

All these my banners be.
I sow my pageantry
In May—
It rises train by train—
Then sleeps in state again—
My chancel— all the plain
Today.

To lose— if One can find again—
To miss— If one shall meet—
The Burglar cannot rob— then—
The Broker cannot cheat.
So build the hillocks gaily
Thou little spade of mine
Leaving nooks for Daisy
And for Columbine—
You and I the secret
Of the Crocus know—
Let us chant it softly—
“There is no more snow!”

To him who keeps an orchard heart—
The swamps are pink with June.

I had a guinea golden—
 I lost it in the sand—
 And tho' the sum was simple
 And pounds were in the land—

Still, had it such a value
 Unto my frugal eye—
 That when I could not find it—
 I sat me down to sigh.

I had a crimson Robin—
 Who sang full many a day—
 But when the woods were painted,
 He, too, did fly away—

Time brought me other Robins—
 Their ballads were the same—
 Still, for my missing Troubadour—
 I kept the “house at hame.”

I had a star in heaven—
 One “Pleiad” was its name—
 And when I was not heeding,
 It wandered from the same—

And tho' the skies are crowded—
 And all the night ashine—
 I do not care about it—
 Since none of them are mine.

My Story has a moral—
 I have a missing friend—
 “Pleiad” its name, and Robin,
 And guinea in the sand.

And when this mournful ditty—
 Accompanied with tear—
 Shall meet the eye of traitor—
 In country far from here—

Grant that repentance solemn—
 May seize upon his mind—
 And he no consolation—
 Beneath the sun may find.

I robbed the Woods—
The trusting Woods.
The unsuspecting Trees
Brought out their Burs and mosses—
My fantasy to please.
I scanned their trinkets curious—
I grasped— I bore away—
What will the solemn Hemlock—
What will the Oak tree say?

61

Papa above!
Regard a Mouse—
O’erpowered by the Cat!
Reserve within thy Kingdom
A “Mansion” for the Rat!

Snug in seraphic Cupboards
To nibble all the day,
While unsuspecting Cycles
Wheel solemnly away!

Some things that fly there be—
Birds— Hour—
The Bumblebee—
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!

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 eye thy silver mists,
Wherefore, Oh Summer's Day?

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?

Flowers– Well– if anybody
Can the ecstasy define–
Half a transport– half a trouble–
With which flowers humble men:
Anybody find the fountain
From which floods so contra flow–
I will give him all the Daisies
Which upon the hillside blow.

Too much pathos in their faces
For a simple breast like mine–
Butterflies from St. Domingo
Cruising round the purple line–
Have a system of aesthetics–
Far superior to mine.

A fuzzy fellow, without feet,
Yet doth exceeding run!
Of velvet, is his Countenance,
And his Complexion, dun!

Sometime, he dwelleth in the grass,
Sometime, upon a bough,
From which he doth descend in plush
Upon the Passer-by!

All this in summer.
But when winds alarm the Forest Folk,
He taketh Damask Residence
And struts in sewing silk!

Then, finer than a Lady,
Emerges in the spring!
A Feather on each shoulder!
You'd scarce recognize him!

By Men, yclept Caterpillar!
By me! But who am I,
To tell the pretty secret
Of the Butterfly!

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– thro’ 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–

A Burdock- clawed my Gown-
Not Burdock's- blame-
But mine-
Who went too near
The Burdock's Den-

A Bog- affronts my shoe-
What else have Bogs- to do-
The only Trade they know-
The splashing Men!
Ah, pity- then!
'Tis Minnows can despise!
The Elephant's- calm eyes-
Look further on!

We– Bee and I– live by the quaffing–
'Tisn't all Hock– with us–
Life has its Ale–
But it's many a lay of the Dim Burgundy–
We chant– for cheer– when the Wines– fail–

Do we “get drunk”?
Ask the jolly Clovers!
Do we “beat” our “Wife”?
I– never wed–
Bee– pledges his– in minutes– flagons–
Dainty– as the tress– on her deft Head–

While runs the Rhine–
He and I– revel–
First– at the vat– and latest at the Vine–
Noon– our last Cup–
“Found dead”– “of Nectar”–
By a humming Coroner–
In a By-Thyme!

