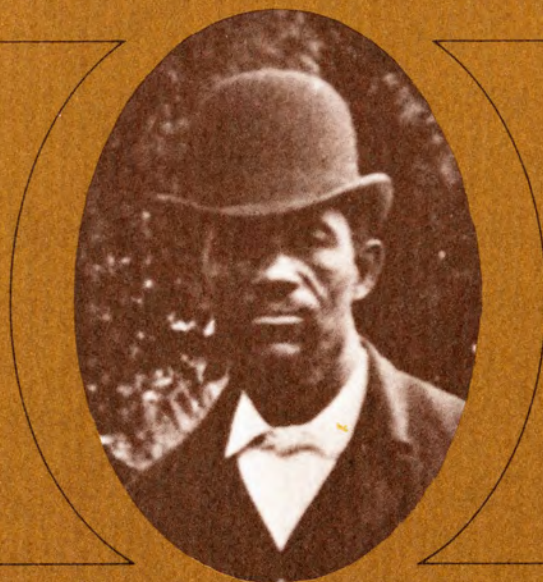


**“KIND  
REGARDS  
OF  
S.G. BROWN”**



**Selected Poems of Solomon G. Brown**

**Compiled by Louise Daniel Hutchinson  
and  
Gail Sylvia Lowe**

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May 15th

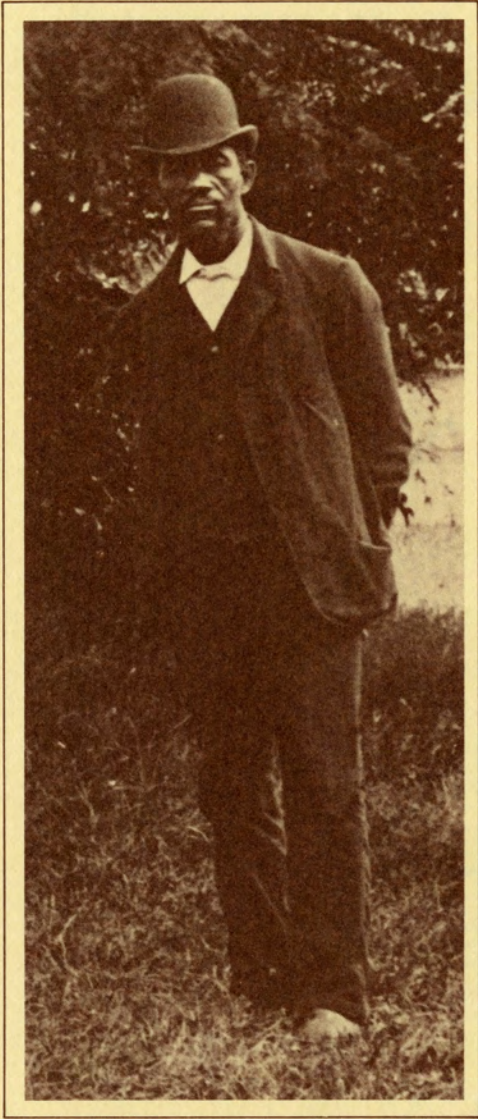
**"KIND REGARDS OF S. G. BROWN"**  
**Selected Poems of Solomon G. Brown**

Presented by

S. G. Brown

1872.

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Solomon G. Brown; July 10, 1891. Portion of a group photograph.  
*Courtesy Smithsonian Archives*

# **“KIND REGARDS OF S.G. BROWN”**

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In this group photograph taken on the steps of the Smithsonian "Castle," Solomon G. Brown is seated in the front row (far left). July 10, 1891.  
*Courtesy Smithsonian Archives.*



## FOREWORD

In 1871, when Solomon G. Brown was elected to a seat in the House of Delegates and became a member of the District of Columbia's territorial government, Frederick Douglass saluted the new era with these words: "The chains of the race are broken, *the fountains of knowledge are opened, the means of advancement are accessible.*" (Italics added.) Then Brown had been a clerk with the Smithsonian Institution for nearly two decades. He had also earned a reputation as a natural scientist-lecturer, and he, himself, was a part of this new era.

A man for all seasons, Brown charted new courses, advocated the work-ethic, and challenged his people to achieve. An inspiring leader, his creative talents and intellectual prowess placed him in the company of the aspiring and promising men and women of his generation. While Solomon Brown is not generally known to many beyond the community of Anacostia, and did not enjoy a large public reputation beyond the boundaries of Washington, Baltimore and Alexandria, yet, as we observe the Anacostia Neighborhood Museum's 16th year of operation, we take this opportunity to celebrate his life and work, and present selected pieces of his poetry for he was one of us.

Then a young man full of enthusiasm for knowledge and service, Brown began employment with the Smithsonian Institution in 1852, and spent more than fifty of his seventy-seven years in this venerable institution. He recognized the unique opportunities of the new era, and took full advantage of the vast knowledge then accessible to him. True to the motto of the institution he served so long and loyally—"The Increase and Diffusion of Knowledge"—with a grand plan of race uplift Brown began to disseminate knowledge among his own people. Back of his planning, and by his own abilities, efforts and boundless energy, was a lifelong vision of advancing his own disparaged race. Today he would certainly applaud the creation of a museum in his Anacostia (Hillsdale) community by the very institution that first opened doors of opportunity and learning to him.

Admonishing the citizens to reject idleness and debilitating habits that would not produce the best for the race, Brown was creative and imaginative in his leadership that inspired confidence among his listeners. In their effort to assimilate into the mainstream of American society, like Douglass, Brown reminded his audiences of the great strides toward freedom that his people had made since release from involuntary servitude.

So might we say to those who assess our value as still a fledgling part of the Smithsonian Institution, rejoice with us, that with the creative vision and support of

the Institution's Secretary, Dr. S. Dillon Ripley, we have come this far, realizing that this 16th anniversary is but a benchmark toward the future. Like Solomon Brown we have put down roots, roots that will send forth blossoms and fruit for the next and succeeding generations.

Like John Quincy Adams, who contributed much to the establishment of the Smithsonian Institution, many present today may not be here "to behold a berry . . . [or] taste a fruit," but we will leave a legacy for generations yet unborn. For "the fountains of knowledge are opened, [and] the means for advancement are accessible."

John R. Kinard  
Director  
Anacostia Neighborhood Museum  
1983

## SOLOMON G. BROWN: A RENAISSANCE MAN

A self-educated man of many accomplishments, the Hon. Solomon G. Brown (1829?-1906) was an employee of the Smithsonian Institution (1852-1906), first in the Transportation Department, then as a clerk in the International Exchange Service. He became a distinguished scientist-lecturer who also showed talent as a scientific-graphic illustrator with a propensity for writing verse.

