

The cover art features a central globe with a rainbow-colored band across its middle. Several books are shown in a dynamic, overlapping arrangement, appearing to float or fly out from the globe. To the right of the globe, there are three interlocking gears in green, red, and blue. The background is a dark green gradient with a faint, repeating pattern of stylized icons representing various subjects like science, history, and nature.

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Etext of The Single Hound Poems of a Lifetime
By Emily Dickinson

The Single Hound Poems of a Lifetime
By Emily Dickinson
With an Introduction by Her Niece
Martha Dickinson Bianchi
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TO SUE.

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 way that I came,
And wore my last year's gown,
The other, as a bird her nest,
Builted 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!
Emilie.

THE EDITOR'S PREFACE.

THE romantic friendship of my Aunt Emily Dickinson and her "Sister Sue" extended from girlhood until death. The first poem, dated, was sent in 1848, and probably the last word Aunt Emily ever wrote was her reply to a message from my Mother, "My answer is an unmitigated Yes, Sue." During the last year of my Mother's life she read and re-read these poems, and innumerable letters, with increasing indecision as to the final disposition of her treasury. It eventually devolved upon me to choose between

burning them or giving them to the lovers of my Aunt's peculiar genius.

My hesitation was finally influenced by a note written in their early twenties, which I quote.

DEAR SUE:

I like your praise because I know it knows. If I could make you and Austin proud some day a long way off, 'twould give me taller feet.

EMILY.

This is my inspiration for a volume, offered as a memorial to the love of these "Dear, dead Women."

Also, it seemed but fitting to reveal a phase of Aunt Emily known only to us who dwelt with her behind the hedge; the fascinating, wilful woman, lightning and fragrance in one.

I am told she is taught in colleges as a rare strange being; a weird recluse, eating her heart out in morbid and unhappy longing, or a victim of unsatisfied passion; I have heard her called "an epigrammatic Walt Whitman" by a noted lecturer, and only recently a distinguished foreign critic pronounced her "the greatest mystic America has produced second only to Ralph Waldo Emerson."

But to her niece and nephews she was of fairy lineage, akin to the frost on the nursery pane in Winter or the humming bird of Midsummer; the realization of our vivid fancy, the confederate in every contraband desire, the very Spirit of the "Never, Never Land."

She adored us, her three Child-Lovers, talked to us as if we were grown up and our opinions of importance, our secrets portentous, though always keeping herself our playmate with such art that she remains in my memory as a little girl herself. Once, when my brother Ned, as a child, stood looking up at the evening star, he said wistfully, "I want to go up there, Aunt Emily." "All right," she

cried, "Go get your horse and buggy and we'll go tonight!" Often quoting afterward his grave rebuke of her levity "Aunt Emily, you can't go up there in a horse and buggy!"

When we were happy she added her crumb, when we were ill all she had was ours, were we grieved, her indignation was hot against whoever or whatever had wounded us. I thought of her as the avenging angel then, her eyes smouldered so gloriously at our wrongs. One other charm was unique to her; her way of flitting, like a shadow upon the hillside, a motion known to no other mortal. In the midst of one of our Eden-hours, she would fly at the sound of an intruder and was not only the tick of the old clock left for our companionship. I was usually left with her while both families went to church [Page viii] on Sabbath mornings and well remember being escorted by her down to the cool hoarding cellar, past the wine closet to a mysterious cupboard of her own, where she dealt me such lawless cake and other goodies, that even a child of four knew it for excess, sure to be followed by disaster later in the day. There was an unreal abandon about it all such as thrills the prodigality of dreaming.

As we grew older her wit was our unconscious standard of others, her pitiless directness of thought our revelation, while her sweetness was like nothing but that of her own favorite jasmine flowers. Indeed she resembled the Cape Jasmine more than any mortal being. They two were the whitest Sisters, or flowers, Nature ever bore.

Once let us get to her, past what Mr. Henry James calls "an archaic Irish servant," past our other faithful but prejudiced Aunt Lavinia, who gave us a plain cookey and advised us to "run home," once within the forbidden precincts of the "front part" of the old mansion, we had found our South-West passage and were [Page ix] transported, obstinate, oblivious. To water her plants with her tiny watering pot, to help her ice a loaf of plum cake for her Father's supper, to watch her check off the rich dark caramels she unflinchingly kept on hand for us, to share her wickedness in skirmishing to avoid outsiders, or to connive in her intrigue to outwit the cat of perpetual unpopularity in her esteem, what other joys could drag us from these?

She put more excitement into the event of a dead fly than her neighbors got from a journey by stage-coach to Boston. If art is "exaggeration apropos," as M,rim,e claims, she was an incomparable artist at life.

There was nothing forbidden us by her, in spite of which license we were as shy of troubling her, as gentle in our play with her, as if she had been Hans Andersen's little Snow Maiden and might melt before our eyes if misunderstood.

Fascination was her element. It was my brother Ned, borne home against his will, screaming "I want a rich! I will see my Aunt [Page x] Emily! I will have a rich!" who provided that dear Villain with a synonym for her own terms with Life. "A rich" was the desire of her heart, "a rich" was her instinctive claim, and she would not compromise.

