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A REVELATION

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BOLTS OF MELODY, New Poems of Emily Dickinson
Edited with Mabel Loomis Todd

ANCESTORS' BROCADES, THE LITERARY DEBUT OF EMILY DICKINSON

EMILY DICKINSON

A REVELATION

BY

MILLICENT TODD BINGHAM

HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS

NEW YORK

EMILY DICKINSON—A REVELATION
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NOTE

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EMILY DICKINSON

A REVELATION

CHAPTER I

The Challenge

1

IN THE early 1890's when my mother, Mabel Loomis Todd, was preparing for the press the original volumes of Emily Dickinson's correspondence, Emily's brother Austin brought her from time to time small packets of letters.[1] Most of them, addressed to himself, he told her to use as she thought best —with one proviso.[2] Some were published in their entirety in the early volumes, others only in part. In the "New and Enlarged Edition" of 1931, excerpts from the letters to Austin were reprinted as they had originally appeared in 1894. With the publication of *Emily Dickinson's Home* all of Emily's letters to him which he was able to find will have appeared in full except such parts as he himself deleted.

One packet brought by Mr. Dickinson was different from all the others. In a used brown envelope, addressed in an unknown hand to "Miss E. C. Dickinson, Amherst, Mass.," the canceled stamps an issue of the early 1880's, it is labeled in my mother's writing, "Rough drafts of Emily's letters." She told me that when Mr. Dickinson gave her this envelope he indicated that it was something very special and personal. A glance was enough to show her that the drafts it contained were indeed different. Obviously love letters, my mother did not ask Mr. Dickinson how they came to be in his possession, wondering though she did how they could have escaped de-

struction, for Emily had tried to erase every vestige of her feeling toward those she cared for most. After her death, as she requested, their letters to her had been destroyed by her sister Lavinia without opening. My mother did not even consider publishing the group in question. She put them back in the envelope and placed it at the bottom of the pile of Emily's manuscripts in the camphorwood chest where it remained unopened for almost forty years.[3]

In 1930 when my mother first drew the envelope to my attention she said that I would do well to find out all I could "about Judge Lord." She did not elaborate. Without asking any questions and without examining the contents of the envelope, which she seemed reluctant to talk about, I accepted the challenge and took the first exploratory steps.

In the present volume I have described my search for information—the paths explored since 1931, the dead ends to which they have sometimes led me and the facts I have learned along the way. Of each episode I made at the time full notes. As with most of Emily Dickinson's relationships there is drama in "all the little diverse strands," out to the remotest reaches of her influence.

Before taking up the story in detail, however, I must explain why, of all the documents in the camphorwood chest, these letters have caused me the deepest concern.

> Whether to keep the secret—
> Whether to reveal—

After a long life spent within the shadow of the Dickinson family, a life during which many perplexing decisions regarding them have been forced upon me—how much to reveal, or how little, of the truth about their attitudes, their interrelationships and their head-on collisions—I reached at last the ultimate choice, namely, whether or not to publish the letters and fragments in this volume. In possession of long-concealed crucial facts, should I continue to conceal them? If so, since the Dickinson family is extinct, to what

purpose? Now, sixty-eight years after Emily's death, the decision has been made and these intimate letters, revealing the last great love of her life, are presented for public scrutiny.

In making this decision I assumed a grave responsibility. If these letters were made public I should be violating not only Emily's privacy, but also her brother's wish to shield her from the curiosity of those who would pry into her deepest feelings in order to speculate about the nature of a friendship which, although he knew it had been sacred to her, he himself did not wholly understand. He knew to whom these letters had been written—imposing, dignified Judge Lord, his father's best friend. But for his sister to have indited to him such impassioned letters must have been to Austin incredible. He did not wish to investigate; but he did not destroy the letters. Instead, he gave them to my mother who, because of his attitude considered them hallowed and left them alone. However, she did not destroy them either, but turned them over to me, together with her feeling that they were untouchable. In publishing them the spell is broken. The doors to the depths of Emily's nature are swung wide. All may now read her messages to the man who, during the last years of her life, held her "soul at the white heat" until his death two years before her own.

As when making other decisions about publishing hitherto unknown facts, my only criterion has been this: will they help to bring about a better understanding of Emily Dickinson? After considering these letters it is hoped that the reader will agree that it is better that this source of enlightenment should remain veiled no longer, better that speculation should at last give way to Emily Dickinson's own revelation of the truth.

2

Emily Dickinson is a puzzle to some people, chiefly because during many years she lived as a recluse and because it is not entirely clear why she did so, not even to those who accept as

fact the explanation offered by Emily's niece, Martha Dickinson Bianchi, that it was because of youthful love for a married man. Renunciation is a "piercing virtue." It appeals to most people—a romantic motive for choosing solitude, one easily understood. That in this case it happens not to be true does not alter the fact that by dint of much repetition the legend has become firmly rooted in American literature, although as an explanation of her retirement it is not wholly convincing.)

During the past quarter of a century and more several biographies of Emily Dickinson have appeared in print. Having accepted the theory that she renounced the world because of a broken heart the authors have differed only as to the identity of the candidate because of whom it is assumed that the renunciation took place. But her conduct cannot be explained so easily. In spite of the fact that she said, "My life has been too simple and stern to embarrass any," it was not a simple life, simply explained, in any but an external superficial sense. What do we actually know about it?

To begin with, the withdrawal was gradual. During much of her life she did live in seclusion, but it was a seclusion which narrowed with the years. It did not happen as the result of a sudden shock in youth. When did it begin? Not in her twenties certainly. In 1854, at the age of twenty-three, she went to Washington with the family. Five years later, in 1859, she was still "doing her courtesies," as she described her social obligations.[4] In 1864 and 1865 trouble with her eyes necessitated a stay of several months in Boston under a physician's care. Throughout this time although she was showing more and more disinclination to mingle with her fellows she was not as yet a recluse. But one factor was weighing more and more heavily—her father's wish to have her at home. In 1866 she wrote to Colonel Higginson, who had suggested a visit: "I must omit Boston. Father prefers so. He likes me to travel with him, but objects that I visit." A year later, in

June, 1867, she wrote again: "You speak kindly of seeing me; could it please your convenience to come so far as Amherst, I should be very glad, but I do not cross my father's ground to any house or town." She was then thirty-six. In August, 1870, after his long-anticipated first visit, Colonel Higginson wrote: "She came to me with two day lilies, which she put in a sort of childlike way into my hand and said, 'These are my introduction,' in a soft frightened, breathless, childlike voice —and added under her breath, 'Forgive me if I am frightened; I never see strangers and hardly know what I say. . . .' " By then, it appears, Emily had given up seeing most people.

There were, however, reasons other than her father's preference for this inch-by-inch withdrawal. The first is simple enough—lack of time. Solitude was for Emily Dickinson a necessity; it was her natural state. As she explained, "The appetite for silence is seldom an acquired taste." Like all creative persons she needed time in which to read, to write, to think, and to be still. She needed time in which to write long, long letters to her friends; time in which to set down her fast-running thoughts, to capture them before they swept past. Her own analogy is better. She must find an outlet for the thoughts pounding within her. More than once she compared the load to that of a child beneath the mother's heart, growing too heavy to carry any longer. Only in poetry did she find release. "And when," she explained, "a sudden light on orchards, or a new fashion in the wind troubled my attention, I felt a palsy, here, the verses just relieve."[5]

And there must be time for books, "those enthralling friends":

> Unto my books how good to turn,
> Far ends of tired days . . .
>
> A precious, mouldering pleasure 'tis
> To meet an antique book
> In just the dress his century wore . . .

And in her latest writing,

> There is no frigate like a book
> To take us lands away . . .

Time was required too for necessary duties and, in view of the never-ending demands of daily chores, some of the heaviest of which fell on her—building the morning fires for instance in her youth, and baking the bread for the family—time was hard to find. One has only to read the early letters to her brother to realize how arduous were her duties and, often, how extreme her fatigue. During the last years of her life it is true that her burden of housework was lightened until she could say, "I dont keep the Moth part of the House —I keep the Butterfly part."[6]

Although solitude was indeed Emily Dickinson's natural state, it should not be forgotten that it was a solitude in the midst of the normal activities of a household, a solitude sustained by a family who did not question her preference, accepting her as she was. They shielded her from contact with those whom she did not wish to see, but whose joys and sorrows and whose deepest wellsprings of action she understood and could express in living words. Her wish not to see her fellow townsmen was primarily due to the fact that with people in general she had little in common. "All men say 'What' to me," was her way of putting it. Again, "We meet our friends and a constant interchange wastes thought and feeling and we are then obliged to repair and renew. . . ." She tried to explain her attitude to Colonel Higginson, and did so more inclusively than she knew when she said, "Perhaps you smile at me. I could not stop for that. My business is circumference."[7] Although she was reluctant to squander precious time in pointless talk, she was reckless in the hours she spent in writing letters—in tending her close friendships. Each in its way opened a new vista which must be explored to the limit. This left little time for casual conversation.

It was Emily's way to form extravagant attachments. She needed an object of devotion and poured out her love on her friends. As a schoolgirl it focused on certain teachers, on Jane T. Humphrey and Elizabeth C. Adams, as well as on one or two girl friends. In particular she squandered her affection on Susan Gilbert, whose wit, cool composure and tart remarks about the peculiarities of their mutual acquaintances fascinated her.[8] She endowed Sue with characteristics Sue did not possess. Her capacity for warm generous affection proved to be limited. After her marriage to Emily's brother Emily looked for a tenderness deeper than Sue was capable of feeling. Emily withered in the atmosphere of disharmony which was not slow to develop in the house next door. The slow realization that in things that mattered her beloved Sue cared more about appearance than reality left a permanent scar. Emily's disillusionment, reflecting that of her brother, should not be overlooked as a positive if secondary element in her withdrawal.

Among the young men to whom Emily felt drawn in her youth were Leonard Humphrey, Principal of Amherst Academy, whose sudden death when she was nineteen was her "first affliction"; and Benjamin Newton, who fed her eager interest as he talked with her about the nature of existence. She loved him like an elder brother and his early death in 1853, when she was twenty-two, "taught" her "immortality." Nearly thirty years later she remembered him with gratitude when writing to Judge Lord of ". . . the Ralph Waldo Emerson, whose name my Father's Law Student taught me."[9] Two other early friends, Vaughan Emmons and John Graves, she also found congenial. For "Cousin John" she had as well a warm affection.

These youthful friendships were followed by a succession of deep lasting attachments. As I have said, each was to Emily profoundly revealing. Each brought its own special insight, different from that of any other, and all were fervently cher-

ished. Through them she grasped the secrets of life. It cannot be said too emphatically or too often that Emily Dickinson's understanding of the human heart is not to be explained in terms of a relationship to any one person. This fact should be borne in mind when searching for the sources of her love poetry.

Of the more ardent of these attachments the first, beginning when she was twenty-three, centered on the Reverend Charles Wadsworth of Philadelphia, profound and eloquent preacher, "whom to know was life." He not only led her through darkness into the light of spiritual understanding, he became, as she said, "my dearest earthly friend." Next was Samuel Bowles of Springfield, who had "the most triumphant face out of Paradise." Him she loved "beyond sentimentality," to use her brother's expression. She adored his "Arabian presence," his brilliance, his buoyancy, his effervescent joyousness. And there was Judge Lord, her father's friend. The flowering of that friendship is revealed in the letters at the end of this book. Each of these relationships had reached a separate "apartment" of her nature.[10] Only at last, in Judge Lord, did all tenderness converge and fuse. However tenuous the connection between Emily and the objects of her previous romantic enthusiasms, here at last is evidence in her own writing of a master passion with a response in kind if not in degree. As to the degree her own words give a clue.

Emily did not discuss these friends of hers. Although her brother and sister knew who they were they did not inquire into the nature of her feeling toward any of them. Her rapturous friendships were regarded by them as a part of her nature which they did not try to understand but which, because she seemed to care so much, they could only accept. They took the attitude that "as there are Apartments in our own minds which we never enter without apology, we should respect the seals of others."[11]

There was about Emily Dickinson an intensity which terrified some people. Others were held at bay. Even Colonel Higginson, whom she called her "safest friend," and who was not an object of her emotional ardor, wrote after his first visit to her, "I never was with anyone who drained my nerve power so much. Without touching her she drew from me. I am glad not to live near her."

For Emily the "ecstasy of living" was a heavy load. But from every emotion—love, or grief, or anguish, or too deep a realization of beauty—she found relief when another "bolt of melody" struck. The effect of her own poems upon her is suggested in a note written toward the end of her life in which she refused to see an acquaintance who had done her a kindness. "I had hoped to see you," she wrote, "but have no grace to talk, and my own words so chill and burn me that the temperature of other minds is too new an awe."[12]

The Greeks imagined that the miracle of vision resided not in the eye alone, but in the eye plus the object looked at; in other words, that certain rays emanate from the eye and, when they strike an object, it is seen. So it was with Emily Dickinson's genius. When she encountered a person who could precipitate an expression of her thought, could cause her feeling to crystallize in words, the release was for her a gift so royal that she could but adore the giver.

Those who cherish the legend of a lifelong renunciation because of a broken heart in youth may prefer not to entertain the thought that her fidelity was not confined to one person. Faithful indeed she was; but faithful above all to her own integrity, to that power within her which, no matter how slight the stimulus, and it might be no more than an exchange of glances, could create a poem. To those persons who cling to the legend it can be said only that against a cherished belief mere truth is a feeble antagonist. Be that as

it may, and when all is said, explanations do not explain. Mystery remains, but it is the mystery of genius.

3

My efforts to learn more about the nature of the relationship between Judge Lord and Emily Dickinson, and in so doing to overlook no possible source of information, is of necessity a personal story. For I began by trying to get in touch with his relatives then living, now dead. First was Abbie Farley, Mrs. Lord's niece, who kept house for him after his wife's death. Abbie offered the only hope of finding Emily's letters, those actually received by the Judge. Furthermore if, among his papers in the possession of this same niece, even a single draft of a letter from him to Emily turned up, it would reveal more of his attitude toward her than can be inferred with safety either from her own letters and notes or from his family's attitude, or hers, toward the friendship.

The account of my search is given in some detail not because of the drama of the narrative alone, not alone because of the importance of the end in view, which was to find letters or drafts of letters from either or both of them, but because of what the search revealed about the atmosphere in which Judge Lord lived during the last years of his life and what it disclosed about the character and motives of the persons closest to him by blood or by propinquity.

FOOTNOTES

1. *Letters of Emily Dickinson,* edited by Mabel Loomis Todd, 2 vols. Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1894. (*Letters,* 1894.)

   Letters of Emily Dickinson, New and Enlarged Edition, edited by Mabel Loomis Todd. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1931. (*Letters,* 1931.)

   Ancestors' Brocades, The Literary Début of Emily Dickinson, by Millicent Todd Bingham. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1945.

2. The proviso, specifying those portions which were to be deleted, is ex-

plained in *Emily Dickinson's Home*, by Millicent Todd Bingham. That book, announced by Harper & Brothers for publication in 1951, a detailed, factual account of Emily Dickinson's family and her immediate surroundings in youth, is based on intimate family letters. It was intended as a preparation for the present volume, which reveals the climax of her emotional life. It is hoped that the publication of the introductory volume, held up now for nearly four years, may not be much longer delayed.

3. *Bolts of Melody,* New Poems of Emily Dickinson, edited by Mabel Loomis Todd and Millicent Todd Bingham. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1945, pp. vii-viii.
4. *Emily Dickinson's Home.*
5. The excerpts are quoted from *Letters,* 1931, pp. 274-284.
6. *Emily Dickinson's Home.*
7. *Letters,* 1931, pp. 278, 89, 276.
8. *Emily Dickinson's Home.*
9. See page 85.
10. Other friendships about which books have been written need not detain us.
11. Compare Chapter II, footnote 3.
12. *Letters,* 1931, pp. 299, 288, 404.

CHAPTER II

The Search

1

AT THE time of my mother's death in 1932 all I knew about Judge Lord was that he had been a member of the Supreme Court of Massachusetts and that he was Edward Dickinson's best friend. That there had been a special bond between him and his friend's daughter Emily I knew also because of an entry in the diary of Thomas Wentworth Higginson under date of May 19, 1886, describing her funeral: "The country exquisite, day perfect, and an atmosphere of its own, pure and strange, about the whole house and grounds—a more saintly and elevated 'House of Usher.' . . . E. D.'s face a wondrous restoration of youth—she is 54 and looked 30, not a gray hair or wrinkle, and perfect peace on the beautiful brow. There was a little bunch of violets at the neck and one pink *Cypripedium;* the sister Vinnie put in two heliotropes by her hand 'to take to Judge Lord.'. . ."[1]

Otis Phillips Lord was graduated from Amherst College in 1832 and he lived in Salem, Massachusetts; so in Salem my search began.

As a first move, while my mother and I were at work on the new and enlarged edition of the *Letters* I wrote to the Essex Institute, Salem. A reply, dated January 13, 1931, referred me to Hurd's *History of Essex County* and to news-

paper accounts at the time of Judge Lord's death in March, 1884—"the only sources that we can give you," the writer explained, but added that "perhaps Miss Elizabeth Lord, 31, Washington Sq., N., of Salem, who is a niece or grand-niece, might give you further data."

I read the newspapers and the relevant chapters of Hurd's *History,* but postponed approaching Miss Lord, daughter of the Judge's younger brother, George Robert Lord, until I could call upon her and ask her certain questions which she might very well hesitate to answer in writing.

