

Nov. 25<sup>th</sup>, 1897.

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To the editor of the Tribune.

Sir; I am a daily reader of the Tribune and am greatly interested in the Sunshine Society. Will you allow me to correct a statement which appeared in your issue of Nov. 21<sup>st</sup>, regarding the poet, Paul Lawrence Dunbar?

Mr. Dunbar is the colored poet, who has sprung so prominently into fame during the last <sup>hit</sup> months in this country and in London, but he is not blind.

Knowing Mr. Dunbar to be employed in the new Library of Congress, and coming myself with a copy of the Tribune, I decided upon finding this rising young poet, with whose poems of "Lowly Life" I was already familiar. Climbing four short flights of stairs in the north stack of the Library, I found my poet, seated humbly at a desk, busily engaged on

some special work in connection with his present position. As I approached he arose and with a kindly greeting, offered me his chair, the only one, I saw on that deck. I explained my errand, I desired to correct to the general public, the impression of his blindness. "Strange" he said, "an old chum of mine, in New Jersey, has just sent me the same copy of the Tribune. I cannot account for such a mistake. But I should be greatly pleased if you take the trouble to write to the Tribune." Whereupon, he proceeded to give me a brief outline of the origin of the poem. "Last year," said he, "while in Toledo, Ohio, I consented to recite at an entertainment given for the Insane. Before the recital, I requested the organist to play for me, cardinal Newman's favorite hymn, 'Lead kindly light'."

The music and words, rushed through my brain in so maddening a way, blinding me to all outside influences, surging through my very heart and soul, until I could stand it no longer. I rushed off to my room, jotted down the very words of this poem, "Lead gently".

When I returned to the recital to take the place assigned me on the program, I brought with me, my newly-fledged poem and read it before the audience. Last summer while in London I forwarded it to the New York Independent where it was published for the first time. This short history was told by Mr. Dunbar, in a simple, unaffected way. His sincere speech, aided by a very musical voice and the entire absence of pose or pretention on his part stamped him, to my mind, as the true poet and lover of his art.

Very recently, in the new Library of Congress, in the department, which, that humane and able librarian, Mr. John Russell Young, has set aside for the use of the blind, Mr. Dunbar read and also intoned or chanted some of his poems. These were deeply enjoyed by his audience.

Poets are messengers from heaven, who bring solace to the wearyhearted and the grieved. Mr. Dunbar has a beautiful mission before him, to bring the inward and spiritual light to those who have been so long in darkness. "Lead gently" will live long in the hearts of all true lovers of poetry.

Sincerely yours  
D.K.B.

Washington D.C.