The poems here included were written on any chance slip of paper, sometimes the old plaid Quadrille, sometimes a gilt-edged sheet with a Paris mark, often a random scrap of commercial note from her Father's law office. Each of these is folded over, addressed merely "Sue," and sent by the first available hand. For though they lived side by side with only a wide green lawn between, days and even weeks slipped by sometimes without their actual meeting. My Mother was blessedly busy in her home and Aunt Emily's light across the snow in the Winter gloaming, or burning late when she remained up all night, to protect her plants from chill, was often a mute greeting between them supplemented only by their written messages. There must have been a lure for the almost cloistered soul in the warmth of her only brother Austin's youthful home, and the radiant atmosphere of [Page xi] my Mother with her three children growing up about her. "Only Woman in the World," "Avalanche of Sun," "Sister of Ophir," she calls her. In these earlier days Aunt Emily often came over, most frequently in the evening, and always when Mr. Bowles, Mrs. Anthon of London, or some such cherished guest, was here. She played brilliantly upon the piano, and travestied the descriptive pieces popular at that period with as much skill as wit. One improvisation which she called the Devil was, by tradition, unparalleled. She had no idea of

the passing of time when at the height of these frolics and not until my revered Grandfather appeared with his lantern, would the revel break off. Him she adored, feared, made fun of, and obeyed. "If Father is asleep on the sofa the house is full, though it were empty otherwise!" was one of her familiar exclamations. It could never be said of her, as she said of a prosaic friend, "He has the facts but not the phosphorescence of learning!" One evening when Dr. and Mrs. Holland had arrived unexpectedly to pass the night, having driven over from North- [Page xii] hampton in the Autumn dusk, my Grandmother, anxious for their every comfort, offered one solicitous suggestion after another, until Aunt Emily, always exasperated by repetition, cried "O Mrs. Holland, don't you want to hear me say the Lord's prayer? Should n't you like me to repeat the Declaration of Independence? Shan't I recite the Ten Commandments?"

It was in this mood that she once put four superfluous kittens on the fire-shovel and softly dropped them into the first convenient jar the cellar offered, her family being in church her chosen time for iniquity. This especial jar happened to be full of pickle brine. The sequel was very awful; occurring when the austere Judge Otis P. Lord of Salem was visiting my Grandfather, and as in all such emergencies of detection she fled to her own room and turned the key; holding reproach at bay until she chose to come out and ignore it. In her innocent love of mystery and intrigue Aunt Emily reminds one of Stevenson. She would have played at "lantern bearers" with him, and given the [Page xiii] stealthy countersign under her breath, as no other living urchin!

She was "eternally preoccupied with death" as any of Pater's giant Florentines, but though the supernatural had the supreme hold on her imagination and conjecture, every lesser mystery was a panic and an ecstasy. If she could contrive to outwit domestic vigilance and smuggle a box of fresh-laid eggs to my Mother, on the sly, it savored to her of piracy and brigandage. She was averse to surveillance of every description and took pains to elude it in these little traffics of her heart as in the enigmas of her Being. "Give me liberty or give me death but if you can, give me liberty!" was her frequent cry. She had a keen scent for the meanings hid beneath the goodly outside of diplomacy and watched for developments in

home and foreign policies with surprising acumen. The Winter she was at Willard's, during her Father's Congressional career, she is said to have astonished his political friends by her insight and created quite a sensation by her wit, though the only story I recall now was [Page xiv] of her saying to a prim old Chief Justice of the Supreme sort, when the plum pudding on fire was offered "Oh Sir, may one eat of hell fire with impunity, here?"

Physically timid at the least approach to a crisis in the day's event, her mind dared earth and heaven. That apocrypha and apocalypse met in her, explains her tendency so often mistaken for blasphemy by the superficial analyst.

The advance and retreat of her thought, her transition from arch to demure, from elfin to angelic, from soaring to drowning, her inescapable sense of tragedy, her inimitable perception of comedy, her breathless reverence and unabashed invasion upon the intimate affairs of Deity and hearsay of the Bible, made her a comrade to mettle inspiration and dazzle rivalry. Unlike the dullard, brilliancy was no effort for her. She revelled in the wings of her mind, I had almost said the fins too, so universal was her identification with every form of life and element of being. She usually liked men better than women because they were more stimulating. I can see her yet, stand- [Page xv] ing in the spacious upper hall a Summer afternoon, finger on lip, and hear her say, as the feminine callers took their departure "Listen! Hear them kiss, the traitors!" To most women she was a provoking puzzle. To her, in turn, most women were a form of triviality to be escaped when feasible.

But stupidity had no sex with her and I equally well remember her spying down upon a stranger sent to call upon her by a mutual friend, and dismissing him unreceived after one glance from her window, remarking "His face is as handsome and as meaningless as the full moon." At another time she called me to peep at a new Professor recently come to the college, saying "Look dear, he is pretty as a cloth Pink!" her mouth curling in derision as she uttered it and one hand motioning as if to throw the flower away. She had a dramatic way of throwing up her hands at the climax of a story or to punctuate one of her own flashes. It was entirely spontaneous, her spirit seemed merely playing through her body as the Aurora

borealis through darkness. And since [Page xvi] there is no portrait of Aunt Emily, may I be pardoned if I try to give an idea of her external likeness? It has been often told that she wore white exclusively. She has said herself, in one of her letters to an inquisitive friend who had never seen her and importuned for a hint of her outward self, that her eyes were the color of the sherry left in the glass by him to whom she wrote. Her hair was of that same warm bronze-chestnut hue that Titian immortalized, and she wore it parted on her brow and low in her neck, but always half covered by a velvet snood of the same tint; such as the Venetian painters loved to add as a final grace to the portraits of their beloved and beautiful women. Her cheek was like the petal of the jasmine, a velvety white never touched by a hint of color. Her red lips parted over very regular little teeth like the squirrels' and it was the rather long upper lip that gave to the mouth its asceticism, and betrayed the monastic tendency in her, of which she was probably quite unaware.

