Chapter Three

Sense of Isolation in Toru Dutt and Emily Dickinson

TORU DUTT

I. Domestic Tragedies

The death of her elder sister Aru heightened and deepened her sense of isolation. She was her only constant literary companion and soul mate. It is recorded in Harihar Das’s Life and Letters of Toru Dutt that when Toru was five years of age, the two sisters made a trial of a certain Biblical advice pointing to Christ’s statement that if a man strikes you on one cheek, he should show the other too. Aru asked Toru whether as a Christian, she would follow the concept. Toru nodded and the elder sister slapped her. She cried out loud without retaliating to the childish mean act. This incident shows the deep influence of Christianity from their earliest years and the child-like intimacy between the two sisters. In their travels abroad, the wealth of experience was shared and projected in their journals and letters written home to cousins and friends. They studied, wrote and illustrated together. It is with perfect ease that Govin Chunder Dutt says, “It was ever thus that Aru walked under Toru’s protection and guidance. The fostering wing of the younger was stretched forth from earliest childhood to protect the more gentle elder sister.”

With Aru’s death, on July twenty third, 1874, Toru’s passion for foreign literature began to fade and an awakening to her own literature began. Thus the study of Sanskrit was started with the help of Govin Chunder Dutt. Eventually when a Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields reached the public, Toru was ardently working at Sanskrit amid recurring bouts of cough and fever, to bring out A Sheaf Gleaned in Sanskrit Fields. She wrote urgently and with lurking premonitions that she too must soon follow her well-loved brother and sister. Ancient Ballads and Legends of
Hindustan which stemmed as a result has many inaccuracies that would have been smoothened out had Toru been spared from sickness and early death.

Near Hastings reflects Toru's gratitude towards an English stranger who gave Aru some roses as a token of friendship

"She past us, - then she came again,

Observing at a glance,

That we were strangers; One, in pain, -

Then asked, - were we from France?

We talked awhile, - some roses red

That seemed as wet with tears,

She gave my sister, and she said,

"God bless you both, my dears!" ^2

It is a memory poem, echoing a bitter - sweet nostalgia for the pleasant past. A tribute to Aru's memory, it also awakens Toru's sad longing for those old days spent among snow, mist and spring flowers. It recognizes her own misgivings about returning to the country of her education, England. Her best of life in Calcutta is only a pale shadow of that which was in England.

"It is pretty cold here now, like English spring weather, and the mornings are almost sure to be ushered in by a slight mist which puts me in mind of Longfellow's lines:

"And resembles sorrow only,

As the mist resembles rain." ^3
A.N. Dwivedi in his *Toru Dutt* gives us a beautiful pen-picture of Aru—"..... she lacked the power, the fire, the originality of her sister, but was well endowed with quiet virtues of her own. Long-suffering, self-denying, reflective and intelligent, a constitutional reserve and taciturnity kept her in the shade and covered her mind and feelings with a sort of nun-like veil which was rarely lifted. ---- In the enthusiasm for Toru, one is likely to lose sight of her elder sister, but it is not proper in view of the sterling quality of her work."4

II. Transition of Faith

Toru’s family became Christians when she was but a child of five. For Kshetramoni Mitter, her mother, it must have been hard, having lived for long, with the magic of ancient folklore and legends of Bharat strongly imprinted in her heart and mind. But she did her duty as devoted Hindu wives always did - follow her husband’s footsteps. The speed and fullness with which Christianity was accepted, is visible in the translation of the book *The Blood of Jesus* into Bengali. She also left a handsome sum as contribution to the local church.

For Govin Chunder Dutt, it was a decision taken with integrity and honor. Apart from respecting his father Rasamoy Dutt’s wish, Christianity had already touched his way of life. He had come to know the spiritual freedom that the religion of the West brought and experienced a loosening of the body and will which had hitherto been bound by the shackles of superstitions. Western literature had touched his creativity and his contribution to *the Dutt Family Album* was qualitatively superior to many of the other contributions, though it was didactic, Wordsworthian and bound in ‘artistic swaddling clothes’. Later, he bore with heroic strength the deaths of his beloved son and daughter, Abju and Aru with faith as the cornerstone.
In such surroundings where faith was predominant yet not fanatic, Toru was able to experience the embalming serenity from the new religion. Like her great ancestor Ashoka, who found that the truth in every religion is universal, Toru cultivated respect and tolerance towards other faiths. Through her ballads and legends she tries to sustain this positive effect of all beliefs.

