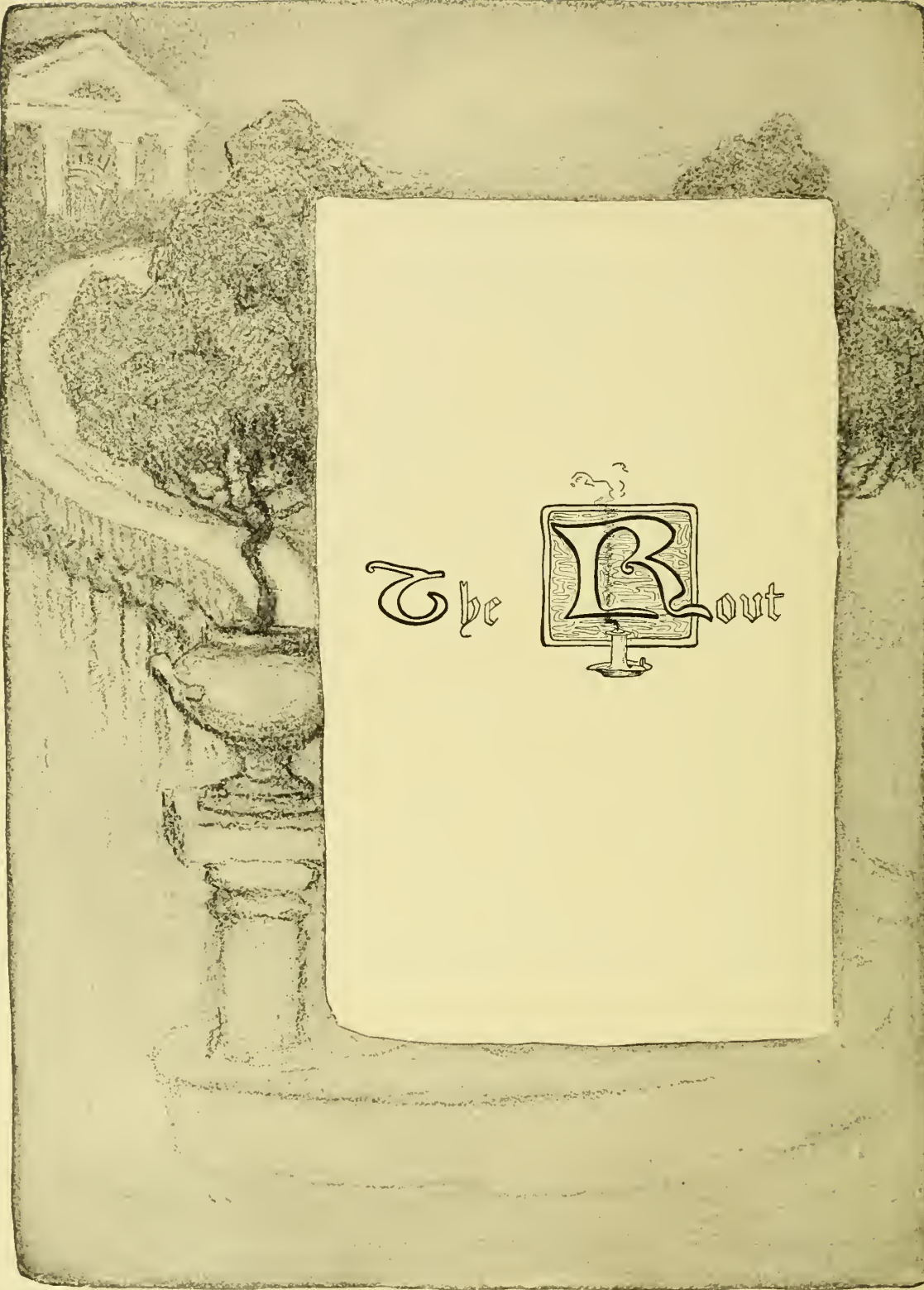
Christmas in the North; and wide  
And wan the world lies cold  
In winter-burial deep of snow  
That hides each field and fold;  
And all is still between the vast  
Black sky and vast white earth,  
And life and love have crept within—  
To shelter at the hearth.