If this combines nature and art and mys- [Page xvii] ticism in one, too bewilderingly to reproduce any definite impression, it is the fault of that face, as animate in my memory as it is still in my dreams.

In spite of an innate austerity of the senses, my Aunt had lovers, like Browning's roses "all the way" to the end; men of varied profession and attainment who wrote to her and came to see her, and whose letters she burned with a chivalry not all of them requited in kind. "Sister Sue" was her confidante and ally, from whose lips we heard many a hot or quaint tale when time had made them no perfidy. One of these in which we most delighted was of how Aunt Emily as a young lady, having been decorously driven to a funeral in Hadley, in the family barouche lined with cream-colored broadcloth, ran from the grave with a dashing cousin from Worcester, via a skittish black horse and worldly buggy, capping her infamy by returning through Sunderland and being in her room with the door locked when the family got home.

Nothing would be more delicious to me than [Page xviii] to repeat by name the list of those whom she bewitched. It included college boys, tutors, law students, the brothers of her girl friends, several

times their affianced bridegrooms even; and then the maturer friendships, literary, Platonic, Plutonic; passages varying in intensity, and at least one passionate attachment whose tragedy was due to the integrity of the Lovers, who scrupled to take their bliss at another's cost.

She was not daily-bread. She was star-dust. Her solitude made her and was part of her. Taken from her distant sky she must have become a creature as different as fallen meteor from pulsing star. One may ask of the Sphinx, if life would not have been dearer to her, lived as other women lived it? To have been, in essence, more as other women were? Or if, in so doing and so being, she would have missed that inordinate compulsion, that inquisitive comprehension that made her Emily Dickinson? It is to ask again the old riddle of genius against every-day happiness. Had life or love been able to dissuade her from that "eter- [Page xix] nal preoccupation with death" which thrall'd her if she could have chosen you urge, still unconvinced? But I feel that she could and did, and that nothing could have compensated her for the forfeit of that "single hound," her "own Identity."

MARTHA DICKINSON BIANCHI.

THE SINGLE HOUND.

I.

ADVENTURE most unto itself
The Soul condemned to be;
Attended by a Single Hound
Its own Identity.

II.

THE Soul that hath a Guest,
Doth seldom go abroad,
Diviner Crowd at home
Obliterate the need,
And courtesy forbid
A Host's departure, when

Upon Himself be visiting
The Emperor of Men!

III.

EXCEPT the smaller size, no Lives are round,
These hurry to a sphere, and show, and end.
The larger, slower grow, and later hang
The Summers of Hesperides are long.

IV.

FAME is a fickle food
Upon a shifting plate,
Whose table once a Guest, but not
The second time, is set.
Whose crumbs the crows inspect,
And with ironic caw
Flap past it to the Farmer's corn;
Men eat of it and die.

V.

THE right to perish might be thought
An undisputed right,
Attempt it, and the Universe upon the opposite
Will concentrate its officers
You cannot even die,
But Nature and Mankind must pause
To pay you scrutiny.

VI.

PERIL as a possession
'Tis good to bear,
Danger disintegrates satiety;
There's Basis there
Begets an awe,
That searches Human Nature's creases
As clean as Fire.

VII.

WHEN Etna basks and purrs,
Naples is more afraid
Than when she shows her Garnet Tooth;
Security is loud.

VIII.

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.

IX.

TO be alive is power,
Existence in itself,
Without a further function,
Omnipotence enough.
To be alive and Will
'Tis able as a God!
The Further of ourselves be what
Such being Finitude?

X.

WITCHCRAFT has not a pedigree,
'Tis early as our breath,
And mourners meet it going out
The moment of our death.

XI.

EXHILARATION is the Breeze
That lifts us from the ground,

And leaves us in another place
Whose statement is not found;
Returns us not, but after time
We soberly descend,
A little newer for the term
Upon enchanted ground.

XII.

NO romance sold unto,
Could so enthrall a man
As the perusal of
His individual one.
'Tis fiction's, to dilute
To plausibility
Our novel, when 'tis small enough
To credit, 'tis n't true!

XIII.

IF what we could were what we would
Criterion be small;
It is the Ultimate of talk
The impotence to tell.

XIV.

PERCEPTION of an
Object costs
Precise the Object's loss.
Perception in itself a gain
Replying to its price;
The Object Absolute is nought,
Perception sets it fair,
And then upbraids a Perfectness
That situates so far.

XV.

NO other can reduce

Our mortal consequence,
Like the remembering it be nought
A period from hence.
But contemplation for
Cotemporaneous nought
Our single competition;
Jehovah's estimate.

XVI.

THE blunder is to estimate,
"Eternity is Then,"
We say, as of a station.
Meanwhile he is so near,
He joins me in my ramble,
Divides abode with me,
No friend have I that so persists
As this Eternity.

XVII.

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.

XVIII.

THERE is another Loneliness
That many die without,

Not want or friend occasions it,
Or circumstances or lot.
But nature sometimes, sometimes thought,
And whoso it befall
Is richer than could be divulged
By mortal numeral.

XIX.

SO gay a flower bereaved the mind
As if it were a woe,
Is Beauty an affliction, then?
Tradition ought to know.

XX.

GLORY is that bright tragic thing,
That for an instant
Means Dominion,
Warms some poor name
That never felt the sun,
Gently replacing
In oblivion.

XXI.

THE missing All prevented me
From missing minor things.
If nothing larger than a World's
Departure from a hinge,
Or Sun's extinction be observed,
'Twas not so large that I
Could lift my forehead from my work
For curiosity.

