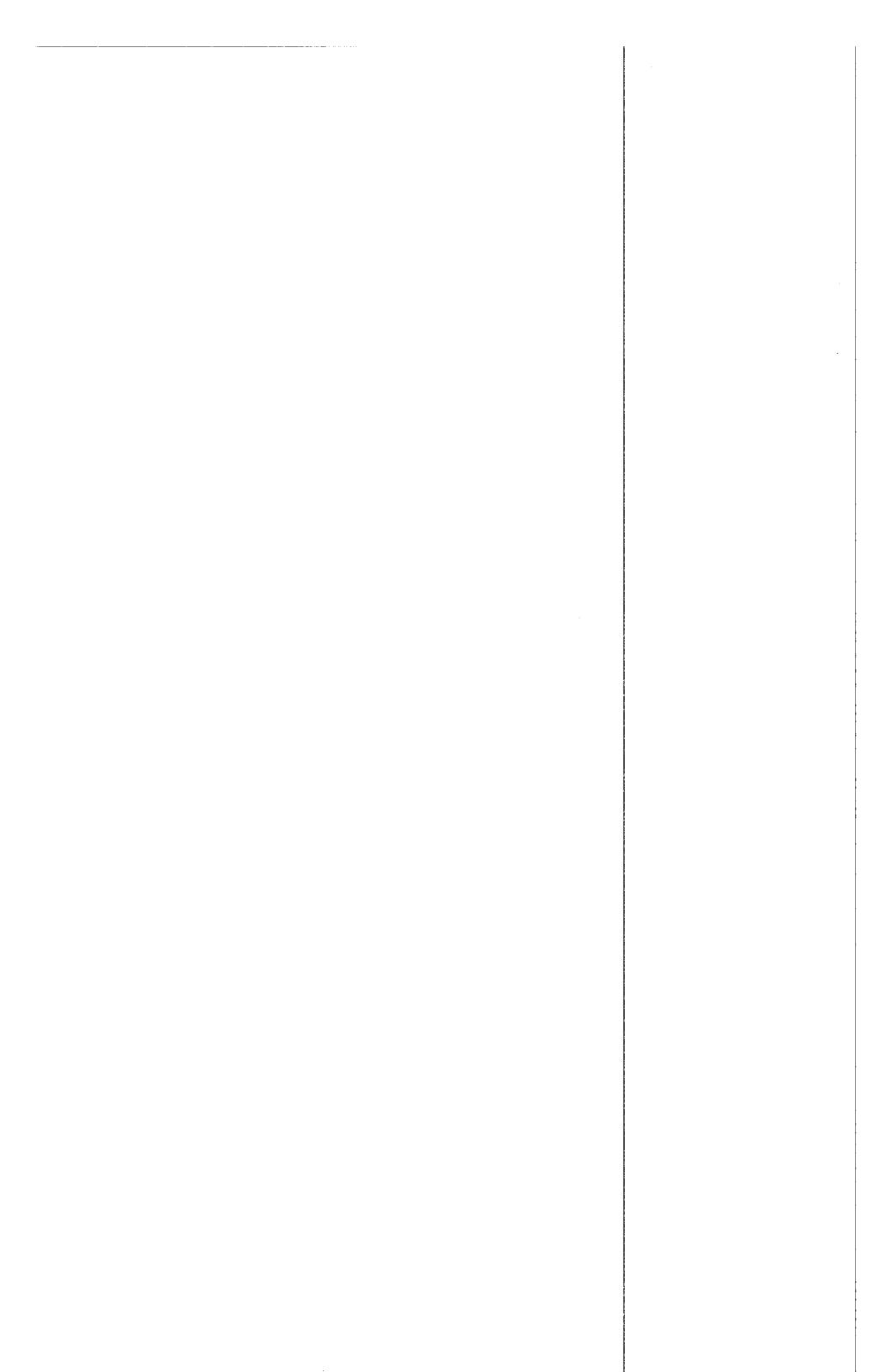


THE COMPLETE POEMS OF
Emily Dickinson



THE COMPLETE POEMS OF
Emily Dickinson

EDITED BY

Thomas H. Johnson



BACK BAY BOOKS
LITTLE, BROWN AND COMPANY
NEW YORK • BOSTON • LONDON

COPYRIGHT, 1890, 1891, 1896, BY ROBERTS BROTHERS. COPYRIGHT, 1914, 1918, 1919, 1924, 1929, 1930, 1932, 1935, 1937, 1942, BY MARTHA DICKINSON BIANCHI. © COPYRIGHT, 1951, 1955, BY THE PRESIDENT AND FELLOWS OF HARVARD COLLEGE. COPYRIGHT, 1952, BY ALFRED LEETE HAMPSON. COPYRIGHT, ©, 1957, 1958, 1960, BY MARY L. HAMPSON.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE U.S. COPYRIGHT ACT OF 1976, THE SCANNING, UPLOADING, AND ELECTRONIC SHARING OF ANY PART OF THIS BOOK WITHOUT THE PERMISSION OF THE PUBLISHER CONSTITUTE UNLAWFUL PIRACY AND THEFT OF THE AUTHOR'S INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY. IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO USE MATERIAL FROM THE BOOK (OTHER THAN FOR REVIEW PURPOSES), PRIOR WRITTEN PERMISSION MUST BE OBTAINED BY CONTACTING THE PUBLISHER AT PERMISSIONS@HBGUSA.COM. THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT OF THE AUTHOR'S RIGHTS.

Back Bay Books / Little, Brown and Company
Hachette Book Group
1290 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10104
littlebrown.com

Originally published in hardcover by Little, Brown and Company, 1960
First paperback edition, 1961

Back Bay Books is an imprint of Little, Brown and Company. The Back Bay Books name and logo are trademarks of Hachette Book Group, Inc.

The publisher is not responsible for websites (or their content) that are not owned by the publisher.

ISBN 978-0-316-18413-7

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CONTROL NUMBER 60-11646

52 51 50 49 48 47 46 45

RRD-C

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Introduction

THE CREATIVE YEARS

THERE are certain significant dates in American literary history during the nineteenth century. One was August 21, 1837, when Emerson, before the Phi Beta Kappa Society at Cambridge, Massachusetts, delivered in the presence of Thoreau's graduating class his "American Scholar" address, immediately hailed by young Oliver Wendell Holmes as "our intellectual Declaration of Independence." One was the day early in July, 1855, when Whitman "for the convenience of private reading only" began circulating printed copies of his *Leaves of Grass*. A third is surely April 15, 1862, when Thomas Wentworth Higginson received a letter from Emily Dickinson enclosing four of her poems.

Emily Dickinson, then thirty-one years old, was writing a professional man of letters to inquire whether her verses "breathed." Higginson was still living at Worcester, Massachusetts, where he had recently resigned his pastorate of a "free" church, and was beginning to establish a reputation as essayist and a lecturer in the cause of reforms. She dared bring herself to his attention because she had just read his "Letter to a Young Contributor," practical advice for those wishing to break into print, and the lead article in the current issue of the *Atlantic Monthly*. "Charge your style with life," he commented, and went on to declare that the privilege of bringing forward "new genius" was fascinating. His article happened to appear exactly at the moment that Emily Dickinson was ready to seek criticism. She knew him to be a liberal thinker, interested in the status of women in general and women writers in particular. Though the article drew responses, all of

which Higginson judged "not for publication," he sensed some quality in the enclosures of the letter posted at Amherst which elicited a reply. He asked for more verses, inquired her age, her reading and her companionships.

The importance of the correspondence with Higginson thus initiated, and continuing throughout Emily Dickinson's life, cannot be exaggerated. In the first place, the four poems she initially selected reveal that in 1862 the poet was no longer a novice but an artist whose strikingly original talent was fully developed. She enclosed "Safe in their Alabaster Chambers" (216), "I'll tell you how the Sun rose" (318), "The nearest Dream recedes—unrealized" (319), and "We play at Paste" (320). What embarrassed Higginson about the poems was his inability to classify them. In 1891 he wrote an article describing this early correspondence. "The impression of a wholly new and original poetic genius," he said, "was as distinct on my mind at the first reading of these four poems as it is now, after thirty years of further knowledge; and with it came the problem never yet solved, what place ought to be assigned in literature to what is so remarkable, yet so elusive of criticism." Higginson's problem was compounded by the fact that during Emily Dickinson's lifetime he was never convinced that she wrote poetry. As he phrased his opinion to a friend, her verses were "remarkable, though odd . . . *too delicate* — not strong enough to publish."

A representative mid-nineteenth-century traditionalist was being asked to judge the work of a "wholly new" order of craftsman. His reply to the first letter (implied in her second letter to him — his letters do not survive) must have told her that the "Alabaster" poem lacked form, that it was imperfectly rhymed and its metric beat spasmodic, a judgment which would have been shared at the time by most of the fraternity of literary appraisers. The unorthodoxy of melodic pattern controlled by key words, wherein the parts express the whole, the altering of metric beat to slow or speed the nature of time itself (the theme of the "Alabaster" poem), give it dimensions which he was not equipped to estimate. He was trying to measure a cube by the rules of plane geometry.

The first weeks of this letter exchange were critical in Emily Dickinson's literary life. Putting aside for the moment the issue whether she wished to see her poetry published (though the fact that she wrote in response to an article on how to contribute to magazines suggests

the possibility), one sees that she clearly is asking whether a professional critic thinks her way of writing poetry is valid. His answer must have implied that it was scarcely comprehensible. The nature of decisions thus forced upon her becomes clear. In the first place, when she wrote the letter, she had composed no fewer than three hundred poems. (Her comment to Higginson that she had written "no verse — but one or two — until this winter" was her answer to his query about her age!) She was so possessed by creative forces that within another year she had doubled that number. For the moment she is pausing to inquire whether she is alone in believing that what she has been striving for is worth attempting.

The second letter to Higginson, written ten days later, enclosed three poems: "South Winds jostle them" (86), "Of all the Sounds despatched abroad" (321), and "There came a Day at Summer's full" (322). Like the previous four they were selected for their range of theme and prosodic variety. The lapse of six weeks before she wrote again, in view of the nature of the third letter, suggests that between April 25 and June 7 she accepted her destiny as an artist who in her lifetime would remain unknown, for in assenting to his verdict she unwaveringly charts her course:

I smile when you suggest that I delay "to publish" — that being foreign to my thought, as Firmament to Fin.

If fame belonged to me, I could not escape her — if she did not, the longest day would pass me on the chase — and the approbation of my Dog, would forsake me — then. My Barefoot-Rank is better.

You think my gait "spasmodic." I am in danger, Sir.

You think me "uncontrolled." I have no Tribunal. . . .

The Sailor cannot see the North, but knows the Needle can.

Though Emily Dickinson kept up the fiction of being Higginson's "scholar" for the rest of her life, she would never expect Higginson or anyone else to think her a poet, or do more than thank her, as at one time he pointedly did, for her "beautiful thoughts and words." Thenceforth she contented herself by enclosing or incorporating verses from time to time in letters to friends. The number thus communicated was but a minuscule fraction of what she was writing, and since the selections were made for particular occasions, they seldom reveal the intellectual and emotional depths she could plumb. Her growing preoccupation with the subject of fame is a striking characteristic of

the poems written between 1862 and 1865. The dedication to her art had begun before she wrote to Higginson. It was a dedication that led to renunciation of fame in her lifetime and, as the wellsprings of her creativeness dried up after 1865, to increasing seclusion. There is strong evidence, nonetheless, that she came to think of herself as a public name in the fact that six times, between the years 1866 and 1872, she signed letters to Higginson simply "Dickinson." Among the most interesting of her poems on the subject of renown are "Some work for Immortality" (46), "Publication is the Auction/ Of the Mind of Man" (709), and "Fame of Myself, to justify" (713).

Marshaling the data, one observes a pattern somewhat as follows: From her youth Emily Dickinson had been writing poetry, and the realization of her destiny as a poet who must during her lifetime expect to maintain a "Barefoot-Rank" came in 1862. Meanwhile, probably in 1858, she winnowed her earlier verses, transcribing those she chose to save into the earliest of the famous packets. Always in ink, the packets are gatherings of four, five, or six sheets of folded stationery loosely held together by thread looped through them in the spine, at two points equidistant from the top and bottom. Of the forty-nine packets, forty-six appear to include all the verses written between 1858 and 1865, the years of great creativeness. Three were assembled later (about 1866, 1871, and 1872). All of the packet poems are either fair copies or semifinal drafts (mostly fair copies), and they constitute two thirds of the entire body of her poetry. The increasing momentum after 1860 reached its peak in 1862 and sustained its full power for three more years.* Thereafter throughout her life Emily Dickinson continued to write poetry, but never again with the urgency she experienced in the early 1860's, when she fully developed her "flood subjects" on the themes of living and dying. With paradoxes of extraor-

* The assigning of packets to a given year must always remain tentative, for, in want of other evidence, it is based upon a study of the characteristic changes of the handwriting, analyzed fully in the introduction to *The Poems of Emily Dickinson* (3 vols., 1955). The number of packet poems for the years 1858-1865 at present is estimated as follows:

1858	51
1859	93
1860	63
1861	85
1862	366
1863	140
1864	172
1865	84

dinary insight she repeatedly gives relationship to the ideas and experience which exist in time but never are a part of it.

THE PRESENT TEXT

AT the time of her death in 1886, Emily Dickinson left in manuscript a body of verse far more extensive than anyone imagined. Cared for by a servant, Emily and her sister Lavinia had been living together in the Amherst house built by their grandfather Dickinson, alone after their mother's death in 1882. On going through her sister's effects, Lavinia discovered a small box containing about 900 poems. These were the sixty little "volumes," as Lavinia called them, "tied together with twine," that constitute the packets. Determined that she must find a publisher for them, she persuaded Mabel Loomis Todd, the wife of an Amherst professor, to undertake the task of transcribing them. Mrs. Todd enlisted the aid of Thomas Wentworth Higginson, and together they made a selection of 115 poems for publication. But Colonel Higginson was apprehensive about the willingness of the public to accept the poems as they stood. Therefore in preparing copy for the printer he undertook to smooth rhymes, regularize the meter, delete provincialisms, and substitute "sensible" metaphors. Thus "folks" became "those," "heft" became "weight," and occasionally line arrangement was altered.

The publication of *Poems by Emily Dickinson* by Roberts Brothers of Boston nevertheless proved to be one of the literary events of 1890, and the reception of the slender volume encouraged the editors to select 166 more verses, issued a year later as *Poems, Second Series*. These likewise were warmly received. In 1896 Mrs. Todd alone edited *Poems, Third Series*, bringing the total number published to 449, and together with 102 additional poems and parts of poems included in Mrs. Todd's edition of *Letters of Emily Dickinson* (1894), they constituted the Dickinson canon until 1914, when Emily Dickinson's niece and literary heir, Martha Dickinson Bianchi, issued *The Single Hound*.

By now the public had come to appreciate the quality of Dickinson's originalities, and alterations in the text of *The Single Hound* are refreshingly few. But Mrs. Bianchi sometimes had trouble reading the manuscripts, and on occasion words or phrases were misread, in that volume and in the two later ones which completed publication of all the verses in Mrs. Bianchi's possession: *Further Poems* (1929) and

Unpublished Poems (1935). The appearance of *Bolts of Melody* (1945), from texts prepared by Mrs. Todd and her daughter, Milliecent Todd Bingham, virtually completed publication of all the Dickinson poetry, and marked a new era in textual fidelity. It presented 668 poems and fragments, deriving from transcripts made by Mrs. Todd, or from manuscripts which had remained among her papers.

Clearly the time had come to present the Dickinson poetry in an unreconstructed text and with some degree of chronological arrangement, and that opportunity was presented in 1950 when ownership of Emily Dickinson's literary estate was transferred to Harvard University. Editing then began on the variorum text of *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*, which I prepared for the Belknap Press of Harvard University Press (3 vols., 1955), comprising a total of 1775 poems and fragments.

The text for this edition of *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson* reproduces solely and completely that of the 1955 variorum edition, but intended as a reading text, it selects but one form of each poem. Inevitably therefore one is forced to make some editorial decisions about a text which never was prepared by the author as copy for the printer. Rare instances exist, notably in the poem "Blazing in gold" (228), where no text can be called "final." That poem describes a sunset which in one version stoops as low as "the kitchen window"; in another, as low as an "oriel window"; in a third, as low as "the Otter's Window." These copies were made over a period of five years, from 1861 to 1866, and one text is apparently as "final" as another. The reader may make the choice.

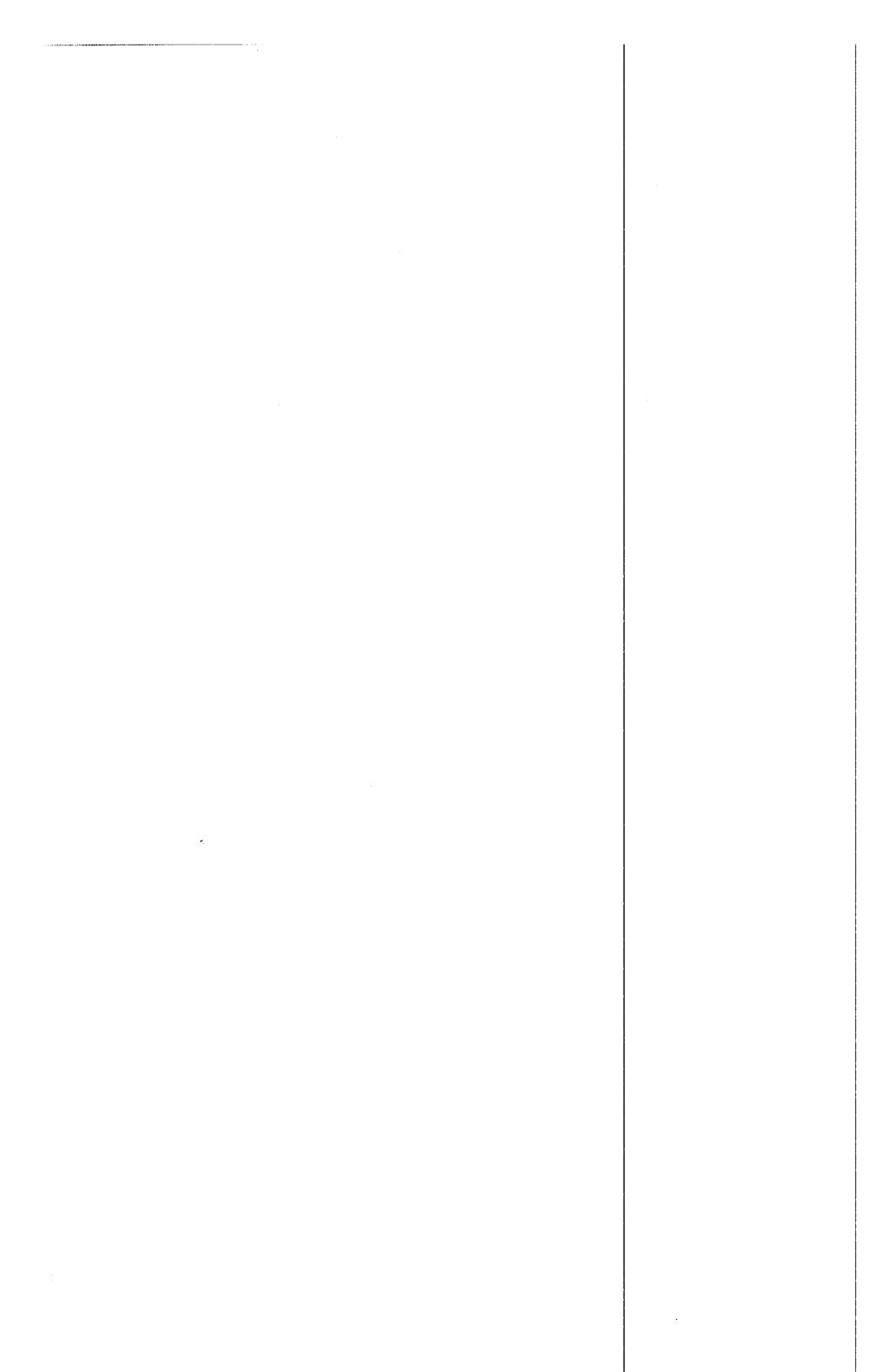
Selection becomes mandatory for the semifinal drafts. Though by far the largest number of packet copies exist in but a single fair-copy version, several exist in semifinal form: those for which marginally the poet suggested an alternate reading for one word or more. In order to keep editorial construction to a bare minimum, I have followed the policy of adopting such suggestions only when they are underlined, presumably Emily Dickinson's method of indicating her own preference.

Rough drafts, of which there are relatively few, are allowed to stand as such, with no editorial tinkering.

I have silently corrected obvious misspelling (*witheld*, *visiter*, etc.), and misplaced apostrophes (*does'nt*). Punctuation and capitalization remain unaltered. Dickinson used dashes as a musical device, and though some may be elongated end stops, any "correction" would be

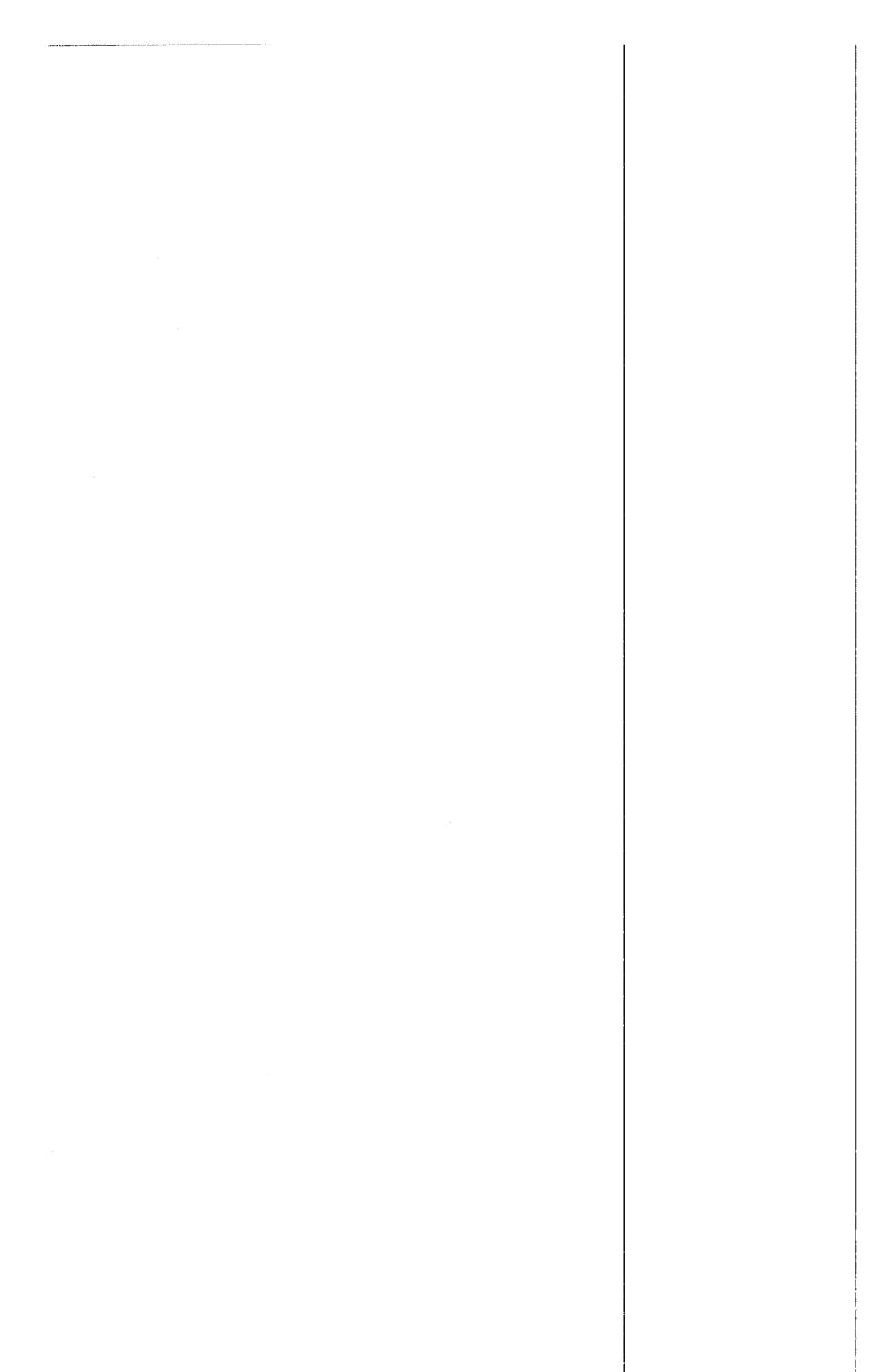
gratuitous. Capitalization, though often capricious, is likewise untouched.

