

THE  
FREEDMEN'S BOOK.

By L. MARIA CHILD.

O dark, sad millions, — patiently and dumb  
Waiting for God, — your hour, at last, has come,  
And Freedom's song  
Breaks the long silence of your night of wrong.

JOHN G. WHITTIER.



BOSTON:  
TICKNOR AND FIELDS.

1866.

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**UNIVERSITY PRESS: WELCH, BIGELOW, & Co.,  
CAMBRIDGE.**

And the bolts and bars shall vibrate  
With the triumphs of the free.

Though the morning seemed to linger  
O'er the hill-tops far away,  
Now the shadows bear the promise  
Of the quickly coming day.

Soon the mists and murky shadows  
Shall be fringed with crimson light,  
And the glorious dawn of freedom  
Break refulgent on the sight.

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NEW-YEAR'S DAY ON THE ISLANDS OF  
SOUTH CAROLINA, 1863.

BY CHARLOTTE L. FORTEN.

A FEW days before Christmas we were delighted at receiving a beautiful Christmas Hymn from John G. Whittier, written especially for our children. They learned it very easily, and enjoyed singing it. We showed them the writer's picture, and told them he was a very good friend of theirs, who felt the deepest interest in them, and had written this Hymn expressly for them to sing. This made them very proud and happy.

Early Christmas morning we were awakened by the people knocking at the doors and windows, and shouting "Merry Christmas!" After distributing some little presents among them, we went to the church, which had been decorated with holly, pine, cassena, mistletoe, and the

hanging moss, and had a very Christmas-like look. The children of our school assembled there, and we gave them the nice comfortable clothing and the picture-books which had been kindly sent by some Philadelphia ladies. There were at least a hundred and fifty children present. It was very pleasant to see their happy, expectant little faces. To them it was a wonderful Christmas-day, such as they had never dreamed of before. There was cheerful sunshine without, lighting up the beautiful moss drapery of the oaks, and looking in joyously through the open windows ; and there were bright faces and glad hearts within.

After the distribution of the gifts, the children were addressed by some of the gentlemen present. Then they sang the following Hymn, which their good friend Whittier had written for them :—

“ O, none in all the world before  
 Were ever so glad as we !  
 We 're free on Carolina's shore,  
 We 're all at home and free.

“ Thou Friend and Helper of the poor,  
 Who suffered for our sake,  
 To open every prison-door,  
 And every yoke to break, —

“ Bend low thy pitying face and mild,  
 And help us sing and pray ;  
 The hand that blest the little child  
 Upon our foreheads lay.

“ We hear no more the driver's horn,  
 No more the whip we fear ;  
 This holy day that saw thee born  
 Was never half so dear.

“ The very oaks are greener clad,  
 The waters brighter smile ;

O, never shone a day so glad  
On sweet St. Helen's Isle.

" We praise Thee in our songs to-day,  
To Thee in prayer we call;  
Make swift the feet and straight the way  
Of freedom unto all.

" Come once again, O blessed Lord!  
Come walking on the sea!  
And let the mainlands hear the word  
That sets the islands free! "

Then they sang John Brown's Hallelujah Song, and several of their own hymns.

Christmas night, the children came in and had several grand shouts. They were too happy to keep still. One of them, a cunning, kittenish little creature, named Amaretta, only six years old, has a remarkably sweet voice. " O Miss," said she, " all I want to do is to sing and shout! " And sing and shout she did, to her heart's content. She reads nicely, and is very fond of books. Many of the children already know their letters. The parents are eager to have them learn. They sometimes say to me : " Do, Miss, let de children learn eberyting dey can. *We* neber hab no chance to learn nuttin' ; but we wants de chillen to learn. " They are willing to make many sacrifices that their children may attend school. One old woman, who had a large family of children and grandchildren, came regularly to school in the winter, and took her seat among the little ones. Another woman, who had one of the best faces I ever saw, came daily, and brought her baby in her arms. It happened to be one of the best babies in the world, and allowed its mother to pursue her studies without interruption.

