



P E N G U I N



C L A S S I C S

*The Portable Walt Whitman*

Edited by

**MICHAEL WARNER**

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*Edited with an Introduction by*

MICHAEL WARNER

PENGUIN BOOKS

## THE PORTABLE WALT WHITMAN

WALT WHITMAN (1819–1892) was born on Long Island and educated in Brooklyn, New York. He served as a printer's devil, journeyman compositor, and itinerant schoolteacher, edited the *Long Islander*, and in 1846 became editor of the *Brooklyn Eagle*, a position from which he was discharged for political reasons. After a period in New Orleans, he returned to Brooklyn and became prominent among the bohemian element of New York. In 1855 he published *Leaves of Grass*, which he continued to revise and republish over his lifetime. The Civil War found him working as an unofficial nurse to Northern and Southern soldiers in army hospitals in Washington, D.C. After the war he became a clerk in the Indian Bureau of the Department of the Interior, from which he was shortly dismissed by the Secretary, who regarded *Leaves of Grass* as an immoral book. He lived in Camden, New Jersey, during his last nineteen years. He was particularly in the public eye during these years, when such English writers as William Rossetti, Algernon Charles Swinburne, J. A. Symonds, and Robert Stevenson contended that Americans did not fully appreciate him.

MICHAEL WARNER is professor of English at Rutgers University. His most recent works include *Publics and Counterpublics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Zone Books, 2002), *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life* (New York: The Free Press, 1999), and *American Sermons: The Pilgrims to Martin Luther King* (New York: Library of America, 1999). He is also the author of *The Letters of the Republic: Publication and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990); the editor of *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); the editor, with Myra Jehlen, of *The English Literatures of America, 1500–1800* (New York: Routledge, 1997) and, with Gerald Graff, of *The Origins of Literary Studies in America: A Documentary Anthology* (New York: Routledge, 1988). His essays and journalism have appeared in *The Village Voice*, *VLS*, *The Nation*, *The Advocate*, *POZ*, *In These Times*, and other magazines. He lives in New York.



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# Introduction

When *Leaves of Grass* first appeared in July 1855, in a private printing of about 800 copies, everything about the book seemed odd. It was a very thin volume with big pages. The dark green binding was embossed so that the lettering of the title snaked off in raised, leaf-like patterns, roots and tendrils groping across the cover. Neither the cover nor the title page named the author; only an engraved picture stood on the frontispiece. Whitman had worked with the engraver, Samuel Hollyer, shaping the image with the fastidiousness of a publicist, but it struck contemporaries as an improbable picture of a poet: a man “in his shirt-sleeves, with one hand in a pocket of his pantaloons,” a daringly unbuttoned collar, and his hat “cocked with a damme-sir air over his forehead.”<sup>1</sup>

Readers who made it past this portrait of edgy swagger (already recognizable as a New York type) found next what another bewildered reviewer described as “a sort of preface, only that it had no beginning, was remarkable for a singular sparseness in the punctuation, and was broken up in a confusing manner by frequent rows of dots.” Beyond that lay “eighty-two pages of what appeared at the first glance to be a number of prose sentences printed somewhat after a biblical fashion.”<sup>2</sup> Each of the twelve separate pieces in that first edition was called “Leaves of Grass,” nothing more. As more than one reviewer noted, there seemed to be nothing poetic about them except that each line began with a capital letter. They did not rhyme; they had no meter; the lines were of wildly uneven length, often wrapping around into more than one line of print;

they grasped the reader by the lapels; they flouted expectations about “poetic” writing; and no topic or body part seemed to have been left out.

Nowadays we might be inclined to call the lines “free verse,” a form so common that it could even be called the dominant kind of verse. For most readers, rhyme and meter have come to look archaic. In that way, if in no other, we have all fallen under Whitman’s influence. The 1855 preface agitates for this revolution in taste, in its somewhat cryptic way. Whitman calls on poetry to be essentially *modern*, implying that it must address modern life not only in its content, but in form. More than anyone else before him, Whitman understood his art as normatively experimental.

That is not to say that it should be formless poetry, which would be a contradiction in terms. Whitman’s long line, for example, does not look like earlier poetry, but it is a device in its own right. In earlier English verse, and most later free verse for that matter, the arbitrary line break sustains a constant tension against the impression of a speaking voice. Rhyme and meter heighten that tension, creating a constant backdrop of sonic patterning. For Whitman, the line break has a new function. It depends entirely on print, for we would not otherwise know that it was there at all. (Whitman, who had been a printer in his youth, set some of the type himself in 1855.) He minimizes the feeling of arbitrariness, however, because his lines are almost always end-stopped; he treats them as units of sense as much as of sound. Despite its reliance on print, this effect helps to create on the page the sense of a vital vocal exposure or challenge—like opera or oratory, the arts he most admired. But another effect of the long line—with its *ad hoc* sonic patterning and un-subordinated accumulation—is to keep us guessing, uncertain where its sequence might take us or what kind of text we might be reading.

For Whitman’s contemporaries, as for attentive readers still, it took a stretch to call this poetry. It seemed to have neither pattern nor decorum. “Muck of abomination,” said one; “a mass of stupid filth,” said another.<sup>3</sup> “Walt Whitman,” said a

third, “is as unacquainted with art, as a hog is with mathematics.”<sup>4</sup> Of course, Whitman had wanted to arouse just this sort of reaction. He himself wrote, in one of several puffs of his own work that he published anonymously, that the book would appear “very devilish to some, and very divine to some.”<sup>5</sup> He even went so far as to include his worst reviews in a promotional packet, a gesture almost without precedent. He wanted to agitate, and he succeeded.

In later life Whitman dropped some of his zeal for provocation and put on the equanimity of the sage; but censors and censorious readers continued to rise up against him. In 1865, when he was working as a minor clerk for the government, the Secretary of the Interior fired him after reportedly finding a copy of *Leaves of Grass*. (Cabinet members in those days evidently had enough time on their hands to snoop through their clerks’ desk drawers.) Publishers repeatedly refused to handle him. In 1882 the Boston district attorney threatened him with prosecution for obscenity, and his new edition of *Leaves*—the first with a respectable, established publisher—was withdrawn. Good people shuddered at his name. John Greenleaf Whittier threw his copy of *Leaves* into the fire in disgust. Emily Dickinson confessed that she never read Whitman, having been “told that he was disgraceful.”

On the other side, he attracted defenders, who wrote such apologies as *The Good Gray Poet*, “A Woman’s View of Walt Whitman,” and after his death, *The Fight of a Book for the World*. His work for the most part no longer needs justification, which is perhaps a pity; it was written to *need* justification.

If the difficulty for early readers lay partly with the shape of the lines, or the absence of rhyme or meter, queerer still was the way the language seemed deliberately out of kilter. This is still true, even though we can no longer be shocked and overwhelmed by it as his contemporaries were. Whitman’s writing is both eloquent and crass, exquisite and obscene. It provokes the reader and yet solicits an extraordinary intimacy. It offers a simple address to common people, while bristling with esoteric imaginings. It brags of its author’s egotism, yet displays un-

commonly wide sympathies for others. It strikes an attitude of rich perceptiveness toward the world that is both willfully profane and yet reverent, a mysticism of the mundane. It seeks the greatest dignity in the least dignified forms of experience.

These tensions have not lost their power to move and unsettle readers. Whitman has had many imitators, and has influenced almost every poet after him, but in these qualities he has never been equaled. To read even his description of daily life, or his lists of the people around him, is to encounter the world with an attentiveness and generosity that feels both moving and painfully exacting. We no longer dispute whether the book deserves to be read, or whether it is poetry—though we might wonder whether poetry is too banal or too familiar a name for this kind of writing and what it does to its readers.

The whole shape of Whitman's career proved to be as anomalous as the book's first appearance. Where most authors write one book and then another, Whitman essentially wrote the same book over and over. Seven substantially different editions of *Leaves of Grass* were published in his lifetime, along with a few minor variants. New poems would be added each time, old ones rewritten, and the structure of the book rearranged. As a result, critics remain divided over the merits of different editions, and no one version of *Leaves of Grass* can stand alone to capture Whitman's work. In this collection, the poems are taken from the last edition, the so-called "Deathbed Edition" of 1891–92 (with the exception of two draft versions, noted in their place). The poems are given here, however, in the chronological order of their introduction into the volume.

In 1855 *Leaves of Grass* had no publisher. It was available for sale in shops run by Whitman's friends Fowler and Wells, where the main business was phrenology—the popular pseudoscience of reading the shapes of people's skulls as signs of their characters. (Fowler and Wells told Whitman that he had a very large bump indicating "adhesiveness," or bonding with members of the same sex.) Advertisements also directed buyers to Whitman's home on Ryerson Street in Brooklyn, where he still lived with his family. He promoted the book with the energy and unscrupulousness of a desperate crank, sending copies



to everyone he could think of, writing anonymous reviews himself, and placing them with the help of journalist friends. To his enemies, of course, this self-promotion confirmed the uncouthness they saw in the writing.

Luckily, one of the promotional copies was sent to Ralph Waldo Emerson, whose work Whitman had followed for some time. When Emerson had visited New York in 1842 to deliver a lecture on “The Poet,” Whitman—then a twenty-two-year-old journalist—was in the audience. Poets, Emerson told the crowd that day, had not yet faced the emergent conditions of American life. They were too busy being poetic. “It is not metres, but a metre-making argument, that makes a poem,” he declared. “Banks and tariffs, the newspaper and caucus, methodism and unitarianism, are flat and dull to dull people, but rest on the same foundations of wonder as the town of Troy.”

“I look in vain for the poet I describe,” Emerson had said in that lecture. Thirteen years later, when he received the unsolicited book from a stranger, Emerson evidently decided he had found what he was looking for. He wrote back what has been called the most famous letter in American literary history:

Dear Sir,

I am not blind to the worth of the wonderful gift of “Leaves of Grass.” I find it the most extraordinary piece of wit & wisdom that America has yet contributed. I am very happy in reading it, as great power makes us happy. It meets the demand I am always making of what seemed the sterile & stingy nature, as if too much handiwork or too much lymph in the temperament were making our western wits fat & mean. I give you joy of your free brave thought. I have great joy in it. I find incomparable things said incomparably well, as they must be. I find the courage of *treatment*, which so delights us, & which large perception only can inspire. I greet you at the beginning of a great career, which yet must have had a long foreground somewhere for such a start. I rubbed my eyes a little to see if this sunbeam were no illusion; but the solid sense of the book is a sober certainty. It has the best merits, namely, of fortifying & encouraging.

I did not know until I, last night, saw the book advertised in a

newspaper, that I could trust the name as real & available for a post-office. I wish to see my benefactor, & have felt much like striking my tasks, & visiting New York to pay you my respects.

Indeed he did pay his respects, calling on Whitman in the depths of Brooklyn. Henry Thoreau and Bronson Alcott, alerted to Whitman's existence by Emerson, made the same pilgrimage the next year. From them we learn that Whitman shared a room and a bed with his retarded brother. He entertained them in a red flannel undershirt and cowhide boots, "rank," sitting on the unmade bed, with the chamber pot in view. On the wall he had pasted unframed pictures of Hercules, Bacchus, and a satyr. According to Alcott, Whitman and Thoreau held each other in wary fascination, "like two beasts."

Whitman did not waste the chance he had been given. He had Emerson's letter printed in the New York *Tribune*, and then appended it to the next edition of his book, in 1856. There he also printed a treatise disguised as a letter of response, addressing Emerson as "Master." (This letter, seldom read but a major statement of Whitman's aims, is included in this volume.) Not only that: he emblazoned the phrase "I greet you at the beginning of a great career" on the spine. Emerson, initially angered by this, loaned his copy to a friend with the wry remark that "the inside was worthy [of] attention even though it came from one capable of so misusing the cover."<sup>6</sup>

Yet it was immediately perceived that Whitman was no one's disciple, certainly no junior Emerson. Charles Eliot Norton, in the very first review of *Leaves*, had described him as "a compound of the New England transcendentalist and New York rowdy." The "rowdy" part was largely a pose, but Whitman was distinguished by a worldliness unlike anything that had come out of New England.

His roots were in working-class New York. He had been born on Long Island, the second of eight children. His father, who died just days after *Leaves* appeared, was a not-too-successful carpenter. The family left Long Island for Brooklyn when Walt was four, and when they returned to the country ten years later, he stayed behind as a printer's apprentice. He was

later to return to the country for a while as a rural school teacher and journalist, before again returning to the city and its newspapers. This early immersion in print and journalism can be seen everywhere in the poetry that came later: the descriptions of contemporary life; the sense of being modern; the techniques of social montage and thumbnail characterization; the intimate and urgent address to strangers in a reading public.

His newspaper writing, in the style of the day, was sometimes sentimental, sometimes fiercely polemical. It ranged widely over civic affairs, human interest stories, reviews, and local sketches. Whitman also published in this early period some conventional poetry, a few short stories, and in 1842, a temperance novel called *Franklin Evans*. (He reprinted it twice in the next few years, but later disowned it, even claiming that he wrote it for pay, in three days, with the aid of a bottle of port.) This early fiction—such as “The Child’s Champion,” included in this volume in its original, uncensored form—is sensational and appealingly crude. Its style gives little hint of the poetry to come, except in its surges of homoeroticism and richly disorganized consciousness.

In his political journalism, Whitman followed a principle that late in life he passed on to his young acolyte Horace Traubel: “Be radical, be radical, be radical—be not too damned radical.”<sup>7</sup> Though he supported the Mexican War in 1848, he soon called for an end to the extension of slavery, and lost his job at the *Brooklyn Eagle* for supporting the Wilmot Proviso. He fumed over the fugitive slave law. When a black man named Anthony Burns was forced back into slavery after reaching freedom in Boston, Whitman wrote an acrid satirical poem, one of the earliest pieces of what would become *Leaves of Grass*, along with another supporting the cause of European revolution. He wrote and typeset (but never published) a vein-popping pamphlet for the 1856 election in which, among other things, he described President Franklin Pierce as a man who “eats dirt and excrement for his daily meals, likes it, and tries to force it on The States.” He would later lose another editorial post at the *Brooklyn Times*, apparently in part for endorsing legalized prostitution and the right of unmarried women to have sex.

But his most passionate commitments were the causes of working men.

Antagonism to middle-class prejudice runs throughout his writing, both poetry and prose. Many who knew him tell us how widely he was known and liked on the streets; he would glad-hand street-car conductors, porters, laborers of all kinds. He took Emerson to meet his friends at the firehouse. Yet when admirers tried to introduce him to literati, he was often uncomfortable and silent. In his correspondence, letters to well-bred men of letters sound stiff, painfully formal; those to soldiers, or horse-cart drivers, or his own mother, speak with a sweet and simple eloquence. Friends offered him comfortable homes on Fifth Avenue, on the Hudson, and elsewhere; but from the early days in Brooklyn to his old age in Camden, he chose to live in working-class quarters that appalled his visitors. His sense of self seems to have been marked by awareness of class in a way that was both enabling and painful.

Even his opposition to slavery had much to do with fear for the jobs of white workers. Like Lincoln, Whitman never liked black people in general, though he believed abstractly in equality. Along with most of his contemporaries in the North, he was reluctant to recognize that his own commitment to democracy was leading to experiments in multiracial culture and citizenship. His politics had outpaced his sensibilities.

Yet because his poetic vision committed him to a view from below, to sympathies with outcasts, he was capable of surprising turns, like the eroticization of the black slave in "I Sing the Body Electric," or like an extraordinary notebook entry about "Black Lucifer" that declares "I am the God of revolt—deathless, sorrowful, vast." From that entry he produced this passage from the 1855 version of "The Sleepers" (excised from 1860 onward):

Now Lucifer was not dead . . . or if he was I am his sorrowful  
terrible heir;  
I have been wronged. . . . I am oppressed. . . . I hate him that  
oppresses me,  
I will either destroy him, or he shall release me.

Damn him! how he does defile me,  
How he informs against my brother and sister and takes pay for  
their blood,  
How he laughs when I look down the bend after the steamboat  
that carries away my woman.

This rhetoric of insurgency, conspicuous in the first version of *Leaves of Grass*, and heightened further in the second edition of 1856, was to be toned down in later versions.

It has been customary to see Whitman's later career as dwindling into respectability. He published an astonishing volume of major work between 1855 and 1865; the last quarter-century of his life suffers by comparison. A stroke sustained in 1873 left him partly paralyzed; he moved to Camden, New Jersey, to be cared for by his brother's family. For the poet who had always prided himself on health and robust physicality, illness would be a psychic challenge for the rest of his life. His admirers had already begun to legitimize him as "the Good Gray Poet"—a label affixed to him by William O'Connor in 1866—and to some degree Whitman came to live that role rather than that of the New York rowdy.

It proved to be a good role for him. Whitman was capable of inspiring intense devotion, even among those who knew nothing of his work. Notoriety gradually gave way to fame. Though never fully accepted in his lifetime, he was in later years recognized by some leading lights of the literary world, including Tennyson. To pay him tribute, many went all the way to Camden, where he lived in a cheap house near a ferryboat station, receiving callers amid scraps of paper and books piled knee-deep on the floor. Among these pilgrims was Oscar Wilde, who saw Whitman there twice. ("I have the kiss of Walt Whitman's still on my lips," he later told a young gay Englishman.)

Whitman had acquired by this time a cult following in a rather literal sense. People were beginning to revere him not just as a poet, but as a religious inspiration. John Addington Symonds, for example, first encountered Whitman in 1865, when his friend Fredric Myers read one of the "Calamus" lyrics aloud to him during an illness. Years later, Symonds wrote:

For my own part, I may confess that [Whitman's light] shone upon me when my life was broken, when I was weak, sickly, poor, and of no account; and that I have ever lived thenceforward in the light and warmth of it. In bounden duty toward Whitman, I make this personal statement. . . . During my darkest hours, it comforted me with the conviction that I too played my part in the illimitable symphony of cosmic life. . . . For this reason, in duty to my master Whitman, and in the hope that my experience may encourage others to seek the same source of inspiration, I have exceeded the bounds of an analytical essay by pouring forth my personal confession.

Exceeded the bounds of an analytical essay, indeed.

Symonds in this moment of excess seems to have intuited something about the way Whitman wanted to be read. In "A Backward Glance," Whitman writes: "But it is not on 'Leaves of Grass' distinctively as *literature*, or a specimen thereof, that I feel to dwell, or advance claims. No one will get at my verses who insists upon viewing them as a literary performance, or attempt at such performance, or as aiming mainly toward art or aestheticism." He had instructed readers as early as the 1855 preface, in what sounds like his own version of the Sermon on the Mount:

This is what you shall do: Love the earth and sun and the animals, despise riches, give alms to every one that asks, stand up for the stupid and crazy, devote your income and labor to others, hate tyrants, argue not concerning God, have patience and indulgence toward the people, take off your hat to nothing known or unknown or to any man or number of men, go freely with powerful uneducated persons and with the young and with the mothers of families, read these leaves in the open air every season of every year of your life, re-examine all you have been told at school or church or in any book, dismiss whatever insults your own soul, and your very flesh shall be a great poem. . . .

Buried in this odd catalogue of commandments is the plea to read his pages—or does he really mean leaves?—"every season

of every year of your life.” He invites us to take the book as a spiritual exercise.

Symonds was not alone among early readers in taking Whitman to be the vehicle of something like a sacred revelation. Religion was the watchword, virtually the shibboleth of the Whitmaniacs—the extended Euro-American network, mostly of young men marked by nonstandard erotic lives, as well as a few women of nonstandard erotic lives, who found each other through Whitman’s texts and tenaciously defended him both in private and in public. One such reader, an English widow named Anne Gilchrist, declared love for Whitman and, sight unseen, moved to America to be near him.

The gathering of the Whitmaniacs into a kind of cult toward the end of Whitman’s life is a phenomenon without a close parallel among figures now accepted as literary authors. Other authors have fans, and in the case of a Jane Austen or a William Shakespeare, those fans can approach a state we are accustomed to call idolatrous. Whitman’s idolators are of a different order. They seem to have taken seriously his claim, in “Starting from Paumanok,” to “inaugurate a religion.” No other modern literary figure has attracted, in his life or after, such explicitly religious veneration. Professional critics define themselves against this kind of reading, and it should not be a surprise that the Whitmaniacs fare rather badly in the critical literature on Whitman.

Most conspicuous among these figures was Richard Maurice Bucke, who virtually canonized Whitman in his *Cosmic Consciousness* in 1903, and thus indirectly in William James’s *Varieties of Religious Experience*, where the impossibly good-natured Whitman is essentially Bucke’s Whitman. In Bucke’s biographical study *Walt Whitman*, of which the first twenty pages or so were written by Whitman himself, Bucke quotes at length a letter by Helen Price, who knew Whitman when she was a girl and Whitman was an occasional boarder and regular visitor in the home of her mother:

If I were asked what I considered Walt Whitman’s leading characteristic, I should say—and it is an opinion formed upon an ac-

quaintance of over twenty years—his *religious sentiment* or feeling. . . . He is a born *exalté*. His is not that religion, or show of it, that is comprised in dogmas, churches, creeds, etc. These are of little or no consequence to him, but it is that habitual state of feeling in which the person regards everything in God's universe with wonder, reverence, perfect acceptance, and love.<sup>8</sup>

Whitman later told Price that she had made him sound “too pretty.”

It is characteristic of the Anglo-American religious scene that Helen Price describes as “religious sentiment” something that has no place for “dogmas, churches, creeds, etc.” Religion reduced to sentiment will seem to many hardly to warrant the name, especially since in Whitman this sentiment has been detached from any idea of spiritual indwelling that had ordinarily motivated the antinomian and anti-institutional rhetoric of the Quakers and other radical Protestants whom we know Whitman admired. At one point a Dutch Reformed pastor, who knew of Whitman's early education in Dutch Reformed Sunday school in Brooklyn, asked him if Whitman still adhered to the creed of the church. Whitman thought for a second and then said yes. Absolutely. In fact, he explained, he believed in the creeds of all the sects.

That so many of Whitman's followers regarded him as a religious figure is all the more surprising since, of all American writers, Whitman was uniquely positioned as the heir to the radical Enlightenment critique of religion. He was a child and adolescent apprentice in New York during the flowering of a rare militant free-thought movement, led by Frances Wright. Wright took over a former church and converted it to a “Hall of Science,” where she offered programs of public education and debate as a substitute for Christian ritual and preaching. (Whitman's “Hoorah for positive science!” section in “Song of Myself” is a clear echo of this movement.) Halls of science sprang up in other cities besides New York; lectures were given in place of sermons, and followers were encouraged to regard each other as fellows among the faithful. Wright appealed especially to a working-class audience, through what came to be



known as the Fanny Wright Party. The conjunction she forged—free thought, labor, abolition, feminism, and free love—would leave its stamp on *Leaves of Grass* thirty years later. Whitman heard Wright speak, venerated her, kept a copy of her picture, and spoke of her more than once in his conversations with Traubel. His father subscribed to the journal Wright edited with Robert Dale Owen, the *Free Enquirer*. Whitman evidently read the journal then, as well as other works of programmatic secularism that his father owned, including Paine's *Age of Reason* and Volney's *The Ruins*. (Whitman's notes on Volney made their way into "Passage to India.") He also read Wright's 1822 philosophical novel about Epicurean atheism, *A Few Days in Athens*, passages from which appear verbatim in *Leaves of Grass*.

The rhetoric of free-thought radicalism is unmistakable in *Leaves of Grass* ("There will soon be no more priests"), and contemporary readers who were not Whitmaniacs tended to perceive irreligion as its program. They also whiffed pagan phallic worship and pantheism, which for many at the time seem to have counted as irreligion. At the same time that Whitman was attracting converts such as Symonds and Bucke, he was also drawing radical secularists such as Robert Ingersoll, who emerged in the postwar period as far and away the most prominent American skeptic on religion, and who became a friend and champion of Whitman in his own right, giving the eulogy after Whitman's death.

To understand how Whitman appealed to both kinds of reader, we should note first that his rhetoric about religion is consistently counterintuitive. He speaks a language of God, but its main point seems to be to get us to shed the habit of worshipping something outside ourselves. "Nothing, not God, is greater to one than one's self is," he writes in section 48 of "Song of Myself." "And I say to mankind, Be not curious about God." Unlike Milton or Wordsworth, he does not undertake to justify God's ways to man; nothing needs justification, evil included. Far from propagating morality, Whitman sees it as his task to invert hierarchies of judgment, giving full recognition to those stigmatized by official morality. There is

no drama of redemption, apart from the need to recognize that nothing needs redemption. Whatever this religion will do for you, it will not give you salvation, except in convincing you that you don't need salvation. If you share his vision, you are promised no reward apart from that vision itself. If you remain an infidel, you are threatened with no punishment. It is a religion to which you cannot exactly convert; you can only cultivate its habits of seeing and feeling. Consider these lines from "Song of Myself":

Divine I am inside and out, and I make holy whatever I touch or  
 am touched from;  
 The scent of these arm-pits is aroma finer than prayer,  
 This head is more than churches or bibles or creeds.

Are these lines religious? Or are they, on the contrary, one of the boldest gestures of secularization in American writing?

Part of what makes Whitman such an oddly compelling saint, too, is just what a profane and perverted holy man he is. He loved smelly men, and liked to go home with them. (His notebooks contain long lists of men and boys he met on the street.) He lived at home for many years, and doted on his mother. He was by all accounts lazy, and took a dandy's care over his working rough costume. He promoted himself with an innocence of tact. He made grammatical mistakes, especially when trying to impress by using foreign languages he did not speak.

And he lived with great shame. This is easy to miss because the poetry is, from its first line ("I celebrate myself"), an overcoming of shame. Whitman's individualism—unlike the banal consumer individualism of the twentieth century, which he seems not to have anticipated in any way—is a moral response to a world of inequality. He seems to have felt a vocation to answer for a great many forms of inferiority: of class, of ignorance, of sex, of poverty, of disrepute and disability, of national provincialism.

Through me forbidden voices,  
 Voices of sexes and lusts, voices veil'd and I remove the veil,  
 Voices indecent by me clarified and transfigur'd.

The intensity of the shame that he resists is sometimes manifest (as in “Scented Herbage of My Breast”), sometimes expressed by a counteracting shamelessness (notably in “Song of Myself,” where the speaker sounds his “barbaric yawp” over the roofs of the world), and sometimes faced flatly (as in the quasi-confessional section 6 of “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry”). It is the implicit backdrop of everything Whitman wrote.

Certainly not least of the motives behind this will-to-dignity is the need to “clarify and transfigure” a kind of sex and lust that had no voice of its own, and could only be expressed in a language of the severest moral anathema—at least until Whitman began calling it “adhesiveness” and “manly love.” What else could he have called it? Even the medical language of abnormality was created only in the second half of his life, in circles far removed from his. The modern idea of homosexuality developed at the end of his lifetime; the idea of gay identity much later. These notions, second nature to most readers today, were not available for Whitman; and in fact, as ways of understanding male–male eros, they are markedly different from the strategy he adopted.

For most of the twentieth century, biographers persisted in the vain attempt to heterosexualize Whitman, fabricating romances on the flimsiest of evidence, evidently thinking that queerness was something from which he needed to be exonerated. Some, indeed, still do. Some have noted, rightly, that the culture of male–male friendship was much more fluid in Whitman’s time than in our own, largely because there was no idea of homosexuality to be phobic about, and therefore less mandate on men to police themselves against any deviation from heterosexual purity. Men embraced, kissed, posed for pictures with each other, wrote letters of endearment, often with no evident anxiety. Not everything that looks queer to us now would have looked that way in Whitman’s time. Scholars have also noted the surprising fact that most of the protest against Whitman’s “indecentcy” had to do with his celebration of male–female sexuality, or autoeroticism, not the (to us) apparent declarations of the “Calamus” poems.

But it would be a great mistake to suppose that Whitman’s

same-sex eroticism was therefore merely conventional and untroubling. His enemies might have avoided mentioning it in part because they couldn't bring themselves to think such a shocking possibility. One of Whitman's contemporaries, Rufus Griswold—the same man who assassinated Poe's character after Poe's death—essentially named Whitman as a sodomite in his review of the 1855 *Leaves*. But he did it in Latin, refusing to speak such a vile possibility even while speaking it:

In our allusions to this book, we have found it impossible to convey any, even the most faint idea of its style and contents, and of our disgust and detestation of them, without employing language that cannot be pleasing to ears polite; but it does seem that some one should, under circumstances like these, undertake a most disagreeable, yet stern duty. The records of crime show that many monsters have gone on in impunity, because the exposure of their vileness was attended with too great indelicacy. "*Peccatum illud horribile, inter Christianos non nominandum.*"<sup>9</sup>

The horrible sin not to be named among Christians—is it any wonder that most other objections to the book were vague or displaced? Griswold does not say what passages he had in mind; the version of *Leaves* he read was tame compared with what was to come later. He might have been writing from first- or second-hand knowledge of Whitman, since they had moved in the same circles for at least thirteen years, and Whitman had once worked for a paper owned by Griswold. (Ironically, Whitman, who knew no Latin, included Griswold's review in his publicity packet.)

At any rate, Griswold was not alone. Even John Burroughs, another early Whitmaniac, noted that Whitman went beyond what was conventional for male friendship. As a young man Burroughs had exchanged love letters with other young men, one of whom introduced him to Whitman's work. When he then made the pilgrimage to meet Whitman, he reported back, with some surprise: "He kisses me as if I were a girl." But he also reports: "I have been much with Walt. Have even slept with him. I love him very much."<sup>10</sup>

In 1865, when Whitman was living in Washington, he met an eighteen-year-old streetcar conductor named Peter Doyle, who became the first of several younger male companions. Doyle later said that something about Whitman, the last passenger in the car on a stormy night, drew him unaccountably. “We were familiar at once—I put my hand on his knee—we understood.” The two were close for several years. By 1870, however, Whitman had reached a crisis, fearing that his love was not returned. He wrote a journal entry, referring to Doyle in code as “16” (for the letter *p*). The partly torn page is covered with underlinings and blacked-out portions, and “him” has been erased and replaced by “her”:

*Cheating, childish, abandonment* of myself, fancying what does not really exist in another, but is all the time in myself alone—utterly deluded & cheated by *myself*, & my own weakness—REMEMBER WHERE I AM MOST WEAK, & most lacking. Yet always preserve a kind spirit & demeanor to 16. BUT PURSUE HER NO MORE.

Whatever else this document tells us, it clearly shows the excruciating power of shame. Even in a private notebook, Whitman censored himself. Other entries have been torn out altogether; this one seems to have been kept as a private lesson in stoicism.

In 1860, when Whitman prepared the third edition of his book, he wrote a special cluster of poems titled “Calamus,” dedicated to the theme of manly love. Long slighted, these poems have come to be recognized as major work. They began as a twelve-poem sequence called “Live Oak, with Moss.” (This draft version, rediscovered in 1955, is included in this volume.) At some point Whitman broke up the sequence, expanded the group, and replaced the live-oak symbol with calamus, a native wetland rhizome with grass-like spears and a phallic flower. After he had done so, he decided to pair the cluster with another on cross-sex love, eventually called “Children of Adam.”

The “Calamus” poems themselves repeatedly suggest that they describe more than conventional friendship. “Scented

Herbage of My Breast,” for example, describes a painful struggle with self-censorship:

Do not remain down there so ashamed, herbage of my breast!  
 Come, I am determined to unbare this broad breast of mine—  
     I have long enough stifled and choked;  
 Emblematic and capricious blades, I leave you—now you serve  
     me not,  
 Away! I will say what I have to say, by itself,  
 I will escape from the sham that was proposed to me,  
 I will sound myself and comrades only—I will never again utter  
     a call, only their call . . .

Here, as so often before, Whitman voices a transgressive impulse. In this case, however, that impulse also leads him to repudiate his earlier verse and its symbols—“emblematic and capricious blades” being, of course, leaves of grass. A great many of the poems that Whitman added in 1860 have the same gesture of self-revision, notably “As I Ebb’d with the Ocean of Life,” where the speaker announces that “before all my arrogant poems the real Me stands yet untouch’d, untold, altogether unreach’d.”