In the late fall I expected to be in Cambridge for a few days so, without going into details about my errand, I wrote asking Miss Lord if I might call and received the following reply:

My dear Mrs. Bingham,

In reply to your communication, I shall have to say that it will be impossible for me to see you, as you suggest. My time is already more than filled with previous engagements.

Very truly yours,
(Miss) Elizabeth F. Lord.

31 Washington Square,
Salem, November nineteenth,
1931.

Abandoning further thought of Miss Elizabeth Lord for the time being, I turned to the other side of the family.

After the death of Judge Lord's wife in 1877, her sister, Mrs. Mary C. Farley, came to keep house for him. Her daughter, Abbie Farley, might still be living, my mother thought, and if I could find her it would be an even better avenue of approach than Miss Lord. Miss Farley sometimes visited the Austin Dickinsons, where in the early 1880's my mother had met her. Later she was said to have married but my mother did not know when nor to whom.

During the summer of 1932 while my husband and I were

living in Cambridge, and in the hope of finding the whereabouts of the lady, I wrote to the only person I knew who had grown up in Salem, Mrs. Marshall Jones. She replied that "Mrs. John Raymond on Chestnut Street is a friend of mine, a very active woman of about sixty-five. If she is at home she may be able to put you in touch with just the right person, or give you information herself. I will give you a letter to her." The tone of Mrs. Raymond's reply to my inquiry was as cordial as it was unexpected, for it seemed that she had been a friend of my grandparents. She would be very glad to see me at her home, No. 8 Chestnut Street. An exchange of letters fixed Sunday, August 14, as the day for my visit. The following is an abridged version of my impressions jotted down after my return to Cambridge.

> It was a very hot day.
>
> From the station I walked through the shimmering heat to No. 8 Chestnut Street where I was confronted with one of those broad impressive doorways characteristic of the great period of Salem's history. Above the paneled door with its brightly polished oval knocker was a beautiful fanlight and to the right and left matching sidelights. Full of admiration I stood for a while, just looking, before I rang the bell.
>
> Mrs. Raymond received me in a drawing room with a Samuel McIntire fireplace on one side and much Chippendale furniture. She spoke at once of my grandmother Loomis and my great-grandmother Wilder whom she had known forty years before when they lived for a time in Salem.
>
> The talk soon turned to Judge Lord and his niece, Abbie Farley. The Judge had died more than half a century ago. His house, a modern one, built about 1860, Mrs. Raymond thought, was diagonally across the street from that in which my grandmothers had spent a winter. After the death of Mrs. Lord, how long before that of the Judge Mrs. Raymond was not certain, her sister, Mrs. Farley, a lovely person from Ipswich, came to keep house for him. After her death her daughter, the same Abbie Farley, continued to care for him

as long as he lived.[2] Mrs. Raymond described Abbie as somewhat aggressive, very unlike her mother, "curt-spoken" was the word used. Many years after Judge Lord's death she married William C. West, a "gentleman of leisure" no longer living, who belonged to one of the first families of Salem. They had no children. She was opinionated and lived "rather a selfish life." By now, Mrs. Raymond thought, Abbie must be at least eighty. Unfortunately she had a stroke three weeks ago, and was still very ill. Mrs. Raymond then telephoned to her house to find out how she was today. This was what I heard. "I wanted to inquire for Mrs. West." After an interval—"Thank you. Good-bye." Mrs. Raymond turned and said, "it is only a matter of a little time."

Obviously I could not see Mrs. West today, and unless she took a turn for the better I might never see her at all. I was much disappointed because this, my mother had said, was the one person who would know most about Judge Lord and who would have any letters from the Dickinsons which might have survived.

I next inquired about Miss Elizabeth Lord, to whom I had written last year asking whether I might have a talk with her only to be told that she would be engaged during the entire time of my stay in Cambridge. As soon as I mentioned her name Mrs. Raymond exclaimed, "Beth Lord! Oh, she's peculiar! I've known her all my life, but I have not seen her for years. But it isn't her fault that she's queer. Her older sister was queer too, but they kept her in the house with an attendant. She thought she had committed the unpardonable sin. Beth was brought up under that influence. They never entertained like other people. Beth is the last of the line." The only time she goes out is to church, it seems, but as she attends the Orthodox Congregational Church Mrs. Raymond does not see her. She herself is a Unitarian, and has just come back from the Isles of Shoals now owned by the Unitarians. "I was away four weeks," Mrs. Raymond went on, "and Abbie was stricken after I left Salem. Three weeks ago Tuesday they didn't think she would live."

But to return to "Beth" Lord. Mrs. Raymond said there is

only one person who sees her often and that is Miss Susan E. Choate of 4 Broad Street. She would ask her whether she thought I might see her. Mrs. Raymond hoped that she could reach Miss Choate before she left for church and went upstairs to telephone.

I sat looking at the few touches of the present in the room—a photograph of an Army captain, the husband of Mrs. Raymond's only daughter, who died shortly after Mr. Raymond, leaving his wife with two little boys. She is now living here with her mother. The weight of tragedies and finalities seems to weigh more and more heavily on Salem.

When Mrs. Raymond came down she said: "Susan says it would never do to ask Miss Lord to see you. Although Susan is her best friend she would never think of even asking where they are to go if she asks her to go to drive. And anyway, she would not know anything about the other family, nor have any letters of any kind relating to the Dickinsons. No, one just could not ask her such a question."

So there was a rift between the families of the Lord brothers! "The other house" is a phrase not unknown among New England families.

One person, Mrs. Raymond thought, who might know a good deal about Judge Lord is Judge Alden Perley White, President of the Essex Institute, and a real antiquarian. But he is now in Europe. She also spoke of another friend of Mrs. West who might have some information but did not mention her name.

Mrs. Raymond then suggested that we take a walk in spite of the heat. At the foot of Chestnut Street, opposite the station, is a wide, open space where the new post office is to be put. Mrs. Raymond is rejoiced that a "Salem boy" has won the contest for the design. "Because it will be such an encouragement to him." I inquired whether he had graduated as yet from the school of architecture? "Oh, he is about forty," she replied. In Salem the first flush of youth! Several people in their seventies to whom she referred were not old, "dear me, no!" You can apply that word only after eighty and not always then.

We walked slowly up the scorching street. Most of the

superb old houses were closed for the summer. We stood in front of No. 20, the Endicotts', as the last of that branch of the family, a little old lady in black with a high collar on this breathless day, came slowly down the side street accompanied by an attendant. She stopped and looked over the fence into her garden, riotous with August color. Opposite, from one of the finest old houses, now occupied by an "outsider," came the raucous blat of jazz, an offense to all the quiet memories.

Walking back we turned into Summer Street. When we reached No. 7, the house of Abbie Farley West, we were confronted by a police sign, "Sickness. Quiet please." The brick house rose directly from the sidewalk, all the curtains drawn. We passed by, crossed the main street, passed the witch house and there, on the corner of Lynde and North Streets, was Judge Lord's. A large white house of the middle 1800's it was substantial, unimaginative, unromantic, dusty and noisy. The curtains in the windows were of imitation lace.

We turned back. On the corner of Essex Street Mrs. Raymond suddenly stopped and spoke to a young dark-haired foreigner. He might have been Italian or French Canadian. They exchanged a few words and then she turned to me. "That was Abbie's chauffeur," she said. "I knew he'd have the latest news of her. He says she is just now breathing her last. . . ."

I reached Cambridge at seven o'clock that evening, oppressed by the remembrance of those brief hours in Salem. I found it hard to realize that I was not of the generation that is past and gone. . . .

Pasted at the end of my account of the visit is a newspaper clipping which reads:

THE BOSTON HERALD
Monday, August 15, 1932
WEST—In Salem, Aug. 14, at 7 Summer St. Mrs. Abbie C. West, widow of William C. West. Funeral notice later.

My mother was disappointed to hear of Mrs. West's death as it would mean further delay. Another move would now be required if we were to see any personal papers of Judge Lord which might still be in existence.

A few days later Mrs. Raymond wrote that she had "communicated with her [Mrs. West's] friend, of whom I spoke to you, and she has given me the desired information. There were letters exchanged between the Dickinson and Lord families but, by request of Judge Lord, they were destroyed after his death, unopened. This was learned by the friend in conversations from time to time with Mrs. West." Another door was closed.

In spite of these discouragements my mother charged me on no account to abandon the search, as any documents Mrs. West might have had would still be in the house. So, on September 15, I went to see her executor, Charles C. Bucknam, of 85 Devonshire Street, Boston. We arranged to meet at the house the next morning and to see what papers, if any, would be of interest.

The sixteenth of September dawned in a steady downpour, said to be the heaviest rain of the summer. It did not let up all day. I went to Salem as agreed. When I reached No. 7 Summer Street I found that on account of the weather Mr. Bucknam had decided not to come. An elderly maid asked me to come in, however, and showed me about. The first thing I noticed were two first editions of the First and Second Series of Emily's *Poems* on the parlor table. A bookmark was laid in the Second Series at page 67,

> Mine enemy is growing old,
> I have at last revenge . . .

There was a photograph album, with pictures of Lords and Dickinsons, including a very dressy one of Mrs. West herself, a scrapbook, and other memorabilia which, as I wrote in my diary, "no one would care about but me." A blue snapshot of

Mrs. Austin Dickinson was lying loose in the album. The maid said if it was of any use to me to take it, but I did not do so. I followed her through the house, from one dark room to the next, while the rain pelted against the window panes.

I took note of the things which seemed of interest, among them the first editions of *Poems;* a pamphlet containing the proceedings of the bar associations of Suffolk and Essex counties at the time of Judge Lord's death; the scrapbook of clippings about him and others; the photograph album, as well as daguerreotypes of the family and the small blue snapshot of Mrs. Austin Dickinson, marked 1897. The latter, my mother told me, had been a special friend of Mrs. West.

Then, through the rain, I trudged over to the Essex Institute but at that time found no additional information. All I could do was to wait as nothing further could be accomplished until the estate was settled.

My mother was so insistent that we should not abandon the Salem search at this point that she decided to see for herself what was in the house. In a few weeks she would be leaving her summer home in Maine to spend the winter in Florida. Mr. Bucknam agreed to meet us at Mrs. West's house on the twenty-first of October.

I spent the morning of October 14, 1932, writing to various persons about arrangements for my mother's prospective trip to Salem.

Late that afternoon, two months to a day after the death of Mrs. West, came the telegram saying that my mother had dropped dead.

2

In acknowledging receipt of the list I had made at Mrs. West's house, Mr. Bucknam wrote on October 24 that "all the property in the house will either be sold or pass over to Mrs. Stockton, the residuary legatee of Mrs. West's will, depending upon the amount of the estate." In a letter of

November 3 he added that "I can only assure you that I will keep your articles on file and if the opportunity arises to comply with your request I shall be glad to do so."

At the time of my mother's death I had not yet looked into the brown envelope containing Emily's letters. When at last some months later I did so, I suddenly felt dizzy. What right had I to look at them? What right indeed had anyone? For this was the holy of holies. No wonder Austin Dickinson had explained nothing when he handed these letters to my mother! No wonder she had been loath to speak of them! And now, only I in all the world knew of their existence!

I felt as if I could not breathe.

I had fully intended to ask my mother about the contents of that envelope and to tell me all she knew about Judge Lord and his family, but I never did. Because of her reluctance I kept putting it off. Now, what was I to do? Emily's words, respected by her brother and sister, and which haunted my mother after her decision in 1931 to publish Emily's letters to the Clark brothers, began to haunt me now. "As there are Apartments in our own minds which we never enter without apology, we should respect the seals of others."[3]

Had I acted in accordance with the New England code I would have destroyed the letters as soon as I realized what they were. But such a thought did not occur to me. In childhood I had been taught to recognize Emily's handwriting and to respect it—the least scrap of it—even a penciled phrase on the torn flap of an envelope.

My first thought after the discovery was to wonder why Mr. Dickinson had had the envelope here on the table in front of me. But since he did, I wondered why he had not destroyed it but instead had given it to my mother, who did not destroy it either. Why did she hand it to me without giving me an inkling as to whether or not she wished me to publish its contents as she had asked me to do in the case of the other documents in the camphorwood chest?

Strangest of all, Emily herself had not burned these letters and drafts, but contrary to her habit had placed them by themselves, apart, in this very envelope. Could she have overlooked it at the last? Unlike her other notes in late handwriting jotted down on backs of envelopes or other scraps of paper—a miscellaneous hodgepodge—these pencil drafts are on uniform sheets of letter paper. I put them back in the envelope and tried to think what to do.

A few months later, on March 21, 1933, I called on Mr. Bucknam to ask whether the estate had as yet been settled. It had not. By the terms of Mrs. West's will quite a large sum of money was to be disposed of. After several gifts and individual bequests amounting to about $70,000, including one of $10,000 to her cousin Miriam Manning Kimball Stockton, she left to the Benjamin Stickney Cable Hospital of Ipswich, in memory of her late uncle, Otis Phillips Lord, the sum of $40,000 as a permanent fund, the income of which was to be used "for the maintenance of free beds for the needy sick." For a like purpose she left to the Salem Hospital, in memory of her late husband, William Cleveland West, the sum of $80,000. The "rest, remainder and residue" of her estate was, as Mr. Bucknam had told me before, bequeathed to Mrs. Stockton, who lived in New York at 150 East 63rd Street.

Two days later I called on Mrs. Stockton. We had only a brief talk for she was in deep mourning—a tragic figure who wrung my heart. The things from Salem had not come, nor could she expect them for some time she thought. I did not refer to the possessions of Judge Lord except as I went in, to explain the reason for my visit. The entry in my diary for that day reads as follows: "I have been trying for some time to see Mrs. Herbert K. Stockton, residuary legatee of Abbie Farley West—not only to find out about letters from Emily to Judge Lord, but from Emily to Mrs. West, besides books and pictures. Today I went at 4:30. Well, it

seems Mrs. Stockton had a genius son who, last year, [died a sudden tragic death]. The story of his life is an epic, and her mystic feeling about all the signs and omens and the allegories connected with him give one the shivers. If it hadn't been for an adorable silky dachshund that put his cold nose into my hand at the tensest moment, I should have been even more het up than I was. And when she finally got around to Emily, she told me that the day after they returned after burying [her son's] ashes in Ipswich, they stopped at Mrs. West's house in Salem. The first thing Mrs. Stockton picked up was a first edition of Emily's poems, with a letter from Emily to Abbie laid in, and *this* was a sentence in it, 'Was it a premonition to him to whom events and omens are at last the same?' I could write on and on. But there are other things to be done. I tried to get her to say she'd write about [her son]—that the articulate part of his work he left to her. She finally agreed—a most remarkable person. . . ."

More than a year elapsed. Thinking that the time for settlement of the estate must be at hand, on August 27, 1934, I again wrote to Mr. Bucknam inquiring about my list of items. He replied that "the articles you spoke of were not going into the auction" but "will go into the possession of Mrs. Stockton. She already has the Emily Dickinson books. . . ."

Meanwhile Mrs. Stockton and I had become friends. I confided to her the reason for my interest in Mrs. West's boxes, which made her as eager as I to examine their contents. In a letter of December 17, 1935, she wrote that she had just returned from Boston and had brought back "several boxes of stuff" which Mr. Bucknam had given her. "Whatever exists," she said, "is here in New York." As she was about to go south for several weeks and had no time to "go through all the papers," she would "like to put the matter over again" for a while. On her return she would ex-

amine them and bring them to me herself, "not later than early February." Then if the war scare subsided she expected to go abroad.

The weeks went by.

On February 5, 1936, is this entry in my diary: "Mrs. Stockton came at 4:30 bringing me pictures of Judge and Mrs. Lord, and such a wealth of information and understanding that I feel at last I have an ally. She is about my age—perhaps a little younger. She is about to go to Switzerland for three months to study about Rudolf Steiner's attitude toward good and evil. She feels that Emily drew from a layer of good which broods over us—or brooded over her—for the forces of evil have equal power and express themselves through certain persons. A mystic, if ever there was one."

So profound an impression did Miriam Stockton make upon me that day that I wrote a brief supplemental account of her visit from which a few excerpts follow.

> She is the daughter of Benjamin Kimball, executor of the will of Judge Otis P. Lord, the son of his cousin Otis Kimball. She is the chief beneficiary under the will of Abbie Farley West, who was *his* chief beneficiary. Here is Mrs. Stockton's description of a visit to Mrs. West.
>
> Mrs. Stockton took her little daughter to Salem to see not only Mrs. West, but the House of Seven Gables and the other sights. When she went in, taking up a volume of Hawthorne's which was on the table, she said, "I see you like Hawthorne." Mrs. West replied, "Like him? I scorn him. He made fun of Salem. He was insane." She seemed to feel with so much intensity that Mrs. Stockton changed the subject. Picking up a volume of Emily's poems, she made some such innocuous remark about them. To that Mrs. West replied, picking the book up by one corner, "Take it away. Little hussy—didn't I know her? I should say I did. Loose morals. She was crazy about men. Even tried to get Judge Lord. Insane, too."

> And this was the woman who had come into possession of Emily's letters to Judge Lord—unless he had himself previously destroyed them—and who burned them all as her ancestors had helped to burn the witches!
>
> We talked about whether it is the envy of the Philistine for the creative worker, suspicion, fear—what it is. But it is the truest word that was ever said that he who sees, who is born to speak the truth, is beset by the powers of evil throughout his entire life. And it is the immense power of the Philistine forces which can and does destroy the creator except in the most fortunate instances. "Organized evil," Mrs. Stockton called it.

