

THE POEMS OF

Emily Dickinson

VARIORUM EDITION



EDITED BY

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123 *Besides the autumn poets sing*

MANUSCRIPTS: Two fair copies, about 1859. A pencil copy, signed "Emilie" and addressed "Sue" (erased), was sent to Susan Dickinson about autumn 1859 (A 655). This manuscript came to Mabel Todd from the Bowles family, forwarded through Austin Dickinson, who may have erased his wife's name. It came with manuscripts sent to Samuel and Mary Bowles, in whose possession were some of those Susan had received.

- A Besides the autumn poets sing
A few prosaic days
A little this side of the snow
And that side of the Haze.
A few incisive mornings - 5
A few ascetic eves -
Gone - Mr Bryant's "Golden Rod"
And Mr Thom'son's "Sheaves" -
Still, is the bustle in the brook,
Sealed, are the spicy valves. 10
Mesmeric fingers softly touch
The eyes of many Elves -

Perhaps a *squirrel* may remain
My sentiments to share -
Grant me Oh Lord a sunny mind - 15
Thy windy will to bear!

Division 15 a |

In late 1859 ED copied the poem for Fascicle 6 (H 11).

- B Besides the Autumn poets sing F6.11
A few prosaic days
A little this side of the snow
And that side of the Haze -

A few incisive mornings - 5
A few Ascetic eves -
Gone - Mr Bryant's "Golden Rod" -
And Mr Thomson's "sheaves."

□

Still, is the bustle in the Brook -
Sealed are the spicy valves - 10
Mesmeric fingers softly touch
The eyes of many Elves -

Perhaps a squirrel may remain -
My sentiments to share -
Grant me, Oh Lord, a sunny mind - 15
Thy windy will to bear!

12 Elves -] *the dash made from a period*

Division 12 Elves - ||

PUBLICATION: Hitchcock, *The Handbook of Amherst, Massachusetts* (1891), 21, stanzas 1 and 3 from the fascicle (B) in a chapter by Mabel Todd on the Connecticut Valley. *Poems* (1891), 173, entire, from the fascicle (B). *Poems* (1955), 93-94 (A summarized, B principal); *CP* (1960), 61-62 (B). *MB* (1981), 102-3 (B), in facsimile. (J131)

B Title November P91 5-8, 13-16] omitted *Handbook*91

124 *Safe in their alabaster chambers*

MANUSCRIPTS: Six (one lost) or seven (two lost), variant, about 1859, 1861, and 1862. There are versions from 1859 and 1861, two further attempts on the second stanza in 1861, and an 1862 holograph of the 1861 version.

The lost manuscript, sent to Susan Dickinson, presumably about late 1859, appears to have been the source for publication of the poem in the *Springfield Daily Republican* (1 March 1862), there titled "The Sleeping" and dated "Pelham Hill, June, 1861."

- [A] Safe in their alabaster chambers,
Untouched by morning,
And untouched by noon,
Sleep the meek members of the Resurrection,
Rafter of satin, and roof of stone. 5

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! 10

Emendation 3, 5, 8, 10] *indented* 9 cadence] cadences

The lost manuscript was still in Susan's possession in December 1890, when she marked out a phrase in her copy of *Poems* (1890) (Y-BRBL), interlining another:

castle <of sunshine> above them

The canceled reading was an editorial alteration in the 1890 text, which derived from the fascicle, already in other editorial hands. The authentic reading there, as in Susan's manuscript and the *Republican*, was "castle above them"; no other source has this variant.

The *Republican* text is substantively identical to the fascicle, except for line 9 in the newspaper, which has "cadences" instead of "cadence." Since Susan did not mark this word when annotating the 1890 text, which also has the singular form, one may conjecture that "cadence" appeared in her manuscript and that the plural form in the *Republican* was alteration or error.

When Samuel Bowles visited Amherst in June 1861, he may have acquired from Susan a copy of the early version: on 1 March 1862 it was published in the *Republican* curiously dated "*Pelham Hill, June, 1861.*" Pelham Hill, according to the *Republican* itself (6 July 1861, in a passage that Bowles may have written), was about two miles east of Amherst, the site of a new water-cure hotel named the Orient. This area is now called Mount Orient and Orient Springs, while the center of the town of Pelham, then known as Pelham Heights, has become known as Pelham Hill.