The date at the left, following each poem, is that conjectured for the earliest known manuscript; that to the right is the date of first publication. The order of the poems is that of the Harvard (*variorum*) edition. There, where all copies of poems are reproduced, fair copies to recipients are chosen for principal representation. Thus, in this volume, for instance, the poems sent to T. W. Higginson in 1862 (nos. 318-327) range in date from 1858 to 1862. This seeming irregularity is necessary to preserve the numerical order of the poems.

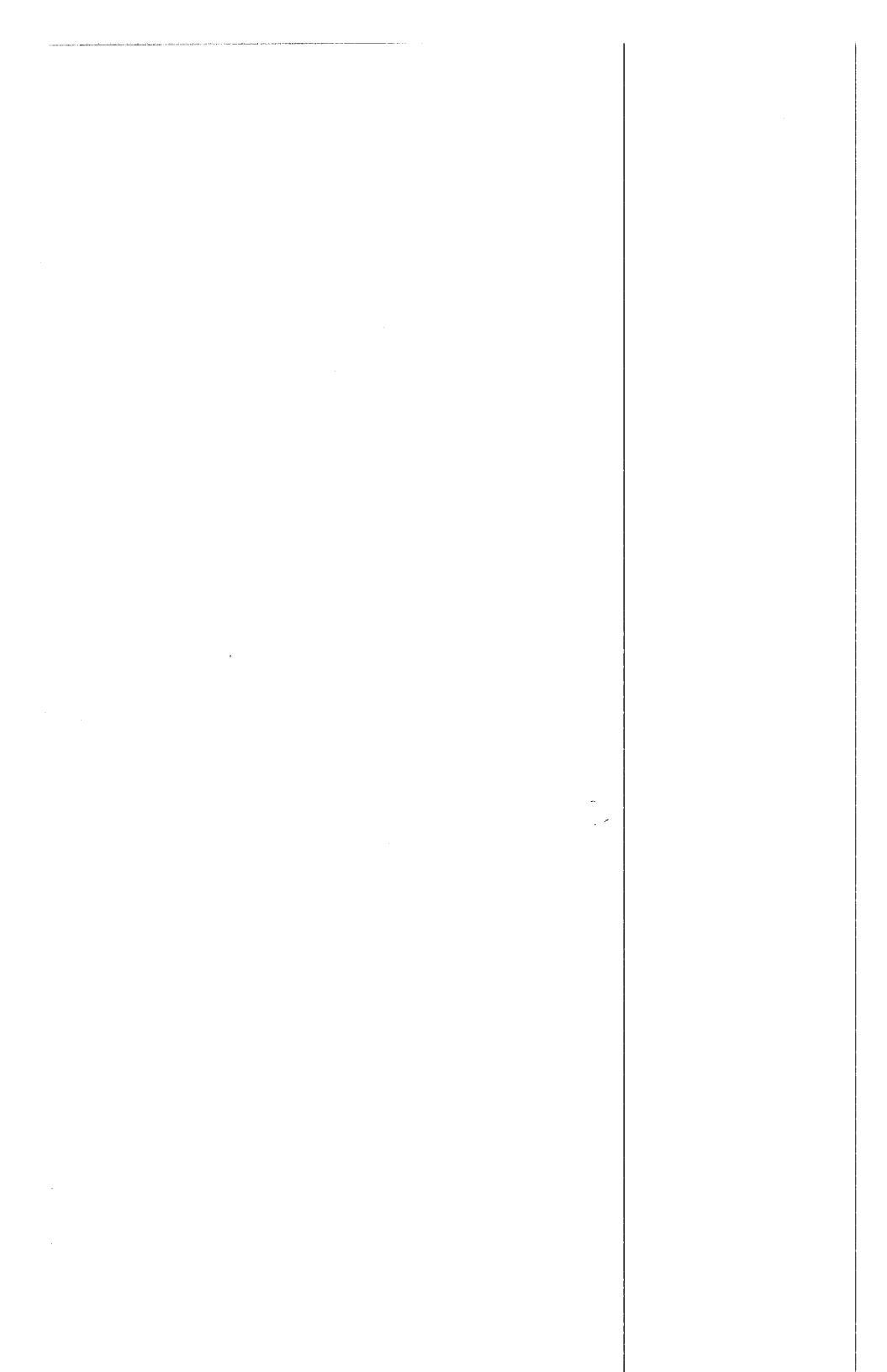


Contents

INTRODUCTION	v
POEMS	3
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	717
PREVIOUS COLLECTIONS	719
SUBJECT INDEX	723
INDEX OF FIRST LINES	737



THE COMPLETE POEMS OF
Emily Dickinson



Valentine week, 1850

Awake ye muses nine, sing me a strain divine,
Unwind the solemn twine, and tie my Valentine!

Oh the Earth was *made* for lovers, for damsel, and hopeless swain,
For sighing, and gentle whispering, and *unity* made of *twain*.
All things do go a courting, in earth, or sea, or air,
God hath made nothing single but *thee* in His world so fair!
The *bride*, and then the *bridegroom*, the *two*, and then the *one*,
Adam, and Eve, his consort, the moon, and then the sun;
The life doth prove the precept, who obey shall happy be,
Who will not serve the sovereign, be hanged on fatal tree.
The high do seek the lowly, the great do seek the small,
None cannot find who *seeketh*, on this terrestrial ball;
The bee doth court the flower, the flower his suit receives,
And they make merry wedding, whose guests are hundred leaves;
The wind doth woo the branches, the branches they are won,
And the father fond demandeth the maiden for his son.
The storm doth walk the seashore humming a mournful tune,
The wave with eye so pensive, looketh to see the moon,
Their spirits meet together, they make them solemn vows,
No more he singeth mournful, her sadness she doth lose.
The *worm* doth woo the *mortal*, death claims a living bride,
Night unto day is married, morn unto eventide;
Earth is a merry damsel, and *heaven* a knight so true,
And Earth is quite coquettish, and beseemeth in vain to sue.
Now to the *application*, to the reading of the roll,
To bringing thee to justice, and marshalling thy soul:
Thou art a *human* solo, a being cold, and lone,
Wilt have no kind companion, thou *reap'st* what thou hast *sown*.
Hast never silent hours, and minutes all too long,
And a deal of sad reflection, and *wailing* instead of song?

There's *Sarah*, and *Eliza*, and *Emeline* so fair,
And *Harriet*, and *Susan*, and she with *curling hair*!
Thine eyes are sadly blinded, but yet thou mayest see
Six true, and comely maidens sitting upon the tree;
Approach that tree with caution, then up it boldly climb,
And seize the one thou lovest, nor care for *space*, or *time*!
Then bear her to the greenwood, and build for her a bower,
And give her what she asketh, jewel, or bird, or flower –
And bring the fife, and trumpet, and beat upon the drum –
And bid the world Goodmorrow, and go to glory home!

1850

1894

2

There is another sky,
Ever serene and fair,
And there is another sunshine,
Though it be darkness there;
Never mind faded forests, Austin,
Never mind silent fields –
Here is a little forest,
Whose leaf is ever green;
Here is a brighter garden,
Where not a frost has been;
In its unfading flowers
I hear the bright bee hum;
Prithee, my brother,
Into *my* garden come!

1851

1894

3

“Sic transit gloria mundi,”
“How doth the busy bee,”
“Dum vivimus vivamus,”
I stay mine enemy!
Oh “veni, vidi, vici!”
Oh caput cap-a-pie!

And oh “memento mori”
When I am *far* from thee!

Hurrah for Peter Parley!
Hurrah for Daniel Boone!
Three cheers, sir, for the gentleman
Who first observed the moon!

Peter, put up the sunshine;
Patti, arrange the stars;
Tell Luna, *tea* is waiting,
And call your brother Mars!

Put down the apple, Adam,
And come away with me,
So shalt thou have a *pippin*
From off my father’s tree!

I climb the “Hill of Science,”
I “view the landscape o’er;”
Such transcendental prospect,
I ne’er beheld before!

Unto the Legislature
My country bids me go;
I’ll take my *india rubbers*,
In case the *wind* should blow!

During my education,
It was announced to me
That *gravitation, stumbling*,
Fell from an *apple* tree!

The earth upon an axis
Was once supposed to turn,
By way of a *gymnastic*
In honor of the sun!

It *was* the brave Columbus,
A sailing o’er the tide,
Who notified the nations
Of where I would reside!

Mortality is fatal -
Gentility is fine,
Rascality, heroic,
Insolvency, sublime!

Our Fathers being weary,
Laid down on Bunker Hill;
And tho' full many a morning,
Yet they are sleeping still, -

The trumpet, sir, shall wake them,
In dreams I see them rise,
Each with a solemn musket
A marching to the skies!

A coward will remain, Sir,
Until the fight is done;
But an *immortal hero*
Will take his hat, and run!

Good bye, Sir, I am going;
My country calleth me;
Allow me, Sir, at parting,
To wipe my weeping e'e.

In token of our friendship
Accept this "Bonnie Doon,"
And when the hand that plucked it
Hath passed beyond the moon,

The memory of my ashes
Will consolation be;
Then, farewell, Tuscarora,
And farewell, Sir, to thee!

St. Valentine - '52

1852

Knowest thou the shore
Where no breakers roar –
Where the storm is o'er?

In the peaceful west
Many the sails at rest –
The anchors fast –
Thither I pilot *thee* –
Land Ho! Eternity!
Ashore at last!

1853

1896

5

I have a Bird in spring
Which for myself doth sing –
The spring decoys.
And as the summer nears –
And as the Rose appears,
Robin is gone.

Yet do I not repine
Knowing that Bird of mine
Though flown –
Learneth beyond the sea
Melody new for me
And will return.

Fast in a safer hand
Held in a truer Land
Are mine –
And though they now depart,
Tell I my doubting heart
They're thine.

In a serener Bright,
In a more golden light
I see
Each little doubt and fear,
Each little discord here
Removed.

Then will I not repine,
Knowing that Bird of mine
Though flown
Shall in a distant tree
Bright melody for me
Return.

1854

1932

6

Frequently the woods are pink –
Frequently are brown.
Frequently the hills undress
Behind my native town.
Oft a head is crested
I was wont to see –
And as oft a cranny
Where it used to be –
And the Earth – they tell me –
On its Axis turned!
Wonderful Rotation!
By but *twelve* performed!

c. 1858

1891

7

The feet of people walking home
With gayer sandals go –
The Crocus – till she rises
The Vassal of the snow –
The lips at Hallelujah
Long years of practise bore
Till bye and bye these Bargemen
Walked singing on the shore.

Pearls are the Diver's farthings
Extorted from the Sea –
Pinions – the Seraph's wagon
Pedestrian once – as we –

Night is the morning's Canvas
Larceny — legacy —
Death, but our rapt attention
To Immortality.

My figures fail to tell me
How far the Village lies —
Whose peasants are the Angels —
Whose Cantons dot the skies —
My Classics veil their faces —
My faith that Dark adores —
Which from its solemn abbeys
Such resurrection pours.

c. 1858

1914

8

There is a word
Which bears a sword
Can pierce an armed man —
It hurls its barbed syllables
And is mute again —
But where it fell
The saved will tell
On patriotic day,
Some epauletted Brother
Gave his breath away.

Wherever runs the breathless sun —
Wherever roams the day —
There is its noiseless onset —
There is its victory!
Behold the keenest marksman!
The most accomplished shot!
Time's sublimest target
Is a soul "forgot!"

c. 1858

1896

Through lane it lay – through bramble
 Through clearing and through wood –
 Banditti often passed us
 Upon the lonely road.

The wolf came peering curious –
 The owl looked puzzled down –
 The serpent's satin figure
 Glid stealthily along –

The tempests touched our garments –
 The lightning's poinards gleamed –
 Fierce from the Crag above us
 The hungry Vulture screamed –

The satyr's fingers beckoned –
 The valley murmured "Come" –
These were the mates –
This was the road
 These children fluttered home.

c. 1858

1924

My wheel is in the dark!
 I cannot see a spoke
 Yet know its dripping feet
 Go round and round.

My foot is on the Tide!
 An unfrequented road –
 Yet have all roads
 A clearing at the end –

Some have resigned the Loom –
 Some in the busy tomb
 Find quaint employ –

Some with new – stately feet –
 Pass royal through the gate –

Flinging the problem back
At you and I!

c. 1858

1914

11

I never told the buried gold
Upon the hill – that lies –
I saw the sun – his plunder done
Crouch low to guard his prize.

He stood as near
As stood you here –
A pace had been between –
Did but a snake bisect the brake
My life had forfeit been.

That was a wondrous booty –
I hope 'twas honest gained.
Those were the fairest ingots
That ever kissed the spade!

Whether to keep the secret –
Whether to reveal –
Whether as I ponder
Kidd will sudden sail –

Could a shrewd advise me
We might e'en divide –
Should a shrewd betray me –
Atropos decide!

c. 1858

1914

12

The morns are meeker than they were –
The nuts are getting brown –
The berry's cheek is plumper –
The Rose is out of town.

The Maple wears a gayer scarf –
The field a scarlet gown –

Lest I should be old fashioned
I'll put a trinket on.

c. 1858

1890

13

Sleep is supposed to be
By souls of sanity
The shutting of the eye.

Sleep is the station grand
Down which, on either hand
The hosts of witness stand!

Morn is supposed to be
By people of degree
The breaking of the Day.

Morning has not occurred!

That shall Aurora be –
East of Eternity –
One with the banner gay –
One in the red array –
That is the break of Day!

c. 1858

1890

14

One Sister have I in our house,
And one, a hedge away.
There's only one recorded,
But both belong to me.

One came the road that I came –
And wore my last year's gown –
The other, as a bird her nest,
Builded our hearts among.

She did not sing as we did –
It was a different tune –

Herself to her a music
As Bumble bee of June.

Today is far from Childhood –
But up and down the hills
I held her hand the tighter –
Which shortened all the miles –

And still her hum
The years among,
Deceives the Butterfly;
Still in her Eye
The Violets lie
Mouldered this many May.

I spilt the dew –
But took the morn –
I chose this single star
From out the wide night's numbers –
Sue – forevermore!

1858

1914

15

The Guest is gold and crimson –
An Opal guest and gray –
Of Ermine is his doublet –
His Capuchin gay –

He reaches town at nightfall –
He stops at every door –
Who looks for him at morning
I pray him too – explore
The Lark's pure territory –
Or the Lapwing's shore!

c. 1858

1932

16

I would distil a cup,
And bear to all my friends,

Drinking to her no more astir,
By beck, or burn, or moor!

c. 1858

1894

17

Baffled for just a day or two -
Embarrassed - not afraid -
Encounter in my garden
An unexpected Maid.

She beckons, and the woods start -
She nods, and all begin -
Surely, such a country
I was never in!

c. 1858

1945

18

The Gentian weaves her fringes -
The Maple's loom is red -
My departing blossoms
Obviate parade.

A brief, but patient illness -
An hour to prepare,
And one below this morning
Is where the angels are -
It was a short procession,
The Bobolink was there -
An aged Bee addressed us -
And then we knelt in prayer -
We trust that she was willing -
We ask that we may be.
Summer - Sister - Seraph!
Let us go with thee!

In the name of the Bee -
And of the Butterfly -
And of the Breeze - Amen!

c. 1858

1891

19

A sepal, petal, and a thorn
 Upon a common summer's morn –
 A flask of Dew – A Bee or two –
 A Breeze – a caper in the trees –
 And I'm a Rose!

c. 1858

1896

20

Distrustful of the Gentian –
 And just to turn away,
 The fluttering of her fringes
 Chid my perfidy –
 Weary for my ———
 I will singing go –
 I shall not feel the sleet – then –
 I shall not fear the snow.

Flees so the phantom meadow
 Before the breathless Bee –
 So bubble brooks in deserts
 On Ears that dying lie –
 Burn so the Evening Spires
 To Eyes that Closing go –
 Hangs so distant Heaven –
 To a hand below.

c. 1858

1945

21

We lose – because we win –
 Gamblers – recollecting which
 Toss their dice again!

c. 1858

1945

All these my banners be.
 I sow my pageantry
 In May –
 It rises train by train –
 Then sleeps in state again –
 My chancel – all the plain
 Today.

To lose – if one can find again –
 To miss – if one shall meet –
 The Burglar cannot rob – then –
 The Broker cannot cheat.
 So build the hillocks gaily
 Thou little spade of mine
 Leaving nooks for Daisy
 And for Columbine –
 You and I the secret
 Of the Crocus know –
 Let us chant it softly –
“There is no more snow!”

To him who keeps an Orchis' heart –
 The swamps are pink with June.

c. 1858

1945

I had a guinea golden –
 I lost it in the sand –
 And tho' the sum was simple
 And pounds were in the land –
 Still, had it such a value
 Unto my frugal eye –
 That when I could not find it –
 I sat me down to sigh.

I had a crimson Robin –
 Who sang full many a day
 But when the woods were painted,
 He, too, did fly away –

Time brought me other Robins –
Their ballads were the same –
Still, for my missing Troubadour
I kept the “house at home.”

I had a star in heaven –
One “Pleiad” was its name –
And when I was not heeding,
It wandered from the same.
And tho’ the skies are crowded –
And all the night ashine –
I do not care about it –
Since none of them are mine.

My story has a moral –
I have a missing friend –
“Pleiad” its name, and Robin,
And guinea in the sand.
And when this mournful ditty
Accompanied with tear –
Shall meet the eye of traitor
In country far from here –
Grant that repentance solemn
May seize upon his mind –
And he no consolation
Beneath the sun may find.

c. 1858

1896

24

There is a morn by men unseen –
Whose maids upon remoter green
Keep their Seraphic May –
And all day long, with dance and game,
And gambol I may never name –
Employ their holiday.

Here to light measure, move the feet
Which walk no more the village street –
Nor by the wood are found –

Here are the birds that sought the sun
When last year's distaff idle hung
And summer's brows were bound.

Ne'er saw I such a wondrous scene -
Ne'er such a ring on such a green -
Nor so serene array -
As if the stars some summer night
Should swing their cups of Chrysolite -
And revel till the day -

Like thee to dance - like thee to sing -
People upon the mystic green -
I ask, each new May Morn.
I wait thy far, fantastic bells -
Announcing me in other dells -
Unto the different dawn!

c. 1858

1945

25

She slept beneath a tree -
Remembered but by me.
I touched her Cradle mute -
She recognized the foot -
Put on her carmine suit
And see!

c. 1858

1896

26

It's all I have to bring today -
This, and my heart beside -
This, and my heart, and all the fields -
And all the meadows wide -
Be sure you count - should I forget
Some one the sum could tell -

This, and my heart, and all the Bees
Which in the Clover dwell.

c. 1858

1896

27

Morns like these – we parted –
Noons like these – she rose –
Fluttering first – then firmer
To her fair repose.

Never did she lisp it –
It was not for me –
She – was mute from transport –
I – from agony –

Till – the evening nearing
One the curtains drew –
Quick! A Sharper rustling!
And this linnet flew!

c. 1858

1891

28

So has a Daisy vanished
From the fields today –
So tiptoed many a slipper
To Paradise away –

Oozed so in crimson bubbles
Day's departing tide –
Blooming – tripping – flowing –
Are ye then with God?

c. 1858

1945

29

If those I loved were lost
The Crier's voice would tell me –
If those I loved were found
The bells of Ghent would ring –

Did those I loved repose
The Daisy would impel me.
Philip -- when bewildered
Bore his riddle in!

c. 1858

1945

30

Adrift! A little boat adrift!
And night is coming down!
Will *no* one guide a little boat
Unto the nearest town?

So Sailors say -- on yesterday --
Just as the dusk was brown
One little boat gave up its strife
And gurgled down and down.

So angels say -- on yesterday --
Just as the dawn was red
One little boat -- o'erspent with gales --
Retrimmed its masts -- redecked its sails --
And shot -- exultant on!

c. 1858

1896

31

Summer for thee, grant I may be
When Summer days are flown!
Thy music still, when Whippoorwill
And Oriole -- are done!

For thee to bloom, I'll skip the tomb
And row my blossoms o'er!
Pray gather me --
Anemone --
Thy flower -- forevermore!

c. 1858

1896

32

When Roses cease to bloom, Sir,
 And Violets are done –
 When Bumblebees in solemn flight
 Have passed beyond the Sun –
 The hand that paused to gather
 Upon this Summer's day
 Will idle lie – in Auburn –
 Then take my flowers – pray!

c. 1858

1896

33

If recollecting were forgetting,
 Then I remember not.
 And if forgetting, recollecting,
 How near I had forgot.
 And if to miss, were merry,
 And to mourn, were gay,
 How very blithe the fingers
 That gathered this, Today!

c. 1858

1894

34

Garlands for Queens, may be –
 Laurels – for rare degree
 Of soul or sword.
 Ah – but remembering me –
 Ah – but remembering thee –
 Nature in chivalry –
 Nature in charity –
 Nature in equity –
 The Rose ordained!

c. 1858

1945

Nobody knows this little Rose –
 It might a pilgrim be
 Did I not take it from the ways
 And lift it up to thee.
 Only a Bee will miss it –
 Only a Butterfly,
 Hastening from far journey –
 On its breast to lie –
 Only a Bird will wonder –
 Only a Breeze will sigh –
 Ah Little Rose – how easy
 For such as thee to die!

c. 1858

1891

Snow flakes.

I counted till they danced so
 Their slippers leaped the town,
 And then I took a pencil
 To note the rebels down.
 And then they grew so jolly
 I did resign the prig,
 And ten of my once stately toes
 Are marshalled for a jig!

c. 1858

1945

Before the ice is in the pools –
 Before the skaters go,
 Or any cheek at nightfall
 Is tarnished by the snow –

Before the fields have finished,
 Before the Christmas tree,
 Wonder upon wonder
 Will arrive to me!

What we touch the hem of
On a summer's day –
What is only walking
Just a bridge away –

That which sings so – speaks so –
When there's no one here –
Will the frock I wept in
Answer me to wear?

c. 1858

1896

38

By such and such an offering
To Mr. So and So,
The web of life woven –
So martyrs albums show!

c. 1858

1945

39

It did not surprise me –
So I said – or thought –
She will stir her pinions
And the nest forgot,

Traverse broader forests –
Build in gayer boughs,
Breathe in Ear more modern
God's old fashioned vows –

This was but a Birdling –
What and if it be
One within my bosom
Had departed me?

