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 —
The Brain, within its Groove
Runs evenly — and true —
But let a Splinter swerve —
’Twere easier for You

To put a Current back —
When Floods have slit the Hills —
And scooped a Turnpike for Themselves —
And trodden out the Mills!

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!

Presentiment — is that long Shadow — on the Lawn —
Indicative that Suns go down —
The Notice to the startled Grass
That Darkness — is about to pass —

Tell all the Truth but tell it slant —
Success in Circuit lies —
Too bright for our infirm Delight
The Truth’s superb surprise

As Lightning to the Children eased
With explanation kind
The Truth must dazzle gradually
Or every man be blind —
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 —  

(The Chariot)

Because I could not stop for Death —  
He kindly stopped for me —  
The Carriage held but just Ourselves  
And Immortality.  

We slowly drove — He knew no haste,  
And I had put away  
My labor, and my leisure too,  
For his Civility —  

We passed the School, where Children strove,  
At Recess — in the Ring —  
We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain —  
We passed the Setting Sun —  

Or rather — He passed Us —  
The Dews drew quivering and chill —  
For only Gossamer, my Gown —  
My Tippet — only Tulle —  

We paused before a House that seemed  
A Swelling of the ground —  
The Roof was scarcely visible —  
The Cornice in the Ground —
Since then — 'tis centuries — and yet
Feels shorter than the Day
I first surmised the Horses' Heads
Were toward Eternity —

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!

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 your name — the livelong June
To an admiring Bog!
A Thought went up my mind today —
That I have had before —
But did not finish — some way back —
I could not fix the Year —

Nor where it went — nor why it came
The second time to me —
Nor definitely, what it was —
Have I the Art to say —

But somewhere — in my soul — I know —
I’ve met the Thing before —
It just reminded me — ‘twas all —
And came my way no more —

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 —
I Years had been from Home,  
And now, before the Door  
I dared not open, lest a Face  
I never saw before

Stare solid into mine  
And ask my business there —  
“My Business but a Life I left  
Was such remaining there?”

I leaned upon the Awe —  
I lingered with Before —  
The Second like an Ocean rolled  
And broke against my ear —

I laughed a crumbling Laugh  
That I could fear a Door  
Who Consternation compassed,  
But never winced before.

I fitted to the Latch  
My Hand, with trembling care  
Lest back the awful Door should spring  
And leave me in the Floor —

Then moved my Fingers off  
As cautiously as Glass  
And held my ears, and like a Thief  
Fled gasping from the House —

I felt a Cleaving in my Mind —  
As if my Brain had split—  
I tried to match it — Seam by Seam —  
But could not make them fit.

The thought behind, I tried to join  
Unto the thought before —  
But Sequence raveled out of reach  
Like Balls — upon a Floor.

A sepal, petal, and a thorn  
Upon a common summer’s morn —  
A flash of Dew — a Bee or two —  
A breeze — a caper in the trees, —  
And I’m a Rose!

To make a prairie it takes a clover and one bee —  
One clover, and a bee,  
And revery.  
The revery alone will do  
If bees are few.
They say that ‘Time assuages’ —
   Time never did assuage —
An actual suffering strengthens
   As Sinews do, with age —

Time is a Test of Trouble —
But not a Remedy —
If such it prove, it prove too
There was no Malady —

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 —
I heard a Fly buzz — when I died —
The Stillness in the Room
Was like the Stillness in the Air —
Between the Heaves of Storm —

The Eyes around — had wrung them dry —
And Breaths were gathering firm
For that last Onset — when the King
Be witnessed — in the Room —

I willed my Keepsakes — Signed away
What portion of me be
Assignable — and then it was
There interposed a Fly —

With Blue — uncertain stumbling Buzz —
Between the light — and me —
And then the Windows failed — and then
I could not see to see —

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 —
The 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 —