

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!

(1861)

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 –

(1862)

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, plashless as they swim.

(1862)

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 –  
A Wooden way  
Of Ground, or Air, or Ought –  
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 –

(1862)

One need not be a Chamber — to be Haunted —

One need not be a House —

The Brain has Corridors — surpassing

Material Place —

Far safer, of a Midnight Meeting

External Ghost

Than its interior Confronting —

That Cooler Host.

Far safer, through an Abbey gallop,

The Stones a'chase —

Than Unarmed, one's a'self encounter —

In lonesome Place —

Ourselves behind ourselves, concealed —

Should startle most —

Assassin hid in our Apartment

Be Horror's least.

The Body — borrows a Revolver —

He bolts the Door —

O'erlooking a superior spectre —

Or More —

(1862)

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 –

(1863)

545

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.

(1863)

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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 –

(1863)