This was but a story –
What and if indeed
There were just such coffin
In the heart instead?

c. 1858

1945

40

When I count the seeds
That are sown beneath,
To bloom so, bye and bye -

When I con the people
Lain so low,
To be received as high -

When I believe the garden
Mortal shall not see -
Pick by faith its blossom
And avoid its Bee,
I can spare this summer, unreluctantly.

c. 1858

1945

41

I robbed the Woods -
The trusting Woods.
The unsuspecting Trees
Brought out their Burs and mosses
My fantasy to please.
I scanned their trinkets curious -
I grasped - I bore away -
What will the solemn Hemlock -
What will the Oak tree say?

c. 1858

1955

42

A Day! Help! Help! Another Day!
Your prayers, oh Passer by!
From such a common ball as this
Might date a Victory!
From marshallings as simple
The flags of nations swang.
Steady - my soul: What issues
Upon thine arrow hang!

c. 1858

1945

43

Could live — *did* live —
 Could die — *did* die —
 Could smile upon the whole
 Through faith in one he met not,
 To introduce his soul.

Could go from scene familiar
 To an untraversed spot —
 Could contemplate the journey
 With unpuzzled heart —

Such trust had one among us,
 Among us *not* today —
 We who saw the launching
 Never sailed the Bay!

c. 1858

1945

44

If she had been the Mistletoe
 And I had been the Rose —
 How gay upon your table
 My velvet life to close —
 Since I am of the Druid,
 And she is of the dew —
 I'll deck Tradition's buttonhole —
 And send the Rose to you.

c. 1858

1894

45

There's something quieter than sleep
 Within this inner room!
 It wears a sprig upon its breast —
 And will not tell its name.

Some touch it, and some kiss it —
 Some chafe its idle hand —

It has a simple gravity
I do not understand!

I would not weep if I were they --
How rude in one to sob!
Might scare the quiet fairy
Back to her native wood!

While simple-hearted neighbors
Chat of the "Early dead" --
We - prone to periphrasis,
Remark that Birds have fled!

c. 1858

1896

46

I keep my pledge.
I was not called --
Death did not notice me.
I bring my Rose.
I plight again,
By every sainted Bee --
By Daisy called from hillside --
By Bobolink from lane.
Blossom and I --
Her oath, and mine --
Will surely come again.

c. 1858

1945

47

Heart! We will forget him!
You and I - tonight!
You may forget the warmth he gave --
I will forget the light!

When you have done, pray tell me
That I may straight begin!
Haste! lest while you're lagging
I remember him!

c. 1858

1896

Once more, my now bewildered Dove
 Bestirs her puzzled wings
 Once more her mistress, on the deep
 Her troubled question flings –

Thrice to the floating casement
 The Patriarch's bird returned,
 Courage! My brave Columba!
 There may yet be *Land!*

c. 1858

1945

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!

c. 1858

1890

I haven't told my garden yet –
 Lest that should conquer me.
 I haven't quite the strength now
 To break it to the Bee –

I will not name it in the street
 For shops would stare at me –
 That one so shy – so ignorant
 Should have the face to die.

The hillsides must not know it –
 Where I have rambled so –
 Nor tell the loving forests
 The day that I shall go –

Nor lisp it at the table –
Nor heedless by the way
Hint that within the Riddle
One will walk today –

c. 1858

1891

51

I often passed the village
When going home from school –
And wondered what they did there –
And why it was so still –

I did not know the year then –
In which my call would come –
Earlier, by the Dial,
Than the rest have gone.

It's stiller than the sundown.
It's cooler than the dawn –
The Daisies dare to come here –
And birds can flutter down –

So when you are tired –
Or perplexed – or cold –
Trust the loving promise
Underneath the mould,
Cry "it's I," "take Dollie,"
And I will enfold!

c. 1858

1945

52

Whether my bark went down at sea –
Whether she met with gales –
Whether to isles enchanted
She bent her docile sails –

By what mystic mooring
She is held today –

This is the errand of the eye
Out upon the Bay.

c. 1858

1894

53

Taken from men – this morning –
Carried by men today –
Met by the Gods with banners –
Who marshalled her away –

One little maid – from playmates –
One little mind from school –
There must be guests in Eden –
All the rooms are full –

Far – as the East from Even –
Dim – as the border star –
Courtiers quaint, in Kingdoms
Our departed are.

c. 1858

1891

54

If I should die,
And you should live –
And time should gurgle on –
And morn should beam –
And noon should burn –
As it has usual done –
If Birds should build as early
And Bees as bustling go –
One might depart at option
From enterprise below!
"Tis sweet to know that stocks will stand
When we with Daisies lie –
That Commerce will continue –
And Trades as briskly fly –
It makes the parting tranquil
And keeps the soul serene –

That gentlemen so sprightly
Conduct the pleasing scene!

c. 1858

1891

55

By Chivalries as tiny,
A Blossom, or a Book,
The seeds of smiles are planted –
Which blossom in the dark.

c. 1858

1945

56

If I should cease to bring a Rose
Upon a festal day,
'Twill be because *beyond* the Rose
I have been called away –

If I should cease to take the names
My buds commemorate –
'Twill be because *Death's* finger
Claps my murmuring lip!

c. 1858

1945

57

To venerate the simple days
Which lead the seasons by,
Needs but to remember
That from you or I,
They may take the trifles
Termed *mortality*!

c. 1858

1896

58

Delayed till she had ceased to know –
Delayed till in its vest of snow
Her loving bosom lay –

An hour behind the fleeting breath –
Later by just an hour than Death –
Oh lagging Yesterday!

Could she have guessed that it would be –
Could but a crier of the joy
Have climbed the distant hill –
Had not the bliss so slow a pace
Who knows but this surrendered face
Were undefeated still?

Oh if there may departing be
Any forgot by Victory
In her imperial round –
Show them this meek appareled thing
That could not stop to be a king –
Doubtful if it be crowned!

c. 1859

1890

59

A little East of Jordan,
Evangelists record,
A Gymnast and an Angel
Did wrestle long and hard –

Till morning touching mountain –
And Jacob, waxing strong,
The Angel begged permission
To Breakfast – to return –

Not so, said cunning Jacob!
“I will not let thee go
Except thou bless me” – Stranger!
The which acceded to –

Light swung the silver fleeces
“Peniel” Hills beyond,
And the bewildered Gymnast
Found he had worsted God!

c. 1859

1914

60

Like her the Saints retire,
In their Chapeaux of fire,
Martial as she!

Like her the Evenings steal
Purple and Cochineal
After the Day!

“Departed” – both – they say!
i.e. gathered away,
Not found,

Argues the Aster still –
Reasons the Daffodil
Profound!

c. 1859

1932

61

Papa above!
Regard a Mouse
O'erpowered by the Cat!
Reserve within thy kingdom
A “Mansion” for the Rat!

Snug in seraphic Cupboards
To nibble all the day,
While unsuspecting Cycles
Wheel solemnly away!

c. 1859

1914

62

“Sown in dishonor”!
Ah! Indeed!
May *this* “dishonor” be?
If I were half so fine myself
I’d notice nobody!

"Sown in corruption"!
Not so fast!
Apostle is askew!
Corinthians 1. 15. narrates
A Circumstance or two!

c. 1859

1914

63

If pain for peace prepares
Lo, what "Augustan" years
Our feet await!

If springs from winter rise,
Can the Anemones
Be reckoned up?

If night stands first – *then* noon
To gird us for the sun,
What gaze!

When from a thousand skies
On our *developed* eyes
Noons blaze!

c. 1859

1914

64

Some Rainbow – coming from the Fair!
Some Vision of the World Cashmere –
I confidently see!
Or else a Peacock's purple Train
Feather by feather – on the plain
Fritters itself away!

The dreamy Butterflies bestir!
Lethargic pools resume the whir
Of last year's sundered tune!
From some old Fortress on the sun
Baronial Bees – march – one by one –
In murmuring platoon!

The Robins stand as thick today
As flakes of snow stood yesterday –
On fence – and Roof – and Twig!
The Orchis binds her feather on
For her old lover – Don the Sun!
Revisiting the Bog!

Without Commander! Countless! Still!
The Regiments of Wood and Hill
In bright detachment stand!
Behold! Whose Multitudes are these?
The children of whose turbaned seas –
Or what Circassian Land?

c. 1859

1890

65

I can't tell you – but you feel it –
Nor can you tell me –
Saints, with ravished slate and pencil
Solve our April Day!

Sweeter than a vanished frolic
From a vanished green!
Swifter than the hoofs of Horsemen
Round a Ledge of dream!

Modest, let us walk among it
With our faces veiled –
As they say polite Archangels
Do in meeting God!

Not for me – to prate about it!
Not for you – to say
To some fashionable Lady
“Charming April Day”!

Rather – Heaven's “Peter Parley”!
By which Children slow
To sublimer Recitation
Are prepared to go!

c. 1859

1914

So from the mould
 Scarlet and Gold
 Many a Bulb will rise –
 Hidden away, cunningly,
 From sagacious eyes.

So from Cocoon
 Many a Worm
 Leap so Highland gay,
Peasants like me,
 Peasants like Thee
 Gaze perplexedly!

c. 1859

1914

Success is counted sweetest
 By those who ne'er succeed.
 To comprehend a nectar
 Requires sorest need.

Not one of all the purple Host
 Who took the Flag today
 Can tell the definition
 So clear of Victory

As he defeated – dying –
 On whose forbidden ear
 The distant strains of triumph
 Burst agonized and clear!

c. 1859

1878

Ambition cannot find him.
 Affection doesn't know
 How many leagues of nowhere
 Lie between them now.

Yesterday, undistinguished!
Eminent Today
For our mutual honor,
Immortality!

c. 1859

1914

69

Low at my problem bending,
Another problem comes –
Larger than mine – Serener –
Involving statelier sums.

I check my busy pencil,
My figures file away.
Wherefore, my baffled fingers
Thy perplexity?

c. 1859

1914

70

“Arcturus” is his other name –
I’d rather call him “Star.”
It’s very mean of Science
To go and interfere!

I slew a worm the other day –
A “Savant” passing by
Murmured “Resurgam” – “Centipede”!
“Oh Lord – how frail are we”!

I pull a flower from the woods –
A monster with a glass
Computes the stamens in a breath –
And has her in a “class”!

Whereas I took the Butterfly
Aforetime in my hat –
He sits erect in “Cabinets” –
The Clover bells forgot.

What once was "Heaven"
Is "Zenith" now –
Where I proposed to go
When Time's brief masquerade was done
Is mapped and charted too.

What if the poles should brisk about
And stand upon their heads!
I hope I'm ready for "the worst" –
Whatever prank betides!

Perhaps the "Kingdom of Heaven's" changed –
I hope the "Children" there
Won't be "new fashioned" when I come –
And laugh at me – and stare –

I hope the Father in the skies
Will lift his little girl –
Old fashioned – naughty – everything –
Over the stile of "Pearl."

c. 1859

1891

71

A throe upon the features –
A hurry in the breath –
An ecstasy of parting
Denominated "Death" –

An anguish at the mention
Which when to patience grown,
I've known permission given
To rejoin its own.

c. 1859

1891

72

Glowing is her Bonnet,
Glowing is her Cheek,
Glowing is her Kirtle,
Yet she cannot speak.

[37]

Better as the Daisy
From the Summer hill
Vanish unrecorded
Save by tearful rill -

Save by loving sunrise
Looking for her face.
Save by feet unnumbered
Pausing at the place.

c. 1859

1914

73

Who never lost, are unprepared
A Coronet to find!
Who never thirsted
Flagons, and Cooling Tamarind!

Who never climbed the weary league -
Can such a foot explore
The purple territories
On Pizarro's shore?

How many Legions overcome -
The Emperor will say?
How many Colors taken
On Revolution Day?

How many Bullets bearest?
Hast Thou the Royal scar?
Angels! Write "Promoted"
On this Soldier's brow!

c. 1859

1891

74

A Lady red - amid the Hill
Her annual secret keeps!
A Lady white, within the Field
In placid Lily sleeps!

The tidy Breezes, with their Brooms
Sweep vale – and hill – and tree!
Prithee, My pretty Housewives!
Who may expected be?

The Neighbors do not yet suspect!
The Woods exchange a smile!
Orchard, and Buttercup, and Bird –
In such a little while!

And yet, how still the Landscape stands!
How nonchalant the Hedge!
As if the “Resurrection”
Were nothing very strange!

c. 1859

1896

75

She died at play,
Gambolled away
Her lease of spotted hours,
Then sank as gaily as a Turk
Upon a Couch of flowers.

Her ghost strolled softly o'er the hill
Yesterday, and Today,
Her vestments as the silver fleece –
Her countenance as spray.

c. 1859

1914

76

Exultation is the going
Of an inland soul to sea,
Past the houses – past the headlands –
Into deep Eternity –

Bred as we, among the mountains,
Can the sailor understand

The divine intoxication
Of the first league out from land?

c. 1859

1890

77

I never hear the word "escape"
Without a quicker blood,
A sudden expectation,
A flying attitude!

I never hear of prisons broad
By soldiers battered down,
But I tug childish at my bars
Only to fail again!

c. 1859

1891

78

A poor - torn heart - a tattered heart -
That sat it down to rest -
Nor noticed that the Ebbing Day
Flowed silver to the West -
Nor noticed Night did soft descend -
Nor Constellation burn -
Intent upon the vision
Of latitudes unknown.

The angels - happening that way
This dusty heart espied -
Tenderly took it up from toil
And carried it to God -
There - sandals for the Barefoot -
There - gathered from the gales -
Do the blue havens by the hand
Lead the wandering Sails.

c. 1859

1891

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.

c. 1859

1891

Our lives are Swiss –
 So still – so Cool –
 Till some odd afternoon
 The Alps neglect their Curtains
 And we look farther on!

Italy stands the other side!
While like a guard between –
The solemn Alps –
The siren Alps
Forever intervene!

c. 1859

1896

81

We should not mind so small a flower –
Except it quiet bring
Our little garden that we lost
Back to the Lawn again.

So spicy her Carnations nod –
So drunken, reel her Bees –
So silver steal a hundred flutes
From out a hundred trees –

That whoso sees this little flower
By faith may clear behold
The Bobolinks around the throne
And Dandelions gold.

c. 1859

1914

82

Whose cheek is this?
What rosy face
Has lost a blush today?
I found her – “pleiad” – in the woods
And bore her safe away.

Robins, in the tradition
Did cover such with leaves,
But which the cheek –
And which the pall
My scrutiny deceives.

c. 1859

1932

Heart, not so heavy as mine
 Wending late home –
 As it passed my window
 Whistled itself a tune –
 A careless snatch – a ballad –
 A ditty of the street –
 Yet to my irritated Ear
 An Anodyne so sweet –
 It was as if a Bobolink
 Sauntering this way
 Carolled, and paused, and carolled –
 Then bubbled slow away!
 It was as if a chirping brook
 Upon a dusty way –
 Set bleeding feet to minuets
 Without the knowing why!
Tomorrow, night will come again –
 Perhaps, weary and sore –
 Ah Bugle! By my window
 I pray you pass once more.

c. 1859

1891

Her breast is fit for pearls,
 But I was not a “Diver” –
 Her brow is fit for thrones
 But I have not a crest.
 Her heart is fit for *home* –
 I – a Sparrow – build there
 Sweet of twigs and twine
 My perennial nest.

c. 1859

1894

“They have not chosen me,” he said,
 “But I have chosen them!”

Brave – Broken hearted statement –
Uttered in Bethlehem!

I could not have told it,
But since Jesus dared –
Sovereign! Know a Daisy
Thy dishonor shared!

c. 1859

1894

86

South Winds jostle them –
Bumblebees come –
Hover – hesitate –
Drink, and are gone –

Butterflies pause
On their passage Cashmere –
I – softly plucking,
Present them here!

c. 1859

1891

87

A darting fear – a pomp – a tear –
A waking on a morn
To find that what one waked for,
Inhales the different dawn.

c. 1859

1945

88

As by the dead we love to sit,
Become so wondrous dear –
As for the lost we grapple
Tho' all the rest are here –

In broken mathematics
We estimate our prize

Vast – in its fading ratio
To our penurious eyes!

c. 1859

1891

89

Some things that fly there be –
Birds – Hours – the Bumblebee –
Of these no Elegy.

Some things that stay there be –
Grief – Hills – Eternity –
Nor this behooveth me.

There are that resting, rise.
Can I expound the skies?
How still the Riddle lies!

c. 1859

1890

90

Within my reach!
I could have touched!
I might have chanced that way!
Soft sauntered thro' the village –
Sauntered as soft away!
So unsuspected Violets
Within the meadows go –
Too late for striving fingers
That passed, an hour ago!

c. 1859

1890

91

So bashful when I spied her!
So pretty – so ashamed!
So hidden in her leaflets
Lest anybody find –

So breathless till I passed her –
So helpless when I turned

And bore her struggling, blushing,
Her simple haunts beyond!

For whom I robbed the Dingle –
For whom betrayed the Dell –
Many, will doubtless ask me,
But I shall never tell!

c. 1859

1890

92

My friend must be a Bird –
Because it flies!
Mortal, my friend must be,
Because it dies!
Barbs has it, like a Bee!
Ah, curious friend!
Thou puzzlest me!

c. 1859

1896

93

Went up a year this evening!
I recollect it well!
Amid no bells nor bravoes
The bystanders will tell!
Cheerful – as to the village –
Tranquil – as to repose –
Chastened – as to the Chapel
This humble Tourist rose!
Did not talk of returning!
Alluded to no time
When, were the gales propitious –
We might look for him!
Was grateful for the Roses
In life's diverse bouquet –
Talked softly of new species
To pick another day;
Beguiling thus the wonder
The wondrous nearer drew –

Hands bustled at the moorings -
The crowd respectful grew -
Ascended from our vision
To Countenances new!
A Difference - A Daisy -
Is all the rest I knew!

c. 1859

1891

94

Angels, in the early morning
May be seen the Dews among,
Stooping - plucking - smiling - flying -
Do the Buds to them belong?

Angels, when the sun is hottest
May be seen the sands among,
Stooping - plucking - sighing - flying -
Parched the flowers they bear along.

c. 1859

1890

95

My nosegays are for Captives -
Dim - long expectant eyes,
Fingers denied the plucking,
Patient till Paradise.

To such, if they should whisper
Of morning and the moor,
They bear no other errand,
And I, no other prayer.

c. 1859

1891

96

Sexton! My Master's sleeping here.
Pray lead me to his bed!
I came to build the Bird's nest,
And sow the Early seed -

That when the snow creeps slowly
From off his chamber door –
Daisies point the way there –
And the Troubadour.

c. 1859

1935

97

The rainbow never tells me
That gust and storm are by,
Yet is she more convincing
Than Philosophy.

My flowers turn from Forums –
Yet eloquent declare
What Cato couldn't prove me
Except the *birds* were here!

c. 1859

1929

98

One dignity delays for all –
One mitred Afternoon –
None can avoid this purple –
None evade this Crown!

Coach, it insures, and footmen –
Chamber, and state, and throng –
Bells, also, in the village
As we ride grand along!

What dignified Attendants!
What service when we pause!
How loyally at parting
Their hundred hats they raise!

How pomp surpassing ermine
When simple You, and I,
Present our meek escutcheon
And claim the rank to die!

c. 1859

1890

New feet within my garden go –
 New fingers stir the sod –
 A Troubadour upon the Elm
 Betrays the solitude.

New children play upon the green –
 New Weary sleep below –
 And still the pensive Spring returns –
 And still the punctual snow!

c. 1859

1890

100

A science – so the Savants say,
 “Comparative Anatomy” –
 By which a single bone –
 Is made a secret to unfold
 Of some rare tenant of the mold,
 Else perished in the stone –

So to the eye prospective led,
 This meekest flower of the mead
 Upon a winter’s day,
 Stands representative in gold
 Of Rose and Lily, manifold,
 And countless Butterfly!

c. 1859

1929

101

Will there really be a “Morning”?
 Is there such a thing as “Day”?
 Could I see it from the mountains
 If I were as tall as they?

Has it feet like Water lilies?
 Has it feathers like a Bird?
 Is it brought from famous countries
 Of which I have never heard?

Oh some Scholar! Oh some Sailor!
Oh some Wise Man from the skies!
Please to tell a little Pilgrim
Where the place called "Morning" lies!

c. 1859

1891

102

Great Caesar! Condescend
The Daisy, to receive,
Gathered by Cato's Daughter,
With your majestic leave!

c. 1859

1932

103

I have a King, who does not speak –
So – wondering – thro' the hours meek
I trudge the day away –
Half glad when it is night, and sleep,
If, haply, thro' a dream, to peep
In parlors, shut by day.

And if I do – when morning comes –
It is as if a hundred drums
Did round my pillow roll,
And shouts fill all my Childish sky,
And Bells keep saying "Victory"
From steeples in my soul!

And if I don't – the little Bird
Within the Orchard, is not heard,
And I omit to pray
"Father, thy will be done" today
For my will goes the other way,
And it were perjury!

c. 1859

1896

Where I have lost, I softer tread –
 I sow sweet flower from garden bed –
 I pause above that vanished head
 And mourn.

Whom I have lost, I pious guard
 From accent harsh, or ruthless word –
 Feeling as if their pillow heard,
 Though stone!

When I have lost, you'll know by this –
 A Bonnet black – A dusk surplice –
 A little tremor in my voice
 Like this!

Why, I have lost, the people know
 Who dressed in frocks of purest snow
 Went home a century ago
 Next Bliss!

c. 1859

1932

To hang our head – ostensibly –
 And subsequent, to find
 That such was not the posture
 Of our immortal mind –

Affords the sly presumption
 That in so dense a fuzz –
 You – too – take Cobweb attitudes
 Upon a plane of Gauze!

c. 1859

1896

The Daisy follows soft the Sun –
 And when his golden walk is done –
 Sits shyly at his feet –

He – waking – finds the flower there –
Wherefore – Marauder – art thou here?
Because, Sir, love is sweet!

We are the Flower – Thou the Sun!
Forgive us, if as days decline –
We nearer steal to Thee!
Enamored of the parting West –
The peace – the flight – the Amethyst –
Night's possibility!

c. 1859

1890

107

"Twas such a little – little boat
That toddled down the bay!
"Twas such a gallant – gallant sea
That beckoned it away!

"Twas such a greedy, greedy wave
That licked it from the Coast –
Nor ever guessed the stately sails
My little craft was *lost*!

c. 1859

1890

108

Surgeons must be very careful
When they take the knife!
Underneath their fine incisions
Stirs the Culprit – *Life*!

c. 1859

1891

109

By a flower – By a letter –
By a nimble love –
If I weld the Rivet faster –
Final fast – above –

Never mind my breathless Anvil!
Never mind Repose!

Never mind the sooty faces
Tugging at the Forge!

c. 1859

1932

110

Artists wrestled here!
Lo, a tint Cashmere!
Lo, a Rose!
Student of the Year!
For the easel here
Say Repose!

c. 1859

1945

111

The Bee is not afraid of me.
I know the Butterfly.
The pretty people in the Woods
Receive me cordially –

The Brooks laugh louder when I come –
The Breezes madder play;
Wherefore mine eye thy silver mists,
Wherefore, Oh Summer's Day?

c. 1859

1890

112

Where bells no more affright the morn –
Where scrabble never comes –
Where very nimble Gentlemen
Are forced to keep their rooms –

Where tired Children placid sleep
Thro' Centuries of noon
This place is Bliss – this town is Heaven –
Please, Pater, pretty soon!

