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THE BALLAD OF ISHMAEL DAY.

ONE summer morning a daring band
Of rebels rode into Maryland—
Over the prosperous, peaceful farms
Sending terror and strange alarms,
The clatter of hoofs and the clang of arms.

Fresh from the South, where the hungry pine,
They ate like Pharaoh's starving kine;
They swept the land like devouring surge,
And left their path, to its furthest verge,
Bare as the track of the locust-scourge.

"The rebels are coming!" far and near
Rang the tidings of dread and fear;
Some pale, and cowered, and sought to hide—
Some stood erect in their fearless pride—
And women shuddered and children cried.

But others—vipers in human form,
Stinging the bosom that kept them warm—
Welcomed with triumph the thievish band,
Hurried to offer the friendly hand,
As the rebels rode into Maryland:

Made them merry with food and wine,
Clad them in garments rich and fine,
For rags and hunger to make amends;
Flattered them, praised them, with selfish ends;—
"Leave us scathless, for we are friends!"

Could traitors trust to a traitor? No!
Little they favored friend or foe,
But gathered the cattle the farms across,
Flinging back, with a scornful toss—
"If ye are friends ye can bear the loss!"

Flushed with triumph, and wine, and prey,
They neared the dwelling of Ishmael Day.
A sturdy veteran, gray and old,
With heart of a patriot, firm and bold,
Strong and steadfast—unbribed, unsold.

And Ishmael Day, his brave head bare,
His white locks tossed by the morning air,
Fearless of danger, or death, or scars,
Went out to raise, by the farm-yard bars,
The dear old flag of the Stripes and Stars.

Proudly, steadily up it flew,
Gorgeous with crimson and white and blue!
His withered hand, as he shook it free,
May have trembled, but not with fear,
While, shouting, the rebels drew more near.

"Halt!"—They had seen the hated sign
Floating free from old Ishmael's line—
"Lower that rag!" was their wrathful cry.
"Never!" rung Ishmael Day's reply;
"Fire, if it please you—I can but die!"

One, with a loud defiant laugh,
Left his comrades and neared the staff.
"Down!"—came the fearless patriot's cry—
"Dare to lower that flag, and die!
One must bleed for it—you or I!"

But caring not for the stern command,
He drew the halliards with daring hand;
Ping! went the rifle-ball—down he came
Under the flag he had tried to shame—
Old Ishmael Day took careful aim!

Seventy winters and three had shed
Their snowy glories on Ishmael's head;
But though cheeks may wither and locks grow gray,
His fame shall be fresh and young away—
Honor be to old Ishmael Day!