He was one of the six children of Isaac and Rachel Brown. Brown was born free in Washington City near Boundary Avenue and 14th Street (now 14th and U Streets, N.W.). The untimely death of his father, in 1833, and the seizure of his property in 1834 to pay alleged debts, left the Brown family homeless and destitute. Too, since private schoolhouses for blacks were few and required a small tuition, family circumstances deprived the Brown's fourth son of a grammar or common school education.<sup>1</sup>

William J. Simmons writes in *Men of Mark* (1887) that young Brown "was placed under the care of a Mr. Lambert Tree, assistant postmaster in the city post office." Whether he was apprenticed to learn a trade (a custom of the day) or become a household servant is unknown. But it is clear that an amicable relationship developed between Brown and the man who became his benefactor. In 1844 Lambert Tree secured for young Brown an appointment in the city post office. Significantly, on July 20, 1858, Tree appeared as a witness in District of Columbia Court, County of Washington, to establish and confirm Solomon G. Brown's status as a free black. Swearing under oath "that no one has any claim against his freedom," Tree reduced for Brown the risk of either being apprehended or detained as a slave.

Brown was fortunate to come under the patronage and influence of Lambert Tree, for the relationship opened doors of opportunity that otherwise might have been closed to him. Soon after his employment with the city post office, Brown was detailed to assist Joseph Henry (1797-1878), the first Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution; Samuel F.B. Morse (1791-1872), the developer of the Morse Code; and Alfred Vail (1807-1859), all of whom contributed to the successful establishment of the first magnetic telegraph system between Washington, D.C., and Baltimore. In a sketch of his life, written in 1906 for the children of Birney Elementary School in Anacostia, Brown wrote that he "carried the first [telegraph] message to the President's Mansion (the White House)."

During his more than half-a-century with the Smithsonian Institution, Brown acquired a considerable expertise in the field of natural history. Soon his illustrated lectures were in great demand by scientific societies in Washington, Alexandria, and Baltimore. His first public lecture, "The Social Habits of Insects," was delivered, at

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<sup>1</sup>Washington City did not provide public education for blacks until after the passage of the Emancipation Act for the District of Columbia and Territories in 1862. The first four-room public schoolhouse for blacks did not open until March 1865.

the invitation of Dr. Enoch Ambush and a committee of the Israel A.M.E. Church, before the Young People's Literary Society and lyceum on January 10, 1855. The lecture was fully illustrated by forty-nine diagrams and illustrations prepared by Brown, himself. For more than thirty-five years "Brown . . . prepared or assisted in preparing nearly all the important diagrams for the grand scientific lectures which [had] been delivered in the famous Smithsonian," according to Simmons in *Men of Mark*. Over the years he lectured on such topics as: "Geology," "Water," "Air," "Telegraph," "Embryo Plants," "Man's Relations to the Earth," and other subjects.

Brown became a member of a citizens group that encouraged a select committee of the Freedmen's Bureau to buy the 375 acre Barry's Farm tract for homesteading by black families—some only recently freed from bondage. Brown, himself, invested in the experiment, purchasing lots on Elvans Road in the section later called East Hillsdale.<sup>2</sup> With his wife Lucinda, he built a comfortable home. In an orchard which neighborhood children called "Brown's Park," young and old members of the Pioneer Sabbath School (founded by Brown) were entertained at picnics. "Hillsdale Notes," a weekly article penned by Cornelius W. Davis, a resident of the village who reported on its cultural and social life, noted the attendance of Frederick Douglass at one of these Sunday School outings. It was reported that Douglass and his sons had donated an organ to the Pioneer Sabbath School.

Although childless themselves, the Browns, like many black families, had an extended family composed of nieces (some of whom they adopted) and boarders. The 1870 Census for Washington County East of 7th Street lists a Kate Adams, age 10, as a member of Brown's household. When William J. Simmons, then a young teacher in the District's public schools, was promoted to the position of principal-teacher of Anacostia's Hillsdale School (Sheridan and Nichols Avenues) he boarded with Solomon Brown. He remained in the Browns' household and at the Hillsdale School until 1874, when, on August 25, he married Miss Josephine Silence of the District.

A race leader committed to race uplift, Solomon G. Brown served three consecutive terms (one year each) as a member of the House of Delegates under the Territorial Government of the District of Columbia. Elected to represent black and white Anacostians (First District), Brown was the first member certified by Henry D. Cooke, Governor of the District of Columbia, when the new government convened to organize on May 15, 1871. He was the first to respond to the roll call and to be escorted to his seat. This was to be the beginning of the involvement of black Anacostians with the legislative process in the Capital City.

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<sup>2</sup>On the 1867-1868 plat map Nichols Avenue divided the flat lands on the west from the hilly lands on the east.

A man of extraordinary energy and seemingly limitless interests, Brown was a member of the national black leadership committee that arranged for the ceremonial unveiling of sculptor Thomas Ball's Emancipation Memorial Monument in Washington's Lincoln Park. (Ball called the statue Lincoln and the *rising* slave.) With President U.S. Grant and members of the Congress in attendance Frederick Douglass was the orator for the day. A trustee of Wilberforce University, and the 15th Street Presbyterian Church, superintendent of the North Washington Mission Sunday School, and a member of the Freedmen's Relief Association, Brown used every opportunity to gain respect and recognition for his people and to be of service.

Simmon's account provides a glimpse of Brown's social and community life.

