

# Eloise Bibb

## Selected Poems



# Eloise Bibb (Thompson)

June 26, 1878 [New Orleans, Louisiana] –

January 8, 1928 [New York, New York]

[Eloise Bibb taught school in New Orleans as a young woman. Her first book of 26 poems was published in Boston in 1895. From 1908 to 1911 she worked as head resident at the Social Settlement House affiliated with Howard University. Howard University president Wilbur P. Thirkield said: “She is a woman who has accomplished a hard task of colored settlement work by putting her heart in it and her life under it and wrought wonderful results.” She moved to Los Angeles, California, with her new husband in 1911, and wrote for various publications there, including the Los Angeles Tribune, Morning Sun Out West, and Tidings (published by the Diocese of Los Angeles). She was also active in the Catholic Women’s Clubs of Los Angeles. The Thompsons were considered members of the “Ink Slingers” literary circle in Los Angeles. Bibb Thompson’s *A Reply to the Clansman* (1915) was a screenplay in response to the film *The Birth of a Nation*.<sup>[8][9]</sup> She wrote at least four plays: *A Friend of Democracy* (1920), *Caught* (1920), *Africanus* (1922, about the life of Marcus Garvey; it was directed by Olga Grey), and *Cooped Up* (1924), and she was associated with the National Ethiopian Art Theatre in New York.]

*Poems*. Boston: The Monthly Review Press, 1895.

# A Garland Of Prayer

Amid the stress of daily life,  
Its cares, success, and its strife,  
    I would repair  
To Thee, O God, and at Thy feet  
I'd lay, with all its perfume sweet,  
    A wreath of prayer.

Today my only thought shall be  
A zealousness in loving Thee—  
    The Elder flower.  
And to this chaplet I shall bind  
The energy of soul and mind,  
    Thus hour by hour.

Tomorrow, in my garland fair,  
I'll twine Devotion deep and rare—  
    The Heliotrope.  
Though oft the tempter hover near,  
In Thee, so faithful and so dear,  
    Shall be my hope.

No virtue, Lord, is loved by Thee  
More than a spotless Chastity—  
    The Orange flower.  
I'll weave my thoughts while I shall live  
Without a stain, if Thou wilt give  
    Thy grace and power.

And I would have my garland bear  
The fragrant bloom of Meekness fair—  
    The Lilac wild.  
My soul shall then receive from Thee  
A perfect peace, for I shall be  
    Thy humble child.

And thus each day shall be my care

To add another flower of prayer.

Until complete.

When fairest are my flowers all

Then may my spirit hear Thy call

At Mercy's seat.

# After Reading Bryant's Lines to a Waterfowl

No forward soul, ambition stung,  
And sunk in carnal bliss,  
E'er dreamed a dream so fraught with heav'n  
And gave us verse like this.

No lute attuned for flattery's ear,  
Or struck by greed for gain,  
E'er woke such cadences so sweet  
Or played so rare a strain.

Not men, but Angels sing like this,  
Lit with celestial fire,  
And sweep the strings with airy touch  
Of an immortal lyre.

# In Memoriam Frederick Douglass

O Death! why dost thou steal the great,  
With grudging like to strongest hate,  
And rob the world of giant minds,  
For whom all nature mourns and pines.

So few have we upon the earth,  
Whom God ennobled at their birth,  
With genius stamped upon their souls,  
That guides, directs, persuades, controls.

So few who scorn the joys of life,  
And labor in contending strife,  
With zeal increased and strength of ten,  
To ameliorate the ills of men.

So few who keep a record clean,  
Amid temptations strong and keen;  
Who live laborious days and nights,  
And shun the stores of passion's blights.

O, why cannot these linger here,  
As lights upon this planet drear;  
Forever in the public sight,  
To lead us always to the right?

O Douglass! thou wert 'mong the few  
Who struggles and temptations knew,  
Yet bravely mounted towering heights,  
Amazing both to blacks and whites.

The sons of Ham feel desolate  
Without thee, O Douglass the Great;  
A nation's tears fall now with mine,  
While mourning at thy sacred shrine.

# In Memory Of Arthur Clement Williams

“Alas! that such a soul should taste of death,”  
Such lofty genius fade for want of breath,  
Such wit find refuge ‘mong the mournful dead,—  
Such brains lie silent in that narrow bed.

O, let the Negro weep most bitter tears!  
Our brightest star from earth now disappears;  
He would have stretched Ethiopia’s hand to God  
Had Death not early placed him ‘neath the sod.

Ne’er breathed a man who saw that classic brow,  
That did not then within himself allow  
He saw a fixed desire to raise his race,  
Imprinted on that noble, comely face.

There is one thought that pains me much to-night,  
Although of him I sing and sometimes write,  
I did not know this brave and gifted one,  
This gallant youth,—this good, obedient son.

Yet, ne’er-the-less, I sighed when others sighed;  
I wept to think of fondest hopes denied,—  
Of fleeting joys, of earthly woes and cares,  
Of all that mother’s tears and anxious prayers.

That soul so loved by all now rests in peace,  
He’s happy there where cares and sorrows cease;  
In that celestial home he dwells to-night,  
That place of love, of joy, of dazzling light.

(Son of Mrs. S. F. Williams. Written for the anniversary of his twenty-second birthday, August 23, 1891.)

# Early Spring

The early spring's sweet blush,  
Like a maiden's beauteous flush,  
Mounts the cheek of earth and sky,  
With radiance soft and shy.  
She comes like a virgin queen,  
From her couch of emerald green,  
Enrobed in garments bright,  
With sunny locks of light  
And gladness in her smile,  
Beguiling care the while,  
With music from the thrush,  
And the brook's low warbling rush.  
She stoops and whispers low,  
To the violets 'neath the snow,  
On bended knee she peeps,  
In the home where the clover sleeps;  
Her warm and fragrant breath  
Has chased the gloom of death,  
That shrouded tree and sky,  
When winter's tears were nigh.  
She dotes on the light and shade,  
Her curls and mantle made.  
O, ye who weep and sigh!  
Bid tears a long good-bye;  
Be not now overcast  
With scenes of the buried past;  
Forget the pangs of yore,  
That made thy bosom sore;  
Know that the soul grows strong  
In battles great and long.  
Weep not, nor e'en be sad,  
Rejoice, for the world is glad!

























































































































































