XXII.

HIS mind, of man a secret makes,
I meet him with a start,
He carries a circumference

In which I have no part,
Or even if I deem I do
He otherwise may know.
Impregnable to inquest,
However neighborly.

XXIII.

THE suburbs of a secret
A strategist should keep,
Better than on a dream intrude
To scrutinize the sleep.

XXIV.

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.

XXV.

THERE is a solitude of space,
A solitude of sea,
A solitude of death, but these
Society shall be,
Compared with that profounder site,
That polar privacy,
A Soul admitted to Itself:
Finite Infinity.

XXVI.

THE props assist the house
Until the house is built,
And then the props withdraw

And adequate, erect,
The house supports itself;
Ceasing to recollect
The auger and the carpenter.
Just such a retrospect
Hath the perfected life,
A past of plank and nail,
And slowness, then the scaffolds drop
Affirming it a soul.

XXVII.

THE gleam of an heroic act,
Such strange illumination
The Possible's slow fuse is lit
By the Imagination!

XXVIII.

OF Death the sharpest function,
That, just as we discern,
The Excellence defies us;
Securest gathered then
The fruit perverse to plucking,
But leaning to the sight
With the ecstatic limit
Of unobtained Delight.

XXIX.

DOWN Time's quaint stream
Without an oar,
We are enforced to sail,
Our Port a secret
Our Perchance a gale.
What Skipper would
Incur the risk, What Buccaneer would ride,
Without a surety from the wind
Or schedule of the tide?

XXX.

I BET with every Wind that blew, till Nature in chagrin
Employed a Fact to visit me and scuttle my Balloon!

XXXI.

THE Future never spoke,
Nor will he, like the Dumb,
Reveal by sign or syllable
Of his profound To-come.
But when the news be ripe,
Presents it in the Act
Forestalling preparation
Escape or substitute.
Indifferent to him
The Dower as the Doom,
His office but to execute
Fate's Telegram to him.

XXXII.

TWO lengths has every day,
Its absolute extent
And area superior
By hope or heaven lent.
Eternity will be
Velocity, or pause,
At fundamental signals
From fundamental laws.
To die, is not to go
On doom's consummate chart
No territory new is staked,
Remain thou as thou art.

XXXIII.

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.

XXXIV.

NATURE is what we see,
The Hill, the Afternoon
Squirrel, Eclipse, the Bumble-bee,
Nay Nature is Heaven.
Nature is what we hear,
The Bobolink, the Sea
Thunder, the Cricket
Nay, Nature is Harmony.
Nature is what we know
But have no art to say,
So impotent our wisdom is
To Her simplicity.

XXXV.

AH, Teneriffe!
Retreating Mountain!
Purples of Ages pause for you,
Sunset reviews her Sapphire Regiment,
Day drops you her red Adieu!
Still, clad in your mail of ices,
Thigh of granite and thigh of steel
Heedless, alike, of pomp or parting,
Ah, Teneriffe!

I'm kneeling still.

XXXVI.

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.

XXXVII.

"MORNING" means "Milking" to the Farmer,
Dawn to the Apennines
Dice to the Maid.
"Morning" means just Chance to the Lover
Just Revelation to the Beloved.
Epicures date a breakfast by it!
Heroes a battle,
The Miller a flood,
Faint-going eyes their lapse
From sighing,
Faith, the Experiment of our Lord!

XXXVIII.

A LITTLE madness in the Spring
Is wholesome even for the King,
But God be with the Clown,
Who ponders this tremendous scene
This whole experiment of green,
As if it were his own!

XXXIX.

I CAN'T tell you, but you feel it

Nor can you tell me,
Saints with vanished 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 ArchangelsDo, in meeting God.
Not for me to prate about it,
Not for you to say
To some fashionable Lady
"Charming April Day!"

42]

Rather Heaven's "Peter Parley,"
By which, Children slow
To sublimer recitations
Are prepared to go!

XL.

SOME Days retired from the rest
In soft distinction lie,
The Day that a companion came
Or was obliged to die.

XLI.

LIKE Men and Women shadows walk
Upon the hills today,
With here and there a mighty bow,
Or trailing courtesy
To Neighbors, doubtless, of their own;
Not quickened to perceive
Minuter landscape, as Ourselves
And Boroughs where we live.

XLII.

THE butterfly obtains
But little sympathy,
Though favorably mentioned
In Entomology.
Because he travels freely
And wears a proper coat,
The circumstances are certain
That he is dissolute.
Had he the homely scutcheon of modest Industry,
'Twere fitter certifying for Immortality.

XLIII.

BEAUTY crowds me till I die,
Beauty, mercy have on me!
But if I expire today,
Let it be in sight of thee.

XLIV.

WE spy the Forests and the Hills,
The tents to Nature's Show,
Mistake the outside for the in
And mention what we saw.
Could Commentators on the sign
Of Nature's Caravan
Obtain "admission," as a child,
Some Wednesday afternoon?

XLV.

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 finest ingots
That ever kissed the spade.
Whether to keep the secret
Whether to reveal
Whether, while I ponder
Kidd may sudden sail
Could a Shrewd advise me
We might e'en divide
Should a Shrewd betray me
"Atropos" decide!

XLVI.

THE largest fire ever known
Occurs each afternoon,
Discovered is without surprise,
Proceeds without concern:
Consumes, and no report to men,
An Occidental town,
Rebuilt another morning
To be again burned down.

51]

XLVII.