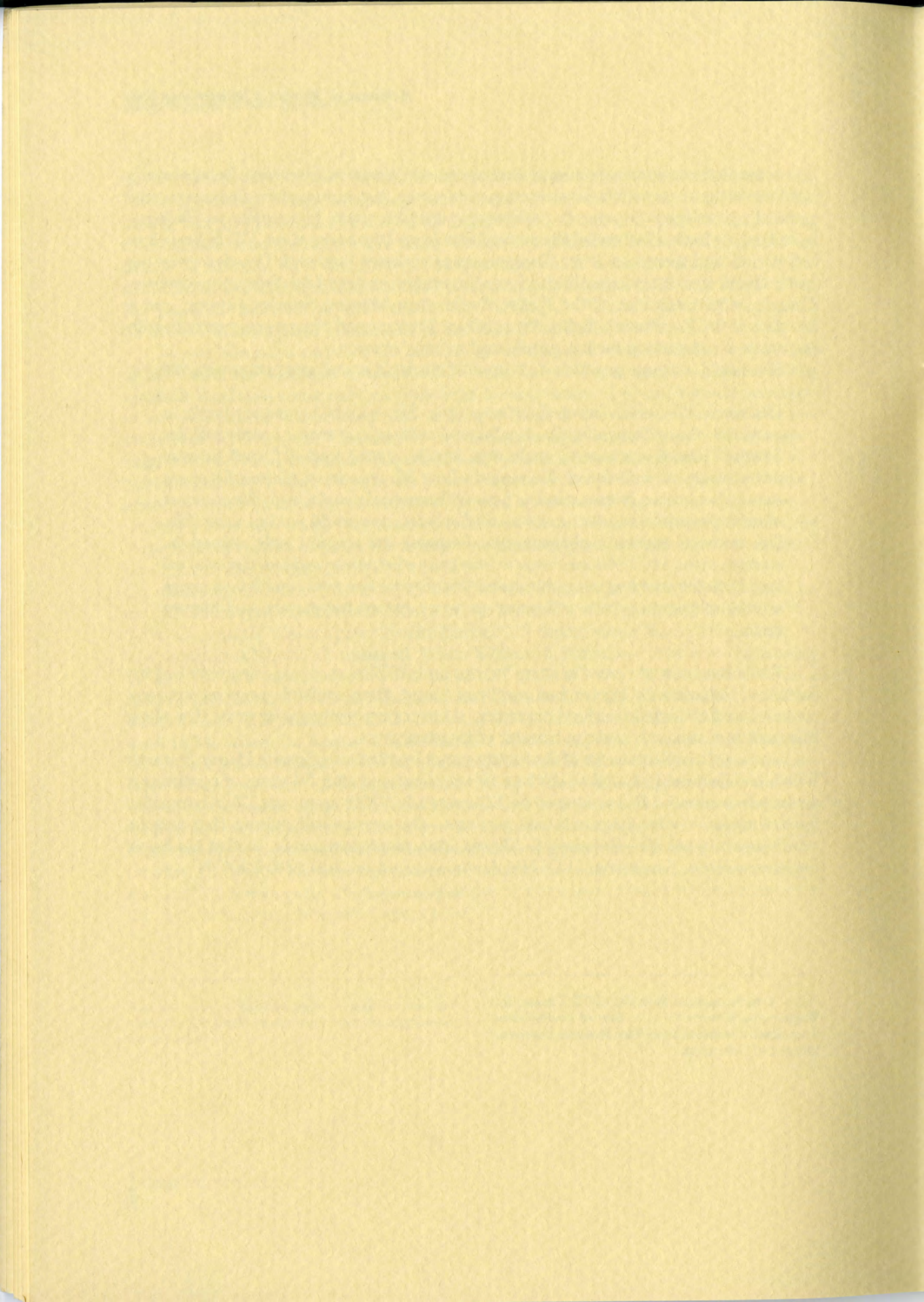
His whole life seems devoted to the people. He spends his money freely in providing those things for the intellectual culture and moral training of the Sunday School attendants, male and female, young and old, and he was never weary in well-doing. No period of my life was more pleasantly spent than in his house. Surrounded as he is with musical people, with the choicest library, pictures and other evidences of culture, one could not but enjoy life. His home is indeed a pleasant one, because his amiable wife, whom he married June 16, 1864 has been to him truly a helpmate and has contributed largely to the carrying out of his plans. Mr. Brown is a poet, and has in press a book of poems which will show to some extent his genius and literary taste.

While the book of verse "in press" at the time William J. Simmons published his sketch of Solomon G. Brown has not been found, from available sources we have retrieved and collected unedited examples of his poetry—writings in verse that show the growth of the man and the breadth of his thoughts.

Serving three Secretaries of the Smithsonian Institution—Joseph Henry, Spencer Baird, and Samuel P. Langley—by his own account and after 54 years of continuous service, Solomon G. Brown retired on February 14, 1906, about age 77. Surrounded by his music, books, paintings and pictures—the beauty and culture that was so much a part of his life—Solomon G. Brown, this renaissance man, died at his home on Elvans Road, Anacostia, D.C. His death occurred on June 24, 1906.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Year of birth inferred from the 1870 Census for Washington County (D.C.); date of death taken from death certificate from Vital Records Division, District of Columbia.



**Selected Poems of Solomon G. Brown**

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO



## “SAY, JOHN, I HEARD THE OTHER DAY”

Say, John, I heard the other day  
From sister Phoebe Perry  
The Hillsdale folk across the way  
Will go to Harper's Ferry.  
When do they go and on what date?  
I think I can remember,  
Oh, yes, I heard our preacher say  
“The fifth day of September.”  
Of course you know I will be there  
And bring my wife and daughter  
If I can only raise the fare,  
One dollar and a quarter.

---

As members of the territorial government of the District of Columbia (1871-74), Solomon G. Brown and Frederick Douglass were equally responsible for renaming the Barry's Farm community. In both 1871 and 1872 legislation was introduced to change the name of the village of Barry's Farm (sometimes called Potomac City) to "Hillsboro." The name "Hillsdale" was finally agreed upon, but the enactment of legislation came so late in the

closing session of the 1874 territorial government that the name never seems to have been published on an official map of the city. However, Brown preserved the name "Hillsdale" in his poetry.

One of the events that Hillsdale residents eagerly anticipated was the annual excursion to Harper's Ferry. Brown, the sponsor of this activity, always advertised it with a verse, of which "Say, John, I Heard The Other Day" is an example.

## IN MEMORIAM

How quick the news spread over the place,  
True sadness was upon each face,  
So sudden Brother Gibbons fell  
Every one had this to tell.

Through the town all had the word,  
Each would ask if you had heard;  
With tearful eye would softly say—  
“Brother Gibbons died today!”

Turn which ever way you would,  
All the neighbors understood,  
Would affirm they felt the shock,  
“Yes! he died at ten o’clock.”

It does not seem as this can be,  
His presence seems so fresh to me,  
So lately he and I did meet,  
And conversed upon the street.

T’was only on last Sabbath day,  
He urged his hearers, watch and pray,  
Saying, that neighbors die so fast,  
This Sacrament may be his last

---

This poem was dedicated to the Reverend William Gibbons, Pastor of Zion Baptist Church, Washington, D.C. It was read by Brown at Gibbons' memorial service, July 28, 1886 at Israel C.M.E. Church. Privately printed, 1886.

His last on Earth he was then giving,  
How soon he took his first in Heaven;  
That Grand Communion, Oh! how sweet  
To kneel around a Saviour's feet,

T'was here he spent a Christian life,  
And leaves his children, friends and wife;  
A host of friends who knew him best—  
His Master calls him home to rest.

It was his custom day by day,  
To read the Bible, sing and pray,  
Then go and visit sick and poor;  
See him go from door to door.

We all will miss this Christian man,  
So dearly loved on every hand;  
For years his Christian battles faught,  
How many thousands he has taught.

Throughout this District he was known,  
By sister Churches as his own;  
You could not meet him any day,  
But what he had kind words to say.

He'd shake your hand—before he'd go  
He'd say these words, and say no more—  
"I hope my Brother you can tell  
That Jesus has done all things well."

