

By intuition, Mightiest Things
Assert themselves – and not by terms –
“I’m Midnight” – need the Midnight say –
“I’m Sunrise” – Need the Majesty?

Omnipotence – had not a Tongue –
His lisp – is Lightning – and the Sun –
His Conversation – with the Sea –
“How shall you know”?
Consult your Eye!

c. 1862

1935

421

A Charm invests a face
Imperfectly beheld –
The Lady dare not lift her Veil
For fear it be dispelled –

But peers beyond her mesh –
And wishes – and denies –
Lest Interview – annul a want
That Image – satisfies –

c. 1862

1891

422

More Life – went out – when He went
Than Ordinary Breath –
Lit with a finer Phosphor –
Requiring in the Quench –

A Power of Renowned Cold,
The Climate of the Grave
A Temperature just adequate
So Anthracite, to live –

For some – an Ampler Zero –
A Frost more needle keen
Is necessary, to reduce
The Ethiop within.

Others – extinguish easier –
A Gnat's minutest Fan
Sufficient to obliterate
A Tract of Citizen –

Whose Peat lift – amply vivid –
Ignores the solemn News
That Popocatapel exists –
Or Etna's Scarlets, Choose –

c. 1862

1935

423

The Months have ends – the Years – a knot –
No Power can untie
To stretch a little further
A Skein of Misery –

The Earth lays back these tired lives
In her mysterious Drawers –
Too tenderly, that any doubt
An ultimate Repose –

The manner of the Children –
Who weary of the Day –
Themselves – the noisy Plaything
They cannot put away –

c. 1862

1935

424

Removed from Accident of Loss
By Accident of Gain
Befalling not my simple Days –
Myself had just to earn –

Of Riches – as unconscious
As is the Brown Malay
Of Pearls in Eastern Waters,
Marked His – What Holiday

Would stir his slow conception –
Had he the power to dream
That but the Dower's fraction –
Awaited even – Him –

c. 1862

1935

425

Good Morning – Midnight –
I'm coming Home –
Day – got tired of Me –
How could I – of Him?

Sunshine was a sweet place –
I liked to stay –
But Morn – didn't want me – now –
So – Goodnight – Day!

I can look – can't I –
When the East is Red?
The Hills – have a way – then –
That puts the Heart – abroad –

You – are not so fair – Midnight –
I chose – Day –
But – please take a little Girl –
He turned away!

c. 1862

1929

426

It don't sound so terrible – quite – as it did –
I run it over – "Dead", Brain, "Dead."
Put it in Latin – left of my school –
Seems it don't shriek so – under rule.

Turn it, a little – full in the face
A Trouble looks bitterest –
Shift it – just –
Say "When Tomorrow comes this way –
I shall have waded down one Day."

I suppose it will interrupt me some
Till I get accustomed – but then the Tomb
Like other new Things – shows largest – then –
And smaller, by Habit –

It's shrewder then
Put the Thought in advance – a Year –
How like "a fit" – then –
Murder – wear!

c. 1862

1945

427

I'll clutch – and clutch –
Next – One – Might be the golden touch –
Could take it –
Diamonds – Wait –
I'm diving – just a little late –
But stars – go slow – for night –

I'll string you – in fine Necklace –
Tiaras – make – of some –
Wear you on Hem –
Loop up a Countess – with you –
Make – a Diadem – and mend my old One –
Count – Hoard – then lose –
And doubt that you are mine –
To have the joy of feeling it – again –

I'll show you at the Court –
Bear you – for Ornament
Where Women breathe –
That every sigh – may lift you
Just as high – as I –

And – when I die –
In meek array – display you –
Still to show – how rich I go –
Lest Skies impeach a wealth so wonderful –
And banish me –

c. 1862

1945

Taking up the fair Ideal,
 Just to cast her down
 When a fracture – we discover –
 Or a splintered Crown –
 Makes the Heavens portable –
 And the Gods – a lie –
 Doubtless – “Adam” – scowled at Eden –
 For *his* perjury!

