

“RETROSPECTION”

BY

PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

When you and I were young, the days
Were filled with scent of pink and rose,
And full of joy from dawn till close,
From morning's mist till evening's haze.
And when the robin sung his song
The verdant woodland ways along,

We whistled louder than he sung.
And school was joy, and work was sport
For which the hours were all too short,
When you and I were young, my boy,
When you and I were young.

When you and I were young, the woods
Brimmed bravely o'er with every joy
To charm the happy-hearted boy.
The quail turned out her timid broods;
The prickly copse, a hostess fine,
Held high black cups of harmless wine;

And low the laden grape–vine swung
With beads of night–kissed amethyst
Where buzzing lovers held their tryst,
When you and I were young, my boy,
When you and I were young.

When you and I were young, the cool
And fresh wind fanned our fevered brows
When tumbling o'er the scented mows,
Or stripping by the dimpling pool,
Sedge–fringed about its shimmering face,
Save where we 'd worn an ent'ring place.
How with our shouts the calm banks rung!
How flashed the spray as we plunged in,—
Pure gems that never caused a sin!
When you and I were young, my boy,
When you and I were young.

When you and I were young, we heard
All sounds of Nature with delight,—
The whirr of wing in sudden flight,
The chirping of the baby–bird.
The columbine's red bells were rung;
The locust's vested chorus sung;
While every wind his zithern strung
To high and holy–sounding keys,

And played sonatas in the trees—
When you and I were young, my boy,
When you and I were young.

When you and I were young, we knew
To shout and laugh, to work and play,
And night was partner to the day
In all our joys. So swift time flew
On silent wings that, ere we wist,
The fleeting years had fled unmissed;
And from our hearts this cry was wrung—
To fill with fond regret and tears
The days of our remaining years—
“When you and I were young, my boy,
When you and I were young.”