**Master. / If you saw a bullet**  (A 828)

**Date:** Composed, or possibly copied from an earlier draft (initial or intermediate, not extant), in ink, and revised both during composition or copying in ink and again on a separate but temporally close occasion in pencil, ca. summer–autumn 1861.

**Material:** 2 folded sheets (4 leaves; each leaf = 202 × 127 mm) of laid, cream, blue-ruled stationery embossed with a decorative frame (13 × 11 mm) containing a queen's head above the letter L and later folded horizontally by hand into thirds.

**Provenance:** Discovered among Dickinson's papers after her death.

**Initial custody:** Unsent in Dickinson's lifetime; no evidence of circulation of a copy of or similar to this document has been found.

**Secondary custody:** MS may have passed from Lavinia Norcross Dickinson to Mabel Loomis Todd, ca. 1891(?); from Todd to Millicent Todd Bingham, ca. 1932; and from Bingham to Amherst College, 1956, where it was catalogued by Jay Leyda and assigned the number A 828.

**Current custody:** Amherst College Archives & Special Collections.

**Publication history:** MLT 1894, pp. 422–23 (six sentences only); MLT 1931, p. 411 (six sentences only); MTB 1955, pp. 422–30, entire, in facsimile; THJ 1958, L 233; YH 1960, II, 22–23; RWF 1986, pp. 31–46, in facsimile with transcript; RWF 1998, Fr 190 (three verse lines only); CM 2016, p. 528 (three verse lines only).

**Summary of authorial interventions in the text:**
The nature of the revisions ED made to this document strongly suggest that she worked on the text on two separate occasions, creating two significantly different versions. The notes below are keyed to the second (later) version of the text; unless otherwise noted, the revisions were carried out in the later scene of writing and revision. Through the notes I hope to represent the integrity of the texts in time and to mark the non-identity of the first and second versions of the text.

Sheet 1, leaf 1, verso, line 12: ED used eight diagonal pencil slashes to cancel "hid –" and then proposed the variant "Master –" above the line.

Sheet 1, leaf 1, recto, line 13: ED wrote "I dont" over "He" in ink; the "H" is carefully reworked into the "I". [First scene of composition and revision.]

Sheet 1, leaf 1, verso, lines 4–7: ED used multiple diagonal pencil slashes to cancel each word of the following passage, leaving only four words uncanceled: "in the Redeemed – I didn’t / tell you for a long time – but / I knew you had altered me – / I was tired – no more –".

Sheet 1, leaf 1, verso, line 7: ED added "and" in pencil above "was": "and was tired – no more"; her penciled "×" mark added above "more" points the reader to three verse lines at the end of the text possibly meant for insertion here: "+ No Rose, yet felt myself / a'bloom, / No Bird – yet rode in Ether –".

Sheet 1, leaf 1, verso, lines 7–11: ED used pencil crosshatching to cancel the following passage: "so dear / did this stranger become, that / were it, or my breath – the / alternative – I had tossed / the fellow away with a smile."

Sheet 1, leaf 1, verso, line 19: ED penciled "can" above "never"; she may be proposing it as a variant for "never" ("...if I can forget...") or an addition ("...if I can never forget...").

Sheet 1, leaf 2, recto, line 15: ED used multiple diagonal pencil slashes to cancel "but".

Sheet 1, leaf 2, recto, line 15: ED carefully reworked the "e" in "breast". [First scene of composition and revision.]

Sheet 1, leaf 2, recto, line 21: ED used multiple diagonal pencil slashes to cancel "reverent" and then proposed the variant reading "holy" (also in pencil) above it.

Sheet 1, leaf 2, recto, line 22: ED used multiple diagonal pencil slashes to cancel "reverently" and then proposed the variant "hallowed" (also in pencil) above it.

Sheet 1, leaf 2, verso, line 2: ED used multiple diagonal ink slashes to cancel "our". [First scene of composition and revision.]

Sheet 1, leaf 2, verso, line 6: ED revised the line in pencil, first canceling "They" with multiple diagonal pencil slashes, then adding the underscored numerals "1" and "2" above the line to indicate a change in word order. The original line in ink,"They said a syllable – one of them –", subsequently reads "one of them – said a syllable –".

Sheet 1, leaf 2, verso, line 14: ED first added "remember that" in ink above the line [first scene of composition and revision]; then later [second scene of revision] she used multiple diagonal pencil slashes to cancel both words and the space between them.

Sheet 1, leaf 2, verso, line 17: ED added the letter "n" in pencil, changing "ever" to "never".
Sheet 2, leaf 1, recto, line 2: ED added the words "like you –" in pencil above the line: "– but if I had the Beard on / my cheek – like you – and you – had Daisy's / petals".

Sheet 2, leaf 1, recto, line 5: ED added the word "me" in pencil above the line: "Could you forget me in fight, or / flight –".

Sheet 2, leaf 1, recto, line 14: ED used six diagonal pencil slashes to cancel "Eternity" and then proposed the variant "Heaven", also in pencil, above the line. At the same time, she penciled in the word "too", squeezing it into the line to achieve the reading "... but the / 'Corporation' are going too – so Heaven / wont be sequestered..."

Sheet 2, leaf 1, recto, line 15: ED continued revising the line in pencil, using multiple diagonal slash marks to cancel "at all –" and then proposing the variant "now" above the line: "... but the / 'Corporation' are going too – so Heaven / wont be sequestered – at all now –".

Sheet 2, leaf 1, recto, line 18: ED used six diagonal pencil slashes to cancel "country" and then proposed the variant "fold" (also in pencil) above the line.

