

“LIFE’S TRAGEDY”

BY

PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

It may be misery not to sing at all
And to go silent through the brimming day.

It may be sorrow never to be loved,
But deeper griefs than these beset the way.

To have come near to sing the perfect song
And only by a half-tone lost the key,
There is the potent sorrow, there the grief,
The pale, sad staring of life’s tragedy.

To have just missed the perfect love,
Not the hot passion of untempered youth,
But that which lays aside its vanity
And gives thee, for thy trusting worship, truth—

This, this it is to be accursed indeed;
For if we mortals love, or if we sing,
We count our joys not by the things we have,
But by what kept us from the perfect thing.