

21

We lose— because we win—  
Gamblers— recollecting which  
Toss their dice again!

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!

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 today  
Can tell the definition  
So clear of Victory

As he defeated—dying—  
On whose forbidden ear  
The distant strains of triumph  
Burst agonized and clear!

My friend must be a Bird—  
Because it flies!  
Mortal, my friend must be,  
Because it dies!  
Barbs has it, like a Bee!  
Ah, Curious friend!  
Thou puzzlest me!

A science— so the Savants say,  
“Comparative Anatomy”  
By which a single bone  
Is made a secret to unfold

Of some rare tenant of the mold,  
Else perished in the stone—  
So to the eye prospective led,  
This meekest flower of the mead

Upon a winter’s day,  
Stands representative in gold  
Of Rose and Lily, manifold,  
And countless Butterfly!

A Wounded Deer– leaps highest–  
I’ve heard the Hunter tell–  
’Tis 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!

245

I held a Jewel in my fingers—  
And went to sleep—  
The day was warm, and winds were prosy—  
I said “’Twill keep”—

I woke— and chid my honest fingers,  
The Gem was gone—  
And now, an Amethyst remembrance  
Is all I own—

I know some lives I could miss  
Without a Misery—  
Others— whose instant's wanting—  
Would be Eternity—

The last— a scanty Number—  
'Twould scarcely fill a Two—  
The first— a Gnat's Horizon—  
Could easily outgrow—



It would never be Common– more– I said–  
 Difference– had begun–  
 Many a bitterness– had been–  
 But that old sort– was done–

Or– If it sometime– showed– as 'twill–  
 Upon the Downiest– Morn–  
 Such bliss– had I– for all the years–  
 'Twould give an Easier– pain–

I'd so much joy– I told it– Red–  
 Upon my simple Cheek–  
 I felt it publish– in my Eye–  
 'Twas needless– any speak–

I walked– as wings– my body bore–  
 The feet– I former used–  
 Unnecessary– now to me–  
 As boots– would be– to Birds–

I put my pleasure all abroad–  
 I dealt a word of Gold  
 To every Creature– that I met–  
 And Dowered– all the World–

When– suddenly– my Riches shrank–  
 A Goblin– drank my Dew–  
 My Palaces– dropped tenantless–  
 Myself– was beggared– too–

I clutched at sounds–  
 I groped at shapes–  
 I touched the tops of Films–  
 I felt the Wilderness roll back  
 Along my Golden lines–

The Sackcloth– hangs upon the nail–  
 The Frock I used to wear–  
 But where my moment of Brocade–  
 My– drop– of India?

Why make it doubt- it hurts it so-  
So sick- to guess-  
So strong- to know-  
So brave- upon its little bed  
To tell the very last they said  
Unto itself- and smile- and shake  
For that dear- distant- dangerous- sake-  
But- the instead- the pinching fear  
That something- it did do- or dare-  
Offend the vision- and it flee-  
And They no more remember me-  
Nor ever turn to tell me why-  
Oh, Master, This is Misery-

I am alive– I guess–  
 The Branches on my Hand  
 Are full of Morning Glory–  
 And at my finger’s end–

The Carmine– tingles warm–  
 And if I hold a Glass  
 Across my Mouth– it blurs it–  
 Physician’s– proof of Breath–

I am alive– because  
 I am not in a Room–  
 The Parlor– Commonly– it is–  
 So Visitors may come–

And lean– and view it sidewise–  
 And add “How cold– it grew”–  
 And “Was it conscious– when it stepped  
 In Immortality?”

I am alive– because  
 I do not own a House–  
 Entitled to myself– precise–  
 And fitting no one else–

And marked my Girlhood’s name–  
 So Visitors may know  
 Which Door is mine– and not mistake–  
 And try another Key–

How good– to be alive!  
 How infinite– to be–  
 Alive– two-fold– The Birth I had–  
 And this– besides, in– Thee!

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— long as Ages steal!

I fear a Man of frugal Speech—  
I fear a Silent Man—  
Haranguer— I can overtake—  
Or Babblers— entertain—

But He who weigheth— While the Rest—  
Expend their furthest pound—  
Of this Man— I am wary—  
I fear that He is Grand—

When Bells stop ringing— Church— begins—  
The Positive— of Bells—  
When Cogs— stop— that's Circumference—  
The Ultimate— of Wheels.

A Prison gets to be a friend—  
Between its Ponderous face  
And Ours— a Kinsmanship express—  
And in its narrow Eyes—

We come to look with gratitude—  
For the appointed Beam—  
It deal us— stated as our food—  
And hungered for— the same—

We learn to know the Planks—  
That answer to Our feet—  
So miserable a sound— at first—  
Nor ever now— so sweet—

As plashing in the Pools—  
When Memory was a Boy—  
But a Demurer Circuit—  
A Geometric Joy—

The Posture of the Key—  
That interrupt the Day—  
To Our Endeavor— Not so real—  
The Cheek of Liberty—

As this Phantasm Steel—  
Whose features— Day and Night—  
Are present to us— as Our Own—  
And as escapeless— quite—

The narrow Round— the Stint—  
The slow exchange of Hope—  
For something passiver— Content—  
Too steep for looking up—

The Liberty we knew—  
Avoided— like a Dream—  
Too wide for any Night but Heaven—  
If That— indeed— redeem—

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 Drama in the 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!



