

Emily Dickinson (1838-1886)

1. <...>

"Hamlet" to Himself were Hamlet —
 Had not Shakespeare wrote —
 Though the "Romeo" left no Record
 Of his Juliet,

(1770)

It were infinite enacted
 In the Human Heart —
 Only Theatre recorded
 Owner cannot shut —

(741)

2.

I many times thought Peace had come
 When Peace was far away —
 As Wrecked Men — deem they sight the Land
 —
 At Centre of the Sea —

And struggle slacker — but to prove
 As hopelessly as I —
 How many the fictitious Shores —
 Before the Harbor be —

(739)

3.

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 —

(303)

4.

Experiment escorts us last -
 His pungent company
 Will not allow an Axiom
 An Opportunity

(1770)

5.

Who has not found the Heaven — below —
 Will fail of it above —
 For Angels rent the House next ours,
 Wherever we remove —

(1544)

6.

Lest this be Heaven indeed
 An Obstacle is given
 That always gauges a Degree
 Between Ourselves and Heaven.

(1043)

7.

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"!

(271)

8.

Truth — is as old as God —
 His Twin identity
 And will endure as long as He
 A Co-Eternity —

And perish on the Day
 Himself is borne away
 From Mansion of the Universe
 A lifeless Deity.

(836)

9.

"Faith" is a fine invention
 For Gentlemen who *see!*
 But *Microscopes* are prudent
 In an Emergency!

(185)

10.

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 —

(327)

11.

Nature and God — I neither knew
 Yet Both so well knew me
 They startled, like Executors
 Of My identity.

Yet Neither told — that I could learn —
 My Secret as secure
 As Herschel's private interest
 Or Mercury's affair —

(835)

12.

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 —

(362)

13.

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.

<...>

(122)

14.

To hear an Oriole sing
 May be a common thing —
 Or only a divine.

It is not of the Bird
 Who sings the same, unheard,
 As unto Crowd —

The Fashion of the Ear
 Attireth that it hear
 In Dun, or fair —

So whether it be Rune,
 Or whether it be none
 Is of within.

The "Tune is in the Tree —"
 The Skeptic — showeth me —
 "No Sir! In Thee!"

(526)

15.

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

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

(421)

16.

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 the Paws —
 The Universe — is still —

(315)

17.

To pile like Thunder to its close
 Then crumble grand away
 While Everything created hid
 This — would be Poetry —

Or Love — the two coeval come —
 We both and neither prove —
 Experience either and consume —
 For None see God and live —

(1247)

18.

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 —

(1129)

19.

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 —

(764)

20.

Further in Summer than the Birds -
 Pathetic from the Grass
 A minor Nation celebrates
 It's unobtrusive Mass -
 No Ordinance be seen -
 So gradual the Grace
 A gentle Custom it becomes -
 Enlarging Loneliness -

Antiquiest felt at Noon
 When August is burning low
 Arise this spectral Canticle
 Repose to typify -
 Remit as yet no Grace -
 No furrow on the Glow -
 But a Druidic Difference
 Enhances Nature now -

(1068)

21.

Split the Lark — and you'll find the Music —
 Bulb after Bulb, in Silver rolled —
 Scantilly dealt to the Summer Morning
 Saved for your Ear when Lutes be old.

Loose the Flood — you shall find it patent —
 Gush after Gush, reserved for you —
 Scarlet Experiment! Sceptic Thomas!
 Now, do you doubt that your Bird was true?
 (861)

22.

Experiment to me
 Is every one I meet
 If it contain a Kernel?
 The Figure of a Nut

Presents upon a Tree
 Equally plausibly,
 But Meat within, is requisite
 To Squirrels, and to Me.

(1073)

23.

The Martyr Poets — did not tell —
 But wrought their Pang in syllable —
 That when their mortal name be numb —
 Their mortal fate — encourage Some —

The Martyr Painters — never spoke —
 Bequeathing — rather — to their Work —
 That when their conscious fingers cease —
 Some seek in Art — the Art of Peace —

(544)

24.

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

(1409)

25.

Obtaining but our own Extent
 In whatsoever Realm —
 'Twas Christ's own personal Expanse
 That bore him from the Tomb —