

Emily Dickinson: Poems

This is my letter to the World (1863)

This is my letter to the World
That never wrote to Me—
That simple News that Nature told—
With tender Majesty

Her Message is committed
To Hands I cannot see—
For love of Her—Sweet—countrymen—
Judge tenderly—of Me

Safe in their Alabaster Chambers (1859 version)

Safe in their Alabaster Chambers—
Untouched by morning
And untouched by noon—
Sleep the meek members of the Resurrection—
Rafters of satin,
And Roof of stone.

Light laughs the breeze
In her Castle above them—
Babbles the Bee in a stolid Ear,
Pipe the sweet Birds in ignorant cadence—
Ah, what sagacity perished here!

Safe in their Alabaster Chambers (1861 version)

Safe in their Alabaster Chambers—
Untouched by Morning—
And untouched by Noon—
Lie the meek members of the Resurrection—
Rafters of Satin—and Roof of Stone!

Grand go the Years—in the Crescent—above them—
Worlds scoop their Arcs—
And Firmaments—row—
Diadems—drop—and Doges—surrender—
Soundless as dots—on a Disk of snow—

I taste a liquor never brewed (1861)

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—

I felt a Funeral, in my Brain (1862)

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 (1863)

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—

My Life had stood—a Loaded Gun

My Life had stood—a Loaded Gun—
 In Corners—till a Day
 The Owner passed—identified—
 And carried Me away—

And now We roam in Sovereign Woods—
 And now We hunt the Doe—
 And every time I speak for Him—
 And Mountains straight reply—

And do I smile, such cordial light
 Upon the Valley glow—
 It is as a Vesuvian face
 Had let its pleasure through—

And when at Night—Our good Day done—
 I guard My Master's Head—
 'Tis better than the Eider Duck's
 Deep Pillow—to have shared—

To foe of His—I'm deadly foe—
 None stir the second time—
 On whom I lay a Yellow Eye—
 Or an emphatic Thumb—

Though I than He—may longer live
 He longer must—than I—
 For I have but the power to kill,
 Without—the power to die—