

“THE LAPSE”

BY

PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

This poem must be done to-day;
Then, I ‘ll e’en to it.
I must not dream my time away,—
I ‘m sure to rue it.
The day is rather bright, I know
The Muse will pardon
My half-defection, if I go
Into the garden.
It must be better working there,—
I ‘m sure it’s sweeter:
And something in the balmy air
May clear my metre.

[In the Garden.]

Ah this is noble, what a sky!
What breezes blowing!
The very clouds, I know not why,
Call one to rowing.
The stream will be a paradise
To-day, I ‘ll warrant.

I know the tide that's on the rise
 Will seem a torrent;
I know just how the leafy boughs
 Are all a-quiver;
I know how many skiffs and scows
 Are on the river.
I think I 'll just go out awhile
 Before I write it;
When Nature shows us such a smile,
 We should n't slight it.
For Nature always makes desire
 By giving pleasure;
And so 't will help me put more fire
 Into my measure.

[*On the River.*]

The river's fine, I 'm glad I came,
 That poem 's teasing;
But health is better far than fame,
 Though cheques are pleasing.
I don't know what I did it for,—
 This air 's a poppy.
I 'm sorry for my editor,—
 He 'll get no copy!