BLOOM upon the Mountain, stated,
Blameless of a name.
Efflorescence of a Sunset
Reproduced, the same.
Seed, had I, my purple sowing
Should endow the Day,
Not a tropic of the twilight
Show itself away.
Who for tilling, to the Mountain
Come, and disappear
Whose be Her renown, or fading,
Witness, is not here.
While I state the solemn petals

Far as North and East,
Far as South and West expanding,
Culminate in rest.

52]
And the Mountain to the Evening
Fit His countenance,
Indicating by no muscle
The Experience.

54]
XLVIII.
MARCH is the month of expectation,
The things we do not know,
The Persons of prognostication
Are coming now.
We try to sham becoming firmness,
But pompous joy
Betrays us, as his first betrothal
Betrays a boy.

54]
XLIX.
THE Duties of the Wind are few
To cast the Ships at sea,
Establish March,
The Floods escort,
And usher Liberty.

55]
L.
THE Winds drew off
Like hungry dogs
Defeated of a bone.
Through fissures in
Volcanic cloud
The yellow lightning shown.
The trees held up
Their mangled limbs
Like animals in pain,

When Nature falls
Upon herself,
Beware an Austrian!

56]

LI.

I THINK that the root of the Wind is Water,
It would not sound so deep
Were it a firmamental product,
Airs no Oceans keep
Mediterranean intonations,
To a Current's ear
There is a maritime conviction
In the atmosphere.

57]

LII.

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.

58]

LIII.

THE long sigh of the Frog
Upon a Summer's day,
Enacts intoxication
Upon the revery.
But his receding swell
Substantiates a peace,
That makes the ear inordinate
For corporal release.

59]

LIV.

A CAP of lead across the sky
Was tight and surly drawn,
We could not find the mighty Face,
The Figure was withdrawn.
A chill came up as from a shaft,
Our noon became a well,
A Thunder storm combines the charms
Of Winter and of Hell.

60]

LV.

I SEND two Sunsets
Day and I in competition ran,
I finished two, and several stars,
While He was making one.
His own is ampler
But, as I was saying to a friend,
Mine is the more convenient
To carry in the hand.
[Sent with brilliant flowers.]

61]

LVI.

OF this is Day composed
A morning and a noon,
A Revelry unspeakable And then a gay Unknown;
Whose Poms allure and spurn
And dower and deprive,
And penury for glory
Remedilessly leave.

62]

LVII.

THE Hills erect their purple heads,
The Rivers lean to see
Yet Man has not, of all the throng,
A curiosity.

63]

LVIII.

LIGHTLY stepped a yellow star
To its lofty place,
Loosed the Moon her silver hat
From her lustral face.
All of evening softly lit
As an astral hall
"Father," I observed to Heaven,
"You are punctual."

64]

LIX.

THE Moon upon her fluent route
Defiant of a road,
The stars Etruscan argument,
Substantiate a God.
If Aims impel these Astral Ones,
The Ones allowed to know,
Know that which makes them as forgot
As Dawn forgets them now.

65]

LX.

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 Bluebeard's galleries.
Her Bees have a fictitious hum,
Her Blossoms, like a dream,
Elate until 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.

66]

LXI.

GLOWING is her Bonnet,
Glowing is her Cheek,
Glowing is her Kirtle,
Yet she cannot speak!
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!

67]

LXII.

FOREVER cherished be the tree,
Whose apple Winter warm,
Enticed to breakfast from the sky
Two Gabriels yestermorn;
They registered in Nature's book
As Robin Sire and Son,
But angels have that modest way
To screen them from renown.

68]

LXIII.

THE Ones that disappeared are back,
The Phoebe and the Crow,
Precisely as in March is heard
The curtness of the Jay
Be this an Autumn or a Spring?
My wisdom loses way, One side of me the nuts are ripe
The other side is May.

69]

LXIV.

THOSE final Creatures, who they are
That, faithful to the close,
Administer her ecstasy,

But just the Summer knows.

70]

LXV.

SUMMER begins to have the look,
Peruser of enchanting Book
Reluctantly, but sure, perceives
A gain upon the backward leaves.
Autumn begins to be inferred
By millinery of the cloud,
Or deeper color in the shawl
That wraps the everlasting hill.
The eye begins its avarice,
A meditation chastens speech,
Some Dyer of a distant tree
Resumes his gaudy industry.
Conclusion is the course of all,
Almost to be perennial,
And then elude stability
Recalls to immortality.

71]

LXVI.

A PROMPT, executive Bird is the Jay,
Bold as a Bailiff's hymn,
Brittle and brief in quality
Warrant in every line;
Sitting a bough like a Brigadier,
Confident and straight,
Much is the mien
Of him in March
As a Magistrate.

72]

LXVII.

LIKE brooms of steel
The Snow and Wind
Had swept the Winter Street,
The House was hooked,
The Sun sent out

Faint Deputies of heat
Where rode the Bird
The Silence tied
His ample, plodding Steed,
The Apple in the cellar snug
Was all the one that played.

73]
LXVIII.
THESE are the days that Reindeer love
And pranks the Northern star,
This is the Sun's objective
And Finland of the year.

1]
LXIX.
FOLLOW wise Orion
Till you lose your eye,
Dazzlingly decamping
He is just as high.

75]
LXX.
IN Winter, in my room,
I came upon a worm,
Pink, lank, and warm.
But as he was a worm
And worms presume,
Not quite with him at home
Secured him by a string
To something neighboring,
And went along.
A trifle afterward
A thing occurred,
I'd not believe it if I heard
But state with creeping blood;
A snake, with mottles rare,
Surveyed my chamber floor,
In feature as the worm before,
But ringed with power.

