

As they learned all their songs by ear, they often strayed into wholly new versions, which sometimes became popular, and entirely banished the others. This was amusingly the case, for instance, with one phrase in the popular camp-song of "Marching Along," which was entirely new to them until our quartermaster taught it to them, at my request. The words, "Gird on the armor," were to them a stumbling-block, and no wonder, until some ingenious ear substituted, "Guide on de army," which was at once accepted, and became universal.

"We'll guide on de army,
and be marching along,"

is now the established version on the Sea Islands.

These quaint religious songs were to the men more than a source of relaxation; they were a stimulus to courage and a tie to heaven. I never overheard in camp a profane or vulgar song. With the trifling exceptions given, all had a religious motive, while the most secular melody could not have been more

exciting. A few youths from Savannah, who were comparatively men of the world, had learned some of the "Ethiopian Minstrel" ditties, imported from the North. These took no hold upon the mass; and, on the other hand, they sang reluctantly, even on Sunday, the long and short metres of the hymn-books, always gladly yielding to the more potent excitement of their own "spirituals." By these they could sing themselves, as had their fathers before them, out of the contemplation of their own low estate, into the sublime scenery of the Apocalypse. I remember that this minor-keyed pathos used to seem to me almost too sad to dwell upon, while slavery seemed destined to last for generations; but now that their patience has had its perfect work, history cannot afford to lose this portion of its record. There is no parallel instance of an oppressed race thus sustained by the religious sentiment alone. These songs are but the vocal expression of the simplicity of their faith and the sublimity of their long resignation.

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98. Shout Songs, Work Songs, and Spirituals

Religion inspired many of the most beautiful slave songs. Death, heaven, and the love of Jesus for all men are the dominant motifs of the lyrics.

Source: William Francis Allen, Charles Pickard Ware, and Lucy McKim Garrison, *Slave Songs of the United States* (New York: A. Simpson & Co., 1867), pp. 6-7, 12-13, 15, 18-19, 23, 72-73.

Transcending the dialect, too often allowed to obscure the meaning, is the pervading sense of the immediacy of Christ, or "King Jesus." One could call it a kind of intimacy. The following songs illustrate this intimacy, and a beautiful blending of the secular language and spiritual themes. Important beyond all other themes is that the sufferings of the world, bravely borne, prepare the soul for heaven. Lucy McKim Garrison was a well-trained musicologist, and her collaboration with Charles Ware and William F. Allen was invaluable in setting down the music they heard while superintending labor on abandoned plantations during the Civil War.

The authors' notations indicate variations in the works sung to a given tune. "I Can't Stay Behind" is a "shout song," i.e., it was sung while the singers circled in a rhythmic dance expressing their religious enthusiasm but always taking care not to cross their feet, as this would have made the dances secular. See in document 97 the passage in which Colonel Higginson describes the "shout." "Poor Rosy," or "Heav'n Shall-a Be My Home," was a work song, as was "Michael Row the Boat Ashore"—as popular and moving today as it was a hundred years ago.

Variations on the wording of the songs were indicated in footnotes by the original editors, and I have kept these notes intact. The substantive notes of Allen, Ware, and Garrison are likewise included just as they appear in the 1867 edition.

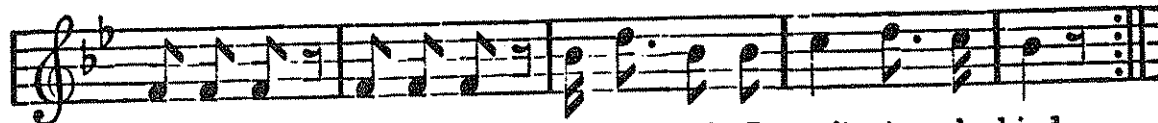
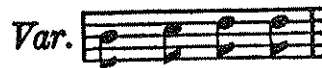
I CAN'T STAY BEHIND.



Chor. I can't stay be-hind, my Lord, I can't stay be - hind!



1. Dere's room e-nough, Room e - nough, Room e - nough in de



heaven, my Lord;* Room enough, Room enough, I can't stay be-hind.

