

'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?

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

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!

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–



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–

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–

You taught me Waiting with Myself–  
Appointment strictly kept–  
You taught me fortitude of Fate–  
This– also– I have learnt–

An Altitude of Death, that could  
No bitterer debar  
Than Life– had done– before It–  
Yet– there IS a Science more–

The Heaven you know– to understand  
That you be not ashamed  
Of Me– in Christ's bright Audience  
Upon the further Hand–

The first Day that I was A Life  
I recollect it– How still–  
That last Day that I was A Life  
I recollect it– as well–

'Twas stiller– though the first  
Was still–  
'Twas empty– but the first  
Was full–

This– was my finallest Occasion–  
But then–  
My tenderer Experiment–  
Toward Men–

“Which choose I”?  
That– I cannot say–  
“Which choose They”?  
Question Memory!

1249

The Stars are old, that stood for me—  
The West a little worn—  
Yet newer glows the only Gold  
I ever cared to earn—

Presuming on that lone result—  
Her infinite Disdain—  
But vanquished her with my defeat—  
'Twas Victory was slain.

With Pinions of Disdain  
The soul can farther fly  
Than any feather specified  
In Ornithology—  
It wafts this sordid Flesh  
Beyond its dull— control  
And during its electric gale—  
The body is a soul—  
Instructing by the same—  
How little work it be—  
To put off filaments like this  
For immortality

1638

Go thy great way!  
The Stars thou meetst  
Are even as Thyself—  
For what are Stars but Asterisks  
To point a human Life?

1643

Extol thee— could I? Then I will  
By saying nothing new—  
But just the truest truth  
That thou art heavenly.

Perceiving thee is evidence  
That we are of the sky  
Partaking thee a guaranty  
Of immortality