

A SIGN-SEEKER

I mark the months in liveries dank and dry,
The noontides many-shaped and hued;
I see the nightfall shades subtrude,
And hear the monotonous hours clang negligently by.

I view the evening bonfires of the sun
On hills where morning rains have hissed;
The eyeless countenance of the mist
Pallidly rising when the summer droughts are done.

I have seen the lightning-blade, the leaping star,
The cauldrons of the sea in storm,
Have felt the earthquake's lifting arm,
And trodden where abysmal fires and snow-cones are.

I learn to prophesy the hid eclipse,
The coming of eccentric orbs;
To mete the dust the sky absorbs,
To weigh the sun, and fix the hour each planet dips.

I witness fellow earth-men surge and strive;
Assemblies meet, and throb, and part;

Death's soothing finger, sorrow's smart;
- All the vast various moils that mean a world alive.

But that I fain would wot of shuns my sense -
Those sights of which old prophets tell,
Those signs the general word so well,
Vouchsafed to their unheed, denied my long suspense.

In graveyard green, behind his monument
To glimpse a phantom parent, friend,
Wearing his smile, and "Not the end!"
Outbreathing softly: that were blest enlightenment;

Or, if a dead Love's lips, whom dreams reveal
When midnight imps of King Decay
Delve sly to solve me back to clay,
Should leave some print to prove her spirit-kisses real;

Or, when Earth's Frail lie bleeding of her Strong,
If some Recorder, as in Writ,
Near to the weary scene should flit
And drop one plume as pledge that Heaven inscrolls the wrong.

- There are who, rapt to heights of tranced trust,
These tokens claim to feel and see,
Read radiant hints of times to be -

Of heart to heart returning after dust to dust.

Such scope is granted not to lives like mine . . .

I have lain in dead men's beds, have walked

The tombs of those with whom I'd talked,

Called many a gone and goodly one to shape a sign,

And panted for response. But none replies;

No warnings loom, nor whisperings

To open out my limitings,

And Nescience mutely muses: When a man falls he lies.