Before she left for Europe for an indefinite stay Mrs. Stockton gave me a good many documents which had been in Mrs. West's possession, among them the following: Judge Lord's will, the copy used by his executor, Mrs. Stockton's father, Benjamin Kimball; Mr. Kimball's final accounting of the estate in 1903, almost twenty years after the Judge's death; Mr. Lord's appointment to the Superior Court of Massachusetts, May 19, 1859; the letter to Governor Gaston from Judge Thomas suggesting Judge Lord's appointment to the Massachusetts Supreme Court, and his subsequent appointment on December 21, 1875; the diploma from Amherst College, 1869, conferring upon him an LL.D. degree; documents relating to his portrait painted for the Essex Bar Association in 1880-1881; an opinion handed down in 1878, in his own handwriting;[4] *copies* of three letters to Mrs. West from Emily; a photograph of Mrs. West taken about 1900, and a roll of sketches made by Judge Lord when he was Speaker of the Massachusetts House in 1854, caricatures largely having to do with events discussed during that session of the General Court.

These things had been in the only box Mrs. Stockton had as yet opened. But she had seen enough, she said, to begin to doubt whether any of Emily's letters to Judge Lord could

have remained. The letters must have been there unless he himself had destroyed them. Of that she was sure. But if by chance any had been found after his death she feared Abbie would have torn them to bits, for if no evidence were discovered there would be no basis for speculation regarding the nature of the relationship between the Judge and Emily. No one would ever suspect anything more between them than a pleasant friendship. That it could have been anything more Abbie would have been prepared to deny to the death.

Mrs. Stockton never recovered from the shock of her son's death. After her return from Switzerland she quoted to me Emily's lines:

> They say that time assuages,
> Time never did assuage.
> An actual suffering strengthens,
> As sinews do, with age.

After that I saw her seldom. She never stayed long in New York—not long enough to go through the other boxes—but returned to Dornach for further study. They were still unopened when she departed for Europe the last time.

Meanwhile I had set out on another trail in the hope of discovering the final repository of Mrs. West's library—a separate bequest. Except for the Dickinson volumes which had already been transferred to Mrs. Stockton, her library as a whole was bequeathed to a cousin, Henry Wardwell of Chicago, whose address Mr. Bucknam gave me. Since a letter from Emily had been found in Mrs. Stockton's volume of her poems might there not perhaps be others in other books? Early in 1936 I wrote to Mr. Wardwell inquiring about the volumes on the original list given to Mr. Bucknam after my visit to Mrs. West's house in September, 1932: *Houses of our Forefathers:* a book of *Views of Amherst College* taken by J. L. Lovell in 1880; and in particular, the scrapbook of clippings which had been on Mrs. West's table.

On February 23, 1936, Mr. Wardwell replied to the effect that most of the books had been sent to his summer home in the White Mountains where he expected to look them over during the coming summer. He added that he would be glad to let me have "the three of them." From North Chatham, New Hampshire, on October 17, 1936, he wrote that the books had been examined and that he had been unable to find either the *Views of Amherst College* or the scrapbook. The *Houses of our Forefathers* he had found of sufficient interest to keep. He was sorry that he could do nothing for me. So, further expenditure of effort in that direction would be useless. Whether any letters of interest to students of the life of Emily Dickinson had been laid in other volumes of Mrs. West's library remains unknown.

In December, 1938, during Mrs. Stockton's absence in Europe her husband, a delightful urbane New Yorker with a breath of fresh air about him, went to Vermont for a holiday. He died as the result of a skiing accident. Mrs. Stockton lived to return to this country. But she could summon no more strength and on June 1, 1941, she died.

Left was her daughter Anne, who inherited the Salem boxes intact. Because of the weight of mounting tragedy around her I hesitated even to speak to her about papers, any papers, no matter how important. And besides, in the meantime she had married, was the mother of two little boys, and I did not know her name.

3

The years went by and we had moved to Washington. After the publication of *Bolts of Melody* and *Ancestors' Brocades* in April, 1945, I ventured to write to Anne, whose name and address I had learned from a mutual friend. On my next trip to New York I called on her and told her of my interest in the boxes and their contents. She said they were in the cellar and that she would go through them at

the earliest possible moment and would let me know what she found, if anything, which might be of interest to me. "Well, at least they are safe," I thought, as I took the train back to Washington.

During the next few months I communicated with Anne once or twice more. Each time the boys were either about to come home from school, or about to return, and there was much to be done for them. I offered to examine the boxes with her. But to no avail.

On November 10, 1945, I again called Anne's number. There was no response. The telephone had been disconnected. Our mutual friend told me that Anne was very ill. How could it have been otherwise, I thought, with a sharp pain through my heart. My friend added that it was rumored that Anne's house had been cleared out and that nothing was left. Surely, I thought, the Salem boxes had not been destroyed!

The details of my repeated efforts to learn the fate of the boxes and to find out what they contained add little to the story. It is enough to say that in the fall of 1950 I wrote to Anne, who was well again, reminding her of my interest in the boxes and asking whether as yet she had found time to examine their contents and, if so, whether anything relating to Emily Dickinson had turned up. She replied suggesting that we have a talk on my next trip to New York.

The long anticipated talk took place in January, 1951. Anne showed no trace of her serious illness of five years before and was deeply engrossed in work for crippled children at a New York hospital. Her own boys were in boarding school and college. Here is the entry in my diary for January 24, 1951, about the heir of the Lord-Farley-West papers. Anne is "a lovely young woman who remembers the bitterness of Mrs. West toward Emily and her vindictiveness as she said, 'If I find any poems I will tear them to bits!' Mrs. West had referred to Emily as a 'witch.' Well, Anne has never

yet opened the trunks and boxes from Salem! They are in her barn in Connecticut, and she hopes to get at cleaning out the barn during her sons' Easter vacation. She is, I think, thoroughly interested."

Two months later, on March 24, 1951, I wrote Anne a letter from which I quote:

> . . . The Easter vacation is upon us, so I am venturing to pester you again about those papers from Salem. . . . Should you find any papers relating to the Farleys, or the Lords, no matter how trivial they seem, they would be of interest. And I suppose your grandfather's papers should be examined also, as he was the executor of Judge Lord's estate. Incidentally, besides the three Emily Dickinson letters, which have considerable money value, your mother also had from Mrs. West the [first editions of] two first volumes of Emily's poems, First Series (1890), and Second Series (1891), now very hard to find. . . . Hoping to hear that your sons think kindly of your suggestion to find out what is in the barn, and with eager interest in the result of the search, I am, etc.

The time was drawing near when, if any documents relating to Judge Lord or the Dickinsons were still in existence, they ought to be found. So, after the Easter vacation I inquired once more whether the search had been made. No reply. Several weeks later, on May 5, 1951, I received a letter posted in Egypt. Anne wrote that during the spring vacation she and the boys had taken time to work on the barn, which was "quite a job." She said that the various boxes and cases had now been collected and brought into the library. She had not yet begun to read the papers or to look for the Emily Dickinson letters, but they were there ready to go over when she came home in June. She hoped she could be helpful when she got back.

In August, before Anne's delayed return, I went to Connecticut and met one of her sons, who showed me the boxes from which the covers had been removed. I saw at a glance that they were full of old letters from Kimballs, Farleys and

others. Even a hurried examination would take several days. And besides, I preferred not to disturb them during Anne's absence, so further search was postponed until after her return from Europe. That was three years ago. Since then I have asked more than once about the boxes, but the last time I inquired a thorough examination of their contents had not yet been made. With reluctance I now abandon the trail, leaving to others the discovery of any evidence they may contain.

In conclusion: So far as I know, Mrs. West's papers still offer the only hope, faint though it is, of yielding any of the letters from Emily actually received by the venerable Judge, or drafts of his letters to her, which had escaped his notice and that of his niece and residuary legatee. Although my long-drawn-out efforts to locate further remnants of their correspondence have not thus far resulted in the discovery of any documents of importance other than the three letters to Abbie Farley of which Mrs. Stockton gave me copies in 1936, further evidence is not required. I hope of course that a precious letter or two may yet be found although they would not in any essential regard change the picture. The nature of Emily Dickinson's feeling for Judge Lord is revealed unequivocally in her own words as well as the intimation of a similar feeling on his part. While it would be helpful to know more about the relationship, particularly about his feeling toward her, no corroboration in the Salem boxes or from any other source is needed to support the evidence in her own handwriting of the turmoil in her "enamoured heart." As a source of many powerful love poems, that is what matters.

4

At intervals throughout these same years I had been trying to find a picture of Judge Lord different from that used in encyclopedias and other accounts of his life—the standard

photograph of which Mrs. Stockton had given me a copy. Mrs. Raymond had been able to give me no help. As early as August 28, 1932, she had written: "I do not know of anyone who might have a picture of Judge Lord, unless it is Miss Elizabeth Lord, who you have found reluctant to grant you an interview." Later I learned indirectly that a portrait in the Salem Court House displayed him in all his judicial dignity. That might be what I was looking for. I wrote to inquire and was startled to receive a reply, not from the official in charge, but from the redoubtable Miss Elizabeth Lord herself, she of "the other family."

31 Washington Square
Salem, Massachusetts

Mrs. W. E. Bingham,
New York City.

My dear Mrs. Bingham,

Mr. Wheeler of the Essex Law Library called me this morning to tell me of the request you had made for a photograph of Judge Otis P. Lord. As I am the last survivor of his branch of the family, and as I do not know you, I am naturally interested to know why you should want a likeness of my uncle. Would you mind telling me whether you may have some distant connection with his family, or are only interested in collecting photographs of leading lawyers in the country? I know of no photograph which could be sent you, but if after I hear from you I feel that the situation warrants it, I might be able to inform you what the expense would be of having one taken from the portrait in the Library, as you suggest.

Very truly yours,
(Miss) Elizabeth F. Lord

February seventh,
1936.

I wrote at once that I did not wish to trouble Miss Lord further. I need hardly say that had I told her the reason for my interest in her uncle it would not only have disturbed her,

it might have touched the quick. For it is not impossible that the attachment between the Judge during the last years of his life and the daughter of his friend Edward Dickinson may have deepened a rift between Otis Lord and his niece Elizabeth. Unlike Abbie, whose sense of outrage was fortified by constant reminders, Elizabeth Lord observed nothing at close range, but the mere rumor of such a friendship would have offended her. Not that it would have been the only cause of estrangement from her uncle, however, because with his wife's ubiquitous relatives she had nothing whatever in common.

A paragraph in the Judge's will, signed July 2, 1883, reads as follows: "To my brother, George R. Lord, of Salem, I give the sum of one thousand dollars ($1000.) as a token of my affection for him. And I make no provision for his children solely for the reason that they are already well provided for, and because there are many other of the relations and connections of myself and my late wife, who are in more needy circumstances." The last sentence would not have increased Elizabeth Lord's affection for her Uncle Otis, especially since to Mrs. Lord's family he left $33,000 and his personal effects, except his law library which went to Benjamin, son of his cousin Otis Kimball of Boston. Sixty years after her uncle Otis' death Elizabeth Lord had not forgotten.

After this second brush with Miss Lord I heard nothing more about her for twelve years. On June 12, 1948, as I passed through Salem, I learned that although nearing ninety she was still alive. By way of paying my respects I stopped in front of the large old house at 31 Washington Square, North. It was painted a dark color and the window shades were drawn. Three granite blocks led up to an uncompromising front door, too narrow I thought to be in the hospitable McIntire tradition. I did not ring the doorbell but stayed in Salem long enough to learn from one who had

known them a few facts about the inhabitants of that grim old house.

After the death of their father in 1891 Elizabeth Lord, her brother, George Robert, Junior, known as "Robert," and their mentally deranged sister, secluded in an upper room, continued to live with their mother in the house on Washington Square. Two other sisters had died young, one as a baby, the other at the age of twenty-three. The mother, Mary Marshall Lord, ruled supreme until, in 1919, she died at the age of ninety-two. So determined was she that her children should not marry beneath them that none of them married at all. Robert, a member of the Essex bar, was assistant Clerk of the Court in Salem until his death on January 5, 1929. He resented the way he was obliged to live I was told and felt that his life had been ruined. His friend summed up Robert Lord's life in these words, "He went to his grave with his reputation and nothing else."

Four months after my visit, on October 31, 1948, Elizabeth, last of the Lords, gave up the ghost. Her nine-page will is a document worthy of the attention of Nathaniel Hawthorne. Fifty-one separate items of personal effects, furniture, china and glass, jewelry and so on, are listed and their disposition minutely specified. Among the bequests to individuals and to institutions she left "To the Essex County Law Library in Salem, Massachusetts, ten thousand (10,000) dollars, in memory of my uncle, Nathaniel J. Lord," the uncle who had died in 1869, almost eighty years before. In memory of her uncle Judge Otis P. Lord, the most eminent member of her family, there was no bequest. The record of her attitude was thus secured beyond the grave.

One paragraph of Miss Lord's will rocked old Salem to its foundations for it seemed like a sin against the Holy Ghost. It was this: "I request my executor to destroy all family portraits found in my home immediately after my decease," a request carried out according to her wishes. In that

provision was summed up the desiccated life of Elizabeth Lord. When I inquired how many portraits there had been, I could discover only that there had been "a good many." I wrote to Miss Lord's executor to ask whether any old letters had been found among her possessions and, if so, what disposition had been made of them. He replied that as far as he knew there were in her estate no personal letters of any description.

During the last few years I have made several attempts to learn more about the Lords from those who had known them, about Elizabeth Lord in particular. On a recent visit to Salem I put some direct questions to one gentleman. He seemed reluctant to talk about her. But finally he said: "Well, she was straight, thin and uncompromising. . . . She was firm in her convictions. . . . Her likes and dislikes were decided. . . . She did not want to be catered to. . . . Her sister? Though she lived with them for many years out of sight, she died in an asylum."

Testimony from the living ends here. To paraphrase Emily's words:

> The moss has reached their lips
> And covered up their names.

Beneath the Salem sod lie the members of both their houses, Lords and Farleys in one lot, Lords and Lords only, in another. At last they are united in the cemetery with the reassuring name—Harmony Grove.

Thus ends my quest to discover at first hand, from living persons, what they knew about the relationship between Judge Lord and Emily Dickinson during the last years of their lives. In hunting for documentary evidence to support the acknowledgment of its intensity by Emily herself I had hoped that some stray letters might have been over-

looked by those bent on wiping out all trace of it. Although I have not found such crucial documents, my encounters in Salem and elsewhere have uncovered a good deal of information about the Judge's home after the death of his wife, the years during which he was more or less preëmpted by her relatives the Farleys. I met neither Abbie Farley West nor Elizabeth Lord, but I became well acquainted with them nonetheless. I learned something about their ways, their outlook on life, and how the community regarded them. The two ladies had never been congenial. They lived in separate worlds. But this they had in common: they were equally fixed in their ideas, however different, and equally uncompromising.

As to the Judge himself, the events of his career give a clear impression of his qualities. So, from personal memories we turn to the printed record in order to find out what manner of man he was.

FOOTNOTES

1. *Letters,* 1931, footnote, p. 431.
2. Here, Mrs. Raymond's memory appears to have been faulty as Mrs. Farley outlived the Judge. The City Clerk of Salem informs me that "the only record of a Mary C. Farley we have in our index [of deaths] from 1880 through 1900" occurred on "November 21, 1897, a *Mrs.* Mary C. Farley."

   Mrs. Lord's relatives are hard to keep straight because of overlapping names. The facts are as follows:

   On October 9, 1843, Otis Lord of Ipswich, Massachusetts, married Elizabeth Wise Farley (1814-1877), daughter of Joseph Farley of the same town.

   Mrs. Lord had a younger sister, Mary Cogswell Farley (1818-1897), who married Alfred Manning Farley on November 29, 1843. After Mrs. Lord's death on December 10, 1877, Mrs. Farley and her daughter, Abbie Cogswell Farley (1846-1932), later Mrs. William Cleveland West, came from Ipswich to keep house for Judge Lord.

   A brother of Mrs. Lord and Mrs. Farley, Joseph Farley, Jr., had a daughter also named Mary Cogswell Farley, referred to in Judge Lord's will as Mary C. Farley "the younger." She too lived with Judge Lord during the last years of his life and was one of the Farley trio who

hovered about him after the death of his wife. During these final years they accompanied the Judge on his trips to Amherst, sometimes only the "girls," sometimes all three ladies. Austin Dickinson's diary refers to the trio as "the Lords."

3. *Letters,* 1931, p. xxiv. These words are written on the back of a fragment of an envelope addressed to "tis P. Lord
   Salem
   Mass."
4. *Massachusetts Reports,* Vol. 124, Cases argued and determined in the Supreme Judicial Court, Jan.-June, 1878. Henry W. Paine *vs.* City of Boston, March 15, 16, 1877. June 22, 1878, pp. 486-491.

   This opinion concerns the rights of one Charles Burrill who, in 1864, had "rendered services and incurred some expenses in obtaining credits to be made on the military quota of the city of Boston, for which services and expenses he made a demand upon the city for a large sum of money, the payment of which was refused." Although the Legislature later passed "an act to authorize the city of Boston to pay to Charles Burrill the sum of $40,000," when reviewed by the Supreme Court *in banc,* this joint opinion, in the handwriting of Judge Lord, was to the effect "that no recovery by plaintiff [Paine as assignee of Burrill] was justified."

CHAPTER III

The Findings

1

JUDGE LORD was a striking figure. A portrait of him arrayed as an Associate Justice of the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts which hangs in the old Court House at Salem is reproduced as the frontispiece of this book. Here, personified, is the majesty of the law. What is not seen is the tempestuous personality beneath the judicial robes.

