

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?

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.

I dreaded that first Robin, so,
But He is mastered, now,
I'm someway 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 'twas 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 unmindful Drums—

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!

A Thought went up my mind today—
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—'twas all—
And came my way no more—

Behind Me– dips Eternity–
Before Me– Immortality–
Myself– the Term between–
Death but the Drift of Eastern Gray,
Dissolving into Dawn away,
Before the West begin–

'Tis Kingdoms– afterward– they say–
In perfect– pauseless Monarchy–
Whose Prince– is Son of None–
Himself– His Dateless Dynasty–
Himself– Himself diversify–
In Duplicate divine–

'Tis Miracle before Me– then–
'Tis Miracle behind– between–
A Crescent in the Sea–
With Midnight to the North of Her–
And Midnight to the South of Her–
And Maelstrom– in the Sky–

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–

One Blessing had I than the rest
So larger to my Eyes
That it stopped gauging– satisfied–
For this enchanted size–

It was the limit of my Dream–
The focus of my Prayer–
A perfect– paralyzing Bliss–
Contented as Despair–

I knew no more of Want– or Cold–
Phantasms both become
For this new Value in the Soul–
Supremest Earthly Sum–

The Heaven below the Heaven above–
Obscured with ruddier Blue–
Life's Latitudes leant over– full–
The Judgment perished– too–

Why Bliss so scantily disburse–
Why Paradise defer–
Why Floods be served to Us– In Bowls–
I speculate no more–

When I hoped, I recollect
Just the place I stood—
At a Window facing West
Roughest Air— was good—

Not a Sleet could bite me
Not a frost could cool
Hope It was that kept me warm
Not Merino shawl—

When I feared— I recollect
Just the Day it was
Worlds were lying out to Sun
Yet— how Nature froze—

Icicles upon my soul
Prickled Blue and Cool
Bird went praising everywhere
Only Me— was still—

And the Day that I despaired
This— If I forget
Nature will— that It be Night
After Sun has set—

Darkness intersect her face
And put out her eye
Nature hesitate— before
Memory and I—

Bereaved of all, I went abroad—
No less bereaved was I
Upon a New Peninsula—
The Grave preceded me—

Obtained my Lodgings, ere myself—
And when I sought my Bed—
The Grave it was reposed upon
The Pillow for my Head—

I waked to find it first awake—
I rose— It followed me—
I tried to drop it in the Crowd—
To lose it in the Sea—

In Cups of artificial Drowse—
To steep its shape away—
The Grave— was finished— but the Spade
Remained In Memory—

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–

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—

1452

Your thoughts don't have words every day—
They come a single time—
Like signal esoteric sips
Of the communion Wine—

Which while you taste so native seems—
So easy so to be—
You cannot comprehend its price—
Nor its infrequency—

1725

I took one Draught of Life–
I'll tell you what I paid–
Precisely an existence–
The market price, they said.

They weighed me, Dust by Dust–
They balanced Film with Film,
Then handed me my Being's worth–
A single Dram of Heaven!

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?

'Tis so much joy! 'Tis 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 befall!

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 extinguish me!

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–

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—

I think to Live– may be a Bliss
To those who dare to try–
Beyond my limit to conceive–
My lip– to testify–

I think the Heart I former wore
Could widen– till to me
The Other, like the little Bank
Appear– unto the Sea–

I think the Days– could every one
In Ordination stand–
And Majesty– be easier
Than an inferior kind–

No numb alarm– lest Difference come–
No Goblin– on the Bloom–
No start in Apprehension's Ear,
No Bankruptcy– no Doom–

But Certainties of Sun–
Midsummer– in the Mind–
A steadfast South– upon the Soul–
Her Polar time– behind–

The Vision– pondered long–
So plausible becomes
That I esteem the fiction– real–
The Real– fictitious seems–

How bountiful the Dream–
What Plenty– It would be–
Had all my Life but been Mistake
Just rectified– in Thee–

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.

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 its interior Confronting–
That Cooler Host.

Far safer, through an Abbey gallop,
The Stones a'chase–
Than Unarmed, one's a'self encounter–
In lonesome Place–

Ourself behind ourself, concealed–
Should startle most–
Assassin hid in our Apartment
Be Horror's least

The Body– borrows a Revolver–
He bolts the Door–
O'erlooking a superior spectre–
Or More–

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!