The very string

76]

With which I tied him, too,
When he was mean and new,
That string was there.
I shrank "How fair you are!"
Propitiation's claw
"Afraid," he hissed,
"Of me?"
"No cordiality?"
He fathomed me.
Then, to a rhythm slim
Secreted in his form,
As patterns swim,
Projected him.
That time I flew,
Both eyes his way,
Lest he pursue
Nor ever ceased to run,
Till, in a distant town,
Towns on from mine
I sat me down;
This was a dream.

LXXI.

NOT any sunny tone
From any fervent zone
Finds entrance there.
Better a grave of Balm
Toward human nature's home,
And Robins near,
Than a stupendous Tomb
Proclaiming to the gloom
How dead we are.

78]

LXXII.

FOR Death, or rather

For the things 'twill buy,
These put away
Life's opportunity.
The things that Death will buy
Are Room, Escape
From Circumstances,
And a Name.
How gifts of Life
With Death's gifts will compare,
We know not
For the rates stop Here.

79]
LXXIII.
DROPPED into the
Ether Acre!
Wearing the sod gown Bonnet of Everlasting laces
Brooch frozen on!
Horses of blonde
And coach of silver,
Baggage a strapped Pearl!
Journey of Down
And whip of Diamond
Riding to meet the Earl!

80]
LXXIV.
THIS quiet Dust was Gentlemen and Ladies,
And Lads and Girls;
Was laughter and ability and sighing,
And frocks and curls.
This passive place a Summer's nimble mansion,
Where Bloom and Bees
Fulfilled their Oriental Circuit,
Then ceased like these.

81]
LXXV.
'T WAS comfort in her dying room
To hear the living clock,

A short relief to have the wind
Walk boldly up and knock,
Diversion from the dying theme
To hear the children play,
But wrong, the mere
That these could live,
And This of ours must die!

82]

LXXVI.

TOO cold is this
To warm with sun,
Too stiff to bended be,
To joint this agate were a feat
Outstaring masonry.
How went the agile kernel out
Contusion of the husk,
Nor rip, nor wrinkle indicate,
But just an Asterisk.

83]

LXXVII.

I WATCHED her face to see which way
She took the awful news,
Whether she died before she heard
Or in protracted bruise
Remained a few short years with us,
Each heavier than the last
A further afternoon to fail,
As Flower at fall of Frost.

84]

LXXVIII.

TODAY or this noon
She dwelt so close,
I almost touched her;
Tonight she lies
Past neighborhood
And bough and steeple
Now past surmise.

85]

LXXIX.

I SEE thee better in the dark,
I do not need a light.
The love of thee a prism be
Excelling violet.
I see thee better for the years
That hunch themselves between,
The miner's lamp sufficient be
To nullify the mine.
And in the grave I see thee best
Its little panels be
A-glow, all ruddy with the light
I held so high for thee!
What need of day to those whose dark
Hath so surpassing sun,
It seem it be continually
At the meridian?

86]

LXXX.

LOW at my problem bending,
Another problem comes,
Larger than mine, serener,
Involving statelier sums;
I check my busy pencil, My ciphers slip away,
Wherefore, my baffled fingers,
Time Eternity?

87]

LXXXI.

IF pain for peace prepares,
Lo the "Augustan" years
Our feet await!
If Springs from Winter rise,
Can the Anemone's
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!

88]
LXXXII.
I FIT for them,
I seek the dark till I am thorough fit.
The labor is a solemn one,
With this sufficient sweet
That abstinence as mine produce
A purer good for them,
If I succeed,
If not, I had
The transport of the Aim.

89]
LXXXIII.
NOT one by Heaven defrauded stay,
Although He seem to steal,
He restitutes in some sweet way.
Secreted in His will.

90]
LXXXIV.
THE feet of people walking home
In gayer sandals go, The Crocus, till she rises,
The Vassal of the Snow
The lips at Hallelujah!
Long years of practice 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,
Pedestrians once, as we
Night is the morning's canvas,
Larceny, legacy,
Death but our rapt attention

To immortality.

91]

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!

92]

LXXXV.
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 red,
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.

93]

LXXXVI.
TO the staunch Dust we safe commit thee;
Tongue if it hath, inviolate to thee
Silence denote and Sanctity enforce thee,
Passenger of Infinity!

94]

LXXXVII.
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 a Head too high to crown,
Diadem or Ducal showing,
Be its Grave sufficient sign.
Yet if we, no Poet's kinsman,
Suffocate with easy woe,
What and if ourself a Bridegroom,
Put Her down, in Italy?
[Written after the death of Mrs. Browning in 1861.]

95]

LXXXVIII.
IMMURED in Heaven! What a Cell!
Let every bondage be,
Thou Sweetest of the Universe,
Like that which ravished thee!

96]

LXXXIX.
I'M thinking of that other morn,
When Cerements let go,
And Creatures clad in Victory
Go up in two by two!

97]

XC.
THE overtakelessness of those
Who have accomplished Death,
Majestic is to me beyond
The majesties of Earth.
The soul her "not at Home"
Inscribes upon the flesh,
And takes her fair aerial gait
Beyond the hope of touch.

98]

XCI.

THE Look of Thee, what is it like?
Hast thou a hand or foot,
Or mansion of Identity,
And what is thy Pursuit?
Thy fellows, are they Realms or Themes?
Hast thou Delight or Fear
Or Longing, and is that for us
Or values more severe?
Let change transfuse all other traits,
Enact all other blame,
But deign this least certificate
That thou shalt be the same.