A Bird came down the Walk—
He did not know I saw—
He bit an Angleworm 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 around—
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.

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—
Like Lowly spices, lain to sleep—
Or Spikenards, perishing—

And then, in Sovereign Barns to dwell—
And dream the Days away,
The Grass so little has to do
I wish I were a Hay—

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 be 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 'twere 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 the Sea–

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—

Within my Garden, rides a Bird
Upon a Single Wheel—
Whose spokes a dizzy Music make
As 'twere a travelling Mill—

He never stops, but slackens
Above the Ripest Rose—
Partakes without alighting
And praises as he goes,

Till every Spice is tasted—
And then his Fairy Gig
Reels in remoter atmospheres—
And I rejoin my Dog.

And He and I, perplex us
If positive, 'twere we
Or bore the Garden in the Brain
This Curiosity—

But He, the best Logician,
Refers my clumsy eye—
To just vibrating Blossoms!
An Exquisite Reply!

He parts Himself– like Leaves–
And then– He closes up–
Then stands upon the Bonnet
Of Any Buttercup–

And then He runs against–
And oversets a Rose–
And then does Nothing–
Then away upon a Jib– He goes–

And dangles like a Mote–
Suspended in the Noon–
Uncertain– to return Below–
Or settle in the Moon–

What come of Him– at Night–
The privilege to say
Be limited by Ignorance–
What Come of Him– That Day–

The Frost– possess the World–
In Cabinets– be shown–
A Sepulchre of quaintest Floss–
An Abbey– a Cocoon–

I think I was enchanted
 When first a sombre Girl–
 I read that Foreign Lady–
 The Dark– felt beautiful–

And whether it was noon at night–
 Or only Heaven– at Noon–
 For very Lunacy of Light
 I had not power to tell–

The Bees– became as Butterflies–
 The Butterflies– as Swans–
 Approached– and spurned the narrow Grass–
 And just the meanest Tunes

That Nature murmured to herself
 To keep herself in Cheer–
 I took for Giants– practising
 Titanic Opera–

The Days– to Mighty Metres stepped–
 The Homeliest– adorned
 As if unto a Jubilee
 'Twere suddenly confirmed–

I could not have defined the change–
 Conversion of the Mind
 Like Sanctifying in the Soul–
 Is witnessed– not explained–

'Twas a Divine Insanity–
 The Danger to be Sane
 Should I again experience–
 'Tis Antidote to turn–

To Tomes of solid Witchcraft–
 Magicians be asleep–
 But Magic– hath an Element
 Like Deity– to keep–

The Spider holds a Silver Ball
In unperceived Hands—
And dancing softly to Himself
His Yarn of Pearl— unwinds—

He plies from Nought to Nought
In unsubstantial Trade—
Supplants our Tapestries with His
In half the period—

An Hour to rear supreme
His Continents of Light—
Then dangle from the Housewife's Broom
His Boundaries— forgot—

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 Story—
When Winter shakes the Door—
Till the Children urge—
But the Forty—
Did they come back no more?

Then a softness— suffuses the Story—
And a silence— the Teller's eye—
And the Children— no further question—
And only the Sea— reply—

To my small Hearth His fire came—
And all my House aglow
Did fan and rock with sudden light—
'Twas Sunrise—'twas the Sky—

Impanelled from no Summer brief
With limit of Decay—
'Twas Noon— without the News of Night—
Nay, Nature, it was Day—

You left me— Sire— two Legacies—
A Legacy of Love
A Heavenly Father would suffice
Had He the offer of—

You left me Boundaries of Pain—
Capacious as the Sea—
Between Eternity and Time—
Your Consciousness— and Me—

647

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—
'Tis that— I cannot say—
I only know— no Curricie that rumble there
Bear Me—

Could I but ride indefinite
As doth the Meadow Bee
And visit only where I liked
And No one visit me

And sport all Day with Buttercups
And marry whom I may
And dwell a little everywhere
Or better, run away

With no Police to follow
Or chase Him if He do
Till He should jump Peninsulas
To get away from me—

I said “But just to be a Bee”
Upon a Raft of Air
And row in Nowhere all Day long
And anchor “off the Bar”

What Liberty! So Captives deem
Who tight in Dungeons are.

