

Just lost, when I was saved!  
Just felt the world go by!  
Just girt me for the onset with Eternity,  
When breath blew back,  
And on the other side  
I heard recede the disappointed tide!

Therefore, as One returned, I feel  
Odd secrets of the line to tell!  
Some Sailor, skirting foreign shores—  
Some pale Reporter, from the awful doors  
Before the Seal!

Next time, to stay!  
Next time, the things to see  
By Ear unheard,  
Unscrutinized by Eye—

Next time, to tarry,  
While the Ages steal—  
Slow tramp the Centuries,  
And the Cycles wheel!

'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 shall know why— when Time is over—  
And I have ceased to wonder why—  
Christ will explain each separate anguish  
In the fair schoolroom of the sky—

He will tell me what “Peter” promised—  
And I— for wonder at his woe—  
I shall forget the drop of Anguish  
That scalds me now— that scalds me now!

A solemn thing– it was– I said–  
A woman– white– to be–  
And wear– if God should count me fit–  
Her blameless mystery–

A hallowed thing– to drop a life  
Into the purple well–  
Too plummetless– that it return–  
Eternity– until–

I pondered how the bliss would look–  
And would it feel as big–  
When I could take it in my hand–  
As hovering– seen– through fog–

And then– the size of this “small” life–  
The Sages– call it small–  
Swelled– like Horizons– in my vest–  
And I sneered– softly–“small”!

How noteless Men, and Pleiads, stand,  
Until a sudden sky  
Reveals the fact that One is rapt  
Forever from the Eye—

Members of the Invisible,  
Existing, while we stare,  
In Leagueless Opportunity,  
O’ertakeless, as the Air—

Why didn’t we detain Them?  
The Heavens, with a smile,  
Sweep by our disappointed Heads  
Without a syllable—

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

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—

Perhaps I asked too large—  
I take— no less than skies—  
For Earths, grow thick as  
Berries, in my native town—

My Basket holds— just— Firmaments—  
Those— dangle easy— on my arm,  
But smaller bundles— Cram.



I saw no Way– The Heavens were stitched–  
I felt the Columns close–  
The Earth reversed her Hemispheres–  
I touched the Universe–

And back it slid– and I alone–  
A Speck upon a Ball–  
Went out upon Circumference–  
Beyond the Dip of Bell–

Did Our Best Moment last—  
'Twould supersede the Heaven—  
A few— and they by Risk— procure—  
So This Sort— are not given—

Except as stimulants— in  
Cases of Despair—  
Or Stupor— The Reserve—  
These Heavenly Moments are—

A Grant of the Divine—  
That Certain as it Comes—  
Withdraws— and leaves the dazzled Soul  
In her unfurnished Rooms—

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–

The Red- Blaze- is the Morning-  
The Violet- is Noon-  
The Yellow- Day- is falling-  
And after that- is none-

But Miles of Sparks- at Evening-  
Reveal the Width that burned-  
The Territory Argent- that  
Never yet- consumed-

No Crowd that has occurred  
Exhibit, I suppose,  
That General Attendance  
That Resurrection— does—

Circumference be full—  
The long restricted Grave  
Assert her Vital Privilege—  
The Dust— connect— and live—

On Atoms— features place—  
All Multitudes that were  
Efface in the Comparison—  
As Suns— dissolve a Star—

Solemnity— prevail—  
Its Individual Doom  
Possess each separate Consciousness—  
August— Absorbed— Numb—

What Duplicate— exist—  
What Parallel can be  
Of the Significance of This  
To Universe— and Me?

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—

It would have starved a Gnat–  
To live so small as I–  
And yet I was a living Child–  
With Food's necessity

Upon me– like a Claw–  
I could no more remove  
Than I could coax a Leech away–  
Or make a Dragon– move–

Nor like the Gnat– had I–  
The privilege to fly  
And seek a Dinner for myself–  
How mightier He– than I–

Nor like Himself– the Art  
Upon the Window Pane  
To gad my little Being out–  
And not begin– again–



Our journey had advanced—  
Our feet were almost come  
To that odd Fork in Being's Road—  
Eternity— by Term—

Our pace took sudden awe—  
Our feet— reluctant— led—  
Before— were Cities— but Between—  
The Forest of the Dead—

Retreat— was out of Hope—  
Behind— a Sealed Route—  
Eternity's White Flag— Before—  
And God— at every Gate—

At leisure is the Soul  
That gets a Staggering Blow—  
The Width of Life— before it spreads  
Without a thing to do—

It begs you give it Work—  
But just the placing Pins—  
Or humblest Patchwork— Children do—  
To Help its Vacant Hands—

Forever– is composed of Nows–  
'Tis not a different time  
Except for Infiniteness  
And Latitude of Home

From this– experienced Here–  
Remove the Dates– to These–  
Let Months dissolve in further Months–  
And Years– exhale in Years–

Without Debate– or Pause–  
Or Celebrated Days–  
No different Our Years would be  
From Anno Domini's–

The Brain– is wider than the Sky–  
For– put them side by side–  
The one the other will contain  
With ease– and You– beside–

The Brain is deeper than the sea–  
For– hold them– Blue to Blue–  
The one the other will absorb–  
As Sponges– Buckets– do–

The Brain is just the weight of God–  
For– Heft them– Pound for Pound–  
And they will differ– if they do–  
As Syllable from Sound–

641

Size circumscribes— it has no room  
For petty furniture—  
The Giant tolerates no Gnat  
For Ease of Gianture—

Repudiates it, all the more  
Because intrinsic size  
Ignores the possibility  
Of Calumnies— or Flies.

