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# EMILY DICKINSON

## POEMS FIRST & SECOND SERIES

EDITED BY TWO OF HER FRIENDS

*Mabel Loomis Todd* AND *T. W. Higginson*

ILLUSTRATIONS BY *Leon Jacobson*

INTRODUCTION BY *Carl Van Doren*



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## INTRODUCTION

NOR till after Emily Dickinson's death in 1886 did her family and friends know, or even suspect, that she had written the hundreds of poems which were found among her papers. She had spent most of the years of her life in an intense and increasing seclusion, in the house in Amherst, Massachusetts, where she was born and where she died. Brought up in a rigorous, conventional austerity, she had actually lived an inward life of bold, swift, often gay thought. This inward life first came to light with the discovery of her poems. Her sister Lavinia had to pay for the publication of a selection of *Poems by Emily Dickinson* in November, 1890, edited by two of her friends, Mabel Loomis Todd and Thomas Wentworth Higginson. Fewer than five hundred copies were printed. Two further editions were called for before the end of the year, and three more by March of the year following. In November, 1891, came *Poems by Emily Dickinson, Second Series*, and three more editions of it soon after. Since then many other of her poems have been added in successive volumes and absorbed in later collections, but her fame continues to be founded largely on the *Poems* and the *Poems, Second Series*. They are here printed together, in the exact text and order in which they originally appeared, with the original Prefaces by her two friends. These poems make up one of the most precious books of modern poetry in English or any other language.

In Amherst, Emily, as she was there referred to by friends

or strangers, had become a kind of myth while she still lived. In her later years, she dressed always in white, seldom left her house and garden, and considered it an adventure to go through the hedge to her brother's house next door. The legend grew that she had once been unhappy in love, and some of her poems were long thought of as confirming the legend, but this is little more than romantic guesswork. All that is certain is that she knew as a poet about Love, as she knew about Life, Nature, Time and Eternity, which are the heads under which her first editors arranged her poems. Her silent, darting mind traveled through whole geographies, as she might have said, of human experience. Saying little, she sometimes communicated with her family and friends in brief letters which were poems or in poems which were letters. The surviving manuscripts do not always make clear which they were meant to be, letters or poems. Some of her poems seem to be almost communications with herself—sparks of imagery thrown off by the glowing revolutions of her mind.

Since she lived and moved so largely in her own mind, she was little touched by contemporary literature, though she is perhaps closer in tone and temper to Emerson than to any other writer. Her own knowledge of life, and her own vision of it, are what mattered to her. Her perceptions came to her in bright images. These images were enough. She did not round them out into accepted forms of verse, but let each image make its own form with the quick words she had found for it. "She did not so much cut her poems to the bone as leave them as they were, without adding the customary flesh. Her work approaches poetry's irreducible minimum, which is poetry's immortal part."\*

There are few subjects which she does not touch, with intimate, surprising words. When she prayed to the stern New England God she said, asking him for

“A heaven not so large as yours,  
But large enough for me,”

“A smile suffused Jehovah’s face;  
The cherubim withdrew;  
Grave saints stole out to look at me,  
And showed their dimples, too.”

When she wanted to say, with Keats, that truth and beauty are the same, she told a brief story of this world and the next:

“I died for beauty, but was scarce  
Adjusted in the tomb,  
When one who died for truth was lain  
In an adjoining room.

He questioned softly why I failed?  
‘For beauty,’ I replied.  
‘And I for truth,—the two are one;  
We brethren are,’ he said.

And so, as kinsmen met a night,  
We talked between the rooms,  
Until the moss had reached our lips,  
And covered up our names.”

Speaking in the role of a woman in love, she can use the most housekeeping terms:

“If you were coming in the fall,  
I’d brush the summer by  
With half a smile and half a spurn,  
As housewives do a fly.

If I could see you in a year,  
I'd wind the months in balls,  
And put them each in separate drawers,  
Until their time befalls."

Speaking of a snake in the garden, she says in words that make a reader catch his breath:

"A narrow fellow in the grass  
Occasionally rides;  
You may have met him—did you not,  
His notice sudden is.

The grass divides as with a comb,  
A spotted shaft is seen;  
And then it closes at your feet  
And opens further on.

He likes a boggy acre,  
A floor too cool for corn.  
Yet when a child, and barefoot,  
I more than once, at morn,

Have passed, I thought, a whip-lash  
Unbraiding in the sun,—  
When, stooping to secure it,  
It wrinkled, and was gone.

Several of nature's people  
I know, and they know me;  
I feel for them a transport  
Of cordiality;

But never met this fellow,  
Attended or alone,  
Without a tighter breathing,  
And zero at the bone."

Though she lived so much of her life so close to one house and one garden, she wrote the finest of all poems about railroad trains:

"I like to see it lap the miles,  
And lick the valleys up,  
And stop to feed itself at tanks;  
And then, prodigious, step

Around a pile of mountains,  
And, supercilious, peer  
In shanties by the sides of roads;  
And then a quarry pare

To fit its sides, and crawl between,  
Complaining all the while  
In horrid hooting stanzas;  
Then chase itself down hill

And neigh like Boanerges;  
Then, punctual as a star,  
Stop—docile and omnipotent—  
At its own stable door."

In the world of her poems everything is achingly alive. Nothing stands still. "Rocks breathe and stars play. The tiny stage swarms with innumerable dramas of the heart and mind which need only pinpoints of room. Yet they are not smaller than their themes, which are life, nature, love, time and

eternity. Every fact has a shining significance, and every story throws off rings of light. The whole world has its center in this spot.”\*

Was Emily Dickinson so personal in her utterance, so provincial in her experience, that she failed to be universal? “Provincialism like hers is universality. Here was she, there was life. It looked so large to her, in her still retreat, that she could not exploit it or condescend to it or turn it over in deliberate fingers. She thrilled and trembled, and had to use her strongest and happiest words to tell what she knew, hoped, feared in it. What she did is all any poet can do. Whether a poet’s garden is wide or narrow, he must, to be a good poet, treat it as a universe.”\*

CARL VAN DOREN

\* Taken from the section on Emily Dickinson in *What is American Literature?* (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1935). Now included in *The Portable Carl Van Doren* (New York: The Viking Press, 1945).

# POEMS

FIRST SERIES

*This is my letter to the world,  
That never wrote to me,—  
The simple news that Nature told,  
With tender majesty.*

*Her message is committed  
To hands I cannot see;  
For love of her, sweet countrymen,  
Judge tenderly of me!*

## PREFACE

THE verses of Emily Dickinson belong emphatically to what Emerson long since called "the Poetry of the Portfolio,"—something produced absolutely without the thought of publication, and solely by way of expression of the writer's own mind. Such verse must inevitably forfeit whatever advantage lies in the discipline of public criticism and the enforced conformity to accepted ways. On the other hand, it may often gain something through the habit of freedom and the unconventional utterance of daring thoughts. In the case of the present author, there was absolutely no choice in the matter; she must write thus, or not at all. A recluse by temperament and habit, literally spending years without setting her foot beyond the doorstep, and many more years during which her walks were strictly limited to her father's grounds, she habitually concealed her mind, like her person, from all but a very few friends; and it was with great difficulty that she was persuaded to print, during her lifetime, three or four poems. Yet she wrote verses in great abundance; and though curiously indifferent to all conventional rules, had yet a rigorous literary standard of her own, and often altered a word many times to suit an ear which had its own tenacious fastidiousness.

Miss Dickinson was born in Amherst, Mass., Dec. 10, 1830, and died there May 15, 1886. Her father, Hon. Edward Dickinson, was the leading lawyer of Amherst, and was treasurer of the well-known college there situated. It was his custom once a year to hold a large reception at his house, attended by

all the families connected with the institution and by the leading people of the town. On these occasions his daughter Emily emerged from her wonted retirement and did her part as gracious hostess; nor would any one have known from her manner, I have been told, that this was not a daily occurrence. The annual occasion once past, she withdrew again into her seclusion, and except for a very few friends was as invisible to the world as if she had dwelt in a nunnery. For myself, although I had corresponded with her for many years, I saw her but twice face to face, and brought away the impression of something as unique and remote as Undine or Mignon or Thekla.

This selection from her poems is published to meet the desire of her personal friends, and especially of her surviving sister. It is believed that the thoughtful reader will find in these pages a quality more suggestive of the poetry of William Blake than of anything to be elsewhere found,—flashes of wholly original and profound insight into nature and life; words and phrases exhibiting an extraordinary vividness of descriptive and imaginative power, yet often set in a seemingly whimsical or even rugged frame. They are here published as they were written, with very few and superficial changes; although it is fair to say that the titles have been assigned, almost invariably, by the editors. In many cases these verses will seem to the reader like poetry torn up by the roots, with rain and dew and earth still clinging to them, giving a freshness and a fragrance not otherwise to be conveyed. In other cases, as in the few poems of shipwreck or of mental conflict, we can only wonder at the gift of vivid imagination by which this recluse woman can delineate, by a few touches, the very crises of physical or mental struggle. And sometimes again we catch glimpses of a lyric strain, sustained perhaps but for a line or two at a time, and making the reader regret its sudden cessation. But the main quality of these poems is that of extraordinary grasp and insight,

uttered with an uneven vigor sometimes exasperating, seemingly wayward, but really unsought and inevitable. After all, when a thought takes one's breath away, a lesson on grammar seems an impertinence. As Ruskin wrote in his earlier and better days, "No weight nor mass nor beauty of execution can outweigh one grain or fragment of thought."

THOMAS WENTWORTH HIGGINSON

Facsimile of "Renunciation," by Emily Dickinson.  
PRINTED IN THE FIRST VOLUME OF HER POEMS.

There came a day -  
At Summer's full -  
Enquiring for me -  
I thought that each  
man for the Saints -  
When Resurrections -  
The Sun - as Common  
went - Abroad -  
The Flowers - accustomed -  
Hence -  
As if no soul - that  
Solemnities passed -  
Which maketh  
all things - new -

The time was scarce  
prepared of speech.  
The falling of a word  
was needless - as at  
Sacrament -

The Wardrobe - of  
Our Lord!

Each was 1:-  
each. the called  
Church.

Permitted 1:- Commune  
this time.

Let me 1:- Antward  
short.

at Supper of the Lamb.

The hours slid  
fast - as hours will -  
Clutched tight - of  
good, hands -  
So. faces on two decks  
look back.

Bound 1: opposing. (and).

And so when  
all the time had leaked,  
without external sound,  
Each sound the  
other's Crucifix -  
We got no other  
Bond -

Sufficient - Truth -

That we shall  
rise .  
exposed - at length  
the Grass .

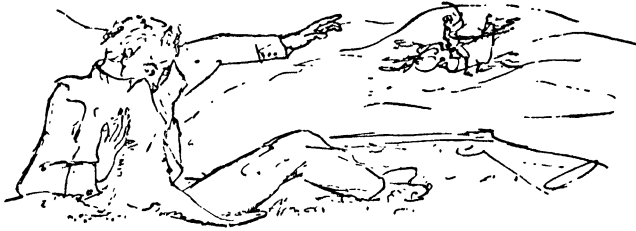
So that men. Mar-  
riage -

Justified - through  
Calvaries - of  
Love !



**I**  
**LIFE**





## I. SUCCESS

ublished in "A Masque of Poets" at the request of "H. H.,"  
thor's fellow-townswoman and friend.]

Success is counted sweetest  
By those who ne'er succeed.  
To comprehend a nectar  
Requires sorest need.

Not one of all the purple host  
Who took the flag to-day  
Can tell the definition,  
So clear, of victory,

As he, defeated, dying,  
On whose forbidden ear  
The distant strains of triumph  
Break, agonized and clear.

## II

Our share of night to bear,  
Our share of morning,  
Our blank in bliss to fill,  
Our blank in scorning.

Here a star, and there a star,  
Some lose their way.  
Here a mist, and there a mist,  
Afterwards — day!

## III. ROUGE ET NOIR

Soul, wilt thou toss again?  
By just such a hazard  
Hundreds have lost, indeed,  
But tens have won an all.

Angels' breathless ballot  
Lingers to record thee;  
Imps in eager caucus  
Raffle for my soul.

#### IV. ROUGE GAGNE

'T is so much joy! 'T is so much joy!  
If I should fail, what poverty!  
And yet, as poor as I  
Have ventured all upon a throw;  
Have gained! Yes! Hesitated so  
This side the victory!

Life is but life, and death but death!  
Bliss is but bliss, and breath but breath!  
And if, indeed, I fail,  
At least to know the worst is sweet.  
Defeat means nothing but defeat,  
No drearier can prevail!

And if I gain,—oh, gun at sea,  
Oh, bells that in the steeples be,  
At first repeat it slow!  
For heaven is a different thing  
Conjectured, and waked sudden in,  
And might o'erwhelm me so!



## V

Glee! the great storm is over!  
Four have recovered the land;  
Forty gone down together  
Into the boiling sand.

Ring, for the scant salvation!  
Toll, for the bonnie souls,—  
Neighbor and friend and bridegroom,  
Spinning upon the shoals!

How they will tell the shipwreck  
When winter shakes the door,  
Till the children ask, "But the forty?  
Did they come back no more?"

Then a silence suffuses the story,  
And a softness the teller's eye;  
And the children no further question,  
And only the waves reply.

## VI

If I can stop one heart from breaking,  
I shall not live in vain;  
If I can ease one life the aching,  
Or cool one pain,  
Or help one fainting robin  
Unto his nest again,  
I shall not live in vain.

## VII. ALMOST!

Within my reach!  
I could have touched!  
I might have chanced that way!  
Soft sauntered through the village,  
Sauntered as soft away!  
So unsuspected violets  
Within the fields lie low,  
Too late for striving fingers  
That passed, an hour ago.

## VIII

A wounded deer leaps highest,  
I've heard the hunter tell;  
'T is but the ecstasy of death,  
And then the brake is still.

The smitten rock that gushes,  
The trampled steel that springs:  
A cheek is always redder  
Just where the hectic stings!

Mirth is the mail of anguish,  
In which it cautious arm,  
Lest anybody spy the blood  
And "You're hurt" exclaim!

## IX

The heart asks pleasure first,  
And then, excuse from pain;  
And then, those little anodynes  
That deaden suffering;

And then, to go to sleep;  
And then, if it should be  
The will of its Inquisitor,  
The liberty to die.

## X. IN A LIBRARY

A precious, mouldering pleasure 't is  
To meet an antique book,  
In just the dress his century wore;  
A privilege, I think,

His venerable hand to take,  
And warming in our own,  
A passage back, or two, to make  
To times when he was young.

His quaint opinions to inspect,  
His knowledge to unfold  
On what concerns our mutual mind,  
The literature of old;

What interested scholars most,  
What competitions ran  
When Plato was a certainty,  
And Sophocles a man;

When Sappho was a living girl,  
And Beatrice wore  
The gown that Dante dcified.  
Facts, centuries before,

He traverses familiar,  
As one should come to town  
And tell you all your dreams were true:  
He lived where dreams were sown.

His presence is enchantment,  
You beg him not to go;  
Old volumes shake their vellum heads  
And tantalize, just so.

## XI

Much madness is divinest sense  
To a discerning eye;  
Much sense the starkest madness.  
'T is the majority  
In this, as all, prevails.  
Assent, and you are sane;  
Demur,—you're straightway dangerous,  
And handled with a chain.

## XII

I asked no other thing,  
No other was denied.  
I offered Being for it;  
The mighty merchant smiled.

Brazil? He twirled a button,  
Without a glance my way:  
"But, madam, is there nothing else  
That we can show to-day?"

### XIII. EXCLUSION

The soul selects her own society,  
Then shuts the door;  
On her divine majority  
Obtrude no more.

Unmoved, she notes the chariot's pausing  
At her low gate;  
Unmoved, an emperor is kneeling  
Upon her mat.

I've known her from an ample nation  
Choose one;  
Then close the valves of her attention  
Like stone.

### XIV. THE SECRET

Some things that fly there be,—  
Birds, hours, the bumble-bee:  
Of these no elegy.

Some things that stay there be,—  
Grief, hills, eternity:  
Nor this behooveth me.

There are, that resting, rise.  
Can I expound the skies?  
How still the riddle lies!



## XV. THE LONELY HOUSE

I know some lonely houses off the road  
A robber'd like the look of,—  
Wooden barred,  
And windows hanging low,  
Inviting to  
A portico,  
Where two could creep:  
One hand the tools,  
The other peep  
To make sure all's asleep.  
Old-fashioned eyes,  
Not easy to surprise!