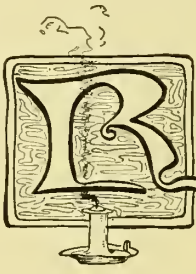
Christmas in the South; and warm  
And brown the earth is stretched—  
And where yon dark field meets the  
clear  
Soft rim of night, is etched  
A lovely, luminous silhouette  
Of flocks and shepherds calm,  
And one large, melting Star that  
hangs  
Low in a sky of balm!





The  out



The  out

## THE ROUT

What shall we do, my heart and I,  
Guests here at Life's gay rout,  
If e're the long, long night has waned  
The dreams should all go out?

The dreams that lit the tinsel place  
With radiance strangely fair,  
And made its crowded loneliness  
A borrowed joyance wear!

The dreams that touched our pulses till  
The throbbing veins ran wine,  
And kept us glad and unafraid  
And young and half divine!

The dreams that helped us to forget  
How dull the hours had grown;  
How many revellers we loved  
Had said "Good night"—and flown.

What shall we do, my heart and I,  
Late guests at Life's poor rout?  
We are so far from home, and see!  
The dreams are going out!



A oice of the Night

## A VOICE OF THE NIGHT

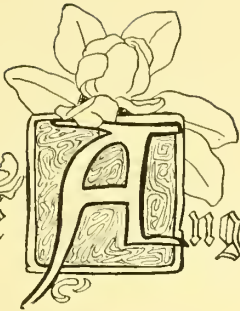
Wide and warm lies the Southern night,  
Steeped in purple dusk;  
Calm except for the scented winds  
That stir the jessamine's musk,  
And silent—until a sudden Voice  
Piercing the night is heard,  
And the quiet, fragrant world awakes  
To the song of a Mocking-bird.

Was it a dream that suddenly stirred  
The sleeping bird to bliss  
And woke his passionate eager heart  
To rapture such as this?  
Or was it that, from his lofty nest,  
He saw in the East a ray  
Of faint but certain dawn—and laughed  
Because of Hope and Day!









The **A**ngel of the Ark



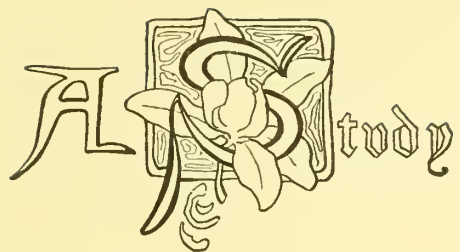
## THE ANGEL OF THE DARK

The quiet night comes softly down,  
Good-bye, dear day, good-bye!  
The Angel of the Dark is here,  
And in her arms I lie!

Good-bye, dear day, the long, long  
night  
Holds not a single fear,  
Because this Angel of the Dark  
Is just my Mammy dear!









## A STUDY

There on the wall hangs the sketch  
of a Head,  
Unfinished and dim and crude;  
Its weak lines drowned in a splendid  
blur  
Of shadows rich and rude.

Black and calm as an alien face  
Blown from tropic seas;  
Caught in a pose of bland content  
And the rapture of taking its ease.

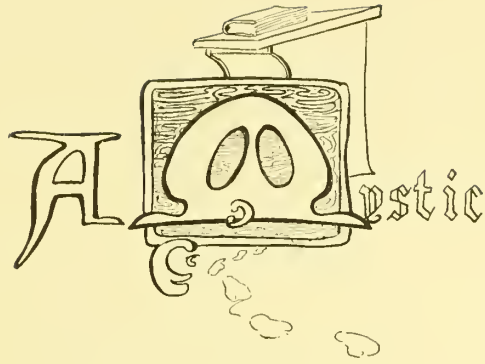
Large and massive and richly dark  
With shadows that smoulder and  
burn;  
Blank as a sphinx with its brooding  
look  
Of placid unconcern.

