

“WHISTLING SAM”

BY

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I has hyeahd o' people dancin' an' I 's hyeahd o' people singin'.
An' I 's been 'roun' lots of othahs dat could keep de banjo ringin';
But of all de whistlin' da'kies dat have lived an' died since Ham,
De whistlin'est I evah seed was ol' Ike Bates's Sam.

In de kitchen er de stable, in de fiel' er mowin' hay,
You could hyeah dat boy a-whistlin' pu'ty nigh a mile erway,—
Puck'rin' up his ugly features 'twell you could n't see his eyes,
Den you 'd hyeah a soun' lak dis un f'om dat awful puckah rise:

When dey had revival meetin' an' de Lawd's good grace was flowin'
On de groun' dat needed wat'rin' whaih de seeds of good was growin',
While de othahs was a-singin' an' a-shoutin' right an' lef,
You could hyeah dat boy a-whistlin' kin' o' sof beneaf his bref:

At de call fu' colo'ed soldiers, Sam enlisted 'mong de res'
Wid de blue o' Gawd's great ahmy wropped about his swellin' breas',
An' he luffed an' whistled loudah in his youfful joy an' glee
Dat de govament would let him he'p to mek his people free.
Daih was lots o' ties to bin' him, pappy, mammy, an' his Dinah,—
Dinah, min' you, was his sweet-hea't, an' dey was n't nary finah;
But he lef 'em all, I tell you, lak a king he ma'ched away,
Try'n' his level bes' to whistle, happy, solemn, choky, gay:

To de front he went an' bravely fought de foe an' kep' his sperrit,
An' his comerds said his whistle made 'em strong when dey could hyeah it.

When a saber er a bullet cut some frien' o' his'n down,
An' de time 'u'd come to trench him an' de boys 'u'd gethah 'roun',
An' dey could n't sta't a hymn-tune, mebbe none o' dem 'u'd keer,
Sam 'u'd whistle "Sleep in Jesus," an' he knowed de Mastah 'd hyeah.
In de camp, all sad discouraged, he would cheer de hea'ts of all,
When above de soun' of labour dey could hyeah his whistle call:

When de cruel wah was ovah an' de boys come ma'chin' back,
Dey was shouts an' cries an' blessin's all erlong dey happy track,
An' de da'kies all was happy; souls an' bodies bofe was freed.
Why, hit seemed lak de Redeemah mus' 'a' been on earf indeed.
Dey was gethahed all one evenin' jes' befo' de cabin do',
When dey hyeahd somebody whistlin' kin' o' sof' an' sweet an' low.
Dey could n't see de whistlah, but de hymn was cleah and ca'm,
An' dey all stood daih a-listenin' ontwell Dinah shouted, "Sam!"
An' dey seed a little da'ky way off yandah thoo de trees
Wid his face all in a puckah mekin' jes' sich soun's ez dese: