

I cautious, scanned my little life—
I winnowed what would fade
From what would last till Heads like mine
Should be a-dreaming laid.

I put the latter in a Barn—
The former, blew away.
I went one winter morning
And lo— my priceless Hay

Was not upon the “Scaffold”—
Was not upon the “Beam”—
And from a thriving Farmer—
A Cynic, I became.

Whether a Thief did it—
Whether It was the wind—
Whether Deity’s guiltless—
My business is, to find!

So I begin to ransack!
How is it Hearts, with Thee?
Art thou within the little Barn
Love provided Thee?

Tie the Strings to my Life, My Lord,
Then, I am ready to go!
Just a look at the Horses—
Rapid! That will do!

Put me in on the firmest side—
So I shall never fall—
For we must ride to the Judgment—
And it's partly, down Hill—

But never I mind the steepest—
And never I mind the Sea—
Held fast in Everlasting Race—
By my own Choice, and Thee—

Goodbye to the Life I used to live—
And the World I used to know—
And kiss the Hills, for me, just once—
Then— I am ready to go!

The Robin's my Criterion for Tune—
Because I grow— where Robins do—
But, were I Cuckoo born,
I'd swear by him—
The ode familiar— rules the Noon—
The Buttercup's, my Whim for Bloom—
Because, we're Orchard sprung—
But, were I Britain born,
I'd Daisies spurn—
None but the Nut— October fit—
Because, through dropping it,
The Seasons flit— I'm taught—
Without the Snow's Tableau—
Winter, were he— to me
Because I see— New Englandly—
The Queen, discerns like me—
Provincially—

Alone, I cannot be—
For Hosts— do visit me—
Recordless Company—
Who baffle Key—

They have no Robes, nor Names—
No Almanacs— nor Climes—
But general Homes
Like Gnomes—

Their Coming, may be known—
By Couriers within—
Their going— is not—
For they're never gone—

The Soul selects her own Society–
Then– shuts the Door–
To her divine Majority–
Present no more–

Unmoved– she notes the Chariots– pausing–
At her low Gate–
Unmoved– an Emperor be kneeling–
Upon her Mat–

I've known her– from an ample nation–
Choose One–
Then– close the Valves of her attention–
Like Stone–

As if I asked a Common Alms,
And in my wondering hand
A Stranger pressed a Kingdom,
And I, bewildered, stand—

As if I asked the Orient
Had it for me a Morn—
And it should lift its purple Dikes,
And shatter me with Dawn!

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 Ringleet, 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—

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—

Of Course– I prayed–
And did God Care?
He cared as much as on the Air
A Bird– had stamped her foot–
And cried “Give Me”–
My Reason– Life–
I had not had– but for Yourself–
'Twere better Charity
To leave me in the Atom's Tomb–
Merry, and Nought, and gay, and numb–
Than this smart Misery.

It might be lonelier
Without the Loneliness—
I'm so accustomed to my Fate—
Perhaps the Other Peace—

Would interrupt the Dark—
And crowd the little Room—
Too scant— by Cubits— to contain
The Sacrament— of Him—

I am not used to Hope—
It might intrude upon—
Its sweet parade— blaspheme the place
Ordained to Suffering—

It might be easier
To fail— with Land in Sight—
Than gain— My Blue Peninsula—
To perish— of Delight—

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—

'Tis little I- could care for Pearls-
Who own the ample sea-
Or Brooches- when the Emperor-
With Rubles- pelteth me-

Or Gold- who am the Prince of Mines-
Or Diamonds- when have I
A Diadem to fit a Dome-
Continual upon me-

I was the slightest in the House—
I took the smallest Room—
At night, my little Lamp, and Book—
And one Geranium—

So stationed I could catch the Mint
That never ceased to fall—
And just my Basket—
Let me think— I'm sure—

That this was all—
I never spoke— unless addressed—
And then, 'twas brief and low—
I could not bear to live— aloud—
The Racket shamed me so—

And if it had not been so far—
And anyone I knew
Were going— I had often thought
How noteless— I could die—

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 Crown–

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—

I could not prove the Years had feet—
Yet confident they run
Am I, from symptoms that are past
And Series that are done—

I find my feet have further Goals—
I smile upon the Aims
That felt so ample— Yesterday—
Today's— have vaster claims—

I do not doubt the self I was
Was competent to me—
But something awkward in the fit—
Proves that— outgrown— I see—

I prayed, at first, a little Girl,
Because they told me to—
But stopped, when qualified to guess
How prayer would feel— to me—

If I believed God looked around,
Each time my Childish eye
Fixed full, and steady, on his own
In Childish honesty—

And told him what I'd like, today,
And parts of his far plan
That baffled me— The mingled side
Of his Divinity—

And often since, in Danger,
I count the force 'twould be
To have a God so strong as that
To hold my life for me—

Till I could take the Balance
That tips so frequent, now,
It takes me all the while to poise—
And then— it doesn't stay—