"Oh could we climb where Moses stood,
And view the Landscape o'er"

Not Father's bells – nor Factories,
Could scare us any more!

c. 1859

1945

113

Our share of night to bear –
Our share of morning –
Our blank in bliss to fill
Our blank in scorning –

Here a star, and there a star,
Some lose their way!
Here a mist, and there a mist,
Afterwards – Day!

c. 1859

1890

114

Good night, because we must,
How intricate the dust!
I would go, to know!
Oh incognito!
Saucy, Saucy Seraph
To elude me so!
Father! they won't tell me,
Won't you tell them to?

c. 1859

1945

115

What Inn is this
Where for the night
Peculiar Traveller comes?
Who is the Landlord?
Where the maids?
Behold, what curious rooms!
No ruddy fires on the hearth –
No brimming Tankards flow –

Necromancer! Landlord!
Who are these below?

c. 1859

1891

116

I had some things that I called mine –
And God, that he called his,
Till, recently a rival Claim
Disturbed these amities.

The property, my garden,
Which having sown with care,
He claims the pretty acre,
And sends a Bailiff there.

The station of the parties
Forbids publicity,
But Justice is sublimer
Than arms, or pedigree.

I'll institute an "Action" –
I'll vindicate the law –
Jove! Choose your counsel –
I retain "Shaw"!

c. 1859

1945

117

In rags mysterious as these
The shining Courtiers go –
Veiling the purple, and the plumes –
Veiling the ermine so.

Smiling, as they request an alms –
At some imposing door!
Smiling when we walk barefoot
Upon their golden floor!

c. 1859

1945

118

My friend attacks my friend!
 Oh Battle picturesque!
 Then I turn Soldier too,
 And he turns Satirist!
 How martial is this place!
 Had I a mighty gun
 I think I'd shoot the human race
 And then to glory run!

c. 1859

1945

119

Talk with prudence to a Beggar
 Of "Potosi," and the mines!
 Reverently, to the Hungry
 Of your viands, and your wines!
 Cautious, hint to any Captive
 You have passed enfranchised feet!
 Anecdotes of air in Dungeons
 Have sometimes proved deadly sweet!

c. 1859

1891

120

If this is "fading"
 Oh let me immediately "fade"!
 If this is "dying"
 Bury me, in such a shroud of red!
 If this is "sleep,"
 On such a night
 How proud to shut the eye!
 Good Evening, gentle Fellow men!
Peacock presumes to die!

c. 1859

1945

As Watchers hang upon the East,
 As Beggars revel at a feast
 By savory Fancy spread –
 As brooks in deserts babble sweet
 On ear too far for the delight,
 Heaven beguiles the tired.

As that same watcher, when the East
 Opens the lid of Amethyst
 And lets the morning go –
 That Beggar, when an honored Guest,
 Those thirsty lips to flagons pressed,
 Heaven to us, if true.

c. 1859

1945

A something in a summer's Day
 As slow her flambeaux burn away
 Which solemnizes me.

A something in a summer's noon –
 A depth – an Azure – a perfume –
 Transcending ecstasy.

And still within a summer's night
 A something so transporting bright
 I clap my hands to see –

Then veil my too inspecting face
 Lest such a subtle – shimmering grace
 Flutter too far for me –

The wizard fingers never rest –
 The purple brook within the breast
 Still chafes its narrow bed –

Still rears the East her amber Flag –
 Guides still the Sun along the Crag
 His Caravan of Red –

So looking on – the night – the morn
Conclude the wonder gay –
And I meet, coming thro' the dews
Another summer's Day!

c. 1859

1890

123

Many cross the Rhine
In this cup of mine.
Sip old Frankfort air
From my brown Cigar.

c. 1859

1945

124

In lands I never saw – they say
Immortal Alps look down –
Whose Bonnets touch the firmament –
Whose Sandals touch the town –

Meek at whose everlasting feet
A Myriad Daisy play –
Which, Sir, are you and which am I
Upon an August day?

c. 1859

1891

125

For each ecstatic instant
We must an anguish pay
In keen and quivering ratio
To the ecstasy.

For each beloved hour
Sharp pittances of years –
Bitter contested farthings –
And Coffers heaped with Tears!

c. 1859

1891

To fight aloud, is very brave –
 But *gallanter*, I know
 Who charge within the bosom
 The Cavalry of Woe –

 Who win, and nations do not see –
 Who fall – and none observe –
 Whose dying eyes, no Country
 Regards with patriot love –

 We trust, in plumed procession
 For such, the Angels go –
 Rank after Rank, with even feet –
 And Uniforms of Snow.

c. 1859

1890

“Houses” – so the Wise Men tell me –
 “Mansions”! Mansions must be warm!
 Mansions cannot let the tears in,
 Mansions must exclude the storm!

 “Many Mansions,” by “his Father,”
 I don’t know him; snugly built!
 Could the Children find the way there –
 Some, would even trudge tonight!

c. 1859

1945

Bring me the sunset in a cup,
 Reckon the morning’s flagons up
 And say how many Dew,
 Tell me how far the morning leaps –
 Tell me what time the weaver sleeps
 Who spun the breadths of blue!

Write me how many notes there be
In the new Robin's ecstasy
Among astonished boughs –
How many trips the Tortoise makes –
How many cups the Bee partakes,
The Debauchee of Dews!

Also, who laid the Rainbow's piers,
Also, who leads the docile spheres
By withes of supple blue?
Whose fingers string the stalactite –
Who counts the wampum of the night
To see that none is due?

Who built this little Alban House
And shut the windows down so close
My spirit cannot see?
Who'll let me out some gala day
With implements to fly away,
Passing Pomosity?

c. 1859

1891

129

Cocoon above! Cocoon below!
Stealthy Cocoon, why hide you so
What all the world suspect?
An hour, and gay on every tree
Your secret, perched in ecstasy
Defies imprisonment!

An hour in Chrysalis to pass,
Then gay above receding grass
A Butterfly to go!
A moment to interrogate,
Then wiser than a "Surrogate,"
The Universe to know!

c. 1859

1935

These are the days when Birds come back –
 A very few – a Bird or two –
 To take a backward look.

These are the days when skies resume
 The old – old sophistries of June –
 A blue and gold mistake.

Oh fraud that cannot cheat the Bee –
 Almost thy plausibility
 Induces my belief.

Till ranks of seeds their witness bear –
 And softly thro' the altered air
 Hurries a timid leaf.

Oh Sacrament of summer days,
 Oh Last Communion in the Haze –
 Permit a child to join.

Thy sacred emblems to partake –
 Thy consecrated bread to take
 And thine immortal wine!

c. 1859

1890

Besides the Autumn poets sing
 A few prosaic days
 A little this side of the snow
 And that side of the Haze –

A few incisive Mornings –
 A few Ascetic Eves –
 Gone – Mr. Bryant's "Golden Rod" –
 And Mr. Thomson's "sheaves."

Still, is the bustle in the Brook –
 Sealed are the spicy valves –
 Mesmeric fingers softly touch
 The Eyes of many Elves –

Perhaps a squirrel may remain –
My sentiments to share –
Grant me, Oh Lord, a sunny mind –
Thy windy will to bear!

c. 1859

1891

132

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.

c. 1859

1891

133

As Children bid the Guest “Good Night”
And then reluctant turn –

My flowers raise their pretty lips -
Then put their nightgowns on.

As children caper when they wake
Merry that it is Morn -
My flowers from a hundred cribs
Will peep, and prance again.

c. 1859

1890

134

Perhaps you'd like to buy a flower,
But I could never sell -
If you would like to *borrow*,
Until the Daffodil

Unties her yellow Bonnet
Beneath the village door,
Until the Bees, from Clover rows
Their Hock, and Sherry, draw,

Why, I will lend until just then,
But not an hour more!

c. 1859

1890

135

Water, is taught by thirst.
Land - by the Oceans passed.
Transport - by throe -
Peace - by its battles told -
Love, by Memorial Mold -
Birds, by the Snow.

c. 1859

1896

136

Have you got a Brook in your little heart,
Where bashful flowers blow,
And blushing birds go down to drink,
And shadows tremble so -

And nobody knows, so still it flows,
That any brook is there,
And yet your little draught of life
Is daily drunken there –

Why, look out for the little brook in March,
When the rivers overflow,
And the snows come hurrying from the hills,
And the bridges often go –

And *later*, in *August* it may be –
When the meadows parching lie,
Beware, lest this little brook of life,
Some burning noon go dry!

c. 1859

1890

137

Flowers – Well – if anybody
Can the ecstasy define –
Half a transport – half a trouble –
With which flowers humble men:
Anybody find the fountain
From which floods so contra flow –
I will give him all the Daisies
Which upon the hillside blow.

Too much pathos in their faces
For a simple breast like mine –
Butterflies from St. Domingo
Cruising round the purple line –
Have a system of aesthetics –
Far superior to mine.

c. 1859

1945

138

Pigmy seraphs – gone astray –
Velvet people from Vevay –
Belles from some lost summer day –
Bees exclusive Coterie –

Paris could not lay the fold
Belted down with Emerald –
Venice could not show a cheek
Of a tint so lustrous meek –
Never such an Ambuscade
As of briar and leaf displayed
For my little damask maid –

I had rather wear her grace
Than an Earl's distinguished face –
I had rather dwell like her
Than be "Duke of Exeter" –
Royalty enough for me
To subdue the Bumblebee.

c. 1859

1891

139

Soul, Wilt thou toss again?
By just such a hazard
Hundreds have lost indeed –
But tens have won an all –

Angel's breathless ballot
Lingers to record thee –
Imps in eager Caucus
Raffle for my Soul!

c. 1859

1890

140

An altered look about the hills –
A Tyrian light the village fills –
A wider sunrise in the morn –
A deeper twilight on the lawn –
A print of a vermillion foot –
A purple finger on the slope –
A flippant fly upon the pane –
A spider at his trade again –
An added strut in Chanticleer –
A flower expected everywhere –

An axe shrill singing in the woods –
Fern odors on untravelled roads –
All this and more I cannot tell –
A furtive look you know as well –
And Nicodemus' Mystery
Receives its annual reply!

c. 1859

1891

141

Some, too fragile for winter winds
The thoughtful grave encloses –
Tenderly tucking them in from frost
Before their feet are cold.

Never the treasures in her nest
The cautious grave exposes,
Building where schoolboy dare not look,
And sportsman is not bold.

This covert have all the children
Early aged, and often cold,
Sparrows, unnoticed by the Father –
Lambs for whom time had not a fold.

c. 1859

1891

142

Whose are the little beds, I asked
Which in the valleys lie?
Some shook their heads, and others smiled –
And no one made reply.

Perhaps they did not hear, I said,
I will inquire again –
Whose are the beds – the tiny beds
So thick upon the plain?

'Tis Daisy, in the shortest –
A little further on –

Nearest the door – to wake the *1st* –
Little Leontodon.

'Tis Iris, Sir, and Aster –
Anemone, and Bell –
Bartsia, in the blanket red –
And chubby Daffodil.

Meanwhile, at many cradles
Her busy foot she plied –
Humming the quaintest lullaby
That ever rocked a child.

Hush! Epigea wakens!
The Crocus stirs her lids –
Rhodora's cheek is crimson,
She's dreaming of the woods!

Then turning from them reverent –
Their bedtime 'tis, she said –
The Bumble bees will wake them
When April woods are red.

c. 1859

1891

143

For every Bird a Nest –
Wherefore in timid quest
Some little Wren goes seeking round –

Wherefore when boughs are free –
Households in every tree –
Pilgrim be found?

Perhaps a home too high –
Ah Aristocracy!
The little Wren desires –

Perhaps of twig so fine –
Of twine e'en superfine,
Her pride aspires –

The Lark is not ashamed
To build upon the ground
Her modest house –

Yet who of all the throng
Dancing around the sun
Does so rejoice?

c. 1859

1929

144

She bore it till the simple veins
Traced azure on her hand –
Till pleading, round her quiet eyes
The purple Crayons stand.

Till Daffodils had come and gone
I cannot tell the sum,
And then she ceased to bear it –
And with the Saints sat down.

No more her patient figure
At twilight soft to meet –
No more her timid bonnet
Upon the village street –

But Crowns instead, and Courtiers –
And in the midst so fair,
Whose but her shy – immortal face
Of whom we're whispering here?

c. 1859

1935

145

This heart that broke so long –
These feet that never flagged –
This faith that watched for star in vain,
Give gently to the dead –

Hound cannot overtake the Hare
That fluttered panting, here –

Nor any schoolboy rob the nest
Tenderness builded there.

c. 1859

1935

146

On such a night, or such a night,
Would anybody care
If such a little figure
Slipped quiet from its chair –

So quiet – Oh how quiet,
That nobody might know
But that the little figure
Rocked softer – to and fro –

On such a dawn, or such a dawn –
Would anybody sigh
That such a little figure
Too sound asleep did lie

For Chanticleer to wake it –
Or stirring house below –
Or giddy bird in orchard –
Or early task to do?

There was a little figure plump
For every little knoll –
Busy needles, and spools of thread –
And trudging feet from school –

Playmates, and holidays, and nuts –
And visions vast and small –
Strange that the feet so precious charged
Should reach so small a goal!

c. 1859

1891

147

Bless God, he went as soldiers,
His musket on his breast –

Grant God, he charge the bravest
Of all the martial blest!

Please God, might I behold him
In epauletted white –
I should not fear the foe then –
I should not fear the fight!

c. 1859

1896

148

All overgrown by cunning moss,
All interspersed with weed,
The little cage of “Curer Bell”
In quiet “Haworth” laid.

Gathered from many wanderings –
Gethsemane can tell
Thro’ what transporting anguish
She reached the Asphodel!

Soft fall the sounds of Eden
Upon her puzzled ear –
Oh what an afternoon for Heaven,
When “Bronte” entered there!

c. 1859

1896

149

She went as quiet as the Dew
From an Accustomed flower.
Not like the Dew, did she return
At the Accustomed hour!

She dropt as softly as a star
From out my summer’s Eve –
Less skillful than Le Verriere
It’s sorcer to believe!

c. 1859

1896

She died – *this* was the way she died.
 And when her breath was done
 Took up her simple wardrobe
 And started for the sun.
 Her little figure at the gate
 The Angels must have spied,
 Since I could never find her
 Upon the mortal side.

c. 1859

1891

Mute thy Coronation –
 Meek my Vive le roi,
 Fold a tiny courtier
 In thine Ermine, Sir,
 There to rest revering
 Till the pageant by,
 I can murmur broken,
 Master, It was I –

c. 1859

1945

The Sun kept stooping – stooping – low!
 The Hills to meet him rose!
 On his side, what Transaction!
 On their side, what Repose!

Deeper and deeper grew the stain
 Upon the window pane –
 Thicker and thicker stood the feet
 Until the Tyrian

Was crowded dense with Armies –
 So gay, so Brigadier –
 That *I* felt martial stirrings
 Who once the Cockade wore –

Charged, from my chimney corner –
But Nobody was there!

c. 1860

1945

153

Dust is the only Secret –
Death, the only One
You cannot find out all about
In his “native town.”

Nobody knew “his Father” –
Never was a Boy –
Hadn’t any playmates,
Or “Early history” –

Industrious! Laconic!
Punctual! Sedate!
Bold as a Brigand!
Stiller than a Fleet!

Builds, like a Bird, too!
Christ robs the Nest –
Robin after Robin
Smuggled to Rest!

c. 1860

1914

154

Except to Heaven, she is nought.
Except for Angels – lone.
Except to some wide-wandering Bee
A flower superfluous blown.

Except for winds – provincial.
Except by Butterflies
Unnoticed as a single dew
That on the Acre lies.

The smallest Housewife in the grass,
Yet take her from the Lawn

And somebody has lost the face
That made Existence – Home!

c. 1860

1890

155

The Murmur of a Bee
A Witchcraft – yieldeth me –
If any ask me why –
'Twere easier to die –
Than tell –

The Red upon the Hill
Taketh away my will –
If anybody sneer –
Take care – for God is here –
That's all.

The Breaking of the Day
Addeth to my Degree –
If any ask me how –
Artist – who drew me so –
Must tell!

c. 1860

1890

156

You love me – you are sure –
I shall not fear mistake –
I shall not *cheated* wake –
Some grinning morn –
To find the Sunrise left –
And Orchards – unbereft –
And Dollie – gone!

I need not start – you're sure –
That night will never be –
When frightened – home to Thee I run –
To find the windows dark –
And no more Dollie – mark –
Quite none?

Be sure you're sure - you know -
I'll bear it better now -
If you'll just tell me so -
Than when - a little dull Balm grown -
Over this pain of mine -
You sting -- again!

c. 1860

1945

157

Musicians wrestle everywhere -
All day - among the crowded air
I hear the silver strife -
And - waking - long before the morn -
Such transport breaks upon the town
I think it that "New Life"!

It is not Bird - it has no nest -
Nor "Band" - in brass and scarlet - drest -
Nor Tamborin - nor Man -
It is not Hymn from pulpit read -
The "Morning Stars" the Treble led
On Time's first Afternoon!

Some - say - it is "the Spheres" - at play!
Some say that bright Majority
Of vanished Dames - and Men!
Some - think it service in the place
Where we - with late - celestial face -
Please God - shall Ascertain!

c. 1860

1891

158

Dying! Dying in the night!
Won't somebody bring the light
So I can see which way to go
Into the everlasting snow?

And "Jesus"! Where is Jesus gone?
They said that Jesus - always came -

Perhaps he doesn't know the House –
This way, Jesus, Let him pass!

Somebody run to the great gate
And see if Dollie's coming! Wait!
I hear her feet upon the stair!
Death won't hurt – now Dollie's here!

c. 1860

1945

159

A little bread – a crust – a crumb –
A little trust – a demijohn –
Can keep the soul alive –
Not portly, mind! but breathing – warm –
Conscious – as old Napoleon,
The night before the Crown!

A modest lot – A fame petite –
A brief Campaign of sting and sweet
Is plenty! Is enough!
A Sailor's business is *the shore!*
A Soldier's – *balls!* Who asketh more,
Must seek the neighboring life!

c. 1860

1896

160

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!

c. 1860

1891

161

A feather from the Whippoorwill
That everlasting – sings!
Whose galleries – are Sunrise –
Whose Opera – the Springs –
Whose Emerald Nest the Ages spin
Of mellow – murmuring thread –
Whose Beryl Egg, what Schoolboys hunt
In “Recess” – Overhead!

c. 1860

1894

162

My River runs to thee –
Blue Sea! Wilt welcome me?
My River waits reply –
Oh Sea – look graciously –
I'll fetch thee Brooks
From spotted nooks –
Say – Sea – Take Me!

c. 1860

1890

163

Tho' my destiny be Fustian –
Hers be damask fine –
Tho' she wear a silver apron –
I, a less divin:e –

Still, my little Gypsy being
I would far prefer,
Still, my little sunburnt bosom
To her Rosier,

For, when Frost, their punctual fingers
On her forehead lay,
You and I, and Dr. Holland,
Bloom Eternally!

Roses of a steadfast summer
In a steadfast land,
Where no Autumn lifts her pencil –
And no Reapers stand!

c. 1860

1894

164

Mama never forgets her birds,
Though in another tree –
She looks down just as often
And just as tenderly
As when her little mortal nest
With cunning care she wove –
If either of her “sparrows fall,”
She “notices,” above.

c. 1860

1945

165

A *Wounded* Deer – leaps highest –
I’ve heard the Hunter tell –
‘Tis but the Ecstasy of *death* –
And then the Brake is still!

The *Smitten* Rock that gushes!
The *trampled* Steel that springs!
A Cheek is always redder
Just where the Hectic stings!

Mirth is the Mail of Anguish -
In which it Cautious Arm,
Lest anybody spy the blood
And "you're hurt" exclaim!

c. 1860

1890

166

I met a King this afternoon!
He had not on a Crown indeed,
A little Palmleaf Hat was all,
And he was barefoot, I'm afraid!

But sure I am he Ermine wore
Beneath his faded Jacket's blue -
And sure I am, the crest he bore
Within that Jacket's pocket too!

For 'twas too stately for an Earl -
A Marquis would not go so grand!
'Twas possibly a Czar petite -
A Pope, or something of that kind!

If I must tell you, of a Horse
My freckled Monarch held the rein -
Doubtless an estimable Beast,
But not at all disposed to run!

And such a wagon! While I live
Dare I presume to see
Another such a vehicle
As then transported me!

Two other ragged Princes
His royal state partook!
Doubtless the first excursion
These sovereigns ever took!

I question if the Royal Coach
Round which the Footmen wait

Has the significance, on high,
Of this Barefoot Estate!

c. 1860

1893

167

To learn the Transport by the Pain -
As Blind Men learn the sun!

To die of thirst - suspecting
That Brooks in Meadows run!

To stay the homesick - homesick feet
Upon a foreign shore -
Haunted by native lands, the while -
And blue - beloved air!

This is the Sovereign Anguish!
This - the signal woe!

These are the patient "Laureates"
Whose voices - trained - below -

Ascend in ceaseless Carol -
Inaudible, indeed,
To us - the duller scholars
Of the Mysterious Bard!

c. 1860

1891

168

If the foolish, call them "*flowers*" -
Need the wiser, *tell*?

If the Savants "Classify" them
It is just as well!

Those who read the "Revelations"
Must not criticize
Those who read the same Edition -
With beclouded Eyes!

Could we stand with that Old "Moses" -
"Canaan" denied -

Scan like him, the stately landscape
On the other side –

Doubtless, we should deem superfluous
Many Sciences,
Not pursued by learned Angels
In scholastic skies!

Low amid that glad Belles lettres
Grant that we may stand,
Stars, amid profound *Galaxies* –
At that grand “Right hand”!

c. 1860

1896

169

In Ebon Box, when years have flown
To reverently peer,
Wiping away the velvet dust
Summers have sprinkled there!

To hold a letter to the light –
Grown Tawny now, with time –
To con the faded syllables
That quickened us like Wine!

Perhaps a Flower’s shrivelled cheek
Among its stores to find –
Plucked far away, some morning –
By gallant – mouldering hand!

A curl, perhaps, from foreheads
Our Constancy forgot –
Perhaps, an Antique trinket –
In vanished fashions set!

And then to lay them quiet back –
And go about its care –
As if the little Ebon Box
Were none of our affair!

c. 1860

1935

Portraits are to daily faces
 As an Evening West,
 To a fine, pedantic sunshine -
 In a satin Vest!

c. 1860

1891

Wait till the Majesty of Death
 Invests so mean a brow!
 Almost a powdered Footman
 Might dare to touch it now!

Wait till in Everlasting Robes
 That Democrat is dressed,
 Then prate about "Preferment" -
 And "Station," and the rest!

Around this quiet Courtier
 Obsequious Angels wait!
 Full royal is his Retinue!
 Full purple is his state!

A Lord, might dare to lift the Hat
 To such a Modest Clay
 Since that My Lord, "the Lord of Lords"
 Receives unblushingly!

c. 1860

1891

"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!

c. 1860

1890

173

A fuzzy fellow, without feet,
Yet doth exceeding run!
Of velvet, is his Countenance,
And his Complexion, dun!

Sometime, he dwelleth in the grass!
Sometime, upon a bough,
From which he doth descend in plush
Upon the Passer-by!

All this in summer.
But when winds alarm the Forest Folk,
He taketh *Damask* Residence -
And struts in sewing silk!

Then, finer than a Lady,
Emerges in the spring!
A Feather on each shoulder!
You'd scarce recognize him!

By Men, yclept Caterpillar!
By me! But who am I,
To tell the pretty secret
Of the Butterfly!

c. 1860

1929

At last, to be identified!
 At last, the lamps upon thy side
 The rest of Life to see!

