



## Little Brown Brother Annie L. Diggs (1899)

*Annie Le Porte Diggs was born in Canada but was raised in the United States; for most of her adult life, her home was in Kansas. She was a journalist, a suffragist, and an orator for the Populist Party, a third party of the 1890s that aimed to defend American farmers and urban laborers against large corporations. Religiously, Diggs was a Unitarian with freethinker leanings. She wrote this poem to protest the ongoing Philippine-American War, during which the US military fought against Filipinos who were seeking independence for their country after it had passed from Spanish to US rule as a result of the Spanish-American War. Diggs's poem appeared in a collection of anti-war poetry published by the Anti-Imperialist League, an organization which opposed US control of the Philippines. The league's membership included former US president Grover Cleveland, industrialist Andrew Carnegie, and famed satirist Mark Twain.*

Little Brown Brothers across the sea,  
Running your race for liberty,  
Here's to you.  
We've been there ourselves.

Odd little Brown Men, like "jackrabbits" you run.  
Bang the Krag-Jorgenson: "Pick 'em off, it's great fun!"<sup>a</sup>  
Halt!  
"Jackrabbits," are they?  
Well, even sparrows fall not unheeded.  
Where's Christ?

Across the shame-stricken, sobbing sea  
Comes a sad, stern voice from Galilee:  
"As unto the least of my brethren,  
So unto me.  
Are there thorns in their feet in their race to be free?  
There were thorns on my brow there at Calvary."  
Spare us, O Christ, lest we crucify thee.

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<sup>a</sup> An allusion to letters sent home by US soldiers in the Philippines, in which the soldiers compared shooting Filipinos to shooting rabbits. The comparison appears in letters from five different soldiers that the Anti-Imperialist League published as evidence of American war atrocities. One soldier wrote, "The scene reminded me of the shooting of jackrabbits in Utah, only the rabbits sometimes got away, but the insurgents did not." Another wrote of Filipino men whom he surprised inside a house during a scouting party: "[One] jumped out of the window and ran, and I brought him to the ground like a jackrabbit. I killed seven that I know of, and one more I am almost sure of... I had lots of fun that morning."

Soldiers' Letters: Being Materials for the History of a War of Criminal Aggression (Boston: Rockwell and Churchill Press, for the Anti-Imperialist League, 1899), 6, 7, 10, 13, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89062554605>. The word jackrabbit de-hyphenated for the sake of modernization.

Halt! Who goes there?  
Not jackrabbits, not rebels, but Men  
Fighting for life, liberty, homes.  
Homes? Bamboo huts.  
Well, homes are homes, brown stone or bamboo.  
We've sung that and sworn it  
By Payne's sacred bones.<sup>b</sup>

A Brown Man lies dead 'neath his own island sky:  
A Brown Wife utters a strange wild cry.  
The billowy deep brings the piteous sound.  
Hearts are the same God's sweet world 'round.

O little Brown Child whose father lies low,  
Just when will your love and your loyalty flow  
As dew from the daisies, as incense from roses,  
To the Flag and the Nation that made you an orphan?

Little Brown Brothers across the blue sea,  
Are your bare brown feet all bleeding and torn?  
So were ours.  
Valley Forge! Brandywine!  
Where's Lafayette?

There is blood on hot sands:  
There was blood on sharp ice.  
God made of one blood all nations of earth,  
Brothers all.  
Lord God of Nations, spare us Cain's mark.

Little Brown Brothers across the blue sea,  
Battling so bravely for liberty,  
Here's to you.  
We've been there ourselves: and won.

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<sup>b</sup> A reference to John Howard Payne, a white American who wrote the lyrics to "Home! Sweet Home!", a song popular in the United States during the 1800s. The song's sentimental message is that "there's no place like home," even if home is a "lowly thatched cottage."

**Source:** Annie L. Diggs, “Little Brown Brother,” in *Liberty Poems: Inspired by the Crisis of 1898-1900* (Boston: James H. West Co., 1900), 11-12, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd.hnmikg>. Public domain, Google-digitized.

Edited and annotated by John-Charles Duffy. Capitalization and punctuation reproduce the usage of the source publication, except that the word *jackrabbits* has been de-hyphenated here for the sake of modernization.

This annotated presentation of Diggs’s poem is intended for *teaching* purposes only. For *research* purposes, you should consult, quote, and cite the source publication listed above.



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