

The Poems of Emily Dickinson
Variorum edition. Ed. R.W. Franklin (Belknap of Harvard University Press, 1998)
Civil War Poems

465

The name – of it – is “Autumn” –
The hue – of it – is Blood –
An Artery – upon the Hill –
A Vein – along the Road –

Great Globules – in the Alleys –
And Oh, the Shower of Stain –
When Winds – upset the Basin –
And spill the Scarlet Rain –

It sprinkles Bonnets – far below –
It gathers ruddy Pools –
Then – eddies like a Rose – away –
Opon Vermilion Wheels –

8 spill] tip –
10 gathers] stands in –
10 gathers ruddy] makes Vermillion –
12] And leaves me with the Hills.

524

It feels a Shame to be Alive –
When Men so brave – are dead –
One envies the Distinguished Dust –
Permitted – such a Head –

The Stone – that tells defending Whom
This Spartan put away
What little of Him we – possessed
In Pawn for Liberty –

The Price is great – Sublimely paid –
Do we deserve – a Thing –
That lives – like Dollars – must be piled
Before we may obtain?

Are we that wait – sufficient worth –
That such Enormous Pearl
As life – dissolved be – for Us –
In Battle's – horrid Bowl?

It may be – a Renown to live –
I think the Men who die –
Those unsustained – Saviors –
Present Divinity –

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.

704

My Portion is Defeat – today –
A paler luck than Victory –
Less Paeans – fewer Bells –
The Drums don't follow Me – with tunes –
Defeat – a somewhat slower – means –
More Arduous than Balls –

'Tis populous with Bone and stain –
And Men too straight to stoop again –
And Piles of solid Moan –
And Chips of Blank – in Boyish Eyes –
And scraps of Prayer –
And Death's surprise,
Stamped visible – in Stone –

There's somewhat prouder, over there –
The Trumpets tell it to the Air –
How different Victory
To Him who has it – and the One
Who to have had it, would have been
Contenteder – to die –

5 somewhat slower] something dumber

6 Arduous] difficult –
8 stoop] bend –
11 scraps] shreds
14 somewhat] something

1212

My Triumph lasted till the Drums
Had left the Dead alone
And then I dropped my Victory
And chastened stole along
To where the finished Faces
Conclusion turned on me
And then I hated Glory
And wished myself were They.

What is to be is best descried
When it has also been –
Could Prospect taste of Retrospect
The Tyrannies of Men
Were Tenderer, diviner
The transitive toward -
A Bayonet's contrition
Is nothing to the Dead -