



INDICTMENTS

THE SONG OF THE GATHERER & THE ANNUAL DIGESTS

Paul L. Dunbar & Anonymous

Cheek by jowl, the two poems printed below appeared in the back pages of the August 1898 issue of the original *Green Bag*. The first, “The Song of the Gatherer,” by renowned African-American poet Paul Dunbar, complains about the burdens that practitioners of law place on the backs of others. The second, “The Annual Digests,” by an unnamed minor bard, appears in “The Lawyer’s Easy Chair” section of the *Bag*, and complains about the burdens that the law places on the backs of its practitioners. It was ever so.

—*The Editors*



THE SONG OF THE GATHERER

The plutocrat hoards up his treasures of gold,
And smiles in his power and pride;
While he seals up his coffers, withholds his great store

Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872-1906) was from an early age a prominent poet in the United States and overseas, and one of the first African-American writers to gain a wide audience for his work. These poems originally appeared at 10 GREEN BAG 355 & 357 (1898).

Paul L. Dunbar & Anonymous

From the paupers who wail at his side.
He has laid his foundation and built on it "Wealth,"—
A tower that never will fall.
Then he scribbles a will and he passes away,
And the lawyer he gathereth all.

The farmer he plants, and he tends, and he reaps,
And he garners his grain with a will;
Then he finds a good market for all he would sell,
And laughs at the winds growing chill.
For his pockets are full and his granaries, too,
There's a plenty for kitchen and stall;
But he places a mortgage — a small one of course,
And the lawyer he gathereth all.

The miser goes ragged and lives on a crust,
Then childless and will-less, he dies;
When lo! from Obscurity's corners remote,
How his heirs and relations arise!
And they quibble and fight about reason and right,
And start up a terrible brawl;
But while they are spending their breath and their cash,
The lawyer he gathereth all.

And so it goes on to the end of the tale,
That rich men and farmers and fools
Will bury their hands in the depths of the chest,
To play with the keen-edged tools.
But one jolly wight looks on at the sight,
And no tears for their follies lets fall.
And this song doth he sing as their tribute they bring:
"Oh, the lawyer he gathereth all."