In Massachusetts a hundred years ago the practice of the law was, with the ministry, the most honored of the professions. To it Mr. Lord brought varied talents. His "vehement and fervid eloquence" as a trial lawyer was so effective, his manner so impressive, that Chief Justice Marcus Morton could say of him that "few men in this Commonwealth have ever acquired a greater reputation as an accomplished and successful advocate." To the cool councils of the courts, on the other hand, "strength and dignity" were added by his learning, his keen insight into character, his promptness of decision and his contempt for technicalities that obstruct the free operation of justice.

Judge Lord's character and achievements are summarized in the records of two memorial meetings held shortly after his death on March 13, 1884: the first, of the bar of the Commonwealth in Boston on March 22; the second, in Salem, of the Essex County Bar Association on April 24.[1] The pub-

lished proceedings include the resolutions adopted together with appraisals of his career by associates great and small, from the Chief Justice down to obscure local lawyers. He is presented as he moved from trial lawyer and pleader up through the courts into the rarefied atmosphere of the highest deliberative body of the state. Although the tributes emphasize different characteristics they agree as to the impressiveness of his personality.

Speaking before the bar of the Commonwealth William G. Russell said: "Fitly to characterize JUDGE LORD, to state his claim to distinction as a judge and his claim to our regard as a man, requires his own power of terse, vigorous expression. . . . We all knew him, for no man ever showed more plainly and transparently than he, what manner of man he was. No one who met him could fail to feel his force, his strength, his grip. No one who heard his spoken word, or read his written word, could fail to find the utmost clearness of thought and distinctness of its utterance. No one who saw him in action, could fail to see the energy which gave him his strength, the life which animated, shone through and made vivid his thought and his word."

"In private life," to quote the Essex memorial, "Judge Lord was one of the most interesting and agreeable of men, dignified but cordial in his manners, piquant and racy in conversation, both just and generous, a staunch friend, a kind neighbor, an upright and liberal citizen, and in his home, genial, hospitable, gracious, and until domestic bereavement and infirmities of age cast their shadows, overflowing with high spirits and abounding in good cheer."[2]

Although many of Judge Lord's qualities are listed in this eulogy, what is lacking is the living man. For though it was seldom allowed to show through, the struggle between judicial aloofness and a volcanic temperament never ceased. As Emily put it, "Calvary and May wrestled in his nature."[3] Learning and deliberative sagacity met head on with a rest-

lessness and impatience which could blaze white hot when confronted with dishonesty, trickery, or pretense.

The main incidents of Judge Lord's career are summarized in the following pages. Through the facts the reader must discern the man, because it is as a man that we wish to know him, a man who, in his sixties, became the object of Emily Dickinson's most mature and ardent devotion.

Otis Phillips Lord was born in Ipswich, Essex County, Massachusetts, on July 11, 1812. His ancestor Robert Lord emigrated from Ipswich, England, in 1631 and settled about twenty-five miles north of Boston in a town named for that from which he had come. Otis was the fourth child and second son of the Honorable Nathaniel Lord and Eunice, his wife, daughter of Jeremiah Kimball of Ipswich. This Nathaniel Lord, who graduated from Harvard College in 1798, was from 1815 to 1851 Register of Probate for Essex County. Otis's older brother, Nathaniel James Lord, born in 1805, graduated from Harvard in 1825 and was admitted to the bar in September, 1828. In that year Otis, having fitted for college at near-by Dummer Academy, entered Amherst College and was graduated in 1832. For a few months he read law in the office of Oliver B. Morris of Springfield, Judge of Probate of Hampden County and father of his Amherst classmate, Henry Morris. Otis Lord was admitted to the bar of Essex County in December, 1835, seven months prior to his graduation from the Dane (Harvard) Law School in 1836. For nine years he practiced in Ipswich until "Ipswich proved to be too small alike for his growing business, and for his laudable ambition!"[4] On October 9, 1843, he had married Elizabeth Wise Farley of that town, a descendant of President Leverett of Harvard College. In November, 1844, they moved to Salem where they lived for the rest of their lives. They had no children. In Salem Mr. Lord engaged in the practice of law for more than thirty years until, in 1875, he was elevated to the Supreme Bench of the Commonwealth.

The bar of Essex County has a proud history with a galaxy of legal practitioners of whom Rufus Choate was only the most brilliant. Otis Lord exemplified the tradition as did his older brother Nathaniel, who began his career (1828-1835) as a partner of the Honorable Leverett Saltonstall and continued to practice in Salem until his death on June 18, 1869. A memorial presented at a meeting of the Essex Bar Association on June 28, 1870, described Nathaniel Lord in these words: "as a lawyer he was a model . . . scholarly in speech and style, meticulous and accurate and traditional." His "shrewd common sense and mother wit" were typical of the New England mind. "Elegant in appearance and manner, he was unlike his younger brother Otis," who it seems lacked Nathaniel's polish. That they were "often the leading counsel on opposite sides of the same cause . . . in no way impaired their fraternal affection. Both held to the highest traditions of their profession, and both were of an 'incorruptible integrity.' " After the death of Rufus Choate in 1859 the Lord brothers became the acknowledged leaders of the bar of Essex County, the county in which they were born and where they died.

Otis Lord was early marked for a career of public service because of many conspicuous traits, among them a remarkable memory combined with "physical force, intellectual energy and decision of character." At the age of thirty-four he was elected on the Whig ticket to the Massachusetts General Court and served in the House of Representatives in 1847, 1848, 1852, 1853 and 1854. In 1849 he served one term in the state Senate.

In 1853 a Constitutional Convention was held in Boston primarily to consider changes in the basis of representation in the Commonwealth. The debates about the twenty-four proposed amendments aroused violent emotions, No. 15 in particular: "Harvard College is placed more under the control of the Legislature, who may fill vacancies on the Board

of Corporators."[5] As a delegate to the convention Mr. Lord fought against the proposed constitution, opposing many of its provisions with such vigor that he appears to have offended the sensibilities of more than one gentleman. Referring to the convention Charles Francis Adams wrote: "Lord has shown marked ability, and is a formidable debater; but he is little if at all above [Benjamin F.] Butler in manners and taste, and has a great lack of judgment. Perhaps his position in a hopeless minority encouraged his naturally reckless and desperate temper. . . ."[6] Just how "hopeless" a "minority" it was is not clear, for the new constitution which Mr. Lord opposed was rejected by the voters on November 14, 1853, by a majority of about five thousand.

In presenting his views to the convention Mr. Lord had "fought so effectively that his prestige was thereby greatly enhanced. The House owed him a debt of gratitude for 'a most thorough and masterly exposition of the blunders, incongruities and iniquities of the rejected constitution,' "[7] and proceeded to elect him Speaker for the following year.

While presiding over the deliberations of the House (January 4–April 29, 1854) Mr. Lord amused himself by drawing caricatures of this and that. These cartoons would enliven an account of the proceedings of that legislative session. One of them, the east entrance to the Hoosac tunnel, is reproduced in *Emily Dickinson's Home*. Mr. Lord was Speaker of the House during the last Whig legislature, the party being voted out of office in the November election.

The collapse of the Whig Party marked the end of the congressional career of Edward Dickinson; it also ended the political career of Otis P. Lord who, like Mr. Dickinson, was thenceforth a man without a party. They both opposed the Free Soil movement, scorned the Know Nothings and challenged the formation of the Republican Party. So conspicuous were Mr. Lord's forensic talents, however, that his

supporters tried four times to find another place for him in the field of politics.

In 1858, without effort on his part, he was nominated for Congress on an independent ticket by a group of rebellious Republicans. The reason for this action appears in a broadside entitled, "To the Voters of the Sixth Congressional District." It was signed on October 29, 1858, by certain members of the Republican Party who, "dissatisfied with those presented to them as candidates" in the approaching election, "have called upon the people of the District to rebuke the shameless scramble for office which has marked the present campaign in Essex South."[8] The signers of the protest nominated the Honorable Otis P. Lord as an independent candidate, explaining that "this nomination was made with no ulterior party purpose in view, but simply to enable the free and intelligent voters of this District to vote for a FIT candidate nominated in a FITTING manner. . . . Mr. Lord is well known to the District for his ability, his integrity, his generous impulses, his experience and uniform political conduct which demonstrate him to be a reliable man in all emergencies." After enumerating Mr. Lord's views on several important matters the signers concluded with a dig at the questionable tactics of members of the American (Know Nothing) Party in contrast to those of their own candidate. They were of the opinion that "men should act in all political matters in open broad daylight," and affixed their signatures as "Independent Republicans of the Sixth District." Mr. Lord accepted the nomination although he well knew that there was no chance of being elected.

Again, in 1860, the District nominated him on the Constitutional Unionist ticket. Again he was defeated.

Once more, in 1868, Mr. Lord was nominated for Congress, "but declined on grounds of political principle." His name was retained on the Democratic ticket however, which, to an inveterate supporter of a protective tariff must have

seemed the final indignity. In the election "he polled nearly 6000 votes in a contest with General Butler and the late Richard H. Dana."[9]

Finally, in 1874, Judge Lord was put forward as a candidate upon whom both Republicans and Democrats might unite as "an unselfish public servant, a statesman, and a man of incorruptible integrity." But he failed to receive the nomination.

Throughout 1854 the Whig Party had been slowly disintegrating. After its downfall Mr. Lord was, as I have said, never again a party man, a fact which militated against him in 1874 as it had twenty years earlier after the resignation of Edward Everett (May, 1854), when his name had been proposed for the United States Senate. In the words of B. V. Abbott, legal historian, "political considerations hindered his advancement for years." He might have said "to the last," for after 1854 Judge Lord was singularly detached from politics. Such nominations as he did receive were in spite of himself. To the Whig Party he remained so doggedly loyal that a political career, for which he was preëminently fitted, was out of the question.

2

In the field of the law the career of Otis Phillips Lord is a different story. So marked had been his early success as a pleader that in 1856 at the age of forty-four he was elected first president of the Essex Bar Association. In 1859 the old Court of Common Pleas was abolished and in its place the Superior Court of Massachusetts was created "for the trial of all civil cases above $200, and for criminal jurisdiction in all except capital cases." To that court Mr. Lord was appointed by Governor Nathaniel P. Banks on May 19, 1859. After some hesitation he accepted the appointment and served for sixteen years, carrying on his legal practice meanwhile.

In 1875 the Honorable Benjamin F. Thomas, an Associate Justice of the Massachusetts Supreme Court (1853-1859), wrote to Governor William Gaston suggesting Judge Lord's elevation to membership in that august body. He was then sixty-three years old.

Letter addressed to His Exc. Gov. Gaston

Boston Nov. 25th 1875

My dear Governor

The death of Mr. Justice Wells has made a great void in our highest judicial tribunal. It is fortunate for the Commonwealth that the Executive chair is filled by a lawyer who understands the importance of the trust and has the personal knowledge requisite to make a fit selection to fill the vacant seat. I know you will finally act from your own judgment and sense of duty but I feel that if I were in your place I should be glad of the suggestions of the members of the bar especially if I could feel, as I am sure you will in relation to myself, that I have no personal interests or wishes to warp my judgment.

Without stopping to consider whether political considerations are to have weight in the selection, as they may well have considering that the State is nearly equally divided and that the minority has but a single representative on the Bench, without reference to this consideration, I unhesitatingly say that no better selection could be made than that of Judge Lord. I am not influenced by the fact that his great claims have been so long overlooked. To the public interest the individual is nothing. I am influenced only by my estimate of his great judicial qualities, his instinctively sound legal judgment, his quick perception and application of legal principles, his large experience and his well digested learning, and even more than these, his thorough honesty and high sense of justice.

I have had, your Excellency, an experience at the bar and on the bench now of somewhat more than forty years, yet I have not seen the lawyer or the judge to whose legal judgment and sense of right I would more willingly commit my own interests or those of my clients than to those of Judge Lord. Nor has there been a vacancy on the bench of the Supreme Court for the last 20 years

when, if I had the power of appointment I should not have felt I was doing valuable service to the Commonwealth in asking him to fill it.

With respect and regard
Very truly yours
Benj. F. Thomas[10]

Less than a month later, on December 21, 1875, the Governor appointed Judge Lord an Associate Justice of the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts on which he continued to serve until, for reasons of health, he resigned on December 8, 1882.

Judge Lord died in his seventy-second year, on March 13, 1884. The following day an editorial in the *Boston Transcript* pointed out that in his death the Commonwealth had lost a commanding personality—"a marked man in appearance, of a decidedly controversial taste, with sledge-hammer powers of expression, which he wielded relentlessly when moved thereto." These traits were enlarged upon in the two memorials previously mentioned. An eyewitness described Mr. Lord in action: "I remember to have heard him cross examine a defendant, who had offered himself as a witness in a criminal case, where he assisted the Government in the prosecution. That cross examination was terrific; his sudden and powerful mental grip so checked the witness' circulation that he fainted."

The Attorney General of the Commonwealth referred to some of Mr. Lord's shortcomings: "His learning was not extensive, and his temperament was always too impatient for much research, but he could recognize a distinction or detect a fallacy at a glance."[11] In a word, Judge Lord had little patience with "the nice, sharp quillets of the law" upon which some of his associates were prone to lavish so much time and talent.

In his analysis of Mr. Lord's characteristics Chief Justice Marcus Morton contrasted his conduct as advocate and as

judge: "His remarkable power of analyzing and grouping the evidence in a case, his clear insight as to the motives and arguments which were most likely to rule the minds of jurors, the strength of his convictions, and his unsurpassed power of expressing them in language, made him at once a successful advocate, and soon established for him a position as one of the leading members of the bar. . . . He brought to the duties of the judicial office the same incisive and aggressive qualities which had made his success at the bar. . . . His numerous published opinions are the enduring monuments of his success."

As an advocate the full force of Otis Lord's vehement personality could be brought into play. As a judge his "impulsive force and vigor not always under rigid restraint," had to be held in reserve and used sparingly. The Essex memorial points out, however, that although "the qualifications for success as an advocate are to a certain extent incompatible with the exercise of that strict impartiality which should characterize the Bench,"[12] Judge Lord had for that post other valuable qualities which enabled him to dispatch an extraordinary amount of business. Chief among these was his "robust common sense," a trait much prized in New England. Emily Dickinson was of the opinion that "common sense is almost as omniscient as God." The importance Judge Lord attached to it is shown by his own words:

"Strong, sterling common sense . . . is the result of severe training and discipline. It is more properly *wisdom applied to conduct.* The secret springs of action in one mind are not intuitively known to another. To discover them and to turn them to useful account demands more profound thought and more incessant study than to master the details of history or science. The mysteries of mind are more subtle than those of physics and much more readily elude pursuit and investigation; and he that becomes master of the human mind and human passions has achieved a greater triumph

than he who has discovered a planet. 'He understands human nature,' can properly be said only of him who has been a long, severe and profound student; although when such power is attained, like the most marvellous discoveries in science or art, it seems so simple that we are inclined to deem it intuition. . . . Although we may call the result by the humble and unpretentious name of common sense; it is indeed one of the highest achievements of study."[13]

Edward Dickinson had followed Otis Lord's career with intense interest ever since his graduation from Amherst College in 1832. Mr. Dickinson had served several terms in the Massachusetts General Court where Mr. Lord's political career also began. When Mr. Dickinson, aged fifty-one, was a member of the Thirty-third Congress, Mr. Lord, aged forty-two, was Speaker of the Massachusetts House. Politically they saw eye to eye for, as we know, both were inveterate Whigs.[14] Although as I have indicated the collapse of the Whig Party in 1854 put an end to the political careers of both men, in a way it brought them closer together as both concentrated their attention on their legal practice. Their minds ran in much the same groove. Mr. Dickinson took great pride in his friend's advancement, particularly in his appointment as one of the original members of the Superior Court when it was organized in 1859. Mr. Dickinson was gratified too when in 1869 Amherst College conferred upon Judge Lord the degree of LL.D., *honoris causa,* six years after he himself had been similarly honored.

Throughout the years Judge Lord's prestige had been steadily mounting. To quote the Supreme Court memorial: "There was something grand, almost heroic, in the quality and proportions of his character. His fidelity to his convictions, his indifference to consequences, and his scorn of all time serving and all time servers, were as wholesome and bracing as the ocean breezes on the shores of his own Essex." As the Chief Justice said: "In every aspect of his character

he was a strong man. He was strong in his intellect, strong in his emotions, strong in his friendships, strong in his dislikes and prejudices, strong in thought, and strong in language, and above all, strong in his integrity." In a word, he "was cast in a large and heroic mould."[15]

To some, the conspicuous traits of this aggressive personality seemed unsuitable in a Justice of the Supreme Court, his special talents as a pleader being the very ones for the exercise of which the bench gives little scope. That his judicial conduct was not universally admired is illustrated by the following incident.

In December 1874 Judge Lord received a letter to which he replied as follows:

The Honorable William D. Northend
Lynde Street [Salem]

My dear Mr. Northend,

I have received your communication, covering the request of Mr. Justice Endicott and very many members of the Bar of Essex, that they may be permitted to make arrangements to obtain a portrait of myself to be placed in the Court Room in Salem. Such a request from this source sensibly affects me. It is an honor far transcending any aspirations I have ever had. I recognize upon the request the name of every member of the Bar now living, who was in the practice of the law at the time of my entering the profession; of every one of my associates during a long practise; and of very many who have begun the duties of the profession since my appointment to the Bench. I cannot regard it as a mere formality. Although it may imply a far higher estimate of the ability with which I have discharged the duties of my office, than less indulgent observers may entertain, I cannot regard it otherwise than as a recognition of my attempt at impartial & conscientious performance of duty. If I have ever had occasion to doubt whether to the profession I had not seemed to fail in this, such doubt is more than dispelled by this testimonial of those to whom my conduct & motives have been most apparent. I cannot refuse your request; nor—mindful that my judicial career is not

fully ended and that the boast is for him that putteth off & not to him that girdeth on the harness—can I fail to remember that your course in reference to the future will be just & independent, and will not be compromised by this request.