The record copy in Fascicle 6 is the earliest extant holograph, transcribed about late 1859 (H 11).

B Safe in their Alabaster Chambers - F6.12
Untouched by morning
And untouched by noon -
Sleep the meek members of the Resurrection -
Rafter of satin, 5
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 - 10
Ah, what sagacity perished here!

About 1861, perhaps as a consequence of Bowles's visit, a literary exchange with Susan Dickinson took this early version as the starting point. To Susan's criticism of the second stanza, ED responded with a new version: the familiar first stanza (but variant in line 4: "Lie" for "Sleep") followed by a new one. She concluded the manuscript (H B74a), which is written in pencil and signed "Emily," with a note:

Perhaps this verse would please you better - Sue -

C Safe in their Alabaster Chambers,
Untouched by morning -
And untouched by noon -
Lie the meek members of the Resurrection -
Rafter of satin - and Roof of stone - 5

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 Disc of snow - 10

Division 4 of | 5 Roof of | 6 in the | 9 Doges - | 10 a |

Susan liked the new stanza less than the earlier one and renewed her criticism by "Pony Express" (H B74b).

I am not suited dear Emily with the second verse - It is remarkable as the chain lightening that blinds us hot nights in the Southern sky but it does not go with the ghostly shimmer of the first verse as well as the other one - It just occurs to me that the first verse is complete in itself it needs no other, and can't be coupled - Strange things always go alone - as there is only one Gabriel and one Sun - You never made a peer for that verse, and I *guess* you[r] kingdom does'nt hold one - I always go to the fire and get warm after thinking of it, but I never *can* again.

ED tried her hand at two more versions of the second stanza, dispatching one next door with a question and a final note to the exchange (H B74c).

Is *this frostier?*

D Springs - shake the Sills -
But - the Echoes - stiffen -
Hoar - is the Window - and numb - the Door -

Tribes of Eclipse - in Tents of Marble -
Staples of Ages - have buckled - there -

5

Division 3 and | 4 Tents | 5 have |

Her note, which follows the poem, begins with the passage:

Dear Sue -

Your praise is good - to me - because I *know* it *knows* - and
suppose it *means* -

Could I make you and Austin - proud - sometime - a great way
off - 'twould give me taller feet -

In the second half of 1861, ED copied the revised portions of the poem onto a sheet of stationery (H 203), which she bound up as part of Fascicle 10. It was a complete record of the new attempts, including the stanza she had not sent to Susan.

E Safe in their Alabaster chambers - F10.18
Untouched by Morning -
And untouched by Noon -
Lie the meek members of the Resurrection -
Rafter of Satin - and Roof of Stone! 5

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 Disc of snow - 10

6-10]

Springs - shake the sills -
But - the Echoes - stiffen -
Hoar - is the window -
And - numb - the door -
Tribes - of Eclipse - in Tents - of Marble -
Staples - of Ages - have buckled - there -

Springs - shake the seals -
But the silence - stiffens -
Frosts unhook - in the Northern Zones -
Icicles - crawl from polar Caverns -

Midnight in Marble -
Refutes - the Suns -

Division 1 Alabaster | 4 of | 6 in the | 9 Doges - | 10 a | alt
6-10 window - || alt 6-10 Tents - | alt 6-10 have | alt 6-10 in the |
alt 6-10 polar |

When ED sent her first letter to T. W. Higginson on 15 April 1862, six weeks after the early version of "Safe in their alabaster chambers" had appeared in the *Republican*, she enclosed a copy of the later version (BPL 2), one of four poems sent for his critical assessment. It is substantively identical with the copy in Fascicle 10, except for a return to "Sleep" in line 3.

F Safe in their Alabaster Chambers -
Untouched by Morning -
And untouched by noon -
Sleep the meek members of the Resurrection,
Rafter of Satin and Roof of Stone - 5

Grand go the Years,
In the Crescent above them -
Worlds scoop their Arcs -
And Firmaments - row -
Diadems - drop - 10
And Doges - surrender -
Soundless as Dots,
On a Disc of Snow.