Past Midnight! Past the Morning Star!
 Past Sunrise!
 Ah, What leagues there *were*
 Between our feet, and Day!

c. 1860

1890

I have never seen "Volcanoes" –
 But, when Travellers tell
 How those old – phlegmatic mountains
 Usually so still –

Bear within – appalling Ordnance,
 Fire, and smoke, and gun,
 Taking Villages for breakfast,
 And appalling Men –

If the stillness is Volcanic
 In the human face
 When upon a pain Titanic
 Features keep their place –

If at length the smouldering anguish
 Will not overcome –
 And the palpitating Vineyard
 In the dust, be thrown?

If some loving Antiquary,
 On Resumption Morn,
 Will not cry with joy "Pompeii"!
 To the Hills return!

c. 1860

1945

I'm the little "Heart's Ease"!
 I don't care for pouting skies!
 If the Butterfly delay
 Can I, therefore, stay away?

If the Coward Bumble Bee
 In his chimney corner stay,
 I, must resolute be!
 Who'll apologize for me?

Dear, Old fashioned, little flower!
 Eden is old fashioned, too!
 Birds are antiquated fellows!
 Heaven does not change her blue.
 Nor will I, the little Heart's Ease –
 Ever be induced to do!

c. 1860

1893

Ah, Necromancy Sweet!
 Ah, Wizard erudite!
 Teach me the skill,
 That I instil the pain
 Surgeons assuage in vain,
 Nor Herb of all the plain
 Can heal!

c. 1860

1929

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?

c. 1860

1929

179

If I could bribe them by a Rose
I’d bring them every flower that grows
From Amherst to Cashmere!
I would not stop for night, or storm –
Or frost, or death, or anyone –
My business were so dear!

If they would linger for a Bird
My Tambourin were soonest heard
Among the April Woods!
Unwearied, all the summer long,
Only to break in wilder song
When Winter shook the boughs!

What if they hear me!
Who shall say
That such an importunity
May not at last avail?

That, weary of this Beggar's face -
They may not finally say, Yes -
To drive her from the Hall?

c. 1860

1935

180

As if some little Arctic flower
Upon the polar hem -
Went wandering down the Latitudes
Until it puzzled came
To continents of summer -
To firmaments of sun -
To strange, bright crowds of flowers -
And birds, of foreign tongue!
I say, As if this little flower
To Eden, wandered in -
What then? Why nothing,
Only, your inference therefrom!

c. 1860

1890

181

I lost a World - the other day!
Has Anybody found?
You'll know it by the Row of Stars
Around its forehead bound.

A Rich man - might not notice it -
Yet - to my frugal Eye,
Of more Esteem than Ducats -
Oh find it - Sir - for me!

c. 1860

1890

182

If I shouldn't be alive
When the Robins come,
Give the one in Red Cravat,
A Memorial crumb.

If I couldn't thank you,
Being fast asleep,
You will know I'm trying
With my Granite lip!

c. 1860

1890

183

I've heard an Organ talk, sometimes
In a Cathedral Aisle,
And understood no word it said –
Yet held my breath, the while –

And risen up – and gone away,
A more Bernardine Girl –
Yet – know not what was done to me
In that old Chapel Aisle.

c. 1860

1935

184

A transport one cannot contain
May yet a transport be –
Though God forbid it lift the lid –
Unto its Ecstasy!

A Diagram – of Rapture!
A sixpence at a Show –
With Holy Ghosts in Cages!
The *Universe* would go!

c. 1860

1935

185

"Faith" is a fine invention
When Gentlemen can *see* –
But *Microscopes* are prudent
In an Emergency.

c. 1860

1891

What shall I do – it whimpers so –
 This little Hound within the Heart
 All day and night with bark and start –
 And yet, it will not go –
 Would you *untie* it, were you me –
 Would it stop whining – if to Thee –
 I sent it -- even now?

It should not tease you –
 By your chair – or, on the mat –
 Or if it dare – to climb your dizzy knee –
 Or – sometimes at your side to run –
 When you were willing –
 Shall it come?
 Tell Carlo –
He'll tell me!

c. 1860

1945

How many times these low feet staggered –
 Only the soldered mouth can tell –
 Try – can you stir the awful rivet –
 Try – can you lift the hasps of steel!

Stroke the cool forehead – hot so often –
 Lift – if you care – the listless hair –
 Handle the adamantine fingers
 Never a thimble – more – shall wear –

Buzz the dull flies – on the chamber window –
 Brave – shines the sun through the freckled pane –
 Fearless – the cobweb swings from the ceiling –
 Indolent Housewife – in Daisies – lain!

c. 1860

1890

Make me a picture of the sun –
 So I can hang it in my room –
 And make believe I'm getting warm
 When others call it "Day"!

Draw me a Robin – on a stem –
 So I am hearing him, I'll dream,
 And when the Orchards stop their tune –
 Put my pretense – away –

Say if it's really – warm at noon –
 Whether it's Buttercups – that "skim" –
 Or Butterflies – that "bloom"? –
 Then – skip – the frost – upon the lea –
 And skip the Russet – on the tree –
 Let's play those – never come!

c. 1860

1945

189

It's such a little thing to weep –
 So short a thing to sigh –
 And yet – by Trades – the size of *these*
 We men and women die!

c. 1860

1896

190

He was weak, and I was strong – then –
 So He let me lead him in –
 I was weak, and He was strong then –
 So I let him lead me – Home.

"Twasn't far – the door was near –
 "Twasn't dark – for He went – too –
 "Twasn't loud, for He said nought –
 That was all I cared to know.

Day knocked – and we must part –
 Neither – was strongest – now –

He strove – and I strove – too –
We didn’t do it – tho’!

c. 1860

1945

191

The Skies can’t keep their secret!
They tell it to the Hills –
The Hills just tell the Orchards –
And they – the Daffodils!

A Bird – by chance – that goes that way –
Soft overhears the whole –
If I should bribe the little Bird –
Who knows but *she* would tell?

I think I won’t – however –
It’s finer – not to know –
If Summer were *an Axiom* –
What sorcery had *Snow*?

So keep your secret – Father!
I would not – if I could,
Know what the Sapphire Fellows, do,
In your new-fashioned world!

c. 1860

1891

192

Poor little Heart!
Did they forget thee?
Then dinna care! Then dinna care!

Proud little Heart!
Did they forsake thee?
Be debonnaire! Be debonnaire!

Frail little Heart!
I would not break thee –
Could’st credit *me*? Could’st credit *me*?

Gay little Heart –
Like Morning Glory!
Wind and Sun – wilt thee array!

c. 1860

1896

193

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!

c. 1860

1890

194

On this long storm the Rainbow rose –
On this late Morn – the Sun –
The clouds – like listless Elephants –
Horizons – straggled down –

The Birds rose smiling, in their nests –
The gales – indeed – were done –
Alas, how heedless were the eyes –
On whom the summer shone!

The quiet nonchalance of death –
No Daybreak – can bestir –
The slow – Archangel’s syllables
Must awaken *her*!

c. 1860

1890

195

For this – accepted Breath –
Through it – compete with Death –
The fellow cannot touch this Crown –

By it – my title take –
Ah, what a royal sake
To my necessity – stooped down!

No Wilderness – can be
Where this attendeth me –
No Desert Noon –
No fear of frost to come
Haunt the perennial bloom –
But Certain June!

Get Gabriel – to tell – the royal syllable –
Get Saints – with new – unsteady tongue –
To say what trance below
Most like their glory show –
Fittest the Crown!

c. 1860

1935

196

We don't cry – Tim and I,
We are far too grand –
But we bolt the door tight
To prevent a friend –

Then we hide our brave face
Deep in our hand –
Not to cry – Tim and I –
We are far too grand –

Nor to dream – he and me –
Do we condescend –
We just shut our brown eye
To see to the end –

Tim – see Cottages –
But, Oh, so high!
Then – we shake – Tim and I –
And lest I – cry –

Tim – reads a little Hymn –
And we both pray –

Please, Sir, I and Tim –
Always lost the way!

We must die – by and by –
Clergymen say –
Tim – shall – if I – do –
I – too – if he –

How shall we arrange it –
Tim – was – so – shy?
Take us simultaneous – Lord –
I – “Tim” – and – Me!

c. 1860

1945

197

Morning – is the place for Dew –
Corn – is made at Noon –
After dinner light – for flowers –
Dukes – for Setting Sun!

c. 1860

1896

198

An awful Tempest mashed the air –
The clouds were gaunt, and few –
A Black – as of a Spectre’s Cloak
Hid Heaven and Earth from view.

The creatures chuckled on the Roofs –
And whistled in the air –
And shook their fists –
And gnashed their teeth –
And swung their frenzied hair.

The morning lit – the Birds arose –
The Monster’s faded eyes
Turned slowly to his native coast –
And peace – was Paradise!

c. 1860

1891

I'm "wife" -- I've finished that --
 That other state --
 I'm Czar -- I'm "Woman" now --
 It's safer so --

How odd the Girl's life looks
 Behind this soft Eclipse --
 I think that Earth feels so
 To folks in Heaven -- now --

This being comfort -- then
 That other kind -- was pain --
 But why compare?
 I'm "Wife"! Stop there!

c. 1860

1890

I stole them from a Bee --
 Because -- Thee --
 Sweet plea --
 He pardoned me!

c. 1860

1894

Two swimmers wrestled on the spar --
 Until the morning sun --
 When One -- turned smiling to the land --
 Oh God! the Other One!

The stray ships -- passing --
 Spied a face --
 Upon the waters borne --
 With eyes in death -- still begging raised --
 And hands -- beseeching -- thrown!

c. 1860

1890

My Eye is fuller than my vase –
Her Cargo – is of Dew –
 And still – my Heart – my Eye outweighs –
 East India – for you!

c. 1860

1945

He forgot – and I – remembered –
 'Twas an everyday affair –
 Long ago as Christ and Peter –
 "Warmed them" at the "Temple fire."

 "Thou wert with him" – quoth "the Damsel"?
 "No" – said Peter, 'twasn't me –
 Jesus merely "looked" at Peter –
 Could I do aught else – to Thee?

c. 1860

1945

A slash of Blue –
 A sweep of Gray –
 Some scarlet patches on the way,
 Compose an Evening Sky –
 A little purple – slipped between –
 Some Ruby Trousers hurried on –
 A Wave of Gold –
 A Bank of Day –
 This just makes out the Morning Sky.

c. 1860

1935

I should not dare to leave my friend,
 Because – because if he should die
 While I was gone – and I – too late –
 Should reach the Heart that wanted me –

If I should disappoint the eyes
That hunted – hunted so – to see –
And could not bear to shut until
They “noticed” me – they noticed me –

If I should stab the patient faith
So sure I’d come – so sure I’d come –
It *listening* – listening – went to sleep –
Telling my tardy name –

My Heart would wish it broke before –
Since breaking then – since breaking then –
Were useless as next morning’s sun –
Where midnight frosts – had lain!

c. 1860

1891

206

The Flower must not blame the Bee –
That seeketh his felicity
Too often at her door –

But teach the Footman from Vevay –
Mistress is “not at home” – to say –
To people – any more!

c. 1860

1935

207

Tho’ I get home how late – how late –
So I get home – ’twill compensate –
Better will be the Ecstasy
That they have done expecting me –
When Night – descending – dumb – and dark –
They hear my unexpected knock –
Transporting must the moment be –
Brewed from decades of Agony!

To think just how the fire will burn –
Just how long-cheated eyes will turn –
To wonder what myself will say,

And what itself, will say to me –
Beguiles the Centuries of way!

c. 1860

1891

208

The Rose did caper on her cheek –
Her Bodice rose and fell –
Her pretty speech – like drunken men –
Did stagger pitiful –

Her fingers fumbled at her work –
Her needle would not go –
What ailed so smart a little Maid –
It puzzled me to know –

Till opposite – I spied a cheek
That bore *another* Rose –
Just opposite – Another speech
That like the Drunkard goes –

A Vest that like her Bodice, danced –
To the immortal tune –
Till those two troubled – little Clocks
Ticked softly into one.

c. 1860

1891

209

With thee, in the Desert –
With thee in the thirst –
With thee in the Tamarind wood –
Leopard breathes – at last!

c. 1860

1945

210

The thought beneath so slight a film –
Is more distinctly seen –

As laces just reveal the surge --
Or Mists - the Apennine

c. 1860

1891

211

Come slowly - Eden!
Lips unused to Thee -
Bashful - sip thy Jessamines -
As the fainting Bee -

Reaching late his flower,
Round her chamber hums -
Counts his nectars -
Enters - and is lost in Balms.

c. 1860

1890

212

Least Rivers - docile to some sea.
My Caspian - thee.

c. 1860

1945

213

Did the Harebell loose her girdle
To the lover Bee
Would the Bee the Harebell *hallow*
Much as formerly?

Did the "Paradise" - persuaded -
Yield her moat of pearl -
Would the Eden *be* an Eden,
Or the Earl - an *Earl*?

c. 1860

1891

214

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 –

c. 1860

1861

215

What is – “Paradise” –
Who live there –
Are they “Farmers” –
Do they “hoe” –
Do they know that this is “Amherst” –
And that I – am coming – too –

Do they wear “new shoes” – in “Eden” –
Is it always pleasant – there –
Won’t they scold us – when we’re homesick –
Or tell God – how cross we are –

You are sure there’s such a person
As “a Father” – in the sky –
So if I get lost – there – ever –
Or do what the Nurse calls “die” –
I shan’t walk the “Jasper” – barefoot –
Ransomed folks – won’t laugh at me –
Maybe – “Eden” a’n’t so lonesome
As New England used to be!

c. 1860

1945

Safe in their Alabaster Chambers –
 Untouched by Morning
 And untouched by Noon –
 Sleep the meek members of the Resurrection –
 Rafter of satin,
 And Roof of stone.

Light laughs the breeze
 In her Castle above them –
 Babbles the Bee in a stolid Ear,
 Pipe the Sweet Birds in ignorant cadence –
 Ah, what sagacity perished here!

version of 1859

1862

Safe in their Alabaster Chambers –
 Untouched by Morning –
 And untouched by Noon –
 Lie the meek members of the Resurrection –
 Rafter of Satin – and Roof of Stone!

Grand go the Years – in the Crescent – above them –
 Worlds scoop their Arcs –
 And Firmaments – row –
 Diadems – drop – and Doges – surrender –
 Soundless as dots – on a Disc of Snow –

version of 1861

1890

Savior! I've no one else to tell –
 And so I trouble *thee*.
 I am the one forgot thee so –
 Dost thou remember me?
 Nor, for myself, I came so far –
 That were the little load –
 I brought thee the imperial Heart
 I had not strength to hold –

The Heart I carried in my own –
Till mine too heavy grew –
Yet – strangest – *heavier* since it went –
Is it too large for *you*?

1861

1929

218

Is it true, dear Sue?
Are there *two*?
I shouldn't like to come
For fear of joggling Him!
If I could shut him up
In a Coffee Cup,
Or tie him to a pin
Till I got in –
Or make him fast
To "Toby's" fist –
Hist! Whist! I'd come!

1861

1924

219

She sweeps with many-colored Brooms –
And leaves the Shreds behind –
Oh Housewife in the Evening West –
Come back, and dust the Pond!

You dropped a Purple Ravelling in –
You dropped an Amber thread –
And now you've littered all the East
With Duds of Emerald!

And still, she plies her spotted Brooms,
And still the Aprons fly,
Till Brooms fade softly into stars –
And then I come away –

c. 1861

1891

Could I – then – shut the door –
 Lest my beseeching face – at last –
 Rejected – be – of Her?

c. 1861

1932

It can't be "Summer"!
 That – got through!
 It's early – yet – for "Spring"!
 There's that long town of White – to cross –
 Before the Blackbirds sing!
 It can't be "Dying"!
 It's too Rouge –
 The Dead shall go in White –
 So Sunset shuts my question down
 With Cuffs of Chrysolite!

c. 1861

1891

When Katie walks, this simple pair accompany her side,
 When Katie runs unwearied they follow on the road,
 When Katie kneels, their loving hands still clasp her pious knee –
 Ah! Katie! Smile at Fortune, with *two so knit to thee!*

c. 1861?

1931

I Came to buy a smile – today –
 But just a single smile –
 The smallest one upon your face
 Will suit me just as well –
 The one that no one else would miss
 It shone so very small –
 I'm pleading at the "counter" – sir –
 Could you afford to sell –

I've *Diamonds* – on my fingers –
You know what *Diamonds* are?
I've Rubies – like the Evening Blood –
And Topaz – like the star!
'Twould be "a Bargain" for a *Jew*!
Say – may I have it – Sir?

c. 1861

1929

224

I've nothing else – to bring, You know –
So I keep bringing These –
Just as the Night keeps fetching Stars
To our familiar eyes –

Maybe, we shouldn't mind them –
Unless they didn't come –
Then – maybe, it would puzzle us
To find our way Home –

c. 1861

1929

225

Jesus! thy Crucifix
Enable thee to guess
The smaller size!

Jesus! thy second face
Mind thee in Paradise
Of ours!

c. 1861

1945

226

Should you but fail at – Sea –
In sight of me –
Or doomed lie –
Next Sun – to die –
Or rap – at Paradise – unheard

1861

I'd harass God
Until he let you in!

1955

227

Teach Him – When He makes the *names* –
Such an one – to say –
On his babbling -- Berry – lips –
As should sound – to me –
Were my Ear – as near his nest –
As my *thought* – today –
As should sound –
“Forbid us not” –
Some like “Emily.”

1861

1894

228

Blazing in Gold and quenching in Purple
Leaping like Leopards to the Sky
Then at the feet of the old Horizon
Laying her spotted Face to die
Stooping as low as the Otter's Window
Touching the Roof and tinting the Barn
Kissing her Bonnet to the Meadow
And the Juggler of Day is gone

c. 1861

1864

229

A Burdock – clawed my Gown –
Not *Burdock's* – blame –
But *mine* –
Who went too near
The Burdock's *Den* –

A Bog – affronts my shoe –
What else have Bogs – *to do* –

The only Trade they *know* –
The *splashing Men!*
Ah, *pity* – *then!*

'Tis *Minnows can despise!*
The *Elephant's* – calm eyes
Look *further on!*

1861

1945

230

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 minute 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!

c. 1861

1929

231

God permits industrious Angels –
Afternoons – to play –
I met one – forgot my Schoolmates –
All – for Him – straightway –

God calls home – the Angels – promptly –
At the Setting Sun –
I missed mine – how *dreary* – *Marbles* –
After playing *Crown!*

c. 1861

1890

232

The *Sun* – just touched the Morning –
The *Morning* – Happy thing –
Supposed that He had come to *dwell* –
And Life would all be *Spring*!

She felt herself *supremo* –
A *Raised* – *Ethereal Thing*!
Henceforth – for Her – *What Holiday*!
Meanwhile – Her wheeling King –
Trailed – slow – along the Orchards –
His *haughty* – *spangled Hems* –
Leaving a *new necessity*!
The want of *Diadems*!

The Morning – *fluttered* – *staggered* –
Felt feebly – for Her *Crown* –
Her *unanointed forehead* –
Henceforth – Her *only One*!

c. 1861

1891

233

The Lamp burns sure – within –
Tho' Serfs – supply the Oil –
It matters not the busy Wick –
At her phosphoric toil!

The Slave – forgets – to fill –
The Lamp – burns golden – on –
Unconscious that the oil is out –
As that the Slave – is gone.

c. 1861

1935

You're right – “the way *is* narrow” –
 And “difficult the Gate” –
 And “few there be” – Correct again –
 That “enter in – thereat” –

“Tis Costly – So are *purples*!
 “Tis just the price of *Breath* –
 With but the “Discount” of the *Grave* –
 Termed by the *Brokers* – “Death”!
 And after *that* – there's Heaven –
 The *Good Man's* – “*Dividend*” –
 And *Bad Men* – “go to Jail” –
 I guess –

c. 1861

1945

The Court is far away –
 No Umpire – have I –
 My Sovereign is offended –
 To gain his grace – I'd die!

I'll seek his royal feet –
 I'll say – Remember – King –
 Thou shalt – thyself – one day – a Child –
 Implore a *larger* – thing –
That Empire – is of Czars –
 As small – they say – as I –
 Grant *me* – that day – the royalty –
 To *intercede* – for *Thee* –

c. 1861

1945

If *He dissolve* – then – there is *nothing* – *more* –
Eclipse – at *Midnight* –
 It was *dark* – *before* –

*Sunset – at Easter –
Blindness – on the Dawn –
Faint Star of Bethlehem –
Gone down!*

*Would but some God – inform Him –
Or it be too late!
Say – that the pulse just lisps –
The Chariots wait –*

*Say – that a little life – for His –
Is leaking – red –
His little Spaniel – tell Him!
Will He heed?*

c. 1861

1935

237

I think just how my shape will rise –
When I shall be “forgiven” –
Till Hair – and Eyes – and timid Head –
Are out of sight – in Heaven –

I think just how my lips will weigh –
With shapeless – quivering – prayer –
That you – so late – “Consider” me –
The “Sparrow” of your Care –

I mind me that of Anguish – sent –
Some drifts were moved away –
Before my simple bosom – broke –
And why not this – if they?

And so I con that thing – “forgiven” –
Until – delirious – borne –
By my long bright – and longer – trust –
I drop my Heart – unshriven!

c. 1861

1891

238

Kill your Balm – and its Odors bless you –
 Bare your Jessamine – to the storm –
 And she will fling her maddest perfume –
 Haply – your Summer night to Charm –

 Stab the Bird – that built in your bosom –
 Oh, could you catch her last Refrain –
 Bubble! “forgive” – “Some better” – Bubble!
 “Carol for Him – when I am gone”!

c. 1861

1945

239

“Heaven” – is what I cannot reach!
 The Apple on the Tree –
 Provided it do hopeless – hang –
 That – “Heaven” is – to Me!

The Color, on the Cruising Cloud –
 The interdicted Land –
 Behind the Hill – the House behind –
 There – Paradise – is found!

Her teasing Purples – Afternoons –
 The credulous – decoy –
 Enamored – of the Conjuror –
 That spurned us – Yesterday!

c. 1861

1896

240

Ah, Moon – and Star!
 You are very far –
 But were no one
 Farther than you –
 Do you think I’d stop
 For a Firmament –
 Or a Cubit – or so?

I could borrow a Bonnet
Of the Lark –
And a Chamois' Silver Boot –
And a stirrup of an Antelope –
And be with you – Tonight!