How orderly the kitchen'd look by night,  
With just a clock,—  
But they could gag the tick,  
And mice won't bark;  
And so the walls don't tell,  
None will.

A pair of spectacles ajar just stir—  
An almanac's aware.  
Was it the mat winked,  
Or a nervous star?  
The moon slides down the stair  
To see who's there.

There's plunder,—where?  
Tankard, or spoon,  
Earring, or stone,  
A watch, some ancient brooch  
To match the grandmamma,  
Staid sleeping there.

Day rattles, too,  
Stealth's slow;  
The sun has got as far  
As the third sycamore.  
Screams chanticleer,  
"Who's there?"  
And echoes, trains away,  
Sneer—"Where?"  
While the old couple, just astir,  
Fancy the sunrise left the door ajar!

## XVI

To fight aloud is very brave,  
But gallanter, I know,  
Who charge within the bosom,  
The cavalry of woe.

Who win, and nations do not see,  
Who fall, and none observe,  
Whose dying eyes no country  
Regards with patriot love.

We trust, in plumed procession,  
For such the angels go,  
Rank after rank, with even feet  
And uniforms of snow.

## XVII. DAWN

When night is almost done,  
And sunrise grows so near  
That we can touch the spaces,  
It's time to smooth the hair

And get the dimples ready,  
And wonder we could care  
For that old faded midnight  
That frightened but an hour.



## XVIII. THE BOOK OF MARTYRS

Read, sweet, how others strove,  
Till we are stouter;  
What they renounced,  
Till we are less afraid;  
How many times they bore  
The faithful witness,  
Till we are helped,  
As if a kingdom cared!

Read then of faith  
That shone above the fagot;  
Clear strains of hymn  
The river could not drown;  
Brave names of men  
And celestial women,  
Passed out of record  
Into renown!

## XIX. THE MYSTERY OF PAIN

Pain has an element of blank;  
It cannot recollect  
When it began, or if there were  
A day when it was not.

It has no future but itself,  
Its infinite realms contain  
Its past, enlightened to perceive  
New periods of pain.

## XX

I taste a liquor never brewed,  
From tankards scooped in pearl;  
Not all the vats upon the Rhine  
Yield such an alcohol!

Inebriate of air am I,  
And debauchee of dew,  
Reeling, through endless summer days,  
From inns of molten blue.

When landlords turn the drunken bee  
Out of the foxglove's door,  
When butterflies renounce their drams,  
I shall but drink the more!

Till seraphs swing their snowy hats,  
And saints to windows run,  
To see the little tippler  
Leaning against the sun!

## XXI. A BOOK

He ate and drank the precious words,  
His spirit grew robust;  
He knew no more that he was poor,  
Nor that his frame was dust.  
He danced along the dingy days,  
And this bequest of wings  
Was but a book. What liberty  
A loosened spirit brings!

## XXII

I had no time to hate, because  
The grave would hinder me,  
And life was not so ample I  
Could finish enmity.

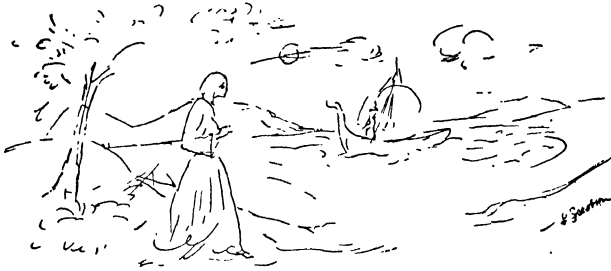
Nor had I time to love; but since  
Some industry must be,  
The little toil of love, I thought,  
Was large enough for me.



### XXIII. UNRETURNING

'T was such a little, little boat  
That toddled down the bay!  
'T was such a gallant, gallant sea  
That beckoned it away!

'T was such a greedy, greedy wave  
That licked it from the coast;  
Nor ever guessed the stately sails  
My little craft was lost!



## XXIV

Whether my bark went down at sea,  
Whether she met with gales,  
Whether to isles enchanted  
She bent her docile sails;

By what mystic mooring  
She is held to-day,—  
This is the errand of the eye  
Out upon the bay.

## XXV

Belshazzar had a letter,—  
He never had but one;  
Belshazzar's correspondent  
Concluded and begun  
In that immortal copy  
The conscience of us all  
Can read without its glasses  
On revelation's wall.

## XXVI

The brain within its groove  
Runs evenly and true;  
But let a splinter swerve,  
'T were easier for you  
To put the water back  
When floods have slit the hills,  
And scooped a turnpike for themselves,  
And blotted out the mills!

II  
LOVE



## I. MINE

Mine by the right of the white election!  
Mine by the royal seal!  
Mine by the sign in the scarlet prison  
Bars cannot conceal!

Mine, here in vision and in veto!  
Mine, by the grave's repeal  
Titled, confirmed,—delirious charter!  
Mine, while the ages steal!

## II. BEQUEST

You left me, sweet, two legacies,—  
A legacy of love  
A Heavenly Father would content,  
Had He the offer of;

You left me boundaries of pain  
Capacious as the sea,  
Between eternity and time,  
Your consciousness and me.

### III

Alter? When the hills do.  
Falter? When the sun  
Question if his glory  
Be the perfect one.

Surfeit? When the daffodil  
Doth of the dew:  
Even as herself, O friend!  
I will of you!

### IV. SUSPENSE

Elysium is as far as to  
The very nearest room,  
If in that room a friend await  
Felicity or doom.

What fortitude the soul contains,  
That it can so endure  
The accent of a coming foot,  
The opening of a door!

## V. SURRENDER

Doubt me, my dim companion!  
Why, God would be content  
With but a fraction of the love  
Poured thee without a stint.  
The whole of me, forever,  
What more the woman can,—  
Say quick, that I may dower thee  
With last delight I own!

It cannot be my spirit,  
For that was thine before;  
I ceded all of dust I knew,—  
What opulence the more  
Had I, a humble maiden,  
Whose farthest of degree  
Was that she might,  
Some distant heaven,  
Dwell timidly with thee!

## VI

If you were coming in the fall,  
I'd brush the summer by  
With half a smile and half a spurn,  
As housewives do a fly.

If I could see you in a year,  
I'd wind the months in balls,  
And put them each in separate drawers,  
Until their time befalls.

If only centuries delayed,  
I'd count them on my hand,  
Subtracting till my fingers dropped  
Into Van Diemen's land.

If certain, when this life was out,  
That yours and mine should be,  
I'd toss it yonder like a rind,  
And taste eternity.

But now, all ignorant of the length  
Of time's uncertain wing,  
It goads me, like the goblin bee,  
That will not state its sting.

## VII. WITH A FLOWER

I hide myself within my flower,  
That wearing on your breast,  
You, unsuspecting, wear me too—  
And angels know the rest.

I hide myself within my flower,  
That, fading from your vase,  
You, unsuspecting, feel for me  
Almost a loneliness.



### VIII. PROOF

That I did always love,  
I bring thee proof:  
That till I loved  
I did not love enough.

That I shall love always,  
I offer thee  
That love is life,  
And life hath immortality.

This, dost thou doubt, sweet?  
Then have I  
Nothing to show  
But Calvary.

## IX

Have you got a brook in your little heart,  
Where bashful flowers blow,  
And blushing birds go down to drink,  
And shadows tremble so?

And nobody knows, so still it flows,  
That any brook is there;  
And yet your little draught of life  
Is daily drunken there.

Then look out for the little brook in March,  
When the rivers overflow,  
And the snows come hurrying from the hills,  
And the bridges often go.

And later, in August it may be,  
When the meadows parching lie,  
Beware, lest this little brook of life  
Some burning noon go dry!

## X. TRANSPLANTED

As if some little Arctic flower,  
Upon the polar hem,  
Went wandering down the latitudes,  
Until it puzzled came  
To continents of summer,  
To firmaments of sun,  
To strange, bright crowds of flowers,  
And birds of foreign tongue!  
I say, as if this little flower  
To Eden wandered in—  
What then? Why, nothing, only  
Your inference therefrom!

## XI. THE OUTLET

My river runs to thee:  
Blue sea, wilt welcome me?

My river waits reply.  
Oh sea, look graciously!

I'll fetch thee brooks  
From spotted nooks,—

Say, sea,  
Take me!

## XII. IN VAIN

I cannot live with you,  
It would be life,  
And life is over there  
Behind the shelf

The sexton keeps the key to,  
Putting up  
Our life, his porcelain,  
Like a cup

Discarded of the housewife,  
Quaint or broken;  
A newer Sèvres pleases,  
Old ones crack.

I could not die with you,  
For one must wait  
To shut the other's gaze down,—  
You could not.

And I, could I stand by  
And see you freeze,  
Without my right of frost,  
Death's privilege?

Nor could I rise with you,  
Because your face  
Would put out Jesus',  
That new grace

Glow plain and foreign  
On my homesick eye,  
Except that you, than he  
Shone closer by.

They'd judge us—how?  
For you served Heaven, you know,  
Or sought to;  
I could not,

Because you saturated sight,  
And I had no more eyes  
For sordid excellence  
As Paradise.

And were you lost, I would be,  
Though my name  
Rang loudest  
On the heavenly fame.

And were you saved,  
And I condemned to be  
Where you were not,  
That self were hell to me.

So we must keep apart,  
You there, I here,  
With just the door ajar  
That oceans are,  
And prayer,  
And that pale sustenance,  
Despair!



### XIII. RENUNCIATION

There came a day at summer's full  
Entirely for me;  
I thought that such were for the saints,  
Where revelations be.

The sun, as common, went abroad,  
The flowers, accustomed, blew,  
As if no soul the solstice passed  
That maketh all things new.

The time was scarce profaned by speech;  
The symbol of a word  
Was needless, as at sacrament  
The wardrobe of our Lord.

Each was to each the sealed church,  
Permitted to commune this time,  
Lest we too awkward show  
At supper of the Lamb.

The hours slid fast, as hours will,  
Clutched tight by greedy hands;  
So faces on two decks look back,  
Bound to opposing lands.

And so, when all the time had failed,  
Without external sound,  
Each bound the other's crucifix,  
We gave no other bond.

Sufficient troth that we shall rise—  
Deposed, at length, the grave—  
To that new marriage, justified  
Through Calvaries of Love!

#### XIV. LOVE'S BAPTISM

I'm ceded, I've stopped being theirs;  
The name they dropped upon my face  
With water, in the country church,  
Is finished using now,  
And they can put it with my dolls,  
My childhood, and the string of spools  
I've finished threading too.

Baptized before without the choice,  
But this time consciously, of grace  
Unto supremest name,  
Called to my full, the crescent dropped,  
Existence's whole arc filled up  
With one small diadem.

My second rank, too small the first,  
Crowned, crowing on my father's breast,  
A half unconscious queen;  
But this time, adequate, erect,  
With will to choose or to reject,  
And I choose—just a throne.

## XV. RESURRECTION

'T was a long parting, but the time  
For interview had come;  
Before the judgment-seat of God,  
The last and second time

These fleshless lovers met,  
A heaven in a gaze,  
A heaven of heavens, the privilege  
Of one another's eyes.

No lifetime set on them,  
Apparelled as the new  
Unborn, except they had beheld,  
Born everlasting now.

Was bridal e'er like this?  
A paradise, the host,  
And cherubim and seraphim  
The most familiar guest.

## XVI. APOCALYPSE

I'm wife; I've finished that,  
That other state;  
I'm Czar, I'm woman now:  
It's safer so.

How odd the girl's life looks  
Behind this soft eclipse!  
I think that earth seems so  
To those in heaven now.

This being comfort, then  
That other kind was pain;  
But why compare?  
I'm wife! stop there!

## XVII. THE WIFE

She rose to his requirement, dropped  
The playthings of her life  
To take the honorable work  
Of woman and of wife.

If aught she missed in her new day  
Of amplitude, or awe,  
Or first prospective, or the gold  
In using wore away,

It lay unmentioned, as the sea  
Develops pearl and weed,  
But only to himself is known  
The fathoms they abide.

## XVIII. APOTHEOSIS

Come slowly, Eden!  
Lips unused to thee,  
Bashful, sip thy jasmynes,  
As the fainting bee,

Reaching late his flower,  
Round her chamber hums,  
Counts his nectars—enters,  
And is lost in balms!

III  
NATURE



## I

New feet within my garden go,  
New fingers stir the sod;  
A troubadour upon the elm  
Betrays the solitude.

New children play upon the green,  
New weary sleep below;  
And still the pensive spring returns,  
And still the punctual snow!

## II. MAY-FLOWER

Pink, small, and punctual,  
Aromatic, low,  
Covert in April,  
Candid in May,

Dear to the moss,  
Known by the knoll,  
Next to the robin  
In every human soul.

Bold little beauty,  
Bedecked with thee,  
Nature forswears  
Antiquity.



### III. WHY?

The murmur of a bee  
A witchcraft yieldeth me.  
If any ask me why,  
'T were easier to die  
Than tell.

The red upon the hill  
Taketh away my will;  
If anybody sneer,  
Take care, for God is here,  
That's all.

The breaking of the day  
Addeth to my degree;  
If any ask me how,  
Artist, who drew me so,  
Must tell!

Perhaps you'd like to buy a flower?  
But I could never sell.  
If you would like to borrow  
Until the daffodil

Unties her yellow bonnet  
Beneath the village door,  
Until the bees, from clover rows  
Their hock and sherry draw,

Why, I will lend until just then,  
But not an hour more!

V

The pedigree of honey  
Does not concern the bee;  
A clover, any time, to him  
Is aristocracy.

## VI. A SERVICE OF SONG

Some keep the Sabbath going to church;  
I keep it staying at home,  
With a bobolink for a chorister,  
And an orchard for a dome.

Some keep the Sabbath in surplice;  
I just wear my wings,  
And instead of tolling the bell for church,  
Our little sexton sings.

God preaches,—a noted clergyman,—  
And the sermon is never long;  
So instead of getting to heaven at last,  
I'm going all along!



## VII

The bee is not afraid of me,  
I know the butterfly;  
The pretty people in the woods  
Receive me cordially.

The brooks laugh louder when I come,  
The breezes madder play.  
Wherefore, mine eyes, thy silver mists?  
Wherefore, O summer's day?



## VIII. SUMMER'S ARMIES

Some rainbow coming from the fair!  
Some vision of the world Cashmere  
I confidently see!  
Or else a peacock's purple train,  
Feather by feather, on the plain  
Fritters itself away!

The dreamy butterflies bestir,  
Lethargic pools resume the whirl  
Of last year's Sundered tune.  
From some old fortress on the sun  
Baronial bees march, one by one,  
In murmuring platoon!

The robins stand as thick to-day  
As flakes of snow stood yesterday,  
On fence and roof and twig.  
The orchis binds her feather on  
For her old lover, Don the Sun,  
Revisiting the bog!

Without commander, countless, still,  
The regiment of wood and hill  
In bright detachment stand.  
Behold! Whose multitudes are these?  
The children of whose turbaned seas,  
Or what Circassian land?

## IX. THE GRASS

The grass so little has to do,—  
A sphere of simple green,  
With only butterflies to brood,  
And bees to entertain,

And stir all day to pretty tunes  
The breezes fetch along,  
And hold the sunshine in its lap  
And bow to everything;

And thread the dews all night, like pearls,  
And make itself so fine,—  
A duchess were too common  
For such a noticing.

And even when it dies, to pass  
In odors so divine,  
As lowly spices gone to sleep,  
Or amulets of pine.

And then to dwell in sovereign barns,  
And dream the days away,—  
The grass so little has to do,  
I wish I were the hay!

## X

A little road not made of man,  
Enabled of the eye,  
Accessible to thill of bee,  
Or cart of butterfly.

If town it have, beyond itself,  
'T is that I cannot say;  
I only sigh,—no vehicle  
Bears me along that way.

## XI. SUMMER SHOWER

A drop fell on the apple tree,  
Another on the roof;  
A half a dozen kissed the eaves,  
And made the gables laugh.

A few went out to help the brook,  
That went to help the sea.  
Myself conjectured, Were they pearls,  
What necklaces could be!

The dust replaced in hoisted roads,  
The birds jocosely sung;  
The sunshine threw his hat away,  
The orchards spangles hung.

The breezes brought dejected lutes,  
And bathed them in the glee;  
The East put out a single flag,  
And signed the fête away.