Division 1 Alabaster | Alabas - | ter 4 members | mem - | bers | 5 and
| 7 above | 9 row - ||

A transcript of the first stanza in an unidentified hand (A Tr69) may derive from another holograph now lost. The nature of the variants suggests the text to have been recalled, unreliably, from memory.

[G] Deep in their alabaster chambers,
Untouched by morn and untouched by noon,
Sleep the mute members of the Resurrection
Roof of satin and rafter of stone,

Emendation 2 and | & 4 and | &

Each of the four lines, cited with the line numbering of the transcript, differs from all other sources:

	<i>Republican, Fascicles, Susan, Higginson</i>	<i>Transcript</i>
1	Safe	Deep
2	morning	morn
3	meeK	mute
4	Rafter of satin	Roof of satin
4	roof of stone	rafter of stone

Where the other sources vary in line 3, the transcript agrees with three of them:

	<i>SDR, Fascicle 6, Higginson, Transcript</i>	<i>Susan, Fascicle 10</i>
3	Sleep	Lie

PUBLICATION: *Springfield Daily Republican* (1 March 1862), 2, apparently from the lost copy to Susan Dickinson ([A]). Higginson, *Christian Union*, 42 (25 September 1890), 393, the complete poem from the early version in Fascicle 6 (B) and, separately, the second stanza of the later version that had been sent to him (F). Higginson explained that the separate stanza struck "a note too fine to be lost." *Poems* (1890), 113, combined these elements, arranged as three quatrains, with the early fascicle version (B) as stanzas 1 and 2 and the second stanza of the later version, apparently from Higginson's copy (F), as stanza 3. A facsimile of Higginson's copy was printed in Higginson and Boynton, *A Reader's History of American Literature* (1903), 130-31. LL (1924), 78, the second stanza of the second version to Susan (C) and the third version of the stanza to her (D). Bingham, AB (1945), 383n, the first alternative version for the second stanza, as a quatrain, from Fascicle 10 (E). *Poems* (1955), 151-55 ([A] as possibly sent to Bowles, B principal, C, D, E principal, F; without [G]); CP (1960), 100 (B, E). *Letters* (1958), 379-80 (B as if sent to Susan, C, D). Higgins, *American Literature*, 38 (March 1966), 21, from the unidentified transcript ([G]). MB (1981), 103 (B) and 193-94 (E), in facsimile. (J216)

- [A] Title The Sleeping SDR62 9 cadence] cadences SDR62
 B 8 above them] of sunshine P90 CP24 P30 P37 after 11] the second stanza of F P90 CP24 P30 P37
 C 1-5] omitted LL24 8 row] bow LL24
 D 1 the] their LL24

125 A poor - torn heart - a tattered heart

MANUSCRIPTS: Two fair copies, variant, about 1859. ED sent Susan Dickinson a pencil copy (H B175) onto which she had tied two pictures

clipped from her father's copy of Dickens's *Old Curiosity Shop*. One of these remains: a young man in a graveyard kissing the hand of a young woman.

A	A poor - torn Heart - a tattered heart, That sat it down to rest - Nor noticed that the ebbing Day Flowed silver to the West; Nor noticed night did soft descend, Nor Constellation burn - Intent upon a vision Of Latitudes unknown -	5
	The Angels, happening that way This dusty heart espied - Tenderly took it up from toil - And carried it to God - There - sandals for the Barefoot - There - gathered from the gales Do the blue Havens - by the hand Lead the wandering sails -	10 15

About late 1859 the poem was copied for Fascicle 6 (H 11).

B	A poor - torn heart - a tattered heart - That sat it down to rest - Nor noticed that the ebbing Day Flowed silver to the west - Nor noticed night did soft descend - Nor Constellation burn - Intent upon the vision Of latitudes unknown.	F6.13 5
	The angels - happening that way This dusty heart espied - Tenderly took it up from toil And carried it to God - There - sandals for the Barefoot - There - gathered from the gales - Do the blue havens by the hand Lead the wandering Sails.	10 15

7 upon] made from on

Emendation 1 tattered] tattered