I measure every Grief I meet (561)

Emily Dickinson, 1830 - 1886

I measure every Grief I meet

With narrow, probing, eyes –

I wonder if It weighs like Mine –

Or has an Easier size.

I wonder if They bore it long –

Or did it just begin –

I could not tell the Date of Mine –

It feels so old a pain –

I wonder if it hurts to live –

And if They have to try –

And whether – could They choose between –

It would not be – to die –

I note that Some – gone patient long –

At length, renew their smile –

An imitation of a Light

That has so little Oil –

I wonder if when Years have piled –

Some Thousands – on the Harm –

That hurt them early – such a lapse

Could give them any Balm –

Or would they go on aching still

Through Centuries of Nerve –

Enlightened to a larger Pain –

In Contrast with the Love –

The Grieved – are many – I am told –

There is the various Cause –

Death – is but one – and comes but once –

And only nails the eyes –

There’s Grief of Want – and grief of Cold –

A sort they call “Despair” –

There’s Banishment from native Eyes –

In sight of Native Air –

And though I may not guess the kind –

Correctly – yet to me

A piercing Comfort it affords

In passing Calvary –

To note the fashions – of the Cross –

And how they’re mostly worn –

Still fascinated to presume

That Some – are like my own –