



Selected Poems

EMILY DICKINSON



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 — 5
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 — 10
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 15
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 — 5
 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 5
 Behind this soft Eclipse —
 I think that Earth feels so
 To folks in Heaven — now —

This being comfort — then
 That other kind — was pain — 10
 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 5
 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 — 5
 We can find no scar,
 But internal difference
 Where the Meanings, are —

None may teach it — Any —
 'Tis the Seal, Despair, — 10
 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 15
 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, 5
 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 — 10
 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 — 15
 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 — 20

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!

5



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!

5



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 5
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 — 10
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 — 5
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, — 10
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 — 15
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 — 20
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 5
 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 — 10
 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, 15
 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 — 20

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 5
 Unto the thought before —
 But Sequence ravelled 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! 5



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. 5



They say that 'Time assuages' —
 Time never did assuage —
 An actual suffering strengthens
 As Sinews do, with age —

Time is a Test of Trouble — 5
 But not a Remedy —
 If such it prove, it prove too
 There was no Malady —



I breathed enough to take the Trick —
 And now, removed from Air —
 I simulate the Breath, so well —
 That One, to be quite sure —

The Lungs are stirless — must descend 5
 Among the Cunning Cells —
 And touch the Pantomime — Himself.
 How numb, the Bellows feels!



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, 5
 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 10
 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, 15
 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 — 20



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 — 5
 And Breaths were gathering firm
 For that last Onset — when the King
 Be witnessed — in the Room —

I willed my Keepsakes — Signed away 10
 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 15
 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 — 5

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 — 10
 This Pendulum of snow —
 The Shopman importunes it —
 While cool — concernless No —

Nods from the Gilded pointers —
 Nods from the Seconds slim — 15
 Decades of Arrogance between
 The Dial life —
 And Him —

