TO A LADY PLAYING THE HARP

Thy tones are silver melted into sound,
   And as I dream
I see no walls around,
   But seem to hear
A gondolier
Sing sweetly down some slow Venetian stream.

Italian skies--that I have never seen--
   I see above.
(Ah, play again, my queen;
   Thy fingers white
Fly swift and light
And weave for me the golden mesh of love.)

Oh, thou dusk sorceress of the dusky eyes
   And soft dark hair,
'T is thou that mak'st my skies
   So swift to change
To far and strange;
But far and strange, thou still dost make them fair.

Now thou dost sing, and I am lost in thee
   As one who drowns
In floods of melody.
   Still in thy art
Give me this part,
Till perfect love, the love of loving crowns.

This poem appears in the following book(s): Lyrics of the Hearthside

HARRIET BEECHER STOWE

She told the story, and the whole world wept
   At wrongs and cruelties it had not known
But for this fearless woman's voice alone.
She spoke to consciences that long had slept:
Her message, Freedom's clear reveille, swept
From heedless hovel to complacent throne.
   Command and prophecy were in the tone
And from its sheath the sword of justice leapt.
Around two peoples swelled a fiery wave,
   But both came forth transfigured from the flame.
Blest be the hand that dared be strong to save,
   And blest be she who in our weakness came--
Prophet and priestess! At one stroke she gave
A race to freedom and herself to fame.

This poem appears in the following book(s): Lyrics of the Hearthside
Thou Art My Lute

BY Paul Laurence Dunbar

Thou art my lute, by thee I sing,—
My being is attuned to thee.
Thou settest all my words a-wing,
And meltest me to melody.

Thou art my life, by thee I live,
From thee proceed the joys I know;
Sweetheart, thy hand has power to give
The meed of love—the cup of woe.

Thou art my love, by thee I lead
My soul the paths of light along,
From vale to vale, from mead to mead,
And home it in the hills of song.

My song, my soul, my life, my all,
Why need I pray or make my plea,
Since my petition cannot fall;
For I'm already one with thee!
The Corn-Stalk Fiddle

BY PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

When the corn’s all cut and the bright stalks shine
Like the burnished spears of a field of gold;
When the field-mice rich on the nubbins dine,
And the frost comes white and the wind blows cold;
Then its heigho fellows and hi-diddle-diddle,
For the time is ripe for the corn-stalk fiddle.

And you take a stalk that is straight and long,
With an expert eye to its worthy points,
And you think of the bubbling strains of song
That are bound between its pithy joints—
Then you cut out strings, with a bridge in the middle,
With a corn-stalk bow for a corn-stalk fiddle.

Then the strains that grow as you draw the bow
O’er the yielding strings with a practiced hand!
And the music’s flow never loud but low
Is the concert note of a fairy band.
Oh, your dainty songs are a misty riddle
To the simple sweets of the corn-stalk fiddle.

When the eve comes on and our work is done
And the sun drops down with a tender glance,
With their hearts all prime for the harmless fun,
Come the neighbor girls for the evening’s dance,
And they wait for the well-known twist and twiddle,
More time than tune—from the corn-stalk fiddle.

Then brother Jabez takes the bow,
While Ned stands off with Susan Bland,
Then Henry stops by Milly Snow
And John takes Nellie Jones’s hand,
While I pair off with Mandy Biddle,
And scrape, scrape, scrape goes the corn-stalk fiddle.
“Salute your partners,” comes the call,
“All join hands and circle round,”
“Grand train back,” and “Balance all,”

Footsteps lightly spurn the ground,
“Take your lady and balance down the middle”
To the merry strains of the corn-stalk fiddle.

So the night goes on and the dance is o’er,
   And the merry girls are homeward gone,
But I see it all in my sleep once more,
   And I dream till the very break of dawn
Of an impish dance on a red-hot griddle
To the screech and scrape of a corn-stalk fiddle.
Invitation to Love

BY PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

Come when the nights are bright with stars
Or come when the moon is mellow;
Come when the sun his golden bars
Drops on the hay-field yellow.
Come in the twilight soft and gray,
Come in the night or come in the day,
Come, O love, whene’er you may,
And you are welcome, welcome.

You are sweet, O Love, dear Love,
You are soft as the nesting dove.
Come to my heart and bring it to rest
As the bird flies home to its welcome nest.

Come when my heart is full of grief
Or when my heart is merry;
Come with the falling of the leaf
Or with the redd’ning cherry.
Come when the year’s first blossom blows,
Come when the summer gleams and glows,
Come with the winter’s drifting snows,
And you are welcome, welcome.