In the ballad, *the Royal Ascetic and the Hind*, Toru infuses her own theory on asceticism and the duty of man. She is pleased with King Bharat, the protagonist as far as he remained loyal to his sceptre and crown. At the renunciation of his kingdom and home, to embrace asceticism for gaining complete mastery over the soul, Toru turns into a stern school-mistress who chides her truant saying.

"Not in seclusion, not apart from all,
Not in a place elected for its peace,
But in the heart and bustle of his world,
’Mid sorrow, sickness, suffering and sin,
Must he still labour with a loving soul,
Who strives to enter through the narrow gate.”

Toru conveys that the way to salvation lies in man’s own allocated surroundings than in any Utopia conjured up by his imagination. Dwivedi points out “the poem ends with the spirited defence of the hermit king’s conduct and a condemnation of the ideal of asceticism. ……... She goes so far that she forgets altogether that she is dealing with an old legend - her main purpose. In so doing she is both naive and interesting. She has been able to assert her individuality and modern outlook upon life.”
The Tree of Life is a poetic vision. In this noble and pathetic piece, Toru’s pain at unrealisable dreams is poignant. She longs for poetic fame to cross her path, for she knew that was the only avenue still lying open for her. She was conscious of her ensuing death and the infancy stage of her career. Time and corporeal frame were getting out of reach for her young genius. Lying low in sickness and pain, she sees a pleasant vision of herself being crowned as a great poet in the future. No resentment flares in these lines, when the dream vision fades,

“..........................then, all at once

Opened my tear-dimmed eyes - when lo! The light -

Was gone - the light as of the stars where snow

Lies deep upon the ground. No more, no more,

Was seen the Angel’s face. I only found

My father watching patiently by my bed,

And holding in his own close-prest, my hand.”

Her physical pain must have only increased as her emotional crisis deepened. She craved to live longer, to write better and she knew it wouldn’t be. Life in Bengal was tough for Toru’s sensitivity though she lived cloistered with care and indulgence at home. She could not go further in her career even if she wished, for even brilliant Indians under the European rule had their limitations and misgivings.

III. Social Bengal

Toru’s independent spirit was chained by social limitations. In pre-independent Bengal, one must be a rebel to get what one aspires. She was neither a rebel nor a fanatic. Her antagonism found expression in her works. She had proved her mettle through the publication of the Sheaf
Gleaned In French Fields and continual contribution of articles, essays and poems to the Bengal Magazine. It was her iron strength that made her stand singularly alone when her female contemporaries were shrouded in ignorance and superstition. Toru’s feminine nature is visible when we see the simple, yet all-comprehensive medium she chose to express herself - writing. In isolation that was inevitable to a Bengali of the nineteenth century, Toru’s consolation was her ability to learn more and express herself. At first she found much in French and English life, wrought parallels in her imagination. Her mind was either immature in the early stage of her career or it had still not awakened by the many small freedom waves that swept throughout India. Her happy disposition was content to draw life from French and English society. But even in these early writings, what drew Toru more was the concept of freedom. In the Sheaf, Victor Hugo dominates and it is not mere coincidence. Hugo’s love for freedom well might have been Toru’s own. Her choice of Hugo’s poem The Universal Republic can portray her hope for her own country, which she has subtly expressed in her original poems.

“O vision of future time

O Prospect glorious and sublime

..................

And Earth and sky their bridal sing,

E’er now the eye that high up towers,

The bright dream sees - no shadow lowers,

..................

The past has Hate - is o’er his reign

Thy name is love, thou coming Day.”

8
The faith and strength found in these lines appeals to Toru. Mlle. Clarisse Bader feels that Toru's Indian ancestry caused the romantic poetry of the nineteenth century to arouse her interest rather than the Classicists.