And whether the Artist will finish the  
sketch  
No man, it seems, can know:  
He may give it a touch like dawn  
some day,  
Or leave it forever—so!











## A MYSTIC

I got religion through a heap  
Of fights wid doubt an' sin,  
An' many a time 'twas hard to tell  
If Heaben or Hell would win.

But one day as I walked to 'a'ds home  
Still seekin' peace of min'  
I asked de Lord to end my doubts  
By givin' me a Sign.

An' suddenly I heerd His voice  
Say softly, "Gabe, look back;"  
An', lo, de road was smooove-as  
glass—

I hadn't left a track!

So den I knowed dat I was in  
De spirit for a fac';  
'Cause in de flesh a nigger's foot  
Is 'casion for a track!







## A WAIF

Who made me? Well, 'twas God I  
'spec',

At least, dat's what is said:  
But how is I to know fer sure,  
Now dat my Mammy's dead!


De ether chillun learns de news  
Right at dere Mammies' side  
An' laughs becuse dere's no sich place  
For me, since Mammy died!

But one thing I *do* know, becuse  
Hits somethin' Mammy said:  
"Dat Heaben was where a chile would  
find  
Its Mammy was not dead!"







After  Spades

## ACER SPADES

De chillun all tuk after Her,  
A warm, bright ginger-bread,  
Exceptin' little Acer Spades,  
An' he was black instead.

So, bein' he tuk after *me*,  
Why, I tuk after *him*,  
An' dat small little boy he filled  
My heart right to de brim.

Well—all de ethers dey growed up  
An' scattered far an' wide;  
An' only one has stayed wid me—  
Dat Acer Spades who died!





The  roblem



## THE PROBLEM

You've made me the Problem of the  
age—

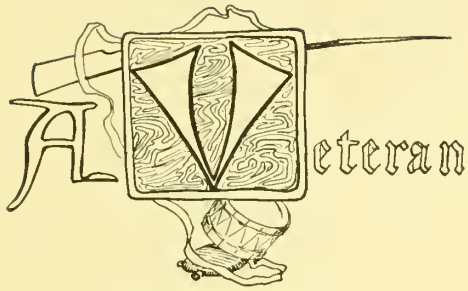
The Riddle— the Puzzle the Knot:  
And the nations stand frowning and  
gaping around,  
Trying to unravel the plot.

And all the while I'm the simplest thing  
Ever made in the image of fun,  
If you leave me alone with a cotton-field  
And a hoe, and plenty of sun!