676

Least Bee that brew—

A Honey's Weight

The Summer multiply—

Content Her smallest fraction help

The Amber Quantity—

The Judge is like the Owl–
I've heard my Father tell–
And Owls do build in Oaks–
So here's an Amber Sill–

That slanted in my Path–
When going to the Barn–
And if it serve You for a House–
Itself is not in vain–

About the price-'tis small–
I only ask a Tune
At Midnight– Let the Owl select
His favorite Refrain.

The Birds reported from the South–
A News express to Me–
A spicy Charge, My little Posts–
But I am deaf– Today–

The Flowers– appealed– a timid Throng–
I reinforced the Door–
Go blossom to the Bees– I said–
And trouble Me– no More–

The Summer Grace, for Notice strove–
Remote– Her best Array–
The Heart– to stimulate the Eye–
Refused too utterly–

At length, a Mourner, like Myself,
She drew away austere–
Her frosts to ponder– then it was–
I recollected Her–

She suffered Me, for I had mourned–
I offered Her no word–
My Witness– was the Crape I bore–
Her– Witness– was Her Dead–

Thenceforward– We– together dwelt–
I never questioned Her–
Our Contract
A Wiser Sympathy–

Deprived of other Banquet,
I entertained Myself—
At first— a scant Nutrition—
An insufficient Loaf—

But grown by slender addings
To so esteemed a Size—
'Tis sumptuous enough for me—
And almost to suffice—

A Robin's famine able—
Red Pilgrim, He and I—
A Berry from our table—
Reserve— for Charity—

The Birds begun at Four o'clock—
Their period for Dawn—
A Music numerous as space—
But neighboring as Noon—

I could not count their Force—
Their Voices did expend
As Brook by Brook bestows itself—
To multiply the Pond.

Their Witnesses were not—
Except occasional man—
In homely industry arrayed—
To overtake the Morn—

Nor was it for applause—
That I could ascertain—
But independent Ecstasy
Of Deity and Men—

By Six, the Flood had done—
No Tumult there had been—
Of Dressing, or Departure—
And yet the Band was gone—

The Sun engrossed the East—
The Day controlled the World—
The Miracle that introduced—
Forgotten, as fulfilled.

She staked her Feathers— Gained an Arc—
Debated— Rose again—
This morn— beyond the estimate
Of Envy, or of Men—

And now, among Circumference—
Her steady Boat be seen—
At home— among the Billows— As
The Bough where she was born—

The Wind begun to knead the Grass—
 As Women do a Dough—
 He Hung a Hand full at the Plain—
 A Hand full at the Sky—
 The Leaves unhooked themselves from Trees—
 And started all abroad—
 The Dust did scoop itself like Hands—
 And throwaway the Road—
 The Wagons quickened on the Street—
 The Thunder gossiped low—
 The Lightning showed a Yellow Head—
 And then a livid Toe—
 The Birds put up the Bars to Nests—
 The Cattle flung to Barns—
 Then 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—

Version I

The Wind begun to rock the Grass
 With threatening Tunes and low—
 He threw 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 threw 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—

Version II

When One has given up One's life—
The parting with the rest
Feels easy, as when Day lets go—
Entirely the West—

The Peaks, that lingered last—
Remain in Her regret—
As scarcely as the Iodine—
Upon the Cataract.

Split the Lark– and you’ll find the Music–
Bulb after Bulb, in Silver rolled–
Scantily dealt to the Summer Morning–
Saved for your Ear when Lutes be old–

Loose the Flood– you shall find it patent–
Gush after Gush, reserved for you–
Scarlet Experiment! Sceptic Thomas!
Now, do you doubt that your Bird was true?

Because the Bee may blameless hum—
For Thee a Bee do I become—
List even unto Me.

