

Nobody knows this little Rose—
It might a pilgrim be
Did I not take it from the ways
And lift it up to thee—

Only a Bee will miss it—
Only a Butterfly,
Hastening from far journey—
On its breast to lie—

Only a Bird will wonder—
Only a Breeze will sigh—
Ah Little Rose— how easy
For such as thee to die!

There's something quieter than sleep
Within this inner room!
It wears a sprig upon its breast—
And will not tell its name.

Some touch It, and some kiss It—
Some chafe its idle hand—
It has a simple gravity
I do not understand!

I would not weep if I were they—
How rude in one to sob!
Might scare the quiet fairy
Back to her native wood!

While simple-hearted neighbors
Chat of the "Early dead"—
We— prone to periphrasis,
Remark that Birds have Red!

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 space 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'm glad they did believe it
Whom I have never found
Since the mighty Autumn afternoon
I left them in the ground.

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.

The covert have all the children
Early aged, and often cold,
Sparrows, unnoticed by the Father—
Lambs for whom time had not a fold.

'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!

Of Bronze— and Blaze—
The North— Tonight—
So adequate— it forms—
So preconcerted with itself—
So distant— to alarms—
An Unconcern so sovereign
To Universe, or me—
Infects my simple spirit
With Taints of Majesty—
Till I take vaster attitudes—
And strut upon my stem—
Disdaining Men, and Oxygen,
For Arrogance of them—

My Splendors, are Menagerie—
But their Competeless Show
Will entertain the Centuries
When I, am long ago,
An Island in dishonored Grass—
Whom none but Beetles— know

The Doomed— regard the Sunrise
With different Delight—
Because— when next it burns abroad
They doubt to Witness it—

The Man— to die— tomorrow—
Harks for the Meadow Bird—
Because its Music stirs the Axe
That clamors for his head—

Joyful— to whom the Sunrise
Precedes Enamored— Day—
Joyful— for whom the Meadow Bird
Has ought but Elegy!

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 ’twas 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.

There's been a Death, in the Opposite House,
As lately as Today—
I know it, by the numb look
Such Houses have— alway—

The Neighbors rustle in and out—
The Doctor— drives away—
A Window opens like a Pod—
Abrupt— mechanically—

Somebody rings a Mattress out—
The Children hurry by—
They wonder if it died— on that—
I used to— when a Boy—

The Minister— goes stiffly in—
As if the House were His—
And He owned all the Mourners— now—
And little Boys— besides—

And then the Milliner— and the Man
Of the Appalling Trade—
To take the measure of the House—

There'll be that Dark Parade—

Of Tassels— and of Coaches— soon—
It's easy as a Sign—
The Intuition of the News—
In just a Country Town—

I heard a Fly buzz– when I died–
The Stillness in the Room
Was like the Stillness in the Air–
Between the Heaves of Storm–

The Eyes around– had wrung them dry–
And Breaths were gathering firm
For that last Onset– when the King
Be witnessed– in the Room–

I willed my Keepsakes– Signed away
What portion of me be
Assignable– and then it was
There interposed a Fly–

With Blue– uncertain– stumbling Buzz–
Between the Light– and me–
And then the Windows failed– and then
I could not see to see–

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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—
'Twere blessed to have seen—

You'll find— it when you try to die—
The Easier to let go—
For recollecting such as went
You could not spare— you know.

And though their places somewhat filled
As did their Marble names
With Moss— they never grew so full
You chose the newer names.

And when this World— sets further back
As Dying— say it does—
The former love— distincter grows
And supersedes the fresh.

And Thought of them— so fair invites
It looks too tawdry Grace
To stay behind— With Just the Toys
We bought— to ease their place.

In falling Timbers buried—
There breathed a Man—
Outside— the spades— were plying—
The Lungs— within—

Could He— know— they sought Him—
Could They— know— He breathed—
Horrid Sand Partition—
Neither— could be heard—

Never slacked the Diggers—
But when Spades had done—
Oh, Reward of Anguish,
It was dying— Then—

Many Things— are fruitless—
'Tis a Baffling Earth—
But there is no Gratitude—
Like the Grace— of Death—

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—

Bereavement in their death to feel
Whom We have never seen—
A Vital Kinsmanship import
Our Soul and theirs— between—

For Stranger— Strangers do not mourn—
There be Immortal friends
Whom Death see first— 'tis news of this
That paralyze Ourselves—

Who, vital only to Our Thought—
Such Presence bear away
In dying— 'tis as If Our Souls
Absconded— suddenly—

A long– long Sleep– A famous– Sleep–
That makes no show for Morn–
By Stretch of Limb– or stir of Lid–
An independent One–

Was ever Idleness like This?
Upon a Bank of Stone
To bask the Centuries away–
Nor once look up– for Noon?

I meant to find Her when I came—
Death— had the same design—
But the Success— was His— it seems—
And the Surrender— Mine—

I meant to tell Her how I longed
For just this single time—
But Death had told Her so the first—
And she had passed, with Him—

To wander— now— is my Repose—
To rest— To rest would be
A privilege of Hurricane—
To Memory— and Me.

This quiet Dust was Gentlemen and Ladies
And Lads and Girls—
Was laughter and ability and Sighing
And Frocks and Curls.

This passive Place a Summer's nimble mansion
Where Bloom and Bees
Fulfilled an Oriental Circuit—
Then ceased, like these—

Dying– To be afraid of thee
One must– to thine Artillery
Have left exposed a Friend–
Than thine old Arrow is a Shot
Delivered straighter to the Heart
The leaving Love behind–

Not for itself, the Dust is shy,
But, enemy, Beloved be
Thy Batteries divorce–
Fight sternly in a Dying eye–
Two Armies– Love and Certainty–
And Love– and the Reverse–

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.

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Some wretched creature, Savior take
Who would exult to die
And leave for Thy sweet mercy's sake
Another Hour to me

The Frost of Death was on the Pane—
“Secure your Flower,” said he.
Like Sailors fighting with a Leak
We fought Mortality.

Our passive Flower we held to Sea—
To Mountain— To the Sun—
Yet even on his Scarlet shelf
To crawl the Frost begun—

We pried him back
Ourselves we wedged
Himself and her between,
Yet easy as the narrow Snake
He forked his way along

Till all her helpless beauty bent
And then our wrath begun—
We hunted him to his Ravine
We chased him to his Den—

We hated Death and hated Life
And nowhere was to go—
Than Sea and continent there is
A larger— it is Woe—

1462

We knew not that we were to live—
Nor when— we are to die—
Our ignorance— our cuirass is—
We wear Mortality
As lightly as an Option Gown
Till asked to take it off—
By his intrusion, God is known—
It is the same with Life—

1692

The right to perish might be thought
An undisputed right—
Attempt it, and the Universe
Upon the opposite—

Will concentrate its officers—
You cannot even die
But nature and mankind must pause
To pay you scrutiny.