

ELEANOR

The following poems are published from Melvin B. Tolson's book entitled "Rendezvous With America", published in 1944.

(About The Author)

Melvin B. Tolson established his reputation as a significant voice in contemporary American poetry when his long poem "Dark Symphony" won the National Poetry Contest conducted in connection with the American Negro Exposition in Chicago. The poem has been set to music by Earl Robinson. These poems and others proved Mr. Tolson to be a poet of drive and vigor, with a simplicity that is at once appealing and stirring. He was a graduate of Lincoln University, Penna., with a master's degree from Columbia; he was Director of Drama and Debate at Wiley College, Marshall, Texas.

ANDANTE SOSTENUTO

They tell us to forget
 The Golgotha we tread
 We who are scourged with hate,
 A price upon our head,
 They who have shackled us
 Require of us a song,
 They who have wasted us
 Bid us condone the wrong.
 They tell us to forget
 Democracy is spurned.
 They tell us to forget
 The Bill of Rights is burned.
 Three hundred years we slaved,
 We slave and suffer yet:
 Though flesh and bone rebel,
 They tell us to forget!
 Oh, how can we forget
 Our human rights denied?
 Oh, how can we forget
 Our manhood crucified
 Where justice is profound?
 And plea with cure is met
 When Freedom's gates are barred,
 Oh, how can we forget?

TEMPO PRIMO

The New Negro strides upon the
 continent
 In seven-league boots ...
 The New Negro
 Who sprang from the vigor-stout
 loins
 Of Nat Turner, gallows-martyr for
 Freedom,
 Of Joseph Cinquez, Black Moses of
 the Amistad Mutiny,
 Of Frederick Douglas, Oracle of
 the Catholic Man,
 Of Sojourner Truth, eye and ear of
 Lincoln's legions.
 Of Harriet Tubman, St. Bernard
 of the Underground Railroad.
 The New Negro breaks the icons
 of his detractors.
 Wipes out the conspiracy of silence,
 Speaks to his America:
 "My history-moulding ancestors
 Planted the first crops of wheat
 on these shores,
 Built ships to conquer the seven
 seas,
 Erected the Cotton Empire,
 Filling railroads across the hemis-
 phere.

Disemboweled the earth's iron and
 coal,
 Tunneled the mountains and bridg-
 ed rivers,
 Harvested the grain and hewed
 forests,
 Sentineled the Thirteen Colonies,
 Unfurled Old Glory at the North
 Pole,
 Fought a hundred battles for the
 Republic".
 The New Negro:
 His giant hands fling murals upon
 high chambers,
 His drama teaches a world to
 laugh and weep,
 His music leads continents captive,
 His voice thunders the Brother-
 hood of Labor,
 His science creates seven wonders,
 His Republic of Letters challenges
 the Negro-baiters.
 The New Negro,
 Hard muscled, Fascist-hating, De-
 mocracy ensouled.
 Strides in seven-league boots
 Along the Highway of Today
 Toward the Promised Land of To-
 morrow!

(To be continued next week)