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—

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?

Behind Me– dips Eternity–  
Before Me– Immortality–  
Myself– the Term between–  
Death but the Drift of Eastern Gray,  
Dissolving into Dawn away,  
Before the West begin–

'Tis Kingdoms– afterward– they say–  
In perfect– pauseless Monarchy–  
Whose Prince– is Son of None–  
Himself– His Dateless Dynasty–  
Himself– Himself diversify–  
In Duplicate divine–

'Tis Miracle before Me– then–  
'Tis Miracle behind– between–  
A Crescent in the Sea–  
With Midnight to the North of Her–  
And Midnight to the South of Her–  
And Maelstrom– in the Sky–



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–

765

You constituted Time—  
I deemed Eternity  
A Revelation of Yourself—  
'Twas therefore Deity—

The Absolute— removed—  
The Relative— away—  
That I unto Himself adjust  
My slow idolatry—

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—

All I may, if small,  
Do it not display  
Larger for the Totalness—  
'Tis Economy—

To bestow a World  
And withhold a Star—  
Utmost, is Munificence—  
Less, tho' larger, poor.

The Only News I know  
Is Bulletins all Day  
From Immortality.

The Only Shows I see—  
Tomorrow and Today—  
Perchance Eternity—

The Only One I meet  
Is God— The Only Street  
Existence— This traversed

If Other News there be—  
Or Admirabler Show—  
I'll tell it You—

I stepped from Plank to Plank—  
A slow and cautious way—  
The Stars about my Head I felt,  
About my Feet the Sea.

I knew not but the next  
Would be my final inch—  
This gave me that precarious Gait  
Some call Experience.

Our little Kinsmen— after Rain  
In plenty may be seen,  
A Pink and Pulpy multitude  
The tepid Ground upon.

A needless life, it seemed to me  
Until a little Bird  
As to a Hospitality  
Advanced and breakfasted.

As I of He, so God of Me  
I pondered, may have Judged,  
And left the little Angle Worm  
With Modesties enlarged.

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



Crisis is a Hair  
Toward which the forces creep  
Past which forces retrograde  
If it come in sleep

To suspend the Breath  
Is the most we can  
Ignorant is it Life or Death  
Nicely balancing

Let an instant push  
Or an Atom press  
Or a Circle hesitate  
In its Circumference

It may jolt the Hand  
That adjusts the Hair  
That secures Eternity  
From presenting— Here

The Admirations– and Contempts– of Time–  
Show justest– through an Open Tomb–  
The Dying– as it were a Height  
Reorganizes Estimate  
And what We saw not  
We distinguish clear–  
And mostly– see not  
What We saw before–

'Tis Compound Vision–  
Light– enabling Light–  
The Finite– furnished  
With the Infinite–  
Convex– and Concave Witness–  
Back– toward Time–  
And forward–  
Toward the God of Him–

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—

999

Superfluous were the Sun  
When Excellence be dead  
He were superfluous every Day  
For every Day be said—

That syllable whose Faith  
Just saves It from Despair  
And whose “I’ll meet You” hesitates  
If Love inquire “Where?”

Upon His dateless Fame  
Our Periods may lie  
As Stars that drop anonymous  
From an abundant sky.

I've dropped my Brain– My Soul is numb–  
The Veins that used to run  
Stop palsied– 'tis Paralysis  
Done perfecter on stone

Vitality is Carved and cool.  
My nerve– In Marble lies–  
A Breathing Woman  
Yesterday– Endowed with Paradise.

Not dumb– I had a sort that moved–  
A Sense that smote and stirred–  
Instincts for Dance– a caper part–  
An Aptitude for Bird–

Who wrought Carrara in me  
And chiselled all my tune  
Were it a Witchcraft– were it Death–  
I've still a chance to strain

To Being, somewhere– Motion– Breath–  
Though Centuries beyond,  
And every limit a Decade–  
I'll shiver, satisfied.

1111

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—

1162

The Life we have is very great—  
The Life that we shall see  
Surpasses it, we know, because  
It is Infinity—

But when all Space has been beheld  
And all Dominion shown  
The smallest Human Heart's extent  
Reduces it to none—



1234

If my Bark sink  
'Tis to another sea—  
Mortality's Ground Floor  
Is Immortality—

1409

Could mortal lip divine  
The undeveloped Freight  
Of a delivered syllable  
'Twould crumble with the weight.

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—

1569

The Clock strikes one that just struck two—  
Some schism in the Sum—  
A Vagabond for Genesis  
Has wrecked the Pendulum—

1695

There is a solitude of space—  
A solitude of sea—  
A solitude of death, but these  
Society shall be—

Compared with that profounder site  
That polar privacy  
A soul admitted to itself—  
Finite infinity.

1746

The most important population—  
Unnoticed— dwell,  
They have a heaven each instant—  
Not any hell.

Their names, unless you know them,  
'Twere useless tell.  
Of bumble-bees and other nations—  
The grass is full.

1774

Too happy Time dissolves itself  
And leaves no remnant by—  
'Tis Anguish not a Feather hath  
Or too much weight to fly—