But, Moon, and Star,
Though you're very far –
There is one – farther than you –
He – is more than a firmament – from Me –
So I can never go!

c. 1861

1935

241

I like a look of Agony,
Because I know it's true –
Men do not sham Convulsion,
Nor simulate, a Throe –

The Eyes glaze once – and that is Death –
Impossible to feign
The Beads upon the Forehead
By homely Anguish strung.

c. 1861

1890

242

When we stand on the tops of Things –
And like the Trees, look down –
The smoke all cleared away from it –
And Mirrors on the scene –

Just laying light – no soul will wink
Except it have the flaw –
The Sound ones, like the Hills – shall stand –
No Lightning, scares away –

The Perfect, nowhere be afraid –
They bear their dauntless Heads,

Where others, dare not go at Noon,
Protected by their deeds —

The Stars dare shine occasionally
Upon a spotted World —
And Suns, go surer, for their Proof,
As if an Axle, held —

c. 1861

1945

243

I've known a Heaven, like a Tent —
To wrap its shining Yards —
Pluck up its stakes, and disappear —
Without the sound of Boards
Or Rip of Nail — Or Carpenter —
But just the miles of Stare —
That signalize a Show's Retreat —
In North America —

No Trace — no Figment of the Thing
That dazzled, Yesterday,
No Ring — no Marvel —
Men, and Feats —
Dissolved as utterly —
As Bird's far Navigation
Discloses just a Hue —
A plash of Oars, a Gaiety —
Then swallowed up, of View.

c. 1861

1929

244

It is easy to work when the soul is at play —
But when the soul is in pain —
The hearing him put his playthings up
Makes work difficult — then —

It is simple, to ache in the Bone, or the Rind —
But Gimlets — among the nerve —

Mangle daintier – terribler –
Like a Panther in the Glove –

c. 1861

1945

245

I held a Jewel in my fingers –
And went to sleep –
The day was warm, and winds were prosy –
I said “ ‘Twill keep” –

I woke – and chid my honest fingers,
The Gem was gone –
And now, an Amethyst remembrance
Is all I own –

c. 1861

1891

246

Forever at His side to walk –
The smaller of the two!
Brain of His Brain –
Blood of His Blood –
Two lives – One Being – now –

Forever of His fate to taste –
If grief – the largest part –
If joy – to put my piece away
For that beloved Heart –

All life – to know each other –
Whom we can never learn –
And bye and bye – a Change –
Called Heaven –
Rapt Neighborhoods of Men –
Just finding out – what puzzled us –
Without the lexicon!

c. 1861

1929

What would I give to see his face?
 I'd give – I'd give my life – of course –
 But *that* is not enough!
 Stop just a minute – let me think!
 I'd give my biggest Bobolink!
 That makes *two* – *Him* – and *Life*!
 You know who "*June*" is –
 I'd give *her* –
 Roses a day from Zanzibar –
 And Lily tubes – like Wells –
 Bees – by the furlong –
 Straits of Blue
 Navies of Butterflies – sailed thro' –
 And dappled Cowslip Dells –
 Then I have "shares" in Primrose "Banks" –
 Daffodil Dowries – spicy "Stocks" –
 Dominions – broad as Dew –
 Bags of Doubloons – adventurous Bees
 Brought me – from firmamental seas –
 And Purple – from Peru –
Now – have I bought it –
 "Shylock"? Say!
 Sign me the Bond!
 "I vow to pay
 To Her – who pledges *this* –
 One hour – of her Sovereign's face"!
 Ecstatic Contract!
 Niggard Grace!
 My Kingdom's worth of Bliss!

c. 1861

1929

Why – do they shut Me out of Heaven?
 Did I sing – too loud?
 But – I can say a little "Minor"
 Timid as a Bird!

Wouldn't the Angels try me –
Just – once – more –
Just – see – if I troubled them –
But don't – shut the door!

Oh, if I – were the Gentleman
In the "White Robe" –
And they – were the little Hand – that knocked –
Could – I – forbid?

c. 1861

1929

249

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!

c. 1861

1891

250

I shall keep singing!
Birds will pass me
On their way to Yellower Climes –
Each – with a Robin's expectation –
I – with my Redbreast –
And my Rhymes –

Late – when I take my place in summer –
But – I shall bring a fuller tune –

Vespers – are sweeter than Matins – Signor –
Morning – only the seed of Noon –

c. 1861

1935

251

Over the fence –
Strawberries – grow –
Over the fence –
I could climb – if I tried, I know –
Berries are nice!

But – if I stained my Apron –
God would certainly scold!
Oh, dear, – I guess if He were a Boy –
He'd – climb – if He could!

c. 1861

1945

252

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!

c. 1861

1891

You see I cannot see – your lifetime –
 I must guess –
 How many times it ache for me – today – Confess –
 How many times for my far sake
 The brave eyes film –
 But I guess guessing hurts –
 Mine – get so dim!

Too vague – the face --
 My own – so patient -- covers --
 Too far – the strength –
 My timidness enfolds –
 Haunting the Heart –
 Like her translated faces –
 Teasing the want –
 It – only – can suffice!

c. 1861

1929

“Hope” is the thing with feathers –
 That perches in the soul –
 And sings the tune without the words –
 And never stops – at all –
 And sweetest – in the Gale – is heard –
 And sore must be the storm –
 That could abash the little Bird
 That kept so many warm –
 I’ve heard it in the chillest land –
 And on the strangest Sea –
 Yet, never, in Extremity,
 It asked a crumb – of Me.

c. 1861

1891

To die – takes just a little while –
 They say it doesn’t hurt –

It's only fainter – by degrees –
And then – it's out of sight –

A darker Ribbon – for a Day –
A Crape upon the Hat –
And then the pretty sunshine comes –
And helps us to forget –

The absent – mystic – creature –
That but for love of us –
Had gone to sleep – that soundest time –
Without the weariness –

c. 1861

1935

256

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 –

c. 1861

1945

257

Delight is as the flight –
Or in the Ratio of it,
As the Schools would say –
The Rainbow's way –
A Skein
Flung colored, after Rain,

Would suit as bright,
Except that flight
Were Aliment –

"If it would last"
I asked the East,
When that Bent Stripe
Struck up my childish
Firmament –
And I, for glee,
Took Rainbows, as the common way,
And empty Skies
The Eccentricity –

And so with Lives –
And so with Butterflies –
Seen magic – through the fright
That they will cheat the sight –
And Dower latitudes far on –
Some sudden morn –
Our portion – in the fashion –
Done –

c. 1861

1929

258

There's a certain Slant of light,

Winter Afternoons –

That oppresses, like the Heft

Of Cathedral Tunes –

Heavenly Hurt, it gives us –

We can find no scar,

But internal difference,

Where the Meanings, are –

None may teach it – Any –

"Tis the Seal Despair –

An imperial affliction

Sent us of the Air –

When it comes, the Landscape listens –
Shadows – hold their breath –
When it goes, 'tis like the Distance
On the look of Death –

c. 1861

1890

259

Good Night! Which put the Candle out?
A jealous Zephyr – not a doubt –
Ah, friend, you little knew
How long at that celestial wick
The Angels – labored diligent –
Extinguished – now – for you!

It might – have been the Light House spark –
Some Sailor – rowing in the Dark –
Had importuned to see!
It might – have been the wanng lamp
That lit the Drummer from the Camp
To purer Reveille!

c. 1861

1891

260

Read – Sweet – how others – strove –
Till we – are stouter –
What they – renounced –
Till we – are less afraid –
How many times they – bore the faithful witness –
Till we – are helped –
As if a Kingdom – cared!

Read then – of faith –
That shone above the fagot –
Clear strains of Hymn
The River could not drown –
Brave names of Men –
And Celestial Women –

Passed out – of Record
Into – Renown!

c. 1861

1890

261

Put up my lute!
What of – my Music!
Since the sole ear I cared to charm –
Passive – as Granite – laps My Music –
Sobbing – will suit – as well as psalm!

Would but the “Memnon” of the Desert –
Teach me the strain
That vanquished Him –
When He – surrendered to the Sunrise –
Maybe – that – would awaken – them!

c. 1861

1935

262

The lonesome for they know not What –
The Eastern Exiles – be –
Who strayed beyond the Amber line
Some madder Holiday –

And ever since – the purple Moat
They strive to climb – in vain –
As Birds – that tumble from the clouds
Do fumble at the strain –

The Blessed Ether – taught them –
Some Transatlantic Morn –
When Heaven – was too common – to miss –
Too sure – to dote upon!

c. 1861

1929

263

A single Screw of Flesh
Is all that pins the Soul

That stands for Deity, to Mine,
Upon my side the Veil –

Once witnessed of the Gauze –
Its name is put away
As far from mine, as if no plight
Had printed yesterday,

In tender – solemn Alphabet,
My eyes just turned to see,
When it was smuggled by my sight
Into Eternity –

More Hands – to hold – These are but Two –
One more new-mailed Nerve
Just granted, for the Peril's sake –
Some striding – Giant – Love –

So greater than the Gods can show,
They slink before the Clay,
That not for all their Heaven can boast
Will let its Keepsake – go

c. 1861

1935

264

A Weight with Needles on the pounds –
To push, and pierce, besides –
That if the Flesh resist the Heft –
The puncture – coolly tries –

That not a pore be overlooked
Of all this Compound Frame –
As manifold for Anguish –
As Species – be – for name –

c. 1861

1935

265

Where Ships of Purple – gently toss –
On Seas of Daffodil –

Fantastic Sailors -- mingle --
And then -- the Wharf is still!

c. 1861

1891

266

This -- is the land -- the Sunset washes --
These -- are the Banks of the Yellow Sea --
Where it rose -- or whither it rushes --
These -- are the Western Mystery!

Night after Night
Her purple traffic
Strews the landing with Opal Bales --
Merchantmen -- poise upon Horizons --
Dip -- and vanish like Orioles!

c. 1861

1890

267

Did we disobey Him?
Just one time!
Charged us to forget Him --
But we couldn't learn!

Were Himself -- such a Dunce --
What would we -- do?
Love the dull lad -- best --
Oh, wouldn't you?

c. 1861

1945

268

Me, change! Me, alter!
Then I will, when on the Everlasting Hill
A Smaller Purple grows --
At sunset, or a lesser glow
Flickers upon Cordillera --
At Day's superior close!

c. 1861

1945

Bound – a trouble –
 And lives can bear it!
 Limit – how deep a bleeding go!
 So – many – drops – of vital scarlet –
 Deal with the soul
 As with Algebra!

Tell it the Ages – to a cypher –
 And it will ache – contented – on –
 Sing – at its pain – as any Workman –
 Notching the fall of the Even Sun!

c. 1861

1935

One Life of so much Consequence!
 Yet I – for it – would pay –
 My Soul's *entire income* –
 In ceaseless – salary –

One Pearl – to me – so signal –
 That I would instant dive –
 Although – I *knew* – to *take* it –
 Would *cost* me – *just a life!*

The Sea is full – I know it!
 That – does not blur *my Gem*!
 It burns – distinct from all the row –
Intact – in Diadem!

The life is thick – I know it!
 Yet – not so dense a crowd –
 But *Monarchs* – are *perceptible* –
 Far down the dustiest Road!

c. 1861

1929

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"!

c. 1861

1896

272

I breathed enough to take the Trick --
And now, removed from Air --
I simulate the Breath, so well --
That One, to be quite sure --

The Lungs are stirless -- must descend
Among the Cunning Cells --
And touch the Pantomime -- Himself,
How numb, the Bellows feels!

c. 1861

1896

273

He put the Belt around my life --
I heard the Buckle snap --
And turned away, imperial,
My Lifetime folding up --
Deliberate, as a Duke would do
A Kingdom's Title Deed --

Henceforth, a Dedicated sort –
A Member of the Cloud.

Yet not too far to come at call –
And do the little Toils
That make the Circuit of the Rest –
And deal occasional smiles
To lives that stoop to notice mine –
And kindly ask it in –
Whose invitation, know you not
For Whom I must decline?

c. 1861

1891

274

The only Ghost I ever saw
Was dressed in Mechlin – so –
He wore no sandal on his foot –
And stepped like flakes of snow –

His Gait – was soundless, like the Bird –
But rapid – like the Roe –
His fashions, quaint, Mosaic –
Or haply, Mistletoe –

His conversation – seldom –
His laughter, like the Breeze –
That dies away in Dimples
Among the pensive Trees –

Our interview – was transient –
Of me, himself was shy –
And God forbid I look behind –
Since that appalling Day!

c. 1861

1891

275

Doubt Me! My Dim Companion!
Why, God, would be content
With but a fraction of the Life –
Poured thee, without a stint –

The whole of me – forever –
What more the Woman can,
Say quick, that I may dower thee
With last Delight I own!

It cannot be my Spirit –
For that was thine, before –
I ceded all of Dust I knew –
What Opulence the more
Had I – a freckled Maiden,
Whose farthest of Degree,
Was – that she might –
Some distant Heaven,
Dwell timidly, with thee!

Sift her, from Brow to Barefoot!
Strain till your last Surmise –
Drop, like a Tapestry, away,
Before the Fire's Eyes –
Winnow her finest fondness –
But hallow just the snow
Intact, in Everlasting flake –
Oh, Caviler, for you!

c. 1861

1890

276

Many a phrase has the English language –
I have heard but one –
Low as the laughter of the Cricket,
Loud, as the Thunder's Tongue –

Murmuring, like old Caspian Choirs,
When the Tide's a' lull –
Saying itself in new inflection –
Like a Whippoorwill –

Breaking in bright Orthography
On my simple sleep –

Thundering its Prospective –
Till I stir, and weep –

Not for the Sorrow, done me –
But the push of Joy –
Say it again, Saxon!
Hush – Only to me!

c. 1861

1935

277

What if I say I shall not wait!
What if I burst the fleshly Gate –
And pass escaped – to thee!

What if I file this Mortal – off –
See where it hurt me – That's enough –
And wade in Liberty!

They cannot take me – any more!
Dungeons can call – and Guns implore
Unmeaning – now – to me –

As laughter – was – an hour ago –
Or Laces – or a Travelling Show –
Or who died – yesterday!

c. 1861

1891

278

A shady friend – for Torrid days –
Is easier to find –
Than one of higher temperature
For Frigid – hour of Mind –

The Vane a little to the East –
Scares Muslin souls – away –
If Broadcloth Hearts are firmer –
Than those of Organdy –

Who is to blame? The Weaver?
Ah, the bewildering thread!

The Tapestries of Paradise
So notelessly – are made!

c. 1861

1891

279

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!

c. 1861

1896

280

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 –

c. 1861

1896

281

'Tis so appalling – it exhilarates –
So over Horror, it half Captivates –
The Soul stares after it, secure –
A Sepulchre, fears frost, no more –

To scan a Ghost, is faint –
But grappling, conquers it –
How easy, Torment, now –
Suspense kept sawing so –

The Truth, is Bald, and Cold –
But that will hold –
If any are not sure –
We show them – prayer –
But we, who know,
Stop hoping, now –

Looking at Death, is Dying –
Just let go the Breath –
And not the pillow at your Cheek
So Slumbereth –

Others, Can wrestle –
Yours, is done –
And so of Woe, bleak dreaded – come,
It sets the Fright at liberty –

And Terror's free –
Gay, Ghastly, Holiday!

c. 1861

1935

282

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 –

c. 1861

1929

283

A Mien to move a Queen –
Half Child – Half Heroine –
An Orleans in the Eye
That puts its manner by
For humbler Company
When none are near
Even a Tear –
Its frequent Visitor –

A Bonnet like a Duke –
And yet a Wren's Peruke
Were not so shy
Of Goer by –
And Hands – so slight –
They would elate a Sprite
With Merriment –

A Voice that Alters – Low
And on the Ear can go
Like Let of Snow –
Or shift supreme –
As tone of Realm
On Subjects Diadem –
Too small – to fear –
Too distant – to endear –
And so Men Compromise –
And just – revere –

c. 1861

1935

284

The Drop, that wrestles in the Sea –
Forgets her own locality –
As I – toward Thee –

She knows herself an incense small –
Yet *small* – she sighs – if *All* – is *All* –
How *larger* – be?

The Ocean – smiles – at her Conceit –
But *she*, forgetting Amphitrite –
Pleads – “Me”?

c. 1861

1945

285

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 lie – to me –
Because I see – New Englandly –
The Queen, discerns like me –
Provincially –

c. 1861

1929

286

That after Horror – that 'twas *us* –
That passed the mouldering Pier –
Just as the Granite Crumb let go –
Our Savior, by a Hair –

A second more, had dropped too deep
For Fisherman to plumb –
The very profile of the Thought
Puts Recollection numb –

The possibility – to pass
Without a Moment's Bell –
Into Conjecture's presence –
Is like a Face of Steel –
That suddenly looks into ours
With a metallic grin –
The Cordiality of Death –
Who drills his Welcome in –

c. 1861

1935

287

A Clock stopped –
Not the Mantel's –
Geneva's farthest skill
Can't put the puppet bowing –
That just now dangled still –

An awe came on the Trinket!
The Figures hunched, with pain –

Then quivered out of Decimals –
Into Degreeless Noon –

It will not stir for Doctors –
This Pendulum of snow –
This Shopman importunes it –
While cool – concernless No –

Nods from the Gilded pointers –
Nods from the Seconds slim –
Decades of Arrogance between
The Dial life –
And Him –

c. 1861

1896

288

I'm Nobody! Who are you?
Are you – Nobody – Too?
Then there's a pair of us!
Don't tell! they'd advertise – you know!

How dreary – to be – Somebody!
How public – like a Frog –
To tell one's name – the livelong June –
To an admiring Bog!

c. 1861

1891

289

I know some lonely Houses off the Road
A Robber'd like the look of –
Wooden barred,
And Windows hanging low,
Inviting to –
A Portico,
Where two could creep –
One – hand the Tools –
The other peep –
To make sure All's Asleep –

Old fashioned eyes –
Not easy to surprise!

How orderly the Kitchen'd look, by night,
With just a Clock –
But they could gag the Tick –
And Mice won't bark –
And so the Walls – don't tell –
None – will –

A pair of Spectacles ajar just stir –
An Almanac's aware –
Was it the Mat – winked,
Or a Nervous Star?
The Moon – slides down the stair,
To see who's there!

There's plunder – where –
Tankard, or Spoon –
Earring – or Stone –
A Watch – Some Ancient Brooch
To match the Grandmama –
Staid sleeping – there –

Day – rattles – too
Stealth's – slow –
The Sun has got as far
As the third Sycamore –
Screams Chanticleer
“Who's there”?

And Echoes – Trains away,
Sneer – “Where”!
While the old Couple, just astir,
Fancy the Sunrise – left the door ajar!

c. 1861

1890

290

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.

c. 1861

1896

291

How the old Mountains drip with Sunset
How the Hemlocks burn –
How the Dun Brake is draped in Cinder
By the Wizard Sun –

How the old Steeples hand the Scarlet
Till the Ball is full –
Have I the lip of the Flamingo
That I dare to tell?

Then, how the Fire ebbs like Billows –
Touching all the Grass
With a departing – Sapphire – feature –
As a Duchess passed –

How a small Dusk crawls on the Village
Till the Houses blot
And the odd Flambeau, no men carry
Glimmer on the Street –

How it is Night – in Nest and Kennel –
And where was the Wood –
Just a Dome of Abyss is Bowing
Into Solitude –

These are the Visions flitted Guido –
Titian – never told –
Domenichino dropped his pencil –
Paralyzed, with Gold –

c. 1861

1896

292

If your Nerve, deny you –
Go above your Nerve –
He can lean against the Grave,
If he fear to swerve –

That's a steady posture –
Never any bend
Held of those Brass arms –
Best Giant made –

If your Soul seesaw –
Lift the Flesh door –
The Poltroon wants Oxygen –
Nothing more –

c. 1861

1935

293

I got so I could take his name –
Without – Tremendous gain –
That Stop-sensation – on my Soul –
And Thunder – in the Room –

I got so I could walk across
That Angle in the floor,
Where he turned so, and I turned – how –
And all our Sinew tore –

I got so I could stir the Box –
In which his letters grew
Without that forcing, in my breath –
As Staples – driven through –

Could dimly recollect a Grace –
I think, they call it “God” –
Renowned to ease Extremity –
When Formula, had failed –

And shape my Hands –
Petition’s way,
Tho’ ignorant of a word
That Ordination – utters –

My Business, with the Cloud,
If any Power behind it, be,
Not subject to Despair –
It care, in some remoter way,
For so minute affair
As Misery –
Itself, too vast, for interrupting – more –

c 1861

1929

294

The Doomed – regard the Sunrise
With different Delight –
Because – when next it burns abroad
They doubt to witness it –

The Man – to die – tomorrow –
Harks for the Meadow Bird –
Because its Music stirs the Axe
That clamors for his head –

Joyful – to whom the Sunrise
Precedes Enamored – Day –
Joyful – for whom the Meadow Bird
Has ought but Elegy!

c. 1861

1929

Unto like Story – Trouble has enticed me –
 How Kinsmen fell –
 Brothers and Sister – who preferred the Glory –
 And their young will
 Bent to the Scaffold, or in Dungeons – chanted –
 Till God's full time –
 When they let go the ignominy – smiling –
 And Shame went still –

Unto guessed Crests, my moaning fancy, leads me,
 Worn fair
 By Heads rejected – in the lower country –
 Of honors there –
 Such spirit makes her perpetual mention,
 That I – grown bold –
 Step martial – at my Crucifixion –
 As Trumpets – rolled –
 Feet, small as mine – have marched in Revolution
 Firm to the Drum –
 Hands – not so stout – hoisted them – in witness –
 When Speech went numb –
 Let me not shame their sublime deportments –
 Drilled bright –
 Beckoning – Etruscan invitation –
 Toward Light –

c. 1861

1935

One Year ago – jots what?
 God – spell the word! I – can't –
 Was't Grace? Not that –
 Was't Glory? That – will do –
 Spell slower – Glory –
 Such Anniversary shall be –
 Sometimes – not often – in Eternity –
 When farther Parted, than the Common Woe –

Look – feed upon each other’s faces – so –
In doubtful meal, if it be possible
Their Banquet’s true –

I tasted – careless – then –
I did not know the Wine
Came once a World – Did you?
Oh, had you told me so –
This Thirst would blister – easier – now –
You said it hurt you – most –
Mine – was an Acorn’s Breast –
And could not know how fondness grew
In Shaggier Vest –
Perhaps – I couldn’t –
But, had you looked in –
A Giant – eye to eye with you, had been –
No Acorn – then –

So – Twelve months ago –
We breathed –
Then dropped the Air –
Which bore it best?
Was this – the patientest –
Because it was a Child, you know –
And could not value – Air?

If to be “Elder” – mean most pain –
I’m old enough, today, I’m certain – then –
As old as thee – how soon?
One – Birthday more – or Ten?
Let me – choose!
Ah, Sir, None!

c. 1861

1945

It’s like the Light –
A fashionless Delight –
It’s like the Bee –
A dateless – Melody –

It's like the Woods –
Private – Like the Breeze –
Phraseless – yet it stirs
The proudest Trees –

It's like the Morning –
Best – when it's done –
And the Everlasting Clocks –
Chime – Noon!

c. 1861

1896

298

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 –

c. 1861

1932

299

Your Riches – taught me – Poverty.
Myself – a Millionaire
In little Wealths, as Girls could boast
Till broad as Buenos Ayre –

You drifted your Dominions –
A Different Peru –
And I esteemed All Poverty
For Life's Estate with you –

Of Mines, I little know – myself –
But just the names, of Gems –
The Colors of the Commonest –
And scarce of Diadems –

So much, that did I meet the Queen –
Her Glory I should know –
But this, must be a different Wealth –
To miss it – beggars so –

I'm sure 'tis India – all Day –
To those who look on You –
Without a stint – without a blame,
Might I – but be the Jew –

I'm sure it is Golconda –
Beyond my power to deem –
To have a smile for Mine – each Day,
How better, than a Gem!

At least, it solaces to know
That there exists – a Gold –
Altho' I prove it, just in time
Its distance – to behold –

Its far – far Treasure to surmise –
And estimate the Pearl –
That slipped my simple fingers through –
While just a Girl at School.

1862

1891

300

"Morning" – means "Milking" – to the Farmer –
Dawn – to the Teneriffe –
Dice – to the Maid –
Morning means just Risk – to the Lover –
Just revelation – to the Beloved –
Epicures – date a Breakfast – by it –
Brides – an Apocalypse –
Worlds – a Flood –

Faint-going Lives – Their Lapse from Sighing –
Faith – The Experiment of Our Lord –

c. 1862

1914

301

I reason, Earth is short –
And Anguish – absolute –
And many hurt,
But, what of that?

I reason, we could die –
The best Vitality
Cannot excel Decay,
But, what of that?

