

Wright State University

CORE Scholar

Paul Laurence Dunbar Books

Special Collections and Archives

1901

Candle-Lightin' Time

Paul Laurence Dunbar

Follow this and additional works at: <https://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/dunbar>



Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#), and the [Poetry Commons](#)

Repository Citation

Dunbar , P. L. (1901). *Candle-Lightin' Time*. : Dodd, Mead and Company.

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Special Collections and Archives at CORE Scholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in Paul Laurence Dunbar Books by an authorized administrator of CORE Scholar. For more information, please contact library-corescholar@wright.edu.

Paul Laurence Dunbar

Candle-Lightin' Time

Dinah Kneading Dough

Dat Ol' Mare O' Mine

A Spring Wooing

The Old Front Gate

Fishin'

When Dey Listed Colored Soldiers

Lullaby

Song of Summer

At Candle-Lightin' Time

*First published by Dodd, Mead and Company
University Press, John Wilson and Son, Cambridge, USA*

1901

Dinah Kneading Dough

I have seen full many a sight
Born of day or drawn by night:
Sunlight on a silver stream,
Golden lilies all a-dream,
Lofty mountains, bold and proud,
Veiled beneath the lacelike cloud;
But no lovely sight I know
Equals Dinah kneading dough.

Brown arms buried elbow-deep
Their domestic rhythm keep,
As with steady sweep they go
Through the gently yielding dough.
Maids may vaunt their finer charms —
Naught to me like Dinah's arms;
Girls may draw, or paint, or sew —
I love Dinah kneading dough.

Eyes of jet and teeth of pearl,
Hair, some say, too tight a-curl;
But the dainty maid I deem
Very near perfection's dream.
Swift she works, and only flings
Me a glance — the least of things.
And I wonder, does she know
That my heart is in the dough?

Dat Ol' Mare O' Mine

Want to trade me, do you, mistah? Oh, well, now, I reckon not.

W'y you could n't buy my Sukey fu' a thousan' on de spot.

Dat ol' mare o' mine?

Yes, huh coat ah long an' shaggy, an' she ain't no shakes to see;

Dat's a ring-bone yes, you right, suh, an' she got a on'ry knee,

But dey ain't no use in talkin', she de only hoss fu' me,

Dat ol' mare o' mine.

C'ose, I knows dat Suke's contra'y, an' she moughty ap' to vex;

But you got to mek erlowance fu' de nature of huh sex;

Dat ol' mare o' mine.

Ef you pull her on de lef' han', she plum 'terminated to go right,

A cannon could n't skeer huh, but she boun' to tek a fright

At a piece o' common paper, or anyt'ing whut's white,

Dat ol' mare o' mine.

W'en my eyes commence to fail me, dough, I trus'es to huh sight,

An' she'll tote me safe an' hones' on de ve'y da'kes' night,

Dat ol' mare o' mine.

Ef I whup huh, she jes' switch huh tail, an' settle to a walk,

Ef I whup huh mo', she shek huh haid, an' lak ez not, she balk.

But huh sense ain't no ways lackin', she do evah t'ing but talk,

Dat ol' mare o' mine.

But she gentle ez a lady w'en she know huh beau kin see,

An' she sholy got mo' gumption any day den you or me,

Dat ol' mare o' mine.

She's a leetle slow a-goin', an' she moughty ha'd to sta't,

But we's gittin' ol' togethah, an' she's closah to my hea't,

An' I does n't reckon, mistah, dat she'd sca'cely keer to pa't;

Dat ol' mare o' mine.

W'y, I knows de time dat cidah's kin' o' muddled up my haid,

Ef it had n't been fu' Sukey hyeah, I reckon I'd been daid;

Dat ol' mare o' mine.

But she got me in de middle o' de road an' tuk me home,

An' she would n't let me wandah, ner she would n't let me roam,

Dat's de kin' o' hoss to tie to w'en you's seed de cidah's foam,

Dat ol' mare o' mine.

You kin talk erbout yo' heaven, you kin talk erbout yo' hell,

Dey is people, dey is hosses, den dey's cattle, den dey's — well, —

Dat ol' mare o' mine;

She de beatenes' t'ing dat evah struck de medders o' de town,

An' aldough huh haid ain't fittin' fu' to waih no golden crown,

D' ain't a blessed way fu' Petah fu' to tu'n my Sukey down,

Dat ol' mare o' mine.