I beg you to give to each one of those whom you represent the assurance of my personal esteem & friendship; my appreciation of the kindness which dictates their request; and my purpose & hope that it will aid me in still stronger efforts to deserve their continued esteem by devotion to duty.

I am, my dear Sir,
Very respectfully &c
Otis P. Lord[16]

Salem, Dec. 9, 1874

On receipt of Judge Lord's assent to this proposal a letter circulated in the county for additional signatures brought forth unexpected opposition. His uncompromising, sometimes violent, definiteness of utterance which had scratched the sensibilities of Charles Francis Adams had offended others. A printed protest against the proposed portrait was signed by eighteen members of the Essex bar. At the head of the list appears the name of Edgar Jay Sherman, then District Attorney, later Attorney General of Massachusetts, the very man who, ten years later, on March 22, 1884, presented to the Bar of the Commonwealth the laudatory resolutions adopted by the Supreme Court on the death of Judge Lord. The leaflet reads as follows:

The County Commissioners of Essex have received the following letter from District Attorney Sherman, Representatives Knox and Blunt, Burley of Lawrence, Poor of Andover, Merrill of Haverhill, Morse of Newburyport, Smith of Gloucester, Norris of Lynn, and others, members of the Essex Bar, which letter explains itself.

To the County Commissioners of the County of Essex:—

By the Statutes of this Commonwealth the property of the County is committed to your care, and it is your duty to see to it, that the public buildings are appropriated only to legitimate

public uses. No other or different use of the public property should be allowed, except by common and unanimous consent. Upon the question of what is a legitimate use of public property minorities, even, have rights which should be respected and protected.

A letter has been in circulation for signatures among the members of the Bar of this County, addressed to, and requesting Judge Otis P. Lord, of the Superior Court, to sit for his portrait, that it may be hung upon the walls of the County Court House at Salem.

As the object of this letter may result in official action, on the part of your Board, we respectfully remonstrate against the carrying out of the purpose of the request, and assign some of the reasons that constrain us in so doing.

In the first place, it is not customary to erect monuments to the living. When the final scene has closed a worthy life, an appreciative people may well set up monuments; only the most prominent and exceptional services to the public can change such a well established propriety.

While all the members of the bar and the public generally, concede to Judge Lord great qualifications as a lawyer and advocate, yet we believe it is as generally acknowledged that these qualifications are not such as peculiarly fit him for the office of Judge. And if any member of the bar was called upon to select from the Bench the Judge in reference to whose conduct, officially, complaint was most general, he certainly would be compelled to name Judge Lord.

The letter referred to, which has been quite generally signed by the members of the bar in this County is not, in our opinion, evidence of any general feeling favoring such marked recognition of magisterial excellence; and we submit that a request to sign such a letter from the personal and interested friends of Judge Lord, to the members of the bar, who, to a greater or less extent, are engaged in trying cases before him, is not only a matter of questionable propriety, especially so when the peculiar characteristics of Judge Lord are so well known, and he so often holds Court in this County—but the letter itself, obtained under such circumstances, is of but little value as tending to show any professional, much less any public sentiment, in favor of a project

which should only be carried out upon the most manifest and voluntary expression of such sentiment.

Again we submit, it would be neither wise nor considerate, to select one Judge from his brethren upon the bench, and, previous to his retirement from active duty, so distinguish him from the other Judges of the Supreme and Superior Courts, who each have occasion to hold Court in the same room where it is proposed to hang the portrait of Judge Lord. Comparisons are odious, and this would be the most odious and unjust of all comparisons.

While the above are by no means all the reasons that could be assigned, yet they are, in our opinion, sufficient to justify you, as servants of the public, in refusing the use of the Court House for the purpose indicated.

January 1st, 1875.

Signed by Edgar J. Sherman and eighteen others[17]

This document put a stop to further effort for the time being. But the Judge was so striking a figure that the idea of a portrait lingered in the minds of his associates. Six years later under different circumstances the subject was brought up again.

In December, 1875, Judge Lord had been elevated to the Supreme Bench, an appointment acclaimed throughout the Commonwealth. In December, 1880, he received a letter from a committee of the Essex Bar Association to the effect that at its annual meeting on the seventh of that month the wish had been expressed by formal vote that he would permit his portrait to be painted. It would become the property of the Association and would hang in the Court Room in Salem. The letter signed by the president and three members of the committee asks whether he would "accede to the request of the Association" and if so, when it would be agreeable to him to meet the artist, Frederic P. Vinton of Boston, then the outstanding portrait painter of New England, to make the necessary arrangements.

The committee's report, dated April 19, 1881, indicates

that as soon as subscription lists were opened to members of the bar it became evident that a sum would be forthcoming sufficient to procure a portrait which would be satisfactory to the Association as well as to Judge Lord himself. Mr. Vinton was engaged; the portrait was completed; the County Commissioner provided an "elegant and fitting" frame, and the committee found it "in the highest degree satisfactory both as a work of art and as a strong, spirited and interesting likeness." The report concludes as follows:

"In presenting it today to the Bar Assn as its property to be forever hung upon the walls of the Court Room, the Committee wd offer their hearty congratulations to the Association upon the possession of this likeness of one of its former members, once its President, who in his practice at the Bar, and through his long services upon the Bench of the Superior and Supreme Courts, has achieved the highest reputation as a lawyer and a Judge."

The Court Room which opens off the Essex Law Library in the Salem Court House is bare except for rostrum, table, seats and two portraits, an undistinguished one of Rufus Choate and the Vinton portrait of Otis Lord, which dominates the scene. There sits the Supreme Court Justice. We now know the man beneath the judicial robes well enough perhaps to follow with sympathy the rest of the story and to understand how Emily Dickinson could write:

> My lovely Salem smiles at me I seek his face so often—but I have done with guises. I confess that I love him—I rejoice that I love him—I thank the Maker of Heaven and Earth that gave him me to love—the Exaltation floods me—I cannot find my channel. The Creek turns Sea—at thought of thee—Will you punish me? "Involuntary Bankruptcy" (as the Debtors say), how could that be Crime?

FOOTNOTES

1. *Proceedings of the Bar of the Commonwealth and of the Supreme Judicial Court at Boston, on the Death of Otis Phillips Lord, LL.D., March, 1884; Proceedings of the Essex Bar Association, and of the Supreme Judicial Court, at Salem, on the Death of Otis Phillips Lord, LL.D.*, April, 1884. Both memorials are contained in a pamphlet entitled *In Memory of Otis P. Lord,* herein referred to as *Proceedings,* from which most of the excerpts in this chapter are taken.
2. *Proceedings,* pp. 5, 35.
3. See below, p. 69.
4. *Biographical Encyclopaedia of Massachusetts of the Nineteenth Century.* New York: 1879, I, p. 63.
5. *Official Report, State Constitutional Convention,* 1853: I, pp. 573 *et seq.;* see also III, pp. 187, 460, 510. *Mass. Register,* 1854, pp. 49-50.

   House Bill No. 170 provides for a topographical survey of the towns of the Commonwealth. H. F. Walling, civil engineer, proposed to make such a survey and to reimburse himself from the proceeds of the sale; the proposal was voted. This map has been used as basis for the end papers in *Emily Dickinson's Home.*
6. Charles Francis Adams, *Richard Henry Dana, a Biography,* 2 vols. Boston: 1890, I, pp. 249-250.
7. *Boston Transcript,* March 13, 1884.
8. Copy in the Essex Institute, Salem. The Sixth became the Fifth Massachusetts District in the 38th Congress, 1864.
9. George S. Merriam, *The Life and Times of Samuel Bowles,* 2 vols. New York: 1885, II, p. 92. Reference is made to the contest between B. F. Butler and R. H. Dana, Jr., an independent Republican, opposed by Judge Loid, the "unaggressive Democratic candidate."
10. Original letter is in my possession. It is printed with the kind permission of Judge Thomas's granddaughter, Mrs. Latham McMullin.
11. *Proceedings,* pp. 43, 10.
12. *Ibid.,* pp. 13-15, 39, 37.
13. Otis P. Lord, *Hon. Asahel Huntington,* Memorial Address delivered before the Essex Institute, Tuesday evening, September 5, 1871. Salem, Mass.: 1872, pp. 16-17.
14. The transactions of the 1854 session of the Massachusetts House included several items which must have been of special interest to Emily Dickinson's father, among them Bill No. 39, to incorporate the Amherst Savings Bank; and No. 108, an act to limit "the employment of persons by manufacturing corporations," one provision of which read: "No person shall be employed in laboring . . . more than ten hours a day," a reform Mr. Dickinson was even then trying to bring about in the national armory at Springfield. House Bill No. 13 contained a proposal "to open a very

important communication between the northern part of Massachusetts, the state of New York and the great productive regions of the Western States, calculated to give immense activity to the commercial prosperity of Boston, while it will develop the resources of an extensive section of the Commonwealth, whenever the proposed road is completed. A loan of $2,000,000 is asked to tunnel the Hoosac mountain," and so on. On the subject of this tunnel, still unfinished twenty years later, Mr. Dickinson addressed the House of Representatives of the General Court on the day he died, June 16, 1874.

15. *Proceedings*, pp. 11-12, 26, 16.
16. The original letter is in my possession.
17. From a copy in the State Library of Massachusetts, Boston.

CHAPTER IV

The Approach

1

EMILY DICKINSON had known Mr. Lord all her life. He entered Amherst College before she was born and graduated when she was not yet two. Although much younger than Mr. Dickinson he became as she said, "my father's closest friend," in itself enough to explain her life-long deference.

As long as there was a Whig Party and both men were active in politics Mr. Lord made frequent though irregular stops in Amherst. After 1859, when he was appointed to the Superior Court which held two sessions a year in the nearby towns of Greenfield and Northampton, his visits to the home of his friend became more regular.

On June 16, 1874, after making a speech in the Legislature in which he was a representative, Edward Dickinson collapsed and a few hours later died in Boston, alone. His last letter to his family had been written on Friday, the fifth of June. He would leave for Amherst the next day, he said, and reach home in the evening.[1] Although it is clear that he spent Sunday the seventh at home there is some question as to whether he was there on the following Sunday also. He might very well have been as the House of Representatives was in recess from the eleventh to Monday, the fifteenth. Furthermore, a month later Emily wrote to Colonel Higginson that "the last afternoon that my father lived, though

with no premonition, I preferred to be with him. . . ."[2] "The last afternoon that my father lived" cannot be taken literally. Even if he had spent Sunday, the fourteenth, at home he would have returned to Boston early on the fifteenth, the day before he died.[3]

These details have a bearing on Emily's attitude toward Judge Lord which was profoundly influenced by her father's death. In that same last letter to his family Mr. Dickinson had written: "Judge Lord sent me a note that he is holding Court at Cambridge, and invited me to go home with him, some night. I declined for this week—on account of things which detained me here." Mr. Dickinson may have taken advantage of the recess to go to Salem. But whether he did or not, whether or not Judge Lord had seen her father alive after she had, he had been nearer to him when he died than she had which, for Emily, would have invested him with a kind of sanctity. These are mysterious things, hard to understand. But we must recognize the fact that whereas she had always honored Judge Lord as her father's best friend, after his death she seems to have felt toward him a veneration, a primitive kind of awe. A hint of her attitude appears in a letter to Colonel Higginson. "Since my father's dying," she wrote, "everything sacred enlarged so." Several years later after Dr. Wadsworth's death, though in a less degree, she had the same sense of drawing closer through mutual bereavement when she wrote to his friend James D. Clark: "The sharing a sorrow never lessens, but when a balm departs, the plants that nearest grew have a grieved significance and you cherished my friend."

Emily was forty-three years old at the time of her father's death. Although she said that "the mighty dying of my Father made no external change" the fact is that thereafter she saw no one but her closest friends. From contact with the outside world she withdrew altogether. Not that she confined herself to the house, but she no longer ventured beyond her father's grounds, which she explained afforded

"almost travel." (To the end of her life she spoke of the place as "my Father's." In his diary Austin also referred to the homestead as "E. D.'s.")

There was soon a further excuse for Emily's increasing "cowardice of strangers." In June, 1875, " a year from the evening Father died," her mother was paralyzed. "I have now no Father and scarcely a Mother," she wrote Mrs. Higginson, "for her will followed my Father, and only an idle heart is left, listless for his sake." As long as her mother lived, for more than seven years, Emily watched over her. "Little, wayfaring acts comprise my 'pursuits,' " she wrote Mr. Higginson, "and a few moments at night for books, after the rest sleep." Now at last Emily Dickinson had become the white-robed recluse of the legend.

In the autumn of 1876 Austin returned from the Centennial in Philadelphia with malarial fever. For a time they feared he would die. Calamity piled upon calamity until Emily could say without exaggeration that "existence has overpowered books."

Mrs. Dickinson was beginning to regain the ability to walk about the house when, in June, 1878, she broke her hip. After that she was helpless and "not of power to lift her head for a glass of water." Emily's time was devoted to attending to her mother's "dear little wants" until in November, 1882, she "ceased."

2

Death is the supple suitor
That wins at last.
It is a stealthy wooing,
Conducted first

By pallid innuendoes
And dim approach,
But brave at last with bugles
And a bisected coach

It bears away in triumph
To troth unknown
And kindred as responsive
As porcelain.

Her mother's death, Emily said, "almost stunned my spirit. . . . I cannot tell how Eternity seems. It sweeps around me like a sea." For a time she was prostrated. "The great attempt to save her life had it been successful, would have been fatigueless, but failing, strength forsook us."

Throughout these anxious years Emily's attitude toward Judge Lord had been undergoing a slow transformation as she came to depend on him more and more. To Colonel Higginson she mentioned a visit in October, 1875. Again, in 1876, she wrote: "Judge Lord was with us a few days since, and told me that the joy we most revere we profane in taking. I wish that was wrong." The solace he brought was very real.

On Emily's forty-seventh birthday Judge Lord received a paralyzing blow. His wife—a woman of power as well as of unusual beauty—died on December 10, 1877. Emily sprang to comfort him. It was her custom, and her great gift, to minister to her friends in time of bereavement. A month later, on January 16, 1878, Samuel Bowles died. To Mr. Higginson she wrote, "Mr. Bowles was not willing to die. When you have lost a friend, Master, you remember you could not begin again, because there was no world." In relentless succession death was taking those she cared for most: Mr. Bowles in 1878; Dr. Holland in 1881; Dr. Wadsworth on April 1, 1882; her mother on November 10, 1882. "Each that we lose takes part of us," she wrote, ". . . and how to repair my shattered ranks is a besetting pain."[4]

3

It is not my purpose to try to explain what happened, nor when. "Tenderness has not a date—it comes—and over-

whelms," Emily wrote to Judge Lord and, in a moment of cool reflection, "Train up a Heart in the way it should go and quick as it can 'twill depart from it."

After his wife's death, whenever the Judge came to Amherst he was accompanied by her nieces, the cousins Abbie and Mary Farley. Sometimes Abbie's mother came too. In his diary Austin mentions one such visit on August 23, 1880: "Judge Lord & Troupe arrived at Amherst House." During these visits the Judge was spending more and more of his time with Emily. Her niece, Mrs. Bianchi, characterizing him as "the pompous Judge Lord," wrote that while the young people went driving, "Aunt Emily and he enjoyed their own adventures in conversation at home."[5]

After her father's death Judge Lord had been Emily's main source of strength. Now he was something more. She did not talk about it but the family saw that she was shaken. As was their custom Austin and Lavinia respected her silence. They always respected visible symptoms of inner turmoils they did not understand. Sue did not understand either, but whatever it was she did not like it. An example of how she handled the situation was described by my mother in a signed statement quoted below.

As related by her niece, the legend of Emily Dickinson's withdrawal from the world because of a youthful disappointment in love has been accepted as the truth. The letters in this volume may convince the reader that a lifelong dedication to a youthful disappointment does not provide the explanation. But before giving up his belief he may wish to have a few additional facts.

The legend arose during Emily's lifetime because Amherst gossips could not understand either her secluded life or the cryptic little messages, in verse and in prose, which she sent about to her neighbors. She certainly was "queer." So it was whispered that she sought seclusion because of

hopeless love for a married man. This was not only plausible, it was the most acceptable explanation of her conduct.

I have said that my mother was so reluctant to talk about the letters in the brown envelope that I did not press her to tell me what she knew about them or about the members of Judge Lord's family. However, in 1931, when we were working on the new edition of the *Letters* I did ask her how, when it was not true, the legend could have gained such substance, such vitality. Her reply was so illuminating that I asked her to write it down, which she did.

