

Up and Down

Charlotte Perkins Stetson

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Up, up up! On and out and away
From the little beast I live in,
Through the sweet home life I give in,
With its dear, close love;
Out of that fragrant gloom,
With its crowding fruit and bloom,
Into the wide clear day;
Into the world above.

Out, where the soul can spread
Into the lives of many —
Feeling the joy and pain,
The peace, the toil, the strain
That is not spared to any;
Feeling and working as one;
So is our life begun —
The life that can never grow
Till it has widened so. —
The neighborless soul is dead.

On — with a sharp-caught breath,
Into the space beyond —
Wonderful white-blue space
Where you feel through shifting time
The slow-formed life sublime
Of a yet unconscious race.
Where you live beyond all tears;
Where centuries slide as years
And the flickering screen of death
Shows God's face calm and fond.

Even — a moment's dream —
A flash that lifts and flies —
Even beyond our brothers
To a day when the full-born soul,
World circling, conscious, whole,

Up and Down

Shall taste the world's full worth —
Shall feel the swing of the earth —
Feel what life will seem
When we walk the thronging skies
And the earth shall sing with the others!

Down, down, down! Back and in and home!
Circling softly through
The spaces vast and blue;
The centuries' whirling spokes
Settling back again
To time—marks clear and plain,
As we count the separate strokes.
The race lifelong and free
Narrowed to what we see,
Our own set hope and power
In the history of the hour —
Back to our time we come.

In, where the Soul is warm
With the clinging, lingering touch
Of those we love so much,
And the daring wings can rest;
Back, where the task is small,
Easy and plain to all,
The life that most hold best —
Humanity's first form.

Down! If we fail of this;
Down to the very base —
The Universe, the Race,
Country and Friends and Home —
Here at the end we come
To the first gift that was given,
The little beast we live in!
Rest and be happy, soul!
This was an age—long goal,
This too you may nobly love —
Failing of aught above;
Feeling that, even here,
Life is as true, as near,
As one with the will of God
As sky, or sea, or sod
Or aught of the world that is.