

Selected Poems of Emily Dickinson

Contents

Success is Counted Sweetest	2
A Wounded Deer—leaps highest.....	3
Soul Selects Her Own Society	4
I taste a liquor never brewed.....	5
I bring an unaccustomed wine	6
Who never lost, are unprepared.....	7
I like to see it lap the miles,.....	8
Musicians wrestle everywhere	9
There is no frigate like a book.....	10
A Route of Evanescence	10
I had a guinea golden	11
Before you thought of spring,.....	12
A Bird Came Down.....	13
A narrow fellow in the grass.....	14
No Brigadier throughout the Year	15
The Rose did caper on her cheek	16
One dignity delays for all	17
I Died For Beauty	18
Afraid! Of whom am I afraid?	19
It was not death, for I stood up,	20
I felt a Funeral, in my Brain (280)	21
Dying (I heard a fly buzz when I died)	22

Selected Poems of Emily Dickinson

Success is Counted Sweetest

*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!*

Selected Poems of Emily Dickinson

A Wounded Deer—leaps highest

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!

Soul Selects Her Own Society

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 --

Selected Poems of Emily Dickinson

I taste a liquor never brewed

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, through endless summer days,
From inns of molten blue.

When the landlord 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!

I bring an unaccustomed wine

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.*

Who never lost, are unprepared

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!

Selected Poems of Emily Dickinson

I like to see it lap the miles,

*I like to see it lap the miles,
And lick the valleys up,
And stop to feed itself at tanks;
And then, prodigious, step*

*Around a pile of mountains,
And, supercilious, peer
In shanties by the sides of roads;
And then a quarry pare*

*To fit its sides, and crawl between,
Complaining all the while
In horrid, hooting stanza;
Then chase itself down hill*

*And neigh like Boanerges;
Then, punctual as a star,
Stop--docile and omnipotent--
At its own stable door.*

Musicians wrestle everywhere

157

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

If 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!

Selected Poems of Emily Dickinson

There is no frigate like a book

*There is no frigate like a book
To take us lands away,
Nor any coursers like a page
Of prancing poetry.
This traverse may the poorest take
Without oppress of toll;
How frugal is the chariot
That bears a human soul!*

A Route of Evanescence

A Route of Evanescence
With a revolving Wheel--
A Resonance of Emerald--
A Rush of Cochineal--
And every Blossom on the Bush
Adjusts its tumbled Head--
The mail from Tunis, probably,
An easy Morning's Ride--

Selected Poems of Emily Dickinson

I had a guinea golden

23

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—

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.

Time brought me other Robins—
Their ballads were the same—
Still, for my missing Troubador
I kept the "house at hame."

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.

Selected Poems of Emily Dickinson

Before you thought of spring,

*Before you thought of spring,
Except as a surmise,
You see, God bless his suddenness,
A fellow in the skies
Of independent hues,
A little weather-worn,
Inspiriting habiliments
Of indigo and brown.*

*With specimens of song,
As if for you to choose,
Discretion in the interval,
With gay delays he goes
To some superior tree
Without a single leaf,
And shouts for joy to nobody
But his seraphic self!*

A Bird Came Down

*A bird came down the walk:
He did not know I saw;
He bit an angle-worm 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 abroad,--
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.*

Selected Poems of Emily Dickinson

A narrow fellow in the grass

A narrow fellow in the grass
Occasionally rides;
You may have met him,--did you not,
His notice sudden is.

The grass divides as with a comb,
A spotted shaft is seen;
And then it closes at your feet
And opens further on.

He likes a boggy acre,
A floor too cool for corn.
Yet when a child, and barefoot,
I more than once, at morn,

Have passed, I thought, a whip-lash
Unbraiding in the sun,--
When, stooping to secure it,
It wrinkled, and was gone.

Several of nature's people
I know, and they know me;
I feel for them a transport
Of cordiality;

But never met this fellow,
Attended or alone,
Without a tighter breathing,
And zero at the bone.

No Brigadier throughout the Year

1561

*No Brigadier throughout the Year
So civic as the Jay—
A Neighbor and a Warrior too
With shrill felicity
Pursuing Winds that censure us
A February Day,
The Brother of the Universe
Was never blown away—
The Snow and he are intimate—
I've often seem them play
When Heaven looked upon us all
With such severity
I felt apology were due
To an insulted sky
Whose pompous frown was Nutriment
To their Temerity—
The Pillow of this daring Head
Is pungent Evergreens—
His Larder—terse and Militant—
Unknown—refreshing things—
His Character—a Tonic—
His future—a Dispute—
Unfair an Immortality
That leaves this Neighbor out—*

The Rose did caper on her cheek

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.

One dignity delays for all

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!*

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

Selected Poems of Emily Dickinson

I Died For Beauty

I died for beauty, but was scarce
Adjusted in the tomb,
When one who died for truth was lain
In an adjoining room.

He questioned softly why I failed?
"For beauty," I replied.
"And I for truth - the two are one;
We brethren are," he said.

And so, as kinsmen met a-night,
We talked between the rooms,
Until the moss had reached our lips,
And covered up our names.

Afraid! Of whom am I afraid?

608

*Afraid! Of whom am I afraid?
Not Death—for who is He?
The Porter of my Father's Lodge
As much abasheth me!*

*Of Life? 'Twere odd I fear [a] thing
That comprehendeth me
In one or two existences—
As Deity decree—*

*Of Resurrection? Is the East
Afraid to trust the Morn
With her fastidious forehead?
As soon impeach my Crown!*

Selected Poems of Emily Dickinson

It was not death, for I stood up,

It was not death, for I stood up,
And all the dead lie down;
It was not night, for all the bells
Put out their tongues, for noon.

It was not frost, for on my flesh
I felt siroccos crawl,--
Nor fire, for just my marble feet
Could keep a chancel cool.

And yet it tasted like them all;
The figures I have seen
Set orderly, for burial,
Reminded me of mine,

As if my life were shaven
And fitted to a frame,
And could not breathe without a key;
And 't was like midnight, some,

When everything that ticked has stopped,
And space stares, all around,
Or grisly frosts, first autumn morns,
Repeal the beating ground.

But most like chaos,--stopless, cool,--
Without a chance or spar,--
Or even a report of land
To justify despair.

I felt a Funeral, in my Brain (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--*

Selected Poems of Emily Dickinson

Dying (I heard a fly buzz when I died)

I heard a fly buzz when I died;
The stillness round my form
Was like the stillness in the air
Between the heavens of storm.
The eyes beside had wrung them dry,
And breaths were gathering sure
For that last onset, when the king
Be witnessed in his power.
I willed my keepsakes, signed away
What portion of me I
Could make assignable, -- and then
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.