I reason, that in Heaven –
Somehow, it will be even –
Some new Equation, given –
But, what of that?

c. 1862

1890

302

Like Some Old fashioned Miracle
When Summertime is done –
Seems Summer's Recollection
And the Affairs of June

As infinite Tradition
As Cinderella's Bays –
Or Little John – of Lincoln Green –
Or Blue Beard's Galleries –

Her Bees have a fictitious Hum –
Her Blossoms, like a Dream –
Elate us – till we almost weep –
So plausible – they seem –

Her Memories like Strains – Review –
When Orchestra is dumb –

The Violin in Baize replaced –
And Ear – and Heaven – numb –

c. 1862

1914

303

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 –

c. 1862

1890

304

The Day came slow – till Five o'clock –
Then sprang before the Hills
Like Hindered Rubies – or the Light
A Sudden Musket – spills –

The Purple could not keep the East –
The Sunrise shook abroad
Like Breadths of Topaz – packed a Night –
The Lady just unrolled –

The Happy Winds – their Timbrels took –
The Birds – in docile Rows
Arranged themselves around their Prince
The Wind – is Prince of Those –

The Orchard sparkled like a Jew –
How mighty 'twas – to be

A Guest in this stupendous place –
The Parlor – of the Day –

c. 1862

1891

305

The difference between Despair
And Fear – is like the One
Between the instant of a Wreck –
And when the Wreck has been –

The Mind is smooth – no Motion –
Contented as the Eye
Upon the Forehead of a Bust –
That knows – it cannot see –

c. 1862

1914

306

The Soul's Superior instants
Occur to Her – alone –
When friend – and Earth's occasion
Have infinite withdrawn –

Or She – Herself – ascended
To too remote a Height
For lower Recognition
Than Her Omnipotent –

This Mortal Abolition
Is seldom – but as fair
As Apparition – subject
To Autocratic Air –

Eternity's disclosure
To favorites – a few –
Of the Colossal substance
Of Immortality

c. 1862

1914

The One who could repeat the Summer day –
Were greater than itself – though He
Minutest of Mankind should be –

And He – could reproduce the Sun –
At period of going down –
The Lingering – and the Stain – I mean –

When Orient have been outgrown –
And Occident – become Unknown –
His Name – remain –

c. 1862

1891

I send Two Sunsets –
Day and I – in competition ran –
I finished Two – and several Stars –
While He – was making One –

His own was ampler – but as I
Was saying to a friend –
Mine – is the more convenient
To Carry in the Hand –

c. 1862

1914

For largest Woman's Heart I knew –
'Tis little I can do –
And yet the largest Woman's Heart
Could hold an Arrow – too –
And so, instructed by my own,
I tenderer, turn Me to.

c. 1862

1932

Give little Anguish –
Lives will fret –

Give Avalanches –
And they'll slant –
Straighten – look cautious for their Breath –
But make no syllable – like Death –
Who only shows his Marble Disc –
Sublimer sort – than Speech –

c. 1862

1924

311

It sifts from Leaden Sieves –
It powders all the Wood.
It fills with Alabaster Wool
The Wrinkles of the Road –

It makes an Even Face
Of Mountain, and of Plain –
Unbroken Forehead from the East
Unto the East again –

It reaches to the Fence –
It wraps it Rail by Rail
Till it is lost in Fleeces –
It deals Celestial Vail

To Stump, and Stack – and Stem –
A Summer's empty Room –
Acres of Joints, where Harvests were,
Recordless, but for them –

It Ruffles Wrists of Posts
As Ankles of a Queen –
Then stills its Artisans – like Ghosts –
Denying they have been –

c. 1862

1891

312

Her – “last Poems” –
Poets – ended –
Silver – perished – with her Tongue –

Not on Record – bubbled other,
Flute – or Woman –
So divine –
Not unto its Summer – Morning
Robin – uttered Half the Tune –
Gushed too free for the Adoring –
From the Anglo-Florentine –
Late – the Praise –
'Tis dull – conferring
On the Head too High to Crown –
Diadem – or Ducal Showing –
Be its Grave – sufficient sign –
Nought – that We – No Poet's Kinsman –
Suffocate – with easy woe –
What, and if, Ourself a Bridegroom –
Put Her down – in Italy?

c. 1862

1914

313

I should have been too glad, I see –
Too lifted – for the scant degree
Of Life's penurious Round –
My little Circuit would have shamed
This new Circumference – have blamed –
The homelier time behind.

I should have been too saved – I see –
Too rescued – Fear too dim to me
That I could spell the Prayer
I knew so perfect – yesterday –
That Scalding One – Sabachthani –
Recited fluent – here –

Earth would have been too much – I see –
And Heaven – not enough for me –
I should have had the Joy
Without the Fear – to justify –
The Palm – without the Calvary –
So Savior – Crucify –

Defeat – whets Victory – they say –
The Reefs – in old Gethsemane –
Endear the Coast – beyond!
'Tis Beggars – Banquets – can define –
'Tis Parching – vitalizes Wine –
"Faith" bleats – to understand!

c. 1862

1891

314

Nature – sometimes sears a Sapling –
Sometimes – scalps a Tree –
Her Green People recollect it
When they do not die –

Fainter Leaves – to Further Seasons –
Dumbly testify –
We – who have the Souls –
Die oftener – Not so vitally –

c. 1862

1945

315

He fumbles at your Soul
As Players at the Keys
Before they drop full Music on –
He stuns you by degrees –
Prepares your brittle Nature
For the Ethereal Blow
By fainter Hammers – further heard –
Then nearer – Then so slow
Your Breath has time to straighten –
Your Brain – to bubble Cool –
Deals – One – imperial – Thunderbolt –
That scalps your naked Soul –

When Winds take Forests in their Paws –
The Universe – is still –

c. 1862

1896

The Wind didn't come from the Orchard – today –
 Further than that –
 Nor stop to play with the Hay –
 Nor joggle a Hat –
 He's a transitive fellow – very –
 Rely on that –

If He leave a Bur at the door
 We know He has climbed a Fir –
 But the Fir is Where – Declare –
 Were you ever there?

If He brings Odors of Clovers –
 And that is His business – not Ours –
 Then He has been with the Mowers –
 Whetting away the Hours
 To sweet pauses of Hay –
 His Way – of a June Day –

If He fling Sand, and Pebble –
 Little Boys Hats – and Stubble –
 With an occasional Steeple –
 And a hoarse “Get out of the way, I say,”
 Who'd be the fool to stay?
 Would you – Say –
 Would you be the fool to stay?

c. 1862

1932

Just so – Jesus – raps –
 He – doesn't weary –
 Last – at the Knocker –
 And first – at the Bell.
 Then – on divinest tiptoe – standing –
 Might He but spy the lady's soul –
 When He – retires –
 Chilled – or weary –
 It will be ample time for – me –

Patient – upon the steps – *until* then –
Heart! I am knocking – low at thee.

c. 1861

1914

318

I'll tell you how the Sun rose –
A Ribbon at a time –
The Steeples swam in Amethyst –
The news, like Squirrels, ran –
The Hills untied their Bonnets –
The Bobolinks – begun –
Then I said softly to myself –
“That must have been the Sun”!
But how he set – I know not –
There seemed a purple stile
That little Yellow boys and girls
Were climbing all the while –
Till when they reached the other side,
A Dominie in Gray –
Put gently up the evening Bars –
And led the flock away –

c. 1860

1890

319

The nearest Dream recedes – unrealized –
The Heaven we chase,
Like the June Bee – before the School Boy,
Invites the Race –
Stoops – to an easy Clover –
Dips – evades – teases – deploys –
Then – to the Royal Clouds
Lifts his light Pinnace –
Heedless of the Boy –
Staring – bewildered – at the mocking sky –

Homesick for steadfast Honey –
Ah, the Bee flies not
That brews that rare variety!

c. 1861

1891

320

We play at Paste –
Till qualified, for Pearl –
Then, drop the Paste –
And deem ourself a fool –

The Shapes – though – were similar –
And our new Hands
Learned *Gem*-Tactics –
Practicing *Sands* –

c. 1862

1891

321

Of all the Sounds despatched abroad,
There's not a Charge to me
Like that old measure in the Boughs –
That phraseless Melody –
The Wind does – working like a Hand,
Whose fingers Comb the Sky –
Then quiver down – with tufts of Tune –
Permitted Gods, and me –

Inheritance, it is, to us –
Beyond the Art to Earn –
Beyond the trait to take away
By Robber, since the Gain
Is gotten not of fingers –
And inner than the Bone –
Hid golden, for the whole of Days,
And even in the Urn,
I cannot vouch the merry Dust
Do not arise and play
In some odd fashion of its own,
Some quainter Holiday,

When Winds go round and round in Bands –
And thrum upon the door,
And Birds take places, overhead,
To bear them Orchestra.

I crave Him grace of Summer Boughs,
If such an Outcast be –
Who never heard that fleshless Chant –
Rise – solemn – on the Tree,
As if some Caravan of Sound
Off Deserts, in the Sky,
Had parted Rank,
Then knit, and swept –
In Seamless Company –

c. 1862

1890

322

There came a Day at Summer's full,
Entirely for me –
I thought that such were for the Saints,
Where Resurrections – be –

The Sun, as common, went abroad,
The flowers, accustomed, blew,
As if no soul the solstice passed
That maketh all things new –

The time was scarce profaned, by speech –
The symbol of a word
Was needless, as at Sacrament,
The Wardrobe – of our Lord –

Each was to each The Sealed Church,
Permitted to commune this – time –
Lest we too awkward show
At Supper of the Lamb.

The Hours slid fast – as Hours will,
Clutched tight, by greedy hands –

So faces on two Decks, look back,
Bound to opposing lands –

And so when all the time had leaked,
Without external sound
Each bound the Other's Crucifix –
We gave no other Bond –

Sufficient troth, that we shall rise –
Deposed – at length, the Grave –
To that new Marriage,
Justified – through Calvaries of Love –

c. 1861

1890

323

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!

c. 1858

1891

324

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.

c. 1860

1864

325

Of Tribulation, these are They,
Denoted by the White –
The Spangled Gowns, a lesser Rank
Of Victors – designate –

All these – did conquer –
But the ones who overcame most times –
Wear nothing commoner than Snow –
No Ornament, but Palms –

Surrender – is a sort unknown –
On this superior soil –
Defeat – an outgrown Anguish –
Remembered, as the Mile

Our panting Ankle barely passed –
When Night devoured the Road –
But we – stood whispering in the House –
And all we said – was “Saved”!

c. 1861

1891

326

I cannot dance upon my Toes –
No Man instructed me –
But oftentimes, among my mind,
A Glee possessth 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 –

c. 1862

1929

327

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 –

c. 1862

1891

A Bird came down the Walk --
 He did not know I saw --
 He bit an Angleworm in halves
 And ate the fellow, raw,

 And then he drank a Dew
 From a convenient Grass --
 And then hopped sidewise to the Wall
 To let a Beetle pass --

 He glanced with rapid eyes
 That hurried all around --
 They looked like frightened Beads, I thought --
 He stirred his Velvet Head

 Like one in danger, Cautious,
 I offered him a Crumb
 And he unrolled his feathers
 And rowed him softer home --

 Than Oars divide the Ocean,
 Too silver for a seam --
 Or Butterflies, off Banks of Noon
 Leap, splashless as they swim.

c. 1862

1891

So glad we are -- a Stranger'd deem
 'Twas sorry, that we were --
 For where the Holiday should be
 There publishes a Tear --
 Nor how Ourselves be justified --
 Since Grief and Joy are done
 So similar -- An Optizan
 Could not decide between --

c. 1862

1894

330

The Juggler's Hat her Country is –
The Mountain Gorse – the Bee's!

c. 1861

1894

331

While Aster's –
On the Hill –
Their Everlasting fashions – set –
And Covenant Gentians – Frill!

c. 1861

1894

332

There are two Ripenings – one – of sight –
Whose forces Spheric wind
Until the Velvet product
Drop spicy to the ground –
A homelier maturing –
A process in the Bur –
That teeth of Frosts alone disclose
In far October Air.

c. 1862

1894

333

The Grass so little has to do –
A Sphere of simple Green –
With only Butterflies to brood
And Bees to entertain –

And stir all day to pretty Tunes
The Breezes fetch along –
And hold the Sunshine in its lap
And bow to everything –

And thread the Dews, all night, like Pearls –
And make itself so fine

A Duchess were too common
For such a noticing –

And even when it dies – to pass
In Odors so divine –
Like Lowly spices, lain to sleep –
Or Spikenards, perishing –

And then, in Sovereign Barns to dwell –
And dream the Days away,
The Grass so little has to do
I wish I were a Hay –

c. 1862

1890

334

All the letters I can write
Are not fair as this –
Syllables of Velvet –
Sentences of Plush,
Depths of Ruby, undrained,
Hid, Lip, for Thee –
Play it were a Humming Bird –
And just sipped – me –

1862

1929

335

'Tis not that Dying hurts us so –
'Tis Living – hurts us more –
But Dying – is a different way –
A Kind behind the Door –

The Southern Custom – of the Bird –
That ere the Frosts are due –
Accepts a better Latitude –
We – are the Birds – that stay.

The Shiverers round Farmers' doors –
For whose reluctant Crumb –

We stipulate – till pitying Snows
Persuade our Feathers Home.

c. 1862

1945

336

The face I carry with me – last –
When I go out of Time –
To take my Rank – by – in the West –
That face – will just be thine –

I'll hand it to the Angel –
That – Sir – was my Degree –
In Kingdoms – you have heard the Raised –
Refer to – possibly.

He'll take it – scan it – step aside –
Return – with such a crown
As Gabriel – never capered at –
And beg me put it on –

And then – he'll turn me round and round –
To an admiring sky –
As one that bore her Master's name –
Sufficient Royalty!

c. 1862

1945

337

I know a place where Summer strives
With such a practised Frost –
She – each year – leads her Daisies back –
Recording briefly – "Lost" –

But when the South Wind stirs the Pools
And struggles in the lanes –
Her Heart misgives Her, for Her Vow –
And she pours soft Refrains

Into the lap of Adamant –
And spices – and the Dew –

That stiffens quietly to Quartz –
Upon her Amber Shoe –

c. 1862

1891

338

I know that He exists.
Somewhere – in Silence –
He has hid his rare life
From our gross eyes.

'Tis an instant's play.
'Tis a fond Ambush –
Just to make Bliss
Earn her own surprise!

But – should the play
Prove piercing earnest –
Should the glee – glaze –
In Death's – stiff – stare –

Would not the fun
Look too expensive!
Would not the jest –
Have crawled too far!

c. 1862

1891

339

I tend my flowers for thee –
Bright Absentee!
My Fuchsia's Coral Seams
Rip – while the Sower – dreams –

Geraniums – tint – and spot –
Low Daisies – dot –
My Cactus – splits her Beard
To show her throat –

Carnations – tip their spice –
And Bees – pick up –
A Hyacinth – I hid –

Puts out a Ruffled Head –
And odors fall
From flasks – so small –
You marvel how they held –

Globe Roses – break their satin flake –
Upon my Garden floor –
Yet – thou – not there –
I had as lief they bore
No Crimson – more –

Thy flower – be gay –
Her Lord – away!
It ill becometh me –
I'll dwell in Calyx – Gray –
How modestly – alway –
Thy Daisy –
Draped for thee!

c. 1862

1929

340

Is Bliss then, such Abyss,
I must not put my foot amiss
For fear I spoil my shoe?

I'd rather suit my foot
Than save my Boot –
For yet to buy another Pair
Is possible,
At any store –

But Bliss, is sold just once.
The Patent lost
None buy it any more –
Say, Foot, decide the point –
The Lady cross, or not?
Verdict for Boot!

c. 1862

1896

After great pain, a formal feeling comes –
 The Nerves sit ceremonious, like Tombs –
 The stiff Heart questions was it He, that bore,
 And Yesterday, or Centuries before?

The Feet, mechanical, go round –
 Of Ground, or Air, or Ought –
 A Wooden way
 Regardless grown,
 A Quartz contentment, like a stone –

This is the Hour of Lead –
 Remembered, if outlived,
 As Freezing persons, recollect the Snow –
 First – Chill – then Stupor – then the letting go –

c. 1862

1929

It will be Summer – eventually.
 Ladies – with parasols –
 Sauntering Gentlemen – with Canes –
 And little Girls – with Dolls –

Will tint the pallid landscape –
 As 'twere a bright Bouquet –
 Tho' drifted deep, in Parian –
 The Village lies – today –

The Lilacs – bending many a year –
 Will sway with purple load –
 The Bees – will not despise the tune –
 Their Forefathers – have hummed –

The Wild Rose – redder in the Bog –
 The Aster – on the Hill
 Her everlasting fashion – set –
 And Covenant Gentians – frill –

Till Summer folds her miracle –
 As Women – do – their Gown –

Or Priests – adjust the Symbols –
When Sacrament – is done –

c. 1862

1929

343

My Reward for Being, was This.
My premium – My Bliss –
An Admiralty, less –
A Sceptre – penniless –
And Realms – just Dross –

When Thrones accost my Hands –
With “Me, Miss, Me” –
I’ll unroll Thee –
Dominions dowerless – beside this Grace –
Election – Vote –
The Ballots of Eternity, will show just that.

c. 1862

1945

344

’Twas the old – road – through pain –
That unfrequented – one –
With many a turn – and thorn –
That stops – at Heaven –

This – was the Town – she passed –
There – where she – rested – last –
Then – stepped more fast –
The little tracks – close prest –
Then – not so swift –
Slow – slow – as feet did weary – grow –
Then – stopped – no other track!

Wait! Look! Her little Book –
The leaf – at love – turned back –
Her very Hat –
And this worn shoe just fits the track –
Herself – though – fled!

Another bed – a short one –
Women make – tonight –
In Chambers bright –
Too out of sight – though –
For our hoarse Good Night –
To touch her Head!

c. 1862

1929

345

Funny – to be a Century –
And see the People – going by –
I – should die of the Oddity –
But then – I'm not so staid – as He –

He keeps His Secrets safely – very –
Were He to tell – extremely sorry
This Bashful Globe of Ours would be –
So dainty of Publicity –

c. 1862

1929

346

Not probable – The barest Chance –
A smile too few – a word too much
And far from Heaven as the Rest –
The Soul so close on Paradise –

What if the Bird from journey far –
Confused by Sweets – as Mortals – are
Forget the secret of His wing –
And perish – but a Bough between –
Oh, Groping feet –
Oh Phantom Queen!

c. 1862

1935

347

When Night is almost done –
And Sunrise grows so near

[164]

That we can touch the Spaces –
It's time to smooth the Hair –

And get the Dimples ready –
And wonder we could care
For that old – faded Midnight –
That frightened – but an Hour –

c. 1862

1890

348

I dreaded that first Robin, so,
But He is mastered, now,
I'm some 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 unthinking Drums –

c. 1862

1891

349

I had the Glory – that will do –
An Honor, Thought can turn her to
When lesser Fames invite –
With one long “Nay” –
Bliss’ early shape
Deforming – Dwindling – Gulping up –
Time’s possibility.

c. 1862

1945

350

They leave us with the Infinite.
But He – is not a man –
His fingers are the size of fists –
His fists, the size of men –

And whom he findeth, with his Arm
As Himmaleh, shall stand –
Gibraltar’s Everlasting Shoe
Poised lightly on his Hand,

So trust him, Comrade –
You for you, and I, for you and me
Eternity is ample,
And quick enough, if true.

c. 1862

1945

351

I felt my life with both my hands
To see if it was there –
I held my spirit to the Glass,
To prove it possibler –

I turned my Being round and round
And paused at every pound
To ask the Owner's name –
For doubt, that I should know the Sound –

I judged my features – jarred my hair –
I pushed my dimples by, and waited –
If they – twinkled back –
Conviction might, of me –

I told myself, "Take Courage, Friend –
That – was a former time –
But we might learn to like the Heaven,
As well as our Old Home!"

c. 1862

1945

352

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.

c. 1862

1945

353

A happy lip – breaks sudden –
It doesn't state you how
It contemplated – smiling –
Just consummated – now –
But this one, wears its merriment
So patient – like a pain –
Fresh gilded – to elude the eyes
Unqualified, to scan –

c. 1862

1955

From Cocoon forth a Butterfly
 As Lady from her Door
 Emerged – a Summer Afternoon –
 Repairing Everywhere –

Without Design – that I could trace
 Except to stray abroad
 On Miscellaneous Enterprise
 The Clovers – understood –

Her pretty Parasol be seen
 Contracting in a Field
 Where Men made Hay –
 Then struggling hard
 With an opposing Cloud –

Where Parties – Phantom as Herself –
 To Nowhere – seemed to go
 In purposeless Circumference –
 As 'twere a Tropic Show –

And notwithstanding Bee – that worked –
 And Flower – that zealous blew –
 This Audience of Idleness
 Disdained them, from the Sky –

Till Sundown crept – a steady Tide –
 And Men that made the Hay –
 And Afternoon – and Butterfly –
 Extinguished – in the Sea –

c. 1862

1891

'Tis Opposites – entice –
 Deformed Men – ponder Grace –
 Bright fires – the Blanketless –
 The Lost – Day's face –

The Blind – esteem it be
 Enough Estate – to see –

The Captive – strangles new –
For deeming – Beggars – play –

To lack – enamor Thee –
Tho' the Divinity –
Be only
Me –

c. 1862

1929

356

The Day that I was crowned
Was like the other Days –
Until the Coronation came –
And then – 'twas Otherwise –

As Carbon in the Coal
And Carbon in the Gem
Are One – and yet the former
Were dull for Diadem –

I rose, and all was plain –
But when the Day declined
Myself and It, in Majesty
Were equally – adorned –

The Grace that I – was chose –
To Me – surpassed the Crown
That was the Witness for the Grace –
'Twas even that 'twas Mine –

c. 1862

1935

357

God is a distant – stately Lover –
Woos, as He states us – by His Son –
Verily, a Vicarious Courtship –
“Miles”, and “Priscilla”, were such an One –

But, lest the Soul – like fair “Priscilla”
Choose the Envoy – and spurn the Groom –

Vouches, with hyperbolic archness –
“Miles”, and “John Alden” were Synonym –

c. 1862

1891

358

If any sink, assure that this, now standing –
Failed like Themselves – and conscious that it rose –
Grew by the Fact, and not the Understanding
How Weakness passed – or Force – arose –

Tell that the Worst, is easy in a Moment –
Dread, but the Whizzing, before the Ball –
When the Ball enters, enters Silence –
Dying – annuls the power to kill.

c. 1862

1935

359

I gained it so –
By Climbing slow –
By Catching at the Twigs that grow
Between the Bliss – and me –
It hung so high
As well the Sky
Attempt by Strategy –

I said I gained it –
This – was all –
Look, how I clutch it
Lest it fall –
And I a Pauper go –
Unfitted by an instant’s Grace
For the Contented – Beggar’s face
I wore – an hour ago –

c. 1862

1891

360

Death sets a Thing significant
The Eye had hurried by

[170]

Except a perished Creature
Entreat us tenderly

To ponder little Workmanships
In Crayon, or in Wool,
With "This was last Her fingers did" –
Industrious until –

The Thimble weighed too heavy –
The stitches stopped – themselves –
And then 'twas put among the Dust
Upon the Closet shelves –

A Book I have – a friend gave –
Whose Pencil – here and there –
Had notched the place that pleased Him –
At Rest – His fingers are –

Now – when I read – I read not –
For interrupting Tears –
Obliterate the Etchings
Too Costly for Repairs.

c. 1862

1891

361

What I can do – I will –
Though it be little as a Daffodil –
That I cannot – must be
Unknown to possibility –

c. 1862

1929

362

It struck me – every Day –
The Lightning was as new
As if the Cloud that instant slit
And let the Fire through –