In the “Calamus” poems, differences of form as well as theme are striking. Where the poems of the 1855 version are loud and expansive, seemingly wanting to go on forever, the “Calamus” poems are short, sometimes a mere three lines. Many of them end with an image of wordless intimacy. Gone is the garrulous rough who sounds his barbaric yawp. In his place is a new Whitman, “charged with untold and untellable wisdom,” initiating a chosen few into his mysteries by “faint clews and indications,” terse, reticent, silent. Although the sequence begins with the claim that it will broadcast the new theme of manly love, it continues to show an awareness of danger and stigma, as in the following poem, which I quote in its entirety:

Here the frailest leaves of me and yet my strongest lasting,  
 Here I shade and hide my thoughts, I myself do not expose  
     them,  
 And yet they expose me more than all my other poems.

The method of these poems cannot be understood apart from Whitman's struggle with what was deemed unspeakable. Do they "shade and hide" something, or "expose" it?

Years later John Addington Symonds thought he knew. Symonds thought he had found in Whitman the great prophet of same-sex love. When he wrote to an aged Whitman in 1890 with this idea, Whitman sputtered indignation at such a "vile imputation," going on to boast, falsely, that he had fathered several children and grandchildren. Clearly, he protested too much. Yet Whitman must also have seen that his own way of legitimating male eros was crucially different from Symonds's. Symonds proposed thinking about men who loved men as "sexual invert"—a special minority, almost biologically different from the norm. Whitman had dreamed of a world where eroticism would be freed up among all men, even if in the meantime it would be the special bond of certain initiates.

The difference involved Whitman's whole approach to morality. His writing is remarkable, from the first appearance of *Leaves of Grass*, for the energy it devotes to rearranging our hierarchies of value. Where Christianity places the soul above the body, for example, Whitman writes, in section 5 of "Song of Myself":

I believe in you my soul, the other I am must not abase itself  
to you,  
And you must not be abased to the other.

The next few lines address the soul as a lover—physical, even unmistakably sexual ("you settled your head athwart my hips and gently turn'd over upon me . . ."). He insists on the fleshiness of spirit and the spiritual value of flesh. The paradoxical gesture is made so often, and so pointedly, that Whitman sometimes seems a prophet of the modern value on transgression for its own sake. But this is only half the picture. The body, after all, has not been placed above the soul. Antagonism, in Whitman, is always resolved into affirmation—affirmation not only of what has been devalued, but of everything that is: the honor of the despised, the beauty in ugliness, the vitality of death. His

reevaluations might seem perverse, but he also wants us to see them as moral and encompassing. He needed a way to meet the Christian moral hierarchies directly, unblinkingly, with a better moral vision. The saintly Whitman emerges from that struggle, which is both an inner struggle and a social one.

The same section about the body and the soul concludes with a justly famous passage, in which orgasmic ecstasy and religious vision seem fused:

Swiftly arose and spread around me the peace and knowledge  
 that pass all the argument of the earth,  
 And I know that the hand of God is the promise of my own,  
 And I know that the spirit of God is the brother of my own,  
 And that all the men ever born are also my brothers, and the  
     women my sisters and lovers,  
 And that a kelson of the creation is love,  
 And limitless are leaves stiff and drooping in the fields,  
 And brown ants in the little wells beneath them,  
 And mossy scabs of the worm fence, heap'd stones, elder,  
     mullein and poke-weed.

This passage is often described as a mystical vision. And so it is, in its way. But where we might expect the poet to ascend from the mundane to the heavenly, he does the opposite. The passage does not end with the sight of God. It continues, with gathering intensity, to the minutest details of the physical world. It is as though his eyes come gradually into focus. What other writer could have led us so compellingly from the heights of the universe to ants and weeds? Who else could have infused so much reverence in a word like “scabs”?

Much of Whitman’s writing, notably in “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry,” comes down to a radical and paradoxical idea, borrowed from stoic philosophy but with a new resonance in a Christian culture: that what is beautiful is mere existence. The last section of that poem addresses the world with a series of fiat commands that sound very much like “Let there be light”; but in this case they command the world to be exactly as it already is: “Flow on, river! . . . Stand up, tall masts of Manna hatta! . . .



Throb, baffled and curious brain!" Whitman, full of affirmation that he is, does not seek to exonerate the world or redeem it. His attitude is fundamentally a refusal to see the world as in need of redemption. Indeed, there is more of the ugliness of the world in his poetry than in almost anyone else's before him (e.g., "The hiss of the surgeon's knife, the gnawing teeth of his saw, / Wheeze, cluck, swash of falling blood, short wild scream, and long, dull, tapering groan."). His project of finding beauty in mere existence allows him to get beyond the usual preference for the ideal over the actual, spirit over body. This dialectic is a constant source of movement organizing his verse. Whitman's writing is so comprehensive that one of his champions claimed there was no significant aspect of the universe that was not dealt with in *Leaves of Grass*. But it is very difficult to find a passage of any length that could be called pretty. As Randall Jarrell noted in a now classic essay, Whitman's lines exude a care for language that somehow does not distract us from the world they unblinkingly absorb. "The *thereness* and *suchness* of the world," he notes, "are incarnate in Whitman as they are in few other writers."<sup>11</sup>

The attention to the body and to sex that Whitman achieved in this way represents a watershed in modern culture. Formerly, sexual desire had been seen as an appetite, or a sign of fallen nature, or the animal being against which moral humanity asserts itself, with institutions such as marriage being a kind of toilet-training for sexual desire. Whitman treats erotic life as a distinctive kind of experience, valuable because it is not controlled, allowing for a new mode of expressivity and self-discovery, to be approached with abandonment and respect. "Is this then a touch?" he asks, in one especially dense section of "Song of Myself," "quivering me to a new identity"? In Whitman, sex comes to be seen in a new way: as *sexuality*, a fundamental human capacity. He referred to his poems on this topic, especially "I Sing the Body Electric," as his "sexuality odes," and fiercely defended them against critics, nervous publishers, and censorious friends such as Emerson, all of whom pressed for their removal.

This new way of understanding sex is inseparable from Whit-

man's brand of individualism, which is often misunderstood. When he retitled his longest and most famous poem "Song of Myself," he created the misleading impression that he was celebrating a fixed and definite self, his own ego. But Whitman attaches the word "I" to so many situations (e.g., "My voice is the wife's voice, the screech by the rail of the stairs") that it is not finally defined by any of them, except in the almost exasperated comedy of that endless discovery of inner otherness. "I dote on myself," he writes, with often-forgotten humor; "there is that lot of me and all so luscious." Or again: "I resist anything better than my own diversity."

Whitman's individualism, like Emerson's, is paradoxical. It is often forgotten that Emerson, in "Self-Reliance," describes the "self-reliance" of his title as a poor way of speaking, since he meant to underscore not the self as an object to be relied upon, but the endlessly recreating and unknowable agent who does the relying. Self-reliance is a mode of becoming, or transition to a new state, a faith in the unknown persons we might soon be. In "The Poet," the lecture that Whitman heard in 1842, Emerson said, "every intellectual man quickly learns that, beyond the energy of his possessed and conscious intellect, he is capable of a new energy . . . by abandonment to the nature of things." This instinct of metamorphosis, Emerson continued, was the special precinct of the poetic imagination, a higher version of the intoxicants that take us out of normal consciousness. Emersonian individualism, then, far from reconciling us to what we already are, is meant to be a continual revision. He thought it could not fail to conform to natural law, no matter how unpredictable.

Whitman took Emerson's faith in the metamorphic instinct a step further by turning it against the New Englander's creed of refinement, purity, and chastity. Sexuality—by breaking the frame of ordinary reality, heightening the senses, and dissolving public selfhood—restores a primordial, undifferentiated self, fully embodied and in contact with the world. It is a valuable dimension of selfhood partly because it is so foreign to the regulated framework of a self. Over and over, in the sexuality odes as in "Song of Myself" or "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," Whit-

man celebrates that in himself which is not quite himself, “the other I am.” This extends far beyond sex, of course, but it helps to explain why sex is so central to Whitman’s vision (though it sits oddly with the eugenic language of vigorous breeding that Whitman also relied on to validate sex).

In the fourth section of “Song of Myself,” Whitman writes that his public, identifiable self—the kind that anyone would see in daily life—is not “the Me myself.” “Apart from the pulling and hauling stands what I am . . . Both in and out of the game and watching and wondering at it.” This passage has been taken as suggesting a mysterious inner self. Whitman might not have held to any metaphysical view of the “Me myself,” however; he might have been trying to describe the inevitably divided nature of self-awareness. No matter what we are, we can always regard it with some distance. In “As I Ebb’d with the Ocean of Life,” this “real Me” returns to mock the speaker, “with peals of distant ironical laughter at every word I have written.” So it would appear to be less like the usual idea of the soul—as a higher entity with which we will one day become identical by shedding our mortal selves—than as an elusive horizon of transformation. Late in “Song of Myself,” Whitman imagines himself as a germ of life endlessly reembodyed in the material recirculation of atoms through the ages. But here, too, he differs from the familiar versions of reincarnation, since he does not imagine a moral ladder of reward and punishment in different life-forms, let alone the common fantasy of an inner personality persisting from “past lives.”

Given his commitment to affirming the world as it is, flawed and unredeemed, Whitman could hardly have imagined a greater test of his poetic vision than the Civil War. He often said in his later years that the Civil War had been the fountain-source of *Leaves of Grass*. He was greatly exaggerating. Most of his poems had been published by 1860. But the war gave him a severe proving ground for his distinctive vision. In 1862 he went to the Virginia front looking for his brother George, who had been wounded, and stayed in Washington, working at a series of clerk’s jobs and attending wounded soldiers as a volunteer hospital visitor. An ardent Unionist, he soon came to de-

spise the war. *Drum-Taps*, the volume of poems he published separately in 1865 and later folded into *Leaves of Grass*, treats his ambivalence directly, in poems such as “The Wound-Dresser,” forswearing the public rhetoric of heroism and glory in favor of a more complex attention—disturbing, graphic, and erotic at the same time—to the wounded and dying.

*Drum-Taps*, along with Herman Melville’s *Battle-Pieces*, remains one of the strongest treatments of this or any other war. When Lincoln was assassinated in April of 1865, just after the volume appeared, Whitman added new poems to a second printing, including the elegy “When Lilacs Last in the Door-yard Bloom’d.” Although the poem never names Lincoln, it establishes an intensely personal relation to the dead president, who remained Whitman’s hero thereafter. Whitman had seen Lincoln several times; once, after glimpsing him in a crowded room, the poet-clerk went home and wrote in his notebook, “His face & manner have an expression & are inexpressibly sweet—one hand on his friend’s shoulder, the other holds his hand. I love the president personally.”

Whitman also later published prose sketches based on his wartime notebooks, first as *Memoranda During the War* in 1876, then in expanded form as *Specimen Days* in 1882. *Specimen Days* is a chaotic book, frequently apologetic for its fragmentary character, but its personal reflections have made it one of the most enduringly popular treatments of the war. Its first half, devoted to the war years, is moving and agreeably rambling. Readers have often felt a loss of momentum in the second half, which lacks a narrative and personal focus; it is omitted here.

After the war, Whitman revisited his early nationalist idealism. In ways that he only dimly recognized, the world had changed around him. In his youth, America was stamped by provincialism, regarded as an uncultured and crude aberration among nations. Whitman’s nationalist ardor—and his poetic vocation—arose partly as a response to that intense sense of devaluation. After the war, the American market economy was entering a new phase, dominated by corporations and heavy

capital. The United States was also more and more set on an imperial course of its own. The Whitman who had been called by Thoreau “the greatest democrat the world has seen” evidently felt his optimism called into question by the war, by postwar corruption and the impeachment of Andrew Johnson, and by a tide of European critics—including Thomas Carlyle, who had been another of the young Whitman’s heroes.

In this context, Whitman wrote a series of magazine articles in which he tried to put together a defense of the American experiment as he understood it, allowing “full play for human nature to expand itself in numberless and even conflicting directions.” The resulting book, *Democratic Vistas*, is a peculiar mix. It is in treatise form, yet without systematic argument. Whitman lacks Tocqueville’s grasp of historical contradictions and seriously underestimates the structural character of anti-democratic tendencies. His distinctive generosity sometimes wavers in the face of Carlyle’s antipopulism, and sometimes asserts itself all too naively. Yet *Democratic Vistas* remains an eloquent (if sometimes bombastic) statement of democratic national ideals, and has survived as a minor classic of political faith. It is especially remarkable for the role it gives to literature in forging the conditions of democratic life. In this it might be compared with Matthew Arnold’s *Culture and Anarchy* (1869), with which it is nearly contemporary.

In poetry, too, Whitman began to change the emphases of his national rhetoric. He had always celebrated America not just as a nation like any other, the way an Icelander might be fond of Iceland, but as a nation with a special mission, bringing democracy to all peoples. This supercharged nationalism was a potent but contradictory mix. It fed the arrogance of a redeemer nation, justifying American dominance and expansion. But it could also make possible a democratic transnationalism beyond the merely American. Both of these tendencies find expression in Whitman’s verse, early and late. The later poetry, such as “Passage to India” or “Prayer of Columbus,” broadens the poet’s sense of the world, without abandoning his original vocation. Interestingly, some of the first major writers to see

themselves as followers of Whitman, including José Martí of Cuba and Fernando Pessoa of Portugal, were those who took him in this internationalist light. American writers of the twentieth century, by contrast, tend to see him as a national, essentially American writer.

Looking back on his earlier, more productive years, the aging Whitman often tried to summarize what he had been up to. He told the story in a different way each time. He once remarked that *Leaves of Grass* had been above all “a language experiment.” He told a group of admirers in Canada that his main object all along had been “to sing, and sing to the full, the ecstasy of simple physiological Being.” In “A Backward Glance,” he says the point was what we would now call autobiographical: “to articulate and faithfully express in literary or poetic form, and uncompromisingly, my own physical, emotional, moral, intellectual, and aesthetic Personality, in the midst of, and tallying, the momentous spirit and facts of its immediate days, and of current America.”

This volume brings together each of the forewords and afterwords that Whitman wrote for various editions of his poetry, allowing a unique overview of his shifting manifestos. Most famous among them is the preface to the 1855 version. Whitman later wrote that he never liked this preface. He claimed that he wrote it in haste, as the book was being set in type, neither planning it in advance nor revising as he went. Yet it is one of the most eloquent things he ever wrote, not only on his faith in democracy and America, but on his dramatic conception of an essentially modern poetry. The 1856 edition had no preface, but the open letter to Emerson covers much the same ground in a new, even more militant way. The editions of 1860 and 1867 contained nothing comparable, but when Whitman published “As a Strong Bird on Pinions Free” separately in 1872, he wrote a new comprehensive preface—as he did again four years later for a new edition of his work. “A Backward Glance,” first published in 1888, was retained as an afterword to the deathbed edition.

## Notes

1. Unsigned review in the [London] *Examiner*, March 22, 1856, pp. 180-181.
2. Unsigned review in the *New York Daily Times*, November 13, 1856, p. 2.
3. *Ibid.*; and Rufus Griswold, review in *Criterion* 1, November 10, 1855, p. 24.
4. Unsigned review in *The Critic* [London], April 1, 1856, pp. 170-171.
5. [Walt Whitman], unsigned review in the *Brooklyn Daily Times*, September 29, 1855, p. 2.
6. Quoted in Jerome Loving, *Emerson, Whitman, and the American Muse* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1982), p. 98.
7. Horace Traubel, ed., *Walt Whitman in Camden*, 9 vols. (various publishers, 1901-1998), vol. 1, p. 223.
8. Richard Maurice Bucke, *Walt Whitman* (Philadelphia: David McKay, 1883), p. 31.
9. Griswold, *op. cit.*
10. Clara Barrus, *Whitman and Burroughs: Comrades* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1931), pp. 13, 17.
11. Randall Jarrell, "Some Lines from Whitman," in *Poetry and the Age* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953).





POEMS FROM  
*LEAVES OF GRASS*



*Song of Myself.*

## I

I celebrate myself, and sing myself,  
And what I assume you shall assume,  
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.

I loafe and invite my soul,  
I lean and loafe at my ease observing a spear of summer grass.

My tongue, every atom of my blood, form'd from this soil,  
this air,  
Born here of parents born here from parents the same, and  
their parents the same,  
I, now thirty-seven years old in perfect health begin,  
Hoping to cease not till death.

Creeds and schools in abeyance,  
Retiring back a while sufficed at what they are, but never  
forgotten,  
I harbor for good or bad, I permit to speak at every hazard,  
Nature without check with original energy.

## 2

Houses and rooms are full of perfumes, the shelves are  
crowded with perfumes,  
I breathe the fragrance myself and know it and like it,  
The distillation would intoxicate me also, but I shall not let it.

The atmosphere is not a perfume, it has no taste of the  
distillation, it is odorless,  
It is for my mouth forever, I am in love with it,  
I will go to the bank by the wood and become undisguised  
and naked,  
I am mad for it to be in contact with me.

The smoke of my own breath,  
Echoes, ripples, buzz'd whispers, love-root, silk-thread, crotch  
and vine,  
My respiration and inspiration, the beating of my heart, the  
passing of blood and air through my lungs,  
The sniff of green leaves and dry leaves, and of the shore and  
dark-color'd sea-rocks, and of hay in the barn,  
The sound of the belch'd words of my voice loos'd to the  
eddiess of the wind,  
A few light kisses, a few embraces, a reaching around of arms,  
The play of shine and shade on the trees as the supple boughs  
wag,  
The delight alone or in the rush of the streets, or along the  
fields and hill-sides,  
The feeling of health, the full-noon trill, the song of me rising  
from bed and meeting the sun.

Have you reckon'd a thousand acres much? have you  
reckon'd the earth much?  
Have you practis'd so long to learn to read?  
Have you felt so proud to get at the meaning of poems?

Stop this day and night with me and you shall possess the  
origin of all poems,

You shall possess the good of the earth and sun, (there are  
millions of suns left,)  
You shall no longer take things at second or third hand, nor  
look through the eyes of the dead, nor feed on the  
spectres in books,  
You shall not look through my eyes either, nor take things  
from me,  
You shall listen to all sides and filter them from your self.

## 3

I have heard what the talkers were talking, the talk of the  
beginning and the end,  
But I do not talk of the beginning or the end.

There was never any more inception than there is now,  
Nor any more youth or age than there is now,  
And will never be any more perfection than there is now,  
Nor any more heaven or hell than there is now.

Urge and urge and urge,  
Always the procreant urge of the world.

Out of the dimness opposite equals advance, always substance  
and increase, always sex,  
Always a knit of identity, always distinction, always a breed  
of life.

To elaborate is no avail, learn'd and unlearn'd feel that it  
is so.

Sure as the most certain sure, plumb in the uprights, well  
entretied, braced in the beams,  
Stout as a horse, affectionate, haughty, electrical,  
I and this mystery here we stand.

Clear and sweet is my soul, and clear and sweet is all that is  
not my soul.

Lack one lacks both, and the unseen is proved by the seen,  
Till that becomes unseen and receives proof in its turn.

Showing the best and dividing it from the worst age vexes  
age,  
Knowing the perfect fitness and equanimity of things, while  
they discuss I am silent, and go bathe and admire myself.

Welcome is every organ and attribute of me, and of any man  
hearty and clean,  
Not an inch nor a particle of an inch is vile, and none shall be  
less familiar than the rest.

I am satisfied—I see, dance, laugh, sing;  
As the hugging and loving bed-fellow sleeps at my side  
through the night, and withdraws at the peep of the day  
with stealthy tread,  
Leaving me baskets cover'd with white towels swelling the  
house with their plenty,  
Shall I postpone my acceptance and realization and scream at  
my eyes,  
That they turn from gazing after and down the road,  
And forthwith cipher and show me to a cent,  
Exactly the value of one and exactly the value of two, and  
which is ahead?

## 4

Trippers and askers surround me,  
People I meet, the effect upon me of my early life or the ward  
and city I live in, or the nation,  
The latest dates, discoveries, inventions, societies, authors old  
and new,  
My dinner, dress, associates, looks, compliments, dues,  
The real or fancied indifference of some man or woman I  
love,

The sickness of one of my folks or of myself, or ill-doing or  
 loss or lack of money, or depressions or exaltations,  
 Battles, the horrors of fratricidal war, the fever of doubtful  
 news, the fitful events;  
 These come to me days and nights and go from me again,  
 But they are not the Me myself.

Apart from the pulling and hauling stands what I am,  
 Stands amused, complacent, compassionating, idle, unitary,  
 Looks down, is erect, or bends an arm on an impalpable  
 certain rest,  
 Looking with side-curved head curious what will come next,  
 Both in and out of the game and watching and wondering  
 at it.

Backward I see in my own days where I sweated through fog  
 with linguists and contenders,  
 I have no mockings or arguments, I witness and wait.

## 5

I believe in you my soul, the other I am must not abase itself  
 to you,  
 And you must not be abased to the other.

Loafe with me on the grass, loose the stop from your throat,  
 Not words, not music or rhyme I want, not custom or lecture,  
 not even the best,  
 Only the lull I like, the hum of your valvèd voice.

I mind how once we lay such a transparent summer morning,  
 How you settled your head athwart my hips and gently turn'd  
 over upon me,  
 And parted the shirt from my bosom-bone, and plunged your  
 tongue to my bare-stript heart,  
 And reach'd till you felt my beard, and reach'd till you held  
 my feet.

Swiftly arose and spread around me the peace and knowledge  
 that pass all the argument of the earth,  
 And I know that the hand of God is the promise of my own,  
 And I know that the spirit of God is the brother of my own,  
 And that all the men ever born are also my brothers, and the  
 women my sisters and lovers,  
 And that a kelson of the creation is love,  
 And limitless are leaves stiff or drooping in the fields,  
 And brown ants in the little wells beneath them,  
 And mossy scabs of the worm fence, heap'd stones, elder,  
 mullein and poke-weed.

## 6

A child said *What is the grass?* fetching it to me with full  
 hands;  
 How could I answer the child? I do not know what it is any  
 more than he.

I guess it must be the flag of my disposition, out of hopeful  
 green stuff woven.

Or I guess it is the handkerchief of the Lord,  
 A scented gift and remembrancer designedly dropt,  
 Bearing the owner's name someway in the corners, that we  
 may see and remark, and say *Whose?*

Or I guess the grass is itself a child, the produced babe of the  
 vegetation.

Or I guess it is a uniform hieroglyphic,  
 And it means, Sprouting alike in broad zones and narrow  
 zones,  
 Growing among black folks as among white,  
 Kanuck, Tuckahoe, Congressman, Cuff, I give them the same,  
 I receive them the same.

And now it seems to me the beautiful uncut hair of graves.



Tenderly will I use you curling grass,  
It may be you transpire from the breasts of young men,  
It may be if I had known them I would have loved them,  
It may be you are from old people, or from offspring taken  
soon out of their mothers' laps.  
And here you are the mothers' laps.

This grass is very dark to be from the white heads of old  
mothers,  
Darker than the colorless beards of old men,  
Dark to come from under the faint red roofs of mouths.

O I perceive after all so many uttering tongues,  
And I perceive they do not come from the roofs of mouths for  
nothing.

I wish I could translate the hints about the dead young men  
and women,  
And the hints about old men and mothers, and the offspring  
taken soon out of their laps.

What do you think has become of the young and old men?  
And what do you think has become of the women and  
children?

They are alive and well somewhere,  
The smallest sprout shows there is really no death,  
And if ever there was it led forward life, and does not wait at  
the end to arrest it,  
And ceas'd the moment life appear'd.

All goes onward and outward, nothing collapses,  
And to die is different from what any one supposed, and  
luckier.

## 7

Has any one supposed it lucky to be born?  
 I hasten to inform him or her it is just as lucky to die, and I  
 know it.

I pass death with the dying and birth with the new-wash'd  
 babe, and am not contain'd between my hat and boots,  
 And peruse manifold objects, no two alike and every one  
 good,  
 The earth good and the stars good, and their adjuncts all good.

I am not an earth nor an adjunct of an earth,  
 I am the mate and companion of people, all just as immortal  
 and fathomless as myself,  
 (They do not know how immortal, but I know.)

Every kind for itself and its own, for me mine male and  
 female,  
 For me those that have been boys and that love women,  
 For me the man that is proud and feels how it stings to be  
 slighted,  
 For me the sweet-heart and the old maid, for me mothers and  
 the mothers of mothers,  
 For me lips that have smiled, eyes that have shed tears,  
 For me children and the begetters of children.

Undrape! you are not guilty to me, nor stale nor discarded,  
 I see through the broadcloth and gingham whether or no,  
 And am around, tenacious, acquisitive, tireless, and cannot be  
 shaken away.

## 8

The little one sleeps in its cradle,  
 I lift the gauze and look a long time, and silently brush away  
 flies with my hand.

The youngster and the red-faced girl turn aside up the bushy  
hill,  
I peeringly view them from the top.

The suicide sprawls on the bloody floor of the bedroom,  
I witness the corpse with its dabbled hair, I note where the  
pistol has fallen.

The blab of the pave, tires of carts, sluff of boot-soles, talk of  
the promenaders,  
The heavy omnibus, the driver with his interrogating thumb,  
the clank of the shod horses on the granite floor,  
The snow-sleighs, clinking, shouted jokes, pelts of snow-balls,  
The hurrahs for popular favorites, the fury of rous'd mobs,  
The flap of the curtain'd litter, a sick man inside borne to the  
hospital,  
The meeting of enemies, the sudden oath, the blows and fall,  
The excited crowd, the policeman with his star quickly  
working his passage to the centre of the crowd,  
The impassive stones that receive and return so many echoes,  
What groans of over-fed or half-starv'd who fall sunstruck or  
in fits,  
What exclamations of women taken suddenly who hurry  
home and give birth to babes,  
What living and buried speech is always vibrating here, what  
howls restrain'd by decorum,  
Arrests of criminals, slights, adulterous offers made,  
acceptances, rejections with convex lips,  
I mind them or the show or resonance of them—I come and I  
depart.

## 9

The big doors of the country barn stand open and ready,  
The dried grass of the harvest-time loads the slow-drawn  
wagon,  
The clear light plays on the brown gray and green intertinged,  
The armfuls are pack'd to the sagging mow.

I am there, I help, I came stretch'd atop of the load,  
I felt its soft jolts, one leg reclined on the other,  
I jump from the cross-beams and seize the clover and timothy,  
And roll head over heels and tangle my hair full of wisps.

## 10

Alone far in the wilds and mountains I hunt,  
Wandering amazed at my own lightness and glee,  
In the late afternoon choosing a safe spot to pass the night,  
Kindling a fire and broiling the fresh-kill'd game,  
Falling asleep on the gather'd leaves with my dog and gun by  
my side.

The Yankee clipper is under her sky-sails, she cuts the sparkle  
and scud,  
My eyes settle the land, I bend at her prow and shout joyously  
from the deck.

The boatmen and clam-diggers arose early and stopt for me,  
I tuck'd my trowser-ends in my boots and went and had a  
good time;  
You should have been with us that day round the chowder-  
kettle.

I saw the marriage of the trapper in the open air in the far  
west, the bride was a red girl,  
Her father and his friends sat near cross-legged and dumbly  
smoking, they had moccasins to their feet and large thick  
blankets hanging from their shoulders,  
On a bank lounged the trapper, he was drest mostly in skins,  
his luxuriant beard and curls protected his neck, he held  
his bride by the hand,  
She had long eyelashes, her head was bare, her coarse straight  
locks descended upon her voluptuous limbs and reach'd  
to her feet.

The runaway slave came to my house and stopt outside,  
I heard his motions crackling the twigs of the woodpile,  
Through the swung half-door of the kitchen I saw him limpsy  
and weak,  
And went where he sat on a log and led him in and assured  
him,  
And brought water and fill'd a tub for his sweated body and  
bruise'd feet,  
And gave him a room that enter'd from my own, and gave  
him some coarse clean clothes,  
And remember perfectly well his revolving eyes and his  
awkwardness,  
And remember putting plasters on the galls of his neck and  
ankles;  
He staid with me a week before he was recuperated and  
pass'd north,  
I had him sit next me at table, my fire-lock lean'd in the  
corner.

## I I

Twenty-eight young men bathe by the shore,  
Twenty-eight young men and all so friendly;  
Twenty-eight years of womanly life and all so lonesome.

She owns the fine house by the rise of the bank,  
She hides handsome and richly drest aft the blinds of the  
window.

Which of the young men does she like the best?  
Ah the homeliest of them is beautiful to her.

Where are you off to, lady? for I see you,  
You splash in the water there, yet stay stock still in your room.

Dancing and laughing along the beach came the twenty-ninth  
bather,  
The rest did not see her, but she saw them and loved them.

The beards of the young men glisten'd with wet, it ran from  
their long hair,  
Little streams pass'd all over their bodies.

An unseen hand also pass'd over their bodies,  
It descended tremblingly from their temples and ribs.

The young men float on their backs, their white bellies bulge  
to the sun, they do not ask who seizes fast to them,  
They do not know who puffs and declines with pendant and  
bending arch,  
They do not think whom they souse with spray.

## 12

The butcher-boy puts off his killing-clothes, or sharpens his  
knife at the stall in the market,  
I loiter enjoying his repartee and his shuffle and break-down.

Blacksmiths with grimed and hairy chests environ the anvil,  
Each has his main-sledge, they are all out, there is a great heat  
in the fire.

From the cinder-strew'd threshold I follow their movements,  
The lithe sheer of their waists plays even with their massive  
arms,  
Overhand the hammers swing, overhand so slow, overhand so  
sure,  
They do not hasten, each man hits in his place.

## 13

The negro holds firmly the reins of his four horses, the block  
swags underneath on its tied-over chain,  
The negro that drives the long dray of the stone-yard, steady  
and tall he stands pois'd on one leg on the string-piece,  
His blue shirt exposes his ample neck and breast and loosens  
over his hip-band,

His glance is calm and commanding, he tosses the slouch of  
his hat away from his forehead,  
The sun falls on his crispy hair and mustache, falls on the  
black of his polish'd and perfect limbs.

I behold the picturesque giant and love him, and I do not stop  
there,  
I go with the team also.

In me the caresser of life wherever moving, backward as well  
as forward sluing,  
To niches aside and junior bending, not a person or object  
missing,  
Absorbing all to myself and for this song.

Oxen that rattle the yoke and chain or halt in the leafy shade,  
what is that you express in your eyes?  
It seems to me more than all the print I have read in my life.

My tread scares the wood-drake and wood-duck on my  
distant and day-long ramble,  
They rise together, they slowly circle around.

I believe in those wing'd purposes,  
And acknowledge red, yellow, white, playing within me,  
And consider green and violet and the tufted crown  
intentional,  
And do not call the tortoise unworthy because she is not  
something else,  
And the jay in the woods never studied the gamut, yet trills  
pretty well to me,  
And the look of the bay mare shames silliness out of me.

The wild gander leads his flock through the cool night,  
*Ya-honk* he says, and sounds it down to me like an invitation,

The pert may suppose it meaningless, but I listening close,  
Find its purpose and place up there toward the wintry sky.

The sharp-hoof'd moose of the north, the cat on the house-  
sill, the chickadee, the prairie-dog,  
The litter of the grunting sow as they tug at her teats,  
The brood of the turkey-hen and she with her half-spread  
wings,  
I see in them and myself the same old law.

The press of my foot to the earth springs a hundred  
affections,  
They scorn the best I can do to relate them.

I am enamour'd of growing out-doors,  
Of men that live among cattle or taste of the ocean or woods,  
Of the builders and steerers of ships and the wielders of axes  
and mauls, and the drivers of horses,  
I can eat and sleep with them week in and week out.

