

"Old England"

By Claude McKay

Transcription and markup by Students and Staff of Marymount University

- [Frontispiece] -

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SONGS OF JAMAICA
BY
CLAUDE MCKAY
WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY WALTER JEKYLL
AUTHOR OF "JAMAICAN SONG AND STORY"
KINGSTON, JAMAICA
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LONDON
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Old England

I'VE a longin' in me dept's of heart dat I can conquer not,
'Tis a wish dat I've been havin' from since I could form a t'o't, ^{t-o-t},
'Tis to sail athwart the ocean an' to hear de billows roar,
When dem ride aroun' de steamer, when dem beat on England's shore.

Just to view de homeland England, in de streets of London walk,
An' to see de famous sights dem 'bouten which dere's so much talk,
An' to watch de fact'ry chimneys pourin' smoke up to de sky,
An' to see de matches-children, dat I hear 'bout, passin' by.

I would see Saint Paul's Cathedral, an' would hear some of de great
Learnin' comin' from de bishops, preachin' relics of old fait';

I would ope me mout' wid wonder at de massive organ soun',
An' would 'train me eyes to see de beauty lyin' all aroun'.

I'd go to de City Temple, ^{city_temple}, where de 'old fait' is a wreck,
An' de parson is a-preachin' views dat most folks will not tek;
I'd go where de men of science meet togeder in deir hall,
To give light unto de real truths, to obey king Reason's call.

I would view Westminster Abbey, where de great of England sleep,
An' de solemn marble statues o'er deir ashes vigil keep;
I would see immortal Milton an' de wul'-famous Shakespeare,
Past'ral Wordswort', gentle Gray, an' all de great souls buried dere.

I would see de ancient chair where England's kings deir crowns put on,
Soon to lay dem by again when all de vanity is done;
An' I'd go to view de lone spot where in peaceful solitude
Rests de body of our Missis Queen, ^{missis}, Victoria de Good.

An' dese places dat I sing of now shall afterwards impart
All deir solemn sacred beauty to a weary searchin' heart;
So I'll rest glad an' contented in me min', ^{min} for evermore,
When I sail across de ocean back to my own native shore.

Footnotes

t-o-t Thought. [Jekyll's note]

city_temple The City Temple is a nonconformist church (a church that doesn't "conform" to Church of England practices) in central London, built in 1874; however, its congregation is believed to have been in existence since perhaps the 1560s ([Wikipedia](#)).
- [TH]

missis Always so called in Jamaica. [Jekyll's note]

min Mind. [Jekyll's note]