



SINCE

1841

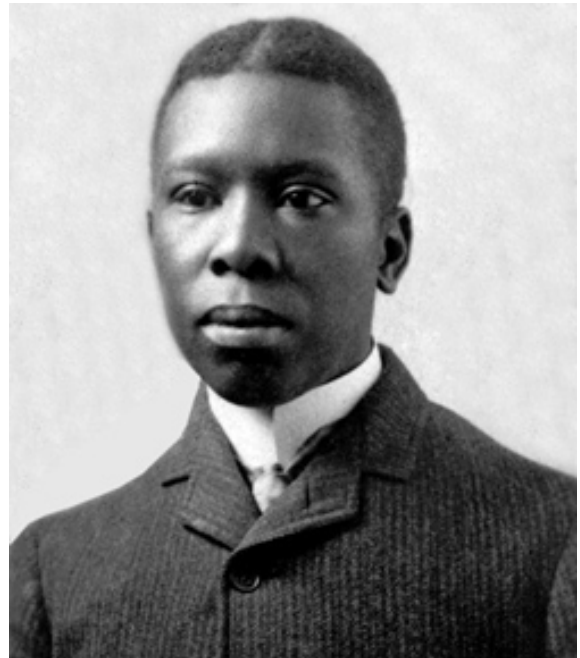
WOODLAND

HISTORIC CEMETERY & ARBORETUM

Paul Laurence Dunbar Christmas Poems

Speakin' O' Christmas

Breezes blowin' middlin' brisk, Snow-flakes
thro' the air a-whisk, Fallin' kind o' soft an' light,
Not enough to make things white, But jest
sorter siftin' down
So 's to cover up the brown
Of the dark world's rugged ways
'N' make things look like holidays. Not
smoothed over, but jest specked, Sorter
strainin' fur effect,
An' not quite a-gittin' through
What it started in to do.
Mercy sakes! it does seem queer Christmas
day is 'most nigh here. Somehow it don't seem
to me Christmas like it used to be,— Christmas
with its ice an' snow, Christmas of the long ago.
You could feel its stir an' hum
Weeks an' weeks before it come; Somethin' in
the atmosphere Told you when the day was
near, Did n't need no almanacs;
That was one o' Nature's fac's. Every cottage
decked out gay— Cedar wreaths an' holly
spray—
An' the stores, how they were drest, Tinsel tell
you could n't rest;
Every winder fixed up pat,
Candy canes, an' things like that; Noah's arks,
an' guns, an' dolls, An' all kinds o' fol-de-rols.
Then with frosty bells a-chime, Slidin' down the
hills o' time,
Right amidst the fun an' din Christmas come a-
bustlin' in, Raised his cheery voice to call
Out a welcome to us all;
Hale and hearty, strong an' bluff, That was



Christmas Carol

Ring out, ye bells!
All Nature swells
With gladness at the wondrous story,—
The world was lorn,
But Christ is born
To change our sadness into glory.

Sing, earthlings, sing!
To-night a King
Hath come from heaven's high throne to bless
us.
The outstretched hand
O'er all the land
Is raised in pity to caress us.

That was Christmas, sure enough. Snow knee-deep an' coastin' fine, Frozen mill-ponds all ashine, Seemin' jest to lay in wait, Beggin' you to come an' skate.
An' you'd git your gal an' go Stumpin' cheerily thro' the snow, Feelin' pleased an' skeert an' warm 'Cause she had a-holt yore arm. Why, when Christmas come in, we Spent the whole glad day in glee, Havin' fun an' feastin' high An' some courtin' on the sly. Burstin' in some neighbor's door An' then suddenly, before He could give his voice a lift, Yellin' at him, "Christmas gift."
Now sich things are never heard, "Merry Christmas" is the word.
But it's only change o' name,
An' means givin' jest the same. There's too many new-styled ways Now about the holidays. I'd jest like once more to see Christmas like it used to be!

Come at his call;
Be joyful all;
Away with mourning and with sadness!
The heavenly choir
With holy fire
Their voices raise in songs of gladness.

The darkness breaks
And Dawn awakes,
Her cheeks suffused with youthful blushes.
The rocks and stones
In holy tones
Are singing sweeter than the thrushes.

Then why should we
In silence be,
When Nature lends her voice to praises;
When heaven and earth
Proclaim the truth
Of Him for whom that lone star blazes?

No, be not still,
But with a will
Strike all your harps and set them ringing;
On hill and heath
Let every breath
Throw all its power into singing!

Christmas in the Heart

The snow lies deep upon the ground,
And winter's brightness all around
Decks bravely out the forest sere,
With jewels of the brave old year.
The coasting crowd upon the hill
With some new spirit seems to thrill;
And all the temple bells achime.
Ring out the glee of Christmas time.

In happy homes the brown oak-bough
Vies with the red-gemmed holly now;
And here and there, like pearls, there show
The berries of the mistletoe.
A sprig upon the chandelier
Says to the maidens, "Come not here!"
Even the pauper of the earth
Some kindly gift has cheered to mirth!

Within his chamber, dim and cold,
There sits a grasping miser old.
He has no thought save one of gain,—
To grind and gather and grasp and drain.
A peal of bells, a merry shout
Assail his ear: he gazes out
Upon a world to him all gray,
And snarls, "Why, this is Christmas Day!"

No, man of ice,—for shame, for shame!
For "Christmas Day" is no mere name.
No, not for you this ringing cheer,
This festal season of the year.
And not for you the chime of bells
From holy temple rolls and swells.
In day and deed he has no part—
Who holds not Christmas in his heart!

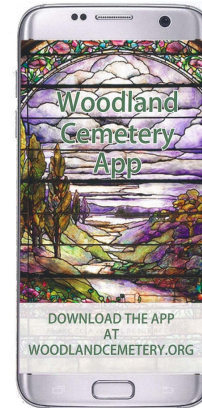
These poems appeared in *The Complete Poems of Paul Laurence Dunbar* (Dodd, Mead and Company, 1922). They are in the public domain.



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