What is commonest, cheapest, nearest, easiest, is Me,  
Me going in for my chances, spending for vast returns,  
Adorning myself to bestow myself on the first that will  
take me,  
Not asking the sky to come down to my good will,  
Scattering it freely forever.

The pure contralto sings in the organ loft,  
The carpenter dresses his plank, the tongue of his foreplane  
whistles its wild ascending lisp,  
The married and unmarried children ride home to their  
Thanksgiving dinner,  
The pilot seizes the king-pin, he heaves down with a strong  
arm,  
The mate stands braced in the whale-boat, lance and harpoon  
are ready,



The duck-shooter walks by silent and cautious stretches,  
The deacons are ordain'd with cross'd hands at the altar,  
The spinning-girl retreats and advances to the hum of the big  
wheel,  
The farmer stops by the bars as he walks on a First-day loafe  
and looks at the oats and rye,  
The lunatic is carried at last to the asylum a confirm'd case,  
(He will never sleep any more as he did in the cot in his  
mother's bed-room;)  
The jour printer with gray head and gaunt jaws works at his  
case,  
He turns his quid of tobacco while his eyes blurr with the  
manuscript;  
The malform'd limbs are tied to the surgeon's table,  
What is removed drops horribly in a pail;  
The quadron girl is sold at the auction-stand, the drunkard  
nods by the bar-room stove,  
The machinist rolls up his sleeves, the policeman travels his  
beat, the gate-keeper marks who pass,  
The young fellow drives the express-wagon, (I love him,  
though I do not know him;)  
The half-breed straps on his light boots to compete in the race,  
The western turkey-shooting draws old and young, some lean  
on their rifles, some sit on logs,  
Out from the crowd steps the marksman, takes his position,  
levels his piece;  
The groups of newly-come immigrants cover the wharf or  
levee,  
As the woolly-pates hoe in the sugar-field, the overseer views  
them from his saddle,  
The bugle calls in the ball-room, the gentlemen run for their  
partners, the dancers bow to each other,  
The youth lies awake in the cedar-roof'd garret and harks to  
the musical rain,  
The Wolverine sets traps on the creek that helps fill the  
Huron,  
The squaw wrapt in her yellow-hemm'd cloth is offering  
moccasins and bead-bags for sale,

The connoisseur peers along the exhibition-gallery with half-shut eyes bent sideways,  
As the deck-hands make fast the steamboat the plank is thrown for the shore-going passengers,  
The young sister holds out the skein while the elder sister winds it off in a ball, and stops now and then for the knots,  
The one-year wife is recovering and happy having a week ago borne her first child,  
The clean-hair'd Yankee girl works with her sewing-machine or in the factory or mill,  
The paving-man leans on his two-handed rammer, the reporter's lead flies swiftly over the note-book, the sign-painter is lettering with blue and gold,  
The canal boy trots on the tow-path, the book-keeper counts at his desk, the shoemaker waxes his thread,  
The conductor beats time for the band and all the performers follow him,  
The child is baptized, the convert is making his first professions,  
The regatta is spread on the bay, the race is begun, (how the white sails sparkle!)  
The drover watching his drove sings out to them that would stray,  
The pedler sweats with his pack on his back, (the purchaser higgling about the odd cent;)  
The bride unrumples her white dress, the minute-hand of the clock moves slowly,  
The opium-eater reclines with rigid head and just-open'd lips,  
The prostitute draggles her shawl, her bonnet bobs on her tipsy and pimpled neck,  
The crowd laugh at her blackguard oaths, the men jeer and wink to each other,  
(Miserable! I do not laugh at your oaths nor jeer you;)  
The President holding a cabinet council is surrounded by the great Secretaries,  
On the piazza walk three matrons stately and friendly with twined arms,

The crew of the fish-smack pack repeated layers of halibut in  
the hold,  
The Missourian crosses the plains toting his wares and his  
cattle,  
As the fare-collector goes through the train he gives notice by  
the jingling of loose change,  
The floor-men are laying the floor, the tinner's are tinning the  
roof, the masons are calling for mortar,  
In single file each shouldering his hod pass onward the  
laborers;  
Seasons pursuing each other the indescribable crowd is  
gather'd, it is the fourth of Seventh-month, (what salutes  
of cannon and small arms!)

Seasons pursuing each other the plougher ploughs, the mower  
mows, and the winter-grain falls in the ground;  
Off on the lakes the pike-fisher watches and waits by the hole  
in the frozen surface,  
The stumps stand thick round the clearing, the squatter  
strikes deep with his axe,  
Flatboatmen make fast towards dusk near the cotton-wood or  
pecan-trees,  
Coon-seekers go through the regions of the Red river or  
through those drain'd by the Tennessee, or through those  
of the Arkansas,  
Torches shine in the dark that hangs on the Chattahoochee or  
Altamahaw,  
Patriarchs sit at supper with sons and grandsons and great-  
grandsons around them,  
In walls of adobie, in canvas tents, rest hunters and trappers  
after their day's sport,  
The city sleeps and the country sleeps,  
The living sleep for their time, the dead sleep for their time,  
The old husband sleeps by his wife and the young husband  
sleeps by his wife;  
And these tend inward to me, and I tend outward to them,  
And such as it is to be of these more or less I am,  
And of these one and all I weave the song of myself.

## 16

I am of old and young, of the foolish as much as the wise,  
Regardless of others, ever regardful of others,  
Maternal as well as paternal, a child as well as a man,  
Stuff'd with the stuff that is coarse and stuff'd with the stuff  
    that is fine,  
One of the Nation of many nations, the smallest the same and  
    the largest the same,  
A Southerner soon as a Northerner, a planter nonchalant and  
    hospitable down by the Oconee I live,  
A Yankee bound my own way ready for trade, my joints the  
    limberest joints on earth and the sternest joints on earth,  
A Kentuckian walking the vale of the Elkhorn in my deer-skin  
    leggings, a Louisianian or Georgian,  
A boatman over lakes or bays or along coasts, a Hoosier,  
    Badger, Buckeye;  
At home on Kanadian snow-shoes or up in the bush, or with  
    fishermen off Newfoundland,  
At home in the fleet of ice-boats, sailing with the rest and  
    tacking,  
At home on the hills of Vermont or in the woods of Maine, or  
    the Texan ranch,  
Comrade of Californians, comrade of free North-Westerners,  
    (loving their big proportions,)  
Comrade of raftsmen and coalmen, comrade of all who shake  
    hands and welcome to drink and meat,  
A learner with the simplest, a teacher of the thoughtfulest,  
A novice beginning yet experient of myriads of seasons,  
Of every hue and caste am I, of every rank and religion,  
A farmer, mechanic, artist, gentleman, sailor, quaker,  
Prisoner, fancy-man, rowdy, lawyer, physician, priest.

I resist any thing better than my own diversity,  
Breathe the air but leave plenty after me,  
And am not stuck up, and am in my place.

(The moth and the fish-eggs are in their place,  
 The bright suns I see and the dark suns I cannot see are in  
 their place,  
 The palpable is in its place and the impalpable is in its place.)

## 17

These are really the thoughts of all men in all ages and lands,  
 they are not original with me,  
 If they are not yours as much as mine they are nothing, or  
 next to nothing,  
 If they are not the riddle and the untying of the riddle they are  
 nothing,  
 If they are not just as close as they are distant they are  
 nothing.

This is the grass that grows wherever the land is and the  
 water is,  
 This the common air that bathes the globe.

## 18

With music strong I come, with my cornets and my drums,  
 I play not marches for accepted victors only, I play marches  
 for conquer'd and slain persons.

Have you heard that it was good to gain the day?  
 I also say it is good to fall, battles are lost in the same spirit in  
 which they are won.

I beat and pound for the dead,  
 I blow through my embouchures my loudest and gayest for  
 them.

Vivas to those who have fail'd!  
 And to those whose war-vessels sank in the sea!  
 And to those themselves who sank in the sea!

And to all generals that lost engagements, and all overcome  
 heroes!

And the numberless unknown heroes equal to the greatest  
 heroes known!

## 19

This is the meal equally set, this the meat for natural hunger,  
 It is for the wicked just the same as the righteous, I make  
 appointments with all,

I will not have a single person slighted or left away,  
 The kept-woman, sponger, thief, are hereby invited,  
 The heavy-lipp'd slave is invited, the venerealee is invited;  
 There shall be no difference between them and the rest.

This is the press of a bashful hand, this the float and odor of  
 hair,

This the touch of my lips to yours, this the murmur of  
 yearning,

This the far-off depth and height reflecting my own face,  
 This the thoughtful merge of myself, and the outlet again.

Do you guess I have some intricate purpose?

Well I have, for the Fourth-month showers have, and the mica  
 on the side of a rock has.

Do you take it I would astonish?

Does the daylight astonish? does the early redstart twittering  
 through the woods?

Do I astonish more than they?

This hour I tell things in confidence,

I might not tell everybody, but I will tell you.

## 20

Who goes there? hankering, gross, mystical, nude;

How is it I extract strength from the beef I eat?

What is a man anyhow? what am I? what are you?

All I mark as my own you shall offset it with your own,  
Else it were time lost listening to me.

I do not snivel that snivel the world over,  
That months are vacuums and the ground but wallow and filth.

Whimpering and truckling fold with powders for invalids,  
conformity goes to the fourth-remov'd,  
I wear my hat as I please indoors or out.

Why should I pray? why should I venerate and be  
ceremonious?

Having pried through the strata, analyzed to a hair, counsel'd  
with doctors and calculated close,  
I find no sweeter fat than sticks to my own bones.

In all people I see myself, none more and not one a barley-  
corn less,  
And the good or bad I say of myself I say of them.

I know I am solid and sound,  
To me the converging objects of the universe perpetually flow,  
All are written to me, and I must get what the writing means.

I know I am deathless,  
I know this orbit of mine cannot be swept by a carpenter's  
compass,  
I know I shall not pass like a child's carlacue cut with a burnt  
stick at night.

I know I am august,  
I do not trouble my spirit to vindicate itself or be understood,  
I see that the elementary laws never apologize,  
(I reckon I behave no prouder than the level I plant my house  
by, after all.)

I exist as I am, that is enough,  
If no other in the world be aware I sit content,  
And if each and all be aware I sit content.

One world is aware and by far the largest to me, and that is  
myself,  
And whether I come to my own to-day or in ten thousand or  
ten million years,  
I can cheerfully take it now, or with equal cheerfulness I can  
wait.

My foothold is tenon'd and mortis'd in granite,  
I laugh at what you call dissolution,  
And I know the amplitude of time.

## 21

I am the poet of the Body and I am the poet of the Soul,  
The pleasures of heaven are with me and the pains of hell are  
with me,  
The first I graft and increase upon myself, the latter I translate  
into a new tongue.

I am the poet of the woman the same as the man,  
And I say it is as great to be a woman as to be a man,  
And I say there is nothing greater than the mother of men.

I chant the chant of dilation or pride,  
We have had ducking and deprecating about enough,  
I show that size is only development.

Have you outstript the rest? are you the President?  
It is a trifle, they will more than arrive there every one, and  
still pass on.

I am he that walks with the tender and growing night,  
I call to the earth and sea half-held by the night.



Press close bare-bosom'd night—press close magnetic  
 nourishing night!  
 Night of south winds—night of the large few stars!  
 Still nodding night—mad naked summer night.

Smile O voluptuous cool-breath'd earth!  
 Earth of the slumbering and liquid trees!  
 Earth of departed sunset—earth of the mountains misty-topt!  
 Earth of the vitreous pour of the full moon just tinged with  
 blue!  
 Earth of shine and dark mottling the tide of the river!  
 Earth of the limpid gray of clouds brighter and clearer for my  
 sake!  
 Far-swooping elbow'd earth—rich apple-blossom'd earth!  
 Smile, for your lover comes.

Prodigal, you have given me love—therefore I to you give  
 love!  
 O unspeakable passionate love.

## 22

You sea! I resign myself to you also—I guess what you mean,  
 I behold from the beach your crooked inviting fingers,  
 I believe you refuse to go back without feeling of me,  
 We must have a turn together, I undress, hurry me out of sight  
 of the land,  
 Cushion me soft, rock me in billowy drowse,  
 Dash me with amorous wet, I can repay you.

Sea of stretch'd ground-swells,  
 Sea breathing broad and convulsive breaths,  
 Sea of the brine of life and of unshovell'd yet always-ready  
 graves,  
 Howler and scooper of storms, capricious and dainty sea,  
 I am integral with you, I too am of one phase and of all  
 phases.

Partaker of influx and efflux I, extoller of hate and  
    conciliation,  
Extoller of amies and those that sleep in each others' arms.

I am he attesting sympathy,  
(Shall I make my list of things in the house and skip the house  
    that supports them?)

I am not the poet of goodness only, I do not decline to be the  
    poet of wickedness also.

What blurt is this about virtue and about vice?  
Evil propels me and reform of evil propels me, I stand  
    indifferent,  
My gait is no fault-finder's or rejecter's gait,  
I moisten the roots of all that has grown.

Did you fear some scrofula out of the unflagging pregnancy?  
Did you guess the celestial laws are yet to be work'd over and  
    rectified?

I find one side a balance and the antipodal side a balance,  
Soft doctrine as steady help as stable doctrine,  
Thoughts and deeds of the present our rouse and early start.

This minute that comes to me over the past decillions,  
There is no better than it and now.

What behaved well in the past or behaves well to-day is not  
    such a wonder,  
The wonder is always and always how there can be a mean  
    man or an infidel.

Endless unfolding of words of ages!  
And mine a word of the modern, the word En-Masse.

A word of the faith that never balks,  
Here or henceforward it is all the same to me, I accept Time  
absolutely.

It alone is without flaw, it alone rounds and completes all,  
That mystic baffling wonder alone completes all.

I accept Reality and dare not question it,  
Materialism first and last imbuing.

Hurrah for positive science! long live exact demonstration!  
Fetch stonecrop mixt with cedar and branches of lilac,  
This is the lexicographer, this the chemist, this made a  
grammar of the old cartouches,  
These mariners put the ship through dangerous unknown  
seas,  
This is the geologist, this works with the scalpel, and this is a  
mathematician.

Gentlemen, to you the first honors always!  
Your facts are useful, and yet they are not my dwelling,  
I but enter by them to an area of my dwelling.

Less the reminders of properties told my words,  
And more the reminders they of life untold, and of freedom  
and extrication,  
And make short account of neuters and geldings, and favor  
men and women fully equipt,  
And beat the gong of revolt, and stop with fugitives and them  
that plot and conspire.

Walt Whitman, a kosmos, of Manhattan the son,  
Turbulent, fleshy, sensual, eating, drinking and breeding,  
No sentimentalist, no stander above men and women or apart  
from them,  
No more modest than immodest.

Unscrew the locks from the doors!  
Unscrew the doors themselves from their jambs!

Whoever degrades another degrades me,  
And whatever is done or said returns at last to me.

Through me the afflatus surging and surging, through me the  
current and index.

I speak the pass-word primeval, I give the sign of democracy,  
By God! I will accept nothing which all cannot have their  
counterpart of on the same terms.

Through me many long dumb voices,  
Voices of the interminable generations of prisoners and  
slaves,  
Voices of the diseas'd and despairing and of thieves and  
dwarfs,  
Voices of cycles of preparation and accretion,  
And of the threads that connect the stars, and of wombs and  
of the father-stuff,  
And of the rights of them the others are down upon,  
Of the deform'd, trivial, flat, foolish, despised,  
Fog in the air, beetles rolling balls of dung.

Through me forbidden voices,  
Voices of sexes and lusts, voices veil'd and I remove the veil,  
Voices indecent by me clarified and transfigur'd.

I do not press my fingers across my mouth,  
I keep as delicate around the bowels as around the head and  
heart,  
Copulation is no more rank to me than death is.

I believe in the flesh and the appetites,  
Seeing, hearing, feeling, are miracles, and each part and tag of  
me is a miracle.

Divine am I inside and out, and I make holy whatever I touch  
 or am touch'd from,  
 The scent of these arm-pits aroma finer than prayer,  
 This head more than churches, bibles, and all the creeds.

If I worship one thing more than another it shall be the spread  
 of my own body, or any part of it,  
 Translucent mould of me it shall be you!  
 Shaded ledges and rests it shall be you!  
 Firm masculine colter it shall be you!  
 Whatever goes to the tilth of me it shall be you!  
 You my rich blood! your milky stream pale strippings of  
 my life!  
 Breast that presses against other breasts it shall be you!  
 My brain it shall be your occult convolutions!  
 Root of wash'd sweet-flag! timorous pond-snipe! nest of  
 guarded duplicate eggs! it shall be you!  
 Mix'd tussled hay of head, beard, brawn, it shall be you!  
 Trickling sap of maple, fibre of manly wheat, it shall be you!  
 Sun so generous it shall be you!  
 Vapors lighting and shading my face it shall be you!  
 You sweaty brooks and dews it shall be you!  
 Winds whose soft-tickling genitals rub against me it shall  
 be you!  
 Broad muscular fields, branches of live oak, loving loungee in  
 my winding paths, it shall be you!  
 Hands I have taken, face I have kiss'd, mortal I have ever  
 touch'd, it shall be you.

I dote on myself, there is that lot of me and all so luscious,  
 Each moment and whatever happens thrills me with joy,  
 I cannot tell how my ankles bend, nor whence the cause of my  
 faintest wish,  
 Nor the cause of the friendship I emit, nor the cause of the  
 friendship I take again.

That I walk up my stoop, I pause to consider if it really be,

A morning-glory at my window satisfies me more than the  
metaphysics of books.

To behold the day-break!  
The little light fades the immense and diaphanous shadows,  
The air tastes good to my palate.

Hefts of the moving world at innocent gambols silently rising  
freshly exuding,  
Scooting obliquely high and low.

Something I cannot see puts upward libidinous prongs,  
Seas of bright juice suffuse heaven.

The earth by the sky staid with, the daily close of their  
junction,  
The heav'd challenge from the east that moment over my  
head,  
The mocking taunt, See then whether you shall be master!

## 25

Dazzling and tremendous how quick the sun-rise would  
kill me,  
If I could not now and always send sun-rise out of me.

We also ascend dazzling and tremendous as the sun,  
We found our own O my soul in the calm and cool of the  
daybreak.

My voice goes after what my eyes cannot reach,  
With the twirl of my tongue I encompass worlds and volumes  
of worlds.

Speech is the twin of my vision, it is unequal to measure itself,  
It provokes me forever, it says sarcastically,  
*Walt you contain enough, why don't you let it out then?*

Come now I will not be tantalized, you conceive too much of  
articulation,  
Do you not know O speech how the buds beneath you are  
folded?  
Waiting in gloom, protected by frost,  
The dirt receding before my prophetic screams,  
I underlying causes to balance them at last,  
My knowledge my live parts, it keeping tally with the  
meaning of all things,  
Happiness, (which whoever hears me let him or her set out in  
search of this day.)

My final merit I refuse you, I refuse putting from me what I  
really am,  
Encompass worlds, but never try to encompass me,  
I crowd your sleekest and best by simply looking toward you.

Writing and talk do not prove me,  
I carry the plenum of proof and every thing else in my face,  
With the hush of my lips I wholly confound the skeptic.

## 26

Now I will do nothing but listen,  
To accrue what I hear into this song, to let sounds contribute  
toward it.

I hear bravuras of birds, bustle of growing wheat, gossip of  
flames, clack of sticks cooking my meals,  
I hear the sound I love, the sound of the human voice,  
I hear all sounds running together, combined, fused or  
following,  
Sounds of the city and sounds out of the city, sounds of the  
day and night,  
Talkative young ones to those that like them, the loud laugh  
of work-people at their meals,  
The angry base of disjointed friendship, the faint tones of  
the sick,

The judge with hands tight to the desk, his pallid lips  
pronouncing a death-sentence,  
The heave'e'yo of stevedores unlading ships by the wharves,  
the refrain of the anchor-lifters,  
The ring of alarm-bells, the cry of fire, the whirr of swift-  
streaking engines and hose-carts with premonitory tinkles  
and color'd lights,  
The steam whistle, the solid roll of the train of approaching  
cars,  
The slow march play'd at the head of the association  
marching two and two,  
(They go to guard some corpse, the flag-tops are draped with  
black muslin.)

I hear the violoncello, ('tis the young man's heart's complaint,)  
I hear the key'd cornet, it glides quickly in through my ears,  
It shakes mad-sweet pangs through my belly and breast.

I hear the chorus, it is a grand opera,  
Ah this indeed is music—this suits me.

A tenor large and fresh as the creation fills me,  
The orbic flex of his mouth is pouring and filling me full.

I hear the train'd soprano (what work with hers is this?)  
The orchestra whirls me wider than Uranus flies,  
It wrenches such ardors from me I did not know I possess'd  
them,  
It sails me, I dab with bare feet, they are lick'd by the indolent  
waves,  
I am cut by bitter and angry hail, I lose my breath,  
Steep'd amid honey'd morphine, my windpipe throttled in  
fakes of death,  
At length let up again to feel the puzzle of puzzles,  
And that we call Being.



## 27

To be in any form, what is that?  
 (Round and round we go, all of us, and ever come back  
     thither,)  
 If nothing lay more develop'd the quahaug in its callous shell  
     were enough.

Mine is no callous shell,  
 I have instant conductors all over me whether I pass or stop,  
 They seize every object and lead it harmlessly through me.

I merely stir, press, feel with my fingers, and am happy,  
 To touch my person to some one else's is about as much as I  
     can stand.

## 28

Is this then a touch? quivering me to a new identity,  
 Flames and ether making a rush for my veins,  
 Treacherous tip of me reaching and crowding to help them,  
 My flesh and blood playing out lightning to strike what is  
     hardly different from myself,  
 On all sides prurient provokers stiffening my limbs,  
 Straining the udder of my heart for its withheld drip,  
 Behaving licentious toward me, taking no denial,  
 Depriving me of my best as for a purpose,  
 Unbuttoning my clothes, holding me by the bare waist,  
 Deluding my confusion with the calm of the sunlight and  
     pasture-fields,  
 Immodestly sliding the fellow-senses away,  
 They bribed to swap off with touch and go and graze at the  
     edges of me,  
 No consideration, no regard for my draining strength or my  
     anger,  
 Fetching the rest of the herd around to enjoy them a while,  
 Then all uniting to stand on a headland and worry me.

The sentries desert every other part of me,  
 They have left me helpless to a red marauder,  
 They all come to the headland to witness and assist against me.

I am given up by traitors,  
 I talk wildly, I have lost my wits, I and nobody else am the  
     greatest traitor,  
 I went myself first to the headland, my own hands carried me  
     there.

You villain touch! what are you doing? my breath is tight in  
     its throat,  
 Unclench your floodgates, you are too much for me.

## 29

Blind loving wrestling touch, sheath'd hooded sharp-tooth'd  
     touch!  
 Did it make you ache so, leaving me?

Parting track'd by arriving, perpetual payment of perpetual  
     loan,  
 Rich showering rain, and recompense richer afterward.

Sprouts take and accumulate, stand by the curb prolific and  
     vital,  
 Landscapes projected masculine, full-sized and golden.

## 30

All truths wait in all things,  
 They neither hasten their own delivery nor resist it,  
 They do not need the obstetric forceps of the surgeon,  
 The insignificant is as big to me as any,  
 (What is less or more than a touch?)

Logic and sermons never convince,  
 The damp of the night drives deeper into my soul.

(Only what proves itself to every man and woman is so,  
Only what nobody denies is so.)

A minute and a drop of me settle my brain,  
I believe the soggy clods shall become lovers and lamps,  
And a compend of compends is the meat of a man or woman,  
And a summit and flower there is the feeling they have for  
    each other,  
And they are to branch boundlessly out of that lesson until it  
    becomes omnific,  
And until one and all shall delight us, and we them.

## 31

I believe a leaf of grass is no less than the journey-work of the  
    stars,  
And the pismire is equally perfect, and a grain of sand, and  
    the egg of the wren,  
And the tree-toad is a chef-d'œuvre for the highest,  
And the running blackberry would adorn the parlors of  
    heaven,  
And the narrowest hinge in my hand puts to scorn all  
    machinery,  
And the cow crunching with depress'd head surpasses any  
    statue,  
And a mouse is miracle enough to stagger sextillions of infidels.

I find I incorporate gneiss, coal, long-threaded moss, fruits,  
    grains, esculent roots,  
And am stucco'd with quadrupeds and birds all over,  
And have distanced what is behind me for good reasons,  
But call any thing back again when I desire it.

In vain the speeding or shyness,  
In vain the plutonic rocks send their old heat against my  
    approach,  
In vain the mastodon retreats beneath its own powder'd bones,  
In vain objects stand leagues off and assume manifold shapes,

In vain the ocean settling in hollows and the great monsters  
    lying low,  
In vain the buzzard houses herself with the sky,  
In vain the snake slides through the creepers and logs,  
In vain the elk takes to the inner passes of the woods,  
In vain the razor-bill'd auk sails far north to Labrador,  
I follow quickly, I ascend to the nest in the fissure of the cliff.

## 32

I think I could turn and live with animals, they are so placid  
    and self-contain'd,  
I stand and look at them long and long.

They do not sweat and whine about their condition,  
They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins,  
They do not make me sick discussing their duty to God,  
Not one is dissatisfied, not one is demented with the mania of  
    owning things,  
Not one kneels to another, nor to his kind that lived  
    thousands of years ago,  
Not one is respectable or unhappy over the whole earth.

So they show their relations to me and I accept them,  
They bring me tokens of myself, they evince them plainly in  
    their possession.

I wonder where they get those tokens,  
Did I pass that way huge times ago and negligently drop  
    them?

Myself moving forward then and now and forever,  
Gathering and showing more always and with velocity,  
Infinite and omnigenous, and the like of these among them,  
Not too exclusive toward the reachers of my remembrancers,  
Picking out here one that I love, and now go with him on  
    brotherly terms.

A gigantic beauty of a stallion, fresh and responsive to my  
caresses,  
Head high in the forehead, wide between the ears,  
Limbs glossy and supple, tail dusting the ground,  
Eyes full of sparkling wickedness, ears finely cut, flexibly  
moving.

His nostrils dilate as my heels embrace him,  
His well-built limbs tremble with pleasure as we race around  
and return.

I but use you a minute, then I resign you, stallion,  
Why do I need your paces when I myself out-gallop them?  
Even as I stand or sit passing faster than you.

## 33

Space and Time! now I see it is true, what I guess'd at,  
What I guess'd when I loaf'd on the grass,  
What I guess'd while I lay alone in my bed,  
And again as I walk'd the beach under the paling stars of the  
morning.

My ties and ballasts leave me, my elbows rest in sea-gaps,  
I skirt sierras, my palms cover continents,  
I am afoot with my vision.

By the city's quadrangular houses—in log huts, camping with  
lumbermen,  
Along the ruts of the turnpike, along the dry gulch and rivulet  
bed,  
Weeding my onion-patch or hoeing rows of carrots and  
parsnips, crossing savannas, trailing in forests,  
Prospecting, gold-digging, girdling the trees of a new  
purchase,  
Scorch'd ankle-deep by the hot sand, hauling my boat down  
the shallow river,

Where the panther walks to and fro on a limb overhead,  
    where the buck turns furiously at the hunter,  
Where the rattlesnake suns his flabby length on a rock, where  
    the otter is feeding on fish,  
Where the alligator in his tough pimples sleeps by the bayou,  
Where the black bear is searching for roots or honey, where  
    the beaver pats the mud with his paddle-shaped tail;  
Over the growing sugar, over the yellow-flower'd cotton  
    plant, over the rice in its low moist field,  
Over the sharp-peak'd farm house, with its scallop'd scum  
    and slender shoots from the gutters,  
Over the western persimmon, over the long-leav'd corn, over  
    the delicate blue-flower flax,  
Over the white and brown buckwheat, a hummer and buzzer  
    there with the rest,  
Over the dusky green of the rye as it ripples and shades in the  
    breeze;  
Scaling mountains, pulling myself cautiously up, holding on  
    by low scragged limbs,  
Walking the path worn in the grass and beat through the  
    leaves of the brush,  
Where the quail is whistling betwixt the woods and the  
    wheat-lot,  
Where the bat flies in the Seventh-month eve, where the great  
    gold-bug drops through the dark,  
Where the brook puts out of the roots of the old tree and  
    flows to the meadow,  
Where cattle stand and shake away flies with the tremulous  
    shuddering of their hides,  
Where the cheese-cloth hangs in the kitchen, where andirons  
    straddle the hearth-slab, where cobwebs fall in festoons  
    from the rafters;  
Where trip-hammers crash, where the press is whirling its  
    cylinders,  
Wherever the human heart beats with terrible throes under its  
    ribs,  
Where the pear-shaped balloon is floating aloft, (floating in it  
    myself and looking composedly down,)

Where the life-car is drawn on the slip-noose, where the heat  
hatches pale-green eggs in the dented sand,  
Where the she-whale swims with her calf and never  
forsakes it,  
Where the steam-ship trails hind-ways its long pennant of  
smoke,  
Where the fin of the shark cuts like a black chip out of the  
water,  
Where the half-burn'd brig is riding on unknown currents,  
Where shells grow to her slimy deck, where the dead are  
corrupting below;  
Where the dense-starr'd flag is borne at the head of the  
regiments,  
Approaching Manhattan up by the long-stretching island,  
Under Niagara, the cataract falling like a veil over my  
countenance,  
Upon a door-step, upon the horse-block of hard wood  
outside,  
Upon the race-course, or enjoying picnics or jigs or a good  
game of base-ball,  
At he-festivals, with blackguard gibes, ironical license, bull-  
dances, drinking, laughter,  
At the cider-mill tasting the sweets of the brown mash,  
sucking the juice through a straw,  
At apple-peelings wanting kisses for all the red fruit I find,  
At musters, beach-parties, friendly bees, huskings, house-  
raisings;  
Where the mocking-bird sounds his delicious gurgles, cackles,  
screams, weeps,  
Where the hay-rick stands in the barn-yard, where the dry-  
stalks are scatter'd, where the brood-cow waits in the  
hovel,  
Where the bull advances to do his masculine work, where the  
stud to the mare, where the cock is treading the hen,  
Where the heifers browse, where geese nip their food with  
short jerks,  
Where sun-down shadows lengthen over the limitless and  
lonesome prairie,

Where herds of buffalo make a crawling spread of the square  
miles far and near,  
Where the humming-bird shimmers, where the neck of the  
long-lived swan is curving and winding,  
Where the laughing-gull scoots by the shore, where she laughs  
her near-human laugh,  
Where bee-hives range on a gray bench in the garden half hid  
by the high weeds,  
Where band-neck'd partridges roost in a ring on the ground  
with their heads out,  
Where burial coaches enter the arch'd gates of a cemetery,  
Where winter wolves bark amid wastes of snow and icicled  
trees,  
Where the yellow-crown'd heron comes to the edge of the  
marsh at night and feeds upon small crabs,  
Where the splash of swimmers and divers cools the warm noon,  
Where the katy-did works her chromatic reed on the walnut-  
tree over the well,  
Through patches of citrons and cucumbers with silver-wired  
leaves,  
Through the salt-lick or orange glade, or under conical firs,  
Through the gymnasium, through the curtain'd saloon,  
through the office or public hall;  
Pleas'd with the native and pleas'd with the foreign, pleas'd  
with the new and old,  
Pleas'd with the homely woman as well as the handsome,  
Pleas'd with the quakeress as she puts off her bonnet and  
talks melodiously,  
Pleas'd with the tune of the choir of the whitewash'd church,  
Pleas'd with the earnest words of the sweating Methodist  
preacher, impress'd seriously at the camp-meeting;  
Looking in at the shop-windows of Broadway the whole  
forenoon, flattening the flesh of my nose on the thick plate  
glass,  
Wandering the same afternoon with my face turn'd up to the  
clouds, or down a lane or along the beach,  
My right and left arms round the sides of two friends, and I in  
the middle;



Coming home with the silent and dark-cheek'd bush-boy,  
    (behind me he rides at the drape of the day,)  
Far from the settlements studying the print of animals' feet, or  
    the moccasin print,  
By the cot in the hospital reaching lemonade to a feverish  
    patient,  
Nigh the coffin'd corpse when all is still, examining with a  
    candle;  
Voyaging to every port to dicker and adventure,  
Hurrying with the modern crowd as eager and fickle as any,  
Hot toward one I hate, ready in my madness to knife him,  
Solitary at midnight in my back yard, my thoughts gone from  
    me a long while,  
Walking the old hills of Judæa with the beautiful gentle God  
    by my side,  
Speeding through space, speeding through heaven and the  
    stars,  
Speeding amid the seven satellites and the broad ring, and the  
    diameter of eighty thousand miles,  
Speeding with tail'd meteors, throwing fire-balls like the rest,  
Carrying the crescent child that carries its own full mother in  
    its belly,  
Storming, enjoying, planning, loving, cautioning,  
Backing and filling, appearing and disappearing,  
I tread day and night such roads.