Cherishing – our poor Ideal –
 Till in purer dress –
 We behold her – glorified –
 Comforts – search – like this –
 Till the broken creatures –
 We adored – for whole –
 Stains – all washed –
 Transfigured – mended –
 Meet us – with a smile –

c. 1862

1945

The Moon is distant from the Sea –
 And yet, with Amber Hands –
 She leads Him – docile as a Boy –
 Along appointed Sands –

He never misses a Degree –
 Obedient to Her Eye
 He comes just so far – toward the Town –
 Just so far – goes away –

Oh, Signor, Thine, the Amber Hand –
 And mine – the distant Sea –
 Obedient to the least command
 Thine eye impose on me –

c. 1862

1891

It would never be Common – more – I said –
 Difference – had begun –
 Many a bitterness – had been –
 But that old sort – was done –

Or – if it sometime – showed – as 'twill –
 Upon the Downiest – Morn –
 Such bliss – had I – for all the years –
 'T would give an Easier – pain –

I'd so much joy – I told it – Red –
 Upon my simple Cheek –
 I felt it publish – in my Eye –
 'T was needless – any speak –

I walked – as wings – my body bore –
 The feet – I former used –
 Unnecessary – now to me –
 As boots – would be – to Birds –

I put my pleasure all abroad –
 I dealt a word of Gold
 To every Creature – that I met –
 And Dowered – all the World –

When – suddenly – my Riches shrank –
 A Goblin – drank my Dew –
 My Palaces – dropped tenantless –
 Myself – was beggared – too –

I clutched at sounds –
 I groped at shapes –
 I touched the tops of Films –
 I felt the Wilderness roll back
 Along my Golden lines –

The Sackcloth – hangs upon the nail –
 The Frock I used to wear –
 But where my moment of Brocade –
 My – drop – of India?

43¹

Me – come! My dazzled face
 In such a shining place!
 Me – hear! My foreign Ear
 The sounds of Welcome – there!

The Saints forget
 Our bashful feet –

My Holiday, shall be
 That They – remember me –
 My Paradise – the fame
 That They – pronounce my name –

c. 1862

1896

43²

Do People moulder equally,
 They bury, in the Grave?
 I do believe a Species
 As positively live

As I, who testify it
 Deny that I – am dead –
 And fill my Lungs, for Witness –
 From Tanks – above my Head –

I say to you, said Jesus –
 That there be standing here –
 A Sort, that shall not taste of Death –
 If Jesus was sincere –

I need no further Argue –
 That statement of the Lord
 Is not a controvertible –
 He told me, Death was dead –

c. 1862

1945

433

Knows how to forget!
 But could It teach it?

Easiest of Arts, they say
 When one learn how
 Dull Hearts have died
 In the Acquisition
 Sacrifice for Science
 Is common, though, now –
 I went to School
 But was not wiser
 Globe did not teach it
 Nor Logarithm Show
 “How to forget”!
 Say – some – Philosopher!
 Ah, to be erudite
 Enough to know!
 Is it in a Book?
 So, I could buy it –
 Is it like a Planet?
 Telescopes would know –
 If it be invention
 It must have a Patent.
 Rabbi of the Wise Book
 Don’t you know?

c. 1865

1945

434

To love thee Year by Year –
 May less appear
 Than sacrifice, and cease –
 However, dear,
 Forever might be short, I thought to show –
 And so I pieced it, with a flower, now.

c. 1862

1914

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 –

c. 1862

1890

The Wind – tapped like a tired Man –
 And like a Host – “Come in”
 I boldly answered – entered then
 My Residence within
 A Rapid – footless Guest –
 To offer whom a Chair
 Were as impossible as hand
 A Sofa to the Air –
 No Bone had He to bind Him –
 His Speech was like the Push
 Of numerous Humming Birds at once
 From a superior Bush –
 His Countenance – a Billow –
 His Fingers, as He passed
 Let go a music – as of tunes
 Blown tremulous in Glass –
 He visited – still flitting –
 Then like a timid Man
 Again, He tapped – 'twas flurriedly –
 And I became alone –

c. 1862

1891

437

Prayer is the little implement
Through which Men reach
Where Presence – is denied them.
They fling their Speech

By means of it – in God's Ear –
If then He hear –
This sums the Apparatus
Comprised in Prayer –

c. 1862

1891

438

Forget! The lady with the Amulet
Forget she wore it at her Heart
Because she breathed against
Was Treason twixt?

Deny! Did Rose her Bee –
For Privilege of Play
Or Wile of Butterfly
Or Opportunity – Her Lord away?

