

'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?

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?

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—

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—

772

The hallowing of Pain
Like hallowing of Heaven,
Obtains at a corporeal cost—
The Summit is not given

To Him who strives severe
At middle of the Hill—
But He who has achieved the Top—
All— is the price of All—

888

When I have seen the Sun emerge
From His amazing House—
And leave a Day at every Door
A Deed, in every place—

Without the incident of Fame
Or accident of Noise—
The Earth has seemed to me a Drum,
Pursued of little Boys

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–

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.

1763

Fame is a bee.

It has a song—

It has a sting—

Ah, too, it has a wing.