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– Tonight–
In Thee!

You see I cannot see— your Lifetime—
I must guess—
How many times it ache for me— today— Confess—
How many times for my far sake
The brave eyes film—
But I— guess guessing hurts—
Mine— get so dim!

Too vague— the face—
My own— so patient— covers—
Too far— the strength—
My timidness enfolds—
Haunting the Heart—
Like her translated faces—
Teasing the want—
It— only— can suffice!

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 One He seemed to know–
And bowing– with a Mighty look–
At me– The Sea withdrew–

I measure every Grief I meet
With narrow, probing, Eyes—
I wonder if It weighs like Mine—
Or has an Easier size.

I wonder if They bore it long—
Or did it just begin—
I could not tell the Date of Mine—
It feels so old a pain—

I wonder if it hurts to live—
And if They have to try—
And whether— could They choose between—
It would not be— to die—

I note that Some— gone patient long—
At length, renew their smile—
An Imitation of a Light
That has so little Oil—

I wonder if when Years have piled—
Some Thousands— on the Harm
That hurt them early— such a lapse
Could give them any Balm—

Or would they go on aching still—
Through Centuries of Nerve—
Enlightened to a larger Pain—
In Contrast with the Love—

The Grieved— are many— I am told—
There is the various Cause—
Death— is but one— and comes but once—
And only nails the eyes—

There's Grief of Want— and Grief of Cold—
A sort they call "Despair"—
There's Banishment from native Eyes—
In sight of Native Air—

And though I may not guess the kind—
Correctly— yet to me
A piercing Comfort it affords
In passing Calvary—

To note the fashions— of the Cross—
And how they're mostly worn—
Still fascinated to presume
That Some— are like My Own—

If I may have it, when it's dead,
 I'll be contented— so—
 If just as soon as Breath is out
 It shall belong to me—

Until they lock it in the Grave,
 'Tis Bliss I cannot weigh—
 For tho' they lock thee in the Grave,
 Myself— can own the key—

Think of it Lover! I and Thee
 Permitted— face to face to be—
 After a Life— a Death— We'll say—
 For Death was That—
 And this— is Thee—

I'll tell Thee All— how Bald it grew—
 How Midnight felt, at first— to me—
 How all the Clocks stopped In the World—
 And Sunshine pinched me— 'Twas so cold—

Then how the Grief got sleepy— some—
 As if my Soul were deaf and dumb—
 Just making signs— across— to Thee—
 That this way— thou could'st notice me—

I'll tell thee how I tried to keep
 A smile, to show you, when this Deep
 All Waded— We look back for Play,
 At those Old Times— in Calvary.

Forgive me, If the Grave come slow—
 For Coveting to look at Thee—
 Forgive me, if to stroke thy frost
 Outvisions Paradise!

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—

It would have starved a Gnat—
To live so small as I—
And yet I was a living Child—
With Food's necessity

Upon me— like a Claw—
I could no more remove
Than I could coax a Leech away—
Or make a Dragon— move—

Nor like the Gnat— had I—
The privilege to fly
And seek a Dinner for myself—
How mightier He— than I—

Nor like Himself— the Art
Upon the Window Pane
To gad my little Being out—
And not begin— again—

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—

They called me to the Window, for
'Twas Sunset— Some one said—
I only saw a Sapphire Farm—
And just a Single Herd—

Of Opal Cattle— feeding far
Upon so vain a Hill—
As even while I looked— dissolved—
Nor Cattle were— nor Soil—

But in their stead— a Sea— displayed—
And Ships— of such a size
As Crew of Mountains— could afford—
And Decks— to seat the skies—

This— too— the Showman rubbed away—
And when I looked again—
Nor Farm— nor Opal Herd— was there—
Nor Mediterranean—

The Brain– is wider than the Sky–
For– put them side by side–
The one the other will contain
With ease– and You– beside–

The Brain is deeper than the sea–
For– hold them– Blue to Blue–
The one the other will absorb–
As Sponges– Buckets– do–

The Brain is just the weight of God–
For– Heft them– Pound for Pound–
And they will differ– if they do–
As Syllable from Sound–