It is this same spirit of freedom that is found in Toru's beloved heroine Savitri of the Legends. The heart that loved the free spirit of France and French writers began to turn to her own rich ancient past, to see if there were parallels and she found them abundantly. It was with enthusiasm and gratitude, more also as an eye-opener that she wrote to Mlle. Bader after her perusal of La Femme dans l'Inde Antique, "I cannot say, dear mademoiselle, how much your affection for my countrywomen and my country touches me; for you love them; your book and your letter show it plainly; and I am proud to be able to say that the heroines of our grand epics are worthy of all honour and love. Can there be a more touching and lovable heroine than Sita? I do not think so." She was both ashamed and touched to read the noble lives and deeds of her country women of ancient times from a book written by a foreigner. Soon she was asking permission to translate the French original.

Though time was denied to Toru to bring out her translation, her love and affection for the heroines of yore is found in the poem Savitri. Toru's Savitri has her differences too from the ancient princess. Toru does not hesitate to detour from the original to suit her purposes. She always had a message to pass on to her readers, through her translations, her personal poems and her legends. Her Savitri is braver, more independent and self-willed, a touch of modernity that she deliberately adds in addition to the ancient, demure, child-like, pure picture of the princess Savitri.

"If Fate so rules, that I should feel

The miseries of a widow's life

60
Can man's device the doom repeal?

Unequal seems to be a strife,
Between Humanity and Fate;

..................

The Right must be our guiding star;
Duty our watch ward, come what may;

Judge for me, friends, - as wiser far.”

S V Mukherji in his *Disjecta Membra - Studies in Literature and Life* adds, “the chief thing in Savitri’s life that attracted the vehement soul of Tom was that she could not but have been the child of a society of freedom. *No purdah* or early marriage could have evolved her, this daughter of the Madra King - ancestress perhaps of the modern Amazon, wild-eyed and free - if only they knew it.”

It is inevitable for Tom to feel isolated in the *purdah*-clad community of Bengal. Her letters to Mary are flooded with descriptions of numerous incidents that occurred in Bengal which were detrimental to the career of any intelligent Bengali. She speaks about certain cruel acts occasioned as a result of the foreign rule. In all these sayings there is a hint of unwilling resignation on her part. The thought of a free-India was still far from her being and the English rule was not favourable. To Mary she writes, “You are indignant at the way some Anglo-Indians speak of India and her inhabitants. What would you think if you read some of the Police reports which appear in the Indian daily papers?” and she goes on to narrate a few incidents on various occasions. As a writer who was coming into her own, Tom must have surely resented the foreign
intervention and her own country’s helplessness. This emotional resurgence could have made her utter with doubting confidence “.........and sometimes when I am attristee I think it would be better to live here in my own country all my life, but this thought does not occur often.”

IV. Pre Independent Bengal

Toru alternately waded between pathos and versatility amidst physical discomforts and prolonged medications. Sometimes she is engulfed in despair and at other times, she rises to the occasion to applaud. In A Scene from Contemporary History she has translated two speeches given by Victor Hugo and M.Thiers in the French Legislative assembly in 1851 and 1870 respectively. These appeared in 1874 in the Bengal Magazine. In the speeches, the respective speakers favour a Republican form of government and Tom adds her own fire and valour to the lines. It is certain then that wherever men spoke of freedom, Tom applauded and she longed for freedom to enter the gates of her country. She felt deeply at the hopelessness of the occurrence, acutely aware of the handful who have seen light in her motherland. Dwivedi has only pointed out Tom’s technical flaws in the translations. “They show that she had crossed the stage of slavish and literal translation. In several passages she aptly expressed the thought of the speaker. But she failed to do this uniformly and sometimes she could not fully grasp the thought contained in the original.”

Her political morality finds its voice in her ballads too. In Prahlad, the Narasimha avatar of Vishnu contains Toru’s rage and fury against oppression and faithlessness. The image of Narasimha holds Toru’s cup of future hope and peace.

