**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!**