

# My Mother

Claude McKay

I

Reg wished me to go with him to the field,  
I paused because I did not want to go;  
But in her quiet way she made me yield  
Reluctantly, for she was breathing low.

5 Her hand she slowly lifted from her lap  
And, smiling sadly in the old sweet way,  
She pointed to the nail where hung my cap.  
Her eyes said: I shall last another day.  
But scarcely had we reached the distant place,  
10 When o'er the hills we heard a faint bell ringing;  
A boy came running up with frightened face;  
We knew the fatal news that he was bringing.  
I heard him listlessly, without a moan,  
Although the only one I loved was gone.

II

15 The dawn departs, the morning is begun,  
The trades come whispering from off the seas,  
The fields of corn are golden in the sun,  
The dark-brown tassels fluttering in the breeze;  
The bell is sounding and the children pass,  
20 Frog-leaping, skipping, shouting, laughing shrill,  
Down the red road, over the pasture-grass,  
Up to the school-house crumbling on the hill.  
The older folk are at their peaceful toil,  
Some pulling up the weeds, some plucking corn,  
25 And others breaking up the sun-baked soil.  
Float, faintly-scented breeze, at early morn  
Over the earth where mortals sow and reap—

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1 ,] ; *Lib.*

2 ;] , *Lib.*

4 ] — *Lib.*

7 .] ; *Lib.*

9 ,] *om. Lib.*

10 ;] , *Lib.*

11 ;] , *Lib.*

12 .] ; *Lib.*

13 , without a ] and made no *Lib.*

18 ;] . *Lib.*

27 earth] , *add. Lib.*

27 —] . *Lib.*

Beneath its breast my mother lies asleep.

### **Textual Note**

This poem also appeared in *The Liberator* (March, 1920). The version appearing in *The Liberator* lacks numbers for the stanzas.