He pointed men to God above,  
Would tell them of his peace and love,  
That God was ready to forgive,  
That all might turn to him and live.

He knelt by thousands of dying men,  
Who always found in him a friend,  
Would visit such from day to day,  
He kindly taught them how to pray.

But, Oh! the number he's baptized,  
If all's not saved, he's got his prize,  
He join'd them to the Church with love,  
He's met a host of them above.

He's met the blood-washed number there  
That oft-times met him here in prayer,  
This night they fly on Heaven's wings,  
They make the Heavenly arches ring.

No more he'll meet the Sunday School,  
Nor point them to the Golden rule;  
No more he'll beg the children learn,  
He meets a School which won't adjourn.

He knew no sect, but preached to all,  
He duly loved the Gospel call,  
He aimed to reach the precious Pearl.  
His mission was to all the world.

Yes, Gibbons was the prisoner's friend,  
Near their cells he would attend,  
At times he'd spend the bless'd day;  
Commune, console, advise, and pray.

In friendship, love, and truth he met,  
Society ties in Lodge he'd set;  
Resign all Lodges here below,  
He'll give the sign and pass no more.

No longer give the sign of Ruth,  
But enters in, by love, purity, and truth,  
Just as the true Samaritans of old  
Walks the streets that's paved with gold.

Behold him now before God's throne,  
Grand hailing signs to God is shown,  
Ten thousand fellows clap their wings  
When to Christ grand honors bring.

All hail! all hail! the crucified;  
All hail! all hail! who bled and died;  
All hail to Him the new born King,  
Admit our worthy Brother in.

Behold the members joining hands;  
Behold that blessed, united band!  
Look, Brother Gibbons is in that ring!  
Hear! their grand Hosannah sing.

Now leave the badge you wore below,  
You will not need it any more;  
Reach out this badge so free,  
And wear it through all eternity.

Farewell old friend we have met for years  
You are home at last and free from cares,  
We may not be so far behind,  
Will always keep you fresh in mind.

Count the years your zeal has run,  
See the good that you have done,  
We hope to profit by the words,  
From the Pulpit we have heard.

The Church its highest honors pay,  
They bore your body far away,  
Consigned it to its native clay  
To rise in that Eternal day.

But soon the word will die away,  
"Brother Gibbons died to-day!"  
And as time will roll between,  
So few will keep his memory green.

Knowing well how men's inclined,  
By this was moved to write these lines,  
Which we may read in after years,  
When we are overcome with cares.

How oft we think of Gibbons then,  
If here his friendly counsel send,  
He'd come and cheer our drooping heart  
And of our burdens he'd bear a part.

As Friends we assemble here to night,  
To show our sorrows, yet its right;  
All his friends may here collect  
To pay a tribute of respect.

And as we all our offerings bring,  
Israel's well-trained Choir will sing;  
Repeat the Hymn he sung of old,  
"Jesus lover of my soul!"

## “WORTHY THE LAMB THAT WAS SLAIN”

On the mountain tops the beacon lights are kindled  
By the rosy flush that tells the day is born;  
Height to height replies as up the waiting heavens  
Comes the rising sun that heralds Easter morn;  
Smiles the earth arrayed in robes of living verdure,  
Sing the birds on leafy bough a joyous strain,  
Nature joins with man in praise and adoration,  
Saying: Worthy is the lamb that was slain!

In their channels leap the streams with throbbing pulses,  
Life renewed is in each whisper of the breeze,  
All the little twigs and shoots are stirring softly  
With the life that animates the waving trees;  
Overhead the cloudless sky is brightly bending,  
Sunbeams rest alike on grassy hill and plain,  
Earth and heaven are lighting up their glad thanksgiving,  
Saying: Worthy is the lamb that once was slain!

Bring no spices to anoint the dead, ye mourners,  
From the grave the stone of grief is rolled away;  
Over death and hell the Saviour rose triumphant  
On the morning of the Resurrection day;  
Seek him not within the tomb for he is risen;  
Jesus is not here, behold where he has lain!  
Look above while angels swell the joyous anthem,  
Saying: Worthy is the Lamb that once was slain!

---

This poem was published in William J. Simmons'  
*Men of Mark* (1887).

Hallelujah! for the crucified is risen,  
Let the earth rejoice, the mountains clap their hands,  
Let the floods be glad and offer up thanksgiving,  
Hallelujah! oh, be joyful all ye lands,  
Sing aloud for joy all nations and all people,  
Angels and archangels swell the loud refrain,  
With the blood-bought millions cast your crown before him,  
Saying: Worthy is the lamb that once was slain!



## EASTER OFFERING FOR 1905

On the mountain tops the beacon light is kindled  
By the rosy flush that tells the day is born;  
Height to height replies, as up the waiting heavens  
Comes the glorious orb that heralds Easter Morn.

Smiles the earth arrayed in robes of living verdure  
Sing the birds in joyous songs of heavenly strain,  
Nature joins with man in praise and adoration,  
Singing "Worthy is the Lamb who was for sinners slain!"

In the channel leaps the stream with ever throbbing pulses,  
Life's again renewed in every whisper of the breeze,  
All the little twigs and shoots are moving softly  
With the life that animates the graceful trees.

While o'er our heads cloudless skies are brightly bending,  
Sunbeams are creeping slowly o'er the grassy plain;  
Earth and heavens are lighting up with joy and thanksgiving  
Singing, "Worthy is the Lamb who was for sinners slain!"

Bring no spice nor myrrh t'annoint the dead ye mourners;  
From His grave the stone of grief is rolled away,  
O'er death and hell, the Saviour rose triumphant  
One the glorious morn, "The Resurrection Day."

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This piece is a revised version of "Worthy The Lamb That Was Slain." No publication data is available.

Seek Him not in the tomb, for your Lord is risen;  
"Jesus is not here, Come see where He has lain."  
Look above, rejoice, while angels swell their anthem—  
Singing, "Worthy is the Lamb who was for sinners slain!"

"Hallelujah! for the crucified is risen!"  
Let all on earth rejoice;  
While the mountains clap their hands,  
Even let the floods be glad and offer thanksgiv'n—  
Hallelujah! Oh be joyful all the lands.

Sing aloud for joy, all nations and all people,  
Angels and archangels swell the loud refrain,  
While all the blood-washed hosts cast their crowns before Him—  
Singing, "Worthy is the Lamb who was for sinners slain!"

## TIME DEALING WITH MAN

Can any here imagine what  
    strange things will appear,  
Beginning prompt with January  
    then ending with the year.  
Each day with strange associates,  
    we never would select,  
We cannot choose her company,  
    nor can we well object.

Suppose old time brings to our door,  
    fortune, wealth and fame,  
To morrow follows close behind,  
    may take them all again,  
Or she may bring good tidings and  
    set our hearts at ease,  
Old time may creep behind her, and  
    cover with disease.