A Spring Wooing

Come on walkin' wid me, Lucy; 't ain't no time to mope erroun'

W'en de sunshine's shoutin' glory in de sky,

An' de little Johnny-Jump-Ups's jes' a-springin' f'om de groun',

Den a-lookin' roun' to ax each othah w'y.

Don' you hyeah dem cows a-mooiin'? Dat's dey howdy to de spring;

Ain' dey lookin' most oncommon satisfied?

Hit's enough to mek a body want to spread dey mouf an' sing

Jes' to see de critters all so spa'klin'-eyed.

W'y dat squir'l dat jes'run past us, ef I did n' know his tricks,

I could swaih he 'd got 'uligion jes' to-day;

An' dem liza'rds slippin' back an' fofe ermong de stones an' sticks

Is a-wigglin' 'cause dey feel so awful gay.

Oh, I see yo' eyes a-shinin' dough you try to mek me b'lieve

Dat you ain' so monst'ous happy 'cause you come;

But I tell you dis hyeah weathah meks it moughty ha'd to 'ceive

Ef a body's soul ain' blin' an' deaf an' dumb.

Robin whistlin' ovah yandah ez he buil' his little nes';

Whut you reckon dat he sayin' to his mate?

He's a-sayin' dat he love huh in de wo'ds she know de bes',

An' she lookin' moughty pleased at whut he state.

Now, Miss Lucy, dat ah rabin sholy got his sheer o' sense,

An' de hen-bird got huh mothah-wit fu' true;

So I t'ink ef you'll ixcuse me, fu' I do' mean no erfence,

Dey 's a lesson in dem birds fu' me an' you.

I 's a-buil'in' o' my cabin, an' I 's vines erbove de do'

Fu' to kin' o' gin it sheltah f'om de sun;

Gwine to have a little kitchen wid a reg'lar wooden flo',

An' dey 'll be a back verandy w'en hit 's done.

I 's a-waitin fu' you, Lucy, tek de 'zample o' de birds,

Dat 's a-lovin an' a-matin' evahwhaih.

I cain' tell you dat I loves you in de robin's music wo'ds,

But my cabin's talkin' fu' me ovah thaih!

The Old Front Gate

W'en daih's chillun in de house,

Dey keep on a-gittin' tall;

But de folks don' seem to see

Dat dey's growin' up at all,

'Twell dey fin' out some fine day

Dat de gals has 'menced to grow,

W'en dey notice as dey pass

Dat de front gate 's saggin' low.

W'en de hinges creak an' cry,

An' de bahs go slantin' down,

You kin reckon dat hit's time

Fu' to cas' yo' eye erroun',

'Cause daih ain' no 'sputin' dis,

Hit's de trues' sign to show,

Dat daih's cou'tin' goin' on

W'en de ol' front gate sags low.

Oh, you grumble an' complain,
An' you prop dat gate up right;
But you notice right nex' day
Dat hit's in de same ol' plight.
So you fin' dat hit's a rule,
An' daih ain' no use to blow,
W'en de gals is growin' up,
Dat de front gate will sag low.

Den you' t'ink o' yo' young days,
W'en yo' cou'ted Sally Jane,
An' you so't o' feel ashamed
Fu' to grumble an' complain,
'Cause yo' ricerlection says,
An' you know hits wo'ds is so,
Dat huh pappy had a time
Wid his front gate saggin' low.

So you jes' looks on an' smiles
At 'em leanin' on de gate,
Try'n to t'ink whut he kin say
Fu' to keep him daih so late.
But you lets dat gate erlone,
Fu' yo' 'sperunce goes to show
'Twell de gals is ma'ied off
It gwine keep on saggin' low.

Fishin'

W'en I git up in de mo'nin' an' de clouds is big an' black,
Dey's a kin' o' wa'nin' shivah goes a'scootin' down my back;
Den I says to my ol' ooman ez I watches down de lane,
"Don't you so't o' reckon, Lizy, dat we gwine to have some rain?"

"Go on, man," my Lizy answah, "you cain't fool me, not a bit,
I don't see no rain a-comin', ef you's wishin' fu' it, quit,
Case de mo' you t'ink erbot it, an' de mo' you pray an' wish,
W'y, de rain stay 'way de longah, spechul ef you wants to fish."

But I see huh pat de skillet, an' I see huh cas' huh eye
Wid a kin' o' anxious motion to'ds de da'kness in de sky;
An' I knows whut she's a-t'inkin', 'dough she tries so ha'd to hide,
She's a-saying', "Would n't catfish now tas'e mons'tous bully, fried?"