“He had a lion head and eyes,

A human body, feet and hands,
Colossal, - such strange shapes arise,
In clouds, when Autumn rules the lands!
He gave a shout; - the boldest quailed
Then struck the tyrant on the helm,
And ripped him down;..............”15

N Parvathi Devi, in her thesis on love and sex in the poetry of Toru Dutt says, “Toru’s sense of national freedom makes her interpret the fourth avatar of Vishnu in a new way. The half-lion, half-human form is said to be ‘lion-strength’ of the suffering millions.”16

V. Emotional alienation

It would be outrageous to suggest that Toru at any stage in her life was denied the joys and pangs of love. In Bianca, Lord Moore is an epitome of a courageous man, strong in head, heart and physical attributes. He hardly has any flaws. This ideal manhood appeals to the heroine Bianca, who herself is the epitome of ideal womanhood. ‘Love at first sight’ is the feeling that steers Bianca’s heart towards Lord Moore. But she is conditioned by social norms and after Lord Moore’s kiss, when she experiences her first feelings of bliss, she feels guilty and confesses to her father. Mr. Garcia’s reaction is equally conventional and idealistic. He shows anger, expressing his dislike for playing at love, for he is intimidated by the idea of an alliance between Lord Moore and his daughter. Having upset her father and succumbed to rashness, Bianca develops fever and delirium. Ultimately Mr. Garcia realises the futility of separating two true lovers and gives his consent for the marriage. The novel breaks off with the assurance that Bianca and Lord Moore have found happiness in each other. The sadness lies in the uncertainty of love’s fulfilment in
their lives, as the Lord goes to war leaving behind his heart and a ring with Bianca, who is destined to wait for him.

The love of Bianca and Lord Moore thrived under ideal conditions. As said earlier, the reason for the unfinished status of the novel is uncertain. It is a likely possibility that the novel has autobiographical touches. For it is impossible for Toru with her leanings towards the romantic, to have ever remained frigid to the passion of the heart. If this is true, the breaking off of the novel is not a mere coincidence. A similar occurrence was likely. Toru was waiting after her lover departed and true to herself, it was impossible to continue the story. He could have departed either to pursue a career abroad or died, one never knows. Toru would have waited and thus remained waiting. One cannot assume the course that supposed affair has taken.

N. Parvathi Devi sees a conflict between a woman’s natural inclination and the guilt that arises from social conditioning. She mentions that as Christian Toru and Bianca believe in inner purity. 

In either case Toru’s mind harbours on the unhappy side of love. Unfulfilled love is the theme of Bianca. The lovers find temporary joy, soon to be separated by destiny. Toru’s own belief in fate and destiny as is expressed in her ballads is transferred to her characters. She believed in the physical expression of love also and in Bianca, the call of duty denies the lovers this gift. In Toru, such a denial could have left her lonely and wanting.

The same theme recurs in Marguerite, with certain differences. Marguerite’s love was one sided and good that it was so, for Count Dunois does not possess much integrity of character.
When she finally marries the one who loves her and soon dies in childbirth, the story attains a lull after the stormy scenes preceding it - the fratricide, the suicide and the madness. It is an anticlimax that Marguerite learns to love Louis Lefevre, a man of character, but for whom she feels no fiery passion. For Toru, it was fitting to make Marguerite sleep the “sleep of death.” Though Marguerite and Louis Lefevre found conjugal bliss and joy at the birth of their son, Toru could not compromise with her ideal belief that love can occur only once in a woman’s heart and never again. Hence, Marguerite “closed her eyes; her lips parted slightly, and pure soul flew thence to the bosom of God.............”  

VI. Linguistic Alienation

This separation was the worst Toru faced at first unknowingly and later silently. Her one year struggle with Sanskrit and her urgency noticeable in the ballads by a keen reader, is a touching struggle and tale of a voice who wants to say so much but lacks experience, time, wisdom of the ages and knowledge of one’s own mother-tongue.