2 I been all around, I been all around,
Been all around de Heaven, my Lord.

3 I've searched every room—in de Heaven, my Lord. †

4 De angels singin' ‡—all round de trone.

5 My Fader call—and I must go.

6 Sto-back, § member; sto-back, member.

* For you. † And Heaven all around. ‡ Crowned. § "Sto-back" means "Shout backwards."

[This "shout" is very widely spread, and variously sung. In Charleston it is simpler in its movement, and the refrain is "I can't stay away." In Edgefield it is expostulating: "Don't stay away, my mudder." Col. Higginson gives the following version, as sung in his regiment:

"O, my mudder is gone! my mudder is gone!
My mudder is gone into heaven, my Lord!
I can't stay behind!

Dere 's room in dar, room in dar.
Room in dar, in de heaven, my Lord!
I can't stay behind.

Can't stay behind, my dear,
I can't stay behind!

"O, my fader is gone! &c.

"O, de angels are gone! &c

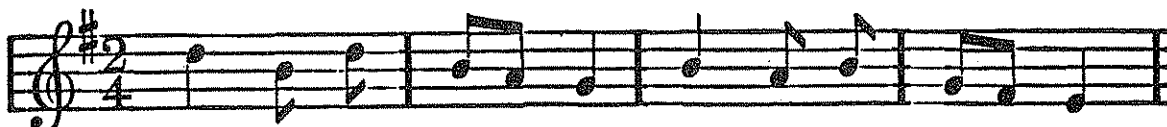
"O, I 'se been on de road! I 'se been on de road!
I 'se been on de road into heaven, my Lord!
I can't stay behind!

O, room in dar, room in dar,
Room in dar, in de heaven, my Lord!
I can't stay behind!"



Lt. Col. Trowbridge is of opinion that it was brought from Florida, as he first heard it in Dec., 1862, from a boat-load of Florida soldiers brought up by Lt. Col. Billings. It was not heard by Mr. Ware at Coffin's Point until that winter. It seems hardly likely, however, that it could have made its way to Charleston and Edgefield since that time. The air became "immensely popular" in the regiment, and was soon adopted for military purposes, so that the class leaders indignantly complained of "the drum corps using de Lord's chune."]

9. POOR ROSY.



1. Poor Ro - sy, poor gal;* Poor Ro - sy, poor gal;



Ro - sy break my poor heart, Heav'n shall-a be my home. I



can - not stay in hell one day, Heav'n shall-a be my home; I'll



sing and pray my soul a-way, Heav'n shall-a be my home.

2 Got hard trial in my way, (*ter*)
 Heav'n shall-a be my home.
 O when I talk, † I talk † wid God, } (*bis*)
 Heav'n shall-a be my home.

8 I dunno what de people ‡ want of me, (*ter*)
 Heav'n shall-a be my home.

* Poor Caesar, poor boy. † Walk. ‡ Massa.

[This song ranks with "Roll, Jordan," in dignity and favor. The following variation of the second part was heard at "The Oaks :"]



Be - fore I stay in hell one day, Heaven shall-a be my home;
 I sing and pray my soul a - way, Heaven shall-a be my home.



wind nor storm shall blow dem down, O yes, Lord!



March on, member, Bound to go; March on, member, Bound to go;



March on, mem-ber, Bound to go; Bid 'em fare you well.

31. MICHAEL ROW THE BOAT ASHORE.



1. Michael row de boat a - shore, Hal - le - lu - jah!



2. Mich - ael boat a gos - pel boat, Hal - le - lu - jah!

3 I wonder where my mudder deh (there).

4 See my mudder on de rock gwine home.

5 On de rock gwine home in Jesus' name.

6 Michael boat a music boat.

7 Gabriel blow de trumpet horn.

8 O you mind your boastin' talk.

9 Boastin' talk will sink your soul.

10 Brudder, lend a helpin' hand

11 Sister, help for trim dat boat.

12 Jordan stream is wide and deep.

13 Jesus stand on t' oder side.

14 I wonder if my maussa deh.

15 My fader gone to unknown land.

16 O de Lord he plant his garden deh.