## XII. PSALM OF THE DAY

A something in a summer's day,  
As slow her flambeaux burn away,  
Which solemnizes me.

A something in a summer's noon,—  
An azure depth, a wordless tune,  
Transcending ecstasy.

And still within a summer's night  
A something so transporting bright,  
I clap my hands to see;

Then veil my too inspecting face,  
Lest such a subtle, shimmering grace  
Flutter too far for me.

The wizard-fingers never rest,  
The purple brook within the breast  
Still chafes its narrow bed;

Still rears the East her amber flag,  
Guides still the sun along the crag  
His caravan of red,

Like flowers that heard the tale of dews,  
But never deemed the dripping prize  
Awaited their low brows;

Or bees, that thought the summer's name  
Some rumor of delirium  
No summer could for them;

Or Arctic creature, dimly stirred  
By tropic hint,—some travelled bird  
Imported to the wood;

Or wind's bright signal to the ear,  
Making that homely and severe,  
Contented, known, before

The heaven unexpected came,  
To lives that thought their worshipping  
A too presumptuous psalm.

### XIII. THE SEA OF SUNSET

This is the land the sunset washes,  
These are the banks of the Yellow Sea;  
Where it rose, or whither it rushes,  
These are the western mystery!

Night after night her purple traffic  
Strews the landing with opal bales;  
Merchantmen poise upon horizons,  
Dip, and vanish with fairy sails.

### XIV. PURPLE CLOVER

There is a flower that bees prefer,  
And butterflies desire;  
To gain the purple democrat  
The humming-birds aspire.

And whatsoever insect pass,  
A honey bears away  
Proportioned to his several dearth  
And her capacity.

Her face is rounder than the moon,  
And ruddier than the gown  
Of orchis in the pasture,  
Or rhododendron worn.

She doth not wait for June;  
Before the world is green  
Her sturdy little countenance  
Against the wind is seen,

Contending with the grass,  
Near kinsman to herself,  
For privilege of sod and sun,  
Sweet litigants for life.

And when the hills are full,  
And newer fashions blow,  
Doth not retract a single spice  
For pang of jealousy.

Her public is the noon,  
Her providence the sun,  
Her progress by the bee proclaimed  
In sovereign, swerveless tune.

The bravest of the host,  
Surrendering the last,  
Nor even of defeat aware  
When cancelled by the frost.

## XV. THE BEE

Like trains of cars on tracks of plush  
I hear the level bee:  
A jar across the flowers goes,  
Their velvet masonry

Withstands until the sweet assault  
Their chivalry consumes,  
While he, victorious, tilts away  
To vanquish other blooms.

His feet are shod with gauze,  
His helmet is of gold;  
His breast, a single onyx  
With chrysoprase, inlaid.

His labor is a chant,  
His idleness a tune;  
Oh, for a bee's experience  
Of clovers and of noon!

## XVI

Presentiment is that long shadow on the lawn  
Indicative that suns go down;  
The notice to the startled grass  
That darkness is about to pass.

## XVII

As children bid the guest good-night,  
And then reluctant turn,  
My flowers raise their pretty lips,  
Then put their nightgowns on.

As children caper when they wake,  
Merry that it is morn,  
My flowers from a hundred cribs  
Will peep, and prance again.

## XVIII

Angels in the early morning  
May be seen the dew among,  
Stooping, plucking, smiling, flying:  
Do the buds to them belong?

Angels when the sun is hottest  
May be seen the sands among,  
Stooping, plucking, sighing, flying;  
Parched the flowers they bear along.



## XIX

So bashful when I spied her,  
So pretty, so ashamed!  
So hidden in her leaflets,  
Lest anybody find;

So breathless till I passed her,  
So helpless when I turned  
And bore her, struggling, blushing,  
Her simple haunts beyond!

For whom I robbed the dingle,  
For whom betrayed the dell,  
Many will doubtless ask me,  
But I shall never tell!

## XX. TWO WORLDS

It makes no difference abroad,  
The seasons fit the same,  
The mornings blossom into noons,  
And split their pods of flame.

Wild-flowers kindle in the woods,  
The brooks brag all the day;  
No blackbird bates his jargoning  
For passing Calvary.

*Auto-da-fé* and judgment  
Are nothing to the bee;  
His separation from his rose  
To him seems misery.



## XXI. THE MOUNTAIN

The mountain sat upon the plain  
In his eternal chair,  
His observation omnifold,  
His inquest everywhere.

The seasons prayed around his knees,  
Like children round a sire:  
Grandfather of the days is he,  
Of dawn the ancestor.

## XXII. A DAY

I'll tell you how the sun rose,—  
A ribbon at a time.  
The steeples swam in amethyst,  
The news like squirrels ran.

The hills untied their bonnets,  
The bobolinks begun.  
Then I said softly to myself,  
"That must have been the sun!"

. . . . .

But how he set, I know not.  
There seemed a purple stile  
Which little yellow boys and girls  
Were climbing all the while

Till when they reached the other side,  
A dominie in gray  
Put gently up the evening bars,  
And led the flock away.

## XXIII

The butterfly's assumption-gown,  
In chrysoprase apartments hung,  
This afternoon put on.

How condescending to descend,  
And be of buttercups the friend  
In a New England town!

## XXIV. THE WIND

Of all the sounds despatched abroad,  
There's not a charge to me  
Like that old measure in the boughs,  
That phraseless melody

The wind does, working like a hand  
Whose fingers brush the sky,  
Then quiver down, with tufts of tune  
Permitted gods and me.

When winds go round and round in bands,  
And thrum upon the door,  
And birds take places overhead,  
To bear them orchestra,

I crave him grace, of summer boughs,  
If such an outcast be,  
He never heard that fleshless chant  
Rise solemn in the tree,

As if some caravan of sound  
On deserts, in the sky,  
Had broken rank,  
Then knit, and passed  
In seamless company.

## XXV. DEATH AND LIFE

Apparently with no surprise  
To any happy flower,  
The frost beheads it at its play  
In accidental power.  
The blond assassin passes on,  
The sun proceeds unmoved  
To measure off another day  
For an approving God.

## XXVI

'T was later when the summer went  
Than when the cricket came,  
And yet we knew that gentle clock  
Meant nought but going home.

'T was sooner when the cricket went  
Than when the winter came,  
Yet that pathetic pendulum  
Keeps esoteric time.

## XXVII. INDIAN SUMMER

These are the days when birds come back,  
A very few, a bird or two,  
To take a backward look.

These are the days when skies put on  
The old, old sophistries of June,—  
A blue and gold mistake.

Oh, fraud that cannot cheat the bee,  
Almost thy plausibility  
Induces my belief,

Till ranks of seeds their witness bear,  
And softly through the altered air  
Hurries a timid leaf!

Oh, sacrament of summer days,  
Oh, last communion in the haze,  
Permit a child to join,

Thy sacred emblems to partake,  
Thy consecrated bread to break,  
Taste thine immortal wine!

## XXVIII. AUTUMN

The morns are meeker than they were,  
The nuts are getting brown;  
The berry's cheek is plumper,  
The rose is out of town.

The maple wears a gayer scarf,  
The field a scarlet gown.  
Lest I should be old-fashioned,  
I'll put a trinket on.

## XXIX. BECLOUDED

The sky is low, the clouds are mean,  
A travelling flake of snow  
Across a barn or through a rut  
Debates if it will go.

A narrow wind complains all day  
How some one treated him;  
Nature, like us, is sometimes caught  
Without her diadem.

### XXX. THE HEMLOCK

I think the hemlock likes to stand  
Upon a marge of snow;  
It suits his own austerity,  
And satisfies an awe

That men must slake in wilderness,  
Or in the desert cloy,—  
An instinct for the hoar, the bald,  
Lapland's necessity.

The hemlock's nature thrives on cold;  
The gnash of northern winds  
Is sweetest nutriment to him,  
His best Norwegian wines.

To satin races he is nought;  
But children on the Don  
Beneath his tabernacles play,  
And Dnieper wrestlers run.



### XXXI

There's a certain slant of light,  
On winter afternoons,  
That oppresses, like the weight  
Of cathedral tunes.

Heavenly hurt it gives us;  
We can find no scar,  
But internal difference  
Where the meanings are.

None may teach it anything,  
'T is the seal, despair,—  
An imperial affliction  
Sent us of the air.

When it comes, the landscape listens,  
Shadows hold their breath;  
When it goes, 't is like the distance  
On the look of death.

IV  
TIME AND ETERNITY



# I

One dignity delays for all,  
One mitred afternoon.  
None can avoid this purple,  
None evade this crown.

Coach it insures, and footmen,  
Chamber and state and throng;  
Bells, also, in the village,  
As we ride grand along.

What dignified attendants,  
What service when we pause!  
How loyally at parting  
Their hundred hats they raise!

How pomp surpassing ermine,  
When simple you and I  
Present our meek escutcheon,  
And claim the rank to die!

## II. TOO LATE

Delayed till she had ceased to know,  
Delayed till in its vest of snow  
    Her loving bosom lay.  
An hour behind the fleeting breath,  
Later by just an hour than death,—  
    Oh, lagging yesterday!

Could she have guessed that it would be;  
Could but a crier of the glee  
    Have climbed the distant hill;  
Had not the bliss so slow a pace,—  
Who knows but this surrendered face  
    Were undefeated still?

Oh, if there may departing be  
Any forgot by victory  
    In her imperial round,  
Show them this meek appalled thing,  
That could not stop to be a king,  
    Doubtful if it be crowned!

### III. ASTRA CASTRA

Departed to the judgment,  
A mighty afternoon;  
Great clouds like ushers leaning,  
Creation looking on.

The flesh surrendered, cancelled,  
The bodiless begun;  
Two worlds, like audiences, disperse  
And leave the soul alone.

### IV

Safe in their alabaster chambers,  
Untouched by morning and untouched by noon,  
Sleep the meek members of the resurrection,  
Rafter of satin, and roof of stone.

Light laughs the breeze in her castle of sunshine;  
Babbles the bee in a stolid ear;  
Pipe the sweet birds in ignorant cadence,—  
Ah, what sagacity perished here!

Grand go the years in the crescent above them;  
Worlds scoop their arcs, and firmaments row,  
Diadems drop and Doges surrender,  
Soundless as dots on a disk of snow.

## V

On this long storm the rainbow rose,  
On this late morn the sun;  
The clouds, like listless elephants,  
Horizons straggled down.

The birds rose smiling in their nests,  
The gales indeed were done;  
Alas! how heedless were the eyes  
On whom the summer shone!

The quiet nonchalance of death  
No daybreak can bestir;  
The slow archangel's syllables  
Must awaken her.

## VI. FROM THE CHRYSALIS

My cocoon tightens, colors tease,  
I'm feeling for the air;  
A dim capacity for wings  
Degrades the dress I wear.

A power of butterfly must be  
The aptitude to fly,  
Meadows of majesty concedes  
And easy sweeps of sky.

So I must baffle at the hint  
And cipher at the sign,  
And make much blunder, if at last  
I take the clew divine.



## VII. SETTING SAIL

Exultation is the going  
Of an inland soul to sea,—  
Past the houses, past the headlands,  
Into deep eternity!

Bred as we, among the mountains,  
Can the sailor understand  
The divine intoxication  
Of the first league out from land?

## VIII

Look back on time with kindly eyes,  
He doubtless did his best;  
How softly sinks his trembling sun  
In human nature's west!

## IX

A train went through a burial gate,  
A bird broke forth and sang,  
And trilled, and quivered, and shook his throat  
Till all the churchyard rang;

And then adjusted his little notes,  
And bowed and sang again.  
Doubtless, he thought it meet of him  
To say good-by to men.

## X

I died for beauty, but was scarce  
Adjusted in the tomb,  
When one who died for truth was lain  
In an adjoining room.

He questioned softly why I failed?  
"For beauty," I replied.  
"And I for truth,—the two are one;  
We brethren are," he said.

And so, as kinsmen met a night,  
We talked between the rooms,  
Until the moss had reached our lips,  
And covered up our names.

## XI. "TROUBLED ABOUT MANY THINGS"

How many times these low feet staggered,  
Only the soldered mouth can tell;  
Try! can you stir the awful rivet?  
Try! can you lift the hasps of steel?

Stroke the cool forehead, hot so often,  
Lift, if you can, the listless hair;  
Handle the adamantine fingers  
Never a thimble more shall wear.

Buzz the dull flies on the chamber window;  
Brave shines the sun through the freckled pane;  
Fearless the cobweb swings from the ceiling—  
Indolent housewife, in daisies lain!

## XII. REAL

I like a look of agony,  
Because I know it's true;  
Men do not sham convulsion,  
Nor simulate a throe.

The eyes glaze once, and that is death.  
Impossible to feign  
The beads upon the forehead  
By homely anguish strung.

## XIII. THE FUNERAL

That short, potential stir  
That each can make but once,  
That bustle so illustrious  
'T is almost consequence,

Is the *éclat* of death.  
Oh, thou unknown renown  
That not a beggar would accept,  
Had he the power to spurn!



## XIV

I went to thank her,  
But she slept;  
Her bed a funnelled stone,  
With nosegays at the head and foot,  
That travellers had thrown,

Who went to thank her;  
But she slept.  
'T was short to cross the sea  
To look upon her like, alive,  
But turning back 't was slow.

## XV

I've seen a dying eye  
Run round and round a room  
In search of something, as it seemed,  
Then cloudier become;  
And then, obscure with fog,  
And then be soldered down,  
Without disclosing what it be,  
'T were blessed to have seen.



## XVI. REFUGE

The clouds their backs together laid,  
The north begun to push,  
The forests galloped till they fell,  
The lightning skipped like mice;  
The thunder crumbled like a stuff—  
How good to be safe in tombs,  
Where nature's temper cannot reach,  
Nor vengeance ever comes!

## XVII

I never saw a moor,  
I never saw the sea;  
Yet know I how the heather looks,  
And what a wave must be.

I never spoke with God,  
Nor visited in heaven;  
Yet certain am I of the spot  
As if the chart were given.

## XVIII. PLAYMATES

God permits industrious angels  
Afternoons to play.  
I met one,—forgot my school-mates,  
All, for him, straightway.

God calls home the angels promptly  
At the setting sun;  
I missed mine. How dreary marbles,  
After playing Crown!

## XIX

To know just how he suffered would be dear;  
To know if any human eyes were near  
To whom he could intrust his wavering gaze,  
Until it settled firm on Paradise.

To know if he was patient, part content,  
Was dying as he thought, or different;  
Was it a pleasant day to die,  
And did the sunshine face his way?

What was his furthest mind, of home, or God,  
Or what the distant say  
At news that he ceased human nature  
On such a day?

And wishes, had he any?  
Just his sigh, accented,  
Had been legible to me.  
And was he confident until  
Ill fluttered out in everlasting well?

And if he spoke, what name was best,  
What first,  
What one broke off with  
At the drowsiest?

Was he afraid, or tranquil?  
Might he know  
How conscious consciousness could grow,  
Till love that was, and love too blest to be,  
Meet—and the junction be Eternity?

## XX

The last night that she lived,  
It was a common night,  
Except the dying; this to us  
Made nature different.

We noticed smallest things,—  
Things overlooked before,  
By this great light upon our **minds**  
Italicized, as 't were.

That others could exist  
While she must finish quite,  
A jealousy for her arose  
So nearly infinite.

We waited while she passed;  
It was a narrow time,  
Too jostled were our souls to **speak**,  
At length the notice came.

She mentioned, and forgot;  
Then lightly as a reed  
Bent to the water, shivered **scarce**,  
Consented, and was dead.

And we, we placed the hair,  
And drew the head erect;  
And then an awful leisure **was**,  
Our faith to regulate.

## XXI. THE FIRST LESSON

Not in this world to see his face  
Sounds long, until I read the place  
Where this is said to be  
But just the primer to a life  
Unopened, rare, upon the shelf,  
Clasped yet to him and me.

And yet, my primer suits me so  
I would not choose a book to know  
Than that, be sweeter wise;  
Might some one else so learned be,  
And leave me just my A B C,  
Himself could have the skies.

## XXII

The bustle in a house  
The morning after death  
Is solemnest of industries  
Enacted upon earth,—

The sweeping up the heart,  
And putting love away  
We shall not want to use again  
Until eternity.

### XXIII

I reason, earth is short,  
And anguish absolute.  
And many hurt;  
But what of that?

