

Emily Dickinson

(1830-1886)

#986 (c.1865)

A narrow Fellow in the Grass  
Occasionally rides –  
You may have met Him – did you not  
His notice sudden is –

The Grass divides as with a Comb –  
A spotted shaft is seen –  
And then it closes at your feet  
And opens further on –

He likes a Boggy Acre  
A Floor too cool for Corn –  
Yet when a Boy, and Barefoot –  
I more than once at Noon  
Have passed, I thought, a Whip lash  
Unbraiding in the Sun  
When stooping to secure it  
It wrinkled, and was gone –

Several of Nature's People  
I know, and they know me –  
I feel for them a transport  
Of cordiality –

But never met this Fellow  
Attended, or alone  
Without a tighter breathing  
And Zero at the Bone –

#### ANALYSIS

“Miss Dickinson had not consented to its publication when this poem appeared in the *Springfield Republican*, February 14, 1866. She was annoyed with some liberties taken by the editor in the division of lines and in the punctuation. But she later settled on only one change in the wording: line 4, ‘sudden’ was substituted for ‘instant,’ and one stanza of eight lines—9-16—supplanted two stanzas of four lines each. Here, as in other poems, the author uses figurative expressions which not only portray accurately but also connote the emotion of the poet. Increasingly, it suggests the effects of the snake which are summarized in the last line—‘Zero at the Bone’.”

James E. Miller, Jr.  
*The Literature of the United States II*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition  
(Scott, Foresman 1953-66) 199