What songs of woe and horror, a  
    passing day may sing,  
How soon from joy to sadness, a  
    sudden change may bring,  
The history of a day is made, but  
    stop and tell us how,  
Delays are not permitted here, but  
    must be started now.

---

In January 1887, Solomon Brown read this poem on the occasion of his election as Poet Laureate of the Philomathian Literary Society. The *Washington Bee* published it on January 15, 1887.

A moment can't be wasted, or half  
a moment lost,  
But time will be demanding, and  
calling for its cost,  
Yet remember that each duty, must  
be properly performed,  
Or the time for its performance,  
will be forever gone.

What is time, that we should give,  
such ever earnest need,  
Why can't we disregard it, and  
spend just as we need?  
Time to man is mystery and has  
no resting place.  
It comes in from eternity, and ends  
it[s] day in space.

Why should we stop to ponder,  
and take such notes of time,  
Why not disregard it, and act as  
we're inclined?  
But time will sure arrest us, by its  
rapid flight,  
And will touch our ebon locks and  
change them into white.

The man who don't keep up with time,  
as a companion dear,  
How soon he falls behind the time,  
and in different sphere,  
Stupid, mean and ignorant, with  
never nothing new,  
Those people who are up with time,  
find little use for you.

Where did you first meet with time,  
can any answer this,  
Then where did time first meet with  
you, was in a mist?  
If it was mist 'tis blown away so  
that you could grow,  
Until old time should come around  
and lay our bodies low.

We like time can't be detained, we  
have no place to stay,  
Our spirit goes we know not where,  
our bodies to the clay,  
Time's ever changing while we live  
always growing old,  
Time passes and forgotten is "just  
as a tale that[']s told."

In what strange world did we reside  
before we entered this?  
Where oh! where will we abide,  
when driven off from this?  
We will have old father time attend  
us all the way,  
He will escort us down through life  
until we end our day.

How shall we meet old father time,  
when he calls for pay,  
Put him off as printer's bills, please  
call some other day,  
Or will we raise our battle axe to  
drive him from our door,  
Or try to chop him into bits, and  
leave these on the floor?

The friends we meet and greet to day,  
we may never meet them more,  
Time may bring the dreaded news,  
our meeting here is o'er,  
Time alone decides for all when  
each shall cease to greet,  
Time will fix and time alone when  
hearts shall cease to beat.

Solomon's writing hath declared, a  
time for everything,  
"A time to dance, to love and hate,  
even time to sing,"  
He also gives us time for births, as  
well as time to die,  
Grave old men find time to laugh,  
women time to cry.

Nowhere did Solomon fix a time for  
the women rest,  
It was the merest accident, Eve  
found leaves to dress,  
Women must be up in time, and  
always near at hand,  
Have every wish and notion bright  
made ready for the man.

So many go to look for time, get  
dreary by the way,  
Only wakes to be informed that  
time has passed a day,  
So common in our daily walks, to  
hear some neighbor say,  
We'll not perform this duty now,  
but some other day.

To day if wisdom lifts her voice,  
    let it read the heart,  
Look, see just what your calling is,  
    rise up and take your part,  
To morrow it may never come,  
    time may end to day,  
Sing before the morrow comes, time  
    may pass away.

Awake, arise stand up as men, none  
    can do your part,  
Nothing is accomplished here,  
    except you make the start,  
Begin just at the starting place,  
    end when you are done,  
Time will pay what wages due,  
    at your setting sun.

## HAVE WE HUSBANDS DONE OUR DUTY

Have we husbands acted manly,  
As good husbands ought to do,—  
With proper zeal fulfilled each duty;  
Give the wife just what was due?

Have we tried to lift the burdens  
That must fall on her each day—  
Sympathized in all her feelings,  
Toning every word we say?

It is right or even proper,  
For we men to have our way;  
In the home and family circle,  
Should the wife not have her say?

Should we men name all the children  
Even the darling baby girl;  
While wife is bond to household duties  
We men have freedom of the world?

Suppose the wife can't eat fat meat,  
And we men can eat no lean,  
When selecting from the butcher,  
Why not go just between?

---

Dedicating this poem "to the ladies," the poet read it before the Bethel Literary Association in October 1887. It was printed in the *Washington Bee*, October 8, 1887.



Suppose her taste should call for rare meat,  
And we like our meat well done;  
Why not roast, turn and brown it,  
Till the cooking suits each one?

Would not woman last much longer  
And be man a source of wealth;  
By proper treatment grow much stronger,  
And enjoy much better health.

Suppose each pair would pull together,  
Not wait to see who'd pull the most,  
Regard the wife just as a mother,  
And drop this thing they call divorce.

## “GOD’S VENGEANCE IS CREEPING”

God’s vengeance is creeping, this Nation must pay,  
For lives that are wasted, the crimes of our day;  
We are cheated in election, denied every right,  
The sin’s unrepented, not hid from God’s sight.

This Nation is dreaming, mid wrong and despair,  
Our brothers blood streaming, their groans fill the air;  
The blood that’s being wasted, will cry unto God,  
This Nation, He measures by a just holy rod.

The North is protesting against this great shame,  
No murderers are arrested, and none are arraigned;  
Still onward they murder, untrammelled by laws.  
These crimes become bolder; without any cause.

They charge men with arson, they charge them with rape,  
No chance to disprove it, no chance for escape;  
They’ll hang without mercy, without trial or proof,  
Not waiting for jurors, for witness, nor truth.

Most all of such charges, are brought up for spite,  
To drive off some leaders who must fly to-night;  
None but these demons, have heard of these crimes,  
The pretended outraged one, is deranged in her mind.

---

This poem appeared in the *National Leader*  
(Washington, D.C.), December 8, 1888.

It's strange all this outrage, occurs in the South,  
The Rapers are Negroes, with hell in their mouths,  
The white men are Angels, with power to slay,  
They need no tribunal, but have all one way.

The justice won't know them, pretends they are strange.  
So none are arrested and none are arraigned.  
He can not indite them, without he has proof;  
Just who hung these negroes, he can't get the truth.

Each week as it passes, fresh victims we see,  
A ghastly cold body's found hung to some tree.  
With cards pinned down upon it, "this negro has raped,  
The people of Pineville, provided this tape."

The Nation's unable, to care for black sons,  
Her Courts are too feeble, and so are her guns,  
Her dark sons are bleeding, and swinging from trees  
While thousands are pleading, and mourning for these.

The Church of this Nation, why don't it arise,  
And cry from each station appeal to the skies:  
By calling for justice, demanding what's right,  
Like they did in slavery, "arise in their might."

No tide can withstand you, though hell may arise.  
Should the North be united, and cry to the skies,  
Demand from this Nation, these murders must cease,  
That the sons of this country, may live here in peace.