I visit the orchards of spheres and look at the product,  
And look at quintillions ripen'd and look at quintillions green.

I fly those flights of a fluid and swallowing soul,  
My course runs below the soundings of plummets.

I help myself to material and immaterial,  
No guard can shut me off, no law prevent me.

I anchor my ship for a little while only,  
My messengers continually cruise away or bring their returns  
    to me.

I go hunting polar furs and the seal, leaping chasms with a  
pike-pointed staff, clinging to topples of brittle and blue.

I ascend to the foretruck,  
I take my place late at night in the crow's-nest,  
We sail the arctic sea, it is plenty light enough,  
Through the clear atmosphere I stretch around on the  
wonderful beauty,  
The enormous masses of ice pass me and I pass them, the  
scenery is plain in all directions,  
The white-topt mountains show in the distance, I fling out my  
fancies toward them,  
We are approaching some great battle-field in which we are  
soon to be engaged,  
We pass the colossal outposts of the encampment, we pass  
with still feet and caution,  
Or we are entering by the suburbs some vast and ruin'd city,  
The blocks and fallen architecture more than all the living  
cities of the globe.

I am a free companion, I bivouac by invading watchfires,  
I turn the bridegroom out of bed and stay with the bride  
myself,  
I tighten her all night to my thighs and lips.

My voice is the wife's voice, the screech by the rail of the stairs,  
They fetch my man's body up dripping and drown'd.

I understand the large hearts of heroes,  
The courage of present times and all times,  
How the skipper saw the crowded and rudderless wreck of  
the steam-ship, and Death chasing it up and down the  
storm,  
How he knuckled tight and gave not back an inch, and was  
faithful of days and faithful of nights,  
And chalk'd in large letters on a board, *Be of good cheer, we  
will not desert you;*

How he follow'd with them and tack'd with them three days  
and would not give it up,  
How he saved the drifting company at last,  
How the lank loose-gown'd women look'd when boated from  
the side of their prepared graves,  
How the silent old-faced infants and the lifted sick, and the  
sharp-lipp'd unshaved men;  
All this I swallow, it tastes good, I like it well, it becomes  
mine,  
I am the man, I suffer'd, I was there.

The disdain and calmness of martyrs,  
The mother of old, condemn'd for a witch, burnt with dry  
wood, her children gazing on,  
The hounded slave that flags in the race, leans by the fence,  
blowing, cover'd with sweat,  
The twinges that sting like needles his legs and neck, the  
murderous buckshot and the bullets,  
All these I feel or am.

I am the hounded slave, I wince at the bite of the dogs,  
Hell and despair are upon me, crack and again crack the  
marksmen,  
I clutch the rails of the fence, my gore dribs, thinn'd with the  
ooze of my skin,  
I fall on the weeds and stones,  
The riders spur their unwilling horses, haul close,  
Taunt my dizzy ears and beat me violently over the head with  
whip-stocks.

Agonies are one of my changes of garments,  
I do not ask the wounded person how he feels, I myself  
become the wounded person,  
My hurts turn livid upon me as I lean on a cane and observe.

I am the mash'd fireman with breast-bone broken,  
Tumbling walls buried me in their debris,

Heat and smoke I inspired, I heard the yelling shouts of my  
comrades,  
I heard the distant click of their picks and shovels,  
They have clear'd the beams away, they tenderly lift me forth.

I lie in the night air in my red shirt, the pervading hush is for  
my sake,  
Painless after all I lie exhausted but not so unhappy,  
White and beautiful are the faces around me, the heads are  
bared of their fire-caps,  
The kneeling crowd fades with the light of the torches.

Distant and dead resuscitate,  
They show as the dial or move as the hands of me, I am the  
clock myself.

I am an old artilleryist, I tell of my fort's bombardment,  
I am there again.

Again the long roll of the drummers,  
Again the attacking cannon, mortars,  
Again to my listening ears the cannon responsive.

I take part, I see and hear the whole,  
The cries, curses, roar, the plaudits for well-aim'd shots,  
The ambulanza slowly passing trailing its red drip,  
Workmen searching after damages, making indispensable  
repairs,  
The fall of grenades through the rent roof, the fan-shaped  
explosion,  
The whizz of limbs, heads, stone, wood, iron, high in the air.

Again gurgles the mouth of my dying general, he furiously  
waves with his hand,  
He gasps through the clot *Mind not me—mind—the*  
*entrenchments.*

## 34

Now I tell what I knew in Texas in my early youth,  
(I tell not the fall of Alamo,  
Not one escaped to tell the fall of Alamo,  
The hundred and fifty are dumb yet at Alamo,)  
'Tis the tale of the murder in cold blood of four hundred and  
twelve young men.

Retreating they had form'd in a hollow square with their  
baggage for breastworks,  
Nine hundred lives out of the surrounding enemy's, nine times  
their number, was the price they took in advance,  
Their colonel was wounded and their ammunition gone,  
They treated for an honorable capitulation, receiv'd writing  
and seal, gave up their arms and march'd back prisoners  
of war.

They were the glory of the race of rangers,  
Matchless with horse, rifle, song, supper, courtship,  
Large, turbulent, generous, handsome, proud, and  
affectionate,  
Bearded, sunburnt, drest in the free costume of hunters,  
Not a single one over thirty years of age.

The second First-day morning they were brought out in  
squad and massacred, it was beautiful early summer,  
The work commenced about five o'clock and was over by  
eight.

None obey'd the command to kneel,  
Some made a mad and helpless rush, some stood stark and  
straight,  
A few fell at once, shot in the temple or heart, the living and  
dead lay together,  
The maim'd and mangled dug in the dirt, the new-comers saw  
them there,  
Some half-kill'd attempted to crawl away,

These were despatch'd with bayonets or batter'd with the  
blunts of muskets,  
A youth not seventeen years old seiz'd his assassin till two  
more came to release him,  
The three were all torn and cover'd with the boy's blood.

At eleven o'clock began the burning of the bodies;  
That is the tale of the murder of the four hundred and twelve  
young men.

## 35

Would you hear of an old-time sea-fight?  
Would you learn who won by the light of the moon and stars?  
List to the yarn, as my grandmother's father and sailor told it  
to me.

Our foe was no skulk in his ship I tell you, (said he,)  
His was the surly English pluck, and there is no tougher or  
truer, and never was, and never will be;  
Along the lower'd eve he came horribly raking us.

We closed with him, the yards entangled, the cannon touch'd,  
My captain lash'd fast with his own hands.

We had receiv'd some eighteen pound shots under the water,  
On our lower-gun-deck two large pieces had burst at the first  
fire, killing all around and blowing up overhead.

Fighting at sun-down, fighting at dark,  
Ten o'clock at night, the full moon well up, our leaks on the  
gain, and five feet of water reported,  
The master-at-arms loosing the prisoners confined in the after-  
hold to give them a chance for themselves.

The transit to and from the magazine is now stopt by the  
sentinels,

They see so many strange faces they do not know whom to  
trust.

Our frigate takes fire,  
The other asks if we demand quarter?  
If our colors are struck and the fighting done?

Now I laugh content, for I hear the voice of my little  
captain,  
*We have not struck*, he composedly cries, *we have just begun  
our part of the fighting.*

Only three guns are in use,  
One is directed by the captain himself against the enemy's  
mainmast,  
Two well serv'd with grape and canister silence his musketry  
and clear his decks.

The tops alone second the fire of this little battery, especially  
the main-top,  
They hold out bravely during the whole of the action.

Not a moment's cease,  
The leaks gain fast on the pumps, the fire eats toward the  
powder-magazine.

One of the pumps has been shot away, it is generally thought  
we are sinking.

Serene stands the little captain,  
He is not hurried, his voice is neither high nor low,  
His eyes give more light to us than our battle-lanterns.

Toward twelve there in the beams of the moon they surrender  
to us.

## 36

Stretch'd and still lies the midnight,  
Two great hulls motionless on the breast of the darkness,  
Our vessel riddled and slowly sinking, preparations to pass to  
the one we have conquer'd,  
The captain on the quarter-deck coldly giving his orders  
through a countenance white as a sheet,  
Near by the corpse of the child that serv'd in the cabin,  
The dead face of an old salt with long white hair and carefully  
curl'd whiskers,  
The flames spite of all that can be done flickering aloft and  
below,  
The husky voices of the two or three officers yet fit for duty,  
Formless stacks of bodies and bodies by themselves, dabs of  
flesh upon the masts and spars,  
Cut of cordage, dangle of rigging, slight shock of the soothe  
of waves,  
Black and impassive guns, litter of powder-parcels, strong  
scent,  
A few large stars overhead, silent and mournful shining,  
Delicate sniffs of sea-breeze, smells of sedgy grass and fields  
by the shore, death-messages given in charge to survivors,  
The hiss of the surgeon's knife, the gnawing teeth of his saw,  
Wheeze, cluck, swash of falling blood, short wild scream, and  
long, dull, tapering groan,  
These so, these irretrievable.

## 37

You laggards there on guard! look to your arms!  
In at the conquer'd doors they crowd! I am possess'd!  
Embody all presences outlaw'd or suffering,  
See myself in prison shaped like another man,  
And feel the dull unintermitted pain.

For me the keepers of convicts shoulder their carbines and  
keep watch,



It is I let out in the morning and barr'd at night.

Not a mutineer walks handcuff'd to jail but I am handcuff'd  
to him and walk by his side,  
(I am less the jolly one there, and more the silent one with  
sweat on my twitching lips.)

Not a youngster is taken for larceny but I go up too, and am  
tried and sentenced.

Not a cholera patient lies at the last gasp but I also lie at the  
last gasp,  
My face is ash-color'd, my sinews gnarl, away from me  
people retreat.

Askers embody themselves in me and I am embodied in them,  
I project my hat, sit shame-faced, and beg.

## 38

Enough! enough! enough!  
Somehow I have been stunn'd. Stand back!  
Give me a little time beyond my cuff'd head, slumbers,  
dreams, gaping,  
I discover myself on the verge of a usual mistake.

That I could forget the mockers and insults!  
That I could forget the trickling tears and the blows of the  
bludgeons and hammers!  
That I could look with a separate look on my own  
crucifixion and bloody crowning.

I remember now,  
I resume the overstaid fraction,  
The grave of rock multiplies what has been confided to it, or  
to any graves,  
Corpses rise, gashes heal, fastenings roll from me.

I troop forth replenish'd with supreme power, one of an  
 average unending procession,  
 Inland and sea-coast we go, and pass all boundary lines,  
 Our swift ordinances on their way over the whole earth,  
 The blossoms we wear in our hats the growth of thousands of  
 years.

Elevés, I salute you! come forward!  
 Continue your annotations, continue your questionings.

## 39

The friendly and flowing savage, who is he?  
 Is he waiting for civilization, or past it and mastering it?

Is he some Southwesterner rais'd out-doors? is he Kanadian?  
 Is he from the Mississippi country? Iowa, Oregon, California?  
 The mountains? prairie-life, bush-life? or sailor from the sea?

Wherever he goes men and women accept and desire him,  
 They desire he should like them, touch them, speak to them,  
 stay with them.

Behavior lawless as snow-flakes, words simple as grass,  
 uncomb'd head, laughter, and naivetè,  
 Slow-stepping feet, common features, common modes and  
 emanations,  
 They descend in new forms from the tips of his fingers,  
 They are wafted with the odor of his body or breath, they fly  
 out of the glance of his eyes.

## 40

Flaunt of the sunshine I need not your bask—lie over!  
 You light surfaces only, I force surfaces and depths also.

Earth! you seem to look for something at my hands,  
 Say, old top-knot, what do you want?

Man or woman, I might tell how I like you, but cannot,  
And might tell what it is in me and what it is in you, but  
cannot,  
And might tell that pining I have, that pulse of my nights and  
days.

Behold, I do not give lectures or a little charity,  
When I give I give myself.

You there, impotent, loose in the knees,  
Open your scarf'd chops till I blow grit within you,  
Spread your palms and lift the flaps of your pockets,  
I am not to be denied, I compel, I have stores plenty and to  
spare,  
And any thing I have I bestow.

I do not ask who you are, that is not important to me,  
You can do nothing and be nothing but what I will infold you.

To cotton-field drudge or cleaner of privies I lean,  
On his right cheek I put the family kiss,  
And in my soul I swear I never will deny him.

On women fit for conception I start bigger and nimbler  
babes,  
(This day I am jetting the stuff of far more arrogant  
republics.)

To any one dying, thither I speed and twist the knob of the  
door,  
Turn the bed-clothes toward the foot of the bed,  
Let the physician and the priest go home.

I seize the descending man and raise him with resistless will,  
O despairer, here is my neck,  
By God, you shall not go down! hang your whole weight  
upon me.

I dilate you with tremendous breath, I buoy you up,  
 Every room of the house do I fill with an arm'd force,  
 Lovers of me, bafflers of graves.

Sleep—I and they keep guard all night,  
 Not doubt, not decease shall dare to lay finger upon you,  
 I have embraced you, and henceforth possess you to myself,  
 And when you rise in the morning you will find what I tell  
     you is so.

## 41

I am he bringing help for the sick as they pant on their backs,  
 And for strong upright men I bring yet more needed help.

I heard what was said of the universe,  
 Heard it and heard it of several thousand years;  
 It is middling well as far as it goes—but is that all?

Magnifying and applying come I,  
 Outbidding at the start the old cautious hucksters,  
 Taking myself the exact dimensions of Jehovah,  
 Lithographing Kronos, Zeus his son, and Hercules his  
     grandson,  
 Buying drafts of Osiris, Isis, Belus, Brahma, Buddha,  
 In my portfolio placing Manito loose, Allah on a leaf, the  
     crucifix engraved,  
 With Odin and the hideous-faced Mexitli and every idol and  
     image,  
 Taking them all for what they are worth and not a cent more,  
 Admitting they were alive and did the work of their days,  
 (They bore mites as for unfledg'd birds who have now to rise  
     and fly and sing for themselves,)  
 Accepting the rough deific sketches to fill out better in myself,  
     bestowing them freely on each man and woman I see,  
 Discovering as much or more in a framer framing a house,  
 Putting higher claims for him there with his roll'd-up sleeves  
     driving the mallet and chisel,

Not objecting to special revelations, considering a curl of  
    smoke or a hair on the back of my hand just as curious  
    as any revelation,  
Lads ahold of fire-engines and hook-and-ladder ropes no less  
    to me than the gods of the antique wars,  
Minding their voices peal through the crash of destruction,  
Their brawny limbs passing safe over charr'd laths, their  
    white foreheads whole and unhurt out of the flames;  
By the mechanic's wife with her babe at her nipple interceding  
    for every person born,  
Three scythes at harvest whizzing in a row from three lusty  
    angels with shirts bagg'd out at their waists,  
The snag-tooth'd hostler with red hair redeeming sins past  
    and to come,  
Selling all he possesses, traveling on foot to fee lawyers for his  
    brother and sit by him while he is tried for forgery;  
What was strewn in the amplest strewing the square rod  
    about me, and not filling the square rod then,  
The bull and the bug never worshipp'd half enough,  
Dung and dirt more admirable than was dream'd,  
The supernatural of no account, myself waiting my time to be  
    one of the supremes,  
The day getting ready for me when I shall do as much good as  
    the best, and be as prodigious;  
By my life-lumps! becoming already a creator,  
Putting myself here and now to the ambush'd womb of the  
    shadows.

## 42

A call in the midst of the crowd,  
My own voice, orotund sweeping and final.

Come my children,  
Come my boys and girls, my women, household and  
    intimates,  
Now the performer launches his nerve, he has pass'd his  
    prelude on the reeds within.

Easily written loose-finger'd chords—I feel the thrum of your  
climax and close.

My head slues round on my neck,  
Music rolls, but not from the organ,  
Folks are around me, but they are no household of mine.

Ever the hard unsunk ground,  
Ever the eaters and drinkers, ever the upward and downward  
sun, ever the air and the ceaseless tides,  
Ever myself and my neighbors, refreshing, wicked, real,  
Ever the old inexplicable query, ever that thorn'd thumb, that  
breath of itches and thirsts,  
Ever the vexer's *hoot! hoot!* till we find where the sly one  
hides and bring him forth,  
Ever love, ever the sobbing liquid of life,  
Ever the bandage under the chin, ever the trestles of death.

Here and there with dimes on the eyes walking,  
To feed the greed of the belly the brains liberally spooning,  
Tickets buying, taking, selling, but in to the feast never once  
going,  
Many sweating, ploughing, thrashing, and then the chaff for  
payment receiving,  
A few idly owning, and they the wheat continually claiming.

This is the city and I am one of the citizens,  
Whatever interests the rest interests me, politics, wars,  
markets, newspapers, schools,  
The mayor and councils, banks, tariffs, steamships, factories,  
stocks, stores, real estate and personal estate.

The little plentiful manikins skipping around in collars and  
tail'd coats,  
I am aware who they are, (they are positively not worms or  
fleas,)  
I acknowledge the duplicates of myself, the weakest and  
shallowest is deathless with me,

What I do and say the same waits for them,  
 Every thought that flounders in me the same flounders in  
 them.

I know perfectly well my own egotism,  
 Know my omnivorous lines and must not write any less,  
 And would fetch you whoever you are flush with myself.

Not words of routine this song of mine,  
 But abruptly to question, to leap beyond yet nearer bring;  
 This printed and bound book—but the printer and the  
 printing-office boy?  
 The well-taken photographs—but your wife or friend close  
 and solid in your arms?  
 The black ship mail'd with iron, her mighty guns in her  
 turrets—but the pluck of the captain and engineers?  
 In the houses the dishes and fare and furniture—but the host  
 and hostess, and the look out of their eyes?  
 The sky up there—yet here or next door, or across the way?  
 The saints and sages in history—but you yourself?  
 Sermons, creeds, theology—but the fathomless human brain,  
 And what is reason? and what is love? and what is life?

## 43

I do not despise you priests, all time, the world over,  
 My faith is the greatest of faiths and the least of faiths,  
 Enclosing worship ancient and modern and all between  
 ancient and modern,  
 Believing I shall come again upon the earth after five thousand  
 years,  
 Waiting responses from oracles, honoring the gods, saluting  
 the sun,  
 Making a fetich of the first rock or stump, powowing with  
 sticks in the circle of obis,  
 Helping the llama or brahmin as he trims the lamps of the  
 idols,

Dancing yet through the streets in a phallic procession, rapt  
and austere in the woods a gymnosophist,  
Drinking mead from the skull-cup, to Shastas and Vedas  
admirant, minding the Koran,  
Walking the teokallis, spotted with gore from the stone and  
knife, beating the serpent-skin drum,  
Accepting the Gospels, accepting him that was crucified,  
knowing assuredly that he is divine,  
To the mass kneeling or the puritan's prayer rising, or sitting  
patiently in a pew,  
Ranting and frothing in my insane crisis, or waiting dead-like  
till my spirit arouses me,  
Looking forth on pavement and land, or outside of pavement  
and land,  
Belonging to the winders of the circuit of circuits.

One of that centripetal and centrifugal gang I turn and talk  
like a man leaving charges before a journey.

Down-hearted doubters dull and excluded,  
Frivolous, sullen, moping, angry, affected, dishearten'd,  
atheistical,  
I know every one of you, I know the sea of torment, doubt,  
despair and unbelief.

How the flukes splash!  
How they contort rapid as lightning, with spasms and spouts  
of blood!

Be at peace bloody flukes of doubters and sullen mopers,  
I take my place among you as much as among any,  
The past is the push of you, me, all, precisely the same,  
And what is yet untried and afterward is for you, me, all,  
precisely the same.

I do not know what is untried and afterward,  
But I know it will in its turn prove sufficient, and cannot fail.



Each who passes is consider'd, each who stops is consider'd,  
not a single one can it fail.

It cannot fail the young man who died and was buried,  
Nor the young woman who died and was put by his side,  
Nor the little child that peep'd in at the door, and then drew  
back and was never seen again,  
Nor the old man who has lived without purpose, and feels it  
with bitterness worse than gall,  
Nor him in the poor house tubercled by rum and the bad  
disorder,  
Nor the numberless slaughter'd and wreck'd, nor the brutish  
koboo call'd the ordure of humanity,  
Nor the sacs merely floating with open mouths for food to  
slip in,  
Nor any thing in the earth, or down in the oldest graves of the  
earth,  
Nor any thing in the myriads of spheres, nor the myriads of  
myriads that inhabit them,  
Nor the present, nor the least wisp that is known.

## 44

It is time to explain myself—let us stand up.

What is known I strip away,  
I launch all men and women forward with me into the  
Unknown.

The clock indicates the moment—but what does eternity  
indicate?

We have thus far exhausted trillions of winters and summers,  
There are trillions ahead, and trillions ahead of them.

Births have brought us richness and variety,  
And other births will bring us richness and variety.

I do not call one greater and one smaller,  
That which fills its period and place is equal to any.

Were mankind murderous or jealous upon you, my brother,  
my sister?

I am sorry for you, they are not murderous or jealous upon me,  
All has been gentle with me, I keep no account with  
lamentation,  
(What have I to do with lamentation?)

I am an acme of things accomplish'd, and I an encloser of  
things to be.

My feet strike an apex of the apices of the stairs,  
On every step bunches of ages, and larger bunches between  
the steps,  
All below duly travel'd, and still I mount and mount.

Rise after rise bow the phantoms behind me,  
Afar down I see the huge first Nothing, I know I was even  
there,  
I waited unseen and always, and slept through the lethargic  
mist,  
And took my time, and took no hurt from the fetid carbon.

Long I was hugg'd close—long and long.

Immense have been the preparations for me,  
Faithful and friendly the arms that have help'd me.

Cycles ferried my cradle, rowing and rowing like cheerful  
boatmen,  
For room to me stars kept aside in their own rings,  
They sent influences to look after what was to hold me.

Before I was born out of my mother generations guided me,  
My embryo has never been torpid, nothing could overlay it.

For it the nebula cohered to an orb,  
 The long slow strata piled to rest it on,  
 Vast vegetables gave it sustenance,  
 Monstrous sauroids transported it in their mouths and  
     deposited it with care.

All forces have been steadily employ'd to complete and  
     delight me,  
 Now on this spot I stand with my robust soul.

## 45

O span of youth! ever-push'd elasticity!  
 O manhood, balanced, florid and full.

My lovers suffocate me,  
 Crowding my lips, thick in the pores of my skin,  
 Jostling me through streets and public halls, coming naked to  
     me at night,  
 Crying by day *Ahoy!* from the rocks of the river, swinging and  
     chirping over my head,  
 Calling my name from flower-beds, vines, tangled underbrush,  
 Lighting on every moment of my life,  
 Bussing my body with soft balsamic busses,  
 Noiselessly passing handfuls out of their hearts and giving  
     them to be mine.

Old age superbly rising! O welcome, ineffable grace of dying  
     days!

Every condition promulges not only itself, it promulges what  
     grows after and out of itself,  
 And the dark hush promulges as much as any.

I open my scuttle at night and see the far-sprinkled systems,  
 And all I see multiplied as high as I can cipher edge but the  
     rim of the farther systems.

Wider and wider they spread, expanding, always expanding,  
Outward and outward and forever outward.

My sun has his sun and round him obediently wheels,  
He joins with his partners a group of superior circuit,  
And greater sets follow, making specks of the greatest inside  
them.

There is no stoppage and never can be stoppage,  
If I, you, and the worlds, and all beneath or upon their  
surfaces, were this moment reduced back to a pallid float,  
it would not avail in the long run,  
We should surely bring up again where we now stand,  
And surely go as much farther, and then farther and farther.

A few quadrillions of eras, a few octillions of cubic leagues,  
do not hazard the span or make it impatient,  
They are but parts, any thing is but a part.

See ever so far, there is limitless space outside of that,  
Count ever so much, there is limitless time around that.

My rendezvous is appointed, it is certain,  
The Lord will be there and wait till I come on perfect terms,  
The great Camerado, the lover true for whom I pine will be  
there.

## 46

I know I have the best of time and space, and was never  
measured and never will be measured.

I tramp a perpetual journey, (come listen all!)  
My signs are a rain-proof coat, good shoes, and a staff cut  
from the woods,  
No friend of mine takes his ease in my chair,  
I have no chair, no church, no philosophy,  
I lead no man to a dinner-table, library, exchange,

But each man and each woman of you I lead upon a knoll,  
My left hand hooking you round the waist,  
My right hand pointing to landscapes of continents and the  
public road.

Not I, not any one else can travel that road for you,  
You must travel it for yourself.

It is not far, it is within reach,  
Perhaps you have been on it since you were born and did not  
know,  
Perhaps it is everywhere on water and on land.

Shoulder your duds dear son, and I will mine, and let us  
hasten forth,  
Wonderful cities and free nations we shall fetch as we go.

If you tire, give me both burdens, and rest the chuff of your  
hand on my hip,  
And in due time you shall repay the same service to me,  
For after we start we never lie by again.

This day before dawn I ascended a hill and look'd at the  
crowded heaven,  
And I said to my spirit *When we become the enfolders of  
those orbs, and the pleasure and knowledge of every  
thing in them, shall we be fill'd and satisfied then?*  
And my spirit said *No, we but level that lift to pass and  
continue beyond.*

You are also asking me questions and I hear you,  
I answer that I cannot answer, you must find out for yourself.

Sit a while dear son,  
Here are biscuits to eat and here is milk to drink,  
But as soon as you sleep and renew yourself in sweet clothes, I  
kiss you with a good-bye kiss and open the gate for your  
egress hence.

Long enough have you dream'd contemptible dreams,  
Now I wash the gum from your eyes,  
You must habit yourself to the dazzle of the light and of every  
moment of your life.

Long have you timidly waded holding a plank by the shore,  
Now I will you to be a bold swimmer,  
To jump off in the midst of the sea, rise again, nod to me,  
shout, and laughingly dash with your hair.

## 47

I am the teacher of athletes,  
He that by me spreads a wider breast than my own proves the  
width of my own,  
He most honors my style who learns under it to destroy the  
teacher.

The boy I love, the same becomes a man not through derived  
power, but in his own right,  
Wicked rather than virtuous out of conformity or fear,  
Fond of his sweetheart, relishing well his steak,  
Unrequited love or a slight cutting him worse than sharp steel  
cuts,  
First-rate to ride, to fight, to hit the bull's eye, to sail a skiff,  
to sing a song or play on the banjo,  
Preferring scars and the beard and faces pitted with small-pox  
over all latherers,  
And those well-tann'd to those that keep out of the sun.

I teach straying from me, yet who can stray from me?  
I follow you whoever you are from the present hour,  
My words itch at your ears till you understand them.

I do not say these things for a dollar or to fill up the time  
while I wait for a boat,  
(It is you talking just as much as myself, I act as the tongue of  
you,

Tied in your mouth, in mine it begins to be loosen'd.)

I swear I will never again mention love or death inside a  
house,  
And I swear I will never translate myself at all, only to him or  
her who privately stays with me in the open air.

If you would understand me go to the heights or water-shore,  
The nearest gnat is an explanation, and a drop or motion of  
waves a key,  
The maul, the oar, the hand-saw, second my words.

No shutter'd room or school can commune with me,  
But roughs and little children better than they.

The young mechanic is closest to me, he knows me well,  
The woodman that takes his axe and jug with him shall take  
me with him all day,  
The farm-boy ploughing in the field feels good at the sound of  
my voice,  
In vessels that sail my words sail, I go with fishermen and  
seamen and love them.

The soldier camp'd or upon the march is mine,  
On the night ere the pending battle many seek me, and I do  
not fail them,  
On that solemn night (it may be their last) those that know  
me seek me.

My face rubs to the hunter's face when he lies down alone in  
his blanket,  
The driver thinking of me does not mind the jolt of his  
wagon,  
The young mother and old mother comprehend me,  
The girl and the wife rest the needle a moment and forget  
where they are,  
They and all would resume what I have told them.

## 48

I have said that the soul is not more than the body,  
 And I have said that the body is not more than the soul,  
 And nothing, not God, is greater to one than one's self is,  
 And whoever walks a furlong without sympathy walks to his  
     own funeral drest in his shroud,  
 And I or you pocketless of a dime may purchase the pick of  
     the earth,  
 And to glance with an eye or show a bean in its pod  
     confounds the learning of all times,  
 And there is no trade or employment but the young man  
     following it may become a hero,  
 And there is no object so soft but it makes a hub for the  
     wheel'd universe,  
 And I say to any man or woman, Let your soul stand cool and  
     composed before a million universes.

And I say to mankind, Be not curious about God,  
 For I who am curious about each am not curious about God,  
 (No array of terms can say how much I am at peace about  
     God and about death.)

I hear and behold God in every object, yet understand God  
     not in the least,  
 Nor do I understand who there can be more wonderful than  
     myself.

Why should I wish to see God better than this day?  
 I see something of God each hour of the twenty-four, and  
     each moment then,  
 In the faces of men and women I see God, and in my own face  
     in the glass,  
 I find letters from God dropt in the street, and every one is  
     sign'd by God's name,  
 And I leave them where they are, for I know that wheresoe'er  
     I go,  
 Others will punctually come for ever and ever.



## 49

And as to you Death, and you bitter hug of mortality, it is idle  
to try to alarm me.

To his work without flinching the accoucheur comes,  
I see the elder-hand pressing receiving supporting,  
I recline by the sills of the exquisite flexible doors,  
And mark the outlet, and mark the relief and escape.

And as to you Corpse I think you are good manure, but that  
does not offend me,  
I smell the white roses sweet-scented and growing,  
I reach to the leafy lips, I reach to the polish'd breasts of  
melons.

And as to you Life I reckon you are the leavings of many  
deaths,  
(No doubt I have died myself ten thousand times before.)

I hear you whispering there O stars of heaven,  
O suns—O grass of graves—O perpetual transfers and  
promotions,  
If you do not say any thing how can I say any thing?

Of the turbid pool that lies in the autumn forest,  
Of the moon that descends the steep of the soughing twilight,  
Toss, sparkles of day and dusk—toss on the black stems that  
decay in the muck,  
Toss to the moaning gibberish of the dry limbs.

I ascend from the moon, I ascend from the night,  
I perceive that the ghastly glimmer is noonday sunbeams  
reflected,  
And debouch to the steady and central from the offspring  
great or small.

## 50

There is that in me—I do not know what it is—but I know it  
is in me.

Wrench'd and sweaty—calm and cool then my body becomes,  
I sleep—I sleep long.

I do not know it—it is without name—it is a word unsaid,  
It is not in any dictionary, utterance, symbol.

Something it swings on more than the earth I swing on,  
To it the creation is the friend whose embracing awakes me.

Perhaps I might tell more. Outlines! I plead for my brothers  
and sisters.

Do you see O my brothers and sisters?  
It is not chaos or death—it is form, union, plan—it is eternal  
life—it is Happiness.

## 51

The past and present wilt—I have fill'd them, emptied them,  
And proceed to fill my next fold of the future.

