**Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872-1906)**

**We Wear the Mask**

**WE wear the mask that grins and lies,   
It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,—   
This debt we pay to human guile;   
With torn and bleeding hearts we smile,   
And mouth with myriad subtleties.**

**Why should the world be over-wise,   
In counting all our tears and sighs?   
Nay, let them only see us, while   
            We wear the mask.**

**We smile, but, O great Christ, our cries   
To thee from tortured souls arise.   
We sing, but oh the clay is vile   
Beneath our feet, and long the mile;   
But let the world dream otherwise,   
            We wear the mask!**