

# To the Negro Farmers of the United States

By Alice Moore Dunbar-Nelson

God washes clean the souls and hearts of you,  
His favored ones, whose backs bend o'er the soil,  
Which grudging gives to them requite for toil  
In sober graces and in vision true.  
God places in your hands the pow'r to do  
A service sweet. Your gift supreme to foil  
The bare-fanged wolves of hunger in the moil  
Of Life's activities. Yet all too few  
Your glorious band, clean sprung from Nature's heart;  
The hope of hungry thousands, in whose breast  
Dwells fear that you should fail. God placed no dart  
Of war within your hands, but pow'r to start  
Tears, praise, love, joy, enwoven in a crest  
To crown you glorious, brave ones of the soil.

Notes:

from *The Dunbar Speaker and Entertainer*

Source: *The Works of Alice Dunbar-Nelson Volume 2 The Schomburg Library of Nineteenth-Century Black Women Writers* (Oxford University Press, 1988)



Poet, essayist, diarist, and activist Alice Moore Dunbar-Nelson was born in New Orleans, Louisiana, to mixed-race parents. Her African American, Anglo, Native American, and Creole heritage contributed to her complex understandings of gender, race, and ethnicity, subjects she often addressed in her work. Her first book, *Violets and Other Tales* (1895), was published when she was just 20. One of the few female African American diarists of the early 20th century, she portrays the complicated reality of African American women and intellectuals, addressing topics such as racism, oppression, family, work, and sexuality. In 1898 she married the poet Paul Laurence Dunbar; they separated in 1902, and Dunbar-Nelson married twice more.