Your millions are bowing to some kind of God,  
We ask, whom you worship, and who is your Lord?  
Is your God, our Creator, the Father of all?  
That God you have told us, that all men must call?

We must say, "Our Father, for all are His Sons;  
Do hear your own children, for we are all one."  
"Forgive us our Father, as we do each other—  
And grant us our Father, what we give our brother."

How can we as neighbors, still worship one Lord,  
And own that Christ Jesus, as the only true God;  
How can they approach Him, and feel He is pleased,  
Yet run down our brothers, and swing them from trees ?

Do stop these foul murders, this lynching of men,  
God hunt out these wretches, and purge our fair land;  
Make up large meetings, unite everywhere,  
Let Christians, while greeting, discuss this affair.

There are millions of Northmen, whose voice must be heard,  
Loyal Southern Christians, who honor God's Word;  
And Western brave farmers, who believe in what's right,  
With Eastern Mayflowers, who in justice delight.

Then cry from your pulpits, your alters, and stand  
How can you now falter, and not take a hand?  
For mercy and justice, for law and for right,  
Arrest these masked demons, who travel by night.

Your pulpits are silent, your priests are tied down,  
The Southern church members, have blood on their gown  
They sit in their places, pretending to pray,  
With long pious faces, How Holy are they?

Oh! God what pretentions, of blood thirsty souls,  
Whose priests dare not mention; what they do behold;  
Oh! let loose Thy vengeance, and take up our cause,  
We have no protection, under, what they call laws.

God! visit this Nation, begin at its head,  
Go down through each station, and purge every grade,  
Move sin from high stations, move misery and crime,  
To crush out such murderers, let Heavens combine.

God's vengeance is creeping, the time's near at hand,  
A justice long sleeping, will burst o'er this land.  
The pride and the hatred, against the black race;  
Is a curse to this Nation, yes! a countries disgrace.

## “MY HUSBAND SELLS WHISKY, BUT WHAT CAN I DO?”

My husband sells whisky, but what can I do?  
Your pictures of drunkards are perfect and true;  
The fine gilded bar-room is still a mean place—  
While neighbors are talking, I feel the disgrace.

My husband's a painter, he owns a good trade,  
We all lived more happy on what he once made;  
To me it's a wonder, he'd lay by the tools  
To open a bar-room like other poor fools.

My husband makes money, and we are well fixed,  
By Rum he is selling, by poison he's mixed;  
To sell to his neighbors so near his own door—  
Thus rob their dear children and make them so poor.

I met a poor woman, who once managed well,  
She filled me with sorrow to hear what she'd tell;  
Just how she had suffered, been turned out of doors—  
Her children bare-footed, with scarce any clothes.

I turn to my children and see how they live,  
So much that sustains them to others should give,  
That comes of the whisky he sells men each day—  
I pray the Good Master will turn him away.

---

Brown dedicated this poem to the Junior Grand Lodge of Independent Order of Good Templars for the District of Columbia. Privately printed November 1890. From the Library Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.

From longer deluding his weak fellow man,  
Whose wives he is grieving all over our land;  
Their children are starving and turned out of doors—  
Just how they suffer, the Lord only knows.

I sit at my window, see crowds going in,  
To spend all their earnings in Rum, Beer and Gin;  
Amongst them are black men, as well as the whites,  
Are drinking and treating by days and by nights.

They hang 'round till mid-night and then we must close,  
Some are ejected and shoved out of doors,  
To grope mid the darkness, through mud, slush and rain,  
Though I have retired my heart sinks in pain.

That man was so drunk that he might miss his home—  
And fall in some danger, while he would thus roam;  
I think of the misery of such a low life,  
Then I remember his poor starving wife.

Her husband's been drinking, he spends every cent,  
Has none for provisions, for fuel nor for rent;  
While I am surrounded with comforts of life,  
I can't sleep from thinking about his poor wife.

The women are coming and calling for Beer,  
Or sending young children, when ashamed to appear;  
Thus sending their daughters in temptation's way,  
The fruits of this sending will bloom out some day.

O Lord! send an angel from heaven in haste,  
Prevail on my husband to close up that place;  
And sell no more whiskey, but work at his trade,  
And give these poor children a part that he's made.

## “HE IS A NEGRO STILL”

“Why don’t the Negro keep his place,”  
Not force himself upon our race?  
It matters not what men may say,  
They are inferior every way.

Inferior to the meanest white,  
Are always hateful in our sight;  
We never will accept his race—  
’Twould bring our children to disgrace.

I’m free to own we can’t suppress  
That hatred harbored in our breast;  
I’ve turned and twisted every plan—  
Yet can’t regard him as a man.

Even though his skin is bright and clear,  
No kinks nor curls mixed in his hair;  
That hatred comes, and come it will,  
Which makes us hate the Negro still.

Some I’ve seen with splendid mind,  
Their whole demeanor was refined;  
But yet would come that stubborn will  
And make me hate the Negro still.

I often feel condem’d in mind,  
Repentant tears will upwards climb;  
Like brine they’ll flow, like dew distill—  
I’ll rise, but hate the Negro still.

---

Privately printed February 1891. From the Library  
Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center,  
Howard University.



I've tried to make a compromise,  
But this my very soul denies;  
I greatly fear I never will  
Cease to hate the Negro still.

They are very good to scrub and sew,  
And do our kitchen work below;  
To raise them up—we never will—  
But keep them down as Negroes still.

To do our will we think them nice,  
Even then we'll pay the lowest price;  
This is his place, no white can fill—  
And there we'll keep the Negro still.

His offsprings we can't recognize,  
These Negro children we despise;  
To keep this class just where we ought—  
In separate schools they must be taught.

Our Negro driver's name is Jim,  
Our Negro maid is tall and slim,  
Our Negro cook is old Aunt Till—  
Are good, but all are Negroes still.

Suppose Jim takes your worn-out farm  
And make it bloom out as a charm?  
This way your empty pocket fill—  
That's grand, but he's a Negro still.

Suppose true bravery he possess,  
Through him your armies have success?  
The victories gained by his own skill—  
Even then he is a Negro still.

Suppose his education's rare,  
His eyes are blue, complexion's fair?  
And he a good position fill—  
To us he is a Negro still.

Suppose he be physician square,  
With practice large and charges fair?  
He cures disease with extra skill—  
He is a Negro doctor still.

He's well enough among his race,  
And this alone is his true place;  
We'll not regard his fame or skill.  
But hold him as a Negro still.

Suppose he has inventive art,  
The world acknowledge he is smart,  
Intelligent and fills the bill?  
He's nothing but a Negro still.

Suppose he sits in Congress Hall,  
With handsome face and stature tall?  
And carries out the people's will—  
Indeed he is a Negro still.

