

***The Man Who Didn't
Like Heaven***



SOME SERIOUS AND PERTINENT DOGGEREL

By

VERNON JOHNS

Dedicated to:

Two Judges BEFORE whom I was "tried,"
The one now living and the one who died.
Fall I again to your turn of mind,
Please dish up justice from BEHIND.

"Maybe," said the Colonel, with honest awe
"The dam Yankees did win the Civil War!"

He laid aside his martial air,
Hummed a little tune, and reflected on prayer,
His thoughts went back to the streets of gold,
Pondered if Sam really had a soul.
He smiled at the maid and patted his pet
As he entered the room where breakfast was set.
Greeted the butler with a beaming face
And thought up the words to say the grace.

Then he smelled the coffee and saw it steam,
Put in a big spoon of sugar, and a jiffy of cream.
The paper was in its usual place . . .
A Supreme Court Ruling! "Goldarn the grace!"

Business as usual, rubbed out the dream.

Meet a Virginian, in Time and Space!
Proud old scion of the Master Race!
Proud of all battles Democracy won.
Who never heard the name of Jefferson!

Pray for the Virginian, John Marshall bespoke
At whose bier the States knelled till the Liberty Bell broke!
Who taught the Great Court with his heart and his soul;
That each State must respond to the States as a whole;
Who swore by his creed for thirty-four years,
And the same would have welded with blood, and his tears!

And pray for a Virginian, like General Lee
Who loved his Virginia, like the English do tea.
The Great Arbiter spoke, in fire from above,
And he laid down his sword, and threw in his glove!

Not one other word of union dissent
Till in death he commanded, "Strike the tent."

Better men than would destroy this nation
Enslaved to a foolish and cruel fixation
Who think of god will that wishes all well
As the opposite of heaven, and lower than hell.

THE MAN WHO DIDN'T LIKE HEAVEN

The Tragic Story of Mr. Burge;
Rancher, Vestryman, Banker, Judge;
His solemn trek to the Last Appointment,
With just one fly in the precious ointment!

Some would be perfect, no one can;
But the Colonel was gunning for the "Ideal Man."
He thumbed his nose at overt sin;
Growled and gagged at a social gin,
"Hadn't had a dram, he didn't know when."

Swearing, he never "damned" or "darned,"
Just "Fetch it all! or 'I'll be consarned!"

The Colonel avoided fruitless strife
Was gentle and kind to his dog and cat.
Faithful husband of just one wife
Never any more; and barely that

He watched his steps with pious eyes
Careful, that at last the Great Assize,
Would place him with sheep not the goats;
Sowed wheat and barely, but no wild oats.

Even when hauling farm manure
His hands were clean and his thoughts were pure.

His ancestors came over fairly soon,
Had heraldry, and a coat of arms;
Missed the Mayflower, but arrived in June
The men had cash, their women charms.

So the Colonel boasted good connections,
The family branched out in all directions.
One uncle was drowned in a fight at sea;
(He was kin to a man who was kin to Lee.)
His father was cousin to an associate Justice,
Great grandmother lived near Martha Custis.
They ranked high up with the Honored Dead
(One saved his life and lost his head.)

To all Great Wars some Burges went;
Many "shook hands with the President."
Couldn't show "Seventy-two Quarterings"
But his herds outlived no end of slaughterings.
A mansion was his home on a high green hill
And he ground his grain at his own grist mill.

A Burge wouldn't marry "any Jack or Jill."

Cradled in Virginia-Christian nurture
He was "beau ideal" of Southern Virtue
Very apt in the use of figures and phrases
And helped his wife with her dahlias and daisies.

Any neighbor could borrow his cart or sleigh —
He never missed a meeting of either Young C. A.
Was a middle of the roader to the day he died,
Would yell himself hoarse if religion was denied;
And yell louder still if fully applied.

His name was magic in Sunday Schools;
He was humane to cattle, Nigras, and mules.

