

I.

Somewhere in another setting,
Not so very long ago,
I sat down to write this poem
As my preacher told me so.

II.

I sat down because he asked me, --
For that cause and nothing more.
"Write an ode," my best friend told me,
"For Dunbar's Class of 'Forty-Four."

III.

I sat down to tell this story;
I began to probe for facts;
I began the writer's journey
Up the road that turns not back.

IV.

I began to feel a tingel,
For the muse had let it be, --
That same pride I first experienced...
In my Ode to Mister Seay.

V.

Can't you see those seniors marching
Though this nation was at war?
Forty years ago -- last summer --
Dunbar's Class of 'Forty-Four ...

VI.

Do you sometimes really wonder
Who . . . and what . . . and when . . . and how?
Four decades ago, -- determined; --
I'm resolved to ask them now?

VII.

Did your parent's great examples
Build your courage to excel?
Or was it Dunbar's finest teachers . . .
That made you do so very well?

VIII.

Or was it all that competition,
Daring you to be the best?
Was it Addison? Langston? Armstrong?
Booker-T? -- Or all the rest?

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O how rare a group of graduates,
Sixty seniors; -- special folk:
What was it you learned up yonder
At that school . . . on Twelfth and Polk?

IX.

Was it sheer determination?
 Was it that, and much, much more?
 Of Dunbar's greatest classes/ever,
 Many say: "'Twas 'Forty-four."

X.

Scholarship and Truth and Honor;
 Leadership . . . and Service too; --
 All of these . . . and many others
 Art the things you had to do.

XI.

And the past became the future,
 And the years have come and gone;
 And tomorrow and tomorrow,
 Have left your memories . . . all alone . . .

XII.

Thank you for your inspiration,
 Thank you for your guiding ray;
 Thank you for the countless thousands
 Who can not be here today.

XIII.

Thank you for your Great achievements, --
 For your honors -- young and old:
 Thanks for holding high the banner, --
 Purple fields . . . in strems of gold!

XIV.

When the years have told their story,
 When the sun's behind the hill,
 When the Gods have lost their haloes
 And their deeds are standing still; --

XV.

If you listen--truly listen,
 We will surely call your name; -
 And remind our children's children . . .
 Of your just . . . and lasting fame!

XVI.

When they tell the Dunbar story . . .
 Great . . . and Good . . . and True . . . and Fair,
 When the accolades are handed,
 You'll be glad that you were there.

When they tell the Dunbar Story . . .
High up on that list you'll be
Where the winds of life are silent
And your honors: full and free.

XVII.

In that land/beyond the river,
Where the road/no longer bends,
We'll be judged/somewhere in glory
Where His prise/will never end;

XVIII.

When they call the institutions
That shall live forever more; --
Somewhere First-Ranked with the finest:
DUNBAR'S Class of "Forty-Four!"

--LGS
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