

ISHMAEL DAY

The sun looks over the Maryland hills,  
And kisses the rip'ning grain,  
Which flashes back, in a billowy gleam,  
The light of his glory again;  
The shout of the harvest band rings out,  
And the cradler's swath is full;  
The raker gathers the golden stems,  
And binds with a lusty pull.

II

On the shaded porch of the mansion old,  
Sits the sire of seventy-three,  
And looks on the manor that owns his wall,  
And his brow is calm and free.  
He smokes his pipe in his easy chair,  
And watches the placid grace  
That slumbers—a fadeless sunlight—on  
The motherly good-wife's face.

III

"The harvest is full," quoth Ishmael Day,  
In nigh on to three-score year;  
I've watched it ripen in Maryland—  
A better has not been here.  
The stalk is not over-heavy, it's true,  
But the berry is plump and bright,  
And never a straw has been scotched with rust,  
Nor a head been touched with blight.

IV

"But the crop's light, otherwhere, they say,  
An' the prices are rangin' high;  
So we must save for the poor folk round,  
Who'll find it hard to buy.  
But we'll sell the rest and invest in 'bonds,'  
For the country needs it now,  
And it'll be safer for good wife,  
Than hid in thy stocking, I trow."

"The rebels come! The rebels come!"  
The harvest hum was still,  
And naught was seen but billowy gold,  
Upon the wheat-clad hill.  
Down from his porch came Ishmael Day,  
And to his flagstaff went,  
And up the heaven-ward-pointing spar  
The starry bunting sent.

VI

"They shall not say—the dashed brood,  
Whene'er they choose to come,  
They found the "Union" hid away,  
Or Ishmael not at home.  
It's waved on that "Old Hick'ry" pole,  
This many a prosperous year,  
An' while there's nerve in this old arm,  
It still shall flutter here!

VII

"I'll let 'em know that seventy years  
Haint dimmed the hunter's eye;  
For by the God who hears me now,  
Who pulls it down shall die!  
My finger 'll pull a trigger yet,  
And old "Brown Bess" is true;  
They'd best not touch "the striped rag,"  
They'll rue it if they do!"

VIII

Back to his porch and easy chair,  
The farmer mutt'ring strode,  
As two grey horsemen came in sight  
Upon the woodland road.  
With jeering shouts they greet the flag,  
Nor heed the farmer's frown;  
But grasp the halyards eagerly  
To drag the banner down.

IX

"Beware!"—the warning came too late  
"Brown Bess" and Ishmael Day  
Spake both at once,—and in the dust  
A dying rebel lay.  
While down the road with clattering hoofs  
The other swiftly sped.  
Quoth Ishmael—"For the brave old flag  
One rebel, at least, hath bled!"

The night has come upon Maryland,  
And blazing home and byre,  
And blackened fields and smouldering sheaves,  
A host of soldiers' ire,  
On pile-locks of silver grey,  
There none with a lighter heart  
Than the patriot, Ishmael Day.

APPLICATION

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