

The Craftsman

By Marcus B. Christian

I ply with all the cunning of my art

This little thing, and with consummate care

I fashion it—so that when I depart,

Those who come after me shall find it fair

And beautiful. It must be free of flaws—

Pointing no laborings of weary hands;

And there must be no flouting of the laws

Of beauty—as the artist understands.

Through passion, yearnings infinite—yet dumb—

I lift you from the depths of my own mind

And gild you with my soul's white heat to plumb

The souls of future men. I leave behind

This thing that in return this solace gives:

"He who creates true beauty ever lives."

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Best known for his spirited poem of the city of New Orleans, "I Am New Orleans," poet Marcus Bruce

Christian was born 80 miles south of New Orleans in 1900. By the time he was 13, both of his parents had died. As a teenager, he moved to New Orleans. He worked first as a chauffeur and then became the owner of a dry cleaning company, Bluebird Cleaners. Though he attended night school, he did not complete a college degree. Christian worked for the Federal Writers' Project and as a librarian at Dillard University, and he taught history and poetry at the University of New Orleans.

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