

Hope is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul,
And sings the tune without the words,
And never stops at all,

And sweetest in the gale is heard;
And sore must be the storm
That could abash the little bird
That kept so many warm.

I've heard it in the chilliest land,
And on the strangest sea;
Yet, never, in extremity,
It asked a crumb of me.

gale—a strong wind
abash—to astonish; to make feel ill at ease or self-conscious
extremity—a most difficult or dangerous time or situation



I started early, took my dog,
And visited the sea—
The mermaids in the basement
Came out to look at me,

And frigates in the upper floor
Extended hempen hands—
Presuming me to be a mouse
Aground, upon the sands,

But no man moved me till the tide
Went past my simple shoe—
And past my apron and my belt,
And past my bodice too,

And made as he would eat me up
And wholly as a dew
Upon a dandelion's sleeve—
And then I started too.

And he—he followed close behind;
I felt his silver heel
Upon my ankle—then my shoes
Would overflow with pearl.

Until we met the solid town,
No one he seemed to know—
And bowing with a mighty look
At me, the sea withdrew.

frigates—medium-sized warships with sails
hempen—ropelike (some rope is made from hemp, which is a
plant with tough fiber in its stem)
bodice—the part of a woman's dress above the waist

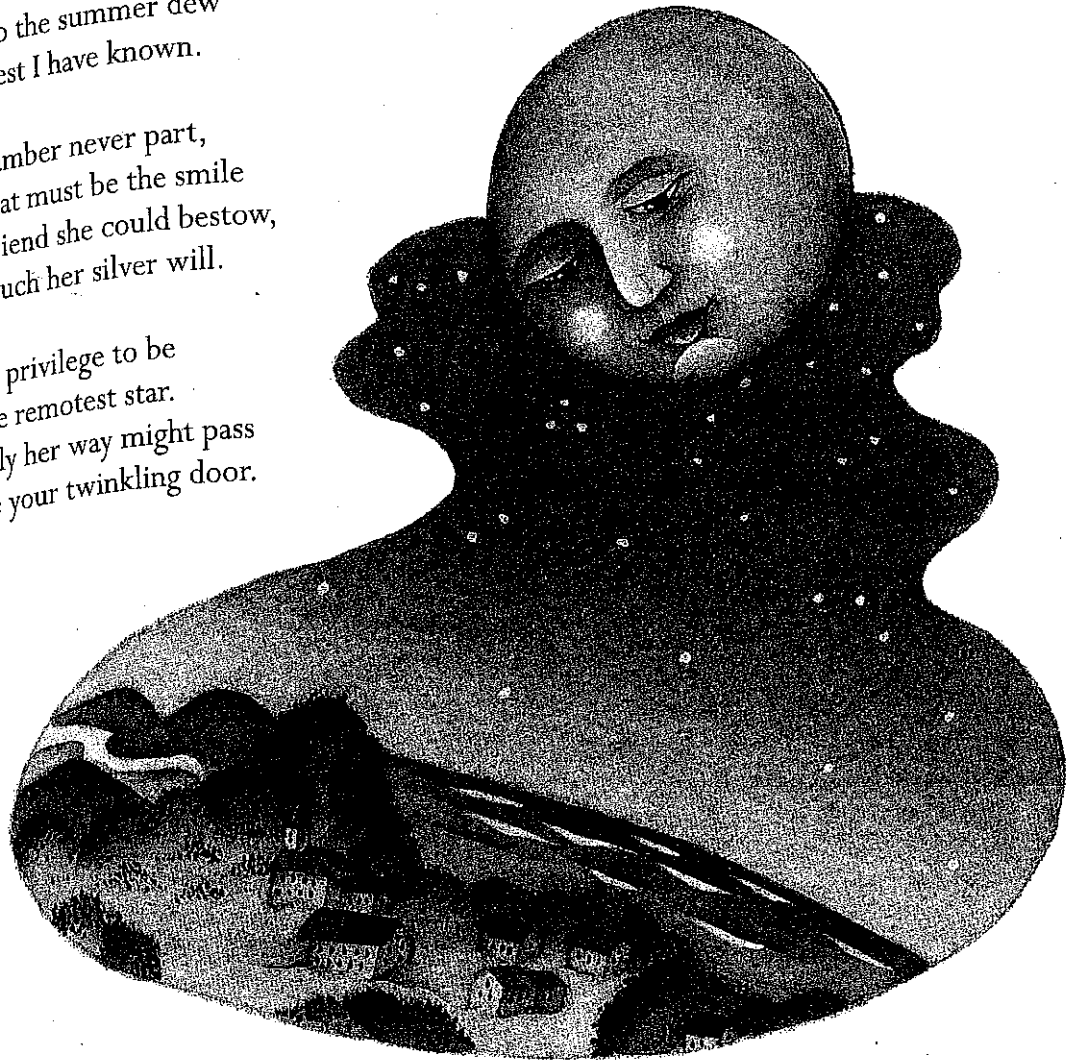
The moon was but a chin of gold
A night or two ago,
And now she turns her perfect face
Upon the world below.

