

Futility

Claude McKay

Oh, I have tried to laugh the pain away,
Let new flames brush my love-springs¹ like a feather.
But the old fever seizes me to-day,
As sickness grips a soul in wretched weather.
5 I have given up myself to every urge,
With not a care of precious powers spent,
Have bared my body to the strangest scourge,
To soothe and deaden my heart's unhealing rent.
But you have torn a nerve out of my frame,
10 A gut that no physician can replace,
And reft² my life of happiness and aim.
Oh what new purpose shall I now embrace?
What substance hold, what lovely form pursue,
When my thought burns through everything to you?

Textual Note

This poem also appeared in *The Liberator* (January, 1922).

Editorial Notes

1. **Love-Springs:** The young shoots of love; compare *Comedy of Errors* where Luciana asks Antipholus, "shall, Antipholus, / Even in the spring of love, thy **love-springs** rot? / Shall love, in building, grow so ruinous?" (III.ii).
2. **Reft:** Deprived of, bereft of.

¹ ,] *om. Lib.*