Suppose his wife has manners fine,  
Cultured, brilliant, splendid mind?  
And every rule she rightly fills—  
That woman is a Negress still.

Suppose she holds in her own name,  
Such wealth that brings her into fame?  
Much power subject to her will—  
Even then she is a Negress still.

Suppose she comes to your relief,  
And soften down your deepest grief?  
As a nurse she has been drilled—  
That woman is a Negress still.

Suppose she finds you out of doors,  
And takes you in, provides her stores?  
And every Christian duty fill—  
She is a Negro woman still.

And then for you she kneels in prayer,  
She pleads with God your life would spare;  
The Lord her wishes does fulfill—  
Even then she is a Negress still.

And should I die in her embrace,  
Grant me a white man's resting place;  
Don't let me rest if I should die—  
Near where a Negro's body lie.

And should they take me to the church,  
Be sure and make the proper search;  
See that no Negro's standing near  
To place his hands upon my bier.

Here is a fact you cannot hide,  
The Blackman is our country's pride;  
May twist and turn it as you will—  
The Negro is your brother still.

This fact he loves above the rest,  
While it disturbs the white man's rest,  
Twist and turn it as you may,  
The Negro's here, HE'S HERE TO STAY!

## OUR CHURCH ENTERTAINMENTS

We notice these late days that men are divided,  
As to government of churches and how to sustain;  
No conference convention has ever decided  
How much of these customs should longer remain.

We hear much discussion on church entertainments,  
Indeed these are questions of very grave doubt;  
Some even demand a total refrainment  
That many abuses be hastily thrown out.

Our present church debts too large in proportion  
To place on a people not able to pay;  
To satisfy some in their vain foolish notions,  
Our churchmen are burdened and groaning to-day.

Go where you may 'tis, "Come my dear honeys,  
We owe a big debt since our foundation was laid;  
Please come, while we sing, and bring up your moneys,  
They're pushing us hard, this debt must be paid."

They push out the table and tell funny stories,  
Repeating old tales that the people may laugh;  
Then sing old time ditties, mix heaven's bright glories  
They fix the sum needed but get only half.

---

By special invitation Brown read this poem at the Prize Literary Meeting at Hillsdale Station C.M.E. Church (now St. John's C.M.E. Church), January 16, 1893. The poem must have evoked some vexation, for Brown privately published the composition in Hillsdale, D.C., February 10, 1893,

with the following explanation: "This has been published to correct many false impressions which have gone abroad respecting the language used by the reader." From the Library Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.

They employ their pastors without means to pay him,  
Expect him to beg of all he chance meet  
Resorting to means not right to support him,  
What good he might do they often defeat.

They send out young misses with many devices  
As punch cards with pass books and other new tricks,  
Thus throw them in contact with him who entices  
Return with few pennies and morals much mixed.

They publish inducements, draw all sorts together  
Who pay a small entrance, compete for some prize;  
Build churches without money to be paid for by others  
Without a regard to the cost or its size.

Employ good music, secure a pavillion  
And send out their notice that all may come in,  
But preach from their pulpit that Christian religion  
Regards these light skippings the worse of all sin.

They mix crowds together in close proximations  
And often embrace and kiss in their play;  
Pay no regard to fixed social stations,  
We've known of such gatherings to last till near day.

In plays they are grasping for paraphernalia  
That's used in the circus and other low rings,  
Tried Shakespeare and Byron but these have been failures;  
But unholy songs they frequently sing.

They descend to the cabin of old slave grandmothers,  
They mimic their language, their worship and glee,  
Expose the defects of their poor ignorant brothers;  
They carry their practise to a fearful degree.

Still boast the advancement our people are making,  
Yet suffer these evils to daily grow worse,  
Not checking the spread these customs are making,  
But foster the things which point to our curse.

As children advance they'll reason together,  
Consistence's law to these will awake;  
They'll study the paths of their fathers and mothers  
And conclude their old people had made a mistake.

They'll measure the style of our recent camp-meetings  
So far from the morals such meetings should be;  
They will not discover those true Christian greetings  
That was practiced in reason as we used to see.

Now, preaching is brought down to fine story telling,  
Which rarely the wicked or scorner awake;  
But eating and drinking, buying and selling,  
Each trader will try how much he can make.

Such songs are selected that sound the most funny  
To amuse our white neighbors and draw them around;  
And all this is done to gain the more money  
Beside the gate pennies to enter the ground.

Can we in bright hope for the new generation  
Send down these mean customs with any right claim;  
Won't reason be seeking a holier station  
And point to our customs as almost profane?

Should we not awake and do our true duty,  
Demand from our leaders some purer reform?  
See that the church shines out in its beauty,  
The cloud we see gathering foretells a great storm.

## IN MEMORY OF ISAAC BROWN

When we are not thinking or looking for death,  
Only just weary with a shortness of breath;  
A burning depression, slight pain in the head—  
By no means expecting so soon to be dead.

Friend Isaac seemed healthy, hearty and strong,  
He had the appearance of living here long;  
He was careful in diet, in habits and dress,  
With slight indication of a spirit depressed.

But seldom complaining but rather seem'd well,  
When life was declining to none he would tell;  
But growing still weaker each hour, each day—  
So quiet he suffered, thus stealeth away.

He heard a still voice way down in the night,  
"Come home, weary soldier," his soul takes its flight;  
Lie pierced by death's arrow he showed no alarms—  
Convulsed by a spasm, he falls in His arms.

So calm is he resting, now done with this life,  
He feels not the grief of his children and wife;  
Nor father, nor mother who grieve for their son—  
The two dear old parents seem nearly undone.

---

Brown wrote this "memorial verse" in honor of his friend, Isaac Brown, who died April 26, 1894. Isaac Brown had been president of the Pioneer Sunday School Association, founded by S.G. Brown. This poem was read at the memorial service May 13, 1894. Privately printed.

Awakes in bright glory he'd heard of so long—  
Enraptur'd by music of Heaven's glad song  
He falls before Jesus his offering bring—  
Joins the blessed Spirits in songs they now sing.

Our last conversation was cheerful and bright,  
We'll always remember our visit that night;  
So kind he received us we sat by his side,  
But early next morning I learn'd he'd died.

Promised before leaving we'd call in again,  
He seemed to be sorry we could not remain;  
In taking our leave of him and his wife—  
Not dreaming we'd never more see him in life.

The tie of true friendship between us was great,  
Neither time with its changes could ever abate;  
From our early acquaintance [sic] when he but a youth,  
Our strongest attachment was builded on truth.

I felt as his father, and he as my son;  
Our tastes and opinions were nearly as one;  
We loved him most dearly, we honor him now  
And while we are grieving to God we must bow.

Who knows the relation, e'en down from our birth,  
Decides when 'tis best to divide us on earth;  
Seeing a contention which brought about strife  
God deemed it was best to remove him from life.