Her forehead is of amplest blonde,
Her cheek like beryl stone,
Her eye unto the summer dew
The likest I have known.

Her lips of amber never part,
But what must be the smile
Upon her friend she could bestow,
Were such her silver will.

And what a privilege to be
But the remotest star.
For certainly her way might pass
Beside your twinkling door.

Her bonnet is the firmament,
The universe her shoe,
The stars the trinkets at her belt,
Her dimities of blue.

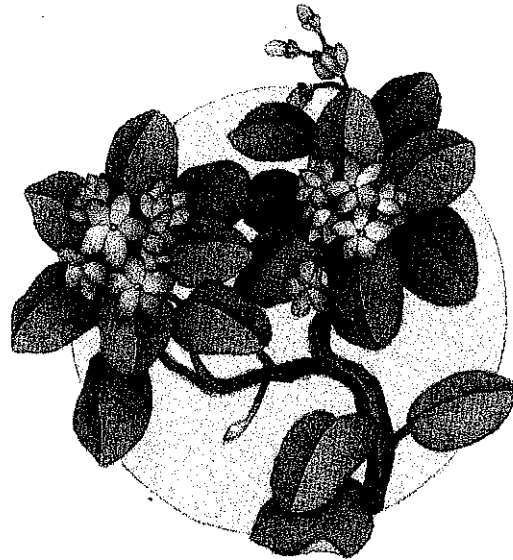


THE NEXT SEVEN POEMS ARE RIDDLES EMILY WROTE. SEE IF YOU CAN GUESS WHAT SHE IS DESCRIBING. THE ANSWERS ARE UPSIDE DOWN AT THE END OF EACH POEM, BUT DON'T PEEK UNTIL YOU'VE TRIED TO SOLVE THE RIDDLES. YOU MAY WANT TO COVER THE PICTURES, TOO.

Pink, small, and punctual
Aromatic, low,
Covert in April,
Candid in May,

Dear to the moss,
Known by the knoll,
Next to the robin
In every human soul,

Bold little beauty,
Bedecked with thee,
Nature forswears Antiquity.



covert—*hidden or disguised*
knoll—a *little hill or mound*

(an arbutus, a plant with little pink
or white blossoms and strawberry-
like berries)

2A

Smile



An everywhere of silver,
With ropes of sand
To keep it from effacing
The track called land.

effacing—wiping out or erasing something

(the sea)

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.

prodigious—amazing; of great size and power

supercilious—haughty or proud

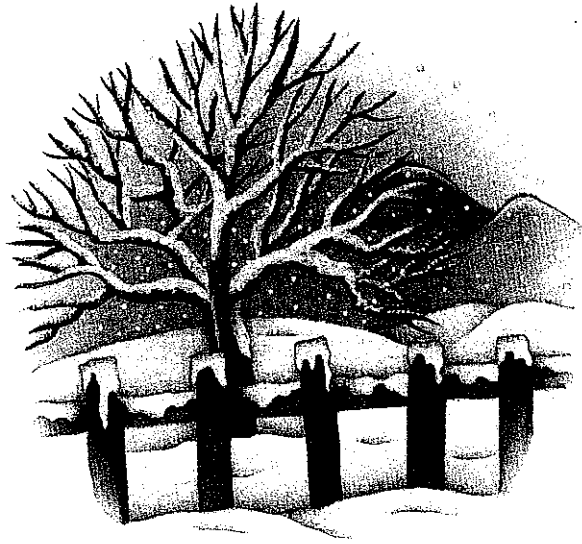
shanties—small, shabby huts or houses

*quarry—a place where stone or marble used for building is
cut or blasted out of the ground*

*Boanerges—the Apostles James and John, who were called
the “Sons of Thunder” because they wanted to
call down fire from heaven on the Samaritans
(see Mark 3:17)*

omnipotent—all-powerful

(a train)



It sifts from leaden sieves,
It powders all the wood,
It fills with alabaster wool
The wrinkles of the road.

It makes an even face
Of mountain and of plain,—
Unbroken forehead from the east
Unto the east again.

It reaches to the fence,
It wraps it, rail by rail,
Till it is lost in fleeces;
It flings a crystal veil

On stump and stack and stem,—
The summer's empty room,
Acres of seams where harvests were,
Recordless, but for them.

It ruffles wrists of posts,
And ankles of a queen,—
Then stills its artisans like ghosts,
Denying they have been.

(Mous)

sieves—strainers or sifters
artisans—skilled workers or craftspeople who make things that show imagination and feeling

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 to 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.

