

Classic Poetry Series

G.E. Patterson

- poems -

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Autobiographia

I had everything and luck: Rings of smoke
blown for me; sunlight safe inside the leaves
of cottonwoods; pure, simple harmonies
of church music, echoes of slave songs; scraps
of candy wrappers -- airborne. Everything.
Mother and father, brother, aunts, uncles;
chores and schoolwork and playtime. Everything.

I was given gloves against winter cold.
I was made to wear gloves when I gardened.
I was made to garden; taught to hold forks
in my left hand when cutting, in my right
when bringing food to my mouth. Everything.

I had clothes I was told not to wear outside;
a face you could clean up almost handsome;
I had friends to fight with and secrets, spread
all over the neighborhood; the best teachers,
white and colored. I'm not making this up.
I knew that I had everything. Still do.

G.E. Patterson