I reason, we could die:  
The best vitality  
Cannot excel decay;  
But what of that?

I reason that in heaven  
Somehow, it will be even,  
Some new equation given;  
But what of that?

### XXIV

Afraid? Of whom am I afraid?  
Not death; for who is he?  
The porter of my father's lodge  
As much abasheth me.

Of life? 'T were odd I fear a thing  
That comprehendeth me  
In one or more existences  
At Deity's decree.

Of resurrection? Is the east  
Afraid to trust the morn  
With her fastidious forehead?  
As soon impeach my crown!

## XXV. DYING

The sun kept setting, setting still;  
No hue of afternoon  
Upon the village I perceived,—  
From house to house 't was noon.

The dusk kept dropping, dropping still;  
No dew upon the grass,  
But only on my forehead stopped,  
And wandered in my face.

My feet kept drowsing, drowsing still,  
My fingers were awake;  
Yet why so little sound myself  
Unto my seeming make?

How well I knew the light before!  
I could not see it now.  
'T is dying, I am doing; but  
I'm not afraid to know.

## XXVI

Two swimmers wrestled on the spar  
Until the morning sun,  
When one turned smiling to the land.  
O God, the other one!

The stray ships passing spied a face  
Upon the waters borne,  
With eyes in death still begging raised,  
And hands beseeching thrown.



## XXVII. THE CHARIOT

Because I could not stop for Death,  
He kindly stopped for me;  
The carriage held but just ourselves  
And Immortality.

We slowly drove, he knew no haste,  
And I had put away  
My labor, and my leisure too,  
For his civility.

We passed the school where children played,  
Their lessons scarcely done;  
We passed the fields of gazing grain,  
We passed the setting sun.

We paused before a house that seemed  
A swelling of the ground;  
The roof was scarcely visible,  
The cornice but a mound.

Since then 't is centuries; but each  
Feels shorter than the day  
I first surmised the horses' heads  
Were toward eternity.

## XXVIII

She went as quiet as the dew  
From a familiar flower.  
Not like the dew did she return  
At the accustomed hour!

She dropt as softly as a star  
From out my summer's eve;  
Less skilful than Leverrier  
It's sorer to believe!



## XXIX. RESURGAM

At last to be identified!  
At last, the lamps upon thy side,  
The rest of life to see!  
Past midnight, past the morning star!  
Past sunrise! Ah! what leagues there are  
Between our feet and day!

## XXX

Except to heaven, she is nought;  
Except for angels, lone;  
Except to some wide-wandering bee,  
A flower superfluous blown;

Except for winds, provincial;  
Except by butterflies,  
Unnoticed as a single dew  
That on the acre lies.

The smallest housewife in the grass,  
Yet take her from the lawn,  
And somebody has lost the face  
That made existence home!

XXXI

Death is a dialogue between  
The spirit and the dust.  
"Dissolve," says Death. The Spirit, "Sir,  
I have another trust."

Death doubts it, argues from the ground.  
The Spirit turns away,  
Just laying off, for evidence,  
An overcoat of clay.

XXXII

It was too late for man,  
But early yet for God;  
Creation impotent to help,  
But prayer remained our side.

How excellent the heaven,  
When earth cannot be had;  
How hospitable, then, the face  
Of our old neighbor, God!

### XXXIII. ALONG THE POTOMAC

When I was small, a woman died.  
To-day her only boy  
Went up from the Potomac,  
His face all victory,

To look at her; how slowly  
The seasons must have turned  
Till bullets clipt an angle,  
And he passed quickly round!

If pride shall be in Paradise  
I never can decide;  
Of their imperial conduct,  
No person testified.

But proud in apparition,  
That woman and her boy  
Pass back and forth before my brain,  
As ever in the sky.



#### XXXIV

The daisy follows soft the sun,  
And when his golden walk is done,  
Sits shyly at his feet.  
He, waking, finds the flower near.  
“Wherefore, marauder, art thou here?  
“Because, sir, love is sweet!”

We are the flower, Thou the sun!  
Forgive us, if as days decline,  
We nearer steal to Thee,—  
Enamoured of the parting west,  
The peace, the flight, the amethyst,  
Night’s possibility!

## XXXV. EMANCIPATION

No rack can torture me,  
My soul's at liberty.  
Behind this mortal bone  
There knits a bolder one

You cannot prick with saw,  
Nor rend with scymitar.  
Two bodies therefore be;  
Bind one, and one will flee.

The eagle of his nest  
No casier divest  
And gain the sky,  
Than mayest thou,

Except thyself may be  
Thine enemy;  
Captivity is consciousness,  
So's liberty.

### XXXVI. LOST

I lost a world the other day.  
Has anybody found?  
You'll know it by the row of stars  
Around its forehead bound.

A rich man might not notice it;  
Yet to my frugal eye  
Of more esteem than ducats.  
Oh, find it, sir, for me!

### XXXVII

If I should n't be alive  
When the robins come,  
Give the one in red cravat  
A memorial crumb.

If I could n't thank you,  
Being just asleep,  
You will know I'm trying  
With my granite lip!

## XXXVIII

Sleep is supposed to be,  
By souls of sanity,  
The shutting of the eye.

Sleep is the station grand  
Down which on either hand  
The hosts of witness stand!

Morn is supposed to be,  
By people of degree,  
The breaking of the day.

Morning has not occurred!  
That shall aurora be  
East of eternity;

One with the banner gay,  
One in the red array,—  
That is the break of day.



### XXXIX

I shall know why, when time is over,  
And I have ceased to wonder why;  
Christ will explain each separate anguish  
In the fair schoolroom of the sky.

He will tell me what Peter promised,  
And I, for wonder at his woe,  
I shall forget the drop of anguish  
That scalds me now, that scalds me now.

### XL

I never lost as much but twice,  
And that was in the sod;  
Twice have I stood a beggar  
Before the door of God!

Angels, twice descending,  
Reimbursed my store.  
Burglar, banker, father,  
I am poor once more!

# POEMS

SECOND SERIES

*My nosegays are for captives;  
Dim, long-expectant eyes,  
Fingers denied the plucking,  
Patient till paradise.*

*To such, if they should whisper  
Of morning and the moor,  
They bear no other errand,  
And I, no other prayer.*

## PREFACE

THE eagerness with which the first volume of Emily Dickinson's poems has been read shows very clearly that all our alleged modern artificiality does not prevent a prompt appreciation of the qualities of directness and simplicity in approaching the greatest themes,—life and love and death. That "irresistible needle-touch," as one of her best critics has called it, piercing at once the very core of a thought, has found a response as wide and sympathetic as it has been unexpected even to those who knew best her compelling power. This second volume, while open to the same criticism as to form with its predecessor, shows also the same shining beauties.

Although Emily Dickinson had been in the habit of sending occasional poems to friends and correspondents, the full extent of her writing was by no means imagined by them. Her friend "H. H." must at least have suspected it, for in a letter dated 5th September, 1884, she wrote:—

MY DEAR FRIEND,—What portfolios full of verses you must have! It is a cruel wrong to your "day and generation" that you will not give them light.

If such a thing should happen as that I should outlive you, I wish you would make me your literary legatee and executor. Surely after you are what is called "dead" you will be willing that the poor ghosts you have left behind should be cheered and pleased by your verses, will you not? You ought to be. I do not think we have a right to withhold from the world a

word or a thought any more than a *deed* which might help a single soul. . . .

Truly yours,

HELEN JACKSON.

The "portfolios" were found, shortly after Emily Dickinson's death, by her sister and only surviving housemate. Most of the poems had been carefully copied on sheets of note-paper, and tied in little fascicules, each of six or eight sheets. While many of them bear evidence of having been thrown off at white heat, still more had received thoughtful revision. There is the frequent addition of rather perplexing foot-notes, affording large choice of words and phrases. And in the copies which she sent to friends, sometimes one form, sometimes another, is found to have been used. Without important exception, her friends have generously placed at the disposal of the Editors any poems they had received from her; and these have given the obvious advantage of comparison among several renderings of the same verse.

To what further rigorous pruning her verses would have been subjected had she published them herself, we cannot know. They should be regarded in many cases as merely the first strong and suggestive sketches of an artist, intended to be embodied at some time in the finished picture.

Emily Dickinson appears to have written her first poems in the winter of 1862. In a letter to one of the present Editors the April following, she says, "I made no verse, but one or two, until this winter."

The handwriting was at first somewhat like the delicate, running Italian hand of our elder gentlewomen; but as she advanced in breadth of thought, it grew bolder and more abrupt, until in her latest years each letter stood distinct and separate from its fellows. In most of her poems, particularly the later ones, everything by way of punctuation was discarded, except

numerous dashes; and all important words began with capitals. The effect of a page of her more recent manuscript is exceedingly quaint and strong. The fac-simile given in the present volume is from one of the earlier transition periods. Although there is nowhere a date, the handwriting makes it possible to arrange the poems with general chronologic accuracy.

As a rule, the verses were without titles; but "A Country Burial," "A Thunder-Storm," "The Humming-Bird," and a few others were named by their author, frequently at the end,—sometimes only in the accompanying note, if sent to a friend.

The variation of readings, with the fact that she often wrote in pencil and not always clearly, have at times thrown a good deal of responsibility upon her Editors. But all interference not absolutely inevitable has been avoided. The very roughness of her own rendering is part of herself, and not lightly to be touched; for it seems in many cases that she intentionally avoided the smoother and more usual rhymes.

Like impressionist pictures, or Wagner's rugged music, the very absence of conventional form challenges attention. In Emily Dickinson's exacting hands, the especial, intrinsic fitness of a particular order of words might not be sacrificed to anything virtually extrinsic; and her verses all show a strange cadence of inner rhythmical music. Lines are always daringly constructed, and the "thought-rhyme" appears frequently,—appealing, indeed, to an unrecognized sense more elusive than hearing.

Emily Dickinson scrutinized everything with clear-eyed frankness. Every subject was proper ground for legitimate study, even the sombre facts of death and burial, and the unknown life beyond. She touches these themes sometimes lightly, sometimes almost humorously, more often with weird and peculiar power; but she is never by any chance frivolous or trivial. And while, as one critic has said, she may exhibit toward God "an Emersonian self-possession," it was because she

looked upon all life with a candor as unprejudiced as it is rare.

She had tried society and the world, and found them lacking. She was not an invalid, and she lived in seclusion from no love-disappointment. Her life was the normal blossoming of a nature introspective to a high degree, whose best thought could not exist in pretence.

Storm, wind, the wild March sky, sunsets and dawns; the birds, and bees, butterflies and flowers of her garden, with a few trusted human friends, were sufficient companionship. The coming of the first robin was a jubilee beyond crowning of monarch or birthday of pope; the first red leaf hurrying through "the altered air," an epoch. Immortality was close about her; and while never morbid or melancholy, she lived in its presence.

MABEL LOOMIS TODD

*Amherst, Massachusetts,  
August, 1891.*

**I**  
**LIFE**



## I

I'm nobody! Who are you?  
Are you nobody, too?  
Then there's a pair of us—don't tell!  
They'd banish us, you know.

How dreary to be somebody!  
How public, like a frog  
To tell your name the livelong day  
To an admiring bog!



## II

I bring an unaccustomed wine  
To lips long parching, next to mine,  
And summon them to drink.

Crackling with fever, they essay;  
I turn my brimming eyes away,  
And come next hour to look.

The hands still hug the tardy glass;  
The lips I would have cooled, alas!  
Are so superfluous cold,

I would as soon attempt to warm  
The bosoms where the frost has lain  
Ages beneath the mould.

Some other thirsty there may be  
To whom this would have pointed me  
Had it remained to speak.

And so I always bear the cup  
If, haply, mine may be the drop  
Some pilgrim thirst to slake,—

If, haply, any say to me,  
“Unto the little, unto me,”  
When I at last awake.

### III

The nearest dream recedes, unrealized.  
The heaven we chase  
Like the June bee  
Before the school-boy  
Invites the race;  
Stoops to an easy clover—  
Dips—evades—teases—deploys;  
Then to the royal clouds

Lifts his light pinnace  
Heedless of the boy  
Staring, bewildered, at the mocking sky.

Homesick for steadfast honey,  
Ah! the bee flies not  
That brews that rare variety.

#### IV

We play at paste,  
Till qualified for pearl,  
Then drop the paste,  
And deem ourself a fool.  
The shapes, though, were similar,  
And our new hands  
Learned gem-tactics  
Practising sands.

#### V

I found the phrase to every thought  
I ever had, but one;  
And that defies me,—as a hand  
Did try to chalk the sun

To races nurtured in the dark;—  
How would your own begin?  
Can blaze be done in cochineal,  
Or noon in mazarin?

## VI. HOPE

Hope is the thing with feathers  
That perches in the soul,  
And sings the tune without the words,  
And never stops at all,

And sweetest in the gale is heard;  
And sore must be the storm  
That could abash the little bird  
That kept so many warm.

I've heard it in the chillest land,  
And on the strangest sea;  
Yet, never, in extremity,  
It asked a crumb of me.

## VII. THE WHITE HEAT

Dare you see a soul at the white heat?  
Then crouch within the door.  
Red is the fire's common tint;  
But when the vivid ore

Has sated flame's conditions,  
Its quivering substance plays  
Without a color but the light  
Of unanointed blaze.

Least village boasts its blacksmith,  
Whose anvil's even din  
Stands symbol for the finer forge  
That soundless tugs within,

Refining these impatient ores  
With hammer and with blaze,  
Until the designated light  
Repudiate the forge.

## VIII. TRIUMPHANT

Who never lost, are unprepared  
A coronet to find;  
Who never thirsted, flagons  
And cooling tamarind.

Who never climbed the weary league—  
Can such a foot explore  
The purple territories  
On Pizarro's shore?

How many legions overcome?  
The emperor will say.  
How many colors taken  
On Revolution Day?

How many bullets bearest?  
The royal scar hast thou?  
Angels, write "Promoted"  
On this soldier's brow!

## IX. THE TEST

I can wade grief,  
Whole pools of it,—  
I'm used to that.  
But the least push of joy  
Breaks up my feet,  
And I tip—drunken.  
Let no pebble smile,  
'T was the new liquor,—  
That was all!

Power is only pain,  
Stranded, through discipline,  
Till weights will hang.  
Give balm to giants,  
And they'll wilt, like men.  
Give Himmaleh,—  
They'll carry him!

## X. ESCAPE

I never hear the word "escape"  
Without a quicker blood,  
A sudden expectation,  
A flying attitude.

I never hear of prisons broad  
By soldiers battered down,  
But I tug childish at my bars,—  
Only to fail again!

## XI. COMPENSATION

For each ecstatic instant  
We must an anguish pay  
In keen and quivering ratio  
To the ecstasy.

For each beloved hour  
Sharp pittances of years,  
Bitter contested farthings  
And coffers heaped with tears.

## XII. THE MARTYRS

Through the straight pass of suffering  
The martyrs even trod,  
Their feet upon temptation,  
Their faces upon God.

A stately, shriven company;  
Convulsion playing round,  
Harmless as streaks of meteor  
Upon a planet's bound.

Their faith the everlasting troth;  
Their expectation fair;  
The needle to the north degree  
Wades so, through polar air.



### XIII. A PRAYER

I meant to have but modest needs,  
Such as content, and heaven;  
Within my income these could lie,  
And life and I keep even.

But since the last included both,  
It would suffice my prayer  
But just for one to stipulate,  
And grace would grant the pair.

And so, upon this wise I prayed,—  
Great Spirit, give to me  
A heaven not so large as yours,  
But large enough for me.

A smile suffused Jehovah's face;  
The cherubim withdrew;  
Grave saints stole out to look at me,  
And showed their dimples, too.

I left the place with all my might,—  
My prayer away I threw;  
The quiet ages picked it up,  
And Judgment twinkled, too,

That one so honest be extant  
As take the tale for true  
That "Whatsoever you shall ask,  
Itself be given you."

But I, grown shrewder, scan the skies  
With a suspicious air,—  
As children, swindled for the first,  
All swindlers be, infer.



#### XIV

The thought beneath so slight a film  
Is more distinctly seen,—  
As laces just reveal the surge,  
Or mists the Apennine.

## XV

The soul unto itself  
Is an imperial friend,—  
Or the most agonizing spy  
An enemy could send.

Secure against its own,  
No treason it can fear;  
Itself its sovereign, of itself  
The soul should stand in awe.

