

I never lost as much but twice,
And that was in the sod.
Twice have I stood a beggar
Before the door of God!

Angels– twice descending
Reimbursed my store–
Burglar, Banker– Father!
I am poor once more!

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.

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.

'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 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?

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–

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!

I can wade Grief–
Whole Pools of it–
I'm used to that–
But the least push of Joy
Breaks up my feet–
And I tip– drunken–
Let no Pebble– smile–
'Twas the New Liquor–
That was all!

Power is only Pain–
Stranded, thro' Discipline,
Till Weights– will hang–
Give Balm– to Giants–
And they'll wilt, like Men–
Give Himmaleh–
They'll Carry– Him!

If I'm lost— now
That I was found—
Shall still my transport be—
That once— on me— those Jasper Gates
Blazed open— suddenly—

That in my awkward— gazing— face—
The Angels— softly peered—
And touched me with their fleeces,
Almost as if they cared—
I'm banished— now— you know it—
How foreign that can be—
You'll know— Sir— when the Savior's face
Turns so— away from you—

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!

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 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!

Some keep the Sabbath going to Church—
I keep it, staying at Home—
With a Bobolink for a Chorister—
And an Orchard, for a Dome—

Some keep the Sabbath in Surplice—
I just wear my Wings—
And instead of tolling the Bell, for Church,
Our little Sexton— sings.

God preaches, a noted Clergyman—
And the sermon is never long,
So instead of getting to Heaven, at last—
I'm going, all along.

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—

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—

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?

Much Madness is divinest Sense—
To a discerning Eye—
Much Sense— the starkest Madness—
'Tis the Majority

In this, as All, prevail—
Assent— and you are sane—
Demur— you're straightway dangerous—
And handled with a Chain—

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—

I live with Him– I see His face–
I go no more away
For Visitor– or Sundown–
Death's single privacy–

The Only One– forestalling Mine–
And that– by Right– that He
Presents a Claim invisible–
No wedlock– granted Me–

I live with Him– I hear His Voice–
I stand alive– Today–
To witness to the Certainty–
Of Immortality–

Taught Me– by Time– the lower Way–
Conviction– Every day–
That Life like This– Is stopless–
Be Judgment– what it may–

'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–

540

I took my Power in my Hand—
And went against the World—
'Twas not so much as David— had—
But I— was twice as bold—

I aimed my Pebble— but Myself
Was all the one that fell—
Was it Goliah— was too large—
Or was myself— too small?

The Brain, within its Groove
Runs evenly- and true-
But let a Splinter swerve-
'Twere easier for You-

To put a Current back-
When Floods have slit the Hills-
And scooped a Turnpike for Themselves-
And trodden out the Mills-

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—

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–

I Years had been from Home—
And now, before the Door
I dared not enter, lest a Face
I never saw before

Stare stolid into mine
And ask my Business there—
“My Business but a Life I left—
Was such remaining there?”

I leaned upon the Awe—
I lingered with Before—
The Second like an Ocean rolled
And broke against my ear—

I laughed a crumbling Laugh—
That I could fear a Door—
Who Consternation compassed
And never Winced before.

I fitted to the Latch
My Hand, with trembling care
Lest back the awful Door should spring
And leave me standing there—

Then moved my Fingers off—
As cautiously as Glass—
And held my ears, and like a Thief
Fled gasping from the House—

I see thee better– in the Dark–
I do not need a Light–
The Love of Thee– a Prism be–
Excelling Violet–

I see thee better for the Years–
That hunch themselves between–
The Miner's Lamp– sufficient be–
To nullify the Mine–

And in the Grave– I see Thee best–
Its little Panels be–
Aglow– All ruddy– with the Light–
I held so high, for Thee–

What need of Day–
To Those whose Dark– hath so– surpassing Sun–
It deem it be– Continually–
At the Meridian?

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–

Me from Myself- to banish
Had I Art
Impregnable my Fortress
Unto All Heart-

But Since Myself- assault Me-
How have I peace
Except by subjugating
Consciousness?

And since We're mutual Monarch
How this be
Except by Abdication-
Me- of Me?

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!

The Love a Life can show Below
Is but a filament, I know,
Of that diviner thing
That faints upon the face of Noon—
And smites the Tinder in the Sun—
And hinders Gabriel's Wing—

'Tis this— in Music— hints— and sways—
And far abroad on Summer days—
Distils uncertain pain—
'Tis this enamors in the East—
And tints the Transit in the West
With harrowing Iodine—

'Tis this— invites— appalls— endows—
Flits— glimmers— proves— dissolves—
Returns— suggests— convicts— enchants—
Then— flings in Paradise—

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!

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–

713

Fame of Myself, to justify,
All other Plaudit be
Superfluous— An Incense
Beyond Necessity—

Fame of Myself to lack— Although
My Name be else Supreme—
This were an Honor honorless—
A futile Diadem—

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–

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—

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.

I felt a Cleaving in my Mind—
As if my Brain had split—
I tried to match it— Seam by Seam—
But could not make them fit.

The thought behind, I strove to join
Unto the thought before—
But Sequence unravelled out of Sound—
Like Balls— upon a Floor.

1005

Bind me- I still can sing-
Banish- my Mandolin
Strikes true within-

Slay- and my Soul shall rise-
Chanting to Paradise-
Still thine.

1101

Between the form of Life and Life
The difference is as big
As Liquor at the Lip between
And Liquor in the Jug

The latter– excellent to keep–
But for ecstatic need–
The corkless is superior–
I know for I have tried–

1659

Fame is a fickle food
Upon a shifting plate—
Whose table once a
Guest but not
The second time is set.

Whose crumbs the crows inspect
And with ironic caw
Flap past it to the
Farmer's Corn—
Men eat of it and die.

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!

1763

Fame is a bee.

It has a song—

It has a sting—

Ah, too, it has a wing.