In the fall of 1881 my youthful parents left Washington and went to Amherst, where my father had been appointed instructor in mathematics and astronomy in the College. They soon met the Dickinsons, Emily's brother Austin, a prominent citizen and Treasurer of the College, and his handsome wife, Susan, who promptly took my mother, aged twenty-five, in hand. Here are my mother's unedited words: "About this time Sue, as she was called in the village, began to tell me about a remarkable sister of Austin's who never went out, and saw no one who called. I heard of her also through others in town who seemed to resent, somewhat, her refusal to see themselves, who had known her in earlier years. Then came a note from this mysterious Emily's housemate, her sister Lavinia, demanding that I call 'at once, with my husband.' Sue said at that, 'You will not allow your husband to go there, I hope!' 'Why not?' I asked innocently. 'Because they have not, either of them, any idea of morality,' she replied, with a certain satisfaction in her tone. I knew that would interest my good husband, and pressing her a little farther, she added, 'I went in there one day, and in the drawing room I found Emily reclining in the arms of a man. What can you say to that?' I had no explanation, of course, so I let the subject drop, notwithstanding which I went to the ancestral mansion in which the two lived a few days later."

My mother went on to describe the "family quarrel of endless involutions" in which she wished not to become entangled. Further quotation from her statement is not pertinent here. But it is worth bearing in mind that this was the time when Emily's idolatry of Judge Lord was reaching its peak. Whenever he was in Amherst he spent long hours with her and their congeniality was well known.

Abbie Farley was Sue's special friend and Vinnie's special aversion. Abbie sensed power in the relationship and, my mother thought, wanted to disguise it, to cover it up, feeling that it was somehow disloyal to her dead aunt. At any rate, she made sarcastic comments on the "sweet" letters she thought "Uncle Lord" was sending to the "mansion." At this time my mother was in daily communication with the Austin Dickinsons. It was her belief, corroborated in part by Mrs. Stockton's memory of what Abbie Farley West told her, that Abbie enlisted Sue's help to accomplish her purpose.

However that may be, here are some facts to bear in mind: (1) The emotional strength of the friendship between Judge Lord and Emily Dickinson as revealed by the letters in this volume; (2) Sue's warning to my mother soon after she reached Amherst to keep away from Emily and Vinnie as they had no "idea of morality"; (3) Abbie Farley West's attitude toward the friendship as recalled by Mrs. Stockton, as told to me and recorded by me at the time. (See pages 23-24.) Indeed, Abbie had used the very word Sue had used, "immoral," to characterize the friendship; (4) Abbie and Sue were fast friends. It would have been easy to distract attention from a relationship distasteful to them both by giving an air of authenticity to the whispers about an early love affair—the raw material of legend already at hand. To put it differently, in order to belittle the significance of a powerful emotion the existence of which they felt but did not wish to acknowledge, the two women revived the sim-

mering rumors so as to make Emily's love for Judge Lord seem unlikely if not impossible. My mother thought that their object in endorsing gossip about youthful love for the Philadelphia preacher was not intended to explain Emily's seclusion so much as to divert attention from the present "infatuation." So successful was the stratagem, if such it was, that until now the existence of an ardent attachment between Emily Dickinson and the venerable Judge has not been suspected.

During the spring of 1882, while the life of Emily's mother was ebbing slowly away, one month to a day after Dr. Wadsworth's death, Judge Lord suffered on May first a sudden serious attack the exact nature of which is not clear. He fought against the idea that his condition could be serious and continued making plans to preside at one of the fall terms of the Supreme Court assigned to him. "But," in the words of Chief Justice Morton, "this was not to be. After a painful struggle between alternating hopes and doubts, he finally accepted the conviction that his life's work was finished, and accordingly, in December, 1882, he sent to the Governor his resignation as a judge of this court."[6] Thereafter, for more than a year, he lived with the ever-present consciousness that sudden death was impending.

4

> Summer is shorter than any one,
> Life is shorter than Summer;
> Seventy years is spent as quick
> As an only dollar.

The panic aroused in Emily by the Judge's illness intensified her fast-swelling adoration. Shortly after he was stricken she wrote to Abbie Farley. A copy of this letter written in May, 1882, was given to me by Mrs. Stockton together with copies of two others written after Judge Lord's

death. The printed text of Emily's letters to Abbie Farley follows that of Mrs. Stockton's copies.

Monday

[Newspaper clipping pasted on]

> Judge Lord has passed the crisis at Salem and there is hope that he will soon be about again.

Dear Abby—

This was all the letter we had this morning—Was it not enough? Oh no—a tiding every hour would not be enough—I hoped to hear nothing yesterday unless it were through you—

The last we knew was Hope, and that would last till Monday, but Austin brought a Morning Paper as soon as I was down—"I hope there'll be something of Mr. Lord—I'll look it over here," he said—"Couldn't I find it quicker" I inquired timidly—searching and finding nothing he handed the Paper to me—I found nothing, also—and felt relieved and disturbed too—Then I knew I should hear Monday, but Morning brought me nothing but just this little general note to a listening world—Were our sweet Salem safe, it would be "May" indeed—I shall never forget "May Day."

All our flowers were draped—

Is he able to speak or to hear voices or to say "Come in" when his Amherst knocks?

Fill his Hand with Love as sweet as Orchard Blossoms, which he will share with each of you. I know his boundless ways.

As it was too much sorrow, so it is almost too much joy.

Lovingly,

EMILY

It is plain that the Judge had had an "alarming illness."[7] Austin's diary gives evidence, however, that he recovered sufficiently during the following months to make at least one more trip to Amherst:

September 8, 1883.	The Lords arrived this noon.
September 9, "	Called on the Lords in evening, at the hotel. Ned went off to drive with Mrs Farley and the Misses, P.M.
September 12, "	Judge Lord and family dined with us, and I sat with them till 3½. . . Took Judge Lord up to Walker Building and Library this noon.

Somewhat reassured by this visit, Emily was beginning to conquer her fear lest Judge Lord might die when she was felled by another blow. On October 5, 1883, her nephew Gilbert, youngest child of Austin and Sue, died of a fever at the age of eight. Had this boy lived the subsequent history of the Dickinson family might have been different, for in love of him they were united. Gilbert was a child apart. In him both houses recognized a quality so noble, so far beyond contamination, that they marveled. His little son was the darling of Austin's heart. Of this his diary gives evidence, not only in frequent mention of their companionship, noteworthy in a record for the most part perfunctory, but in entries of another sort. Austin, having supervised the building of the new Village Church opposite his house, felt a kind of proprietary interest in it. But his diary refers to it as "Gib's church," so often did the child run across the street to attend services alone.

The family was shattered by Gilbert's death. Lavinia was exhausted; Austin prostrated. Not until three months had passed was Emily able to write (January 4, 1884): ". . . I have been very ill since early October, and unable to thank you for the sacred kindness, but treasured it each day, and hasten with my first steps, and my fullest gratitude. Returning from the dying child, waiting till he left us, I found it on my desk. . . ." In the following August she wrote: "The little boy we laid away never fluctuates, and his dim society is com-

panion still." And again, two years later: "October is a mighty month, for in it little Gilbert died. 'Open the door,' was his last cry, 'the boys are waiting for me.' Quite used to his commandment, his little aunt obeyed, and still two years and many days, and he does not return."[8]

5

Recollect the face of me
When in thy felicity,
Due in paradise today,
Guest of mine assuredly,

Other courtesies have been,
Other courtesy may be.
We commend ourselves to thee,
Paragon of chivalry.

The climax of the sorrowing years was not long delayed. On March 11, 1884, Judge Lord suffered a stroke. Two days later, the day he died, the *Boston Transcript* reported that he "now lies in an unconscious condition." Denying a coma, however, a different account of his death appears in the *Proceedings* of the meeting of the Bar of the Commonwealth. "On a bright day, at full noon, in his own house, a loving friend bathed his temples and arranged his pillows, and then sat down by his bedside and began to read to him a newspaper article which seemed to please him much. He placed his hand in hers. She looked; he breathed. A moment later, she looked again; he was gone. . . ." The Memorial of the Essex Bar Association states categorically that "his intellectual vision was undimmed to the last."[9]

The funeral services were held in the North Church, Essex Street, Salem, on Monday, March 17, at two o'clock. Upon the casket lay a wreath of ivy. Many dignitaries of the Commonwealth attended: Chief Justice Morton of the Supreme Court and five associates; Chief Justice Brigham of the Su-

perior Court and six associates; ex-Judge Endicott of Salem, ex-Governor Gaston, and the presidents of the bar associations of Essex and Suffolk counties. Sir Edwin Arnold's poem,

> He who died at Azan sends
> This to comfort faithful friends,[10]

was read by the Reverend E. B. Wilson who conducted the services.

To her "little cousins" Emily wrote: "Thank you, dears, for the sympathy. I hardly dare to know that I have lost another friend, but anguish finds it out."

And in a letter she thanks Aunt Catherine Sweetser "for speaking so tenderly of our latest lost. We had hoped the persuasions of the spring, added to our own, might delay his going, but they came too late. 'I met,' said he in his last note, 'a crocus and a snowdrop in my yesterday's walk,' but the sweet beings outlived him. . . ."[11]

Grief was beginning to take its toll. After the death of Judge Lord the prostration following little Gilbert's death increased tenfold. An entry in Austin's diary for June 14, 1884, reads: "Emily had a singular attack of dizziness, etc., about 2 o'c this p.m." She herself described it in a letter of August 9, 1884: "Eight Saturday noons ago, I was making a loaf of cake with Maggie, when I saw a great darkness coming and knew no more until late at night. I woke to find Austin and Vinnie and a strange physician bending over me, and supposed I was dying, or had died, all was so kind and hallowed. I had fainted and lain unconscious for the first time in my life. Then I grew very sick and gave the others much alarm, but am now staying. The doctor calls it 'revenge of the nerves'; but who but Death had wronged them?"

From this attack she was slow to recover. The summer had been "wide and deep," she told Colonel Higginson, explaining that "I, too, took my summer in a chair, though from

'nervous prostration,' not fracture, but take my nerve by the bridle now, and am again abroad."

It was a brave attempt, but her strength did not return. As she said, even "the strength to perish is sometimes withheld."[12]

On Sunday, October 12, 1884, Austin wrote: "Went over to the other house about 5 and found Vin had been working over Emily, who had had another bad turn, since 3 o'clock alone—no one coming to help her, or within call.

"Got her onto the lounge with Stephen's help and sent for Maggie" (servants at the homestead).

Two months later Francis Backus Gilbert, Sue Dickinson's brother, arrived in Amherst suffering from a serious malady. Sue accompanied him to Boston to consult a physician but soon returned to Amherst.[13] On May 25, 1885, he died.

The two other letters from Emily to Abbie Farley above referred to were written at about this time. The first thanks Abbie and her mother for a touching gift. The second expresses sympathy for another bereavement not, however, for the death of Mrs. Farley, who lived until 1897.[14] Of the death of Mary C. Farley, the younger, which seems to be implied, I have found no record in Salem or in Ipswich.

Dear Friends—

When I opened the little Box and the vestal flower sprang out, an instant conviction of its source overpowered me, and I did not attempt to dispel the tears which were bolder than I.

Thank the sweet mother who plotted, and the loved Daughter that executed the spotless commission. Again the vanished lived.

Can the Jasmine outlast the Hand that bore it so joyously away? Then the mutable is the elder. It lies beside the Portrait.

"Lovely in their lives, and in their Death, not divided."

How entirely lovely in your Mother to remember one whom she has never seen! I trust she is still well, and may long be a keepsake to us all.

One of Sue's noble Brothers has died, and Sue and Ned are

expected tonight from an absence of two weeks, on that sad account. Mattie comes home occasionally for a moment's recess, and fast becomes an imperial Girl.

I hope you may have a charming trip, and return refreshed.

You have indeed endured.

Can one scant year contain so much?

With affection

Emily

Dear Friend—

What a reception for you! Did she wait for your approbation?

Her deferring to die until you came seemed to me so confiding —as if nothing should be presumed. It can probably never be real to you.

The veil that helps us, falls so mercifully over it.

"An envious sliver broke" was a passage your Uncle peculiarly loved in the drowning Ophelia.

Was it a premonition to him to whom events and omens are at last the same?

I shall certainly think of you in the second departure, so innocent, so cruel.

Isaac pleads again "but where is the Lamb for the Sacrifice?" the clock's sweet voice makes no reply.

No faithful pang is silenced, but Anguish sometimes gives a cause which was at first concealed. That you two be not sundered is my holy wish.

Emily

with love

At about this time Emily was carrying on a correspondence with Judge Lord's cousin and executor, Benjamin Kimball, Esq., of Boston. Three of the letters have survived.[15] To one of them is attached an envelope which, contrary to her custom, is addressed by Emily herself. But she arranged to have the letter posted in Palmer.

Lavinia was aware that Emily was writing to Mr. Kimball. This we know because a few years later, in 1891, when Lavinia proposed to take legal steps to prevent further "un-

authorized" publication of Emily's poems—by anyone, that is, whom she did not approve—she asked my mother to consult Mr. Kimball with whom, she said, Emily had been acquainted.[16] Mr. Kimball never divulged the fact that he had received any letters from Emily, but he did not destroy them. Like other persons who knew of the friendship between Judge Lord and Emily Dickinson, he considered it too "hallowed" to discuss. All that Mr. Kimball passed on to my mother was his wariness of the subject.

Dear friend—

To take the hand of my friend's friend, even apparitionally, is a hallowed pleasure.
I think you told me you were his kinsman.
I was only his friend—and cannot yet believe that "his part in all the pomp that fills
The circuit of the Southern Hills,
Is that his Grave is green."
His last words in his last note were "a Caller comes." I infer it to be Eternity, as he never returned.
Your task must be a fervent one—often one of pain.
To fulfill the will of a powerless friend supersedes the Grave.
Oh, Death, where is thy Chancellor?
On my way to my sleep, last night, I paused at the Portrait.
Had I not loved it, I had feared it, the
Face had such ascension.
Go thy great way!
The Stars thou meetst
Are even as thyself,
For what are Stars but Asterisks
To point a human Life?
Thank you for the nobleness, and for the earnest Note, but *all are* friends, upon a Spar.

Gratefully,
E. Dickinson—

Dear friend.

Your Note was Unspeakable strength.
May I keep it's promise in solemn reserve? To know that there is shelter, sometimes dissuades it's necessity. In this instance defers it.

Even to ask a legal question might so startle me that my voice would pass to another World before it could be uttered.
In tribute to your fidelity I send you the face of my Father.
Thank you for the *Seal*—it covers the whole area of sanctity.

Confidingly,
E. Dickinson.[17]

Dear friend—

Had I known I asked the impossible, should I perhaps have asked it, but Abyss is it's own apology. I once asked him what I should do for him when he was not here, referring half unconsciously to the great Expanse. In a tone italic of both Worlds "Remember me," he said. I have kept his Commandment. But you are a Psychologist, I, only a Scholar who has lost her Preceptor.
For the great kindness of your Opinion, I am far indebted. Perhaps to solidify his faith was for him impossible, and if for him, how more, for us! Your noble and tender words of him were exceedingly precious—I shall cherish them.
He did not tell me he "sang" to you, though to sing in his presence was involuntary, thronged only with Music, like the Decks of Birds.
Abstinence from Melody was what made him die. Calvary and May wrestled in his Nature.
Neither fearing Extinction, nor prizing Redemption, he believed alone. Victory was his Rendezvous—
I hope it took him home.
But I fear I detain you.
I try to thank you and fail.
Perhaps the confiding effort you would not disdain?

Sacredly,
E. Dickinson.

[enclosed:]

Though the great Waters sleep,
That they are still the Deep,
We cannot doubt.
No vacillating God
Ignited this Abode
To put it out.[18]

And now, with the knowledge that, as Emily said,

> The truth must dazzle gradually
> Or every man be blind,

we are permitted to look straight at the light and to discover for ourselves "the truth's superb surprise."[19]

FOOTNOTES

1. *Emily Dickinson's Home.*
2. *Letters,* 1931, p. 291.
3. Emily appears to have mistaken the date of her father's death. She told the Misses Norcross that the news reached her on the day of his death "the fifteenth of June." *Ibid.,* p. 255. Again, a year later, she wrote Colonel Higginson: "Mother was paralyzed Tuesday, a year from the evening my father died." *Ibid.,* p. 293. In 1875 that Tuesday fell on June 15.
4. The above passages are quoted from *Letters,* 1931, most of them from Chapter VIII, pp. 292-311; the remainder, from pp. 345, 266, 267, 347 and 354. The poems are from *Bolts of Melody.*
5. Martha Dickinson Bianchi, *Emily Dickinson Face to Face.* Boston: 1932, pp. 33, 36.
6. *Proceedings,* pp. 16-17.
7. *Amherst Student,* May 20, 1882.
8. *Letters,* 1931, pp. 353, 269, 380.
9. *Proceedings,* pp. 5, 35. Apoplexy was given as the official cause of death.
10. Edwin Arnold, "After Death in Arabia," *Poems.* Boston: 1880, pp. 189-192. In Volume I of *Edwin Arnold's Poetical Works,* Boston: 1889, the poem is called "A Message from the Dead," in section entitled "Pearls of the Faith," pp. 188-193.
11. *Letters,* 1931, pp. 267, 402.
12. *Letters,* 1931, pp. 268, 319, 413.
13. Entries in Austin Dickinson's diary for December 21, 22 and 29, 1884.
14. For clarification of Farley names see Chapter II, footnote 2.
15. The first letter and the third are published through the courtesy of the Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection of the New York Public Library.
16. *Ancestors' Brocades,* pp. 119-120.
17. This letter was first among those in the envelope referred to on page one. Both the substance and the handwriting, however, indicate that it belongs with the Kimball letters in the New York Public Library.
18. *Letters,* 1931, p. 381.
19. *Bolts of Melody,* p. 233.