Sheet 2, leaf 1, verso, line 5: ED used five diagonal pencil slashes to cancel "of" then proposed the variant "for" (also in pencil) above the line.

Sheet 2, leaf 1, verso, line 16: ED used twelve diagonal pencil slashes to cancel "this summer"; she then used six diagonal pencil slashes to cancel "could" proposing the variant "would" (also in pencil) above the line.

Sheet 2, leaf 1, verso, lines 19–20: ED used twenty diagonal pencil slashes to strike out each word of the lines: "Would it do harm – yet we both / fear God –".

Sheet 2, leaf 2, recto, line 8: ED used twenty-three diagonal pencil slashes to strike through each word of the question with which the initial version of the text ends: "Will you tell me if you will?"

Sheet 2, leaf 2, recto, lines 10–12: ED skipped a line and then added three lines in pencil: "I didn't think to tell you, you / didn't come to me 'in white' – / nor ever told me why –"; when the sheet is open, the lines almost mirror the echoing lines on the verso of sheet 2, leaf 1, verso: "What would you do with me / if I came 'in white'?"

Sheet 2, leaf 2, recto, lines 14–16: ED skipped another line and then added three more lines in pencil: "+ No Rose, yet felt myself / a'bloom, / No Bird – yet rode in Ether –".

These lines, keyed for insertion on sheet 1, leaf 1 (verso), at line 7, also appear to be the last words she wrote when she returned to revise the text.
If you saw a bullet
hit a Bird - and he told you
he wasn’t shot - you might weep
at his courtesy, but you would
certainly doubt his word -
One drop more from the gash
that stains your Daisy’s
bosom - then would you believe?
Thomas’ faith in Anatomy - was
stronger than his faith in faith.
God made me - Sir - I didn’t
be - myself - I don’t know how
it was done - He built the
heart in me - Bye and bye
it outgrew me - and like
the little mother - with the
big child - I got tired
holding him - I heard of a
thing called “Redemption” - which
rested men and women -
I now remember I asked you
for it - you gave me something
else. I forgot the rest.

I thought to myself
but I was not sure
about anything.

That time on the
It was clear.

This other - tonight, heart -
but I am in the same

so on the floor and the
encount. If it had been
just in that, I might

That is, when you breathed
and quite the Peace - say
it made - if I never forget
that I am not with you,
and that sooner and now -

I am more than I am now.
You remember I asked you
for it - you gave me something
else - I forgot the Redemption
in the Redeemed - I didn't
tell you for a long time - but
I knew you had altered me -
I was tired - no more - so dear
did this stranger become, that
were it, or my breath - the
alternative. I had tossed
the fellow away with a smile.
I am older - tonight, Master -
but the love is the same -
so are the moon and the
crescent. If it had been
God's will that I might
breathe where you breathed -
and find the place - myself -
at night - if I never forget
that I am not with you -
and that sorrow and frost
are nearer than I - if I wish
with a might I cannot
repress - that mine were the
Queen's place - the love of
the - Plantagenet is my only
apology - To come nearer
than Presbyteries - and nearer than
the new Coat - that the Tailor
made - the prank of the Heart
at play on the Heart - in holy
Holiday - is forbidden me -
You make me say it over -
I fear you laugh - when I do
not see - "Chillon" is not
funny. Have you the Heart in
your breast - Sir - is it set
like mine - a little to the left -
has it the misgiving - if it
wake in the night - perchance -
itself to it - a timbrel is it -
itself to it a tune?
These things are reverent, Sir,
I touch them reverently, but
persons who pray - dare remark

"Father"! You say I do
not tell you all - Daisy "confessed -
and denied not."

Vesuvius don't talk - Etna - don't -
They said a syllable - one of them -
a thousand years ago, and
Pompeii heard it, and hid
forever - She couldn't look the
world in the face, afterward -
I suppose - Bashful Pompeii!
"Tell you of the want" - you
know what a leech is, don't
you - and Daisy's arm is small -
and you have felt the Horizon -
hav'nt you - and did the
sea - never come so close as
to make you dance?
I don't know what you can
do for it - thank you - Master -
– but if I had the Beard on like you -
my cheek - and you - had Daisy’s petals - and you cared so for me - what would become of you?
Could you forget in fight, or flight - or the foreign land?
Could’nt Carlo, and you and I walk in the meadows an hour - and nobody care but the Bobolink - and his - a silver scruple?
I used to think when I died -
I could see you - so I died as fast as I could - but the “Corporation” are going too - so Eternity won’t be sequestered - at all.
Say I may wait for you -
Say I need go with no stranger to the to me - untried Country -
I waited a long time - Master -
but I can wait more - wait till my hazel hair is dappled-
And you Carrie, you came - then I can cook at my wish. And if this boy is in your opinion - we can take the Chinese back to heaven - What would you do with me? I came to write? Come on the little chair in - but the Alice in? I want to see you more for I than all. I need you in the same - and the wife - allow a little will it be my own one for the shine. Can't you come to stay England. Would I find - you come to - you. Carrie - I need you also to come - mister - could - do. I had. Could I have anything for me she would not? So it weren't comfort funny just.
to look in your face, while
you looked in mine - then I
could play in the woods - till
Dark - till you take me
where Sundown can not find
us - and the true keep
coming - till the town is full.

Will you tell me if you will?

I didn’t think to tell you, you
didn’t come to me “in white”,
nor ever told me why,

+ No Rose, yet felt myself
a ‘bloom, 
No Bird - yet rode in Ether,