XCII.

THE Devil, had he fidelity,
Would be the finest friend
Because he has ability,
But Devils cannot mend.
Perfidy is the virtue
That would he but resign,
The Devil, so amended,
Were durably divine.

XCIII.

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 pompously away.

XCIV.

NOT when we know
The Power accosts,
The garment of Surprise
Was all our timid Mother wore
At Home, in Paradise.

XCV.

ELIJAH'S wagon knew no thill,
Was innocent of wheel,
Elijah's horses as unique
As was his vehicle.
Elijah's journey to portray,
Expire with him the skill,
Who justified Elijah,
In feats inscrutable.

XCVI.

"REMEMBER me," implored the Thief
Oh magnanimity!
"My Visitor in Paradise
I give thee Guaranty."
That courtesy will fair remain,
When the delight is dust,
With which we cite this mightiest case
Of compensated Trust.
Of All, we are allowed to hope,
But Affidavit stands
That this was due, where some, we fear,
Are unexpected friends.

XCVII.

TO this apartment deep
No ribaldry may creep;
Untroubled this abode
By any man but God.

XCVIII.

"SOWN in dishonor?"
Ah! Indeed!
May this dishonor be?
If I were half so fine myself,
I'd notice nobody!
"Sown in corruption?"
By no means! Apostle is askew;
Corinthians 1. 15, narrates
A circumstance or two!

XCIX.

WHO is it seeks my pillow nights?
With plain inspecting face,
"Did you, or did you not?" to ask,
'Tis Conscience, childhood's nurse.
With martial hand she strokes the hair
Upon my wincing head,
"All rogues shall have their part in"
What
The Phosphorus of God.

C.

HIS Cheek is his Biographer
As long as he can blush,
Perdition is Opprobrium;
Past that, he sins in peace.
Thief

CI.

"HEAVENLY Father," take to thee
The supreme iniquity,
Fashioned by thy candid hand
In a moment contraband.
Though to trust us seem to us
More respectful "we are dust."
We apologize to Thee

For Thine own Duplicity.

CII.

THE sweets of Pillage can be known
To no one but the Thief,
Compassion for Integrity
Is his divinest Grief.

CIII.

A LITTLE over Jordan,
As Genesis record,
An Angel and a Wrestler
Did wrestle long and hard.
Till, morning touching mountain,
And Jacob waxing strong,
The Angel begged permission
To breakfast and return.
Not so, quoth wily Jacob
And girt his loins anew,
"Until thou bless me, stranger!"
The which acceded to:
Light swung the silver fleeces
Peniel hills among,
And the astonished Wrestler
Found he had worsted God!

CIV.

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,

Bolder than a Brigand,
Swifter than a Fleet,
Builds like a bird too,
Christ robs the nest
Robin after robin
Smuggled to rest!

CV.

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!

CVI.

EDEN is that old fashioned House
We dwell in every day,
Without suspecting our abode
Until we drive away.
How fair, on looking back, the Day
We sauntered from the door,
Unconscious our returning
Discover it no more.

CVII.

CANDOR, my tepid Friend,
Come not to play with me!
The Myrrhs and Mochas of the Mind
Are its Iniquity.

CVIII.

SPEECH is a symptom of affection,
And Silence one,

The perfectest communication
Is heard of none
Exists and its endorsement
Is had within
Behold! said the Apostle,
Yet had not seen.

CIX.

WHO were "the Father and the Son"
We pondered when a child,
And what had they to do with us
And when portentous told
With inference appalling,
By Childhood fortified,
We thought, "at least they are no worse
Than they have been described."
Who are "the Father and the Son"
Did we demand today,
"The Father and the Son" himself
Would doubtless specify,
But had they the felicity
When we desired to know,
We better Friends had been, perhaps,
Than time ensue to be.
We start, to learn that we believe
But once, entirely
Belief, it does not fit so well
When altered frequently.
We blush, that Heaven if we achieve,
Event ineffable
We shall have shunned, until ashamed
To own the Miracle.

CX.

THAT Love is all there is,
Is all we know of Love;
It is enough, the freight should be
Proportioned to the groove.

CXI.

THE luxury to apprehend
The luxury 'twould be
To look at thee a single time,
An Epicure of me,
In whatsoever Presence, makes,
Till, for a further food
I scarcely recollect to starve,
So first am I supplied.
The luxury to meditate
The luxury it was
To banquet on thy Countenance,
A sumptuousness bestows
On plainer days,
Whose table, far as
Certainty can see,
Is laden with a single crumb
The consciousness of Thee.

CXII.

THE Sea said "Come" to the Brook,
The Brook said "Let me grow!"
The Sea said "Then you will be a Sea
I want a brook, Come now!"

CXIII.

ALL I may, if small,
Do it not display
Larger for its Totalness?
'Tis economy
To bestow a world
And withhold a star,
Utmost is munificence;
Less, though larger, Poor.

CXIV.

LOVE reckons by itself alone,
"As large as I" relate the Sun
To one who never felt it blaze,
Itself is all the like it has.

CXV.

THE inundation of the Spring
Submerges every soul,
It sweeps the tenement away
But leaves the water whole.
In which the Soul, at first alarmed,
Seeks furtive for its shore,
But acclimated, gropes no more
For that Peninsular.

CXVI.

NO Autumn's intercepting chill
Appalls this Tropic Breast,
But African exuberance
And Asiatic rest.

CXVII.