They shut me up in Prose–
As when a little Girl
They put me in the Closet–
Because they liked me “still”–

Still! Could themselves have peeped–
And seen my Brain– go round–
They might as well have lodged a Bird
For Treason– in the Pound–

Himself has but to will
And easy as a Star
Abolish his Captivity–
And laugh– No more have I–

Publication– is the Auction
Of the Mind of Man–
Poverty– be justifying
For so foul a thing

Possibly– but We– would rather
From Our Garret go
White– Unto the White Creator–
Than invest– Our Snow–

Thought– belong to Him who gave it–
Then– to Him Who bear
Its Corporeal illustration– sell
The Royal Air–

In the Parcel– Be the Merchant
Of the Heavenly Grace–
But reduce no Human Spirit
To Disgrace of Price–

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—

Again– his voice is at the door–
I feel the old Degree–
I hear him ask the servant
For such an one– as me–

I take a flower– as I go–
My face to justify–
He never saw me– in this life–
I might surprise his eye!

I cross the Hall with mingled steps–
I– silent– pass the door–
I look on all this world contains–
Just his face– nothing more!

We talk in careless– and in toss–
A kind of plummet strain–
Each– sounding– shyly–
Just– how– deep–
The other’s one– had been–

We walk– I leave my Dog– at home–
A tender– thoughtful Moon–
Goes with us– just a little way–
And– then– we are alone–

Alone– If Angels are “alone”–
First time they try the sky!
Alone– if those “veiled faces” be–
We cannot count– on High!

I’d give– to live that hour– again–
The purple– in my Vein–
But He must count the drops– himself–
My price for every stain!

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!

Strong Draughts of Their Refreshing Minds
To drink– enables Mine
Through Desert or the Wilderness
As bore it Sealed Wine–

To go elastic– Or as One
The Camel's trait– attained–
How powerful the Stimulus
Of an Hermetic Mind–

677

To be alive— is Power—
Existence— in itself—
Without a further function—
Omnipotence— Enough—

To be alone— and Will!
'Tis able as a God—
The Maker— of Ourselves— be what—
Such being— Finitude!

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–

No Notice gave She, but a Change—
No Message, but a Sigh—
For Whom, the Time did not suffice
That She should specify.

She was not warm, though Summer shone
Nor scrupulous of cold,
Though Rime by Rime, the steady Frost
Upon Her Bosom piled—

Of shrinking ways— she did not fright
Though all the Village looked—
But held Her gravity aloft—
And met the gaze— direct—

And when adjusted like a Seed
In careful fitted Ground,
Unto the Everlasting Spring—
And hindered but a Mound—

Her Warm return, if so she chose—
And We— imploring drew—
Removed our Invitation by
As Some She never knew—

864

The Robin for the Crumb

Returns no syllable

But long records the Lady's name

In Silver Chronicle.

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—

967

Pain— expands the Time—
Ages coil within
The minute Circumference
Of a single Brain—

Pain contracts— the Time—
Occupied with Shot—
Gamuts of Eternities
Are as they were not—

Fitter to see Him, I may be
 For the long Hindrance– Grace– to Me–
 With Summers, and with Winters, grow,
 Some passing Year– A trait bestow

To make Me fairest of the Earth–
 The Waiting– then– will seem so worth–
 I shall impute with half a pain–
 The blame that I was chosen– then–

Time to anticipate His Gaze–
 It's first– Delight– and then– Surprise–
 The turning o'er and o'er my face–
 For Evidence it be the Grace–

He left behind One Day– So less–
 He seek Conviction, That– be This–
 I only must not grow so new
 That He'll mistake– and ask for me–

Of me– when first unto the Door–
 I go– to Elsewhere go no more–
 I only must not change so fair–
 He'll sigh– “The Other– She– is Where?”

The Love, tho', will array me right–
 I shall be perfect– in His Sight–
 If He perceive the other Truth–
 Upon an Excellenter Youth–

How sweet I shall not lack in Vain–
 But gain– thro' loss– Through Grief– obtain–
 The Beauty that reward Him best–
 The Beauty of Demand– at Rest–

1581

The farthest Thunder that I heard
Was nearer than the Sky
And rumbles still, though torrid Noons
Have lain their missiles by—

The Lightning that preceded it
Struck no one but myself—
But I would not exchange the Bolt
For all the rest of Life—

Indebtedness to Oxygen
The Happy may repay,
But not the obligation
To Electricity—

It founds the Homes and decks the Days
And every clamor bright
Is but the gleam concomitant
Of that waylaying Light—

The Thought is quiet as a Flake—
A Crash without a Sound,
How Life's reverberation
Its Explanation found—

1732

My life closed twice before its close—
It yet remains to see
If Immortality unveil
A third event to me—

So huge, so hopeless to conceive
As these that twice befell.
Parting is all we know of heaven,
And all we need of hell.

1750

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