Listener up there! what have you to confide to me?  
Look in my face while I snuff the sidle of evening,  
(Talk honestly, no one else hears you, and I stay only a minute  
longer.)

Do I contradict myself?  
Very well then I contradict myself,  
(I am large, I contain multitudes.)

I concentrate toward them that are nigh, I wait on the door-  
slab.

Who has done his day's work? who will soonest be through  
with his supper?

Who wishes to walk with me?

Will you speak before I am gone? will you prove already too  
late?

## 52

The spotted hawk swoops by and accuses me, he complains of  
my gab and my loitering.

I too am not a bit tamed, I too am untranslatable,  
I sound my barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world.

The last scud of day holds back for me,  
It flings my likeness after the rest and true as any on the  
shadow'd wilds,  
It coaxes me to the vapor and the dusk.

I depart as air, I shake my white locks at the runaway sun,  
I effuse my flesh in eddies, and drift it in lacy jags.

I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow from the grass I love,  
If you want me again look for me under your boot-soles.

You will hardly know who I am or what I mean,  
But I shall be good health to you nevertheless,  
And filter and fibre your blood.

Failing to fetch me at first keep encouraged,  
Missing me one place search another,  
I stop somewhere waiting for you.

*A Song for Occupations.*

## I

A song for occupations!  
In the labor of engines and trades and the labor of fields I find  
the developments,  
And find the eternal meanings.

Workmen and Workwomen!  
Were all educations practical and ornamental well display'd  
out of me, what would it amount to?  
Were I as the head teacher, charitable proprietor, wise  
statesman, what would it amount to?  
Were I to you as the boss employing and paying you, would  
that satisfy you?

The learn'd, virtuous, benevolent, and the usual terms,  
A man like me and never the usual terms.

Neither a servant nor a master I,  
I take no sooner a large price than a small price, I will have  
my own whoever enjoys me,  
I will be even with you and you shall be even with me.

If you stand at work in a shop I stand as nigh as the nighest in  
the same shop,  
If you bestow gifts on your brother or dearest friend I demand  
as good as your brother or dearest friend,  
If your lover, husband, wife, is welcome by day or night, I  
must be personally as welcome,  
If you become degraded, criminal, ill, then I become so for  
your sake,

If you remember your foolish and outlaw'd deeds, do you  
 think I cannot remember my own foolish and outlaw'd  
 deeds?

If you carouse at the table I carouse at the opposite side of  
 the table,

If you meet some stranger in the streets and love him or her,  
 why I often meet strangers in the street and love them.

Why what have you thought of yourself?

Is it you then that thought yourself less?

Is it you that thought the President greater than you?

Or the rich better off than you? or the educated wiser than  
 you?

(Because you are greasy or pimped, or were once drunk, or a  
 thief,

Or that you are diseas'd, or rheumatic, or a prostitute,

Or from frivolity or impotence, or that you are no scholar  
 and never saw your name in print,

Do you give in that you are any less immortal?)

## 2

Souls of men and women! it is not you I call unseen, unheard,  
 untouchable and untouching,

It is not you I go argue pro and con about, and to settle  
 whether you are alive or no,

I own publicly who you are, if nobody else owns.

Grown, half-grown and babe, of this country and every  
 country, in-doors and out-doors, one just as much as the  
 other, I see,

And all else behind or through them.

The wife, and she is not one jot less than the husband,

The daughter, and she is just as good as the son,

The mother, and she is every bit as much as the father.

Offspring of ignorant and poor, boys apprenticed to trades,  
Young fellows working on farms and old fellows working on  
farms,  
Sailor-men, merchant-men, coasters, immigrants,  
All these I see, but nigher and farther the same I see,  
None shall escape me and none shall wish to escape me.

I bring what you much need yet always have,  
Not money, amours, dress, eating, erudition, but as good,  
I send no agent or medium, offer no representative of value,  
but offer the value itself.

There is something that comes to one now and perpetually,  
It is not what is printed, preach'd, discussed, it eludes  
discussion and print,  
It is not to be put in a book, it is not in this book,  
It is for you whoever you are, it is no farther from you than  
your hearing and sight are from you,  
It is hinted by nearest, commonest, readiest, it is ever  
provoked by them.

You may read in many languages, yet read nothing about it,  
You may read the President's message and read nothing about  
it there,  
Nothing in the reports from the State department or Treasury  
department, or in the daily papers or weekly papers,  
Or in the census or revenue returns, prices current, or any  
accounts of stock.

## 3

The sun and stars that float in the open air,  
The apple-shaped earth and we upon it, surely the drift of  
them is something grand,  
I do not know what it is except that it is grand, and that it is  
happiness,  
And that the enclosing purport of us here is not a speculation  
or bon-mot or reconnoissance,

And that it is not something which by luck may turn out well  
for us, and without luck must be a failure for us,  
And not something which may yet be retracted in a certain  
contingency.

The light and shade, the curious sense of body and identity,  
the greed that with perfect complaisance devours all  
things,  
The endless pride and outstretching of man, unspeakable joys  
and sorrows,  
The wonder every one sees in every one else he sees, and the  
wonders that fill each minute of time forever,  
What have you reckon'd them for, camerado?

Have you reckon'd them for your trade or farm-work? or for  
the profits of your store?  
Or to achieve yourself a position? or to fill a gentleman's  
leisure, or a lady's leisure?

Have you reckon'd that the landscape took substance and  
form that it might be painted in a picture?  
Or men and women that they might be written of, and songs  
sung?  
Or the attraction of gravity, and the great laws and  
harmonious combinations and the fluids of the air, as  
subjects for the savans?  
Or the brown land and the blue sea for maps and charts?  
Or the stars to be put in constellations and named fancy  
names?  
Or that the growth of seeds is for agricultural tables, or  
agriculture itself?

Old institutions, these arts, libraries, legends, collections, and  
the practice handed along in manufactures, will we rate  
them so high?  
Will we rate our cash and business high? I have no objection,  
I rate them as high as the highest—then a child born of a  
woman and man I rate beyond all rate.

We thought our Union grand, and our Constitution grand,  
I do not say they are not grand and good, for they are,  
I am this day just as much in love with them as you,  
Then I am in love with You, and with all my fellows upon the  
earth.

We consider bibles and religion divine—I do not say they are  
not divine,  
I say they have all grown out of you, and may grow out of  
you still,  
It is not they who give the life, it is you who give the life,  
Leaves are not more shed from the trees, or trees from the  
earth, than they are shed out of you.

## 4

The sum of all known reverence I add up in you whoever you  
are,  
The President is there in the White House for you, it is not  
you who are here for him,  
The Secretaries act in their bureaus for you, not you here for  
them,  
The Congress convenes every Twelfth-month for you,  
Laws, courts, the forming of States, the charters of cities, the  
going and coming of commerce and mails, are all for you.

List close my scholars dear,  
Doctrines, politics and civilization exurge from you,  
Sculpture and monuments and any thing inscribed anywhere  
are tallied in you,  
The gist of histories and statistics as far back as the records  
reach is in you this hour, and myths and tales the same,  
If you were not breathing and walking here, where would  
they all be?  
The most renown'd poems would be ashes, orations and plays  
would be vacuums.

All architecture is what you do to it when you look upon it,



(Did you think it was in the white or gray stone? or the lines  
of the arches and cornices?)

All music is what awakes from you when you are reminded  
by the instruments,  
It is not the violins and the cornets, it is not the oboe nor the  
beating drums, nor the score of the baritone singer  
singing his sweet romanza, nor that of the men's chorus,  
nor that of the women's chorus,  
It is nearer and farther than they.

## 5

Will the whole come back then?  
Can each see signs of the best by a look in the looking-glass?  
is there nothing greater or more?  
Does all sit there with you, with the mystic unseen soul?

Strange and hard that paradox true I give,  
Objects gross and the unseen soul are one.

House-building, measuring, sawing the boards,  
Blacksmithing, glass-blowing, nail-making, coopering, tin-  
roofing, shingle-dressing,  
Ship-joining, dock-building, fish-curing, flagging of sidewalks  
by flaggers,  
The pump, the pile-driver, the great derrick, the coal-kiln and  
brick-kiln,  
Coal-mines and all that is down there, the lamps in the  
darkness, echoes, songs, what meditations, what vast  
native thoughts looking through smutch'd faces,  
Iron-works, forge-fires in the mountains or by river-banks,  
men around feeling the melt with huge crowbars, lumps  
of ore, the due combining of ore, limestone, coal,  
The blast-furnace and the puddling-furnace, the loup-lump at  
the bottom of the melt at last, the rolling-mill, the  
stumpy bars of pig-iron, the strong clean-shaped T-rail  
for railroads,

Oil-works, silk-works, white-lead-works, the sugar-house,  
steam-saws, the great mills and factories,  
Stone-cutting, shapely trimmings for façades or window or  
door-lintels, the mallet, the tooth-chisel, the jib to protect  
the thumb,  
The calking-iron, the kettle of boiling vault-cement, and the  
fire under the kettle,  
The cotton-bale, the stevedore's hook, the saw and buck of  
the sawyer, the mould of the moulder, the working-knife  
of the butcher, the ice-saw, and all the work with ice,  
The work and tools of the rigger, grappler, sail-maker, block-  
maker,  
Goods of gutta-percha, papier-maché, colors, brushes, brush-  
making, glazier's implements,  
The veneer and glue-pot, the confectioner's ornaments, the  
decanter and glasses, the shears and flat-iron,  
The awl and knee-strap, the pint measure and quart measure,  
the counter and stool, the writing-pen of quill or metal,  
the making of all sorts of edged tools,  
The brewery, brewing, the malt, the vats, every thing that is  
done by brewers, wine-makers, vinegar-makers,  
Leather-dressing, coach-making, boiler-making, rope-twisting,  
distilling, sign-painting, lime-burning, cotton-picking,  
electroplating, electrotyping, stereotyping,  
Stave-machines, planing-machines, reaping-machines,  
ploughing-machines, thrashing-machines, steam wagons,  
The cart of the carman, the omnibus, the ponderous dray,  
Pyrotechny, letting off color'd fireworks at night, fancy figures  
and jets;  
Beef on the butcher's stall, the slaughter-house of the butcher,  
the butcher in his killing-clothes,  
The pens of live pork, the killing-hammer, the hog-hook, the  
scalders tub, gutting, the cutter's cleaver, the packer's  
maul, and the plenteous winterwork of pork-packing,  
Flour-works, grinding of wheat, rye, maize, rice, the barrels  
and the half and quarter barrels, the loaded barges, the  
high piles on wharves and levees,

The men and the work of the men on ferries, railroads,  
     coasters, fish-boats, canals;  
 The hourly routine of your own or any man's life, the shop,  
     yard, store, or factory,  
 These shows all near you by day and night—workman!  
     whoever you are, your daily life!  
 In that and them the heft of the heaviest—in that and them  
     far more than you estimated, (and far less also,)  
 In them realities for you and me, in them poems for you  
     and me,  
 In them, not yourself—you and your soul enclose all things,  
     regardless of estimation,  
 In them the development good—in them all themes, hints,  
     possibilities.

I do not affirm that what you see beyond is futile, I do not  
     advise you to stop,  
 I do not say leadings you thought great are not great,  
 But I say that none lead to greater than these lead to.

## 6

Will you seek afar off? you surely come back at last,  
 In things best known to you finding the best, or as good as the  
     best,  
 In folks nearest to you finding the sweetest, strongest,  
     lovingest,  
 Happiness, knowledge, not in another place but this place,  
     not for another hour but this hour,  
 Man in the first you see or touch, always in friend, brother,  
     nighest neighbor—woman in mother, sister, wife,  
 The popular tastes and employments taking precedence in  
     poems or anywhere,  
 You workwomen and workmen of these States having your  
     own divine and strong life,  
 And all else giving place to men and women like you.

When the psalm sings instead of the singer,  
When the script preaches instead of the preacher,  
When the pulpit descends and goes instead of the carver that  
    carved the supporting desk,  
When I can touch the body of books by night or by day, and  
    when they touch my body back again,  
When a university course convinces like a slumbering woman  
    and child convince,  
When the minted gold in the vault smiles like the night-  
    watchman's daughter,  
When warrantee deeds loafe in chairs opposite and are my  
    friendly companions,  
I intend to reach them my hand, and make as much of them  
    as I do of men and women like you.

*To Think of Time.*

## I

To think of time—of all that retrospection,  
To think of to-day, and the ages continued henceforward.

Have you guess'd you yourself would not continue?  
Have you dreaded these earth-beetles?  
Have you fear'd the future would be nothing to you?

Is to-day nothing? is the beginningless past nothing?  
If the future is nothing they are just as surely nothing.

To think that the sun rose in the east—that men and women  
were flexible, real, alive—that every thing was alive,  
To think that you and I did not see, feel, think, nor bear our  
part,  
To think that we are now here and bear our part.

## 2

Not a day passes, not a minute or second without an  
accouchement,  
Not a day passes, not a minute or second without a corpse.

The dull nights go over and the dull days also,  
The soreness of lying so much in bed goes over,  
The physician after long putting off gives the silent and  
terrible look for an answer,  
The children come hurried and weeping, and the brothers and  
sisters are sent for,  
Medicines stand unused on the shelf, (the camphor-smell has  
long pervaded the rooms,)

The faithful hand of the living does not desert the hand of the  
dying,  
The twitching lips press lightly on the forehead of the dying,  
The breath ceases and the pulse of the heart ceases,  
The corpse stretches on the bed and the living look upon it,  
It is palpable as the living are palpable.

The living look upon the corpse with their eyesight,  
But without eyesight lingers a different living and looks  
curiously on the corpse.

## 3

To think the thought of death merged in the thought of  
materials,  
To think of all these wonders of city and country, and others  
taking great interest in them, and we taking no interest in  
them.

To think how eager we are in building our houses,  
To think others shall be just as eager, and we quite indifferent.

(I see one building the house that serves him a few years, or  
seventy or eighty years at most,  
I see one building the house that serves him longer than that.)

Slow-moving and black lines creep over the whole earth—  
they never cease—they are the burial lines,  
He that was President was buried, and he that is now  
President shall surely be buried.

## 4

A reminiscence of the vulgar fate,  
A frequent sample of the life and death of workmen,  
Each after his kind.

Cold dash of waves at the ferry-wharf, posh and ice in the  
 river, half-frozen mud in the streets,  
 A gray discouraged sky overhead, the short last daylight of  
 December,  
 A hearse and stages, the funeral of an old Broadway stage-  
 driver, the cortege mostly drivers.

Steady the trot to the cemetery, duly rattles the death-bell,  
 The gate is pass'd, the new-dug grave is halted at, the living  
 alight, the hearse uncloses,  
 The coffin is pass'd out, lower'd and settled, the whip is laid  
 on the coffin, the earth is swiftly shovel'd in,  
 The mound above is flatted with the spades—silence,  
 A minute—no one moves or speaks—it is done,  
 He is decently put away—is there any thing more?

He was a good fellow, free-mouth'd, quick-temper'd, not bad-  
 looking,  
 Ready with life or death for a friend, fond of women,  
 gambled, ate hearty, drank hearty,  
 Had known what it was to be flush, grew low-spirited toward  
 the last, sicken'd, was help'd by a contribution,  
 Died, aged forty-one years—and that was his funeral.

Thumb extended, finger uplifted, apron, cape, gloves, strap,  
 wet-weather clothes, whip carefully chosen,  
 Boss, spotter, starter, hostler, somebody loafing on you, you  
 loafing on somebody, headway, man before and man  
 behind,  
 Good day's work, bad day's work, pet stock, mean stock, first  
 out, last out, turning-in at night,  
 To think that these are so much and so nigh to other drivers,  
 and he there takes no interest in them.

The markets, the government, the working-man's wages, to  
 think what account they are through our nights and days,

To think that other working-men will make just as great  
account of them, yet we make little or no account.

The vulgar and the refined, what you call sin and what you  
call goodness, to think how wide a difference,  
To think the difference will still continue to others, yet we lie  
beyond the difference.

To think how much pleasure there is,  
Do you enjoy yourself in the city? or engaged in business? or  
planning a nomination and election? or with your wife  
and family?  
Or with your mother and sisters? or in womanly housework?  
or the beautiful maternal cares?  
These also flow onward to others, you and I flow onward,  
But in due time you and I shall take less interest in them.

Your farm, profits, crops—to think how engross'd you are,  
To think there will still be farms, profits, crops, yet for you of  
what avail?

## 6

What will be will be well, for what is is well,  
To take interest is well, and not to take interest shall be well.

The domestic joys, the daily housework or business, the  
building of houses, are not phantasms, they have weight,  
form, location,  
Farms, profits, crops, markets, wages, government, are none  
of them phantasms,  
The difference between sin and goodness is no delusion,  
The earth is not an echo, man and his life and all the things of  
his life are well-consider'd.

You are not thrown to the winds, you gather certainly and  
safely around yourself,  
Yourself! yourself! yourself, for ever and ever!



## 7

It is not to diffuse you that you were born of your mother and  
father, it is to identify you,  
It is not that you should be undecided, but that you should be  
decided,  
Something long preparing and formless is arrived and form'd  
in you,  
You are henceforth secure, whatever comes or goes.

The threads that were spun are gather'd, the weft crosses the  
warp, the pattern is systematic.

The preparations have every one been justified,  
The orchestra have sufficiently tuned their instruments, the  
baton has given the signal.

The guest that was coming, he waited long, he is now housed,  
He is one of those who are beautiful and happy, he is one of  
those that to look upon and be with is enough.

The law of the past cannot be eluded,  
The law of the present and future cannot be eluded,  
The law of the living cannot be eluded, it is eternal,  
The law of promotion and transformation cannot be eluded,  
The law of heroes and good-doers cannot be eluded,  
The law of drunkards, informers, mean persons, not one iota  
thereof can be eluded.

## 8

Slow moving and black lines go ceaselessly over the earth,  
Northerner goes carried and Southerner goes carried, and  
they on the Atlantic side and they on the Pacific,  
And they between, and all through the Mississippi country,  
and all over the earth.

The great masters and kosmos are well as they go, the heroes  
and good-doers are well,  
The known leaders and inventors and the rich owners and  
pious and distinguish'd may be well,  
But there is more account than that, there is strict account of  
all.

The interminable hordes of the ignorant and wicked are not  
nothing,  
The barbarians of Africa and Asia are not nothing,  
The perpetual successions of shallow people are not nothing  
as they go.

Of and in all these things,  
I have dream'd that we are not to be changed so much, nor  
the law of us changed,  
I have dream'd that heroes and good-doers shall be under the  
present and past law,  
And that murderers, drunkards, liars, shall be under the  
present and past law,  
For I have dream'd that the law they are under now is  
enough.

And I have dream'd that the purpose and essence of the  
known life, the transient,  
Is to form and decide identity for the unknown life, the  
permanent.

If all came but to ashes of dung,  
If maggots and rats ended us, then Alarum! for we are  
betray'd,  
Then indeed suspicion of death.

Do you suspect death? if I were to suspect death I should die  
now,  
Do you think I could walk pleasantly and well-suited toward  
annihilation?

Pleasantly and well-suited I walk,  
Whither I walk I cannot define, but I know it is good,  
The whole universe indicates that it is good,  
The past and the present indicate that it is good.

How beautiful and perfect are the animals!  
How perfect the earth, and the minutest thing upon it!  
What is called good is perfect, and what is called bad is just as  
perfect,  
The vegetables and minerals are all perfect, and the  
imponderable fluids perfect;  
Slowly and surely they have pass'd on to this, and slowly and  
surely they yet pass on.

## 9

I swear I think now that every thing without exception has an  
eternal soul!  
The trees have, rooted in the ground! the weeds of the sea  
have! the animals!

I swear I think there is nothing but immortality!  
That the exquisite scheme is for it, and the nebulous float is  
for it, and the cohering is for it!  
And all preparation is for it—and identity is for it—and life  
and materials are altogether for it!

*The Sleepers.*

## I

I wander all night in my vision,  
Stepping with light feet, swiftly and noiselessly stepping and  
stopping,  
Bending with open eyes over the shut eyes of sleepers,  
Wandering and confused, lost to myself, ill-assorted,  
contradictory,  
Pausing, gazing, bending, and stopping.

How solemn they look there, stretch'd and still,  
How quiet they breathe, the little children in their cradles.

The wretched features of ennuyés, the white features of  
corpses, the livid faces of drunkards, the sick-gray faces  
of onanists,  
The gash'd bodies on battle-fields, the insane in their strong-  
door'd rooms, the sacred idiots, the new-born emerging  
from gates, and the dying emerging from gates,  
The night pervades them and infolds them.

The married couple sleep calmly in their bed, he with his palm  
on the hip of the wife, and she with her palm on the hip  
of the husband,  
The sisters sleep lovingly side by side in their bed,  
The men sleep lovingly side by side in theirs,  
And the mother sleeps with her little child carefully wrapt.

The blind sleep, and the deaf and dumb sleep,  
The prisoner sleeps well in the prison, the runaway son sleeps,  
The murderer that is to be hung next day, how does he sleep?  
And the murder'd person, how does he sleep?

The female that loves unrequited sleeps,  
And the male that loves unrequited sleeps,  
The head of the money-maker that plotted all day sleeps,  
And the enraged and treacherous dispositions, all, all sleep.

I stand in the dark with drooping eyes by the worst-suffering  
and the most restless,  
I pass my hands soothingly to and fro a few inches from them,  
The restless sink in their beds, they fitfully sleep.

Now I pierce the darkness, new beings appear,  
The earth recedes from me into the night,  
I saw that it was beautiful, and I see that what is not the earth  
is beautiful.

I go from bedside to bedside, I sleep close with the other  
sleepers each in turn,  
I dream in my dream all the dreams of the other dreamers,  
And I become the other dreamers.

I am a dance—play up there! the fit is whirling me fast!

I am the ever-laughing—it is new moon and twilight,  
I see the hiding of douceurs, I see nimble ghosts whichever  
way I look,  
Cache and cache again deep in the ground and sea, and where  
it is neither ground nor sea.

Well do they do their jobs those journeymen divine,  
Only from me can they hide nothing, and would not if they  
could,  
I reckon I am their boss and they make me a pet besides,  
And surround me and lead me and run ahead when I walk,  
To lift their cunning covers to signify me with stretch'd arms,  
and resume the way;  
Onward we move, a gay gang of blackguards! with mirth-  
shouting music and wild-flapping pennants of joy!

I am the actor, the actress, the voter, the politician,  
The emigrant and the exile, the criminal that stood in the box,  
He who has been famous and he who shall be famous after  
to-day,  
The stammerer, the well-form'd person, the wasted or feeble  
person.

I am she who adorn'd herself and folded her hair expectantly,  
My truant lover has come, and it is dark.

Double yourself and receive me darkness,  
Receive me and my lover too, he will not let me go without him.

I roll myself upon you as upon a bed, I resign myself to the dusk.

He whom I call answers me and takes the place of my lover,  
He rises with me silently from the bed.

Darkness, you are gentler than my lover, his flesh was sweaty  
and panting,  
I feel the hot moisture yet that he left me.

My hands are spread forth, I pass them in all directions,  
I would sound up the shadowy shore to which you are  
journeying.

Be careful darkness! already what was it touch'd me?  
I thought my lover had gone, else darkness and he are one,  
I hear the heart-beat, I follow, I fade away.

## 2

I descend my western course, my sinews are flaccid,  
Perfume and youth course through me and I am their wake.

It is my face yellow and wrinkled instead of the old woman's,  
I sit low in a straw-bottom chair and carefully darn my  
grandson's stockings.

It is I too, the sleepless widow looking out on the winter  
midnight,  
I see the sparkles of starshine on the icy and pallid earth.

A shroud I see and I am the shroud, I wrap a body and lie in  
the coffin,  
It is dark here under ground, it is not evil or pain here, it is  
blank here, for reasons.

(It seems to me that every thing in the light and air ought to  
be happy,  
Whoever is not in his coffin and the dark grave let him know  
he has enough.)

## 3

I see a beautiful gigantic swimmer swimming naked through  
the eddies of the sea,  
His brown hair lies close and even to his head, he strikes out  
with courageous arms, he urges himself with his legs,  
I see his white body, I see his undaunted eyes,  
I hate the swift-running eddies that would dash him head-  
foremost on the rocks.

What are you doing you ruffianly red-trickled waves?  
Will you kill the courageous giant? will you kill him in the  
prime of his middle age?

Steady and long he struggles,  
He is baffled, bang'd, bruis'd, he holds out while his strength  
holds out,  
The slapping eddies are spotted with his blood, they bear him  
away, they roll him, swing him, turn him,  
His beautiful body is borne in the circling eddies, it is  
continually bruis'd on rocks,  
Swiftly and out of sight is borne the brave corpse.

## 4

I turn but do not extricate myself,  
Confused, a past-reading, another, but with darkness yet.

The beach is cut by the razory ice-wind, the wreck-guns  
    sound,  
The tempest lulls, the moon comes floundering through the  
    drifts.

I look where the ship helplessly heads end on, I hear the burst  
    as she strikes, I hear the howls of dismay, they grow  
    fainter and fainter.

I cannot aid with my wringing fingers,  
I can but rush to the surf and let it drench me and freeze  
    upon me.

I search with the crowd, not one of the company is wash'd to  
    us alive,  
In the morning I help pick up the dead and lay them in rows  
    in a barn.

## 5

Now of the older war-days, the defeat at Brooklyn,  
Washington stands inside the lines, he stands on the  
    intrench'd hills amid a crowd of officers,  
His face is cold and damp, he cannot repress the weeping  
    drops,  
He lifts the glass perpetually to his eyes, the color is blanch'd  
    from his cheeks,  
He sees the slaughter of the southern braves confided to him  
    by their parents.

The same at last and at last when peace is declared,  
He stands in the room of the old tavern, the well-belov'd  
    soldiers all pass through,



The officers speechless and slow draw near in their turns,  
The chief encircles their necks with his arm and kisses them  
on the cheek,  
He kisses lightly the wet cheeks one after another, he shakes  
hands and bids good-by to the army.

## 6

Now what my mother told me one day as we sat at dinner  
together,  
Of when she was a nearly grown girl living home with her  
parents on the old homestead.

A red squaw came one breakfast-time to the old homestead,  
On her back she carried a bundle of rushes for rush-  
bottoming chairs,  
Her hair, straight, shiny, coarse, black, profuse, half-envelop'd  
her face,  
Her step was free and elastic, and her voice sounded  
exquisitely as she spoke.

My mother look'd in delight and amazement at the stranger,  
She look'd at the freshness of her tall-borne face and full and  
pliant limbs,  
The more she look'd upon her she loved her,  
Never before had she seen such wonderful beauty and purity,  
She made her sit on a bench by the jamb of the fireplace, she  
cook'd food for her,  
She had no work to give her, but she gave her remembrance  
and fondness.

The red squaw staid all the forenoon, and toward the middle  
of the afternoon she went away,  
O my mother was loth to have her go away,  
All the week she thought of her, she watch'd for her many a  
month,  
She remember'd her many a winter and many a summer,  
But the red squaw never came nor was heard of there again.

## 7

A show of the summer softness—a contact of something  
unseen—an amour of the light and air,  
I am jealous and overwhelm'd with friendliness,  
And will go gallivant with the light and air myself.

O love and summer, you are in the dreams and in me,  
Autumn and winter are in the dreams, the farmer goes with  
his thrift,  
The droves and crops increase, the barns are well-fill'd.

Elements merge in the night, ships make tacks in the dreams,  
The sailor sails, the exile returns home,  
The fugitive returns unharm'd, the immigrant is back beyond  
months and years,  
The poor Irishman lives in the simple house of his childhood  
with the well-known neighbors and faces,  
They warmly welcome him, he is barefoot again, he forgets he  
is well off,  
The Dutchman voyages home, and the Scotchman and  
Welshman voyage home, and the native of the  
Mediterranean voyages home,  
To every port of England, France, Spain, enter well-fill'd  
ships,  
The Swiss foots it toward his hills, the Prussian goes his way,  
the Hungarian his way and the Pole his way,  
The Swede returns, and the Dane and Norwegian return.

The homeward bound and the outward bound,  
The beautiful lost swimmer, the ennuyé, the onanist, the  
female that loves unrequited, the money-maker,  
The actor and actress, those through with their parts and  
those waiting to commence,  
The affectionate boy, the husband and wife, the voter, the  
nominee that is chosen and the nominee that has fail'd,  
The great already known and the great any time after to-day,  
The stammerer, the sick, the perfect-form'd, the homely,

The criminal that stood in the box, the judge that sat and  
 sentenced him, the fluent lawyers, the jury, the audience,  
 The laugher and weeper, the dancer, the midnight widow, the  
 red squaw,  
 The consumptive, the erysipalite, the idiot, he that is wrong'd,  
 The antipodes, and every one between this and them in the  
 dark,  
 I swear they are averaged now—one is no better than the  
 other,  
 The night and sleep have liken'd them and restored them.

I swear they are all beautiful,  
 Every one that sleeps is beautiful, every thing in the dim light  
 is beautiful,  
 The wildest and bloodiest is over, and all is peace.

Peace is always beautiful,  
 The myth of heaven indicates peace and night.

The myth of heaven indicates the soul,  
 The soul is always beautiful, it appears more or it appears  
 less, it comes or it lags behind,  
 It comes from its embower'd garden and looks pleasantly on  
 itself and encloses the world,  
 Perfect and clean the genitals previously jetting, and perfect  
 and clean the womb cohering,  
 The head well-grown proportion'd and plumb, and the  
 bowels and joints proportion'd and plumb.

The soul is always beautiful,  
 The universe is duly in order, every thing is in its place,  
 What has arrived is in its place and what waits shall be in its  
 place,  
 The twisted skull waits, the watery or rotten blood waits,  
 The child of the glutton or venerealee waits long, and the  
 child of the drunkard waits long, and the drunkard  
 himself waits long,

The sleepers that lived and died wait, the far advanced are to  
go on in their turns, and the far behind are to come on in  
their turns,  
The diverse shall be no less diverse, but they shall flow and  
unite—they unite now.

## 8

The sleepers are very beautiful as they lie unclothed,  
They flow hand in hand over the whole earth from east to  
west as they lie unclothed,  
The Asiatic and African are hand in hand, the European and  
American are hand in hand,  
Learn'd and unlearn'd are hand in hand, and male and female  
are hand in hand,  
The bare arm of the girl crosses the bare breast of her lover,  
they press close without lust, his lips press her neck,  
The father holds his grown or ungrown son in his arms with  
measureless love, and the son holds the father in his arms  
with measureless love,  
The white hair of the mother shines on the white wrist of the  
daughter,  
The breath of the boy goes with the breath of the man, friend  
is inarm'd by friend,  
The scholar kisses the teacher and the teacher kisses the  
scholar, the wrong'd is made right,  
The call of the slave is one with the master's call, and the  
master salutes the slave,  
The felon steps forth from the prison, the insane becomes  
sane, the suffering of sick persons is reliev'd,  
The sweatings and fevers stop, the throat that was unsound is  
sound, the lungs of the consumptive are resumed, the  
poor distress'd head is free,  
The joints of the rheumatic move as smoothly as ever, and  
smoother than ever,  
Stiflings and passages open, the paralyzed become supple,  
The swell'd and convuls'd and congested awake to themselves  
in condition,

They pass the invigoration of the night and the chemistry of  
the night, and awake.

I too pass from the night,  
I stay a while away O night, but I return to you again and  
love you.

Why should I be afraid to trust myself to you?  
I am not afraid, I have been well brought forward by you,  
I love the rich running day, but I do not desert her in whom I  
lay so long,  
I know not how I came of you and I know not where I go  
with you, but I know I came well and shall go well.

I will stop only a time with the night, and rise betimes,  
I will duly pass the day O my mother, and duly return to you.