There's a certain Slant of light,
Winter Afternoons—
That oppresses, like the Heft
Of Cathedral Tunes—

Heavenly Hurt, it gives us—
We can find no scar,
But internal difference,
Where the Meanings, are—

None may teach it— Any—
'Tis the Seal Despair—
An imperial affliction
Sent us of the Air—

When it comes, the Landscape listens—
Shadows— hold their breath—
When it goes, 'tis like the Distance
On the look of Death—

I felt a Funeral, in my Brain,
And Mourners to and fro
Kept treading– treading– till it seemed
That Sense was breaking through–

And when they all were seated,
A Service, like a Drum–
Kept beating– beating– till I thought
My Mind was going numb–

And then I heard them lift a Box
And creak across my Soul
With those same Boots of Lead, again,
Then Space– began to toll,

As all the Heavens were a Bell,
And Being, but an Ear,
And I, and Silence, some strange Race
Wrecked, solitary, here–

And then a Plank in Reason, broke,
And I dropped down, and down–
And hit a World, at every plunge,
And Finished knowing– then–

The Drop, that wrestles in the Sea—
Forgets her own locality—
As I— toward Thee—

She knows herself an Incense small—
Yet small— she sighs— if All— is All—
How larger— be?—

The Ocean— smiles— at her Conceit—
But she, forgetting Amphitrite—
Pleads—“Me”?

I send Two Sunsets—
Day and I— in competition ran—
I finished Two— and several Stars—
While He— was making One—

His own was ampler— but as I
Was saying to a friend—
Mine— is the more convenient
To Carry in the Hand—

I cannot dance upon my Toes–
No Man instructed me–
But oftentimes, among my mind,
A Glee possesseth me,

That had I Ballet knowledge–
Would put itself abroad
In Pirouette to blanch a Troupe–
Or lay a Prima, mad,

And though I had no Gown of Gauze–
No Ringlet, to my Hair,
Nor hopped to Audiences– like Birds,
One Claw upon the Air,

Nor tossed my shape in Eider Balls,
Nor rolled on wheels of snow
Till I was out of sight, in sound,
The House encore me so–

Nor any know I know the Art
I mention– easy– Here–
Nor any Placard boast me–
It's full as Opera–

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— Today—
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 Morning's Amber 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—

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—

Answer July—
Where is the Bee—
Where is the Blush—
Where is the Hay?

Ah, said July—
Where is the Seed—
Where is the Bud—
Where is the May—
Answer Thee— Me—

Nay— said the May—
Show me the Snow—
Show me the Bells—
Show me the Jay!

Quibbled the Jay—
Where be the Maize—
Where be the Haze—
Where be the Bur?

Here— said the Year—

The first Day's Night had come—
And grateful that a thing
So terrible— had been endured—
I told my Soul to sing—

She said her Strings were snapt—
Her Bow— to Atoms blown—
And so to mend her— gave me work
Until another Morn—

And then— a Day as huge
As Yesterdays in pairs,
Unrolled its horror in my face—
Until it blocked my eyes—

My Brain— begun to laugh—
I mumbled— like a fool—
And tho' 'tis Years ago— that Day—
My Brain keeps giggling— still.

And Something's odd— within—
That person that I was—
And this One— do not feel the same—
Could it be Madness— this?

Good Morning– Midnight–
I'm coming Home–
Day– got tired of Me–
How could I– of Him?

Sunshine was a sweet place–
I liked to stay–
But Morn– didn't want me– now–
So– Goodnight– Day!

I can look– can't I–
When the East is Red?
The Hills– have a way– then–
That puts the Heart– abroad–

You– are not so fair– Midnight–
I chose– Day–
But– please take a little Girl–
He turned away!

The Red- Blaze- is the Morning-
The Violet- is Noon-
The Yellow- Day- is falling-
And after that- is none-

But Miles of Sparks- at Evening-
Reveal the Width that burned-
The Territory Argent- that
Never yet- consumed-

1750

The words the happy say
Are paltry melody—
But those the silent feel
Are beautiful—

1774

Too happy Time dissolves itself
And leaves no remnant by—
'Tis Anguish not a Feather hath
Or too much weight to fly—