20. The poem, "Through what transports of patience," in Emily Dickinson's late script, is written on the inside of an envelope addressed by Judge Lord to

Miss Emily Dickinson,
Care Hon. Edward Dickinson,
Amherst,
Mass.

It is postmarked "Salem, Mass., Nov. 10," but without the year, which was added to the Salem cancelation subsequent to 1884.

This envelope arouses the curiosity of the reader who may like to speculate as to whether the letter was sent before or after Edward Dickinson's death.

I am told by the chief philatelist of the Smithsonian Institution that certain minute details indicate that this particular issue of the green postage stamp in use for several years, first appeared in 1873. Though the letter could not have been written before that date, it might have been written before Mr. Dickinson's death in 1874. If so, the Judge would have known that Mr. Dickinson would see it; for it was his habit, when he chose, to open letters addressed to any member of his family. (*Emily Dickinson's Home.*) If, on the other hand, the envelope was addressed in the 1880's, as the uncertain strokes of the pen suggest, then Judge Lord would appear to have fallen in with the attitude of Edward Dickinson's family, namely, that the house now occupied by his two unmarried daughters still belonged to him. This seems inconsistent with the Judge's character. It was not inconsistent with that of Emily Dickinson, however. A sheet of letter paper found among her notes contains the words, "Dear Father," at the top and, at the bottom, "Emily." Nothing more. The writing dates from the middle seventies. (Compare *Ancestors' Brocades,* p. 235.) The words may well have been written after Edward Dickinson's death—an esoteric message addressed to him in realms unknown. However that may be, it should be borne in mind that Edward Dickinson's death did not loosen his hold upon his family.

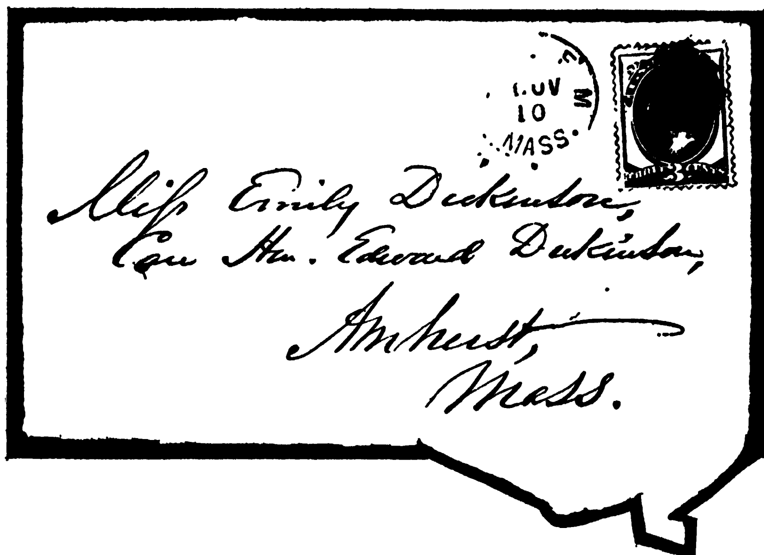
Insofar, then, as this envelope is concerned, we can be sure only of the date, 1873, before which the postage stamp could not have been used; but we cannot be sure of the date on which it was affixed to the envelope. The only safe conclusion about its contents is that from the envelope alone nothing can be inferred either as to when the letter was written or as to its subject matter.

Guide for the Reader

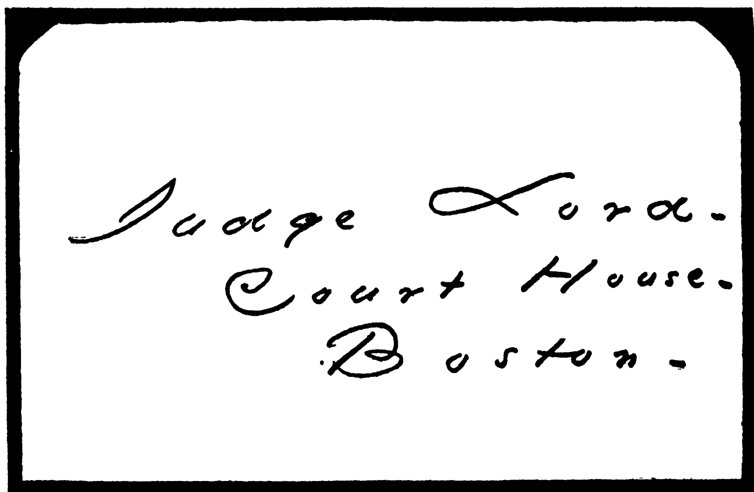
The letters, drafts and fragments in the next chapter are reproduced with all the idiosyncrasies of the original manuscripts, both as to spelling and punctuation. The sequence has been determined by the handwriting and by internal evidence. Written during the late seventies and early eighties, a few can be dated exactly. But the rough notes in Section 2 in writing of the same period, follow an incorporeal chronology. These notes were not with the letters, but were found among the masses of unclassified bits of verse and prose usually referred to as "scraps."

Examination of these manuscripts raises a question as to which letters were actually posted. Most of them have not been folded. In those that have, the creases in different sheets of the same letter do not always correspond. It may be interesting to speculate about whether a given letter was mailed, or whether a certain draft was ever incorporated in a finished letter. But that is not crucial. The thing to remember is that the attachment between Judge Lord and Emily Dickinson was real and that it was mutual. It was not romantic fantasy on her part. Of that there is as we know external as well as internal evidence. Emily did not write these letters just to relieve her feelings. She wrote them for Judge Lord to read, which is apparent even in such matter-of-fact phrases as, "Your's of yesterday is with me," and "I enclose the note I was fast writing . . ." and "Tim's suspicions however will be allayed, for I have thinner paper, which can elude the very Elect, if it undertake." (She refers to a hired man whom Edward Dickinson called "Timothy" which, she said, made the barn sound like the Bible.) Again: "I have written you, Dear, so many Notes since receiving one, it seems like writing a Note to the Sky—yearning and replyless. . . ." In this connection it is worth noting that the few surviving envelopes and parts of envelopes were addressed to Judge Lord by Emily herself, not, as in the case of her letters to other close friends, by another hand.[20] *(For footnote see page 71.)*

The letters are written in pencil, with firm vigorous strokes, on sheets of paper uniform in size but not in weight. A few are complete. Others are fragmentary. In the mutilated drafts a series of dots indicates either that the next page is missing, or that a section has been cut out as if with scissors. Whether Emily herself did the cutting is doubtful. (Dots do not indicate a deletion by the editor.) Passages crossed out but still legible are enclosed in brackets; alternative words or phrases in parentheses. For the rough notes in Section 2 the same devices have been used.



Envelope addressed by Judge Lord to Emily Dickinson



Envelope addressed by Emily Dickinson to Judge Lord

Put off thy shoes from off
thy feet, for the place
whereon thou standest is
holy ground

EXODUS III:5

CHAPTER V

The Revelation

1

My lovely Salem smiles at me—I seek his Face so often—but I have done with guises.
I confess that I love him—I rejoice that I love him—I thank the Maker of Heaven and Earth—that gave him me to love—the Exaltation floods me—I cannot find my channel. The Creek turns Sea—at thought of thee.
Will you punish me? "Involuntary Bankruptcy," how could that be Crime?
Incarcerate me in yourself—rosy penalty—threading with you this lovely maze, which is not Life or Death—though it has the intangibleness of one, and the flush of the other—waking for your sake on Day made magical with you before I went (to sleep. What pretty phrase—we went to sleep as if it were a country—let us make it one [we could (will) make it one]—my native Land—my Darling come Oh be a patriot now—Love is a patriot now. Gave her life for its country Has it meaning now—Oh nation of the soul thou hast thy freedom now)[1]

* * *

Ned and I were talking about God and Ned said "Aunt Emily—does Judge Lord belong to the Church"? "I think not, Ned, technically." "Why, I thought he was one of those Boston Fellers who thought it the respectable thing to do." "I think he does nothing ostensible, Ned." "Well—my Father says if there were another Judge in the Commonwealth like him, the practice of

My lovely Salem
smiles at me I seek
his face so often -
but I have done
with guises.
I confess that I
love him - I rejoice
that I love him.
I thank the maker
of Heaven and
Earth - that gave
him me to love -
the Exaltation
floods me. I cannot
find my channel -
the Creek turns
Sea - at thought

Two drafts of the letter beginning, "My lovely Salem . . ."

of thee –
Will you punish me?
"Involuntary Bankruptcy,"
how could that be
Crime?
Incarcerate me in
yourself – rosy penalty –
threading with you
this lovely maze,
which is not Life
or Death – though
it has the intan-
gibleness of one, and
the flush of the
other – waking for
your sake on Day
made magical with
you before I went

my lovely Salem smiles
at me I seek his Face
so often - but I am
past disguises have
dropped - have done
with guises -
I confess that I love
him - I rejoice that
I love him - I thank
the maker of Heaven
and Earth that gave
him me to love -
the exultation floods
me - I can not
find my channel -
the Creek turns Sea
at ~~thought~~ t of thee -
will you punish
it - ~~[illegible]~~ in
voluntary Bankruptcy,
as the Debtors say.
could that be
crime - How could
that be crime -
Incarcerate me
in yourself - ~~that~~
will punish me -
threading with you
this lovely maze which
is not Life or

Death
it has the
intangibleness
of one and
the flush of
the other
making our [illegible]
sake [illegible]
make may
with ~~before~~
you before
[illegible] to
sleep -
what - [illegible]
phrase -
to slide as if
it were a
country - At us

make it one -
we could make
it one, will my
native land. -
my surviving
country
Love is a
patriot now
Gave her life
for its country
Has it meaning
now - Oh nation
of the soul
thou hast thy freedom now

Miss Vinnie Dickinson
Amherst
By Mr Cowper's
Kindness

Law would amount to something." I told him I thought it probable—though recalling that I had never tried any case in your presence but my own, and that, with your sweet assistance—I was murmurless.
I wanted to fondle the Boy for the fervent words—but . . . made the distinction.
Don't you know you have taken my will away and I "know not where" you "have laid" it? Should I have curbed you sooner? "Spare the 'Nay' and spoil the Child"?
Oh, my too beloved, save me from the idolatry which would crush us both—
"And very Sea—
Mark of my utmost Sail.". . .

* * *

To beg for the Letter when it is written, is bankrupt enough, but to beg for it when it is'nt, and the dear Donor is sauntering, mindless of it's worth, *that* is bankrupter.
Sweet One—to make the bright week noxious, that was once so gay, have you quite the warrant? Also, my naughty one, too seraphic naughty, who can sentence you? Certainly not my enamoured Heart. Now my blissful Sophist, you that can make "Dont" "Do", though forget that I told you so, . . .
[Perhaps, please, you are sinful? Though of power to make Perdition divine, who can punish you?] . . .

* * *

Dont you know you are happiest while I withhold and not confer—dont you know that "No" is the wildest word we consign to Language?
You do, for you know all things— . . .

* * *

. . . to lie so near your longing—to touch it as I passed, for I am but a restive sleeper and often should journey from your Arms through the happy night, but you will lift me back, wont you, for only there I ask to be. I say, if I felt the longing nearer—

To lie so
near your longing—
to touch it as
I passed, for I am
but a restive
sleeper and often
should journey
from your arms
through the dark
night, but you
will lift me back
next you. For only
there I ask to be—
I say, if I felt
the longing nearer—
than in our dear
past, perhaps I could

Fragment, "To lie so near your longing . . ."

than in our dear past, perhaps I could not resist to bless it, but must, because it would be right.
The "Stile" is God's—My Sweet One—for your great sake—not mine—I will not let you cross—but it is all your's, and when it is right I will lift the Bars, and lay you in the Moss. You showed me the word.
I hope it has no different guise when my fingers make it. It is Anguish I long conceal from you to let you leave me, hungry, but you ask the divine Crust and that would doom the Bread.

That unfrequented Flower
Embellish thee (deserving be) . . .

I was reading a little Book—because it broke my Heart I want it to break your's.
Will you think that fair? I often have read it, but not before since loving you. I find that makes a difference—it makes a difference with all. Even the Whistle of a Boy passing late at night, or the Low (?) of a Bird. . . .
"Satan"—but then what I have not heard is the sweet majority. The Bible says very roguishly that the "Wayfaring Man, though a Fool, need not err therein"; need the "Wayfaring" Woman? Ask your throbbing Scripture.
It may surprise you I speak of God. I know him but a little, but Cupid taught Jehovah to many an untutored Mind. Witchcraft is wiser than we.

* * *

. . . I know you acutely weary, yet cannot refrain from taxing you with an added smile—and a pang in it. Was it to him the Thief cried "Lord remember me when thou comest into thy Kingdom," and is it to us that he replies, "This Day thou shalt be with me in Paradise"?
The Propounder of Paradise must indeed possess it. Antony's remark to a friend, "since Cleopatra died" is said to be the saddest ever lain in Language. That engulfing *"Since"*. . . .

* * *

The withdrawal of the Fuel of Rapture does not withdraw the Rapture itself.

Like Powder in a Drawer, we pass it with a Prayer, it's Thunders only dormant.

* * *

Sunday—[April 30, 1882]

His little "Playthings" were very sick all the Week that closed, and except the sweet Papa assured them, they could not believe —it had one grace however, it kept the faint mama from sleep— so she could dream of Papa awake—an innocence of fondness.

To write you, not knowing where you are, is an unfinished pleasure—Sweeter of course than not writing, because it has a wandering Aim, of which you are the goal—but far from joyful like yourself, and moments we have known. I have a strong surmise that moments we have *not* known are tenderest to you. Of their afflicting Sweetness, you only are the judge—but the moments we had, were very good—they were quite contenting.

Very sweet to know from Morn to Morn what you thought and said—the Republican told us—though that Felons could see you and we could not, seemed a wondering fraud. I feared for your sweet Lungs in the crowded Air, the Paper spoke of "Throngs". We were much amused at the Juror's "cough" you thought not pulmonary, and when you were waiting at your Hotel for the Kidder verdict, and the Jury decided to go to sleep, I thought them the loveliest Jury I had ever met.[2] I trust you are "at Home," though my Heart spurns the suggestion, hoping all—absence—but itself.

I am told it is only a pair of Sundays since you went from me. I feel it many years. Today is April's last—it has been an April of meaning to me. I have been in your Bosom. My Philadelphia [Charles Wadsworth] has passed from Earth, and the Ralph Waldo Emerson—whose name my Father's Law Student [Benjamin Newton] taught me, has touched the secret Spring. Which Earth are we in?

Heaven, a Sunday or two ago—but that also has ceased.

Momentousness is ripening. I hope that all is firm. Could we yield each other to the impregnable Chances till we had met once more?

Monday [May 1, 1882][3]

Your's of Yesterday is with me. I am cruelly grieved about the "Cold". I feared it, but entreated it to wrong some other one. Must it of all the Lives have come to trouble your's? Be gentle with it. Coax it. Dont drive it or 'twill stay. I'm glad you are "at Home." Please think it with a codicil. My own were homeless if you were. Was my sweet "Phil" proud? What Hour? Could you tell me? A momentary gleam of him between Morning . . .

. . . Door either, after you have entered, nor any Window, except in the Chimney, and if Folks knock at the Grass, the Grass can let them in. I almost wish it would, sometimes—with reverence I say it. That was a big, sweet Story—the number of times that "little Phil" read his Letter, and the not so many, that Papa read his, but I am prepared for falsehood.
On subjects of which we know nothing, or should I say *Beings*—is "Phil" a "Being" or a "Theme," we both believe, and disbelieve a hundred times an Hour, which keeps Believing nimble. But how can "Phil" have one opinion and Papa another—I thought the Rascals were inseparable—"but there again," as Mr. New Bedford [Thomas] Eliot used to say, "I may be mistaken." Papa has still many Closets that Love has never ransacked. I do—do want you tenderly. The Air is soft as Italy, but when it touches me, I spurn it with a Sigh, because it is not you. The Wanderers came last night. Austin says they are brown as Berries and as noisy as Chipmunks, and feels his solitude much invaded, as far as I can learn. These dislocations of privacy among the *Privateers* amuse me very much, but "the Heart knoweth its own" Whim—and in Heaven they neither woo nor are given in wooing—what an imperfect place!
Mrs Dr Stearns [widow of President Stearns] called to know if we didnt think it very shocking for [Benjamin F.] Butler to "liken himself to his Redeemer," but we thought Darwin had thrown "the Redeemer" away. Please excuse the wandering writing. Sleeplessness makes my Pencil stumble. Affection clogs it—too. Our Life together was long forgiveness on your part toward me. The trespass of my rustic Love upon your Realms of Ermine,

only a Sov[e]reign could forgive. I never knelt to other. The Spirit never twice alike, but every time another—that other more divine. Oh, had I found it sooner! Yet Tenderness has not a Date—it comes—and overwhelms. The time before it was—was naught, so why establish it? And all the time to come it is, which abrogates the time.

* * *

The foregoing letter was written on the very day of Judge Lord's sudden attack; the next, after it had become clear that he would recover.