The lady with the Amulet – will fade –
The Bee – in Mausoleum laid –
Discard his Bride –
But longer than the little Rill –
That cooled the Forehead of the Hill –
While Other – went the Sea to fill –
And Other – went to turn the Mill –
I'll do thy Will –

c. 1862

1935

439

Undue Significance a starving man attaches
To Food –
Far off – He sighs – and therefore – Hopeless –
And therefore – Good –

Portaken – it relieves – indeed –
But proves us
That Spices fly
In the Receipt – It was the Distance –
Was Savory –

c. 1862

1891

440

'Tis customary as we part
A trinket – to confer –
It helps to stimulate the faith
When Lovers be afar –

'Tis various – as the various taste –
Clematis – journeying far –
Presents me with a single Curl
Of her Electric Hair –

c. 1862

1945

441

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

c. 1862

1890

442

God made a little Gentian –
It tried – to be a Rose –
And failed – and all the Summer laughed –
But just before the Snows

There rose a Purple Creature –
That ravished all the Hill –
And Summer hid her Forehead –
And Mockery – was still –

The Frosts were her condition –
The Tyrian would not come
Until the North – invoke it –
Creator – Shall I – bloom?

c. 1862

1891

443

I tie my Hat – I crease my Shawl –
Life's little duties do – precisely –
As the very least
Were infinite – to me –

I put new Blossoms in the Glass –
And throw the old – away –
I push a petal from my Gown
That anchored there – I weigh
The time 'twill be till six o'clock
I have so much to do –
And yet – Existence – some way back –
Stopped – struck – my ticking – through –
We cannot put Ourselves away
As a completed Man
Or Woman – When the Errand's done
We came to Flesh – upon –
There may be – Miles on Miles of Nought –
Of Action – sicker far –
To simulate – is stinging work –
To cover what we are
From Science – and from Surgery –
Too Telescopic Eyes
To bear on us unshaded –
For their – sake – not for Ours –

"Twould start them –
We – could tremble –
But since we got a Bomb –
And held it in our Bosom –
Nay – Hold it – it is calm –

Therefore – we do life's labor –
Though life's Reward – be done –
With scrupulous exactness –
To hold our Senses – on –

c. 1862

1929

444

It feels a shame to be Alive –
When Men so brave – are dead –
One envies the Distinguished Dust –
Permitted – such a Head –

The Stone – that tells defending Whom
This Spartan put away
What little of Him we – possessed
In Pawn for Liberty –

The price is great – Sublimely paid –
Do we deserve – a Thing –
That lives – like Dollars – must be piled
Before we may obtain?

Are we that wait – sufficient worth –
That such Enormous Pearl
As life – dissolved be – for Us –
In Battle's – horrid Bowl?

It may be – a Renown to live –
I think the Man who die –
Those unsustained – Saviors –
Present Divinity –

z. 1862

1929

'Twas just this time, last year, I died.
 I know I heard the Corn,
 When I was carried by the Farms –
 It had the Tassels on –

I thought how yellow it would look –
 When Richard went to mill –
 And then, I wanted to get out,
 But something held my will.

I thought just how Red – Apples wedged
 The Stubble's joints between –
 And the Carts stooping round the fields
 To take the Pumpkins in –

I wondered which would miss me, least,
 And when Thanksgiving, came,
 If Father'd multiply the plates –
 To make an even Sum –

And would it blur the Christmas glee
 My Stocking hang too high
 For any Santa Claus to reach
 The Altitude of me –

But this sort, grieved myself,
 And so, I thought the other way,
 How just this time, some perfect year –
 Themselves, should come to me –

c. 1862

1896

I showed her Heights she never saw –
 "Would'st Climb," I said?
 She said – "Not so" –
 "With *me* –" I said – With *me*?
 I showed her Secrets – Morning's Nest –
 The Rope the Nights were put across –
 And *now* – "Would'st have me for a Guest?"

She could not find her Yes –
And then, I brake my life – And Lo,
A Light, for her, did solemn glow,
The larger, as her face withdrew –
And *could* she, further, “No”?

c. 1862

1914

447

Could – I do more – for Thee –
Wert Thou a Bumble Bee –
Since for the Queen, have I –
Nought but Bouquet?

c. 1862

1929

448

This was a Poet – It is That
Distills amazing sense
From ordinary Meanings –
And Attar so immense

From the familiar species
That perished by the Door –
We wonder it was not Ourselves
Arrested it – before –

Of Pictures, the Discloser –
The Poet – it is He –
Entitles Us – by Contrast –
To ceaseless Poverty –

Of Portion – so unconscious –
The Robbing – could not harm –
Himself – to Him – a Fortune –
Exterior – to Time –

c. 1862

1929

I died for Beauty – but was scarce
 Adjusted in the Tomb
 When One who died for Truth, was lain
 In an adjoining Room –

He questioned softly “Why I failed”?
 “For Beauty”, I replied –
 “And I – for Truth – Themselves are One –
 We Brethren, are”, He said –