*I Sing the Body Electric.*

I

I sing the body electric,  
 The armies of those I love engirth me and I engirth them,  
 They will not let me off till I go with them, respond to them,  
 And discorrupt them, and charge them full with the charge of  
 the soul.

Was it doubted that those who corrupt their own bodies  
 conceal themselves?  
 And if those who defile the living are as bad as they who  
 defile the dead?  
 And if the body does not do fully as much as the soul?  
 And if the body were not the soul, what is the soul?

2

The love of the body of man or woman balks account, the  
 body itself balks account,  
 That of the male is perfect, and that of the female is perfect.

The expression of the face balks account,  
 But the expression of a well-made man appears not only in  
 his face,  
 It is in his limbs and joints also, it is curiously in the joints of  
 his hips and wrists,  
 It is in his walk, the carriage of his neck, the flex of his waist  
 and knees, dress does not hide him,  
 The strong sweet quality he has strikes through the cotton  
 and broadcloth,  
 To see him pass conveys as much as the best poem, perhaps  
 more,

You linger to see his back, and the back of his neck and  
shoulder-side.

The sprawl and fulness of babes, the bosoms and heads of  
women, the folds of their dress, their style as we pass in  
the street, the contour of their shape downwards,  
The swimmer naked in the swimming-bath, seen as he swims  
through the transparent green-shine, or lies with his face  
up and rolls silently to and fro in the heave of the water,  
The bending forward and backward of rowers in row-boats,  
the horseman in his saddle,  
Girls, mothers, house-keepers, in all their performances,  
The group of laborers seated at noon-time with their open  
dinner-kettles, and their wives waiting,  
The female soothing a child, the farmer's daughter in the  
garden or cow-yard,  
The young fellow hoeing corn, the sleigh-driver driving his six  
horses through the crowd,  
The wrestle of wrestlers, two apprentice-boys, quite grown,  
lusty, good-natured, native-born, out on the vacant lot at  
sundown after work,  
The coats and caps thrown down, the embrace of love and  
resistance,  
The upper-hold and under-hold, the hair rumpled over and  
blinding the eyes;  
The march of firemen in their own costumes, the play of  
masculine muscle through clean-setting trowsers and  
waist-straps,  
The slow return from the fire, the pause when the bell strikes  
suddenly again, and the listening on the alert,  
The natural, perfect, varied attitudes, the bent head, the  
curv'd neck and the counting;  
Such-like I love—I loosen myself, pass freely, am at the  
mother's breast with the little child,  
Swim with the swimmers, wrestle with wrestlers, march in  
line with the firemen, and pause, listen, count.

## 3

I knew a man, a common farmer, the father of five sons,  
And in them the fathers of sons, and in them the fathers of sons.

This man was of wonderful vigor, calmness, beauty of person,  
The shape of his head, the pale yellow and white of his hair  
and beard, the immeasurable meaning of his black eyes,  
the richness and breadth of his manners,  
These I used to go and visit him to see, he was wise also,  
He was six feet tall, he was over eighty years old, his sons  
were massive, clean, bearded, tan-faced, handsome,  
They and his daughters loved him, all who saw him loved him,  
They did not love him by allowance, they loved him with  
personal love,  
He drank water only, the blood show'd like scarlet through  
the clear-brown skin of his face,  
He was a frequent gunner and fisher, he sail'd his boat  
himself, he had a fine one presented to him by a ship-  
joiner, he had fowling-pieces presented to him by men  
that loved him,  
When he went with his five sons and many grand-sons to hunt  
or fish, you would pick him out as the most beautiful and  
vigorous of the gang,  
You would wish long and long to be with him, you would  
wish to sit by him in the boat that you and he might  
touch each other.

## 4

I have perceiv'd that to be with those I like is enough,  
To stop in company with the rest at evening is enough,  
To be surrounded by beautiful, curious, breathing, laughing  
flesh is enough,  
To pass among them or touch any one, or rest my arm ever so  
lightly round his or her neck for a moment, what is this  
then?  
I do not ask any more delight, I swim in it as in a sea.



There is something in staying close to men and women and  
 looking on them, and in the contact and odor of them,  
 that pleases the soul well,  
 All things please the soul, but these please the soul well.

## 5

This is the female form,  
 A divine nimbus exhales from it from head to foot,  
 It attracts with fierce undeniable attraction,  
 I am drawn by its breath as if I were no more than a helpless  
 vapor, all falls aside but myself and it,  
 Books, art, religion, time, the visible and solid earth, and  
 what was expected of heaven or fear'd of hell, are now  
 consumed,  
 Mad filaments, ungovernable shoots play out of it, the  
 response likewise ungovernable,  
 Hair, bosom, hips, bend of legs, negligent falling hands all  
 diffused, mine too diffused,  
 Ebb stung by the flow and flow stung by the ebb, love-flesh  
 swelling and deliciously aching,  
 Limitless limpid jets of love hot and enormous, quivering jelly  
 of love, white-blow and delirious juice,  
 Bridegroom night of love working surely and softly into the  
 prostrate dawn,  
 Undulating into the willing and yielding day,  
 Lost in the cleave of the clasping and sweet-flesh'd day.

This the nucleus—after the child is born of woman, man is  
 born of woman,  
 This the bath of birth, this the merge of small and large, and  
 the outlet again.

Be not ashamed women, your privilege encloses the rest, and  
 is the exit of the rest,  
 You are the gates of the body, and you are the gates of the  
 soul.

The female contains all qualities and tempers them,  
 She is in her place and moves with perfect balance,  
 She is all things duly veil'd, she is both passive and active,  
 She is to conceive daughters as well as sons, and sons as well  
 as daughters.

As I see my soul reflected in Nature,  
 As I see through a mist, One with inexpressible completeness,  
 sanity, beauty,  
 See the bent head and arms folded over the breast, the Female  
 I see.

## 6

The male is not less the soul nor more, he too is in his place,  
 He too is all qualities, he is action and power,  
 The flush of the known universe is in him,  
 Scorn becomes him well, and appetite and defiance become  
 him well,  
 The wildest largest passions, bliss that is utmost, sorrow that  
 is utmost become him well, pride is for him,  
 The full-spread pride of man is calming and excellent to the  
 soul,  
 Knowledge becomes him, he likes it always, he brings every  
 thing to the test of himself,  
 Whatever the survey, whatever the sea and the sail he strikes  
 soundings at last only here,  
 (Where else does he strike soundings except here?)

The man's body is sacred and the woman's body is sacred,  
 No matter who it is, it is sacred—is it the meanest one in the  
 laborers' gang?  
 Is it one of the dull-faced immigrants just landed on the  
 wharf?  
 Each belongs here or anywhere just as much as the well-off,  
 just as much as you,  
 Each has his or her place in the procession.

(All is a procession,  
The universe is a procession with measured and perfect  
motion.)

Do you know so much yourself that you call the meanest  
ignorant?

Do you suppose you have a right to a good sight, and he or  
she has no right to a sight?

Do you think matter has cohered together from its diffuse  
float, and the soil is on the surface, and water runs and  
vegetation sprouts,

For you only, and not for him and her?

## 7

A man's body at auction,  
(For before the war I often go to the slave-mart and watch the  
sale,)

I help the auctioneer, the sloven does not half know his  
business.

Gentlemen look on this wonder,  
Whatever the bids of the bidders they cannot be high enough  
for it,

For it the globe lay preparing quintillions of years without  
one animal or plant,

For it the revolving cycles truly and steadily roll'd.

In this head the all-baffling brain,  
In it and below it the makings of heroes.

Examine these limbs, red, black, or white, they are cunning in  
tendon and nerve,  
They shall be stript that you may see them.

Exquisite senses, life-lit eyes, pluck, volition,  
Flakes of breast-muscle, pliant backbone and neck, flesh not  
flabby, good-sized arms and legs,

And wonders within there yet.

Within there runs blood,  
 The same old blood! the same red-running blood!  
 There swells and jets a heart, there all passions, desires,  
     reachings, aspirations,  
 (Do you think they are not there because they are not  
     express'd in parlors and lecture-rooms?)

This is not only one man, this the father of those who shall be  
     fathers in their turns,  
 In him the start of populous states and rich republics,  
 Of him countless immortal lives with countless embodiments  
     and enjoyments.

How do you know who shall come from the offspring of his  
     offspring through the centuries?  
 (Who might you find you have come from yourself, if you  
     could trace back through the centuries?)

## 8

A woman's body at auction,  
 She too is not only herself, she is the teeming mother of  
     mothers,  
 She is the bearer of them that shall grow and be mates to the  
     mothers.

Have you ever loved the body of a woman?  
 Have you ever loved the body of a man?  
 Do you not see that these are exactly the same to all in all  
     nations and times all over the earth?

If any thing is sacred the human body is sacred,  
 And the glory and sweet of a man is the token of manhood  
     untainted,  
 And in man or woman a clean, firm-fibred body, is more  
     beautiful than the most beautiful face.

Have you seen the fool that corrupted his own live body? or  
 the fool that corrupted her own live body?  
 For they do not conceal themselves, and cannot conceal  
 themselves.

## 9

O my body! I dare not desert the likes of you in other men  
 and women, nor the likes of the parts of you,  
 I believe the likes of you are to stand or fall with the likes of  
 the soul, (and that they are the soul,)  
 I believe the likes of you shall stand or fall with my poems,  
 and that they are my poems,  
 Man's, woman's, child's, youth's, wife's, husband's, mother's,  
 father's, young man's, young woman's poems,  
 Head, neck, hair, ears, drop and tympan of the ears,  
 Eyes, eye-fringes, iris of the eye, eyebrows, and the waking or  
 sleeping of the lids,  
 Mouth, tongue, lips, teeth, roof of the mouth, jaws, and the  
 jaw-hinges,  
 Nose, nostrils of the nose, and the partition,  
 Cheeks, temples, forehead, chin, throat, back of the neck,  
 neck-slue,  
 Strong shoulders, manly beard, scapula, hind-shoulders, and  
 the ample side-round of the chest,  
 Upper-arm, armpit, elbow-socket, lower-arm, arm-sinews,  
 arm-bones,  
 Wrist and wrist-joints, hand, palm, knuckles, thumb,  
 forefinger, finger-joints, finger-nails,  
 Broad breast-front, curling hair of the breast, breast-bone,  
 breast-side,  
 Ribs, belly, backbone, joints of the backbone,  
 Hips, hip-sockets, hip-strength, inward and outward round,  
 man-balls, man-root,  
 Strong set of thighs, well carrying the trunk above,  
 Leg-fibres, knee, knee-pan, upper-leg, under-leg,  
 Ankles, instep, foot-ball, toes, toe-joints, the heel;

All attitudes, all the shapeliness, all the belongings of my or  
your body or of any one's body, male or female,  
The lung-sponges, the stomach-sac, the bowels sweet and  
clean,  
The brain in its folds inside the skull-frame,  
Sympathies, heart-valves, palate-valves, sexuality, maternity,  
Womanhood, and all that is a woman, and the man that  
comes from woman,  
The womb, the teats, nipples, breast-milk, tears, laughter,  
weeping, love-looks, love-perturbations and risings,  
The voice, articulation, language, whispering, shouting aloud,  
Food, drink, pulse, digestion, sweat, sleep, walking,  
swimming,  
Poise on the hips, leaping, reclining, embracing, arm-curving  
and tightening,  
The continual changes of the flex of the mouth, and around  
the eyes,  
The skin, the sunburnt shade, freckles, hair,  
The curious sympathy one feels when feeling with the hand  
the naked meat of the body,  
The circling rivers the breath, and breathing it in and out,  
The beauty of the waist, and thence of the hips, and thence  
downward toward the knees,  
The thin red jellies within you or within me, the bones and  
the marrow in the bones,  
The exquisite realization of health;  
O I say these are not the parts and poems of the body only,  
but of the soul,  
O I say now these are the soul!

*Faces.*

## I

Sauntering the pavement or riding the country by-road, lo,  
 such faces!  
 Faces of friendship, precision, caution, suavity, ideality,  
 The spiritual-prescient face, the always welcome common  
 benevolent face,  
 The face of the singing of music, the grand faces of natural  
 lawyers and judges broad at the back-top,  
 The faces of hunters and fishers bulged at the brows, the  
 shaved blanch'd faces of orthodox citizens,  
 The pure, extravagant, yearning, questioning artist's face,  
 The ugly face of some beautiful soul, the handsome detested  
 or despised face,  
 The sacred faces of infants, the illuminated face of the mother  
 of many children,  
 The face of an amour, the face of veneration,  
 The face as of a dream, the face of an immobile rock,  
 The face withdrawn of its good and bad, a castrated face,  
 A wild hawk, his wings clipp'd by the clipper,  
 A stallion that yielded at last to the thongs and knife of the  
 gelder.

Sauntering the pavement thus, or crossing the ceaseless ferry,  
 faces and faces and faces,  
 I see them and complain not, and am content with all.

## 2

Do you suppose I could be content with all if I thought them  
 their own finalè?

This now is too lamentable a face for a man,  
Some abject louse asking leave to be, cringing for it,  
Some milk-nosed maggot blessing what lets it wrig to its hole.

This face is a dog's snout sniffing for garbage,  
Snakes nest in that mouth, I hear the sibilant threat.

This face is a haze more chill than the arctic sea,  
Its sleepy and wabbling icebergs crunch as they go.

This is a face of bitter herbs, this an emetic, they need no  
label,  
And more of the drug-shelf, laudanum, caoutchouc, or hog's-  
lard.

This face is an epilepsy, its wordless tongue gives out the  
unearthly cry,  
Its veins down the neck distend, its eyes roll till they show  
nothing but their whites,  
Its teeth grit, the palms of the hands are cut by the turn'd-in  
nails,  
The man falls struggling and foaming to the ground, while he  
speculates well.

This face is bitten by vermin and worms,  
And this is some murderer's knife with a half-pull'd scabbard.

This face owes to the sexton his dismalest fee,  
An unceasing death-bell tolls there.

## 3

Features of my equals would you trick me with your creas'd  
and cadaverous march?  
Well, you cannot trick me.

I see your rounded never-erased flow,  
I see 'neath the rims of your haggard and mean disguises.



Splay and twist as you like, poke with the tangling fores of  
fishes or rats,  
You'll be unmuzzled, you certainly will.

I saw the face of the most smear'd and slobbering idiot they  
had at the asylum,  
And I knew for my consolation what they knew not,  
I knew of the agents that emptied and broke my brother,  
The same wait to clear the rubbish from the fallen tenement,  
And I shall look again in a score or two of ages,  
And I shall meet the real landlord perfect and unharm'd,  
every inch as good as myself.

## 4

The Lord advances, and yet advances,  
Always the shadow in front, always the reach'd hand bringing  
up the laggards.

Out of this face emerge banners and horses—O superb! I see  
what is coming,  
I see the high pioneer-caps, see staves of runners clearing the  
way,  
I hear victorious drums.

This face is a life-boat,  
This is the face commanding and bearded, it asks no odds of  
the rest,  
This face is flavor'd fruit ready for eating,  
This face of a healthy honest boy is the programme of all good.

These faces bear testimony slumbering or awake,  
They show their descent from the Master himself.

Off the word I have spoken I except not one—red, white,  
black, are all deific,  
In each house is the ovum, it comes forth after a thousand  
years.

Spots or cracks at the windows do not disturb me,  
Tall and sufficient stand behind and make signs to me,  
I read the promise and patiently wait.

This is a full-grown lily's face,  
She speaks to the limber-hipp'd man near the garden pickets,  
*Come here she blushingly cries, Come nigh to me limber-  
hipp'd man,*  
*Stand at my side till I lean as high as I can upon you,*  
*Fill me with albescent honey, bend down to me,*  
*Rub to me with your chafing beard, rub to my breast and  
shoulders.*

## 5

The old face of the mother of many children,  
Whist! I am fully content.

Lull'd and late is the smoke of the First-day morning,  
It hangs low over the rows of trees by the fences,  
It hangs thin by the sassafras and wild-cherry and cat-brier  
under them.

I saw the rich ladies in full dress at the soiree,  
I heard what the singers were singing so long,  
Heard who sprang in crimson youth from the white froth and  
the water-blue.

Behold a woman!  
She looks out from her quaker cap, her face is clearer and  
more beautiful than the sky.

She sits in an armchair under the shaded porch of the  
farmhouse,  
The sun just shines on her old white head.

Her ample gown is of cream-hued linen,

Her grandsons raised the flax, and her grand-daughters spun  
it with the distaff and the wheel.

The melodious character of the earth,  
The finish beyond which philosophy cannot go and does not  
wish to go,  
The justified mother of men.

*There Was a Child Went Forth.*

There was a child went forth every day,  
And the first object he look'd upon, that object he became,  
And that object became part of him for the day or a certain  
part of the day,  
Or for many years or stretching cycles of years.

The early lilacs became part of this child,  
And grass and white and red morning-glories, and white and  
red clover, and the song of the phœbe-bird,  
And the Third-month lambs and the sow's pink-faint litter,  
and the mare's foal and the cow's calf,  
And the noisy brood of the barnyard or by the mire of the  
pond-side,  
And the fish suspending themselves so curiously below there,  
and the beautiful curious liquid,  
And the water-plants with their graceful flat heads, all became  
part of him.

The field-sprouts of Fourth-month and Fifth-month became  
part of him,  
Winter-grain sprouts and those of the light-yellow corn, and  
the esculent roots of the garden,  
And the apple-trees cover'd with blossoms and the fruit  
afterward, and wood-berries, and the commonest weeds  
by the road,  
And the old drunkard staggering home from the outhouse of  
the tavern whence he had lately risen,  
And the schoolmistress that pass'd on her way to the school,  
And the friendly boys that pass'd, and the quarrelsome boys,  
And the tidy and fresh-cheek'd girls, and the barefoot negro  
boy and girl,  
And all the changes of city and country wherever he went.

His own parents, he that had father'd him and she that had  
conceiv'd him in her womb and birth'd him,  
They gave this child more of themselves than that,  
They gave him afterward every day, they became part of him.

The mother at home quietly placing the dishes on the supper-  
table,  
The mother with mild words, clean her cap and gown, a  
wholesome odor falling off her person and clothes as she  
walks by,  
The father, strong, self-sufficient, manly, mean, anger'd,  
unjust,  
The blow, the quick loud word, the tight bargain, the crafty  
lure,  
The family usages, the language, the company, the furniture,  
the yearning and swelling heart,  
Affection that will not be gainsay'd, the sense of what is real,  
the thought if after all it should prove unreal,  
The doubts of day-time and the doubts of night-time, the  
curious whether and how,  
Whether that which appears so is so, or is it all flashes and  
specks?  
Men and women crowding fast in the streets, if they are not  
flashes and specks what are they?  
The streets themselves and the façades of houses, and goods  
in the windows,  
Vehicles, teams, the heavy-plank'd wharves, the huge crossing  
at the ferries,  
The village on the highland seen from afar at sunset, the river  
between,  
Shadows, aureola and mist, the light falling on roofs and  
gables of white or brown two miles off,  
The schooner near by sleepily dropping down the tide, the  
little boat slack-tow'd astern,  
The hurrying tumbling waves, quick-broken crests, slapping,  
The strata of color'd clouds, the long bar of maroon-tint  
away solitary by itself, the spread of purity it lies  
motionless in,

The horizon's edge, the flying sea-crow, the fragrance of salt  
marsh and shore mud,  
These became part of that child who went forth every day,  
and who now goes, and will always go forth every day.

*Who Learns My Lesson Complete?*

Who learns my lesson complete?

Boss, journeyman, apprentice, churchman and atheist,  
The stupid and the wise thinker, parents and offspring,  
    merchant, clerk, porter and customer,  
Editor, author, artist, and schoolboy—draw nigh and  
    commence;  
It is no lesson—it lets down the bars to a good lesson,  
And that to another, and every one to another still.

The great laws take and effuse without argument,  
I am of the same style, for I am their friend,  
I love them quits and quits, I do not halt and make salaams.

I lie abstracted and hear beautiful tales of things and the  
    reasons of things,  
They are so beautiful I nudge myself to listen.

I cannot say to any person what I hear—I cannot say it to  
    myself—it is very wonderful.

It is no small matter, this round and delicious globe moving so  
    exactly in its orbit for ever and ever, without one jolt or  
    the untruth of a single second,  
I do not think it was made in six days, nor in ten thousand  
    years, nor ten billions of years,  
Nor plann'd and built one thing after another as an architect  
    plans and builds a house.

I do not think seventy years is the time of a man or woman,  
Nor that seventy millions of years is the time of a man or  
    woman,  
Nor that years will ever stop the existence of me, or any one  
    else.

Is it wonderful that I should be immortal? as every one is  
immortal;  
I know it is wonderful, but my eyesight is equally wonderful,  
and how I was conceived in my mother's womb is equally  
wonderful,  
And pass'd from a babe in the creeping trance of a couple of  
summers and winters to articulate and walk—all this is  
equally wonderful.

And that my soul embraces you this hour, and we affect each  
other without ever seeing each other, and never perhaps  
to see each other, is every bit as wonderful.

And that I can think such thoughts as these is just as  
wonderful,  
And that I can remind you, and you think them and know  
them to be true, is just as wonderful.

And that the moon spins round the earth and on with the  
earth, is equally wonderful,  
And that they balance themselves with the sun and stars is  
equally wonderful.



*Unfolded Out of the Folds.*

Unfolded out of the folds of the woman man comes unfolded,  
 and is always to come unfolded,  
 Unfolded only out of the superbest woman of the earth is to  
 come the superbest man of the earth,  
 Unfolded out of the friendliest woman is to come the  
 friendliest man,  
 Unfolded only out of the perfect body of a woman can a man  
 be form'd of perfect body,  
 Unfolded only out of the inimitable poems of woman can  
 come the poems of man, (only thence have my poems  
 come;)  
 Unfolded out of the strong and arrogant woman I love, only  
 thence can appear the strong and arrogant man I love,  
 Unfolded by brawny embraces from the well-muscled woman  
 I love, only thence come the brawny embraces of the  
 man,  
 Unfolded out of the folds of the woman's brain come all the  
 folds of the man's brain, duly obedient,  
 Unfolded out of the justice of the woman all justice is  
 unfolded,  
 Unfolded out of the sympathy of the woman is all sympathy;  
 A man is a great thing upon the earth and through eternity,  
 but every jot of the greatness of man is unfolded out of  
 woman;  
 First the man is shaped in the woman, he can then be shaped  
 in himself.

*Song of the Broad-Axe.*

I

Weapon shapely, naked, wan,  
 Head from the mother's bowels drawn,  
 Wooded flesh and metal bone, limb only one and lip only one,  
 Gray-blue leaf by red-heat grown, helve produced from a little  
     seed sown,  
 Resting the grass amid and upon,  
 To be lean'd and to lean on.

Strong shapes and attributes of strong shapes, masculine  
     trades, sights and sounds,  
 Long varied train of an emblem, dabs of music,  
 Fingers of the organist skipping staccato over the keys of the  
     great organ.

2

Welcome are all earth's lands, each for its kind,  
 Welcome are lands of pine and oak,  
 Welcome are lands of the lemon and fig,  
 Welcome are lands of gold,  
 Welcome are lands of wheat and maize, welcome those of the  
     grape,  
 Welcome are lands of sugar and rice,  
 Welcome the cotton-lands, welcome those of the white potato  
     and sweet potato,  
 Welcome are mountains, flats, sands, forests, prairies,  
 Welcome the rich borders of rivers, table-lands, openings,  
 Welcome the measureless grazing-lands, welcome the teeming  
     soil of orchards, flax, honey, hemp;

Welcome just as much the other more hard-faced lands,  
 Lands rich as lands of gold or wheat and fruit lands,  
 Lands of mines, lands of the manly and rugged ores,  
 Lands of coal, copper, lead, tin, zinc,  
 Lands of iron—lands of the make of the axe.

## 3

The log at the wood-pile, the axe supported by it,  
 The sylvan hut, the vine over the doorway, the space clear'd  
 for a garden,  
 The irregular tapping of rain down on the leaves after the  
 storm is lull'd,  
 The wailing and moaning at intervals, the thought of the sea,  
 The thought of ships struck in the storm and put on their  
 beam ends, and the cutting away of masts,  
 The sentiment of the huge timbers of old-fashion'd houses  
 and barns,  
 The remember'd print or narrative, the voyage at a venture of  
 men, families, goods,  
 The disembarkation, the founding of a new city,  
 The voyage of those who sought a New England and found it,  
 the outset anywhere,  
 The settlements of the Arkansas, Colorado, Ottawa,  
 Willamette,  
 The slow progress, the scant fare, the axe, rifle, saddle-bags;  
 The beauty of all adventurous and daring persons,  
 The beauty of wood-boys and wood-men with their clear  
 untrimm'd faces,  
 The beauty of independence, departure, actions that rely on  
 themselves,  
 The American contempt for statutes and ceremonies, the  
 boundless impatience of restraint,  
 The loose drift of character, the inkling through random  
 types, the solidification;  
 The butcher in the slaughter-house, the hands aboard  
 schooners and sloops, the raftsmen, the pioneer,

Lumbermen in their winter camp, daybreak in the woods,  
stripes of snow on the limbs of trees, the occasional  
snapping,  
The glad clear sound of one's own voice, the merry song, the  
natural life of the woods, the strong day's work,  
The blazing fire at night, the sweet taste of supper, the talk,  
the bed of hemlock-boughs and the bear-skin;  
The house-builder at work in cities or anywhere,  
The preparatory jointing, squaring, sawing, and mortising,  
The hoist-up of beams, the push of them in their places,  
laying them regular,  
Setting the studs by their tenons in the mortises according as  
they were prepared,  
The blows of mallets and hammers, the attitudes of the men,  
their curv'd limbs,  
Bending, standing, astride the beams, driving in pins, holding  
on by posts and braces,  
The hook'd arm over the plate, the other arm wielding the  
axe,  
The floor-men forcing the planks close to be nail'd,  
Their postures bringing their weapons downward on the  
bearers,  
The echoes resounding through the vacant building;  
The huge storehouse carried up in the city well under way,  
The six framing-men, two in the middle and two at each end,  
carefully bearing on their shoulders a heavy stick for a  
cross-beam,  
The crowded line of masons with trowels in their right hands  
rapidly laying the long side-wall, two hundred feet from  
front to rear,  
The flexible rise and fall of backs, the continual click of the  
trowels striking the bricks,  
The bricks one after another each laid so workmanlike in its  
place, and set with a knock of the trowel-handle,  
The piles of materials, the mortar on the mortar-boards, and  
the steady replenishing by the hod-men;  
Spar-makers in the spar-yard, the swarming row of well-  
grown apprentices,

The swing of their axes on the square-hew'd log shaping it  
toward the shape of a mast,  
The brisk short crackle of the steel driven slantingly into the  
pine,  
The butter-color'd chips flying off in great flakes and slivers,  
The limber motion of brawny young arms and hips in easy  
costumes,  
The constructor of wharves, bridges, piers, bulk-heads, floats,  
stays against the sea;  
The city fireman, the fire that suddenly bursts forth in the  
close-pack'd square,  
The arriving engines, the hoarse shouts, the nimble stepping  
and daring,  
The strong command through the fire-trumpets, the falling in  
line, the rise and fall of the arms forcing the water,  
The slender, spasmic, blue-white jets, the bringing to bear of  
the hooks and ladders and their execution,  
The crash and cut away of connecting wood-work, or  
through floors if the fire smoulders under them,  
The crowd with their lit faces watching, the glare and dense  
shadows;  
The forger at his forge-furnace and the user of iron after him,  
The maker of the axe large and small, and the welder and  
temperer,  
The chooser breathing his breath on the cold steel and trying  
the edge with his thumb,  
The one who clean-shapes the handle and sets it firmly in the  
socket;  
The shadowy processions of the portraits of the past users  
also,  
The primal patient mechanics, the architects and engineers,  
The far-off Assyrian edifice and Mizra edifice,  
The Roman lictors preceding the consuls,  
The antique European warrior with his axe in combat,  
The uplifted arm, the clatter of blows on the helmeted head,  
The death-howl, the limpsy tumbling body, the rush of friend  
and foe thither,  
The siege of revolted lieges determin'd for liberty,

The summons to surrender, the battering at castle gates, the  
 truce and parley,  
 The sack of an old city in its time,  
 The bursting in of mercenaries and bigots tumultuously and  
 disorderly,  
 Roar, flames, blood, drunkenness, madness,  
 Goods freely rifled from houses and temples, screams of  
 women in the gripe of brigands,  
 Craft and thievery of camp-followers, men running, old  
 persons despairing,  
 The hell of war, the cruelties of creeds,  
 The list of all executive deeds and words just or unjust,  
 The power of personality just or unjust.

## 4

Muscle and pluck forever!  
 What invigorates life invigorates death,  
 And the dead advance as much as the living advance,  
 And the future is no more uncertain than the present,  
 For the roughness of the earth and of man encloses as much  
 as the delicatessen of the earth and of man,  
 And nothing endures but personal qualities.

What do you think endures?  
 Do you think a great city endures?  
 Or a teeming manufacturing state? or a prepared  
 constitution? or the best built steamships?  
 Or hotels of granite and iron? or any chef-d'œuvres of  
 engineering, forts, armaments?

Away! these are not to be cherish'd for themselves,  
 They fill their hour, the dancers dance, the musicians play for  
 them,  
 The show passes, all does well enough of course,  
 All does very well till one flash of defiance.

A great city is that which has the greatest men and women,  
 If it be a few ragged huts it is still the greatest city in the  
 whole world.

## 5

The place where a great city stands is not the place of  
 stretch'd wharves, docks, manufactures, deposits of  
 produce merely,  
 Nor the place of ceaseless salutes of new-comers or the  
 anchor-lifters of the departing,  
 Nor the place of the tallest and costliest buildings or shops  
 selling goods from the rest of the earth,  
 Nor the place of the best libraries and schools, nor the place  
 where money is plentiest,  
 Nor the place of the most numerous population.

Where the city stands with the brawniest breed of orators and  
 bards,  
 Where the city stands that is belov'd by these, and loves them  
 in return and understands them,  
 Where no monuments exist to heroes but in the common  
 words and deeds,  
 Where thrift is in its place, and prudence is in its place,  
 Where the men and women think lightly of the laws,  
 Where the slave ceases, and the master of slaves ceases,  
 Where the populace rise at once against the never-ending  
 audacity of elected persons,  
 Where fierce men and women pour forth as the sea to the  
 whistle of death pours its sweeping and unript waves,  
 Where outside authority enters always after the precedence of  
 inside authority,  
 Where the citizen is always the head and ideal, and President,  
 Mayor, Governor and what not, are agents for pay,  
 Where children are taught to be laws to themselves, and to  
 depend on themselves,  
 Where equanimity is illustrated in affairs,  
 Where speculations on the soul are encouraged,

Where women walk in public processions in the streets the  
 same as the men,  
 Where they enter the public assembly and take places the  
 same as the men;  
 Where the city of the faithfulest friends stands,  
 Where the city of the cleanliness of the sexes stands,  
 Where the city of the healthiest fathers stands,  
 Where the city of the best-bodied mothers stands,  
 There the great city stands.

## 6

How beggarly appear arguments before a defiant deed!  
 How the floridness of the materials of cities shrivels before a  
 man's or woman's look!

All waits or goes by default till a strong being appears;  
 A strong being is the proof of the race and of the ability of the  
 universe,  
 When he or she appears materials are overaw'd,  
 The dispute on the soul stops,  
 The old customs and phrases are confronted, turn'd back, or  
 laid away.

What is your money-making now? what can it do now?  
 What is your respectability now?  
 What are your theology, tuition, society, traditions, statute-  
 books, now?  
 Where are your jibes of being now?  
 Where are your cavils about the soul now?