EMILY DICKINSON

I. Father Dominance

Edward Dickinson carried on the legacy left by his father Samuel Fowler Dickinson, in a more realistic manner. Samuel Dickinson lost his fortunes and died homeless due to his ardent charity and service. Edward too held many offices of state, but never let down his family fortunes. The delineation of his character could be drawn simply through external evidences. He had to balance with his manifold duties as a devoted husband, father, businessman, professional,
politician and leader. He failed as a son, which he regretted later. In his busy professional life, he missed out on the many beauties of life. He was too sternly preoccupied to watch his children grow, though his mind dwelt on their interests several times a day. He did his share, however meagre, in taking his family out for social occasions - there were concerts, music, walks and rides. Brought up as Samuel Fowler’s son, in stern duty and obedience, he allowed no laxity of these virtues in his life. In the late puritan New England society of Amherst, art and literature began to get a prominence over stern puritan idealism of the previous decades. Edward wrote to his fiancee Emily Norcross, later Emily’s mother of his own disposition thus, “I am naturally quiet and ardent in my feelings, easily excited, tho’ not so easily provoked - decided in my opinion - determined in accomplishing whatever I undertake- hard to be persuaded that I am wrong when I have once formed my opinion upon reflection - sometimes unyielding and obstinate - rather particular .....”19 He goes on in this strain and we get a picture of a man who will not compromise on quality. In maturity, which came early to this upright puritan gentleman, he became lonely. To Higginson Emily wrote, “When I think of my father’s lonely life and lonelier death, there is this redress, -

“Take all away;
The only thing worth larceny
Is left - the Immortality.” 20 (Poem 1365)

He was inclined to reading, literature and writing of verses. But the spirit of the muses died in him early as he was a man who maintained his balance on all matters of the heart, mind and soul. The irony is that he is remembered and is a subject of discussion now is because his
daughter was not like him. She followed her heart's desire and wrote poetry excluding all other requirements of life. She remained neuter, except in her poetry. Edward failed her because he was a well-balanced man who believed in leading a well-balanced life. He had a vision for his life and he kept to the straight roads. He had no time or thought for any deviations. It was good that he did not deviate to pry into Emily's poetry, for then we would not have got the work of her singular imagination. Edward would have made remarks and Emily would have been confused. Her remark, "............. he never played, and the straightest engine has its leaning hour," is proof enough of the manner in which this New - England chief affected his daughter. He affected her closely yet distantly.

Edward Dickinson obliquely became the theme for much of Emily's verses. He is given an omnipresent quality for Emily cannot write without the effect of Edward's life upon her. She defined poetry to Higginson, "If I read a book and it makes my whole body so cold no fire can warm me, I know that is poetry. If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, that is poetry. These are the only ways I know. Is there any other way?" He affected her sensibility - he affected her nerves. He made her his dutiful daughter during the day and the poet at night. Unconscious himself of the electric power he exuded upon his daughter, he roamed the land in blissful ignorance and leadership. Emily drew from him the inspiration to write after day is done. Father and daughter cannot stand each other's presence because a tired and strained Edward was aware of his daughter's nerve drawing power. As Higginson exclaimed to his wife how without giving she drew from one's nerves - "I am glad not to live near her". In her vision of God, Master, Preceptor, Lover, Husband, Edward's presence is inevitable. In repudiating him, she also was aware of his dominance over her. In poem 835 Edward identifies with nature.
"Nature and God, I neither knew,

Yet both, so well knew me

They statled, like executors

Of an identity

Yet neither told, that I could learn;

My secret as secure

As Herschel's private interest,

Or Mercury’s affair.”

The poem was sent to Mrs. Samuel Bowles. She was obliquely referring to her plight. She was telling the truth ever so slantingly. Edward and God are co-conspirators to outsmart Emily. The “Eclipse” which her father addressed every day was his friend and just as she found her father incomprehensible, his God was also a stranger to her. But she knew that they know her because they are acknowledged persons. In her imagination, if Edward came to know her unconventional attitude towards writing poetry, he would thwart all her plans and would not even ask her to improve as Higginson does. Hence she secures her secret away from them to display it before strangers like Higginson. In running away thus from her own native front, she experiences isolation.