And so, as Kinsmen, met a Night –
 We talked between the Rooms –
 Until the Moss had reached our lips –
 And covered up – our names –

c. 1862

1890

Dreams – are well – but Waking’s better,
 If One wake at Morn –
 If One wake at Midnight – better –
 Dreaming – of the Dawn –

Sweeter – the Surmising Robins –
 Never gladdened Tree –
 Than a Solid Dawn – confronting –
 Leading to no Day –

c. 1862

1935

The Outer – from the Inner
 Derives its Magnitude –
 ’Tis Duke, or Dwarf, according
 As is the Central Mood –

The fine – unvarying Axis
 That regulates the Wheel –
 Though Spokes – spin – more conspicuous
 And fling a dust – the while.

The Inner – paints the Outer –
The Brush without the Hand –
Its Picture publishes – precise –
As is the inner Brand –

On fine – Arterial Canvas –
A Cheek – perchance a Brow –
The Star's whole Secret – in the Lake –
Eyes were not meant to know.

c. 1862

1935

452

The Malay – took the Pearl –
Not – I – the Earl –
I – feared the Sea – too much
Unsanctified – to touch –

Praying that I might be
Worthy – the Destiny –
The Swarthy fellow swam –
And bore my Jewel – Home –

Home to the Hut! What lot
Had I – the Jewel – got –
Borne on a Dusky Breast –
I had not deemed a Vest
Of Amber – fit –

The Negro never knew
I – wooed it – too –
To gain, or be undone –
Alike to Him – One –

c. 1862

1945

453

Love – thou art high –
I cannot climb thee –
But, were it Two –
Who knows but we –

Taking turns – at the Chimborazo –
Ducal – at last – stand up by thee –

Love – thou art deep –
I cannot cross thee –
But, were there Two
Instead of One –
Rower, and Yacht – some sovereign Summer –
Who knows – but we'd reach the Sun?

Love – thou art Veiled –
A few – behold thee –
Smile – and alter – and prattle – and die –
Bliss – were an Oddity – without thee –
Nicknamed by God –
Eternity –

c. 1862

1929

454

It was given to me by the Gods –
When I was a little Girl –
They give us Presents most – you know –
When we are new – and small.
I kept it in my Hand –
I never put it down –
I did not dare to eat – or sleep –
For fear it would be gone –
I heard such words as "Rich" –
When hurrying to school –
From lips at Corners of the Streets –
And wrestled with a smile.
Rich! 'Twas Myself – was rich –
To take the name of Gold –
And Gold to own – in solid Bars –
The Difference – made me bold –

c. 1862

1945

Triumph – may be of several kinds –
 There's Triumph in the Room
 When that Old Emperor – Death –
 By Faith – be overcome –

There's Triumph of the finer Mind
 When Truth – affronted long –
 Advance unmoved – to Her Supreme –
 Her God – Her only Throng –

A Triumph – when Temptation's Bribe
 Be slowly handed back –
 One eye upon the Heaven renounced –
 And One – upon the Rack –

Severer Triumph – by Himself
 Experienced – who pass
 Acquitted – from that Naked Bar –
 Jehovah's Countenance –

c. 1862

1891

So well that I can live without –
 I love thee – then How well is that?
 As well as Jesus?
 Prove it me
 That He – loved Men –
 As I – love thee –

c. 1862

1929

Sweet – safe – Houses –
 Glad – gay – Houses –
 Sealed so stately tight –
 Lids of Steel – on Lids of Marble –
 Locking Bare feet out –

Brooks of Plush – in Banks of Satin
 Not so softly fall
 As the laughter – and the whisper –
 From their People Pearl –

 No Bald Death – affront their Parlors –
 No Bold Sickness come
 To deface their Stately Treasures –
 Anguish – and the Tomb –

 Hum by – in Muffled Coaches –
 Lest they – wonder Why –
 Any – for the Press of Smiling –
 Interrupt – to die –

c. 1862

1945

458

Like Eyes that looked on Wastes –
 Incredulous of Ought
 But Blank – and steady Wilderness –
 Diversified by Night –

 Just Infinites of Nought –
 As far as it could see –
 So looked the face I looked upon –
 So looked itself – on Me –

 I offered it no Help –
 Because the Cause was Mine –
 The Misery a Compact
 As hopeless – as divine –

 Neither – would be absolved –
 Neither would be a Queen
 Without the Other – Therefore –
 We perish – tho' We reign –

c. 1862

1945