## A VETERAN

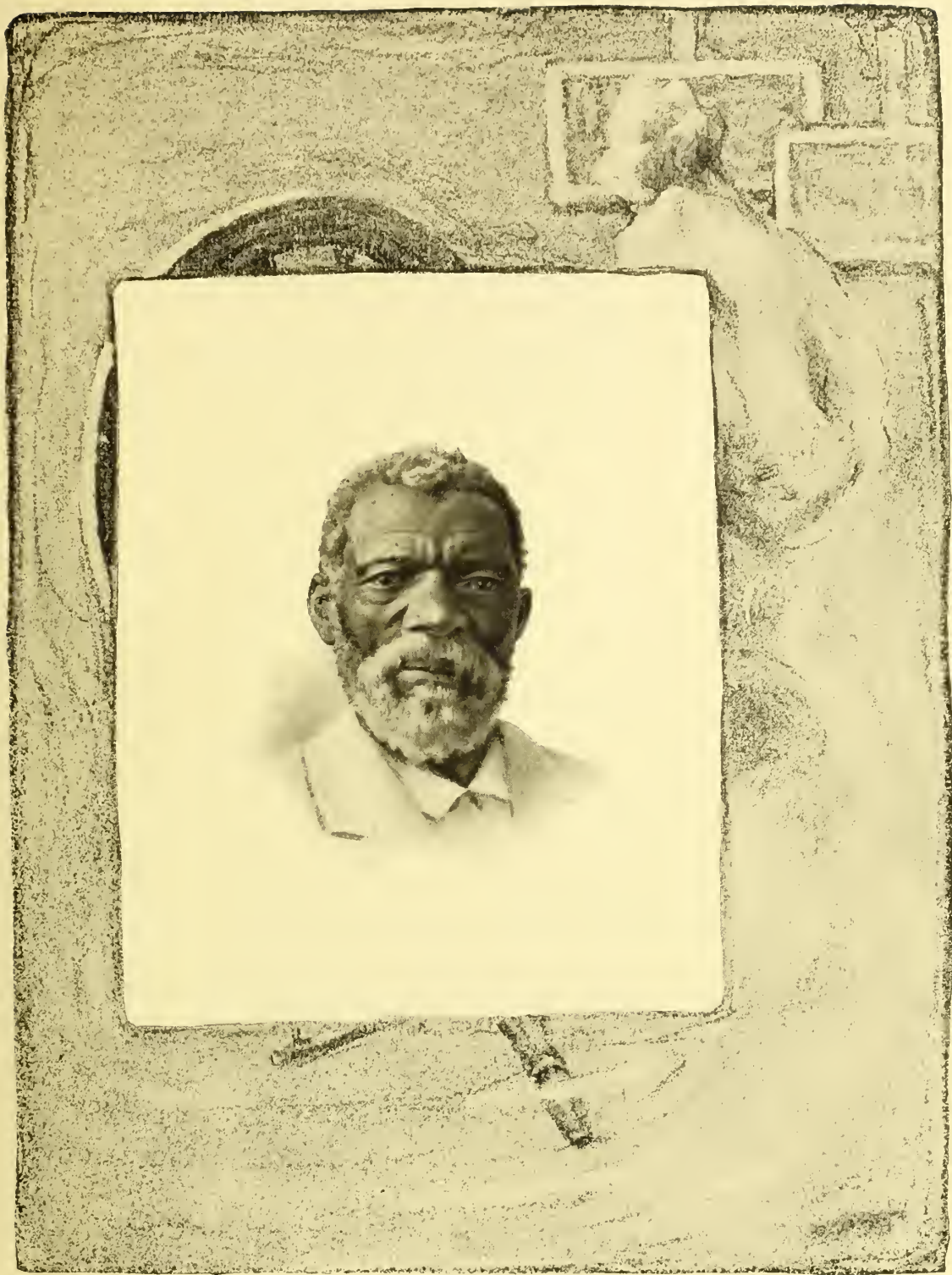
It's curious, when dere's sich a lot  
Of nigger-pensions 'round,  
Dat *mine* in some strange sort of way  
Aint never yit been found!

Of course, sir, I was in de war,  
Me an' my Master too!  
We lit in at de fus' drum-tap  
An' stayed till hit was through.

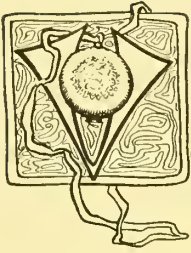
An' I kept always clost to him  
In camp—as clost could be,  
An' in de field as clost, of course,  
As hit was safe for me.

An', bet your life, we made things  
warm  
All up an' down de line;  
For "General" was my Master's rank,  
An' body-sergeant mine!

But now, when I says "pension," why,  
Dey laughs an' says to me:  
You better go an' *die*, an' git  
Your pension fum ole Lee!







anity Fair

## VANITY FAIR

De Cake-walk hit comes off to-night  
Down yander at Sis Lou's;  
An' I've been sont to git a patch  
Put on her Sondag shoes.

Oh, won't dem dancers switch around  
All up an' down in twos,  
An' won't dey scrape an' stomp dere  
feet  
All in dere Sondag shoes!

I seem to hear de banjos play,  
I feel de floors shake,  
I hear de tromp of Sondag shoes,  
An' smell the smell of cake!

De Lord knows if I had my way,  
Of all things, I would choose  
To go to dat Cake-walk to-night  
An' stan' in Sis Lou's shoes!



