Den de clouds git black an' blackah, an' de thundah 'mence to roll,
An' de rain, hit 'mence a-fallin', oh, I's happy, bless my soul!

Ez I look at dat ol' skillet, an' I 'magine I kin see
Jes a slew o' new-ketched catfish sizzlin' daih fu' huh an me.

'T ain't no use to go a-ploughin', fu' de groun'll be too wet.
So I puts out fu' de big house at a moughty pace, you bet,
An' ol' mastah say, "Well, Lishy, ef you think hit's gwine to rain,
Go on fishin', hit's de weathah, an' I 'low we cain't complain."

Talk erbout a dahky walkin' wid his haid up in de aih!
Have to feel mine evah minute to be sho' I got it daih;
Fu' de win' is cuttin' capahs an a-lashin' thoo de trees,
But de rain keeps on a-singin' blessid songs, lak "Tek yo' ease."

Wid my pole erpon my shouldah an' my wo'm-can in my han',
I kin feel de fish a-waitin' w'en I strikes de rivah's san';
Nevah min', you ho'ny scoun'els, need n' swim erroun' an' grin,
I'll be grinnin' in a minute w'en I 'mence to haul you in.

W'en de fish begin to nibble, an' de co'k begin to jump,

I's erfeared dey'll quit dey bitin', case dey hyeah my hea't go "thump"

Twel de co'k go way down undah, an' I raise a awful shout,

Ez a big ol' yallah belly comes a-gallivantin' out.

Need n't wriggle, Mistah Catfish, case I got you jes de same,

You been eatin', I'll be eatin', an' we needer ain't to blame.

But you need n't feel so lonesome fu' I's throwin' out to see

Ef dey ain't some of yo' comerds fu' to keep you company.

Spo't? dis fishin'! now you talkin', w'y dey ain't no kin' to beat;

I do' keer ef I is soakin', laigs, an' back, an' naik, an' feet,

It's de spo't I's lookin' aftah. Hit's de pleasure an' de fun,

Dough I knows dat Lizy's waitin' wid de skillet w'en I's done.

When Dey Listed Colored Soldiers

Dey was talkin' in de cabin, dey was talkin' in de hall;

But I listened kin' o' keerless, not a-t'inkin' 'bout it all;

An' on Sunday, too, I noticed, dey was whisp'rin' mighty much,

Stan'in' all erroun' de roadside w'en dey let us out o' chu'ch.

But I did n't t'ink erbout it 'twell de middle of de week,

An' my 'Lias come to see me, an' somehow he could n't speak.

Den I seed all in a minute whut he'd come to see me for; -

Dey had 'listed colo'ed sojers, an' my 'Lias gwine to wah.

Oh, I hugged him, an' I kissed him, an' I baiged him not to go;

But he tol' me dat his conscience, hit was callin' to him so,

An' he could n't baih to lingah w'en he had a chanst to fight

For de freedom dey had gin him an' de glory of de right.

So he kissed me, an' he lef' me, w'en I'd p'omised to be true;

An' dey put a knapsack on him, an' a coat all colo'ed blue.

So I gin him pap's ol' Bible, f'om de bottom of de draw', -

W'en dey 'listed colo'ed sojers an' my 'Lias went to wah.

But I t'ought of all de weary miles dat he would have to tramp,
An' I could n't be contented w'en dey tuk him to de camp.
W'y, my hea't nigh broke wid grievin' twell I seed him on de street;
Den I felt lak I could go an' th'ow my body at his feet.
For his buttons was a-shinin', an' his face was shinin', too,
An' he looked so strong an' mighty in his coat o' sojer blue,
Dat I hollahed, "Step up, manny," dough my th'roat was so' an' raw,-
W'en dey 'listed colo'ed sojers an' my 'Lias went to wah.

Ol' Mis' cried w'en mastah lef' huh, young Miss mou'ned huh brothah Ned,
An' I did n't know dey feelin's is de ve'y wo'ds dey said
W'en I tol' 'em I was so'y. Dey had done gin up dey all;
But dey only seem mo' proudah dat dey men had hyeahd de call.
Bofe my mastahs went in gray suits, an' I loved de Yankee blue,
But I t'ought dat I could sorrer for de losin' of 'em too;
But I could n't, for I did n't know de ha'f o' whut I saw,
'Twell dey 'listed colo'ed sojers an' my 'Lias went to wah.