You would call the Colonel a "self-made man"
(Though he was assisted some at birth)
His study of the law was Second Hand,
But his practice of law was "Down to earth."
When he finished a trial his breath was spent,
And he leaned real hard on precedent.
Rated "G" on Blackstone, "D" on Coke
Had heard such names as Bolingbroke.
With no idea of what the names bespoke.
Enjoined 'Law and Order' to the very last inch
And in no time hardly, he made the Bench

One Monday, his thoughts were still on heaven,
He mixed Nux Vomica with a writ of Replevin,

The Judge's influence worked like leaven!

For ladies, he had an I. W. Harper bow
An Almond profile, and a Faubus brow.
On the bench, he never knew what was fair
Until he saw the litigant's skin and hair,

Then he knew exactly "Who" went "Where."

The Judge read all books on "Dominant Races"
And had certain folks for certain places.
Didn't matter that Africa cleared the hump
Of Evolution in one long jump
From the old fist-hatched and Hunting Stage
And reared right up in the Atomic Age.

A rush of power! An atomic whirl!
And the Satellite crashed in the nether world.
The landing gear failed, with such force it fell
It knocked two circles out of Dante's hell!
You shouldn't have heard the Colonel swear;
What he hated in heaven was waiting there!

A mixture of peoples, none of them nice
Burge took his bearings and checked them twice.
Cut-throats, murderers, and libertines
Instead of linen, the cloth was jeans!

The Colonel loathed the infernal scenes!

He closed his eyes and turned about
On any dang terms, he wanted out!"
He strained at his moorings to get away
Though, Hitler and Himler begged him to stay.

They ringed him in with atomic smoke,
Put his neck in an iron yoke;
A pall settled on him black as night!
But the Colonel fought a valiant fight!
He swung at an imp with a brimstone cup - -
Until his circulation started, and he woke up.

This all happened when the Colonel was old
And went to bed one night with his feet too cold.
He tossed on his pillow and couldn't sleep
Though, he counted hogs after he counted sheep.

He cognized the state, cerebrated the nation
And Morpheus got him blasting at integration.
All the eerie things this doggerel said
Happened in a vision in the Colonel's head.

He woke up fearing the dream was fact
But his breeches were there, his hat on the rack.
The doors were ajar on his Bourbon case
He still was the child of Time and Space!

Fragrance poured in from a field of clover,
And the Colonel arose to think things over.
He flexed his muscles, was feeling fine,
And swore he would try for an open mind.

The more he thought, the less he talked;
So he thought, and thought, and walked and walked.
On he went, until he felt his feet
Grow heavy with walking; he wanted to eat.

In one way, heaven is stompedown new,
What you downright want is right in view!
When the Colonel had whetted his appetite
The "Applescent Diner" was on his right!

The tables were circled with great gold bars
The scene illumined by a cluster of stars
The walls were a medley of alabasters
And the murals done by the "Old Dutch Masters."

This is a hint of the musical joys
Mozart and Beethoven were choir boys!
The windows opened on celestial views
And the diners were Nordics, and Negroes, and Jews.

A tall shining angel bade the Colonel sit,
Said the Colonel, "I just couldn't stomach it!"

Mr. Burge went on in deep dejection;
Four big, gold letters told him to stop,
As he come to a prominent intersection
With traffic directed by a big black cop.
The Colonel's little soul turned a heavenly flop!

Deeper dejected and taken back
Mr. Burge arose to retrace his track.
He walked and walked until he had come
Back to the place he started from.

"Well," said Peter, with humor and grace,
"Colonel, how do you like our place?"

"O," said the Colonel, "I deeply grieve!
There ain't a thing for me but to up and leave."

Stonewall Jackson, tried to get his eye;
General Lee cried out, "Colonel wait,"
He ignored his idols and brushed on by
Flecked his coattails, and cleared the gate!

Still yearning for heaven, all lily white
He chartered a Russian Satellite

With a billion dark people in ferment
And ringing the earth with discontent
Fate remained firm, defiant and white,
And the Colonel itching for an ethnic fight.

A war broke out so the Colonel went,
Wasn't a patriot who must be "sent."
His easy life in a time of peace
Left him somewhat daft and much obese.