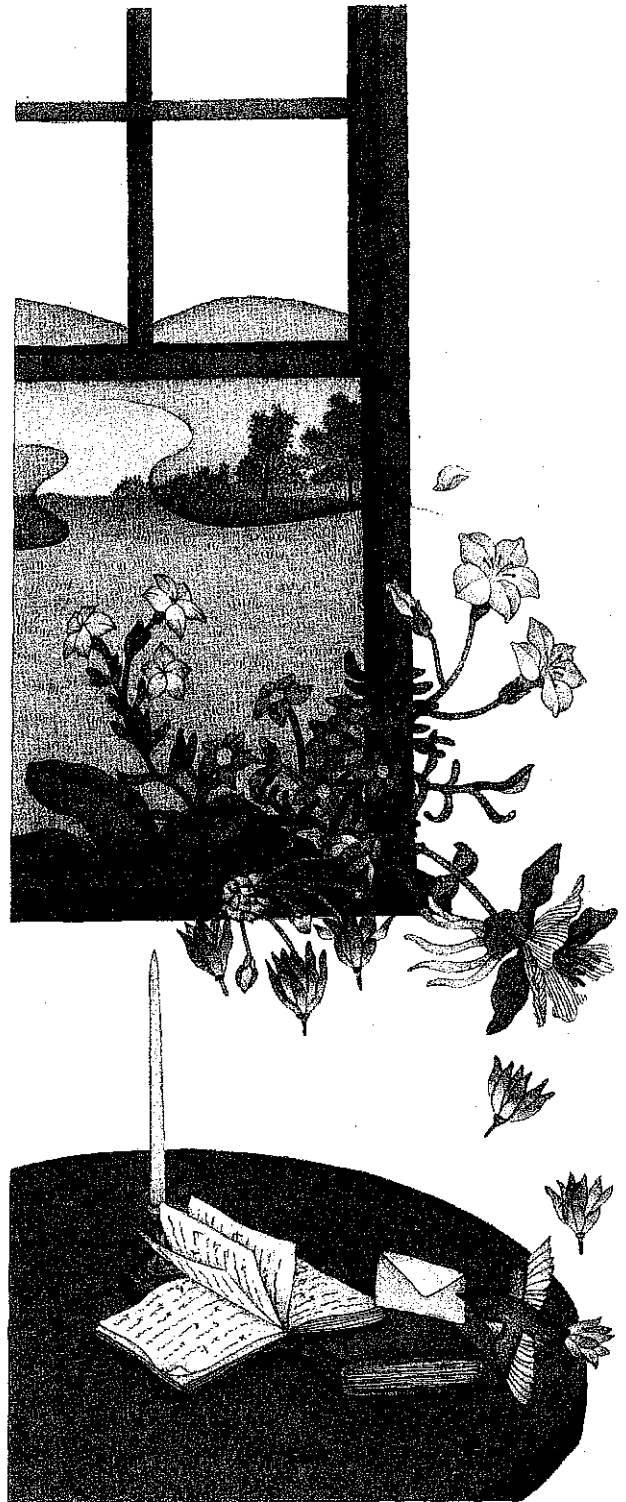
(a snake)

Dear March, come in!
How glad I am!
I looked for you before.
Put down your hat—
You must have walked—
How out of breath you are!
Dear March, how are you?
And the rest?
Did you leave Nature well?
Oh, March, come right upstairs with me,
I have so much to tell!

I got your letter, and the birds'—
The maples never knew
That you were coming—I declare,
How red their faces grew!
But, March, forgive me—
And all those hills
You left for me to hue—
There was no purple suitable,
You took it all with you.

Who knocks? That April!
Lock the door!
I will not be pursued!
He stayed away a year, to call
When I am occupied.
But trifles look so trivial
As soon as you have come,
That blame is just as dear as praise
And praise as mere as blame.

hue—a particular color or tint
(Emily is saying, "You left
it up to me to put the color in!")





Bee, I'm expecting you!
Was saying yesterday
To somebody you know
That you were due.

The frogs got home last week,
Are settled and at work,
Birds mostly back,
The clover warm and thick.

You'll get my letter by
The seventeenth; reply,
Or better, be with me.

Yours,
Fly.

The grass so little has to do,
A sphere of simple green
With only butterflies to brood
And bees to entertain.

And stir all day to pretty tunes
The breezes fetch along
And hold the sunshine in its lap
And bow to everything.

And thread the dews all night, like pearls,
And make itself so fine—
A duchess were too common
For such a noticing.

And even when it dies, to pass
In odors so divine,
As lowly spices gone to sleep,
Or amulets of pine.

And then to dwell in sovereign barns,
And dream the days away—
The grass so little has to do,
I wish I were a hay!



*sovereign—superior to every other; the best,
greatest, or most important*

A bird came down the walk—
He did not know I saw;
He bit an angleworm 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.



plashless—*without splashing*