New-Year's Day, Emancipation Day, was a glorious

one to us. General Saxton and Colonel Higginson had invited us to visit the camp of the First Regiment of South Carolina Volunteers on that day, "the greatest day in the nation's history." We enjoyed perfectly the exciting scene on board the steamboat *Flora*. There was an eager, wondering crowd of the freed people, in their holiday attire, with the gayest of headkerchiefs, the whitest of aprons, and the happiest of faces. The band was playing, the flags were streaming, and everybody was talking merrily and feeling happy. The sun shone brightly, and the very waves seemed to partake of the universal gayety, for they danced and sparkled more joyously than ever before. Long before we reached Camp Saxton, we could see the beautiful grove and the ruins of the old fort near it. Some companies of the First Regiment were drawn up in line under the trees near the landing, ready to receive us. They were a fine, soldierly looking set of men, and their brilliant dress made a splendid appearance among the trees. It was my good fortune to find an old friend among the officers. He took us over the camp and showed us all the arrangements. Everything looked clean and comfortable; much neater, we were told, than in most of the white camps. An officer told us that he had never seen a regiment in which the men were so honest. "In many other camps," said he, "the Colonel and the rest of us would find it necessary to place a guard before our tents. We never do it here. Our tents are left entirely unguarded, but nothing has ever been touched." We were glad to know that. It is a remarkable fact, when we consider that the men of this regiment have all their lives been slaves; for we all know that Slavery does not tend to make men honest.

The ceremony in honor of Emancipation took place in

the beautiful grove of live-oaks adjoining the camp. I wish it were possible to describe fitly the scene which met our eyes, as we sat upon the stand, and looked down on the crowd before us. There were the black soldiers in their blue coats and scarlet pantaloons; the officers of the First Regiment, and of other regiments, in their handsome uniforms; and there were crowds of lookers-on, men, women, and children, of every complexion, grouped in various attitudes, under the moss-hung trees. The faces of all wore a happy, interested look. The exercises commenced with a prayer by the chaplain of the regiment. An ode, written for the occasion, was then read and sung. President Lincoln's Proclamation of Emancipation was then read, and enthusiastically cheered. The Rev. Mr. French presented Colonel Higginson with two very elegant flags, a gift to the First Regiment, from the Church of the Puritans, in New York. He accompanied them by an appropriate and enthusiastic speech. As Colonel Higginson took the flags, before he had time to reply to the speech, some of the colored people, of their own accord, began to sing, —

" My country, 't is of thee,  
Sweet land of liberty,  
Of thee we sing! "

It was a touching and beautiful incident, and sent a thrill through all our hearts. The Colonel was deeply moved by it. He said that reply was far more effective than any speech he could make. But he did make one of those stirring speeches which are "half battles." All hearts swelled with emotion as we listened to his glorious words, "stirring the soul like the sound of a trumpet." His soldiers are warmly attached to him, and he evidently feels toward them all as if they were his children.

General Saxton spoke also, and was received with great enthusiasm. Throughout the morning, repeated cheers were given for him by the regiment, and joined in heartily by all the people. They know him to be one of the best and noblest men in the world. His unflinching kindness and consideration for them, so different from the treatment they have sometimes received at the hands of United States officers, have caused them to have unbounded confidence in him.

At the close of Colonel Higginson's speech, he presented the flags to the color-bearers, Sergeant Rivers and Sergeant Sutton, with an earnest charge, to which they made appropriate replies.

Mrs. Gage uttered some earnest words, and then the regiment sang John Brown's Hallelujah Song.

After the meeting was over, we saw the dress-parade, which was a brilliant and beautiful sight. An officer told us that the men went through the drill remarkably well, and learned the movements with wonderful ease and rapidity. To us it seemed strange as a miracle to see this regiment of blacks, the first mustered into the service of the United States, thus doing itself honor in the sight of officers of other regiments, many of whom doubtless came to scoff. The men afterward had a great feast; ten oxen having been roasted whole, for their especial benefit.

In the evening there was the softest, loveliest moonlight. We were very unwilling to go home; for, besides the attractive society, we knew that the soldiers were to have grand shouts and a general jubilee that night. But the steambont was coming, and we were obliged to bid a reluctant farewell to Camp Saxton and the hospitable dwellers therein. We walked the deck of the steamer singing patriotic songs, and we agreed that moonlight and



water had never looked so beautiful as they did that night. At Beaufort we took the row-boat for St. Helena. The boatmen as they rowed sang some of their sweetest, wildest hymns. It was a fitting close to such a day. Our hearts were filled with an exceeding great gladness; for although the government had left much undone, we knew that Freedom was surely born in our land that day. It seemed too glorious a good to realize, this beginning of the great work we had so longed for and prayed for. It was a sight never to be forgotten, that crowd of happy black faces from which the shadow of Slavery had forever passed. "Forever free! forever free!"—those magical words in the President's Proclamation were constantly singing themselves in my soul.

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SONG OF THE NEGRO BOATMEN AT PORT  
ROYAL, S. C.

BY JOHN G. WHITTIER.

**O** PRAISE and 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 free men.  
 De yam will grow, de cotton blow,  
 We 'll hab de rice an' corn:  
 O nebber you fear, if nebber you hear  
 De driver blow his horn!

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