In her teenage years, when she wrote to Abiah, she personifies nature’s various phases. *Jack Frost, Old Father Time, Old Winter, Old King Frost, Father Mortality* are indications of her preference for Edward to Emily Norcross, her mother. She wanted his laurel to proceed.
When denied such blessings from him and consequent preceptors, she retired to work for a future audience when she would be lost “in the sod.”

Her early insecurities and reservations are expressed - “Father wishes to have me at home a year, and then he will probably send me away again, where I know not…..”

Poem 1059 is one of supplication, possibly even to Edward.

“Sang from the Heart, Sire,
Dipped my Beak in it,
If the Tune drip too much
Have a tint too Red.

“Pardon the Cochineal -
Suffer the Vermilion -
Death is the Wealth
Of the poorest Bear.

“Bear with the Ballad -
Awkward - faltering -
Death twists the strings -
’Twasn’t my blame -

“Pause in your Liturgies -
Wait your Chorals -
While I repeat your
Hallowed name-"

Emily’s verse that pours out her heart and senses is concentrated with life’s blood. If the verse is not saved. Death can ensue. Edward is requested to Pause in his routine Liturgies and hymns, to listen to his daughter’s song of agony and life.

II. Death and Immortality

Higginson said in Emily’s funeral speech that she often read Emily Bronte’s poem Last Lines that begin with No Coward Soul Is Mine to Lavinia and that this “poem on Immortality was a favourite of [her] who has put it on - if she could ever have been said to have put it off.”25 Death and Immortality were Emily’s twin identities. She was obsessed with the concept of death and the truth about Immortality. At first doubts were few as children do concerning solid matters which were always there when eyes begin to see and ears hear. During the cat years of her adolescence, Emily’s array of questions took shape - “I have perfect confidence in God and His promises, and yet I know not why I feel that the world holds a predominant place in my affections....”26

Leonard Humphrey, her tutor at the Academy died in 1851. He was followed by Benjamin Franklin Newton in 1853. Both were early friends and Ben Newton was her “grave preceptor.” Nine years her senior, Ben must have spoken to her about immortality and death. While working in her father’s office for two years, he helped her with a wide reading and
encouraged her writing - "My dying Tutor told me that he would like to live till I had been a poet, but death was much of Mob as I could master-then." 27

It is evident that Ben was the only source of encouragement Emily met with briefly and lost. She had written to Higginson twenty years later, with warm nostalgia, of Ben Newton. This friend who taught her Immortality in the morning of her life lingered with her till the end, as all the years after his death, Immortality occupied the forefront of Emily’s thoughts and writings. Perhaps, Emily’s occupation with these two aspects was a faithful memoir to her hidden poetic career. She never met anyone who remotely resembled Ben; his death objectively forms the matter in several poems. For a year after his death, she was struggling to seek the answer - whether her friend has passed from death to life. She enquired of it to a certain Reverend Mr. Edward Everett Hale, Ben’s minister at Worcester. In the spring of 1876, twenty-three years later, Newton was still fresh in her memory, as she wrote - “My earliest friend wrote me the week before he died. “If I live, I will go to Amherst - if I die, I certainly will.” 28

Ben kept his promise and Emily’s isolation could be conjectured as a tribute to the earliest friend who taught her Immortality and wished to see her a poet. He remained the solid reality to Emily’s world.

Poem 5 is full of initial optimism, written probably after Ben Newton’s death.

“I have a Bird in spring
Which for myself doth sing -
The spring decoys.
And as the summer nears -  
And as Rose appears.  
Robin is gone.

"Yet do I not repine
Knowing that Bird of mine
Though flown -
Leameth beyond the sea
Melody new for me
And will return.

"In a serener Bright, 
In a more golden light 
I see
Each little doubt and fear, 
Each little discord here
Removed.

