



George Moses Horton

TWO POEMS

Born around 1797 in North Carolina, George Moses Horton taught himself to read as a young man and soon began to write poetry. Discovered and supported by white benefactors, he began to publish his poetry in 1828 with the appearance of five poems in three northern newspapers. The next year his first volume of poetry, *The Hope of Liberty*, was published in an unsuccessful attempt to raise money for his freedom and migration to Liberia. Later volumes appeared: *The Poetical Works of George M. Horton*, *The Colored Bard of North-Carolina* in 1835 and *Naked Genius* in 1865. Despite his quest for emancipation, Horton did not become a free man until the end of the Civil War in 1865. He moved to Philadelphia and died there around 1883.

The Slave's Complaint

Am I sadly cast aside,
On misfortune's rugged tide?
Will the world my pains deride
Forever?

Must I dwell in Slavery's night,
And all pleasure take its flight,
Far beyond my feeble sight,
Forever?

Worst of all, must hope grow dim,
And withhold her cheering beam?
Rather let me sleep and dream
Forever!

Something still my heart surveys,
Groping through this dreary maze;
Is it Hope? — then burn and blaze
Forever!

Leave me not a wretch confined,
Altogether lame and blind —
Unto gross despair consigned,
Forever!

Heaven! in whom can I confide?
Canst thou not for all provide?
Condescend to be my guide
Forever:

And when this transient life shall end,
Oh, may some kind, eternal friend
Bid me from servitude ascend,
Forever!

In *The Hope of Liberty*, 1829

A Slave's Reflections the Eve Before His Sale

O, comrades! to-morrow we try,
The fate of an exit unknowing —
Tears trickled from every eye —
'Tis going, 'tis going, 'tis going!

Who shall the dark problem then solve,
An evening of gladness or sorrow,
Thick clouds of emotion evolve,
The sun which awaits us to-morrow,
O! to-morrow! to-morrow!
Thick clouds of emotion evolve,
The sun which awaits us to-morrow.

Soon either with smiles or with tears,
Will the end of our course be completed.
The progress of long fleeting years,
Triumphant or sadly regretted.

In whom shall the vassal confide,
On a passage so treacherous and narrow,
What tongue shall the question decide,
The end which awaits us to-morrow?
O! to-morrow, to-morrow!
What tongue shall the question decide,
The end which awaits us to-morrow?

The sun seems with doubt to look down,
As he rides on his chariot of glory,
A king with a torch and a crown,
But fears to exhibit his story.

What pen the condition makes known,
O! prophet thy light would I borrow,
To steer through the desert alone,
And gaze on the fate of to-morrow;
O! to-morrow, to-morrow!
To steer through the desert alone,
And gaze on the fate of to-morrow.

In *Naked Genius*, 1865