They say that "Time assuages"—  
Time never did assuage—  
An actual suffering strengthens  
As Sinews do, with age—

Time is a Test of Trouble—  
But not a Remedy—  
If such it prove, it prove too  
There was no Malady—

You've seen Balloons set– Haven't You?  
So stately they ascend–  
It is as Swans– discarded You,  
For Duties Diamond–

Their Liquid Feet go softly out  
Upon a Sea of Blonde–  
They spurn the Air, as 'twere too mean  
For Creatures so renowned–

Their Ribbons– just beyond the eye–  
They struggle– some– for Breath–  
And yet the Crowd applaud, below–  
They would not encore– Death–

The Gilded Creature strains– and spins–  
Trips frantic in a Tree–  
Tears open her imperial Veins–  
And tumbles in the Sea–

The Crowd– retire with an Oath  
The Dust in Streets– go down–  
And Clerks in Counting Rooms  
Observe– “'Twas only a Balloon”–

My Soul– accused me– And I quailed–  
As Tongues of Diamond had reviled  
All else accused me– and I smiled–  
My Soul– that Morning– was My friend–

Her favor– is the best Disdain  
Toward Artifice of Time– or Men–  
But Her– Disdain–’twere lighter bear–  
A finger of Enamelled Fire–

My Life had stood– a Loaded Gun–  
In Corners– till a Day  
The Owner passed– identified–  
And carried Me away–

And now We roam in Sovereign Woods–  
And now We hunt the Doe–  
And every time I speak for Him–  
The Mountains straight reply–

And do I smile, such cordial light  
Upon the Valley glow–  
It is as a Vesuvian face  
Had let its pleasure through–

And when at Night– Our good Day done–  
I guard My Master's Head–  
'Tis better than the Eider-Duck's  
Deep Pillow– to have shared–

To foe of His– I'm deadly foe–  
None stir the second time–  
On whom I lay a Yellow Eye–  
Or an emphatic Thumb–

Though I than He– may longer live  
He longer must– than I–  
For I have but the power to kill,  
Without– the power to die–

These- saw Visions-  
Latch them softly-  
These- held Dimples-  
Smooth them slow-  
This- addressed departing accents-  
Quick- Sweet Mouth- to miss thee so-

This- We stroked-  
Unnumbered Satin-  
These- we held among our own-  
Fingers of the Slim Aurora-  
Not so arrogant- this Noon-

These- adjust- that ran to meet us-  
Pearl- for Stocking- Pearl for Shoe-  
Paradise- the only Palace  
Fit for Her reception- now-

771

None can experience stint  
Who Bounty– have not known–  
The fact of Famine– could not be  
Except for Fact of Corn–

Want– is a meagre Art  
Acquired by Reverse–  
The Poverty that was not Wealth  
Cannot be Indigence.

807

Expectation– is Contentment–  
Gain– Satiety–  
But Satiety– Conviction  
Of Necessity–

Of an Austere trait in Pleasure–  
Good, without alarm–  
Is a too established Fortune  
Danger– deepens Sum–

The Veins of other Flowers–  
The Scarlet Flowers– are  
Till Nature leisure has for Terms  
As “Branch,” and “Jugular.”

We pass, and she abides.  
We conjugate Her Skill  
While She creates and federates  
Without a syllable.



821

Away from Home are some and I–  
An Emigrant to be  
In a Metropolis of Homes  
Is easy, possibly–

The Habit of a Foreign Sky  
We– difficult– acquire  
As Children, who remain in Face  
The more their Feet retire.

This Consciousness that is aware  
Of Neighbors and the Sun  
Will be the one aware of Death  
And that itself alone

Is traversing the interval  
Experience between  
And most profound experiment  
Appointed unto Men

How adequate unto itself  
Its properties shall be  
Itself unto itself and none  
Shall make discovery.

Adventure most unto itself  
The Soul condemned to be  
Attended by a single Hound  
Its own identity.

Good to hide, and hear 'em hunting—  
Better, to be found,  
If one care to, that is—  
The Fox fits the Hound—

Good to know, and not tell,  
Best, to know and tell,  
Can one find the rare Ear  
Not too dull—

Who occupies this House?  
A Stranger I must judge  
Since No one knows His Circumstance—  
'Tis well the name and age

Are writ upon the Door—  
Or I should fear to pause—  
Where not so much as Honest Dog—  
Approach encourages.

It seems a curious Town—  
Some Houses very old,  
Some— newly raised this Afternoon,  
Were I compelled to build—

It should not be among  
Inhabitants so still—  
But where the Birds assemble—  
And Boys were possible.

Before Myself was born—  
'Twas settled, so they say,  
A Territory for the Ghosts—  
And Squirrels, formerly.