VOLCANOES be in Sicily
And South America,
I judge from my geography.
Volcanoes nearer here,
A lava step, at any time,
Am I inclined to climb,
A crater I may contemplate,
Vesuvius at home.

CXVIII.

DISTANCE is not the realm of Fox,
Nor by relay as Bird;
Abated, Distance is until

Thyself, Beloved!

CXIX.

THE treason of an accent
Might vilify the Joy
To breathe, corrode the rapture
Of Sanctity to be.

CXX.

HOW destitute is he
Whose Gold is firm,
Who finds it every time,
The small stale sum
When Love, with but a pence
Will so display,
As is a disrespect to India!

CXXI.

CRISIS is sweet and, set the Heart
Upon the hither side,
Has dowers of prospective
Surrendered by the Tried.
Inquire of the closing Rose
Which Rapture she preferred,
And she will tell you, sighing,
The transport of the Bud.

CXXII.

TO tell the beauty would decrease,
To state the Spell demean,
There is a syllableless sea
Of which it is the sign.
My will endeavours for its word
And fails, but entertains
A rapture as of legacies
Of introspective mines.

CXXIII.

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

CXXIV.

I SHOWED her heights she never saw
"Would'st climb?" I said,
She said "Not so"
"With me?" I said, "With me?"
I showed her secrets
Morning's nest,
The rope that Nights were put across
And now, "Would'st have me for a Guest?"
She could not find her yes
And then, I brake my life, and Lo!
A light for her, did solemn glow,
The larger, as her face withdrew
And could she, further, "No?"

CXXV.

ON my volcano grows the grass,
A meditative spot,
An area for a bird to choose
Would be the general thought.
How red the fire reeks below,
How insecure the sod
Did I disclose, would populate
With awe my solitude.

CXXVI.

IF I could tell how glad I was,
I should not be so glad,
But when I cannot make the Force
Nor mould it into word,
I know it is a sign
That new Dilemma be
From mathematics further off,
Than from Eternity.

CXXVII.

HER Grace is all she has,
And that, so vast displays,
One Art, to recognize, must be,
Another Art to praise.

CXXVIII.

NO matter where the Saints abide,
They make their circuit fair;
Behold how great a Firmament
Accompanies a star!

CXXIX.

TO see her is a picture,
To hear her is a tune,
To know her an intemperance
As innocent as June;
By which to be undone
Is dearer than Redemption
Which never to receive,
Makes mockery of melody
It might have been to live.

CXXX.

SO set its sun in thee,
What day is dark to me
What distance far,

So I the ships may see That touch how seldomly
Thy shore?

CXXXI.

HAD this one day not been,
Or could it cease to be
How smitten, how superfluous
Were every other day!
Lest Love should value less
What Loss would value more,
Had it the stricken privilege
It cherishes before.

CXXXII.

THAT she forgot me was the least,
I felt it second pain,
That I was worthy to forget
Was most I thought upon.
Faithful, was all that I could boast,
But Constancy became,
To her, by her innominate,
A something like a shame.

CXXXIII.

THE incidents of Love
Are more than its Events,
Investments best expositor
Is the minute per cents.

CXXXIV.

JUST so, Jesus raps He does not weary
Last at the knocker and first at the bell,
Then on divinest tiptoe standing
Might He out-spy the lady's soul.
When He retires, chilled and weary
It will be ample time for me;

Patient, upon the steps, until then
Heart, I am knocking low at Thee!

CXXXV.

SAFE Despair it is that raves,
Agony is frugal,
Puts itself severe away
For its own perusal.
Garrisoned no Soul can be
In the front of Trouble,
Love is one, not aggregate,
Nor is Dying double.

CXXXVI.

THE Face we choose to miss,
Be it but for a day
As absent as a hundred years
When it has rode away.

CXXXVII.

OF so divine a loss
We enter but the gain,
Indemnity for loneliness
That such a bliss has been.

CXXXVIII.

THE healed Heart shows its shallow scar
With confidential moan,
Not mended by Mortality
Are fabrics truly torn.
To go its convalescent way
So shameless is to see,
More genuine were Perfidy
Than such Fidelity.

CXXXIX.

TO pile like Thunder to its close,
Then crumble grand away,
While everything created hid
This would be Poetry:
Or Love, the two coeval came
We both and neither prove,
Experience either, and consume
For none see God and live.

CXL.

THE Stars are old, that stood for me
The West a little worn,
Yet newer glows the only Gold
I ever cared to earn
Presuming on that lone result
Her infinite disdain,
But vanquished her with my defeat,
'Twas Victory was slain.

CXLI.

ALL circumstances are the frame
In which His Face is set,
All Latitudes exist for His
Sufficient continent.
The light His Action and the dark
The Leisure of His Will,
In Him Existence serve, or set
A force illegible.

CXLII.

I DID not reach thee,
But my feet slip nearer every day;
Three Rivers and a Hill to cross,
One Desert and a Sea
I shall not count the journey one
When I am telling thee.

Two deserts but the year is cold
So that will help the sand
One desert crossed, the second one
Will feel as cool as land.
Sahara is too little price
To pay for thy Right hand!
The sea comes last. Step merry, feet!
So short have we to go
To play together we are prone,
But we must labor now,
The last shall be the lightest load
That we have had to draw.
The Sun goes crooked that is night
Before he makes the bend
We must have passed the middle sea,
Almost we wish the end
Were further off too great it seems
So near the Whole to stand.
We step like plush, we stand like snow
The waters murmur now,
Three rivers and the hill are passed,
Two deserts and the sea!
Now Death usurps my premium
And gets the look at Thee.