Mastah Jack come home all sickly; he was broke for life, dey said;
An' dey lef' my po' young mastah some'r's on de roadside, - dead.
W'en de women cried an' mou'ned 'em, I could feel it thoo an' thoo,
For I had a loved un fightin' in de way o' dangah, too.
Den dey tol' me dey had laid him some'r's way down souf to res',
Wid de flag dat he had fit for shinin' daih acrost his breas'.
Well, I cried, but den I reckon dat's what Gawd had called him for
W'en dey 'listed colo'ed sojers an' my 'Lias went to wah.

Lullaby

Kiver up yo' haid, my little lady,

Hyeah de win' a-blowin' out o' do's.

Don' you kick, ner projick wid de comfo't,

Less'n fros'll bite yo' little toes.

Shut yo' eyes, an' snuggle up to mammy;

Gi' me bofe yo' han's, I hol' 'em tight;

Don' you be afeard, an' 'meance to trimble

Des ez soon ez I blows out de light.

Angels is a-mindin' you, my baby,

Keepin' off de Bad Man in de night.

Whut de use o' bein' skeered o' nuffin'?

You don' fink de da'kness gwine to bite?

Whut de crackin' soun' you hyeah erroun' you? —

Lawsy, chile, you tickles me to def! —

Dat's de man what brings de fros', a-paintin'

Picters on de winder wid his bref.

Mammy ain' afeard, you hyeah huh laffin'?

Go' way, Mistah Fros', you can't come in;

Baby ain' erceivin' folks dis evenin',

Reckon dat you'll have to call ag'in.

Curl yo' little toes up so, my possum —

Umph, but you's a cunnin' one fu' true! —

Go to sleep, de angels is a-watchin',

An' yo' mammy's mindin' of you, too.

Song Of Summer

Dis is gospel weathah, sho'—

Hills is swat o' hazy.

Meddahs level ez a flo'

Callin' to de lazy.

Sky all white wif streaks o' blue,

Sunshine softly gleamin',

D'ain't no wuk hit's right to do,

Nothin' 's right but dreamin'.

Dreamin' by de rivah side

Wif de watahs glist'nin',

Feelin' good an' satisfied

Ez you lay a-list'nin'

To the little nakid boys

Splashin' in de watah,

Hollerin' fu' to spress deir joys

Jes' lak youngsters ought to.

Squir'l a-tippin' on his toes,
So's to hide an' view you;
Whole flocks o' camp-meetin' crows

Shoutin' hallelujah.
Peckahwood erpon de tree
Tappin' lak a hammah;
Jaybird chattin' wif a bee,
Tryin' to teach him grammah.

Breeze is blowin' wif perfume,
Jes' enough to tease you;
Hollyhocks is all in bloom,
Smellin' fu' to please you.

Go 'way, folks, an' let me 'lone,
Times is getting' dearah-
Summah's settin' on de th'one,
An' I'm a-layin' neah huh!

At Candle Lightin' Time

When I come in f'om de co'n-fiel' aftah wo'kin' ha'd all day,

It's amazin' nice to fin' my suppah all erpon de way;

An' it's nice to smell de coffee bubblin' ovah in de pot,

An' it's fine to see de meat a-sizzlin' teasin'-lak an' hot.

But when suppah-time is ovah, an' de t'ings is cleahed away;

Den de happy hours dat foller are de sweetes' of de day.

When m co'ncob pipe is sta'ted, an' de smoke is drawin' prime,

My ole 'ooman says, "I reckon, Ike, it's candle-lightin' time."

Den de chillum snuggle up to me, an' all commence to call,

"Oh, say, daddy, now it's time to mek de shadders on de wall."

So I puts my han's togethah—evah daddy knows de way,—

An' de chillum snuggle closer roun' ez I begin to say:—

"Fus' thing, hyeah come Mistah Rabbit; don' you see him wo'k his eahs?"

Huh, uh! Dis mus' be a donkey,—look, how innercent he 'pears!

Dah's de ole black swan a-swimmin'—ain't she got a' awful neck?

Who's dis feller dat 's a-comin'? Why, dat's ole dog Tray, I 'spec!"

Dat's de way I run on, tryin' fu' to please 'em all I can;

Den I hollah, "Now be keerful—dis hyeah las' 's de buga-man!"

An' dey runs an' hides dey faces; dey ain't skeered—dey's lettin' on:

But de play ain't raaly ovah twell dat buga-man is gone.

So I jes' teks up my banjo, an' I plays a little chune,

An' you see dem huids come peepin' out to listen mighty soon.

Den my wife says, "Sich a pappy fu' to give you sich a fright!

Jes' you go to baid, an' leave him: say yo' prayers an' say good-night."