* * *

Sunday—

To remind you of my own rapture at your return, and of the loved steps, retraced almost from the "Undiscovered Country," I enclose the Note I was fast writing, when the fear that your Life had ceased, came, fresh, yet dim, like the horrid Monsters fled from in a Dream. Happy with my Letter, without a film of fear, Vinnie came in from a word with Austin, passing to the Train. "Emily, did you see anything in the Paper that concerned us"? "Why no, Vinnie, what"? "Mr Lord is very sick." I grasped at a passing Chair. My sight slipped and I thought I was freezing. While my last smile was ending, I heard the Doorbell ring and a strange voice said "I thought first of you." Meantime, Tom [Kelly—a benign Irish presence] had come, and I ran to his Blue Jacket and let my Heart break there—that was the warmest place. "He will be better. Dont cry Miss Emily. I could not see you cry." Then Vinnie came out and said "Prof. Chickering thought we would like to telegraph." He "would do it for us". "Would I write a Telegram?" I asked the Wires how you did, and attached my name. The Professor took it, and Abby's brave —refreshing reply I shall remember . . .

* * *

I wonder we ever leave the Improbable—it is so fair a Home, and perhaps we dont.
What is half so improbable . . .

* * *

You spoke of "Hope" surpassing "Home." I thought that Hope *was* Home—a misapprehension of Architecture—but then if I knew . . .

After a considerable lapse of time

* * *

. . . The celestial Vacation of writing you after an interminable Term of *four Days,* I can scarcely express. My Head was so sick when I woke this Morning that I feared I could'nt meet Tom, though how did I know that the dear necessity at that particular Moment existed? And more afraid, that should it, I could'nt respond tonight, and a Night is *so* long, and it snowing too, another barrier to Hearts that overleap themselves. Emily "Jumbo"! Sweetest name, but I know a sweeter—Emily Jumbo Lord. Have I your approval?
Tim's suspicions however will be allayed, for I have thinner Paper, which can elude the very Elect, if it undertake.

* * *

Sunday—[December 3, 1882]
What if you are writing! Oh, for the power to look, yet were I there, I would not, except you invited me—reverence for each other being the sweet Aim. I have written you, Dear, so many Notes since receiving one, it seems like writing a Note to the Sky—yearning and replyless—but Prayer has not an answer and yet how many pray! While Others go to Church, I go to mine, for are not you my Church, and have we not a Hymn that no one knows but us?
I hope your "Thanksgiving" was not too lonely, though if it were *a little,* Affection must not be displeased.
[Name altered] sent me a lovely Banquet of Fruit, which I sent to a dying Irish Girl in our neighborhood. That was my Thanksgiving. Those that die seem near me because I lose my own. Not *all* my own, Thank God, a darling "own" remains—more darling than I name.
The month in which our Mother died, closed it's Drama Thursday, and I cannot conjecture a form of Space without her timid

face. Speaking to you as I feel, Dear, without that Dress of Spirit must be worn for most, Courage is quite changed.
Your Sorrow was in Winter. One of our's in June and the other, November, and my Clergyman passed from Earth in Spring, but Sorrow brings it's own chill. Seasons do not warm it. You said with loved timidity in asking me to your dear Home, you would "try not to make it unpleasant." So delicate a diffidence, how beautiful to see!
I do not think a Girl extant has so divine a modesty.
You even call me to your Breast with apology! Of what must my poor Heart be made?
That the one for whom Modesty is felt, himself should feel it sweetest and ask his own with such a grace, is beloved reproach. . . .

The tender Priest of Hope need not allure his Offering—'tis on his altar ere he asks. I hope you wear your Furs today. Those and the love of me, will keep you sweetly warm, though the Day is bitter. The love I feel for you, I mean, your own for me a treasure I still keep. . . .

2

Supplementary Rough Notes

Spirit cannot be moved by Flesh—
It must be moved by spirit—
It is strange that the most intangible is the heaviest—but Joy and Gravitation have their own ways. My ways are not your ways.

On the Reverse

We are always in danger of magic
The perils of magic cannot be overestimated—
[One] A single thrill can end a life or open it [anew] forever
[And this my] This mystic territory then, is life—

* * *

I sometimes [have] almost feared Language was done between us—if [you grew] too dear, except for breath, then words flowed

softly in like [some] a shining secret, the Lode of which the miner dreams

* * *

But why did you distrust your little Simon Peter yesterday—you said you didn't but she knew you did. What did Nestor say you begun to tell me. To rest with you swept all day.

* * *

This has been a beautiful Day—dear—given solely to you—carried in my thin hand to your distant—[?] offered softly and added. The haste of early summer is gone and a foreboding leisure is stealing over [nature's] bustling things—

* * *

I feel like wasting my Cheek on your Hand tonight. Will you accept (approve) the squander—Lay up treasures immediately—that's the best Anodyne for moth and Rust and the thief whom the Bible knew enough of Banking to suspect would break in and steal.
Night is my favorite Day—I love silence so. I dont mean halt (stop) of sound—but ones that talk of nought all day mistaking it for—[?]—
Forgive you . . .

On the reverse

The summer that we did not prize
Her treasures were so easy . . .[4]

* * *

[I kissed the little blank. You made it on the second page you may have forgotten.] I will not wash my arm—'twill take your touch away—the one you gave the scarf—it is brown as an Almond—
[I try to think when I wake in the night what the chapter would be for the chapter would be in the <u>night</u> would'nt it—but I cannot decide—]

It is strange that I miss you at night so much when I was never with you—but the punctual love invokes you soon as my eyes are shut—and I wake warm with the want sleep had almost filled—I dreamed last week that you had died—and one had carved a statue of you and I was asked to unvail it—and I said what I had not done in Life I would not in death when your loved eyes could not forgive. [The length of the hour was beautiful. The length of the heavenly hour how sweetly you counted it The numerals of Eden do not oppress the student long] for Eden ebbs away to diviner Edens. [Therefore Love is so speechless.
Seem to withold Darling
I never seemed toward you
Lest I had been too frank was often my fear—
How could I long to give who never saw your natures Face—]

* * *

But are not all Facts Dreams as soon as we put them behind us?

* * *

[A group of students passed the House—one of them said Oh no, like you—the same vagabond Sweetness. I followed the voice]—You know I have a vice for voices—That way lies—yearning—pathos—(pleading lies)

* * *

[I never heard you call anything beautiful before. It remained with me curiously.] There is a fashion in Delight as other things.

On the reverse

Still as the stern Profile of a Tree against a Winter sky (sunset sky) (evening)

* * *

Sunday [March 2, 1884]

Second of March, and the Crow, and Snow high as the Spire,

tuesday is a deeply
depressed day - it is
not far enough
from your dear note
for the energy of
another to form. and
see what slights of
distance - and so
perish softly and
spurn the Birds and
spurn the spring - with
pathetic [illegible] - but
dejected the sun begins
when the corner
is turn the night - everything
thereafter
refreshes - the soft
uplifting grows till by
the time it is Sunday

Fragment, "Tuesday is a deeply depressed day . . ."
(On a scrap of Maggie Maher's writing)

night. all
my life
cheek
is, fever
with ne ouss
t s ous
pliss oue
~~mouths~~ - rippling the little girl
~~what~~ cried on the
to be notest and
for this, cat came
live with her. and
the bird to sing her
to sleep good night
little cry baby

and scarlet expectations of things that never come, because forever here.
"The Twilight says to the Turret if you want an Existence . . .[5]

* * *

(a)
My little devices to live till Monday would darken all your glee—for you have a good deal of glee (many a glee) in your nature's corners the most lurking—and never (not) to be trusted as Brown said of sleep—without ones prayers—

(b)
My little devices to live till Monday would woo (win) your sad attention (fill your eyes with Dew). Full of work and plots and little happinesses the thought of you protracts (derides) them all and makes them sham and cold.

How fleet—how indiscreet an one—how always wrong is Love—

The joyful little Deity
We are not scourged to serve.[6]

* * *

Tuesday is a deeply depressed Day—it is not far enough from your dear note for the embryo of another to form, and yet what flights of Distance—and so I perish softly and spurn the Birds and spurn the sun (spring)—with pathetic (dejected) malice—but when the Sun begins to turn the corner Thursday night—everything refreshes—the soft Uplifting grows till by the time it is Sunday night, all my Life (cheek) is Fever with nearness to your blissful words (rippling words)—

* * *

Emerging from an Abyss and entering it again—that is Life, is it not?

Were Departure Separation there would be neither Nature nor Art, for there would be no world—Emily

* * *

'Tis a dangerous moment for any one when the meaning goes out of things and Life stands straight—and punctual—and yet no signal comes. Yet such moments are. If we survive them, they expand us, if we do not, but that is Death, whose if is everlasting.

We do not think enough of the Dead as exhilarants—they are not dissuaders but Lures—Keepers of that great Romance still to us foreclosed—while we envy (coveting) their wisdom we lament their silence. Grace is still a secret. That they have existed none can take away. That they still exist is a trust so daring we thank thee that thou hast hid these things from us and hast revealed them to them. The power and the glory are the post mortuary gifts.

God cannot discontinue [annul] himself.
This appalling trust is at times all that remains—[7]

FOOTNOTES

1. There are two drafts of this letter. The first, earlier, draft with many alternative words and phrases, is written on the back of a sheet addressed in Judge Lord's handwriting to
   Miss Vinnie Dickinson
   Amherst
   By Mr Cooper's Kindness
   James I. Cooper was Austin Dickinson's law partner. The passage in parentheses, or parts of it, appears to have been included in the second draft and later cut out. The text follows the second draft through "before I went," where the second draft ends. The phrase in parentheses on page 51 is from the first draft.
2. Dwight Kidder was accused of murdering his half-brother, Charles D. Kidder, on June 7, 1881. His trial opened in Springfield on Tuesday, April 25, 1882, Judge Lord presiding. On Saturday, the twenty-ninth, the jury returned a verdict of manslaughter and the young man was sentenced to twenty years in prison. *The Springfield Republican,* April 24-29, 1882, gives a detailed account of the trial.
3. Letters from Judge Lord were usually received on Monday.

4. *Bolts of Melody,* pp. 36-37.
5. On the back of this fragment are two poems: "Circumference thou Bride of Awe" and "Arrows enamoured of his breast."
6. *Bolts of Melody,* p. 284.
7. The first of these sentences appears in a letter written to Mr. Higginson in 1878. *Letters,* 1931, p. 309.

CHAPTER VI

Some Late Poems[1]

1

The thrill came slowly like a boon
For centuries delayed,
Its fitness growing like the flood
In sumptuous solitude.

The desolation only missed
While rapture changed its dress
And stood amazed before the change
In ravished holiness.

* * *

I thought the train would never come.
How slow the whistle sang!
I dont believe a peevish bird
So whimpered for the spring.

I taught my heart a hundred times
Precisely what to say—
Provoking lover, when you came
Its treatise flew away!

To hide my strategy, too late,
To wiser grow, too soon,
For miseries so halcyon
The happiness atone.

* * *

My heart ran so to thee
It would not wait for me,
And I discouraged grew
And drew away,

For whatsoe'er my pace
He first achieve thy face,
How general a grace
Allotted two!

Not in malignity
Mentioned I this to thee.
Had he obliquity
Soonest to share,

But for the greed of him
Boasting my premium,
Basking in Bethlehem
Ere I be there.

* * *

"Escape" is such a thankful word!
I often in the night
Consider it unto myself,
No citadel in sight.

"Escape"—it is the basket
In which the heart is caught
When down some awful battlement
The rest of life is dropped.

'Tis not to sight the savior,
It is to be the saved;
And that is why I lay my head
Upon this trusty word.

* * *

18	Third Quarter.	$	Cts.

We talked with
each other about
each other
though neither of
us spoke.
We were listening
to the Seconds'
Races
and the Hoofs of
the clock.
Pausing in front
of our Palsied
Faces
Time compassion
took.
Arks of Reprieve
Asylums
he offered to us.

Poem, "We talked with each other about each other"

Who never wanted—maddest joy
Remains to him unknown;
The banquet of abstemiousness
Surpasses that of wine.

Within its hope, though yet ungrasped
Desire's perfect goal,
No nearer, lest reality
Should disenthrall thy soul.[2]

* * *

I groped for him before I knew
With solemn nameless need,
All other bounty sudden chaff
For this foreshadowed food

Which others taste and spurn and slight,
Though I within suppose
That consecrated it could be
The only food that grows.

* * *

We talked with each other about each other
Though neither of us spoke—
We were listening to the seconds' races
And the hoofs of the clock.

Pausing in front of our palsied faces,
Time compassion took;
Arks of reprieve he offered to us,
Ararats we took.

* * *

"Secrets" is a daily word
Yet does not exist;
Muffled, it remits surmise,
Murmured, it has ceased.

Dungeoned in the human breast
Doubtless secrets lie,
But that grate inviolate
Comes nor goes away

Nothing with an ear or tongue;
Secrets stapled there
Will decamp but once, and armed,
To the sepulchre.

* * *

When a lover is a beggar
Abject is his knee;
When a lover is an owner
Different is he.

What he begged is then the beggar,
Oh, disparity!
Bread of heaven resents bestowal
Like an obloquy.

* * *

Let my first knowing be of thee
With morning's warming light,
And my first fearing, lest unknowns
Engulf thee in the night!

* * *

Tried always and condemned by thee,
Permit me this reprieve,
That trying, I may earn the look
For which I cease to live.

* * *

I have no life but this
To lead it here
Nor any death, but lest
Dispelled from there—

Nor plea for worlds to come
Nor wisdoms new
Except through this extent,
The loving you.[3]

* * *

Estranged from beauty none can be
For beauty is infinity,
And power to be finite ceased
When fate incorporated us,

2

Still own thee—still thou art
What surgeons call alive,
Though slipping, slipping I perceive
To thy reportless grave.

Which question shall I clutch?
What answer wrest from thee
Before thou dost exude away
In the recall-less sea?

* * *

To be forgot by thee
Surpasses memory
Of other minds;
The heart cannot forget
Unless it contemplate
What it declines.

I was considered, then,
Raised from oblivion
A single time
To be remembered! What?
Worthy to be forgot
Is my renown!
For one must recollect
Before it can forget.

Emily Dickinson—A Revelation

Sweet skepticism of the heart
That knows and does not know,
And tosses like a fleet of balm
Affronted by the snow,

Invites and then retards the truth,
Lest certainty be sere
Compared with the delicious throe
Of transport thrilled with fear.

* * *

A pang is more conspicuous in spring
In contrast with the things that sing—
Not birds entirely, but minds,
Minute effulgences and winds.

When what they sung for is undone
Who cares about a bluebird's tune?
Why, resurrection had to wait
Till they had moved a stone!

* * *

How firm eternity must look
To crumbling men like me,
The only adamant estate
In all identity!

How mighty to the insecure
Thy physiognomy,
To whom not any face cohere
Unless concealed in thee!

* * *

With pinions of disdain
The soul can farther fly
Than any feather certified
By ornithology.

It wafts this sordid flesh
Beyond its slow control,
And during its electric spell
The body is a soul.

Instructing by itself,
How little work it be
To put off filaments like this
For immortality!

* * *

More than the grave is closed to me—
The grave and that eternity
  To which the grave adheres.
I cling to nowhere till I fall.
The crash of nothing, yet of all,
  How similar appears!

* * *

Of paradise' existence
All we know
Is the uncertain certainty,
But its vicinity infer
By its bisecting
Messenger.

* * *

Lives he in any other world
My faith cannot reply;
Before it was imperative
All was distinct to me.

* * *

So give me back to death,
The death I never feared
Except that it deprived of thee;
And now, by life deprived,
In my own grave I breathe
And estimate its size—
Its size is all that hell can guess
And all that heaven surmise.

FOOTNOTES

1. The poems in this chapter are a sampling of those written during the last ten years of Emily Dickinson's life. Except as otherwise indicated all were published in *Bolts of Melody,* the text of which they follow. More than half of the seventy-six poems of which I have copies in her handwriting in the section of that book entitled "An Ablative Estate," which includes many of her most compressed and pregnant lines, date from the same years as the letters in Chapter V. Most of these poems are written in pencil on odds and ends of paper which my mother called "scraps." The strokes of the pencil are often faint and confused, the letters half-formed as if jotted down in the dark. This—together with the fact that within a given period Emily was not consistent in the way she formed her letters, capitals in particular, of which two different styles can sometimes be found on the same page—makes it unwise to ascribe to any poem a precise date of composition. It is safe to say, however, that most of the hundreds of "scraps" were written subsequent to Edward Dickinson's death in 1874. Previous to that time Emily had been in the habit of copying her poems on sheets of letter paper before tying them together in little "volumes," as her sister called them. The great quatrain,

   The vastest earthly day
   Is shrunken small
   By one defaulting face
   Behind a pall,

   written in the mid-seventies, is on the torn flap of an envelope. See Introduction to *Bolts of Melody,* and *The New England Quarterly,* Vol. XX, No. 1 (March, 1947), and Vol. XXII, No. 2 (June, 1949).

   Some of Emily Dickinson's most profound poems on death and immortality date from this late prolific period. "It may surprise you that I speak of God," she wrote Judge Lord. Often their images seem to merge.
2. *Poems,* Third Series, 1896, p. 63.
3. In this late version of the poem first published in *Poems,* Second Series, 1891, page 90, several alternative words and phrases are suggested.

My God - what is a Heart,
Silver - or Gold - or
precious Stone.
Or Star - or Rainbow -
or a part
Of all these things - or
all of them in one?

My God - what is a Heart.

Verso

That thou shouldst it so
eye and woo
Pouring upon it all thy
art
as if that thou hadst
nothing else to do -

Stanzas two and three of "Matins" by George Herbert, copied by Emily Dickinson during the last years of her life

My God, what is a heart,
Silver, or gold, or precious stone,
Or star, or rainbow, or a part
Of all these things, or all of them in one?

My God, what is a heart,
That thou shoulds't it so eye and woo,
Pouring upon it all thy art,
As if that thou hads't nothing else to do!

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