## 7

A sterile landscape covers the ore, there is as good as the best  
 for all the forbidding appearance,  
 There is the mine, there are the miners,  
 The forge-furnace is there, the melt is accomplish'd, the  
 hammers-men are at hand with their tongs and hammers,



What always served and always serves is at hand.  
 Than this nothing has better served, it has served all,  
 Served the fluent-tongued and subtle-sensed Greek, and long  
     ere the Greek,  
 Served in building the buildings that last longer than any,  
 Served the Hebrew, the Persian, the most ancient  
     Hindustanee,  
 Served the mound-raiser on the Mississippi, served those  
     whose relics remain in Central America,  
 Served Albic temples in woods or on plains, with unhewn  
     pillars and the druids,  
 Served the artificial clefts, vast, high, silent, on the snow-  
     cover'd hills of Scandinavia,  
 Served those who time out of mind made on the granite walls  
     rough sketches of the sun, moon, stars, ships, ocean  
     waves,  
 Served the paths of the irruptions of the Goths, served the  
     pastoral tribes and nomads,  
 Served the long distant Kelt, served the hardy pirates of the  
     Baltic,  
 Served before any of those the venerable and harmless men of  
     Ethiopia,  
 Served the making of helms for the galleys of pleasure and the  
     making of those for war,  
 Served all great works on land and all great works on the sea,  
 For the mediæval ages and before the mediæval ages,  
 Served not the living only then as now, but served the dead.

## 8

I see the European headsman,  
 He stands mask'd, clothed in red, with huge legs and strong  
     naked arms,  
 And leans on a ponderous axe.

(Whom have you slaughter'd lately European headsman?  
 Whose is that blood upon you so wet and sticky?)

I see the clear sunsets of the martyrs,  
 I see from the scaffolds the descending ghosts,  
 Ghosts of dead lords, uncrown'd ladies, impeach'd ministers,  
     rejected kings,  
 Rivals, traitors, poisoners, disgraced chieftains and the rest.

I see those who in any land have died for the good cause,  
 The seed is spare, nevertheless the crop shall never run out,  
 (Mind you O foreign kings, O priests, the crop shall never run  
     out.)

I see the blood wash'd entirely away from the axe,  
 Both blade and helve are clean,  
 They spirt no more the blood of European nobles, they clasp  
     no more the necks of queens.

I see the headsman withdraw and become useless,  
 I see the scaffold untrodden and mouldy, I see no longer any  
     axe upon it,  
 I see the mighty and friendly emblem of the power of my own  
     race, the newest, largest race.

## 9

(America! I do not vaunt my love for you,  
 I have what I have.)

The axe leaps!  
 The solid forest gives fluid utterances,  
 They tumble forth, they rise and form,  
 Hut, tent, landing, survey,  
 Flail, plough, pick, crowbar, spade,  
 Shingle, rail, prop, wainscot, jamb, lath, panel, gable,  
 Citadel, ceiling, saloon, academy, organ, exhibition-house,  
     library,  
 Cornice, trellis, pilaster, balcony, window, turret, porch,  
 Hoe, rake, pitchfork, pencil, wagon, staff, saw, jack-plane,  
     mallet, wedge, rounce,

Chair, tub, hoop, table, wicket, vane, sash, floor,  
 Work-box, chest, string'd instrument, boat, frame, and what  
     not,  
 Capitols of States, and capitol of the nation of States,  
 Long stately rows in avenues, hospitals for orphans or for the  
     poor or sick,  
 Manhattan steamboats and clippers taking the measure of  
     all seas.

The shapes arise!  
 Shapes of the using of axes anyhow, and the users and all that  
     neighbors them,  
 Cutters down of wood and haulers of it to the Penobscot or  
     Kennebec,  
 Dwellers in cabins among the Californian mountains or by  
     the little lakes, or on the Columbia,  
 Dwellers south on the banks of the Gila or Rio Grande,  
     friendly gatherings, the characters and fun,  
 Dwellers along the St. Lawrence, or north in Kanada, or down  
     by the Yellowstone, dwellers on coasts and off coasts,  
 Seal-fishers, whalers, arctic seamen breaking passages through  
     the ice.

The shapes arise!  
 Shapes of factories, arsenals, foundries, markets,  
 Shapes of the two-threaded tracks of railroads,  
 Shapes of the sleepers of bridges, vast frameworks, girders,  
     arches,  
 Shapes of the fleets of barges, tows, lake and canal craft, river  
     craft,  
 Ship-yards and dry-docks along the Eastern and Western seas,  
     and in many a bay and by-place,  
 The live-oak kelsons, the pine planks, the spars, the  
     hackmatack-roots for knees,  
 The ships themselves on their ways, the tiers of scaffolds, the  
     workmen busy outside and inside,  
 The tools lying around, the great auger and little auger, the  
     adze, bolt, line, square, gouge, and bead-plane.

## 10

The shapes arise!  
The shape measur'd, saw'd, jack'd, join'd, stain'd,  
The coffin-shape for the dead to lie within in his shroud,  
The shape got out in posts, in the bedstead posts, in the posts  
of the bride's bed,  
The shape of the little trough, the shape of the rockers  
beneath, the shape of the babe's cradle,  
The shape of the floor-planks, the floor-planks for dancers' feet,  
The shape of the planks of the family home, the home of the  
friendly parents and children,  
The shape of the roof of the home of the happy young man  
and woman, the roof over the well-married young man  
and woman,  
The roof over the supper joyously cook'd by the chaste wife,  
and joyously eaten by the chaste husband, content after  
his day's work.

The shapes arise!  
The shape of the prisoner's place in the court-room, and of  
him or her seated in the place,  
The shape of the liquor-bar lean'd against by the young rum-  
drinker and the old rum-drinker,  
The shape of the shamed and angry stairs trod by sneaking  
footsteps,  
The shape of the sly settee, and the adulterous unwholesome  
couple,  
The shape of the gambling-board with its devilish winnings  
and losings,  
The shape of the step-ladder for the convicted and sentenced  
murderer, the murderer with haggard face and pinion'd  
arms,  
The sheriff at hand with his deputies, the silent and white-  
lipp'd crowd, the dangling of the rope.

The shapes arise!  
Shapes of doors giving many exits and entrances,

The door passing the dis sever'd friend flush'd and in haste,  
 The door that admits good news and bad news,  
 The door whence the son left home confident and puff'd up,  
 The door he enter'd again from a long and scandalous  
     absence, diseas'd, broken down, without innocence,  
     without means.

## I I

Her shape arises,  
 She less guarded than ever, yet more guarded than ever,  
 The gross and soil'd she moves among do not make her gross  
     and soil'd,  
 She knows the thoughts as she passes, nothing is conceal'd  
     from her,  
 She is none the less considerate or friendly therefor,  
 She is the best belov'd, it is without exception, she has no  
     reason to fear and she does not fear,  
 Oaths, quarrels, hiccupp'd songs, smutty expressions, are idle  
     to her as she passes,  
 She is silent, she is possess'd of herself, they do not offend her,  
 She receives them as the laws of Nature receive them, she is  
     strong,  
 She too is a law of Nature—there is no law stronger than  
     she is.

## I 2

The main shapes arise!  
 Shapes of Democracy total, result of centuries,  
 Shapes ever projecting other shapes,  
 Shapes of turbulent manly cities,  
 Shapes of the friends and home-givers of the whole earth,  
 Shapes bracing the earth and braced with the whole earth.

*To You.*

Whoever you are, I fear you are walking the walks of dreams,  
I fear these supposed realities are to melt from under your feet  
and hands,  
Even now your features, joys, speech, house, trade, manners,  
troubles, follies, costume, crimes, dissipate away from  
you,  
Your true soul and body appear before me,  
They stand forth out of affairs, out of commerce, shops,  
work, farms, clothes, the house, buying, selling, eating,  
drinking, suffering, dying.

Whoever you are, now I place my hand upon you, that you be  
my poem,  
I whisper with my lips close to your ear,  
I have loved many women and men, but I love none better  
than you.

O I have been dilatory and dumb,  
I should have made my way straight to you long ago,  
I should have blabb'd nothing but you, I should have chanted  
nothing but you.

I will leave all and come and make the hymns of you,  
None has understood you, but I understand you,  
None has done justice to you, you have not done justice to  
yourself,  
None but has found you imperfect, I only find no  
imperfection in you,  
None but would subordinate you, I only am he who will  
never consent to subordinate you,  
I only am he who places over you no master, owner, better,  
God, beyond what waits intrinsically in yourself.

Painters have painted their swarming groups and the centre-  
 figure of all,  
 From the head of the centre-figure spreading a nimbus of gold  
 color'd light,  
 But I paint myriads of heads, but paint no head without its  
 nimbus of gold-color'd light,  
 From my hand from the brain of every man and woman it  
 streams, effulgently flowing forever.

O I could sing such grandeurs and glories about you!  
 You have not known what you are, you have slumber'd upon  
 yourself all your life,  
 Your eyelids have been the same as closed most of the time,  
 What you have done returns already in mockeries,  
 (Your thrift, knowledge, prayers, if they do not return in  
 mockeries, what is their return?)

The mockeries are not you,  
 Underneath them and within them I see you lurk,  
 I pursue you where none else has pursued you,  
 Silence, the desk, the flippant expression, the night, the  
 accustom'd routine, if these conceal you from others or  
 from yourself, they do not conceal you from me,  
 The shaved face, the unsteady eye, the impure complexion, if  
 these balk others they do not balk me,  
 The pert apparel, the deform'd attitude, drunkenness, greed,  
 premature death, all these I part aside.

There is no endowment in man or woman that is not tallied  
 in you,  
 There is no virtue, no beauty in man or woman, but as good  
 is in you,  
 No pluck, no endurance in others, but as good is in you,  
 No pleasure waiting for others, but an equal pleasure waits  
 for you.

As for me, I give nothing to any one except I give the like  
 carefully to you,

I sing the songs of the glory of none, not God, sooner than I  
sing the songs of the glory of you.

Whoever you are! claim your own at any hazard!  
These shows of the East and West are tame compared to you,  
These immense meadows, these interminable rivers, you are  
immense and interminable as they,  
These furies, elements, storms, motions of Nature, throes of  
apparent dissolution, you are he or she who is master or  
mistress over them,  
Master or mistress in your own right over Nature, elements,  
pain, passion, dissolution.

The hobbles fall from your ankles, you find an unfailing  
sufficiency,  
Old or young, male or female, rude, low, rejected by the rest,  
whatever you are promulges itself,  
Through birth, life, death, burial, the means are provided,  
nothing is scanted,  
Through angers, losses, ambition, ignorance, ennui, what you  
are picks its way.



*This Compost.*

## I

Something startles me where I thought I was safest,  
 I withdraw from the still woods I loved,  
 I will not go now on the pastures to walk,  
 I will not strip the clothes from my body to meet my lover  
     the sea,  
 I will not touch my flesh to the earth as to other flesh to  
     renew me.

O how can it be that the ground itself does not sicken?  
 How can you be alive you growths of spring?  
 How can you furnish health you blood of herbs, roots,  
     orchards, grain?  
 Are they not continually putting distemper'd corpses within  
     you?  
 Is not every continent work'd over and over with sour dead?

Where have you disposed of their carcasses?  
 Those drunkards and gluttons of so many generations?  
 I will run a furrow with my plough, I will press my spade  
     through the sod and turn it up underneath,  
 I am sure I shall expose some of the foul meat.

## 2

Behold this compost! behold it well!  
 Perhaps every mite has once form'd part of a sick person—yet  
     behold!  
 The grass of spring covers the prairies,  
 The bean bursts noiselessly through the mould in the garden,  
 The delicate spear of the onion pierces upward,

The apple-buds cluster together on the apple-branches,  
The resurrection of the wheat appears with pale visage out of  
its graves,  
The tinge awakes over the willow-tree and the mulberry-tree,  
The he-birds carol mornings and evenings while the she-birds  
sit on their nests,  
The young of poultry break through the hatch'd eggs,  
The new-born of animals appear, the calf is dropt from the  
cow, the colt from the mare,  
Out of its little hill faithfully rise the potato's dark green  
leaves,  
Out of its hill rises the yellow maize-stalk, the lilacs bloom in  
the dooryards,  
The summer growth is innocent and disdainful above all those  
strata of sour dead.

What chemistry!  
That the winds are really not infectious,  
That this is no cheat, this transparent green-wash of the sea  
which is so amorous after me,  
That it is safe to allow it to lick my naked body all over with  
its tongues,  
That it will not endanger me with the fevers that have  
deposited themselves in it,  
That all is clean forever and forever,  
That the cool drink from the well tastes so good,  
That blackberries are so flavorful and juicy,  
That the fruits of the apple-orchard and the orange-orchard,  
that melons, grapes, peaches, plums, will none of them  
poison me,  
That when I recline on the grass I do not catch any disease,  
Though probably every spear of grass rises out of what was  
once a catching disease.

Now I am terrified at the Earth, it is that calm and patient,  
It grows such sweet things out of such corruptions,  
It turns harmless and stainless on its axis, with such endless  
successions of diseas'd corpses,

It distills such exquisite winds out of such infused fetor,  
It renews with such unwitting looks its prodigal, annual,  
    sumptuous crops,  
It gives such divine materials to men, and accepts such  
    leavings from them at last.

*Crossing Brooklyn Ferry.*

## I

Flood-tide below me! I see you face to face!  
Clouds of the west—sun there half an hour high—I see you  
also face to face.

Crowds of men and women attired in the usual costumes,  
how curious you are to me!  
On the ferry-boats the hundreds and hundreds that cross,  
returning home, are more curious to me than you  
suppose,  
And you that shall cross from shore to shore years hence are  
more to me, and more in my meditations, than you might  
suppose.

## 2

The impalpable sustenance of me from all things at all hours  
of the day,  
The simple, compact, well-join'd scheme, myself  
disintegrated, every one disintegrated yet part of the  
scheme,  
The similitudes of the past and those of the future,  
The glories strung like beads on my smallest sights and  
hearings, on the walk in the street and the passage over  
the river,  
The current rushing so swiftly and swimming with me far  
away,  
The others that are to follow me, the ties between me and  
them,  
The certainty of others, the life, love, sight, hearing of others.

Others will enter the gates of the ferry and cross from shore  
to shore,  
Others will watch the run of the flood-tide,  
Others will see the shipping of Manhattan north and west,  
and the heights of Brooklyn to the south and east,  
Others will see the islands large and small;  
Fifty years hence, others will see them as they cross, the sun  
half an hour high,  
A hundred years hence, or ever so many hundred years hence,  
others will see them,  
Will enjoy the sunset, the pouring-in of the flood-tide, the  
falling-back to the sea of the ebb-tide.

## 3

It avails not, time nor place—distance avails not,  
I am with you, you men and women of a generation, or ever  
so many generations hence,  
Just as you feel when you look on the river and sky, so I felt,  
Just as any of you is one of a living crowd, I was one of a  
crowd,  
Just as you are refresh'd by the gladness of the river and the  
bright flow, I was refresh'd,  
Just as you stand and lean on the rail, yet hurry with the swift  
current, I stood yet was hurried,  
Just as you look on the numberless masts of ships and the  
thick-stemm'd pipes of steamboats, I look'd.

I too many and many a time cross'd the river of old,  
Watched the Twelfth-month sea-gulls, saw them high in the  
air floating with motionless wings, oscillating their  
bodies,  
Saw how the glistening yellow lit up parts of their bodies and  
left the rest in strong shadow,  
Saw the slow-wheeling circles and the gradual edging toward  
the south,  
Saw the reflection of the summer sky in the water,  
Had my eyes dazzled by the shimmering track of beams,

Look'd at the fine centrifugal spokes of light round the shape  
of my head in the sunlit water,  
Look'd on the haze on the hills southward and south-  
westward,  
Look'd on the vapor as it flew in fleeces tinged with violet,  
Look'd toward the lower bay to notice the vessels arriving,  
Saw their approach, saw abroad those that were near me,  
Saw the white sails of schooners and sloops, saw the ships at  
anchor,  
The sailors at work in the rigging or out astride the spars,  
The round masts, the swinging motion of the hulls, the  
slender serpentine pennants,  
The large and small steamers in motion, the pilots in their  
pilot-houses,  
The white wake left by the passage, the quick tremulous whirl  
of the wheels,  
The flags of all nations, the falling of them at sunset,  
The scallop-edged waves in the twilight, the ladled cups, the  
frolicsome crests and glistening,  
The stretch afar growing dimmer and dimmer, the gray walls  
of the granite storehouses by the docks,  
On the river the shadowy group, the big steam-tug closely  
flank'd on each side by the barges, the hay-boat, the  
belated lighter,  
On the neighboring shore the fires from the foundry chimneys  
burning high and glaringly into the night,  
Casting their flicker of black contrasted with wild red and  
yellow light over the tops of houses, and down into the  
clefts of streets.

## 4

These and all else were to me the same as they are to you,  
I loved well those cities, loved well the stately and rapid river,  
The men and women I saw were all near to me,  
Others the same—others who look back on me because I  
look'd forward to them,  
(The time will come, though I stop here to-day and to-night.)

## 5

What is it then between us?  
 What is the count of the scores or hundreds of years  
     between us?

Whatever it is, it avails not—distance avails not, and place  
     avails not,  
 I too lived, Brooklyn of ample hills was mine,  
 I too walk'd the streets of Manhattan island, and bathed in  
     the waters around it,  
 I too felt curious abrupt questionings stir within me,  
 In the day among crowds of people sometimes they came  
     upon me,  
 In my walks home late at night or as I lay in my bed they  
     came upon me,  
 I too had been struck from the float forever held in solution,  
 I too had receiv'd identity by my body,  
 That I was I knew was of my body, and what I should be I  
     knew I should be of my body.

## 6

It is not upon you alone the dark patches fall,  
 The dark threw its patches down upon me also,  
 The best I had done seem'd to me blank and suspicious,  
 My great thoughts as I supposed them, were they not in  
     reality meagre?  
 Nor is it you alone who know what it is to be evil,  
 I am he who knew what it was to be evil,  
 I too knitted the old knot of contrariety,  
 Blabb'd, blush'd, resented, lied, stole, grudg'd,  
 Had guile, anger, lust, hot wishes I dared not speak,  
 Was wayward, vain, greedy, shallow, sly, cowardly, malignant,  
 The wolf, the snake, the hog, not wanting in me,  
 The cheating look, the frivolous word, the adulterous wish,  
     not wanting,

Refusals, hates, postponements, meanness, laziness, none of  
these wanting,  
Was one with the rest, the days and haps of the rest,  
Was call'd by my nighest name by clear loud voices of young  
men as they saw me approaching or passing,  
Felt their arms on my neck as I stood, or the negligent leaning  
of their flesh against me as I sat,  
Saw many I loved in the street or ferry-boat or public  
assembly, yet never told them a word,  
Lived the same life with the rest, the same old laughing,  
gnawing, sleeping,  
Play'd the part that still looks back on the actor or actress,  
The same old role, the role that is what we make it, as great  
as we like,  
Or as small as we like, or both great and small.

## 7

Closer yet I approach you,  
What thought you have of me now, I had as much of you—I  
laid in my stores in advance,  
I consider'd long and seriously of you before you were born.

Who was to know what should come home to me?  
Who knows but I am enjoying this?  
Who knows, for all the distance, but I am as good as looking  
at you now, for all you cannot see me?

## 8

Ah, what can ever be more stately and admirable to me than  
mast-hemm'd Manhattan?  
River and sunset and scallop-edg'd waves of flood-tide?  
The sea-gulls oscillating their bodies, the hay-boat in the  
twilight, and the belated lighter?  
What gods can exceed these that clasp me by the hand, and  
with voices I love call me promptly and loudly by my  
nighest name as I approach?



What is more subtle than this which ties me to the woman or  
man that looks in my face?

Which fuses me into you now, and pours my meaning into  
you?

We understand then do we not?

What I promis'd without mentioning it, have you not  
accepted?

What the study could not teach—what the preaching could  
not accomplish is accomplish'd, is it not?

## 9

Flow on, river! flow with the flood-tide, and ebb with the ebb-  
tide!

Frolic on, crested and scallop-edg'd waves!

Gorgeous clouds of the sunset! drench with your splendor me,  
or the men and women generations after me!

Cross from shore to shore, countless crowds of passengers!

Stand up, tall masts of Mannahatta! stand up, beautiful hills  
of Brooklyn!

Throb, baffled and curious brain! throw out questions and  
answers!

Suspend here and everywhere, eternal float of solution!

Gaze, loving and thirsting eyes, in the house or street or  
public assembly!

Sound out, voices of young men! loudly and musically call me  
by my highest name!

Live, old life! play the part that looks back on the actor and  
actress!

Play the old role, the role that is great or small according as  
one makes it!

Consider, you who peruse me, whether I may not in unknown  
ways be looking upon you;

Be firm, rail over the river, to support those who lean idly, yet  
haste with the hasting current;

Fly on, sea-birds! fly sideways, or wheel in large circles high in  
the air;

Receive the summer sky, you water, and faithfully hold it till  
all downcast eyes have time to take it from you!  
Diverge, fine spokes of light, from the shape of my head, or  
any one's head, in the sunlit water!  
Come on, ships from the lower bay! pass up or down, white-  
sail'd schooners, sloops, lighters!  
Flaunt away, flags of all nations! be duly lower'd at sunset!  
Burn high your fires, foundry chimneys! cast black shadows at  
nightfall! cast red and yellow light over the tops of the  
houses!  
Appearances, now or henceforth, indicate what you are,  
You necessary film, continue to envelop the soul,  
About my body for me, and your body for you, be hung out  
divinest aromas,  
Thrive, cities—bring your freight, bring your shows, ample  
and sufficient rivers,  
Expand, being than which none else is perhaps more spiritual,  
Keep your places, objects than which none else is more  
lasting.

You have waited, you always wait, you dumb, beautiful  
ministers,  
We receive you with free sense at last, and are insatiate hence-  
forward,  
Not you any more shall be able to foil us, or withhold  
yourselves from us,  
We use you, and do not cast you aside—we plant you  
permanently within us,  
We fathom you not—we love you—there is perfection in you  
also,  
You furnish your parts toward eternity,  
Great or small, you furnish your parts toward the soul.

*Song of the Open Road.*

## I

Afoot and light-hearted I take to the open road,  
Healthy, free, the world before me,  
The long brown path before me leading wherever I choose.

Henceforth I ask not good-fortune, I myself am good-fortune,  
Henceforth I whimper no more, postpone no more, need  
nothing,  
Done with indoor complaints, libraries, querulous criticisms,  
Strong and content I travel the open road.

The earth, that is sufficient,  
I do not want the constellations any nearer,  
I know they are very well where they are,  
I know they suffice for those who belong to them.

(Still here I carry my old delicious burdens,  
I carry them, men and women, I carry them with me wherever  
I go,  
I swear it is impossible for me to get rid of them,  
I am fill'd with them, and I will fill them in return.)

## 2

You road I enter upon and look around, I believe you are not  
all that is here,  
I believe that much unseen is also here.

Here the profound lesson of reception, nor preference nor  
denial,

The black with his woolly head, the felon, the diseas'd, the illiterate person, are not denied;  
 The birth, the hasting after the physician, the beggar's tramp, the drunkard's stagger, the laughing party of mechanics,  
 The escaped youth, the rich person's carriage, the fop, the eloping couple,  
 The early market-man, the hearse, the moving of furniture into the town, the return back from the town,  
 They pass, I also pass, any thing passes, none can be interdicted,  
 None but are accepted, none but shall be dear to me.

## 3

You air that serves me with breath to speak!  
 You objects that call from diffusion my meanings and give them shape!  
 You light that wraps me and all things in delicate equable showers!  
 You paths worn in the irregular hollows by the roadsides!  
 I believe you are latent with unseen existences, you are so dear to me.

You flagg'd walks of the cities! you strong curbs at the edges!  
 You ferries! you planks and posts of wharves! you timber-lined sides! you distant ships!  
 You rows of houses! you window-pierc'd façades! you roofs!  
 You porches and entrances! you copings and iron guards!  
 You windows whose transparent shells might expose so much!  
 You doors and ascending steps! you arches!  
 You gray stones of interminable pavements! you trodden crossings!  
 From all that has touch'd you I believe you have imparted to yourselves, and now would impart the same secretly to me,

From the living and the dead you have peopled your  
 impassive surfaces, and the spirits thereof would be  
 evident and amicable with me.

## 4

The earth expanding right hand and left hand,  
 The picture alive, every part in its best light,  
 The music falling in where it is wanted, and stopping where it  
 is not wanted,  
 The cheerful voice of the public road, the gay fresh sentiment  
 of the road.

O highway I travel, do you say to me *Do not leave me?*  
 Do you say *Venture not—if you leave me you are lost?*  
 Do you say *I am already prepared, I am well-beaten and*  
*undenied, adhere to me?*

O public road, I say back I am not afraid to leave you, yet I  
 love you,  
 You express me better than I can express myself,  
 You shall be more to me than my poem.

I think heroic deeds were all conceiv'd in the open air, and all  
 free poems also,  
 I think I could stop here myself and do miracles,  
 I think whatever I shall meet on the road I shall like, and  
 whoever beholds me shall like me,  
 I think whoever I see must be happy.

## 5

From this hour I ordain myself loos'd of limits and imaginary  
 lines,  
 Going where I list, my own master total and absolute,  
 Listening to others, considering well what they say,  
 Pausing, searching, receiving, contemplating,

Gently, but with undeniable will, divesting myself of the holds  
that would hold me.

I inhale great draughts of space,  
The east and the west are mine, and the north and the south  
are mine.

I am larger, better than I thought,  
I did not know I held so much goodness.

All seems beautiful to me,  
I can repeat over to men and women You have done such  
good to me I would do the same to you,  
I will recruit for myself and you as I go,  
I will scatter myself among men and women as I go,  
I will toss a new gladness and roughness among them,  
Whoever denies me it shall not trouble me,  
Whoever accepts me he or she shall be blessed and shall  
bless me.

## 6

Now if a thousand perfect men were to appear it would not  
amaze me,  
Now if a thousand beautiful forms of women appear'd it  
would not astonish me.

Now I see the secret of the making of the best persons,  
It is to grow in the open air and to eat and sleep with the  
earth.

Here a great personal deed has room,  
(Such a deed seizes upon the hearts of the whole race of men,  
Its effusion of strength and will overwhelms law and mocks  
all authority and all argument against it.)

Here is the test of wisdom,  
Wisdom is not finally tested in schools,

Wisdom cannot be pass'd from one having it to another not  
having it,  
Wisdom is of the soul, is not susceptible of proof, is its own  
proof,  
Applies to all stages and objects and qualities and is content,  
Is the certainty of the reality and immortality of things, and  
the excellence of things;  
Something there is in the float of the sight of things that  
provokes it out of the soul.

Now I re-examine philosophies and religions,  
They may prove well in lecture-rooms, yet not prove at all  
under the spacious clouds and along the landscape and  
flowing currents.

Here is realization,  
Here is a man tallied—he realizes here what he has in him,  
The past, the future, majesty, love—if they are vacant of you,  
you are vacant of them.

Only the kernel of every object nourishes;  
Where is he who tears off the husks for you and me?  
Where is he that undoes stratagems and envelopes for you  
and me?

Here is adhesiveness, it is not previously fashion'd, it is  
apropos;  
Do you know what it is as you pass to be loved by strangers?  
Do you know the talk of those turning eye-balls?

## 7

Here is the efflux of the soul,  
The efflux of the soul comes from within through embower'd  
gates, ever provoking questions,  
These yearnings why are they? these thoughts in the darkness  
why are they?

Why are there men and women that while they are nigh me  
     the sunlight expands my blood?  
 Why when they leave me do my pennants of joy sink flat and  
     lank?  
 Why are there trees I never walk under but large and  
     melodious thoughts descend upon me?  
 (I think they hang there winter and summer on those trees  
     and always drop fruit as I pass;)  
 What is it I interchange so suddenly with strangers?  
 What with some driver as I ride on the seat by his side?  
 What with some fisherman drawing his seine by the shore as I  
     walk by and pause?  
 What gives me to be free to a woman's and man's good-will?  
     what gives them to be free to mine?

## 8

The efflux of the soul is happiness, here is happiness,  
 I think it pervades the open air, waiting at all times,  
 Now it flows unto us, we are rightly charged.

Here rises the fluid and attaching character,  
 The fluid and attaching character is the freshness and  
     sweetness of man and woman,  
 (The herbs of the morning sprout no fresher and sweeter  
     every day out of the roots of themselves, than it sprouts  
     fresh and sweet continually out of itself.)

Toward the fluid and attaching character exudes the sweat of  
     the love of young and old,  
 From it falls distill'd the charm that mocks beauty and  
     attainments,  
 Toward it heaves the shuddering longing ache of contact.

## 9

Allons! whoever you are come travel with me!  
 Traveling with me you find what never tires.



The earth never tires,  
 The earth is rude, silent, incomprehensible at first, Nature is  
     rude and incomprehensible at first,  
 Be not discouraged, keep on, there are divine things well  
     envelop'd,  
 I swear to you there are divine things more beautiful than  
     words can tell.

Allons! we must not stop here,  
 However sweet these laid-up stores, however convenient this  
     dwelling we cannot remain here,  
 However shelter'd this port and however calm these waters  
     we must not anchor here,  
 However welcome the hospitality that surrounds us we are  
     permitted to receive it but a little while.

## 10

Allons! the inducements shall be greater,  
 We will sail pathless and wild seas,  
 We will go where winds blow, waves dash, and the Yankee  
     clipper speeds by under full sail.

Allons! with power, liberty, the earth, the elements,  
 Health, defiance, gayety, self-esteem, curiosity;  
 Allons! from all formules!  
 From your formules, O bat-eyed and materialistic priests.

The stale cadaver blocks up the passage—the burial waits no  
     longer.

Allons! yet take warning!  
 He traveling with me needs the best blood, thews, endurance,  
 None may come to the trial till he or she bring courage and  
     health,  
 Come not here if you have already spent the best of yourself,  
 Only those may come who come in sweet and determin'd  
     bodies,

No diseas'd person, no rum-drinker or venereal taint is  
permitted here.

(I and mine do not convince by arguments, similes, rhymes,  
We convince by our presence.)

## 11

Listen! I will be honest with you,  
I do not offer the old smooth prizes, but offer rough new  
prizes,  
These are the days that must happen to you:  
You shall not heap up what is call'd riches,  
You shall scatter with lavish hand all that you earn or achieve,  
You but arrive at the city to which you were destin'd, you  
hardly settle yourself to satisfaction before you are call'd  
by an irresistible call to depart,  
You shall be treated to the ironical smiles and mockings of  
those who remain behind you,  
What beckonings of love you receive you shall only answer  
with passionate kisses of parting,  
You shall not allow the hold of those who spread their  
reach'd hands toward you.

## 12

Allons! after the great Companions, and to belong to them!  
They too are on the road—they are the swift and majestic  
men—they are the greatest women,  
Enjoyers of calms of seas and storms of seas,  
Sailors of many a ship, walkers of many a mile of land,  
Habitue's of many distant countries, habitue's of far-distant  
dwellings,  
Trusters of men and women, observers of cities, solitary  
toilers,  
Pausers and contemplators of tufts, blossoms, shells of the  
shore,

Dancers at wedding-dances, kissers of brides, tender helpers  
     of children, bearers of children,  
 Soldiers of revolts, standers by gaping graves, lowerers-down  
     of coffins,  
 Journeymen over consecutive seasons, over the years, the  
     curious years each emerging from that which preceded it,  
 Journeymen as with companions, namely their own diverse  
     phases,  
 Forth-steppers from the latent unrealized baby-days,  
 Journeymen gayly with their own youth, journeymen with their  
     bearded and well-grain'd manhood,  
 Journeymen with their womanhood, ample, unsurpass'd,  
     content,  
 Journeymen with their own sublime old age of manhood or  
     womanhood,  
 Old age, calm, expanded, broad with the haughty breadth of  
     the universe,  
 Old age, flowing free with the delicious near-by freedom of  
     death.

