

VI.

BARTOW BLACK.*

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'Twas when the Proclamation came,—
Far in the sixties back,—
He left his lord, and changed his name
To "Mister Bartow Black."

He learned to think himself a man,
And privileged, you know,
To adopt a new and different plan,—
To lay aside the hoe.

He took the lead in politics,
And handled all the "notes,"—
For he was up to all the tricks
That gather in the votes;

For when the war came to a close
And negroes "took a stand,"
Young Bartow with the current rose,
The foremost in command.

His voice upon the "stump" was heard;
He "Yankeedom" did prate;
The "carpet-bagger" he revered;
The Southerner did hate.

He now was greater than the lord
Who used to call him slave,
For he was on the "County Board,"
With every right to rave.

But this amazing run of luck
Was far too good to stand;
And soon the chivalrous "Ku-Klux"
Rose in the Southern land.

Then Bartow got a little note,—
'Twas very queerly signed,—
It simply told him not to vote,
Or be to death resigned.

*The facts upon which this poem is based are substantially correct. Black was well known to me, by his proper name, Calvin Rogers. He was far above the average of his race in intelligence and courage. He was killed, as here described, in Jackson County, Florida (where I was born), in the early part of 1870, a reference to which can be found in volume 13, page 192, of the "Ku-Klux Conspiracy," reported to Congress in 1872 by the Joint Select Committee.

Young Bartow thought this little game
Was very fine and nice
To bring his courage rare to shame
And knowledge of justice.

"What right have they to think I fear?"
He to himself did say.

"Dare they presume that I do care
How loudly they do bray?"

"This is my home, and here I die,
Contending for my right!
Then let them come! My colors fly!
I'm ready now to fight!"

"Let those who think that Bartow Black,—
An office-holder, too! —
Will to the cowards show his back,
Their vain presumption rue!"

Bartow pursued his office game,
And made the money, too,
But home at nights he wisely came
And played the husband true.

When they had got their subject tame,
And well-matured their plan,
They at the hour of midnight came,
And armed was every man!

They numbered fifty Southern sons,
And masked was every face;
And Winfield rifles were their guns,—
You could that plainly trace.

One Southern brave did have a key,
An entrance quick to make;
They entered all; but meek, you see,
Their victim not to wake!

They reached his room! He was in bed,—
His wife was by his side!
They struck a match above his head,—
His eyes he opened wide!

Poor Bartow could not reach his gun,
Though quick his arm did stretch,
For twenty bullets through him spun,
That stiffly laid the wretch.

And then they rolled his carcass o'er,
And filled both sides with lead;
And then they turned it on the floor,
And shot away his head!

Ere Black his bloody end did meet
His wife had swooned away;
The Southern braves did now retreat,—
There was no need to stay!