## XVI

Surgeons must be very careful  
When they take the knife!  
Underneath their fine incisions  
Stirs the culprit,—Life!

## XVII. THE RAILWAY TRAIN

I like to see it lap the miles,  
And lick the valleys up,  
And stop to feed itself at tanks;  
And then, prodigious, step

Around a pile of mountains,  
And, supercilious, peer  
In shanties by the sides of roads;  
And then a quarry pare

To fit its sides, and crawl between,  
Complaining all the while  
In horrid, hooting stanza;  
Then chase itself down hill

And neigh like Boanerges;  
Then, punctual as a star,  
Stop—docile and omnipotent—  
At its own stable door.

### XVIII. THE SHOW

The show is not the show,  
But they that go.  
Menagerie to me  
My neighbor be.  
Fair play—  
Both went to see.

### XIX

Delight becomes pictorial  
When viewed through pain,—  
More fair, because impossible  
That any gain.

The mountain at a given distance  
In amber lies;  
Approached, the amber flits a little,—  
And that's the skies!

## XX

A thought went up my mind to-day  
That I have had before,  
But did not finish,—some way back,  
I could not fix the year,

Nor where it went, nor why it came  
The second time to me,  
Nor definitely what it was,  
Have I the art to say.

But somewhere in my soul, I know  
I've met the thing before;  
It just reminded me—'t was all—  
And came my way no more.

## XXI

Is Heaven a physician?  
They say that He can heal;  
But medicine posthumous  
Is unavailable.

Is Heaven an exchequer?  
They speak of what we owe;  
But that negotiation  
I'm not a party to.

## XXII. THE RETURN

Though I get home how late, how late!  
So I get home, 't will compensate.  
Better will be the ecstasy  
That they have done expecting me,  
When, night descending, dumb and dark,  
They hear my unexpected knock.  
Transporting must the moment be,  
Brewed from decades of agony!

To think just how the fire will burn,  
Just how long-cheated eyes will turn  
To wonder what myself will say,  
And what itself will say to me,  
Beguiles the centuries of way!



### XXIII

A poor torn heart, a tattered heart,  
That sat it down to rest,  
Nor noticed that the ebbing day  
Flowed silver to the west,  
Nor noticed night did soft descend  
Nor constellation burn,  
Intent upon the vision  
Of latitudes unknown.

The angels, happening that way,  
This dusty heart espied;  
Tenderly took it from toil  
And carried it to God.  
There,—sandals for the barefoot;  
There,—gathered from the gales,  
Do the blue havens by the hand  
Lead the wandering sails.

## XXIV. TOO MUCH

I should have been too glad, I see,  
Too lifted for the scant degree  
Of life's penurious round;  
My little circuit would have shamed  
This new circumference, have blamed  
The homelier time behind.

I should have been too saved, I see,  
Too rescued; fear too dim to me  
That I could spell the prayer  
I knew so perfect yesterday,—  
That scalding one, "Sabachthani,"  
Recited fluent here.

Earth would have been too much, I see,  
And heaven not enough for me;  
I should have had the joy  
Without the fear to justify,—  
The palm without the Calvary;  
So, Saviour, crucify.

Defeat whets victory, they say;  
The reefs in old Gethsemane  
Endear the shore beyond.  
'T is beggars banquets best define;  
'T is thirsting vitalizes wine,—  
Faith faints to understand.



## XXV. SHIPWRECK

It tossed and tossed,—  
A little brig I knew,—  
O'ertook by blast,  
It spun and spun,  
And groped delirious, for morn.

It slipped and slipped,  
As one that drunken stepped;  
Its white foot tripped,  
Then dropped from sight.

Ah, brig, good-night  
To crew and you;  
The ocean's heart too smooth, too blue,  
To break for you.

## XXVI

Victory comes late,  
And is held low to freezing lips  
Too rapt with frost  
To take it.  
How sweet it would have tasted,  
Just a drop!  
Was God so economical?  
His table's spread too high for us  
Unless we dine on tip-toe.  
Crumbs fit such little mouths,  
Cherries suit robins;  
The eagle's golden breakfast  
Strangles them.  
God keeps his oath to sparrows,  
Who of little love  
Know how to starve!

## XXVII. ENOUGH

God gave a loaf to every bird,  
But just a crumb to me;  
I dare not eat it, though I starve,—  
My poignant luxury  
To own it, touch it, prove the feat  
That made the pellet mine,—  
Too happy in my sparrow chance  
For ampler coveting.

It might be famine all around,  
I could not miss an ear,  
Such plenty smiles upon my board,  
My garner shows so fair.  
I wonder how the rich may feel,—  
An Indiaman—an Earl?  
I deem that I with but a crumb  
Am sovereign of them all.

### XXVIII

Experiment to me  
Is every one I meet.  
If it contain a kernel?  
The figure of a nut

Presents upon a tree,  
Equally plausibly;  
But meat within is requisite,  
To squirrels and to me.

## XXIX. MY COUNTRY'S WARDROBE

My country need not change her gown,  
Her triple suit as sweet  
As when 't was cut at Lexington,  
And first pronounced "a fit."

Great Britain disapproves "the stars;"  
Disparagement discreet,—  
There's something in their attitude  
That taunts her bayonet.

## XXX

Faith is a fine invention  
For gentlemen who see;  
But microscopes are prudent  
In an emergency!

## XXXI

Except the heaven had come so near,  
So seemed to choose my door,  
The distance would not haunt me so;  
I had not hoped before.

But just to hear the grace depart  
I never thought to see,  
Afflicts me with a double loss;  
'T is lost, and lost to me.

## XXXII

Portraits are to daily faces  
As an evening west  
To a fine, pedantic sunshine  
In a satin vest.



## XXXIII. THE DUEL

I took my power in my hand  
And went against the world;  
'T was not so much as David had,  
But I was twice as bold.

I aimed my pebble, but myself  
Was all the one that fell.  
Was it Goliath was too large,  
Or only I too small?

## XXXIV

A shady friend for torrid days  
Is easier to find  
Than one of higher temperature  
For frigid hour of mind.

The vane a little to the east  
Scares muslin souls away;  
If broadcloth breasts are firmer  
Than those of organdy,

Who is to blame? The weaver?  
Ah! the bewildering thread!  
The tapestries of paradise  
So notelessly are made!

## XXXV. THE GOAL

Each life converges to some centre  
Expressed or still;  
Exists in every human nature  
A goal,

Admitted scarcely to itself, it may be,  
Too fair  
For credibility's temerity  
To dare.

Adored with caution, as a brittle heaven,  
To reach  
Were hopeless as the rainbow's raiment  
To touch,

Yet persevered toward, surer for the distance;  
How high  
Unto the saints' slow diligence  
The sky!

Ungained, it may be, by a life's low venture,  
But then,  
Eternity enables the endeavoring  
Again.

### XXXVI. SIGHT

Before I got my eye put out,  
I liked as well to see  
As other creatures that have eyes,  
And know no other way.

But were it told to me, to-day,  
That I might have the sky  
For mine, I tell you that my heart  
Would split, for size of me.

The meadows mine, the mountains mine,—  
All forests, stintless stars,  
As much of noon as I could take  
Between my finite eyes.

The motions of the dipping birds,  
The lightning's jointed road,  
For mine to look at when I liked,—  
The news would strike me dead!

So, safer, guess, with just my soul  
Upon the window-pane  
Where other creatures put their eyes,  
Incautious of the sun.

### XXXVII

Talk with prudence to a beggar  
Of 'Potosi' and the mines!  
Reverently to the hungry  
Of your viands and your wines!

Cautious, hint to any captive  
You have passed enfranchised feet!  
Anecdotes of air in dungeons  
Have sometimes proved deadly sweet!

### XXXVIII. THE PREACHER

He preached upon "breadth" till it argued  
    him narrow,—  
The broad are too broad to define;  
And of "truth" until it proclaimed him a liar,—  
The truth never flaunted a sign.

Simplicity fled from his counterfeit presence  
As gold the pyrites would shun.  
What confusion would cover the innocent Jesus  
To meet so enabled a man!

### XXXIX

Good night! which put the candle out?  
A jealous zephyr, not a doubt.  
    Ah! friend, you little knew  
How long at that celestial wick  
The angels labored diligent;  
    Extinguished, now, for you!

It might have been the lighthouse spark  
Some sailor, rowing in the dark,  
    Had importuned to see!  
It might have been the waning lamp  
That lit the drummer from the camp  
    To purer reveille!

## XL

When I hoped I feared,  
Since I hoped I dared;  
Everywhere alone  
As a church remain;  
Spectre cannot harm,  
Serpent cannot charm;  
He deposes doom,  
Who hath suffered him.

## XLI. DEED

A deed knocks first at thought,  
And then it knocks at will.  
That is the manufacturing spot,  
And will at home and well.

It then goes out an act,  
Or is entombed so still  
That only to the ear of God  
Its doom is audible.

## XLII. TIME'S LESSON

Mine enemy is growing old,—  
I have at last revenge.  
The palate of the hate departs;  
If any would avenge,—

Let him be quick, the viand flits,  
It is a faded meat.  
Anger as soon as fed is dead;  
'T is starving makes it fat.



## XLIII. REMORSE

Remorse is memory awake,  
Her companies astir,—  
A presence of departed acts  
At window and at door.

It's past set down before the soul,  
And lighted with a match,  
Perusal to facilitate  
Of its condensed despatch.

Remorse is cureless,—the disease  
Not even God can heal;  
For 't is his institution,—  
The complement of hell.

#### XLIV. THE SHELTER

The body grows outside,—  
The more convenient way,—  
That if the spirit like to hide,  
Its temple stands away

Ajar, secure, inviting;  
It never did betray  
The soul that asked its shelter  
In timid honesty.

#### XLV

Undue significance a starving man attaches  
To food  
Far off; he sighs, and therefore hopeless,  
And therefore good.

Partaken, it relieves indeed, but proves us  
That spices fly  
In the receipt. It was the distance  
Was savory.

## XLVI

Heart not so heavy as mine,  
Wending late home,  
As it passed my window  
Whistled itself a tune,—

A careless snatch, a ballad,  
A ditty of the street;  
Yet to my irritated ear  
An anodyne so sweet,

It was as if a bobolink,  
Sauntering this way,  
Carolled and mused and carolled,  
Then bubbled slow away.

It was as if a chirping brook  
Upon a toilsome way  
Set bleeding feet to minuets  
Without the knowing why.

To-morrow, night will come again,  
Weary, perhaps, and sore.  
Ah, bugle, by my window,  
I pray you stroll once more!

## XLVII

I many times thought peace had come,  
When peace was far away;  
As wrecked men deem they sight the land  
At centre of the sea,

And struggle slacker, but to prove,  
As hopelessly as I,  
How many the fictitious shores  
Before the harbor lie.

## XLVIII

Unto my books so good to turn  
Far ends of tired days;  
It half endears the abstinence,  
And pain is missed in praise.

As flavors cheer retarded guests  
With banquetings to be,  
So spices stimulate the time  
Till my small library.

It may be wilderness without,  
Far feet of failing men,  
But holiday excludes the night,  
And it is bells within.

I thank these kinsmen of the shelf;  
Their countenances bland  
Enamour in prospective,  
And satisfy, obtained.

### XLIX

This merit hath the worst,—  
It cannot be again.  
When Fate hath taunted last  
And thrown her furthest stone,

The maimed may pause and breathe,  
And glance securely round.  
The deer invites no longer  
Than it eludes the hound.

## L. HUNGER

I had been hungry all the years;  
My noon had come, to dine;  
I, trembling, drew the table near,  
And touched the curious wine.

'T was this on tables I had seen,  
When turning, hungry, lone,  
I looked in windows, for the wealth  
I could not hope to own.

I did not know the ample bread,  
'T was so unlike the crumb  
The birds and I had often shared  
In Nature's dining-room.

The plenty hurt me, 't was so new,—  
Myself felt ill and odd,  
As berry of a mountain bush  
Transplanted to the road.

Nor was I hungry; so I found  
That hunger was a way  
Of persons outside windows,  
The entering takes away.

## LI

I gained it so,  
By climbing slow,  
By catching at the twigs that grow  
Between the bliss and me.  
It hung so high,  
As well the sky  
Attempt by strategy.

I said I gained it,—  
This was all.  
Look, how I clutch it,  
Lest it fall,  
And I a pauper go;  
Unfitted by an instant's grace  
For the contented beggar's face  
I wore an hour ago.

## LII

To learn the transport by the pain,  
As blind men learn the sun;  
To die of thirst, suspecting  
That brooks in meadows run;

To stay the homesick, homesick feet  
Upon a foreign shore  
Haunted by native lands, the while,  
And blue, beloved air—

This is the sovereign anguish,  
This, the signal woe!  
These are the patient laureates  
Whose voices, trained below,

Ascend in ceaseless carol,  
Inaudible, indeed,  
To us, the duller scholars  
Of the mysterious bard!

### LIII. RETURNING

I years had been from home,  
And now, before the door,  
I dared not open, lest a face  
I never saw before

Stare vacant into mine  
And ask my business there.  
My business,—just a life I left,  
Was such still dwelling there?

I fumbled at my nerve,  
I scanned the windows near;  
The silence like an ocean rolled,  
And broke against my ear.

I laughed a wooden laugh  
That I could fear a door,  
Who danger and the dead had faced,  
But never quaked before.

I fitted to the latch  
My hand, with trembling care,  
Lest back the awful door should spring,  
And leave me standing there.

I moved my fingers off  
As cautiously as glass,  
And held my ears, and like a thief  
Fled gasping from the house.



#### LIV. PRAYER

Prayer is the little implement  
Through which men reach  
Where presence is denied them.  
They fling their speech

By means of it in God's ear;  
If then He hear,  
This sums the apparatus  
Comprised in prayer.

## LV

I know that he exists  
Somewhere, in silence.  
He has hid his rare life  
From our gross eyes.

'T is an instant's play,  
'T is a fond ambush,  
Just to make bliss  
Earn her own surprise!

But should the play  
Prove piercing earnest,  
Should the glee glaze  
In death's stiff stare,

Would not the fun  
Look too expensive?  
Would not the jest  
Have crawled too far?



## LVI. MELODIES UNHEARD

Musicians wrestle everywhere:  
All day, among the crowded air,  
    I hear the silver strife;  
And—waking long before the dawn—  
Such transport breaks upon the town  
    I think it that “new life!”

It is not bird, it has no nest;  
Nor band, in brass and scarlet dressed,  
    Nor tambourine, nor man;  
It is not hymn from pulpit read,—  
The morning stars the treble led  
    On time’s first afternoon!

Some say it is the spheres at play!  
Some say that bright majority  
    Of vanished dames and men!  
Some think it service in the place  
Where we, with late, celestial face,  
    Please God, shall ascertain!

## LVII. CALLED BACK

Just lost when I was saved!  
Just felt the world go by!  
Just girt me for the onset with eternity,  
When breath blew back,  
And on the other side  
I heard recede the disappointed tide!

Therefore, as one returned, I feel,  
Odd secrets of the line to tell!  
Some sailor, skirting foreign shores,  
Some pale reporter from the awful doors  
Before the seal!

Next time, to stay!  
Next time, the things to see  
By ear unheard,  
Unscrutinized by eye.

Next time, to tarry,  
While the ages steal,—  
Slow tramp the centuries,  
And the cycles wheel.



II  
LOVE



## I. CHOICE

Of all the souls that stand create  
I have elected one.  
When sense from spirit files away,  
And subterfuge is done;

When that which is and that which was  
Apart, intrinsic, stand,  
And this brief tragedy of flesh  
Is shifted like a sand;

When figures show their royal front  
And mists are carved away,—  
Behold the atom I preferred  
To all the lists of clay!

## II

I have no life but this,  
To lead it here;  
Nor any death, but lest  
Dispelled from there;

Nor tie to earths to come,  
Nor action new,  
Except through this extent,  
The realm of you.

### III

Your riches taught me poverty.  
Myself a millionaire  
In little wealths,—as girls could boast,—  
Till broad as Buenos Ayre,

You drifted your dominions  
A different Peru;  
And I esteemed all poverty,  
For life's estate with you.

Of mines I little know, myself,  
But just the names of gems,—  
The colors of the commonest;  
And scarce of diadems

So much that, did I meet the queen,  
Her glory I should know:  
But this must be a different wealth,  
To miss it beggars so.

