

## Exploring Emily Dickinson

Success is counted sweetest  
 By those who ne'er succeed.  
 To comprehend a nectar  
 Requires sorest need.

Not one of all the purple host  
 Who took the flag to-day  
 Can tell the definition,  
 So clear, of victory,

As he, defeated, dying,  
 On whose forbidden ear  
 The distant strains of triumph  
 Break, agonized and clear.

-----

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.

One dignity delays for all,  
 One mitred afternoon.  
 None can avoid this purple,  
 None evade this crown.

Coach it insures, and footmen,  
 Chamber and state and throng;  
 Bells, also, in the village,  
 As we ride grand along.

What dignified attendants,  
 What service when we pause!  
 How loyally at parting  
 Their hundred hats they raise!

How pomp surpassing ermine,  
 When simple you and I  
 Present our meek escutcheon,  
 And claim the rank to die!

-----

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.

I heard a fly buzz when I died;  
The stillness round my form  
Was like the stillness in the air  
Between the heavens of storm.

The eyes beside had wrung them dry,  
And breaths were gathering sure  
For that last onset, when the king  
Be witnessed in his power.

I willed my keepsakes, signed away  
What portion of me I  
Could make assignable,—and then  
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.