**\* *Oscar Meets Emily* \***



***Farther Revels I***

***The American Tour Revisited***

***(Scene: A Bar in Manhattan)***

***Conversation in a Corner***

 ***with a Lady of Amherst***

Off in a corner of the room,

 A screen not noticed previously

 Conceals *someone.* Who could it be?

What loneliness of self-made gloom

That person must be feeling there,

 Behind that screen, which I draw near

 Until a whispering voice I hear.

My other guests are unaware

The screen is even here, but I

 Am very curious, and ask

 The voice, if not too hard a task,

To rise a little. If not the eye,

The ear can tell it is a woman

 Who now speaks with me audibly.

 She is a poet. Please feel free,

I say, your private Muse to summon.

(This lady—I have read her mind—

 Signs her sole self as Emily

 And I begin to think that she

May be my farthest imagined

Contrary, truth of my mask, though

 I doubt she wears mascara. She is

 New England’s soul’s sharpest ideas

Whose fame’s continuing to grow.)

\*

What diamonds in the rough are yours,

 I say, what visions! I would love

 To hear the latest samples of

Your art, if you don’t mind. *Of course!*

*****Three Poems, Opus Posthumus***

8,874

*What though he stand investibuled*

*Between the Here and There—*

*Or that his eyes must squint at Rapture*

*Through a veil of tears?*

*Thrust into sands of Desolation—*

*By followers left behind,*

*Still burns the abandoned Harbinger—*

*The Moses of the Mind—*

*Regrets—you wonder?*

*Chastened there*

*To usher—*

*Not to enter?*

*Heaven—sirs—*

*Is sheer horizon—*

*Pisgah*

*All our Canaan—*

13,707

*Flies in their barrows—on the sill—*

*Fruitlessly multiply*

*Until their hosts—like grains of sand—*

*Shore up a sea of eyes—*

*Down the sifting seasons piled—*

*In palimpsestic heaps—*

*The scion wears the forebear’s weight*

*Lightly as dust-motes sleep—*

*Those brittle sheaves at windowpanes*

*Are harvests—who shall glean?*

*They danced at those bright thresholds—once—*

*They saw the blazing scenes!*

19,313.

*We that have power to write the world*

*In serifs of Desire*

*Are interrupted thence—caught mapping*

*Watersheds—of nowhere—*

*We that in bold seraphic Scripts*

*Italicize our wants—*

*Would flood the world with Heaven’s Nile—*

*Could we—but find—the Font—*

\*

Bravo, my dear Miss Emily!

 Indeed, we are all of the Elect

 (Which is a Faith, but not a Sect),

Though disembodied things are we,

Or astral-bodied, it may be.

 *The guest becomes the goulish host!*

A girlish ghost, not wholly ghost.

*We’re getting along famously!*

*Wilde nights! Wilde nights!* You are too droll,

 Emily! I’m so sorry about

 That genteel, empty-pated lout

Higginson, a man with no soul.

I knew him: we crossed paper swords,

 We two, on more than one occasion

 During my tour of your great nation.

*With pinchbeck music cut the chords*

*Of memory. He was a vain man.*

There’s nothing out there but that writing

 Upon a wall of our inditing

That burns a little brighter than

The rest. *And peace—sir—is the rest*

 *That Understanding cannot give—*

 *In passages—alone—we live.*

To honour you, *rest* rhymes with *passed*.

In poems I say candidly

 Struck me at first as amateurish,

 There dawned on me a lightning flourish

And I was dazzled, gradually.

*‘Tell all the truth—but tell it slant’*,

 Though… What if Truth itself is of

 The slant persuasion? Or is love

Of Truth another kind of cant?

*You advertised—you know. But why?*

 *The lightning comes—to Solitude—*

 *That maid who sees the face of God.*

*You do not* sell *the Mystery.*

I *was* the news, and the event,

 Alas, a greater talker than

 A writer. Merely being the man

I was was an advertisement.

\*

Your soul at the white heat you kept,

 Whence came those steel, Damascus words,

 Trustier than the keenest swords:

Your forge and furnace never slept.

(Since she remained behind that screen,

 I offered then to read her palm, *Though, like Mrs Robinson, I might get*

 At least. Her answer, firm though calm, *it wrong.* [*When Oscar consulted her*

Was: *Poets should be heard, not seen.*) *before prosecuting Queensberry, she*

 *she predicted a successful outcome.*—Mr V]

*Coda: Emily on Sappho*

*Sappho! Doe, ray, me, far, sole, ah: wish!*

 *Listen: soft-wind solfeggios,*

 *Surf-whisperings.... ‘Hesper, Hesper glows*

*On the sea floor, sovereign starfish!’*

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