It burned Me – in the Night –
It Blistered to My Dream –

It sickened fresh upon my sight –
With every Morn that came –

I thought that Storm – was brief –
The Maddest – quickest by –
But Nature lost the Date of This –
And left it in the Sky –

c. 1862

1896

363

I went to thank Her –
But She Slept –
Her Bed – a funneled Stone –
With Nosegays at the Head and Foot –
That Travellers – had thrown –

Who went to thank Her –
But She Slept –
'Twas Short – to cross the Sea –
To look upon Her like – alive –
But turning back – 'twas slow –

c. 1862

1890

364

The Morning after Woe –
'Tis frequently the Way –
Surpasses all that rose before –
For utter Jubilee –

As Nature did not care –
And piled her Blossoms on –
And further to parade a Joy
Her Victim stared upon –

The Birds proclaim their Tunes –
Pronouncing every word
Like Hammers – Did they know they fell
Like Litanies of Lead –

On here and there – a creature –
They'd modify the Glee
To fit some Crucifixal Clef –
Some Key of Calvary –

c. 1862

1935

365

Dare you see a Soul *at the White Heat*?
Then crouch within the door –
Red – is the Fire's common tint –
But when the vivid Ore
Has vanquished Flame's conditions,
It quivers from the Forge
Without a color, but the light
Of unanointed Blaze.
Least Village has its Blacksmith
Whose Anvil's even ring
Stands symbol for the finer Forge
That soundless tugs – within –
Refining these impatient Ores
With Hammer, and with Blaze
Until the Designated Light
Repudiate the Forge –

c. 1862

1891

366

Although I put away his life –
An Ornament too grand
For Forehead low as mine, to wear,
This might have been the Hand

That sowed the flower, he preferred –
Or smoothed a homely pain,
Or pushed the pebble from his path –
Or played his chosen tune –

On Lute the least – the latest –
But just his Ear could know

That whatsoe'er delighted it,
I never would let go –

The foot to bear his errand –
A little Boot I know –
Would leap abroad like Antelope –
With just the grant to do –

His weariest Commandment –
A sweeter to obey,
Than “Hide and Seek” –
Or skip to Flutes –
Or All Day, chase the Bee –

Your Servant, Sir, will weary –
The Surgeon, will not come –
The World, will have its own – to do –
The Dust, will vex your Fame –

The Cold will force your tightest door
Some February Day,
But say my apron bring the sticks
To make your Cottage gay –

That I may take that promise
To Paradise, with me –
To teach the Angels, avarice,
You, Sir, taught first – to me.

c. 1862

1929

367

Over and over, like a Tune –
The Recollection plays –
Drums off the Phantom Battlements
Cornets of Paradise –

Snatches, from Baptized Generations –
Cadences too grand
But for the Justified Processions
At the Lord’s Right hand.

c. 1862

1929

How sick – to wait – in any place – but thine –
 I knew last night – when someone tried to twine –
 Thinking – perhaps – that I looked tired – or alone –
 Or breaking – almost – with unspoken pain –

And I turned – ducal –
That right – was thine –
One port – suffices – for a Brig – like *mine* –

Ours be the tossing – wild though the sea –
 Rather than a Mooring – unshared by thee.
 Ours be the Cargo – *unladen* – *here* –
 Rather than the “*spicy isles*” –
 And thou – not there –

c. 1862

1945

She lay as if at play
 Her life had leaped away –
 Intending to return –
 But not so soon –

Her merry Arms, half dropt –
 As if for lull of sport –
 An instant had forgot –
 The Trick to start –

Her dancing Eyes – ajar –
 As if their Owner were
 Still sparkling through
 For fun – at you –

Her Morning at the door –
 Devising, I am sure –
 To force her sleep –
 So light – so deep –

c. 1862

1935

Heaven is so far of the Mind
 That were the Mind dissolved –
 The Site – of it – by Architect
 Could not again be proved –

'Tis vast – as our Capacity –
 As fair – as our idea –
 To Him of adequate desire
 No further 'tis, than Here –

c. 1862

1929

A precious – mouldering pleasure – 'tis –
 To meet an Antique Book –
 In just the Dress his Century wore –
 A privilege – I think –

His venerable Hand to take –
 And warming in our own –
 A passage back – or two – to make –
 To Times when he – was young –

His quaint opinions – to inspect –
 His thought to ascertain
 On Themes concern our mutual mind –
 The Literature of Man –

What interested Scholars – most –
 What Competitions ran –
 When Plato – was a Certainty –
 And Sophocles – a Man –

When Sappho – was a living Girl –
 And Beatrice wore
 The Gown that Dante – deified –
 Facts Centuries before

He traverses – familiar –
 As One should come to Town –

And tell you all your Dreams – were true –
He lived – where Dreams were born –

His presence is Enchantment –
You beg him not to go –
Old Volumes shake their Vellum Heads
And tantalize – just so –

c. 1862

1890

372

I know lives, I could miss
Without a Misery –
Others – whose instant's wanting –
Would be Eternity –

The last – a scanty Number –
'Twould scarcely fill a Two –
The first – a Gnat's Horizon
Could easily outgrow –

c. 1862

1929

373

I'm saying every day
"If I should be a Queen, tomorrow" –
I'd do this way –
And so I deck, a little,

If it be, I wake a Bourbon,
None on me, bend supercilious –
With "This was she –
Begged in the Market place –
Yesterday."

Court is a stately place –
I've heard men say –
So I loop my apron, against the Majesty
With bright Pins of Buttercup –
That not too plain –
Rank – overtake me –

And perch my Tongue
On Twigs of singing – rather high –
But this, might be my brief Term
To qualify –

Put from my simple speech all plain word –
Take other accents, as such I heard
Though but for the Cricket – just,
And but for the Bee –
Not in all the Meadow –
One accost me –

Better to be ready –
Than did next morn
Meet me in Aragon –
My old Gown – on –

And the surprised Air
Rustics – wear –
Summoned – unexpectedly –
To Exeter –

c. 1862

1935

374

I went to Heaven –
'Twas a small Town –
Lit – with a Ruby –
Lathed – with Down –

Stiller – than the fields
At the full Dew –
Beautiful – as Pictures –
No Man drew.
People – like the Moth –
Of Mechlin – frames –
Duties – of Gossamer –
And Eider – names –
Almost – contented –
I – could be –

'Mong such unique
Society –

c. 1862

1891

375

The Angle of a Landscape –
That every time I wake –
Between my Curtain and the Wall
Upon an ample Crack –

Like a Venetian – waiting –
Accosts my open eye –
Is just a Bough of Apples –
Held slanting, in the Sky –

The Pattern of a Chimney –
The Forehead of a Hill –
Sometimes – a Vane's Forefinger –
But that's – Occasional –

The Seasons – shift – my Picture –
Upon my Emerald Bough,
I wake – to find no – Emeralds –
Then – Diamonds – which the Snow

From Polar Caskets – fetched me –
The Chimney – and the Hill –
And just the Steeple's finger –
These – never stir at all –

c. 1862

1945

376

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 –

[179]

'Twere better Charity
To leave me in the Atom's Tomb –
Merry, and Nought, and gay, and numb –
Than this smart Misery.

c. 1862

1929

377

To lose one's faith – surpass
The loss of an Estate –
Because Estates can be
Replenished – faith cannot –

Inherited with Life –
Belief – but once – can be –
Annihilate a single clause –
And Being's – Beggary –

c. 1862

1896

378

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 –

c. 1862

1935

379

Rehearsal to Ourselves
Of a Withdrawn Delight –
Affords a Bliss like Murder –
Omnipotent – Acute –

We will not drop the Dirk –
Because We love the Wound

[180]

The Dirk Commemorate – Itself
Remind Us that we died.

c. 1862

1929

380

There is a flower that Bees prefer –
And Butterflies – desire –
To gain the Purple Democrat
The Humming Bird – aspire –

And Whatsoever Insect pass –
A Honey bear away
Proportioned to his several dearth
And her – capacity –

Her face be rounder than the Moon
And ruddier than the Gown
Of Orchis in the Pasture –
Or Rhododendron – worn –

She doth not wait for June –
Before the World be Green –
Her sturdy little Countenance
Against the Wind – be seen –

Contending with the Grass –
Near Kinsman to Herself –
For Privilege of Sod and Sun –
Sweet Litigants for Life –

And when the Hills be full –
And newer fashions blow –
Doth not retract a single spice
For pang of jealousy –

Her Public – be the Noon –
Her Providence – the Sun –
Her Progress – by the Bee – proclaimed –
In sovereign – Swerveless Tune –

The Bravest – of the Host –
Surrendering – the last –

Nor even of Defeat – aware –
When cancelled by the Frost –

c. 1862

1890

381

A Secret told –
Ceases to be a Secret – then –
A Secret – kept –
That – can appal but One –

Better of it – continual be afraid –
Than it –
And Whom you told it to – beside –

c. 1862

1929

382

For Death – or rather
For the Things 'twould buy –
This – put away
Life's Opportunity –

The Things that Death will buy
Are Room –
Escape from Circumstances –
And a Name –

With Gifts of Life
How Death's Gifts may compare –
We know not –
For the Rates – lie Here –

c. 1862

1914

383

Exhilaration – is within –
There can no Outer Wine
So royally intoxicate
As that diviner Brand

[182]

The Soul achieves – Herself –
To drink – or set away
For Visitor – Or Sacrament –
'Tis not of Holiday

To stimulate a Man
Who hath the Ample Rhine
Within his Closet – Best you can
Exhale in offering.

c. 1862

1935

384

No Rack can torture me –
My Soul – at Liberty –
Behind this mortal Bone
There knits a bolder One –

You cannot prick with saw –
Nor pierce with Scimitar –
Two Bodies – therefore be –
Bind One – The Other fly –

The Eagle of his Nest
No easier divest –
And gain the Sky
Than mayest Thou –

Except Thyself may be
Thine Enemy –
Captivity is Consciousness –
So's Liberty.

c. 1862

1890

385

Smiling back from Coronation
May be Luxury –
On the Heads that started with us –
Being's Peasantry –

Recognizing in Procession
Ones We former knew –
When Ourselves were also dusty –
Centuries ago –

Had the Triumph no Conviction
Of how many be –
Stimulated – by the Contrast –
Unto Misery –

c. 1862

1945

386

Answer July –
Where is the Bee –
Where is the Blush –
Where is the Hay?

Ah, said July –
Where is the Seed –
Where is the Bud –
Where is the May –
Answer Thee – Me –

Nay – said the May –
Show me the Snow –
Show me the Bells –
Show me the Jay!

Quibbled the Jay –
Where be the Maize –
Where be the Haze –
Where be the Bur?
Here – said the Year –

c. 1862

1935

387

The Sweetest Heresy received
That Man and Woman know –

Each Other's Convert –
Though the Faith accommodate but Two –

The Churches are so frequent –
The Ritual – so small –
The Grace so unavoidable –
To fail – is Infidel –

c. 1862

1929

388

Take Your Heaven further on –
This – to Heaven divine Has gone –
Had You earlier blundered in
Possibly, e'en You had seen
An Eternity – put on –
Now – to ring a Door beyond
Is the utmost of Your Hand –
To the Skies – apologize –
Nearer to Your Courtesies
Than this Sufferer polite –
Dressed to meet You –
See – in White!

c. 1862

1935

389

There's been a Death, in the Opposite House,
As lately as Today –
I know it, by the numb look
Such Houses have – alway –

The Neighbors rustle in and out –
The Doctor – drives away –
A Window opens like a Pod –
Abrupt – mechanically –

Somebody flings a Mattress out –
The Children hurry by –
They wonder if it died – on that –
I used to – when a Boy –

The Minister – goes stiffly in –
As if the House were His –
And He owned all the Mourners – now –
And little Boys – besides –

And then the Milliner – and the Man
Of the Appalling Trade –
To take the measure of the House –

There'll be that Dark Parade –

Of Tassels – and of Coaches – soon –
It's easy as a Sign –
The Intuition of the News –
In just a Country Town –

c. 1862

1896

390

It's coming – the postponeless Creature –
It gains the Block – and now – it gains the Door –
Chooses its latch, from all the other fastenings –
Enters – with a “You know Me – Sir”?

Simple Salute – and certain Recognition –
Bold – were it Enemy – Brief – were it friend –
Dresses each House in Crape, and Icicle –
And carries one – out of it – to God –

c. 1862

1929

391

A Visitor in Marl –
Who influences Flowers –
Till they are orderly as Busts –
And Elegant – as Glass –

Who visits in the Night –
And just before the Sun –
Concludes his glistening interview –
Caresses – and is gone –

[186.]

But whom his fingers touched –
And where his feet have run –
And whatsoever Mouth he kissed –
Is as it had not been –

c. 1862

1935

392

Through the Dark Sod – as Education –
The Lily passes sure –
Feels her white foot – no trepidation –
Her faith – no fear –

Afterward – in the Meadow –
Swinging her Beryl Bell –
The Mold-life – all forgotten – now –
In Ecstasy – and Dell –

c. 1862

1929

393

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

c. 1862

1935

394

"Twas Love – not me –
Oh punish – pray –

The Real one died for Thee -
Just Him - not me -

Such Guilt - to love Thee - most!
Doom it beyond the Rest -
Forgive it - last -
'Twas base as Jesus - most!

Let Justice not mistake -
We Two - looked so alike -
Which was the Guilty Sake -
'Twas Love's - Now Strike!

c. 1862

1945

395

Reverse cannot befall
That fine Prosperity
Whose Sources are interior -
As soon - Adversity

A Diamond - overtake
In far - Bolivian Ground -
Misfortune hath no implement
Could mar it - if it found -

c. 1862

1914

396

There is a Languor of the Life
More imminent than Pain -
'Tis Pain's Successor - When the Soul
Has suffered all it can -

A Drowsiness - diffuses -
A Dimness like a Fog
Envelops Consciousness -
As Mists - obliterate a Crag.

The Surgeon - does not blanch - at pain -
His Habit - is severe -

But tell him that it ceased to feel –
The Creature lying there –

And he will tell you – skill is late –
A Mightier than He –
Has ministered before Him –
There's no Vitality.

c. 1862

1929

397

When Diamonds are a Legend,
And Diadems – a Tale –
I Brooch and Earrings for Myself,
Do sow, and Raise for sale –

And tho' I'm scarce accounted,
My Art, a Summer Day – had Patrons –
Once – it was a Queen –
And once – a Butterfly –

c. 1862

1935

398

I had not minded – Walls –
Were Universe – one Rock –
And far I heard his silver Call
The other side the Block –

I'd tunnel – till my Groove
Pushed sudden thro' to his –
Then my face take her Recompense –
The looking in his Eyes –

But 'tis a single Hair –
A filament – a law –
A Cobweb – wove in Adamant –
A Battlement – of Straw –

A limit like the Veil
Unto the Lady's face –

But every Mesh – a Citadel –
And Dragons – in the Crease –

c. 1862

1929

399

A House upon the Height –
That Wagon never reached –
No Dead, were ever carried down –
No Peddler's Cart – approached –

Whose Chimney never smoked –
Whose Windows – Night and Morn –
Caught Sunrise first – and Sunset – last –
Then – held an Empty Pane –

Whose fate – Conjecture knew –
No other neighbor – did –
And what it was – we never lisped –
Because He – never told –

c. 1862

1945

400

A Tongue – to tell Him I am true!
Its fee – to be of Gold –
Had Nature – in Her monstrous House
A single Ragged Child –

To earn a Mine – would run
That Interdicted Way,
And tell Him – Charge thee speak it plain –
That so far – Truth is True?

And answer What I do –
Beginning with the Day
That Night – begun –
Nay – Midnight – 'twas –
Since Midnight – happened – say –

If once more – Pardon – Boy –
The Magnitude thou may

Enlarge my Message – If too vast
Another Lad – help thee –

Thy Pay – in Diamonds – be –
And His – in solid Gold –
Say Rubies – if He hesitate –
My Message – must be told –

Say – last I said – was This –
That when the Hills – come down –
And hold no higher than the Plain –
My Bond – have just begun –

And when the Heavens – disband –
And Deity conclude –
Then – look for me. Be sure you say –
Least Figure – on the Road –

c. 1862

1945

401

What Soft – Cherubic Creatures –
These Gentlewomen are –
One would as soon assault a Plush –
Or violate a Star –

Such Dimity Convictions –
A Horror so refined
Of freckled Human Nature –
Of Deity – ashamed –

It's such a common – Glory –
A Fisherman's – Degree –
Redemption – Brittle Lady –
Be so – ashamed of Thee –

c. 1862

1896

402

I pay – in Satin Cash –
You did not state – your price –

A Petal, for a Paragraph
Is near as I can guess -

c. 1862

1929

403

The Winters are so short -
I'm hardly justified
In sending all the Birds away -
And moving into Pod -

Myself - for scarcely settled -
The Phoebes have begun -
And then - it's time to strike my Tent -
And open House - again -

It's mostly, interruptions -
My Summer - is despoiled -
Because there was a Winter - once -
And all the Cattle - starved -

And so there was a Deluge -
And swept the World away -
But Ararat's a Legend - now -
And no one credits Noah -

c. 1862

1935

404

How many Flowers fail in Wood -
Or perish from the Hill -
Without the privilege to know
That they are Beautiful -

How many cast a nameless Pod
Upon the nearest Breeze -
Unconscious of the Scarlet Freight -
It bear to Other Eyes -

c. 1862

1929

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 –

c. 1862

1935

Some – Work for Immortality –
 The Chiefer part, for Time –
 He – Compensates – immediately –
 The former – Checks – on Fame –

Slow Gold – but Everlasting –
 The Bullion of Today –
 Contrasted with the Currency
 Of Immortality –

A Beggar – Here and There –
 Is gifted to discern
 Beyond the Broker's insight –
 One's – Money – One's – the Mine –

c. 1862

1929

If What we could – were what we would –
 Criterion – be small –
 It is the Ultimate of Talk –
 The Impotence to Tell –

c. 1862

1914

Unit, like Death, for Whom?
 True, like the Tomb,
 Who tells no secret
 Told to Him –
 The Grave is strict –
 Tickets admit
 Just two – the Bearer –
 And the Borne –
 And seat – just One –
 The Living – tell –
 The Dying – but a Syllable –
 The Coy Dead – None –
 No Chatter – here – no tea –
 So Babbler, and Bohea – stay there –
 But Gravity – and Expectation – and Fear –
 A tremor just, that All's not sure.

c. 1862

1947

They dropped like Flakes –
 They dropped like Stars –
 Like Petals from a Rose –
 When suddenly across the June
 A wind with fingers – goes –

They perished in the Seamless Grass –
 No eye could find the place –

But God can summon every face
On his Repealless – List.

c. 1862

1891

410

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?

c. 1862

1947

411

The Color of the Grave is Green –
The Outer Grave – I mean –
You would not know it from the Field –
Except it own a Stone –

To help the fond – to find it –
Too infinite asleep

[195]

To stop and tell them where it is –
But just a Daisy – deep –

The Color of the Grave is white –
The outer Grave – I mean –
You would not know it from the Drifts –
In Winter – till the Sun –

Has furrowed out the Aisles –
Then – higher than the Land
The little Dwelling Houses rise
Where each – has left a friend –

The Color of the Grave within –
The Duplicate – I mean –
Not all the Snows could make it white –
Not all the Summers – Green –

You've seen the Color – maybe –
Upon a Bonnet bound –
When that you met it with before –
The Ferret – cannot find –

c. 1862

1935

412

I read my sentence – steadily –
Reviewed it with my eyes,
To see that I made no mistake
In its extremest clause –
The Date, and manner, of the shame –
And then the Pious Form
That “God have mercy” on the Soul
The Jury voted Him –
I made my soul familiar – with her extremity –
That at the last, it should not be a novel Agony –
But she, and Death, acquainted –
Meet tranquilly, as friends –
Salute, and pass, without a Hint –
And there, the Matter ends –

c. 1862

1891

I never felt at Home – Below –
 And in the Handsome Skies
 I shall not feel at Home – I know –
 I don't like Paradise –

Because it's Sunday – all the time –
 And Recess – never comes –
 And Eden'll be so lonesome
 Bright Wednesday Afternoons –

If God could make a visit –
 Or ever took a Nap –
 So not to see us – but they say
 Himself – a Telescope

Perennial beholds us –
 Myself would run away
 From Him – and Holy Ghost – and All –
 But there's the "Judgment Day"!

c. 1862

1929

'Twas like a Maelstrom, with a notch,
 That nearer, every Day,
 Kept narrowing its boiling Wheel
 Until the Agony

Toyed coolly with the final inch
 Of your delirious Hem –
 And you dropt, lost,
 When something broke –
 And let you from a Dream –

As if a Goblin with a Gauge –
 Kept measuring the Hours –
 Until you felt your Second
 Weigh, helpless, in his Paws –

And not a Sinew – stirred – could help,
 And sense was setting numb –

When God – remembered – and the Fiend
Let go, then, Overcome –

As if your Sentence stood – pronounced –
And you were frozen led
From Dungeon’s luxury of Doubt
To Gibbets, and the Dead –

And when the Film had stitched your eyes
A Creature gasped “Reprise”!
Which Anguish was the utterest – then –
To perish, or to live?

c. 1862

1945

415

Sunset at Night – is natural –
But Sunset on the Dawn
Reverses Nature – Master –
So Midnight’s – due – at Noon.

Eclipses be – predicted –
And Science bows them in –
But do one face us suddenly –
Jehovah’s Watch – is wrong.

c. 1862

1929

416

A Murmur in the Trees – to note –
Not loud enough – for Wind –
A Star – not far enough to seek –
Nor near enough – to find –

A long – long Yellow – on the Lawn –
A Hubbub – as of feet –
Not audible – as Ours – to Us –
But dapperer – More Sweet –

A Hurrying Home of little Men
To Houses unperceived –

All this – and more – if I should tell –
Would never be believed –

Of Robins in the Trundle bed
How many I espied
Whose Nightgowns could not hide the Wings –
Although I heard them try –

But then I promised ne'er to tell –
How could I break My Word?
So go your Way – and I'll go Mine –
No fear you'll miss the Road.

c. 1862

1896

417

It is dead – Find it –
Out of sound – Out of sight –
“Happy”? Which is wiser –
You, or the Wind?
“Conscious”? Won’t you ask that –
Of the low Ground?

“Homesick”? Many met it –
Even through them – This
Cannot testify –
Themself – as dumb –

c. 1862

1929

418

Not in this World to see his face –
Sounds long – until I read the place
Where this – is said to be
But just the Primer – to a life –
Unopened – rare – Upon the Shelf –
Clasped yet – to Him – and me –

And yet – My Primer suits me so
I would not choose – a Book to know
Than that – be sweeter wise –

Might some one else – so learned – be –
And leave me – just my A – B – C –
Himself – could have the Skies –

c. 1862

1890

419

We grow accustomed to the Dark –
When Light is put away –
As when the Neighbor holds the Lamp
To witness her Goodbye –

A Moment – We uncertain step
For newness of the night –
Then – fit our Vision to the Dark –
And meet the Road – erect –

And so of larger – Darknesses –
Those Evenings of the Brain –
When not a Moon disclose a sign –
Or Star – come out – within –

The Bravest – grope a little –
And sometimes hit a Tree
Directly in the Forehead –
But as they learn to see –

Either the Darkness alters –
Or something in the sight
Adjusts itself to Midnight –
And Life steps almost straight.

c. 1862

1935

420

You'll know it – as you know 'tis Noon –
By Glory –
As you do the Sun –
By Glory –
As you will in Heaven –
Know God the Father – and the Son.