I'm sure 't is India all day  
To those who look on you  
Without a stint, without a blame,—  
Might I but be the Jew!

I'm sure it is Golconda,  
Beyond my power to deem,—  
To have a smile for mine each day,  
How better than a gem!

At least, it solaces to know  
That there exists a gold,  
Although I prove it just in time  
Its distance to behold!

It's far, far treasure to surmise,  
And estimate the pearl  
That slipped my simple fingers through  
While just a girl at school!

#### IV. THE CONTRACT

I gave myself to him,  
And took himself for pay.  
The solemn contract of a life  
Was ratified this way.

The wealth might disappoint,  
Myself a poorer prove  
Than this great purchaser suspect,  
The daily own of Love

Depreciate the vision;  
But, till the merchant buy,  
Still fable, in the isles of spice,  
The subtle cargoes lie.

At least, 't is mutual risk,—  
Some found it mutual gain;  
Sweet debt of Life,—each night to owe,  
Insolvent, every noon.



## V. THE LETTER

“Going to him! Happy letter! Tell him—  
Tell him the page I didn’t write;  
Tell him I only said the syntax,  
And left the verb and the pronoun out.  
Tell him just how the fingers hurried,  
Then how they waded, slow, slow, slow;  
And then you wished you had eyes in your pages,  
So you could see what moved them so.

“Tell him it wasn’t a practised writer,  
You guessed, from the way the sentence toiled;  
You could hear the bodice tug, behind you,  
As if it held but the might of a child;  
You almost pitied it, you, it worked so.  
Tell him— No, you may quibble there,  
For it would split his heart to know it,  
And then you and I were silenter.

“Tell him night finished before we finished,  
And the old clock kept neighing ‘day!’  
And you got sleepy and begged to be ended—  
What could it hinder so, to say?  
Tell him just how she sealed you, cautious,  
But if he ask where you are hid  
Until to-morrow,—happy letter!  
Gesture, coquette, and shake your head!”

## VI

The way I read a letter 's this:  
'T is first I lock the door,  
And push it with my fingers next,  
For transport it be sure.

And then I go the furthest off  
To counteract a knock;  
Then draw my little letter forth  
And softly pick its lock.

Then, glancing narrow at the wall,  
And narrow at the floor,  
For firm conviction of a mouse  
Not exorcised before,

Peruse how infinite I am  
To—no one that you know!  
And sigh for lack of heaven,—but not  
The heaven the creeds bestow.



## VII

Wild nights! Wild nights!  
Were I with thee,  
Wild nights should be  
Our luxury!

Futile the winds  
To a heart in port,—  
Done with the compass,  
Done with the chart.

Rowing in Eden!  
Ah! the sea!  
Might I but moor  
To-night in thee!

## VIII. AT HOME

The night was wide, and furnished scant  
With but a single star,  
That often as a cloud it met  
Blew out itself for fear.

The wind pursued the little bush,  
And drove away the leaves  
November left; then clambered up  
And fretted in the eaves.

No squirrel went abroad;  
A dog's belated feet  
Like intermittent plush were heard  
Adown the empty street.

To feel if blinds be fast,  
And closer to the fire  
Her little rocking-chair to draw,  
And shiver for the poor,

The housewife's gentle task.  
"How pleasanter," said she  
Unto the sofa opposite,  
"The sleet than May—no thee!"

## IX. POSSESSION

Did the harebell loose her girdle  
To the lover bee,  
Would the bee the harebell hallow  
Much as formerly?

Did the paradise, persuaded,  
Yield her moat of pearl,  
Would the Eden be an Eden,  
Or the earl an earl?

## X

A charm invests a face  
Imperfectly beheld,—  
The lady dare not lift her veil  
For fear it be dispelled.

But peers beyond her mesh,  
And wishes, and denies,—  
Lest interview annul a want  
That image satisfies.

## XI. THE LOVERS

The rose did caper on her cheek,  
Her bodice rose and fell,  
Her pretty speech, like drunken men,  
Did stagger pitiful.

Her fingers fumbled at her work,—  
Her needle would not go;  
What ailed so smart a little maid  
It puzzled me to know,

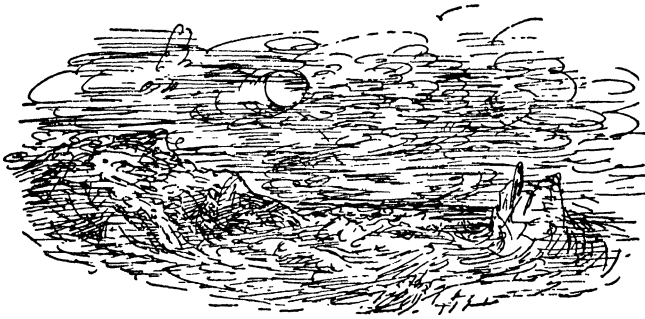
Till opposite I spied a cheek  
That bore another rose;  
Just opposite, another speech  
That like the drunkard goes;

A vest that, like the bodice, danced  
To the immortal tune,—  
Till those two troubled little clocks  
Ticked softly into one.

## XII

In lands I never saw, they say,  
Immortal Alps look down,  
Whose bonnets touch the firmament,  
Whose sandals touch the town,—

Meek at whose everlasting feet  
A myriad daisies play.  
Which, sir, are you, and which am I,  
Upon an August day?



### XIII

The moon is distant from the sea,  
And yet with amber hands  
She leads him, docile as a boy,  
Along appointed sands.

He never misses a degree;  
Obedient to her eye,  
He comes just so far toward the town,  
Just so far goes away.

Oh, Signor, thine the amber hand,  
And mine the distant sea,—  
Obedient to the least command  
Thine eyes impose on me.

## XIV

He put the belt around my life,—  
I heard the buckle snap,  
And turned away, imperial,  
My lifetime folding up  
Deliberate, as a duke would do  
A kingdom's title-deed,—  
Henceforth a dedicated sort,  
A member of the cloud.

Yet not too far to come at call,  
And do the little toils  
That make the circuit of the rest,  
And deal occasional smiles  
To lives that stoop to notice mine  
And kindly ask it in,—  
Whose invitation, knew you not  
For whom I must decline?

## XV. THE LOST JEWEL

I held a jewel in my fingers  
And went to sleep.  
The day was warm, and winds were prosy;  
I said: "T will keep."

I woke and chid my honest fingers,—  
The gem was gone;  
And now an amethyst remembrance  
Is all I own.

## XVI

What if I say I shall not wait?  
What if I burst the fleshly gate  
And pass, escaped, to thee?  
What if I file this mortal off,  
See where it hurt me,—that's enough,—  
And wade in liberty?

They cannot take us any more,—  
Dungeons may call, and guns implore;  
Unmeaning now, to me,  
As laughter was an hour ago,  
Or laces, or a travelling show,  
Or who died yesterday!



III  
NATURE





## I. MOTHER NATURE

Nature, the gentlest mother,  
Impatient of no child,  
The feeblest or the waywardest,—  
Her admonition mild

In forest and the hill  
By traveller is heard,  
Restraining rampant squirrel  
Or too impetuous bird.

How fair her conversation,  
A summer afternoon,—  
Her household, her assembly;  
And when the sun goes down

Her voice among the aisles  
Incites the timid prayer  
Of the minutest cricket,  
The most unworthy flower.

When all the children sleep  
She turns as long away  
As will suffice to light her lamps;  
Then, bending from the sky

With infinite affection  
And infiniter care,  
Her golden finger on her lip,  
Wills silence everywhere.



## II. OUT OF THE MORNING

Will there really be a morning?  
Is there such a thing as day?  
Could I see it from the mountains  
If I were as tall as they?

Has it feet like water-lilies?  
Has it feathers like a bird?  
Is it brought from famous countries  
Of which I have never heard?

Oh, some scholar! Oh, some sailor!  
Oh, some wise man from the skies!  
Please to tell a little pilgrim  
Where the place called morning lies!

### III

At half-past three a single bird  
Unto a silent sky  
Propounded but a single term  
Of cautious melody.

At half-past four, experiment  
Had subjugated test,  
And lo! her silver principle  
Supplanted all the rest.

At half-past seven, element  
Nor implement was seen,  
And place was where the presence was,  
Circumference between.

#### IV. DAY'S PARLOR

The day came slow, till five o'clock,  
Then sprang before the hills  
Like hindered rubies, or the light  
A sudden musket spills.

The purple could not keep the east,  
The sunrise shook from fold,  
Like breadths of topaz, packed a night,  
The lady just unrolled.

The happy winds their timbrels took;  
The birds, in docile rows,  
Arranged themselves around their prince  
(The wind is prince of those).

The orchard sparkled like a Jew,—  
How mighty 't was, to stay  
A guest in this stupendous place,  
The parlor of the day!

## V. THE SUN'S WOOING

The sun just touched the morning;  
The morning, happy thing,  
Supposed that he had come to dwell,  
And life would be all spring.

She felt herself supremer,—  
A raised, ethereal thing;  
Henceforth for her what holiday!  
Meanwhile, her wheeling king

Trailed slow along the orchards  
His haughty, spangled hems,  
Leaving a new necessity,—  
The want of diadems!

The morning fluttered, staggered,  
Felt feebly for her crown,—  
Her unanointed forehead  
Henceforth her only one.

## VI. THE ROBIN

The robin is the one  
That interrupts the morn  
With hurried, few, express reports  
When March is scarcely on.

The robin is the one  
That overflows the noon  
With her cherubic quantity,  
An April but begun.

The robin is the one  
That speechless from her nest  
Submits that home and certainty  
And sanctity are best.

## VII. THE BUTTERFLY'S DAY

From cocoon forth a butterfly  
As lady from her door  
Emerged—a summer afternoon—  
Repairing everywhere,

Without design, that I could trace,  
Except to stray abroad  
On miscellaneous enterprise  
The clovers understood.

Her pretty parasol was seen  
Contracting in a field  
Where men made hay, then struggling hard  
With an opposing cloud,

Where parties, phantom as herself,  
To Nowhere seemed to go  
In purposeless circumference,  
As 't were a tropic show.

And notwithstanding bee that worked,  
And flower that zealous blew,  
This audience of idleness  
Disdained them, from the sky,

Till sundown crept, a steady tide,  
And men that made the hay,  
And afternoon, and butterfly,  
Extinguished in its sea.

## VIII. THE BLUEBIRD

Before you thought of spring,  
Except as a surmise,  
You see, God bless his suddenness,  
A fellow in the skies  
Of independent hues,  
A little weather-worn,  
Inspiring habiliments  
Of indigo and brown.

With specimens of song,  
As if for you to choose,  
Discretion in the interval,  
With gay delays he goes  
To some superior tree  
Without a single leaf,  
And shouts for joy to nobody  
But his seraphic self!

## IX. APRIL

An altered look about the hills;  
A Tyrian light the village fills;  
A wider sunrise in the dawn;  
A deeper twilight on the lawn;  
A print of a vermilion foot;  
A purple finger on the slope;  
A flippant fly upon the pane;  
A spider at his trade again;  
An added strut in chanticleer;  
A flower expected everywhere;  
An axe shrill singing in the woods;  
Fern-odors on untravelled roads,—  
All this, and more I cannot tell,  
A furtive look you know as well,  
And Nicodemus' mystery  
Receives its annual reply.

## X. THE SLEEPING FLOWERS

"Whose are the little beds," I asked,  
"Which in the valleys lie?"  
Some shook their heads, and others smiled,  
And no one made reply.

"Perhaps they did not hear," I said;  
"I will inquire again.  
Whose are the beds, the tiny beds  
So thick upon the plain?"

"T is daisy in the shortest;  
A little farther on,  
Nearest the door to wake the first,  
Little leontodon.

"T is iris, sir, and aster,  
Anemone and bell,  
Batschia in the blanket red,  
And chubby daffodil."

Meanwhile at many cradles  
Her busy foot she plied,  
Humming the quaintest lullaby  
That ever rocked a child.

"Hush! Epigea wakens!  
The crocus stirs her lids,  
Rhodora's cheek is crimson,—  
She's dreaming of the woods."

Then, turning from them, reverent,  
"Their bed-time 't is," she said;  
"The bumble-bees will wake them  
When April woods are red."

## XI. MY ROSE

Pigmy seraphs gone astray,  
Velvet people from Vevay,  
Belles from some lost summer day,  
Bees' exclusive coterie.  
Paris could not lay the fold  
Belted down with emerald;  
Venice could not show a cheek  
Of a tint so lustrous meek.  
Never such an ambushade  
As of brier and leaf displayed  
For my little damask maid.  
I had rather wear her grace  
Than an earl's distinguished face;  
I had rather dwell like her  
Than be Duke of Exeter  
Royalty enough for me  
To subdue the bumble-bee!

## XII. THE ORIOLE'S SECRET

To hear an oriole sing  
May be a common thing,  
Or only a divine.

It is not of the bird  
Who sings the same, unheard,  
As unto crowd.

The fashion of the ear  
Attireth that it hear  
In dun or fair.

So whether it be rune,  
Or whether it be none,  
Is of within;

The "tune is in the tree,"  
The sceptic showeth me;  
"No, sir! In thee!"

### XIII. THE ORIOLE

One of the ones that Midas touched,  
Who failed to touch us all,  
Was that confiding prodigal,  
The blissful oriole.

So drunk, he disavows it  
With badinage divine;  
So dazzling, we mistake him  
For an alighting mine.

A pleader, a dissembler,  
An epicure, a thief,—  
Betimes an oratorio,  
An ecstasy in chief;

The Jesuit of orchards,  
He cheats as he enchants  
Of an entire attar  
For his decamping wants.

The splendor of a Burmah,  
The meteor of birds,  
Departing like a pageant  
Of ballads and of bards.

I never thought that Jason sought  
For any golden fleece;  
But then I am a rural man,  
With thoughts that make for peace.

But if there were a Jason,  
Tradition suffer me  
Behold his lost emolument  
Upon the apple-tree.

#### XIV. IN SHADOW

I dreaded that first robin so,  
But he is mastered now,  
And I'm accustomed to him grown,—  
He hurts a little, though.

I thought if I could only live  
Till that first shout got by,  
Not all pianos in the woods  
Had power to mangle me.

I dared not meet the daffodils,  
For fear their yellow gown  
Would pierce me with a fashion  
So foreign to my own.

I wished the grass would hurry,  
So when 't was time to see,  
He'd be too tall, the tallest one  
Could stretch to look at me.

I could not bear the bees should come,  
I wished they'd stay away  
In those dim countries where they go:  
What word had they for me?

They're here, though; not a creature failed,  
No blossom stayed away  
In gentle deference to me,  
The Queen of Calvary.

Each one salutes me as he goes,  
And I my childish plumes  
Lift, in bereaved acknowledgment  
Of their unthinking drums.

## XV. THE HUMMING-BIRD

A route of evanescence  
With a revolving wheel;  
A resonance of emerald,  
A rush of cochineal;  
And every blossom on the bush  
Adjusts its tumbled head,—  
The mail from Tunis, probably,  
An easy morning's ride.

## XVI. SECRETS

The skies can't keep their secret!  
They tell it to the hills—  
The hills just tell the orchards—  
And they the daffodils!

A bird, by chance, that goes that way  
Soft overheard the whole.  
If I should bribe the little bird,  
Who knows but she would tell?

I think I won't, however,  
It's finer not to know;  
If summer were an axiom,  
What sorcery had snow?

So keep your secret, Father!  
I would not, if I could,  
Know what the sapphire fellows do,  
In your new-fashioned world!

## XVII

Who robbed the woods,  
The trusting woods?  
The unsuspecting trees  
Brought out their burrs and mosses  
His fantasy to please.  
He scanned their trinkets, curious,  
He grasped, he bore away.  
What will the solemn hemlock,  
What will the fir-tree say?

## XVIII. TWO VOYAGERS

Two butterflies went out at noon  
And waltzed above a stream,  
Then stepped straight through the firmament  
And rested on a beam;

And then together bore away  
Upon a shining sea,—  
Though never yet, in any port,  
Their coming mentioned be.

If spoken by the distant bird,  
If met in ether sea  
By frigate or by merchantman,  
Report was not to me.



## XIX. BY THE SEA

I started early, took my dog,  
And visited the sea;  
The mermaids in the basement  
Came out to look at me,

And frigates in the upper floor  
Extended hempen hands,  
Presuming me to be a mouse  
Aground, upon the sands.