Richard Benson Sewall says "His death, coming at a time when the distance between Emily and all her young friends was growing, cut off her most promising hope for literary guidance and encouragement. Looking back, she may have seen how serious his loss was, and our wonder lessens at her hyperbole when she told Higginson in 1862 that "for several years, my Lexicon - was my only companion."" 29
III. Puritanism

It may be defined as a form of Christian worship where the emphasis is on Biblical readings and based on it, to evoke a pure form of prayer and adoration. Reading other than the Bible was strictly prohibited on Sundays. Moreover, it also scrutinises the minute details of everyday affairs, prohibiting even the normal and ordinary pleasures of life. A stoical asceticism was emphasised. Education was found on a strong religious basis and it was reserved the first preference in schools and colleges.

Emily's nature was alien to the sombre aspects of Puritanism. It was in Mount Holyoke Seminary she came face to face with the hard teachings of the faith. In Amherst Academy the teachings of liberal minded leaders like Professor Edward Hitchcock was easier to concede. Hitchcock, scientifically combined the beauties of nature and religion to produce a wholly beautiful view of life. Emily was influenced by this master craftsman as many of her poems reveal the eternal divinity entwined in nature to produce an immortal verse.

"Some keep the sabbath going to Church-
I Keep it, staying at Home -
With a Bobolink for a Chorister-
And an Orchard, for a Dome -

"Some keep the Sabbath in Surplice -
I just wear my wings -
And instead of tolling the Bell, for Church,
Our little Sexton - sings.
“God preaches, a noted clergyman -
And the sermon is never long,
So instead of getting to Heaven, at last -
I'm going, all along.” (Poem 324)

To listen to the local choir's singing is tedious for Emily. They, like her father, are addressing "an Eclipse" in closed rooms. She is staying at home and hearing a bobolink's melody. She does not have to hear the long monotonous sermons of clergymen. Here, God Himself is the renowned preacher who gives a short, pithy speech and drives home a point. In such company, with God and Nature as Emily's companions, it is least surprising that Emily's life is one long journey home to her Heaven which she had never stopped contemplating. Others by their good works and hardships well-borne, can hope to reach Heaven. For Emily, she creates her own little Heaven below to make her journey to the higher home, a pleasanter experience.

As early as eighteen sixty, Emily experiences the difference. In the seminary she had felt the knowledge of the unchanging truth about herself - that the world holds her affection and love, however in retirement can she hold forth.

Poem 1545 is a turning away from the concrete aspects of Christianity.

"The Bible is an antique volume -
Written by faded Men
At the suggestion of Holy Spectres -
Subjects - Bethlehem - 
Eden - the ancient Homestead - 
Satan - the Brigadier - 
Judas - the Great Defaulter - 
David - the Troubadour - 
Sin - a distinguished Precipice 
Others must resist - 
Boys that "believe" are very lonesome - 
Other Boys are "lost" - 
Had but the Tale a warbling Teller - 
All the Boys would come - 
Orpheus' Sermon captivated - 
It did not condemn - "

The poet's condemnation of a sectarian form of worship is relevant in the poem. It denotes the Bible as an ancient tragi-comedy with its *dramatis personae*. The plight of the "lonesome" boys is touching. The comparison with the sermon of Orpheus is a fitting inference.

The poem is supposedly written in 1882 when Emily had turned fifty-two. In the earlier poems God is an earthly companion who gently preaches. As old age dawned upon Emily, her spirit is one of dejection. As the drama of her life is being played out, the faith of her fathers becomes a stage-play to her mind. And they are all "boys" who are lonesome, a tribute to her dead father whose "lonely life and lonelier death" affected her.
IV. Dickinson Civil War

This is variously termed as "the war between the houses." Austin Dickinson's personal unhappiness affected his devoted sister, Emily. Her long-term affection for her old friend and sister-in-law Susan Huntington Gilbert, waned, as the whole town of Amherst watched curiously the differences of opinion that loomed large in the Dickinson homes. Susan, popularly known as Sue, was thoroughly disliked by many in Amherst and Austin turned a lonely and unhappy man except for his daily visit to his two sisters.

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Chap. One, Chap Three

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19 Richard Benson Sewall, *The Life of Emily Dickinson.* P.50

20,21,22 Emily Dickinson, *The Letters of Emily Dickinson.* Pp.267,222,265

23 Richard Benson Sewall, *Life,* P.567

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