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TWO UNLISTED EMILY DICKINSON POEMS

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As early as 1895, when only Poems and Poems: Second Series had been published, it was known that many verses by Emily Dickinson had not yet appeared in print. But it is interesting to guess if it were then believed possible that the world would have to wait until 1945 for Bolts of Melody, after having seen Poems: Third Series (1896), the incorrectly titled Complete Poems (1924), Further Poems (1929), the Centenary Edition (1930), Unpublished Poems (1935), and finally The Poems of Emily Dickinson (1937) which included all the material of the preceding collections. During the course of these various publications and other bits of Emily’s verses which came to light, two bibliographies came out, one by Alfred Leete Hampson (Northampton, 1930) and the other by the Jones Library (Amherst, 1930). There were four books containing letters, four other biographical studies, the most notable being George F. Whicher’s This Was a Poet (New York, 1938), and most recently Millicent Todd Bingham’s account of her mother’s work as first editor of the Dickinson poems, in Ancestors’ Brocades (New York, 1945).

Two of Emily’s poems which had not been found by 1930, when the bibliographies were compiled, have recently been given to the Colby College Library in the original publication that printed them: the semi-monthly Chap-Book (Chicago: Stone & Kimball), Vol. III, No. 11, October 15, 1895. The tiny periodical also contains an advertisement of a new edition of Thomas Hardy’s works by

Buried in the middle of a section called simply “Notes” and with no other heading than a paragraph marker are the two Emily Dickinson verses and a few sentences of critical comment. The anonymous editor says of her poems, the first of which begins, “A clamor in the treetops,” that they treat of solemn subjects in a large familiar manner, which was part of her inheritance from Emerson.

The curious may seek out this poem, either in the Colby College Library copy of *The Chap-Book* (page 446), or in the *Springfield Republican*, where it was reprinted immediately after its first 1895 appearance. It was printed a third time in the Emily Dickinson Issue of the *Smith College Monthly* for November 1941 (p. 11). Neither this poem, nor the second one, has appeared in any book.

Professor Whicher, to whom I am indebted for this information, says the other little epigram, uncharacteristic of her, was, according to a vague tradition, “composed impromptu by Emily at a party when she was still a very young girl.” While one may agree with Dr. Whicher that “it ought never to be offered as a serious poetic effort of a mature poet,” it will hardly harm her reputation to publish here the few lines of doggerel which have not been previously reprinted:

If God upon the seventh day
Did rest from all his labors,
He was either tired of his job
Or feared to shock the neighbors.

If not, why didn’t he complete
The task he set his hand to,
Instead of leaving us this mess
Of water he put land to?