But no man moved me till the tide  
Went past my simple shoe,  
And past my apron and my belt,  
And past my bodice too,

And made as he would eat me up  
As wholly as a dew  
Upon a dandelion's sleeve—  
And then I started too.

And he—he followed close behind;  
I felt his silver heel  
Upon my ankle,—then my shoes  
Would overflow with pearl.

Until we met the solid town,  
No man he seemed to know;  
And bowing with a mighty look  
At me, the sea withdrew.

## XX. OLD-FASHIONED

Arcturus is his other name,—  
I'd rather call him star!  
It's so unkind of science  
To go and interfere!

I pull a flower from the woods,—  
A monster with a glass  
Computes the stamens in a breath,  
And has her in a class.

Whereas I took the butterfly  
Aforetime in my hat,  
He sits erect in cabinets,  
The clover-bells forgot.

What once was heaven, is zenith now.  
Where I proposed to go  
When time's brief masquerade was done,  
Is mapped, and charted too!

What if the poles should frisk about  
And stand upon their heads!  
I hope I'm ready for the worst,  
Whatever prank betides!

Perhaps the kingdom of Heaven's changed!  
I hope the children there  
Won't be new-fashioned when I come,  
And laugh at me, and stare!

I hope the father in the skies  
Will lift his little girl,—  
Old-fashioned, naughty, everything,—  
Over the stile of pearl!

## XXI. A TEMPEST

An awful tempest mashed the air,  
The clouds were gaunt and few;  
A black, as of a spectre's cloak,  
Hid heaven and earth from view.

The creatures chuckled on the roofs  
And whistled in the air,  
And shook their fists and gnashed their teeth,  
And swung their frenzied hair.

The morning lit, the birds arose;  
The monster's faded eyes  
Turned slowly to his native coast,  
And peace was Paradise!

## XXII. THE SEA

An everywhere of silver,  
With ropes of sand  
To keep it from effacing  
The track called land.

## XXIII. IN THE GARDEN

A bird came down the walk:  
He did not know I saw;  
He bit an angle-worm in halves  
And ate the fellow, raw.

And then he drank a dew  
From a convenient grass,  
And then hopped sidewise to the wall  
To let a beetle pass.

He glanced with rapid eyes  
That hurried all abroad,—  
They looked like frightened beads, I thought;  
He stirred his velvet head

Like one in danger; cautious,  
I offered him a crumb,  
And he unrolled his feathers  
And rowed him softer home

Than oars divide the ocean,  
Too silver for a seam,  
Or butterflies, off banks of noon,  
Leap, plashless, as they swim.

## XXIV. THE SNAKE

A narrow fellow in the grass  
Occasionally rides;  
You may have met him,—did you not,  
His notice sudden is.

The grass divides as with a comb,  
A spotted shaft is seen;  
And then it closes at your feet  
And opens further on.

He likes a boggy acre,  
A floor too cool for corn.  
Yet when a child, and barefoot,  
I more than once, at morn,

Have passed, I thought, a whip-lash  
Unbraiding in the sun,—  
When, stooping to secure it,  
It wrinkled, and was gone.

Several of nature's people  
I know, and they know me;  
I feel for them a transport  
Of cordiality;

But never met this fellow,  
Attended or alone,  
Without a tighter breathing,  
And zero at the bone.

## XXV. THE MUSHROOM

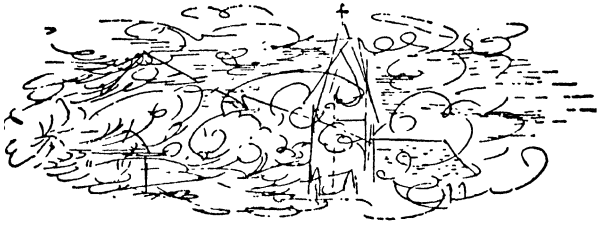
The mushroom is the elf of plants,  
At evening it is not;  
At morning in a truffled hut  
It stops upon a spot

As if it tarried always;  
And yet its whole career  
Is shorter than a snake's delay,  
And fleeter than a tare.

'T is vegetation's juggler,  
The germ of alibi;  
Doth like a bubble antedate,  
And like a bubble hie.

I feel as if the grass were pleased  
To have it intermit;  
The surreptitious scion  
Of summer's circumspect.

Had nature any outcast face,  
Could she a son contemn,  
Had nature an Iscariot,  
That mushroom,—it is him.



## XXVI. THE STORM

There came a wind like a bugle;  
It quivered through the grass,  
And a green chill upon the heat  
So ominous did pass  
We barred the windows and the doors  
As from an emerald ghost;  
The doom's electric moccason  
That very instant passed.  
On a strange mob of panting trees,  
And fences fled away,  
And rivers where the houses ran  
The living looked that day.  
The bell within the steeple wild  
The flying tidings whirled.  
How much can come  
And much can go,  
And yet abide the world!

## XXVII. THE SPIDER

A spider sewed at night  
Without a light  
Upon an arc of white.  
If ruff it was of dame  
Or shroud of gnome,  
Himself, himself inform.  
Of immortality  
His strategy  
Was physiognomy.

## XXVIII

I know a place where summer strives  
With such a practised frost,  
She each year leads her daisies back,  
Recording briefly, "Lost."

But when the south wind stirs the pools  
And struggles in the lanes,  
Her heart misgives her for her vow,  
And she pours soft refrains

Into the lap of adamant,  
And spices, and the dew,  
That stiffens quietly to quartz,  
Upon her amber shoe.

## XXIX

The one that could repeat the summer day  
Were greater than itself, though he  
Minutest of mankind might be.  
And who could reproduce the sun,  
At period of going down—  
The lingering and the stain, I mean—  
When Orient has been outgrown,  
And Occident becomes unknown,  
His name remain.

## XXX. THE WIND'S VISIT

The wind tapped like a tired man,  
And like a host, "Come in,"  
I boldly answered; entered then  
My residence within

A rapid, footless guest,  
To offer whom a chair  
Were as impossible as hand  
A sofa to the air.

No bone had he to bind him,  
His speech was like the push  
Of numerous humming-birds at once  
From a superior bush.

His countenance a billow,  
His fingers, if he pass,  
Let go a music, as of tunes  
Blown tremulous in glass.

He visited, still flitting;  
Then, like a timid man,  
Again he tapped—'t was flurriedly—  
And I became alone.

### XXXI

Nature rarer uses yellow  
Than another hue;  
Saves she all of that for sunsets,—  
Prodigal of blue,

Spending scarlet like a woman,  
Yellow she affords  
Only scantily and selectly,  
Like a lover's words.

## XXXII. GOSSIP

The leaves, like women, interchange  
Sagacious confidence;  
Somewhat of nods, and somewhat of  
Portentous inference,

The parties in both cases  
Enjoining secrecy,—  
Inviolable compact  
To notoriety.

## XXXIII. SIMPLICITY

How happy is the little stone  
That rambles in the road alone,  
And doesn't care about careers,  
And exigencies never fears;  
Whose coat of elemental brown  
A passing universe put on;  
And independent as the sun,  
Associates or glows alone,  
Fulfilling absolute decree  
In casual simplicity.



#### XXXIV. STORM

It sounded as if the streets were running,  
And then the streets stood still.  
Eclipse was all we could see at the window,  
And awe was all we could feel.

By and by the boldest stole out of his covert,  
To see if time was there.  
Nature was in her beryl apron,  
Mixing fresher air.

#### XXXV. THE RAT

The rat is the concisest tenant.  
He pays no rent,—  
Repudiates the obligation,  
On schemes intent.

Balking our wit  
To sound or circumvent,  
Hate cannot harm  
A foe so reticent.

Neither decree  
Prohibits him,  
Lawful as  
Equilibrium.

### XXXVI

Frequently the woods are pink,  
Frequently are brown;  
Frequently the hills undress  
Behind my native town.

Oft a head is crested  
I was wont to see,  
And as oft a cranny  
Where it used to be.

And the earth, they tell me,  
On its axis turned,—  
Wonderful rotation  
By but twelve performed!

## XXXVII. A THUNDER-STORM

The wind begun to rock the grass  
With threatening tunes and low,—  
He flung a menace at the earth,  
A menace at the sky.

The leaves unhooked themselves from trees  
And started all abroad;  
The dust did scoop itself like hands  
And throw away the road.

The wagons quickened on the streets,  
The thunder hurried slow;  
The lightning showed a yellow beak,  
And then a livid claw.

The birds put up the bars to nests,  
The cattle fled to barns;  
There came one drop of giant rain,  
And then, as if the hands

That held the dams had parted hold,  
The waters wrecked the sky,  
But overlooked my father's house,  
Just quartering a tree.

### XXXVIII. WITH FLOWERS

South winds jostle them,  
Bumblebees come,  
Hover, hesitate,  
Drink, and are gone.

Butterflies pause  
On their passage Cashmere;  
I, softly plucking,  
Present them here!

### XXXIX. SUNSET

Where ships of purple gently toss  
On seas of daffodil,  
Fantastic sailors mingle,  
And then—the wharf is still.

XL

She sweeps with many-colored brooms,  
And leaves the shreds behind;  
Oh, housewife in the evening west,  
Come back, and dust the pond!

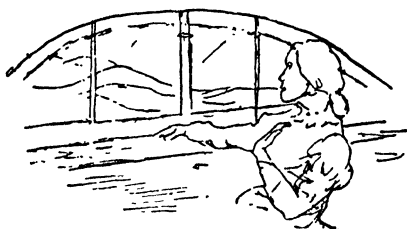
You dropped a purple ravelling in,  
You dropped an amber thread;  
And now you've littered all the East  
With duds of emerald!

And still she plies her spotted brooms,  
And still the aprons fly,  
Till brooms fade softly into stars—  
And then I come away.

XLI

Like mighty footlights burned the red  
At bases of the trees,—  
The far theatricals of day  
Exhibiting to these.

'T was universe that did applaud  
While, chiefest of the crowd,  
Enabled by his royal dress,  
Myself distinguished God.



## XLII. PROBLEMS

Bring me the sunset in a cup,  
Reckon the morning's flagons up,  
    And say how many dew;  
Tell me how far the morning leaps,  
Tell me what time the weaver sleeps  
    Who spun the breadths of blue!

Write me how many notes there be  
In the new robin's ecstasy  
    Among astonished boughs;  
How many trips the tortoise makes,  
How many cups the bee partakes,—  
    The debauchee of dews!

Also, who laid the rainbow's piers,  
Also, who leads the docile spheres  
    By withes of supple blue?  
Whose fingers string the stalactite,  
Who counts the wampum of the night,  
    To see that none is due?

Who built this little Alban house  
And shut the windows down so close  
My spirit cannot see?  
Who'll let me out some gala day,  
With implements to fly away,  
Passing pomposity?

### XLIII. THE JUGGLER OF DAY

Blazing in gold and quenching in purple,  
Leaping like leopards to the sky,  
Then at the feet of the old horizon  
Laying her spotted face, to die;

Stooping as low as the otter's window,  
Touching the roof and tinting the barn,  
Kissing her bonnet to the meadow,—  
And the juggler of day is gone!

### XLIV. MY CRICKET

Farther in summer than the birds,  
Pathetic from the grass,  
A minor nation celebrates  
Its unobtrusive mass.

No ordinance is seen,  
So gradual the grace,  
A pensive custom it becomes,  
Enlarging loneliness.

Antiquiest felt at noon  
When August, burning low,  
Calls forth this spectral canticle,  
Repose to typify.

Remit as yet no grace,  
No furrow on the glow,  
Yet a druidic difference  
Enhances nature now.

#### XLV

As imperceptibly as grief  
The summer lapsed away,—  
Too imperceptible, at last,  
To seem like perfidy.

A quietness distilled,  
As twilight long begun,  
Or Nature, spending with herself  
Sequestered afternoon.

The dusk drew earlier in,  
The morning foreign shone,—  
A courteous, yet harrowing grace,  
As guest who would be gone.

And thus, without a wing,  
Or service of a keel,  
Our summer made her light escape  
Into the beautiful.

## XLVI

It can't be summer,—that got through;  
It's early yet for spring;  
There's that long town of white to cross  
Before the blackbirds sing.

It can't be dying,—it's too rouge,—  
The dead shall go in white.  
So sunset shuts my question down  
With clasps of chrysolite.

## XLVII. SUMMER'S OBSEQUIES

The gentian weaves her fringes,  
The maple's loom is red.  
My departing blossoms  
Obviate parade.

A brief, but patient illness,  
An hour to prepare;  
And one, below this morning,  
Is where the angels are.

It was a short procession,—  
The bobolink was there,  
An aged bee addressed us,  
And then we knelt in prayer.

We trust that she was willing,—  
We ask that we may be.  
Summer, sister, seraph,  
Let us go with thee!

In the name of the bee  
And of the butterfly  
And of the breeze, amen!

#### XLVIII. FRINGED GENTIAN

God made a little gentian;  
It tried to be a rose  
And failed, and all the summer laughed.  
But just before the snows  
There came a purple creature  
That ravished all the hill;  
And summer hid her forehead,  
And mockery was still.  
The frosts were her condition;  
The Tyrian would not come  
Until the North evoked it.  
“Creator! shall I bloom?”

## XLIX. NOVEMBER

Besides the autumn poets sing,  
A few prosaic days  
A little this side of the snow  
And that side of the haze.

A few incisive mornings,  
A few ascetic eves,—  
Gone Mr. Bryant's golden-rod,  
And Mr. Thomson's sheaves.

Still is the bustle in the brook,  
Sealed are the spicy valves;  
Mesmeric fingers softly touch  
The eyes of many elves.

Perhaps a squirrel may remain,  
My sentiments to share.  
Grant me, O Lord, a sunny mind,  
Thy windy will to bear!

## L. THE SNOW

It sifts from leaden sieves,  
It powders all the wood,  
It fills with alabaster wool  
The wrinkles of the road.

It makes an even face  
Of mountain and of plain,—  
Unbroken forehead from the east  
Unto the east again.

It reaches to the fence,  
It wraps it, rail by rail,  
Till it is lost in fleeces;  
It flings a crystal veil

On stump and stack and stem,—  
The summer's empty room,  
Acres of seams where harvests were,  
Recordless, but for them.

It ruffles wrists of posts,  
As ankles of a queen,—  
Then stills its artisans like ghosts,  
Denying they have been.

## LI. THE BLUE JAY

No brigadier throughout the year  
So civic as the jay.  
A neighbor and a warrior too,  
With shrill felicity

Pursuing winds that censure us  
A February day,  
The brother of the universe  
Was never blown away.

The snow and he are intimate;  
I've often seen them play  
When heaven looked upon us all  
With such severity,

I felt apology were due  
To an insulted sky,  
Whose pompous frown was nutriment  
To their temerity.

The pillow of this daring head  
Is pungent evergreens;  
His larder—terse and militant—  
Unknown, refreshing things;

His character a tonic,  
His future a dispute;  
Unfair an immortality  
That leaves this neighbor out.

IV

TIME AND ETERNITY



## I

Let down the bars, O Death!  
The tired flocks come in  
Whose bleating ceases to repeat,  
Whose wandering is done.

Thine is the stillest night,  
Thine the securest fold;  
Too near thou art for seeking thee,  
Too tender to be told.

Going to heaven!  
 I don't know when,  
 Pray do not ask me how,—  
 Indeed, I'm too astonished  
 To think of answering you!  
 Going to heaven!—  
 How dim it sounds!  
 And yet it will be done  
 As sure as flocks go home at night  
 Unto the shepherd's arm!

Perhaps you're going too!  
 Who knows?  
 If you should get there first,  
 Save just a little place for me  
 Close to the two I lost!  
 The smallest "robe" will fit me,  
 And just a bit of "crown;"  
 For you know we do not mind our dress  
 When we are going home.

I'm glad I don't believe it,  
 For it would stop my breath,  
 And I'd like to look a little more  
 At such a curious earth!  
 I am glad they did believe it  
 Whom I have never found  
 Since the mighty autumn afternoon  
 I left them in the ground.



### III

At least to pray is left, is left.  
O Jesus! in the air  
I know not which thy chamber is,—  
I'm knocking everywhere.

Thou stirrest earthquake in the South,  
And maelstrom in the sea;  
Say, Jesus Christ of Nazareth,  
Hast thou no arm for me?

### IV. EPITAPH

Step lightly on this narrow spot!  
The broadest land that grows  
Is not so ample as the breast  
These emerald seams enclose.