To God's just decree we humbly bow,  
But find consolation the flesh knoweth not how;  
Thou hath taken our friend, we honor thy will—  
We dare not oppose Thee, but bow and be still.



With all those who are present we'll show our respect,  
The slightest dishonor we firmly reject;  
At the call from his children we'll quickly appear,  
Lend all our aid for protection and care.

Pleasant companion and dutiful son,  
An excellent husband and well looked upon,  
Meek in his manners, truthful and just—  
A man all could honor, a man we could trust.

Not easily influenced but quick to perceive,  
Nor easily converted but slow to believe;  
An ardent admirer of wisdom and light,  
His highest ambition was to be on the right.

His words were well chosen, indeed they were few,  
None could conjecture the things which he knew;  
For chosen acquaintances affections were strong,  
Uninfluenced by stations, but lasting and long.

Whate'er positions he'd consent to accept,  
In any book-keeping his accounts were correct;  
Attention on meetings and always in place,  
Would greet every member with smiles on his face.

A constant companion, a true-hearted friend,  
Was never insulting, he would not offend;  
But peaceful and quiet, with malice t'wards none,  
Amongst his own circle he'd join in their fun.

Was fond of good speaking and loved a good song,  
Would give good attention, sit quiet and long;  
Devoted, kind teacher, a lover of school,  
Paid great attention to observe every rule.

We won't fail to miss him, his place won't be filled,  
The "Lamb's in the bushes," be ever so still,  
One may be brought from somewhere around  
And be very handy, BUT NOT ISAAC BROWN.

His dear little children will miss him from home,  
They wonder why father so far away roam;  
The wife feels it deeply—her grief can't express—  
She grieves o'er his absence and finds little rest.

Today we assemble to mingle our tears,  
For one we have honored and mingled for years;  
Expressing our sorrow and tell of our love;  
We feel he's in Glory with Jesus above.

## A PRAYER

Our Father (dearest name) not orphans we,  
Nor outcasts, who may thus draw near to Thee.  
Grant us Thy mercy,—warm and free the grace  
Whereby in Christ we see Thy loving face.

We hear with filial face the gentle voice,  
That wins the erring back to holy joys.  
From the high throne of universal power—  
From the bright heavens, descend in copious shower.

This soft dew is the beauty of a King  
Full-handed and large-hearted, who would fling  
His favors far and wide, not only amongst the wise  
Even to the darkest cells He hears the lowly's cries.

May all Thy children piously exclaim  
Honor and homage to Thy Reverend name.  
Bring heaven's order to this alien sphere,  
Thy reign and kingdom speedily appear,  
As in the sky, by all beneath the Sun.

---

This poem appeared in the *Washington Bee*, August 20, 1898.

## FIFTY YEARS TO-DAY

'Mid all the changes I have seen  
Since fifty years have rolled between,  
My eyes can rest on only few—  
Whose faces once could daily view,  
And kindly greet on passing.

My mind goes back to hallowed spots  
Fraught by memories by some forgot;  
Which bring up friends most dear to me  
Who've long since gone beyond the sea.—  
It seems I'll not forget them.

Many I've known are dead and gone  
Many are here who've since been born;  
Some's resigned and changed their home  
Others through foreign countries roam,  
And these are—

—Sending gems to you and me  
They've gathered from the land and sea  
These, too, were young, now growing old;  
But many facts are yet untold,  
To be revealed by others.

---

An official visit was made to Brown on February 15, 1902, by Samuel Pierpont Langley, Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution. Secretary Langley congratulated Brown "upon his reaching fifty years [of] continued service in the Institution." With the Secretary on this occasion were F. W. Hodge and W. I. Adams, both of the International Exchange Service; H. W. Dorsey, then Special Assistant to

the Secretary; and James G. Traylor. Brown's poem, written to commemorate this occasion, was privately printed "by contributions of his friends at the Smithsonian Institution," June 1903. From Smithsonian Institution Archives and the Library Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.

Every year since here I'd stay,  
Some much loved friend's been called away;  
Younger men in everycase—  
Have come right up an [sic] filled their place.  
And suggesting some improvements.

We'll now call up our first main chief  
Whose history may be told in brief;  
A pleasant man so meek and mild  
Was great, yet gentle as a child,  
A man whom all regarded

A man of pious, Godly fear  
Affording all his friendly care;  
'Twas he who first appointed me  
Since then he's gone beyond the sea—  
We never can forget him.

Since then new generations born,  
Take his research and move them on;  
Are treasured by great men of thought,  
Received the credit such research ought,  
Thus adding much to knowledge.

By Henry the electric plans were laid,  
His mind this grand conception made;  
By him was launched out on the sea—  
Which now brings news to you and me,  
In the shortest space of time.

I've been impressed o'er fifty years  
By Henry's brain and patient cares;  
The honors given F. B. Morse  
Were wholly done at Henry's cause  
Which all his friends regretted.

By Henry, I always will believe  
The telegraph was first conceived.  
The part he played upon the staff—  
Made complete the telegraph,  
Which is our greatest blessing.

Our second chief who filled his place  
Was one of justice, truth and grace;  
A scientist of great renown  
No greater naturalist could be found,  
In this, or other countries.

My highest tribute to these names  
My comrades here will do the same;  
To Henry, Baird and G. Brown Goode—  
Each in his place wherein they stood—  
Long may their fame be honored.

Wisdom from these minds would flow  
Increasing knowledge more and more;  
Now younger men can easily learn  
Just how these great men were concerned  
In diffusing usefull knowledge.

From precious seeds these men have sown  
Gigantic plants and trees have grown;  
The Weather Bureau was planted here  
From observations made each year,  
And studies out by Henry—

The nation's museum had its growth;  
The Fish Commission was brought forth;  
The exchange of books began to breathe—  
By Baird and Henry these were conceived  
And carried into practice.

I've lived to hail the third learned chief,  
Whose election brought us much relief;  
While we greatly missed the two then gone  
Yet every branch moves smoothly on,  
With many great improvements.

With our present chief the Zoo did start  
And other additions for his part;  
He also gained that splendid park  
A place once dangerous, wet and dark,  
Is now a splendid country.

Improvements seen on every hand  
The costly, desirable, stretch of land;  
See how grand since he begun  
The work our honored chief has done—  
To beautify this city.

Since eighteen hundred and fifty-two,  
This may seem far back to you;  
But much has passed I have not told—  
Then I was young but now I'm old,  
But still I am observing.



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The Anacostia Neighborhood Museum is located at 2405 Martin Luther King, Jr., Avenue, S.E., Washington, D.C. 20020. Admission is free. The museum is open every day of the year, except Christmas. The hours are from 10:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. during the week and from 1:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. on weekends and holidays. For further information about exhibits and special programs, call 202/287-3369.

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