

A CONFESSION TO A FRIEND IN TROUBLE

Your troubles shrink not, though I feel them less
Here, far away, than when I tarried near;
I even smile old smiles--with listlessness -
Yet smiles they are, not ghastly mockeries mere.

A thought too strange to house within my brain
Haunting its outer precincts I discern:
- That I will not show zeal again to learn
Your griefs, and sharing them, renew my pain . . .

It goes, like murky bird or buccaneer
That shapes its lawless figure on the main,
And each new impulse tends to make outflee
The unseemly instinct that had lodgment here;
Yet, comrade old, can bitterer knowledge be
Than that, though banned, such instinct was in me!

1866.