Step lofty; for this name is told  
As far as cannon dwell,  
Or flag subsist, or fame export  
Her deathless syllable.

## V

Morns like these we parted;  
Noons like these she rose,  
Fluttering first, then firmer,  
To her fair repose.

Never did she lisp it,  
And 't was not for me;  
She was mute from transport,  
I, from agony!

Till the evening, nearing,  
One the shutters drew—  
Quick! a sharper rustling!  
And this linnet flew!

## VI

A death-blow is a life-blow to some  
Who, till they died, did not alive become;  
Who, had they lived, had died, but when  
They died, vitality begun.



## VII

I read my sentence steadily,  
Reviewed it with my eyes,  
To see that I made no mistake  
In its extremest clause,—

The date, and manner of the shame;  
And then the pious form  
That “God have mercy” on the soul  
The jury voted him.

I made my soul familiar  
With her extremity,  
That at the last it should not be  
A novel agony,

But she and Death, acquainted,  
Meet tranquilly as friends,  
Salute and pass without a hint—  
And there the matter ends.

## VIII

I have not told my garden yet,  
Lest that should conquer me;  
I have not quite the strength now  
To break it to the bee.

I will not name it in the street,  
For shops would stare, that I,  
So shy, so very ignorant,  
Should have the face to die.

The hillsides must not know it,  
Where I have rambled so,  
Nor tell the loving forests  
The day that I shall go,

Nor lisp it at the table,  
Nor heedless by the way  
Hint that within the riddle  
One will walk to-day!

## IX. THE BATTLE-FIELD

They dropped like flakes, they dropped like stars,  
Like petals from a rose,  
When suddenly across the June  
A wind with fingers goes.

They perished in the seamless grass,—  
No eye could find the place;  
But God on his repealless list  
Can summon every face.

## X

The only ghost I ever saw  
Was dressed in mechlin,—so;  
He wore no sandal on his foot,  
And stepped like flakes of snow.  
His gait was soundless, like the bird,  
But rapid, like the roe;  
His fashions quaint, mosaic,  
Or, haply, mistletoe.

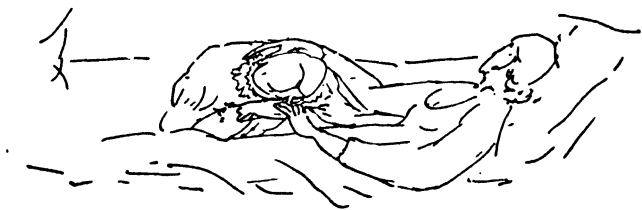
His conversation seldom,  
His laughter like the breeze  
That dies away in dimples  
Among the pensive trees.  
Our interview was transient,—  
Of me, himself was shy;  
And God forbid I look behind  
Since that appalling day!

## XI

Some, too fragile for winter winds,  
The thoughtful grave encloses,—  
Tenderly tucking them in from frost  
Before their feet are cold.

Never the treasures in her nest  
The cautious grave exposes,  
Building where schoolboy dare not look  
And sportsman is not bold.

This covert have all the children  
Early aged, and often cold,—  
Sparrows unnoticed by the Father;  
Lambs for whom time had not a fold.



## XII

As by the dead we love to sit,  
Become so wondrous dear,  
As for the lost we grapple,  
Though all the rest are here,—

In broken mathematics  
We estimate our prize,  
Vast, in its fading ratio,  
To our penurious eyes!

### XIII. MEMORIALS

Death sets a thing significant  
The eye had hurried by,  
Except a perished creature  
Entreat us tenderly

To ponder little workmanships  
In crayon or in wool,  
With "This was last her fingers did,"  
Industrious until

The thimble weighed too heavy,  
The stitches stopped themselves,  
And then 't was put among the dust  
Upon the closet shelves.

A book I have, a friend gave,  
Whose pencil, here and there,  
Had notched the place that pleased him,—  
At rest his fingers are.

Now, when I read, I read not,  
For interrupting tears  
Obliterate the etchings  
Too costly for repairs.

## XIV

I went to heaven,—  
'T was a small town,  
Lit with a ruby,  
Lathed with down.  
Stillter than the fields  
At the full dew,  
Beautiful as pictures  
No man drew.  
People like the moth,  
Of mechlin, frames,  
Duties of gossamer,  
And eider names.  
Almost contented  
I could be  
'Mong such unique  
Society.

## XV

Their height in heaven comforts not,  
Their glory nought to me;  
'T was best imperfect, as it was;  
I'm finite, I can't see.

The house of supposition,  
The glimmering frontier  
That skirts the acres of perhaps,  
To me shows insecure.

The wealth I had contented me;  
If 't was a meaner size,  
Then I had counted it until  
It pleased my narrow eyes

Better than larger values,  
However true their show;  
This timid life of evidence  
Keeps pleading, "I don't know."

## XVI

There is a shame of nobleness  
Confronting sudden pelf,—  
A finer shame of ecstasy  
Convicted of itself.

A best disgrace a brave man feels,  
Acknowledged of the brave,—  
One more "Ye Blessed" to be told;  
But this involves the grave.



## XVII. TRIUMPH

Triumph may be of several kinds.  
There's triumph in the room  
When that old imperator, Death,  
By faith is overcome.

There's triumph of the finer mind  
When truth, affronted long,  
Advances calm to her supreme,  
Her God her only throng.

A triumph when temptation's bribe  
Is slowly handed back,  
One eye upon the heaven renounced  
And one upon the rack.

Severer triumph, by himself  
Experienced, who can pass  
Acquitted from that naked bar,  
Jehovah's countenance!

## XVIII

Pomplous no life can pass away;  
The lowliest career  
To the same pageant wends its way  
As that exalted here.  
How cordial is the mystery!  
The hospitable pall  
A "this way" beckons spaciouly,—  
A miracle for all!



## XIX

I noticed people disappeared,  
When but a little child,—  
Supposed they visited remote,  
Or settled regions wild.

Now know I they both visited  
And settled regions wild,  
But did because they died,—a fact  
Withheld the little child!

## XX. FOLLOWING

I had no cause to be awake,  
My best was gone to sleep,  
And morn a new politeness took,  
And failed to wake them up,

But called the others clear,  
And passed their curtains by.  
Sweet morning, when I over-sleep,  
Knock, recollect, for me!

I looked at sunrise once,  
And then I looked at them,  
And wishfulness in me arose  
For circumstance the same.

'T was such an ample peace,  
It could not hold a sigh,—  
'T was Sabbath with the bells divorced,  
'T was sunset all the day.

So choosing but a gown  
And taking but a prayer,  
The only raiment I should need,  
I struggled, and was there.

## XXI

If anybody's friend be dead,  
It's sharpest of the theme  
The thinking how they walked alive,  
At such and such a time.

Their costume, of a Sunday,  
Some manner of the hair,—  
A prank nobody knew but them,  
Lost, in the sepulchre.

How warm they were on such a day:  
You almost feel the date,  
So short way off it seems; and now,  
They're centuries from that.

How pleased they were at what you said;  
You try to touch the smile,  
And dip your fingers in the frost:  
When was it, can you tell,

You asked the company to tea,  
Acquaintance, just a few,  
And chatted close with this grand thing  
That don't remember you?

Past bows and invitations,  
Past interview, and vow,  
Past what ourselves can estimate,—  
That makes the quick of woe!



## XXII. THE JOURNEY

Our journey had advanced;  
Our feet were almost come  
To that odd fork in Being's road,  
Eternity by term.

Our pace took sudden awe,  
Our feet reluctant led.  
Before were cities, but between,  
The forest of the dead.

Retreat was out of hope,—  
Behind, a sealed route,  
Eternity's white flag before,  
And God at every gate.

### XXIII. A COUNTRY BURIAL

Ample make this bed.  
Make this bed with awe;  
In it wait till judgment break  
Excellent and fair.

Be its mattress straight,  
Be its pillow round;  
Let no sunrise' yellow noise  
Interrupt this ground.

### XXIV. GOING

On such a night, or such a night,  
Would anybody care  
If such a little figure  
Slipped quiet from its chair,

So quiet, oh, how quiet!  
That nobody might know  
But that the little figure  
Rocked softer, to and fro?

On such a dawn, or such a dawn,  
Would anybody sigh  
That such a little figure  
Too sound asleep did lie

For chanticleer to wake it,—  
Or stirring house below,  
Or giddy bird in orchard,  
Or early task to do?

There was a little figure plump  
For every little knoll,  
Busy needles, and spools of thread,  
And trudging feet from school.

Playmates, and holidays, and nuts,  
And visions vast and small.  
Strange that the feet so precious charged  
Should reach so small a goal!

## XXV

Essential oils are wrung:  
The attar from the rose  
Is not expressed by suns alone,  
It is the gift of screws.

The general rose decays;  
But this, in lady's drawer,  
Makes summer when the lady lies  
In ceaseless rosemary.

## XXVI

I lived on dread; to those who know  
The stimulus there is  
In danger, other impetus  
Is numb and vital-less.

As 't were a spur upon the soul,  
A fear will urge it where  
To go without the spectre's aid  
Were challenging despair.

## XXVII

If I should die,  
And you should live,  
And time should gurgle on,  
And morn should beam,  
And noon should burn,  
As it has usual done;  
If birds should build as early,  
And bees as bustling go,—  
One might depart at option  
From enterprise below!  
'T is sweet to know that stocks will stand  
When we with daisies lie,  
That commerce will continue,  
And trades as briskly fly.  
It makes the parting tranquil  
And keeps the soul serene,  
That gentlemen so sprightly  
Conduct the pleasing scene!

## XXVIII. AT LENGTH

Her final summer was it,  
And yet we guessed it not;  
If tenderer industriousness  
Pervaded her, we thought

A further force of life  
Developed from within,—  
When Death lit all the shortness up,  
And made the hurry plain.

We wondered at our blindness,—  
When nothing was to see  
But her Carrara guide-post,—  
At our stupidity,

When, duller than our dulness,  
The busy darling lay,  
So busy was she, finishing,  
So leisurely were we!

## XXIX. GHOSTS

One need not be a chamber to be haunted,  
One need not be a house;  
The brain has corridors surpassing  
Material place.

Far safer, of a midnight meeting  
External ghost,  
Than an interior confronting  
That whiter host.

Far safer through an Abbey gallop,  
The stones achase,  
Than, moonless, one's own self encounter  
In lonesome place.

Ourselves, behind ourselves concealed,  
Should startle most;  
Assassin, hid in our apartment,  
Be horror's least.

The prudent carries a revolver,  
He bolts the door,  
O'erlooking a superior spectre  
More near.



### XXX. VANISHED

She died,—this was the way she died;  
And when her breath was done,  
Took up her simple wardrobe  
And started for the sun.

Her little figure at the gate  
The angels must have spied,  
Since I could never find her  
Upon the mortal side.

### XXXI. PRECEDENCE

Wait till the majesty of Death  
Invests so mean a brow!  
Almost a powdered footman  
Might dare to touch it now!

Wait till in everlasting robes  
This democrat is dressed,  
Then prate about "preferment"  
And "station" and the rest!

Around this quiet courtier  
Obsequious angels wait!  
Full royal is his retinue,  
Full purple is his state!

A lord might dare to lift the hat  
To such a modest clay,  
Since that my Lord, "the Lord of lords"  
Receives unblushingly!

### XXXII. GONE

Went up a year this evening!  
I recollect it well!  
Amid no bells nor bravos  
The bystanders will tell!  
Cheerful, as to the village,  
Tranquil, as to repose,  
Chastened, as to the chapel,  
This humble tourist rose.

Did not talk of returning,  
Alluded to no time  
When, were the gales propitious,  
We might look for him;  
Was grateful for the roses  
In life's diverse bouquet,  
Talked softly of new species  
To pick another day.  
Beguiling thus the wonder,  
The wondrous nearer drew;  
Hands bustled at the moorings—  
The crowd respectful grew.  
Ascended from our vision  
To countenances new!  
A difference, a daisy,  
Is all the rest I knew!

### XXXIII. REQUIEM

Taken from men this morning,  
Carried by men to-day,  
Met by the gods with banners  
Who marshalled her away.

One little maid from playmates,  
One little mind from school,—  
There must be guests in Eden;  
All the rooms are full.

Far as the east from even,  
Dim as the border star,—  
Courtiers quaint, in kingdoms,  
Our departed are.

XXXIV

What inn is this  
Where for the night  
Peculiar traveller comes?  
Who is the landlord?  
Where the maids?  
Behold, what curious rooms!  
No ruddy fires on the hearth,  
No brimming tankards flow.  
Necromancer, landlord,  
Who are these below?

XXXV

It was not death, for I stood up,  
And all the dead lie down;  
It was not night, for all the bells  
Put out their tongues, for noon.

It was not frost, for on my flesh  
I felt siroccos crawl,—  
Nor fire, for just my marble feet  
Could keep a chancel cool.

And yet it tasted like them all;  
The figures I have seen  
Set orderly, for burial,  
Reminded me of mine,

As if my life were shaven  
And fitted to a frame,  
And could not breathe without a key;  
And 't was like midnight, some,

When everything that ticked has stopped.  
And space stares, all around,  
Or grisly frosts, first autumn morns,  
Repeal the beating ground.

But most like chaos,—stopless, cool,—  
Without a chance or spar,  
Or even a report of land  
To justify despair.

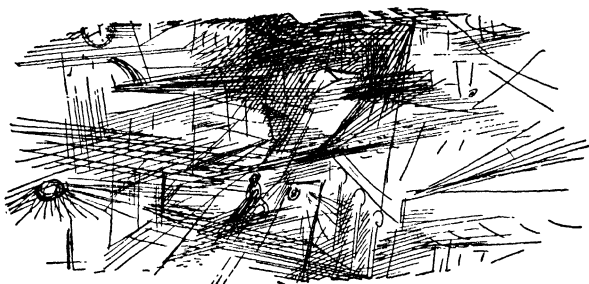
### XXXVI. TILL THE END

I should not dare to leave my friend,  
Because—because if he should die  
While I was gone, and I—too late—  
Should reach the heart that wanted me;

If I should disappoint the eyes  
That hunted, hunted so, to see,  
And could not bear to shut until  
They “noticed” me—they noticed me;

If I should stab the patient faith  
So sure I'd come—so sure I'd come,  
It listening, listening, went to sleep  
Telling my tardy name,—

My heart would wish it broke before,  
Since breaking then, since breaking then,  
Were useless as next morning's sun,  
Where midnight frosts had lain!



### XXXVII. VOID

Great streets of silence led away  
To neighborhoods of pause;  
Here was no notice, no dissent,  
No universe, no laws.

By clocks 't was morning, and for night  
The bells at distance called;  
But epoch had no basis here,  
For period exhaled.

### XXXVIII

A throe upon the features  
A hurry in the breath,  
An ecstasy of parting  
Denominated "Death,"—

An anguish at the mention,  
Which, when to patience grown,  
I've known permission given  
To rejoin its own.

### XXXIX. SAVED!

Of tribulation these are they  
Denoted by the white;  
The spangled gowns, a lesser rank  
Of victors designate.

All these did conquer; but the ones  
Who overcame most times  
Wear nothing commoner than snow,  
No ornament but palms.

Surrender is a sort unknown  
On this superior soil;  
Defeat, an outgrown anguish,  
Remembered as the mile

Our panting ankle barely gained  
When night devoured the road;  
But we stood whispering in the house,  
And all we said was "Saved"!

## XL

I think just how my shape will rise  
When I shall be forgiven,  
Till hair and eyes and timid head  
Are out of sight, in heaven.

I think just how my lips will weigh  
With shapeless, quivering prayer  
That you, so late, consider me,  
The sparrow of your care.

I mind me that of anguish sent,  
Some drifts were moved away  
Before my simple bosom broke,—  
And why not this, if they?

And so, until delirious borne  
I con that thing,—“forgiven,”—  
Till with long fright and longer trust  
I drop my heart, unshriven!

## XLI. THE FORGOTTEN GRAVE

After a hundred years  
Nobody knows the place,—  
Agony, that enacted there,  
Motionless as peace.

Weeds triumphant ranged,  
Strangers strolled and spelled  
At the lone orthography  
Of the elder dead.

Winds of summer fields  
Recollect the way,—  
Instinct picking up the key  
Dropped by memory.



## XLII

Lay this laurel on the one  
Too intrinsic for renown.  
Laurel! veil your deathless tree,—  
Him you chasten, that is he!