He cut back his stomach another size
Put Forsarbin Drops in his tired eyes,
Derusted his sword, and greased his gun
Read up on Ceasar and Wellington
Left affairs in charge of a doubtful son.
Pruned his speech of it's Sunday Cant
Gave his language a martial slant
Compared the campaigns of Xerxes and Grant
Made the rounds of farm and mill
Told the neighbors good-bye, and made a will
Embraced his daughter, kissed his wife,
And entered his country's army life.

The camp over which the Colonel was placed
Had a little equality, a little embraced,
A Negro soldier, Captain Vance
Was over the outfits Ordinance.

The Colonel viewed this much askance!

Gave Ordinance to an officer, a little green
Put the Negro in charge of the camp Latrine:
Then the Colonel gave his neck a virtuous preen.
He'd dimmed somewhat Equality's glow
And started things back to the status quo!

The nature of things didn't take it so!

In some ways Nature's not so bright
The explosives didn't know the boss was white.
There was an acre of smoke, and awful swell
The soldiers sent up a unanimous yell,
And the Colonel's camp was blown to, well
It caught the Colonel in a deep discussion
He was lifted from his seat by the repercussion,
Turned a somersault, gave a quick little "kick."
And his soul fizzed out with a weak little "hick."
Before the dust had settled there
The lily-white soul was on the air;

Sped past moon and sun and star
And plopped right down at the judgement bar.

The Colonel rose and stood aghast
In astonishment that this same blast
Had brought along to the "Glorylan"
The dark brown soul of a colored man
Who had been for years the strong right arm
Of Colonel Burge on his "Hillview Farm."

St. Peter was probing the life of sin
That Sam had led, when his boss dropped in.

St. Peter, inquired, and Sam said, "Well,
To tell de truf, der ain't much to tell,
The little I know'd I done it well;
I ain't siprised if I goes to hell.

I took good keer of the Conel's tools
Fed his cattle and grumed his mules.
I plow'd the Conel's Beck and Bell
Helt 'em to de furrer and plow'd 'em well.
Dat's about all dat's fit to tell.

Peers I'm gettin a brimstone smell."

St. Peter said, "That isn't too bad,
You did middling well with the little you had
A fair, square chance I'm giving you
To show the folks what Sam can do.
We want more good than what you had;
And a whole lot less of what is bad;
Watch your step where you slipped before,
Now 'Go in peace and sin no more."

Sam was chuckling as he left the door!

The Colonel then was deep perplexed,
When Peter said, "Colonel, you are next."
Mr. Burge spoke up, a little disgusted,
"I need some time to get readjusted.
I wouldn't expect, you understand,
To come right after my colored man."

St. Peter said, "Try to be composed,
Matters here are not as oft supposed.
People in heaven are nobody's foes.

The folks are strickly cosmopolite;
Anyone comes here who wants to do right.

The main test is, Can you be contented?
Walk around a little, Colonel, get oriented!"

The Colonel decided to suppress his talk;
Keep his thoughts to himself, and take a walk.
He marveled at the tint of the winter grass,
The motionless calm of the Sea of Glass;
Heard a great lecture on Life and Fate
And the Nature of the Apple that Adam Ate
A chill went to his bone and marrow
The speaker turned out to be Clarence Darrow.
Then said the Colonel, "Fetch it all,
If there ain't Tom Paine and Ingersoll!"

They were going to school to the Apostle Paul!

"Tell me" said the Colonel, "and make it clear,
How did people like that get in up here?"

A bystander said, "You understand,
The way up here are not the ways of man.
Those men didn't take the popular view;
They staked their lives on what they knew,
That is the way the truth comes through!"

The Coloned scowled, and said adieu.

He resumed his walk in the Celestial parks:
"Wouldn't be surprised to meet Charlie Marx!"
Jerked up, at what he saw, with a sudden pause!
But it turned out to be a Russian Santa Claus.

He pondered the value of the streets of gold
Saw black and white sheep in the same green fold . . .
Looked up of a sudden and Lo! and Behold!
Some nice colored girls and a Southern belle
Playing "Ring Around the Rosy" by Jacob's Well.
"Lord, Lord," said the Colonel, "Am I in Hell?"

He hurried away from this awful zone
Screwed up his courage and travelled on,
To get rid of those horrible places
By getting out in the open spaces.