Until a Pioneer, as  
Settlers often do—  
Liking the quiet of the Place—  
Attracted more unto—

And from a Settlement—  
A Capital has grown—  
Distinguished for the gravity—  
Of every Citizen.

The Owner of this House—  
A Stranger He must be—  
Eternity's Acquaintances—  
Are mostly so— to me.

Had I not This, or This, I said,  
Appealing to Myself,  
In moment of prosperity—  
Inadequate were Life—

“Thou hast not Me, nor Me”— it said,  
In Moment of Reverse—  
“And yet Thou art industrious—  
No need— hadst Thou— of us”?

My need— was all I had— I said—  
The need did not reduce—  
Because the food— exterminate—  
The hunger— does not cease—

But diligence— is sharper—  
Proportioned to the Chance—  
To feed upon the Retrograde—  
Enfeebles— the Advance—

Those who have been in the Grave the longest–  
Those who begin Today–  
Equally perish from our Practise–  
Death is the other way–

Foot of the Bold did least attempt it–  
It is the White Exploit–  
Once to achieve annuls the power  
Once to communicate–

I learned– at least– what Home could be–  
 How ignorant I had been  
 Of pretty ways of Covenant–  
 How awkward at the Hymn

Round our new Fireside– but for this–  
 This pattern– of the Way–  
 Whose Memory drowns me, like the Dip  
 Of a Celestial Sea–

What Mornings in our Garden– guessed–  
 What Bees– for us– to hum–  
 With only Birds to interrupt  
 The Ripple of our Theme–

And Task for Both–  
 When Play be done–  
 Your Problem-of the Brain–  
 And mine– some foolisher effect–  
 A Ruffle– or a Tune–

The Afternoons– Together spent–  
 And Twilight– in the Lanes–  
 Some ministry to poorer lives–  
 Seen poorest– thro' our gains–

And then Return– and Night– and Home–

And then away to You– to pass–  
 A new– diviner– care–  
 Till Sunrise take us back to Scene–  
 Transmuted– Vivider–

This seems a Home–  
 And Home is not–  
 But what that Place could be–  
 Afflicts me– as a Setting Sun–  
 Where Dawn– knows how to be–

Crumbling is not an instant's Act  
A fundamental pause  
Dilapidation's processes  
Are organized Decays.

'Tis first a Cobweb on the Soul  
A Cuticle of Dust  
A Borer in the Axis  
An Elemental Rust—

Ruin is formal— Devil's work  
Consecutive and slow—  
Fail in an instant, no man did  
Slipping— Is Crash's law.



What Twigs We held by—  
Oh the View  
When Life's swift River striven through  
We pause before a further plunge  
To take Momentum—  
As the Fringe

Upon a former Garment shows  
The Garment cast,  
Our Props disclose  
So scant, so eminently small  
Of Might to help, so pitiful  
To sink, if We had labored, fond  
The diligence were not more blind

How scant, by everlasting Light  
The Discs that satisfied Our Sight—  
How dimmer than a Saturn's Bar  
The Things esteemed, for Things that are!

1103

The spry Arms of the Wind  
If I could crawl between  
I have an errand imminent  
To an adjoining Zone—

I should not care to stop  
My Process is not long  
The Wind could wait without the Gate  
Or stroll the Town among.

To ascertain the House  
And— is the soul at Home  
And hold the Wick of mine to it  
To light, and then return—

Ourselves we do inter with sweet derision—  
The channel of the dust who once achieves  
Invalidates the balm of that religion  
That doubts as fervently as it believes.

With Pinions of Disdain  
The soul can farther fly  
Than any feather specified  
In Ornithology—  
It wafts this sordid Flesh  
Beyond its dull— control  
And during its electric gale—  
The body is a soul—  
Instructing by the same—  
How little work it be—  
To put off filaments like this  
For immortality

1583

Witchcraft was hung, in History,  
But History and I  
Find all the Witchcraft that we need  
Around us, every Day

1643

Extol thee— could I? Then I will  
By saying nothing new—  
But just the truest truth  
That thou art heavenly.

Perceiving thee is evidence  
That we are of the sky  
Partaking thee a guaranty  
Of immortality

In Winter in my Room  
I came upon a Worm—  
Pink, lank, and warm—  
But as he was a worm  
And worms presume  
Not quite with him at home—  
Secured him by a string  
To something neighboring  
And went along.

A Trifle afterward  
A thing occurred  
I'd not believe it if I heard  
But state with creeping blood—  
A snake with mottles rare  
Surveyed my chamber floor  
In feature as the worm before  
But ringed with power—  
The very string with which  
I tied him— too  
When he was mean and new  
That string was there—

I shrank—"How fair you are"!   
Propitiation's claw—  
"Afraid," he hissed,  
"Of me"?   
"No cordiality"—  
He fathomed me—  
Then to a Rhythm Slim  
Secreted in his Form  
As Patterns swim  
Projected him.

That time I flew  
Both eyes his way  
Lest he pursue  
Nor ever ceased to run  
Till in a distant Town  
Towns on from mine  
I set me down  
This was a dream.