Because the Flowers unafraid—
May lift a look on Thine, a Maid—
Alway a Flower would be.

Nor Robins— Robins need not hide
When Thou upon their Crypts intrude—
So Wings bestow on Me—
Or Petals, or a Dower of Buzz
That Bee to ride, or Flower of Furze—
I that way worship Thee.

891

To my quick ear the Leaves– conferred–
The Bushes– they were Bells–
I could not find Privacy
From Nature’s sentinels–

In Cave if I presumed to hide
The Walls– begun to tell–
Creation seemed a mighty Crack–
To make me visible–

927

Absent Place— an April Day—
Daffodils a-blow
Homesick curiosity
To the Souls that snow—

Drift may block within It
Deeper than without—
Daffodil delight but
Him it duplicate—

What shall I do when the Summer troubles—
What, when the Rose is ripe—
What when the Eggs fly off in Music
From the Maple Keep?

What shall I do when the Skies a' chirrup
Drop a Tune on me—
When the Bee hangs all Noon in the Buttercup
What Will become of me?

Oh, when the Squirrel fills His Pockets
And the Berries stare—
How can I bear their jocund Faces
Thou from Here, so far?

'Twouldn't afflict a Robin—
All His Goods have Wings—

I— do not fly, so wherefore
My Perennial Things?

1075

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.

1099

My Cocoon tightens— Colors tease—
I'm feeling for the Air—
A dim capacity for Wings
Demeans the Dress I wear—

A power of Butterfly must be
The Aptitude to fly
Meadows of Majesty implies
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 clue divine—

1177

A prompt- executive Bird is the Jay-
Bold as a Bailiff's Hymn-
Brittle and Brief in quality-
Warrant in every line-

Sitting a Bough like a Brigadier-
Confident and straight-
Much is the mien of him in March-
As a Magistrate-

1198

A soft Sea washed around the House
A Sea of Summer Air
And rose and fell the magic Planks
That sailed without a care—
For Captain was the Butterfly
For Helmsman was the Bee
And an entire universe
For the delighted crew.

The Mushroom is the Elf of Plants—
At Evening, it is not—
At Morning, in a Truffled Hut
It stop 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—

'Tis Vegetation's Juggler—
The Germ of Alibi—
Doth like a Bubble antedate
And like a Bubble, hie—

I feel as if the Grass was pleased
To have it intermit—
This surreptitious Scion
Of Summer's circumspect.

Had Nature any supple Face
Or could she one condemn—
Had Nature an Apostate—
That Mushroom— It is Him!

1338

What tenements of clover
Are fitting for the bee,
What edifices azure
For butterflies and me—

What residences nimble
Arise and evanesce
Without a rhythmic rumor
Or an assaulting guess.

1448

How soft a Caterpillar steps—
I find one on my Hand—
From such a velvet world it comes—
Such pluses at command—

Its soundless travels just arrest—
My slow-terrestrial eye—
Intent upon its own career—
What use has it for me—

1521

The Butterfly upon the Sky,
That doesn't know Its Name
And hasn't any tax to pay
And hasn't any Home—

Is just as high as you and I,
And higher, I believe,
So soar away and never sigh
And that's the way to grieve—

1685

The butterfly obtains
But little sympathy
Though favorably mentioned
In Entomology—

Because he travels freely
And wears a proper coat
The circumspect are certain
That he is dissolute—

Had he the homely scutcheon
Of modest Industry
'Twere better certifying
For Immortality—

High from the earth I heard a bird—
He trod upon the trees
As he esteemed them trifles,
And then he spied a breeze,

And situated softly
Upon a pile of wind
Which in a perturbation
Nature had left behind.

A joyous going fellow
I gathered from his talk
Which both of benediction
And badinage partook.

Without apparent burden
I subsequently learned
He was the faithful father
Of a dependent brood.

And this untoward transport
His remedy for care—
A contrast to our respites.
How different we are!

1775

The earth has many keys—
Where melody is not
Is the unknown peninsula—
Beauty is nature's fact.

But witness for her land,
And witness for her sea,
The cricket is her utmost
Of elegy to me.