## 13

Allons! to that which is endless as it was beginningless,  
 To undergo much, tramps of days, rests of nights,  
 To merge all in the travel they tend to, and the days and  
     nights they tend to,  
 Again to merge them in the start of superior journeys,  
 To see nothing anywhere but what you may reach it and  
     pass it,  
 To conceive no time, however distant, but what you may  
     reach it and pass it,  
 To look up or down no road but it stretches and waits for  
     you, however long but it stretches and waits for you,  
 To see no being, not God's or any, but you also go thither,  
 To see no possession but you may possess it, enjoying all  
     without labor or purchase, abstracting the feast yet not  
     abstracting one particle of it,

To take the best of the farmer's farm and the rich man's  
elegant villa, and the chaste blessings of the well-married  
couple, and the fruits of orchards and flowers of gardens,  
To take to your use out of the compact cities as you pass  
through,  
To carry buildings and streets with you afterward wherever  
you go,  
To gather the minds of men out of their brains as you  
encounter them, to gather the love out of their hearts,  
To take your lovers on the road with you, for all that you  
leave them behind you,  
To know the universe itself as a road, as many roads, as roads  
for traveling souls.

All parts away for the progress of souls,  
All religion, all solid things, arts, governments—all that was  
or is apparent upon this globe or any globe, falls into  
niches and corners before the procession of souls along  
the grand roads of the universe.

Of the progress of the souls of men and women along the  
grand roads of the universe, all other progress is the  
needed emblem and sustenance.

Forever alive, forever forward,  
Stately, solemn, sad, withdrawn, baffled, mad, turbulent,  
feeble, dissatisfied,  
Desperate, proud, fond, sick, accepted by men, rejected by  
men,  
They go! they go! I know that they go, but I know not where  
they go,  
But I know that they go toward the best—toward something  
great.

Whoever you are, come forth! or man or woman come forth!  
You must not stay sleeping and dallying there in the house,  
though you built it, or though it has been built for you.

Out of the dark confinement! out from behind the screen!  
It is useless to protest, I know all and expose it.

Behold through you as bad as the rest,  
Through the laughter, dancing, dining, supping, of people,  
Inside of dresses and ornaments, inside of those wash'd and  
trimm'd faces,  
Behold a secret silent loathing and despair.

No husband, no wife, no friend, trusted to hear the  
confession,  
Another self, a duplicate of every one, skulking and hiding it  
goes,  
Formless and wordless through the streets of the cities, polite  
and bland in the parlors,  
In the cars of railroads, in steamboats, in the public assembly,  
Home to the houses of men and women, at the table, in the  
bedroom, everywhere,  
Smartly attired, countenance smiling, form upright, death  
under the breast-bones, hell under the skull-bones,  
Under the broadcloth and gloves, under the ribbons and  
artificial flowers,  
Keeping fair with the customs, speaking not a syllable of  
itself,  
Speaking of any thing else but never of itself.

## 14

Allons! through struggles and wars!  
The goal that was named cannot be countermanded.

Have the past struggles succeeded?  
What has succeeded? yourself? your nation? Nature?  
Now understand me well—it is provided in the essence of  
things that from any fruition of success, no matter what,  
shall come forth something to make a greater struggle  
necessary.

My call is the call of battle, I nourish active rebellion,  
He going with me must go well arm'd,  
He going with me goes often with spare diet, poverty, angry  
enemies, desertions.

## 15

Allons! the road is before us!  
It is safe—I have tried it—my own feet have tried it well—be  
not detain'd!

Let the paper remain on the desk unwritten, and the book on  
the shelf unopen'd!  
Let the tools remain in the workshop! let the money remain  
unearn'd!  
Let the school stand! mind not the cry of the teacher!  
Let the preacher preach in his pulpit! let the lawyer plead in  
the court, and the judge expound the law.

Camerado, I give you my hand!  
I give you my love more precious than money,  
I give you myself before preaching or law;  
Will you give me yourself? will you come travel with me?  
Shall we stick by each other as long as we live?

*A Woman Waits for Me.*

A woman waits for me, she contains all, nothing is lacking,  
 Yet all were lacking if sex were lacking, or if the moisture of  
 the right man were lacking.

Sex contains all, bodies, souls,  
 Meanings, proofs, purities, delicacies, results, promulgations,  
 Songs, commands, health, pride, the maternal mystery, the  
 seminal milk,  
 All hopes, benefactions, bestowals, all the passions, loves,  
 beauties, delights of the earth,  
 All the governments, judges, gods, follow'd persons of the  
 earth,  
 These are contain'd in sex as parts of itself and justifications  
 of itself.

Without shame the man I like knows and avows the  
 deliciousness of his sex,  
 Without shame the woman I like knows and avows hers.

Now I will dismiss myself from impassive women,  
 I will go stay with her who waits for me, and with those  
 women that are warm-blooded and sufficient for me,  
 I see that they understand me and do not deny me,  
 I see that they are worthy of me, I will be the robust husband  
 of those women.

They are not one jot less than I am,  
 They are tann'd in the face by shining suns and blowing  
 winds,  
 Their flesh has the old divine suppleness and strength,  
 They know how to swim, row, ride, wrestle, shoot, run,  
 strike, retreat, advance, resist, defend themselves,

They are ultimate in their own right—they are calm, clear,  
well-possess'd of themselves.

I draw you close to me, you women,  
I cannot let you go, I would do you good,  
I am for you, and you are for me, not only for our own sake,  
but for others' sakes,  
Envelop'd in you sleep greater heroes and bards,  
They refuse to awake at the touch of any man but me.

It is I, you women, I make my way,  
I am stern, acrid, large, undissuadable, but I love you,  
I do not hurt you any more than is necessary for you,  
I pour the stuff to start sons and daughters fit for these States,  
I press with slow rude muscle,  
I brace myself effectually, I listen to no entreaties,  
I dare not withdraw till I deposit what has so long  
accumulated within me.

Through you I drain the pent-up rivers of myself,  
In you I wrap a thousand onward years,  
On you I graft the grafts of the best-beloved of me and  
America,  
The drops I distil upon you shall grow fierce and athletic girls,  
new artists, musicians, and singers,  
The babes I beget upon you are to beget babes in their turn,  
I shall demand perfect men and women out of my love-  
spendings,  
I shall expect them to interpenetrate with others, as I and you  
interpenetrate now,  
I shall count on the fruits of the gushing showers of them, as I  
count on the fruits of the gushing showers I give now,  
I shall look for loving crops from the birth, life, death,  
immortality, I plant so lovingly now.



*To a Foil'd European Revolutionaire.*

Courage yet, my brother or my sister!  
 Keep on—Liberty is to be subserv'd whatever occurs;  
 That is nothing that is quell'd by one or two failures, or any  
     number of failures,  
 Or by the indifference or ingratitude of the people, or by any  
     unfaithfulness,  
 Or the show of the tushes of power, soldiers, cannon, penal  
     statutes.

What we believe in waits latent forever through all the  
     continents,  
 Invites no one, promises nothing, sits in calmness and light, is  
     positive and composed, knows no discouragement,  
 Waiting patiently, waiting its time.

(Not songs of loyalty alone are these,  
 But songs of insurrection also,  
 For I am the sworn poet of every dauntless rebel the world  
     over,  
 And he going with me leaves peace and routine behind him,  
 And stakes his life to be lost at any moment.)

The battle rages with many a loud alarm and frequent  
     advance and retreat,  
 The infidel triumphs, or supposes he triumphs,  
 The prison, scaffold, garroté, handcuffs, iron necklace and  
     lead-balls do their work,  
 The named and unnamed heroes pass to other spheres,  
 The great speakers and writers are exiled, they lie sick in  
     distant lands,  
 The cause is asleep, the strongest throats are choked with  
     their own blood,

The young men droop their eyelashes toward the ground  
when they meet;  
But for all this Liberty has not gone out of the place, nor the  
infidel enter'd into full possession.

When liberty goes out of a place it is not the first to go, nor  
the second or third to go,  
It waits for all the rest to go, it is the last.

When there are no more memories of heroes and martyrs,  
And when all life and all the souls of men and women are  
discharged from any part of the earth,  
Then only shall liberty or the idea of liberty be discharged  
from that part of the earth,  
And the infidel come into full possession.

Then courage European revolter, revoltress!  
For till all ceases neither must you cease.

I do not know what you are for, (I do not know what I am for  
myself, nor what any thing is for,)  
But I will search carefully for it even in being foil'd,  
In defeat, poverty, misconception, imprisonment—for they  
too are great.

Did we think victory great?  
So it is—but now it seems to me, when it cannot be help'd,  
that defeat is great,  
And that death and dismay are great.

*Spontaneous Me.*

Spontaneous me, Nature,  
 The loving day, the mounting sun, the friend I am happy with,  
 The arm of my friend hanging idly over my shoulder,  
 The hillside whiten'd with blossoms of the mountain ash,  
 The same late in autumn, the hues of red, yellow, drab,  
     purple, and light and dark green,  
 The rich coverlet of the grass, animals and birds, the private  
     untrimm'd bank, the primitive apples, the pebble-stones,  
 Beautiful dripping fragments, the negligent list of one after  
     another as I happen to call them to me or think of them,  
 The real poems, (what we call poems being merely pictures,)  
 The poems of the privacy of the night, and of men like me,  
 This poem drooping shy and unseen that I always carry, and  
     that all men carry,  
 (Know once for all, avow'd on purpose, wherever are men  
     like me, are our lusty lurking masculine poems,)  
 Love-thoughts, love-juice, love-odor, love-yielding, love-  
     climbers, and the climbing sap,  
 Arms and hands of love, lips of love, phallic thumb of love,  
     breasts of love, bellies press'd and glued together with  
     love,  
 Earth of chaste love, life that is only life after love,  
 The body of my love, the body of the woman I love, the body  
     of the man, the body of the earth,  
 Soft forenoon airs that blow from the south-west,  
 The hairy wild-bee that murmurs and hankers up and down,  
     that gripes the full-grown lady-flower, curves upon her  
     with amorous firm legs, takes his will of her, and holds  
     himself tremulous and tight till he is satisfied;  
 The wet of woods through the early hours,  
 Two sleepers at night lying close together as they sleep, one  
     with an arm slanting down across and below the waist of  
     the other,

The smell of apples, aromas from crush'd sage-plant, mint,  
birch-bark,  
The boy's longings, the glow and pressure as he confides to  
me what he was dreaming,  
The dead leaf whirling its spiral whirl and falling still and  
content to the ground,  
The no-form'd stings that sights, people, objects, sting me  
with,  
The hubb'd sting of myself, stinging me as much as it ever can  
any one,  
The sensitive, orbic, underlapp'd brothers, that only  
privileged feelers may be intimate where they are,  
The curious roamer the hand roaming all over the body, the  
bashful withdrawing of flesh where the fingers soothingly  
pause and edge themselves,  
The limpid liquid within the young man,  
The vex'd corrosion so pensive and so painful,  
The torment, the irritable tide that will not be at rest,  
The like of the same I feel, the like of the same in others,  
The young man that flushes and flushes, and the young  
woman that flushes and flushes,  
The young man that wakes deep at night, the hot hand  
seeking to repress what would master him,  
The mystic amorous night, the strange half-welcome pangs,  
visions, sweats,  
The pulse pounding through palms and trembling encircling  
fingers, the young man all color'd, red, ashamed, angry;  
The souse upon me of my lover the sea, as I lie willing and  
naked,  
The merriment of the twin babes that crawl over the grass in  
the sun, the mother never turning her vigilant eyes from  
them,  
The walnut-trunk, the walnut-husks, and the ripening or  
ripen'd long-round walnuts,  
The continence of vegetables, birds, animals,  
The consequent meanness of me should I skulk or find myself  
indecent, while birds and animals never once skulk or  
find themselves indecent,

The great chastity of paternity, to match the great chastity of  
maternity,  
The oath of procreation I have sworn, my Adamic and fresh  
daughters,  
The greed that eats me day and night with hungry gnaw, till I  
saturate what shall produce boys to fill my place when I  
am through,  
The wholesome relief, repose, content,  
And this bunch pluck'd at random from myself,  
It has done its work—I toss it carelessly to fall where it may.

*A Song of the Rolling Earth.*

I

A song of the rolling earth, and of words according,  
Were you thinking that those were the words, those upright  
lines? those curves, angles, dots?  
No, those are not the words, the substantial words are in the  
ground and sea,  
They are in the air, they are in you.

Were you thinking that those were the words, those delicious  
sounds out of your friends' mouths?  
No, the real words are more delicious than they.

Human bodies are words, myriads of words,  
(In the best poems re-appears the body, man's or woman's,  
well-shaped, natural, gay,  
Every part able, active, receptive, without shame or the need  
of shame.)

Air, soil, water, fire—those are words,  
I myself am a word with them—my qualities interpenetrate  
with theirs—my name is nothing to them,  
Though it were told in the three thousand languages, what  
would air, soil, water, fire, know of my name?

A healthy presence, a friendly or commanding gesture, are  
words, sayings, meanings,  
The charms that go with the mere looks of some men and  
women, are sayings and meanings also.

The workmanship of souls is by those inaudible words of the  
earth,

The masters know the earth's words and use them more than  
audible words.

Amelioration is one of the earth's words,  
The earth neither lags nor hastens,  
It has all attributes, growths, effects, latent in itself from the  
jump,  
It is not half beautiful only, defects and excrescences show just  
as much as perfections show.

The earth does not withhold, it is generous enough,  
The truths of the earth continually wait, they are not so  
conceal'd either,  
They are calm, subtle, untransmissible by print,  
They are imbued through all things conveying themselves  
willingly,  
Conveying a sentiment and invitation, I utter and utter,  
I speak not, yet if you hear me not of what avail am I to you?  
To bear, to better, lacking these of what avail am I?

(Accouche! accouchez!  
Will you rot your own fruit in yourself there?  
Will you squat and stifle there?)

The earth does not argue,  
Is not pathetic, has no arrangements,  
Does not scream, haste, persuade, threaten, promise,  
Makes no discriminations, has no conceivable failures,  
Closes nothing, refuses nothing, shuts none out,  
Of all the power, objects, states, it notifies, shuts none out.

The earth does not exhibit itself nor refuse to exhibit itself,  
possesses still underneath,  
Underneath the ostensible sounds, the august chorus of  
heroes, the wail of slaves,  
Persuasions of lovers, curses, gasps of the dying, laughter of  
young people, accents of bargainers,  
Underneath these possessing words that never fail.

To her children the words of the eloquent dumb great mother  
never fail,  
The true words do not fail, for motion does not fail and  
reflection does not fail,  
Also the day and night do not fail, and the voyage we pursue  
does not fail.

Of the interminable sisters,  
Of the ceaseless cotillions of sisters,  
Of the centripetal and centrifugal sisters, the elder and  
younger sisters,  
The beautiful sister we know dances on with the rest.

With her ample back towards every beholder,  
With the fascinations of youth and the equal fascinations of  
age,  
Sits she whom I too love like the rest, sits undisturb'd,  
Holding up in her hand what has the character of a mirror,  
while her eyes glance back from it,  
Glance as she sits, inviting none, denying none,  
Holding a mirror day and night tirelessly before her own face.

Seen at hand or seen at a distance,  
Duly the twenty-four appear in public every day,  
Duly approach and pass with their companions or a  
companion,  
Looking from no countenances of their own, but from the  
countenances of those who are with them,  
From the countenances of children or women or the manly  
countenance,  
From the open countenances of animals or from inanimate  
things,  
From the landscape or waters or from the exquisite apparition  
of the sky,  
From our countenances, mine and yours, faithfully returning  
them,  
Every day in public appearing without fail, but never twice  
with the same companions.



Embracing man, embracing all, proceed the three hundred  
 and sixty-five resistlessly round the sun;  
 Embracing all, soothing, supporting, follow close three  
 hundred and sixty-five offsets of the first, sure and  
 necessary as they.

Tumbling on steadily, nothing dreading.  
 Sunshine, storm, cold, heat, forever withstanding, passing,  
 carrying,  
 The soul's realization and determination still inheriting,  
 The fluid vacuum around and ahead still entering and  
 dividing,  
 No balk retarding, no anchor anchoring, on no rock striking,  
 Swift, glad, content, unbereav'd, nothing losing,  
 Of all able and ready at any time to give strict account,  
 The divine ship sails the divine sea.

## 2

Whoever you are! motion and reflection are especially for you,  
 The divine ship sails the divine sea for you.

Whoever you are! you are he or she for whom the earth is  
 solid and liquid,  
 You are he or she for whom the sun and moon hang in the  
 sky,  
 For none more than you are the present and the past,  
 For none more than you is immortality.

Each man to himself and each woman to herself, is the word  
 of the past and present, and the true word of  
 immortality;  
 No one can acquire for another—not one,  
 Not one can grow for another—not one.

The song is to the singer, and comes back most to him,  
 The teaching is to the teacher, and comes back most to him,  
 The murder is to the murderer, and comes back most to him,

The theft is to the thief, and comes back most to him,  
The love is to the lover, and comes back most to him,  
The gift is to the giver, and comes back most to him—it  
cannot fail,  
The oration is to the orator, the acting is to the actor and  
actress not to the audience,  
And no man understands any greatness or goodness but his  
own, or the indication of his own.

## 3

I swear the earth shall surely be complete to him or her who  
shall be complete,  
The earth remains jagged and broken only to him or her who  
remains jagged and broken.

I swear there is no greatness or power that does not emulate  
those of the earth,  
There can be no theory of any account unless it corroborate  
the theory of the earth,  
No politics, song, religion, behavior, or what not, is of  
account, unless it compare with the amplitude of the  
earth,  
Unless it face the exactness, vitality, impartiality, rectitude of  
the earth.

I swear I begin to see love with sweeter spasms than that  
which responds love,  
It is that which contains itself, which never invites and never  
refuses.

I swear I begin to see little or nothing in audible words,  
All merges toward the presentation of the unspoken meanings  
of the earth,  
Toward him who sings the songs of the body and of the truths  
of the earth,  
Toward him who makes the dictionaries of words that print  
cannot touch.

I swear I see what is better than to tell the best,  
It is always to leave the best untold.

When I undertake to tell the best I find I cannot,  
My tongue is ineffectual on its pivots,  
My breath will not be obedient to its organs,  
I become a dumb man.

The best of the earth cannot be told anyhow, all or any is best,  
It is not what you anticipated, it is cheaper, easier, nearer,  
Things are not dismiss'd from the places they held before,  
The earth is just as positive and direct as it was before,  
Facts, religions, improvements, politics, trades, are as real as  
before,  
But the soul is also real, it too is positive and direct,  
No reasoning, no proof has establish'd it,  
Undeniable growth has establish'd it.

## 4

These to echo the tones of souls and the phrases of souls,  
(If they did not echo the phrases of souls what were they  
then?  
If they had not reference to you in especial what were they  
then?)

I swear I will never henceforth have to do with the faith that  
tells the best,  
I will have to do only with that faith that leaves the best  
untold.

Say on, sayers! sing on, singers!  
Delve! mould! pile the words of the earth!  
Work on, age after age, nothing is to be lost,  
It may have to wait long, but it will certainly come in use,  
When the materials are all prepared and ready, the architects  
shall appear.

I swear to you the architects shall appear without fail,  
I swear to you they will understand you and justify you,  
The greatest among them shall be he who best knows you,  
    and encloses all and is faithful to all,  
He and the rest shall not forget you, they shall perceive that  
    you are not an iota less than they,  
You shall be fully glorified in them.

*Starting from Paumanok.*

## I

Starting from fish-shape Paumanok where I was born,  
 Well-begotten, and rais'd by a perfect mother,  
 After roaming many lands, lover of populous pavements,  
 Dweller in Mannahatta my city, or on southern savannas,  
 Or a soldier camp'd or carrying my knapsack and gun, or a  
     miner in California,  
 Or rude in my home in Dakota's woods, my diet meat, my  
     drink from the spring,  
 Or withdrawn to muse and meditate in some deep recess,  
 Far from the clank of crowds intervals passing rapt and  
     happy,  
 Aware of the fresh free giver the flowing Missouri, aware of  
     mighty Niagara,  
 Aware of the buffalo herds grazing the plains, the hirsute and  
     strong-breasted bull,  
 Of earth, rocks, Fifth-month flowers experienced, stars, rain,  
     snow, my amaze,  
 Having studied the mocking-bird's tones and the flight of the  
     mountain-hawk,  
 And heard at dawn the unrivall'd one, the hermit thrush from  
     the swamp-cedars,  
 Solitary, singing in the West, I strike up for a New World.

## 2

Victory, union, faith, identity, time,  
The indissoluble compacts, riches, mystery,  
Eternal progress, the kosmos, and the modern reports.

This then is life,  
Here is what has come to the surface after so many throes and  
convulsions.

How curious! how real!  
Underfoot the divine soil, overhead the sun.

See revolving the globe,  
The ancestor-continents away group'd together,  
The present and future continents north and south, with the  
isthmus between.

See, vast trackless spaces,  
As in a dream they change, they swiftly fill,  
Countless masses debouch upon them,  
They are now cover'd with the foremost people, arts,  
institutions, known.

See, projected through time,  
For me an audience interminable.

With firm and regular step they wend, they never stop,  
Successions of men, Americanos, a hundred millions,  
One generation playing its part and passing on,  
Another generation playing its part and passing on in its  
turn,  
With faces turn'd sideways or backward towards me to  
listen,  
With eyes retrospective towards me.

## 3

Americanos! conquerors! marches humanitarian!  
 Foremost! century marches! Libertad! masses!  
 For you a programme of chants.

Chants of the prairies,  
 Chants of the long-running Mississippi, and down to the  
     Mexican sea,  
 Chants of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin and  
     Minnesota,  
 Chants going forth from the centre from Kansas, and thence  
     equidistant,  
 Shooting in pulses of fire ceaseless to vivify all.

## 4

Take my leaves America, take them South and take them  
     North,  
 Make welcome for them everywhere, for they are your own  
     offspring,  
 Surround them East and West, for they would surround you,  
 And you precedents, connect lovingly with them, for they  
     connect lovingly with you.

I conn'd old times,  
 I sat studying at the feet of the great masters,  
 Now if eligible O that the great masters might return and  
     study me.

In the name of these States shall I scorn the antique?  
 Why these are the children of the antique to justify it.

## 5

Dead poets, philosophs, priests,  
 Martyrs, artists, inventors, governments long since,  
 Language-shapers on other shores,

Nations once powerful, now reduced, withdrawn, or desolate,  
 I dare not proceed till I respectfully credit what you have left  
     wafted hither,  
 I have perused it, own it is admirable, (moving awhile  
     among it,)  
 Think nothing can ever be greater, nothing can ever deserve  
     more than it deserves,  
 Regarding it all intently a long while, then dismissing it,  
 I stand in my place with my own day here.

Here lands female and male,  
 Here the heir-ship and heiress-ship of the world, here the  
     flame of materials,  
 Here spiritually the translatress, the openly-avow'd,  
 The ever-tending, the finalè of visible forms,  
 The satisfier, after due long-waiting now advancing,  
 Yes here comes my mistress the soul.

## 6

The soul,  
 Forever and forever—longer than soil is brown and solid—  
     longer than water ebbs and flows.

I will make the poems of materials, for I think they are to be  
     the most spiritual poems,  
 And I will make the poems of my body and of mortality,  
 For I think I shall then supply myself with the poems of my  
     soul and of immortality.

I will make a song for these States that no one State may  
     under any circumstances be subjected to another State,  
 And I will make a song that there shall be comity by day and  
     by night between all the States, and between any two of  
     them,  
 And I will make a song for the ears of the President, full of  
     weapons with menacing points,  
 And behind the weapons countless dissatisfied faces;



And a song make I of the One form'd out of all,  
 The fang'd and glittering One whose head is over all,  
 Resolute warlike One including and over all,  
 (However high the head of any else that head is over all.)

I will acknowledge contemporary lands,  
 I will trail the whole geography of the globe and salute  
     courteously every city large and small,  
 And employments! I will put in my poems that with you is  
     heroism upon land and sea,  
 And I will report all heroism from an American point of view.

I will sing the song of companionship,  
 I will show what alone must finally compact these,  
 I believe these are to found their own ideal of manly love,  
     indicating it in me,  
 I will therefore let flame from me the burning fires that were  
     threatening to consume me,  
 I will lift what has too long kept down those smouldering  
     fires,  
 I will give them complete abandonment,  
 I will write the evangel-poem of comrades and of love,  
 For who but I should understand love with all its sorrow and  
     joy?  
 And who but I should be the poet of comrades?

## 7

I am the credulous man of qualities, ages, races,  
 I advance from the people in their own spirit,  
 Here is what sings unrestricted faith.

Omnes! omnes! let others ignore what they may,  
 I make the poem of evil also, I commemorate that part also,  
 I am myself just as much evil as good, and my nation is—and  
     I say there is in fact no evil,  
 (Or if there is I say it is just as important to you, to the land  
     or to me, as any thing else.)

I too, following many and follow'd by many, inaugurate a  
religion, I descend into the arena,  
(It may be I am destin'd to utter the loudest cries there, the  
winner's pealing shouts,  
Who knows? they may rise from me yet, and soar above every  
thing.)

Each is not for its own sake,  
I say the whole earth and all the stars in the sky are for  
religion's sake.

I say no man has ever yet been half devout enough,  
None has ever yet adored or worship'd half enough,  
None has begun to think how divine he himself is, and how  
certain the future is.

I say that the real and permanent grandeur of these States  
must be their religion,  
Otherwise there is no real and permanent grandeur;  
(Nor character nor life worthy the name without religion,  
Nor land nor man or woman without religion.)

## 8

What are you doing young man?  
Are you so earnest, so given up to literature, science, art,  
amours?  
These ostensible realities, politics, points?  
Your ambition or business whatever it may be?

It is well—against such I say not a word, I am their poet also,  
But behold! such swiftly subside, burnt up for religion's sake,  
For not all matter is fuel to heat, impalpable flame, the  
essential life of the earth,  
Any more than such are to religion.

## 9

What do you seek so pensive and silent?  
 What do you need camerado?  
 Dear son do you think it is love?

Listen dear son—listen America, daughter or son,  
 It is a painful thing to love a man or woman to excess, and  
     yet it satisfies, it is great,  
 But there is something else very great, it makes the whole  
     coincide,  
 It, magnificent, beyond materials, with continuous hands  
     sweeps and provides for all.

## 10

Know you, solely to drop in the earth the germs of a greater  
     religion,  
 The following chants each for its kind I sing.

My comrade!  
 For you to share with me two greatneses, and a third one  
     rising inclusive and more resplendent,  
 The greatness of Love and Democracy, and the greatness of  
     Religion.

Melange mine own, the unseen and the seen,  
 Mysterious ocean where the streams empty,  
 Prophetic spirit of materials shifting and flickering around me,  
 Living beings, identities now doubtless near us in the air that  
     we know not of,  
 Contact daily and hourly that will not release me,  
 These selecting, these in hints demanded of me.

Not he with a daily kiss onward from childhood kissing me,  
 Has winded and twisted around me that which holds me  
     to him,

Any more than I am held to the heavens and all the spiritual  
world,  
After what they have done to me, suggesting themes.

O such themes—equalities! O divine average!  
Warblings under the sun, usher'd as now, or at noon, or  
setting,  
Strains musical flowing through ages, now reaching hither,  
I take to your reckless and composite chords, add to them,  
and cheerfully pass them forward.

## I I

As I have walk'd in Alabama my morning walk,  
I have seen where the she-bird the mocking-bird sat on her  
nest in the briers hatching her brood.

I have seen the he-bird also,  
I have paus'd to hear him near at hand inflating his throat and  
joyfully singing.

And while I paus'd it came to me that what he really sang for  
was not there only,  
Nor for his mate nor himself only, nor all sent back by the  
echoes,  
But subtle, clandestine, away beyond,  
A charge transmitted and gift occult for those being born.

## I 2

Democracy! near at hand to you a throat is now inflating  
itself and joyfully singing.

Ma femme! for the brood beyond us and of us,  
For those who belong here and those to come,  
I exultant to be ready for them will now shake out carols  
stronger and haughtier than have ever yet been heard  
upon earth.

I will make the songs of passion to give them their way,  
And your songs outlaw'd offenders, for I scan you with  
    kindred eyes, and carry you with me the same as any.

I will make the true poem of riches,  
To earn for the body and the mind whatever adheres and goes  
    forward and is not dropt by death;  
I will effuse egotism and show it underlying all, and I will be  
    the bard of personality,  
And I will show of male and female that either is but the  
    equal of the other,  
And sexual organs and acts! do you concentrate in me, for I  
    am determin'd to tell you with courageous clear voice to  
    prove you illustrious,  
And I will show that there is no imperfection in the present,  
    and can be none in the future,  
And I will show that whatever happens to anybody it may be  
    turn'd to beautiful results,  
And I will show that nothing can happen more beautiful than  
    death,  
And I will thread a thread through my poems that time and  
    events are compact,  
And that all the things of the universe are perfect miracles,  
    each as profound as any.

I will not make poems with reference to parts,  
But I will make poems, songs, thoughts, with reference to  
    ensemble,  
And I will not sing with reference to a day, but with reference  
    to all days,  
And I will not make a poem nor the least part of a poem but  
    has reference to the soul,  
Because having look'd at the objects of the universe, I find  
    there is no one nor any particle of one but has reference  
    to the soul.

## 13

Was somebody asking to see the soul?  
See, your own shape and countenance, persons, substances,  
    beasts, the trees, the running rivers, the rocks and sands.

All hold spiritual joys and afterwards loosen them;  
How can the real body ever die and be buried?

Of your real body and any man's or woman's real body,  
Item for item it will elude the hands of the corpse-cleaners  
    and pass to fitting spheres,  
Carrying what has accrued to it from the moment of birth to  
    the moment of death.

Not the types set up by the printer return their impression, the  
    meaning, the main concern,  
Any more than a man's substance and life or a woman's  
    substance and life return in the body and the soul,  
Indifferently before death and after death.

Behold, the body includes and is the meaning, the main  
    concern, and includes and is the soul;  
Whoever you are, how superb and how divine is your body,  
    or any part of it!

## 14

Whoever you are, to you endless announcements!

Daughter of the lands did you wait for your poet?  
Did you wait for one with a flowing mouth and indicative  
    hand?  
Toward the male of the States, and toward the female of the  
    States,  
Exulting words, words to Democracy's lands.

Interlink'd food-yielding lands!  
Land of coal and iron! land of gold! land of cotton, sugar,  
rice!  
Land of wheat, beef, pork! land of wool and hemp! land of  
the apple and the grape!  
Land of the pastoral plains, the grass-fields of the world! land  
of those sweet-air'd interminable plateaus!  
Land of the herd, the garden, the healthy house of adobie!  
Lands where the north-west Columbia winds, and where the  
south-west Colorado winds!  
Land of the eastern Chesapeake! land of the Delaware!  
Land of Ontario, Erie, Huron, Michigan!  
Land of the Old Thirteen! Massachusetts land! land of  
Vermont and Connecticut!  
Land of the ocean shores! land of sierras and peaks!  
Land of boatmen and sailors! fishermen's land!  
Inextricable lands! the clutch'd together! the passionate ones!  
The side by side! the elder and younger brothers! the bony-  
limb'd!  
The great women's land! the feminine! the experienced sisters  
and the inexperienced sisters!  
Far breath'd land! Arctic braced! Mexican breez'd! the  
diverse! the compact!  
The Pennsylvanian! the Virginian! the double Carolinian!  
O all and each well-loved by me! my intrepid nations! O I at  
any rate include you all with perfect love!  
I cannot be discharged from you! not from one any sooner  
than another!  
O death! O for all that, I am yet of you unseen this hour with  
irrepressible love,  
Walking New England, a friend, a traveler,  
Splashing my bare feet in the edge of the summer ripples on  
Paumanok's sands,  
Crossing the prairies, dwelling again in Chicago, dwelling in  
every town,  
Observing shows, births, improvements, structures, arts,  
Listening to orators and oratresses in public halls,

Of and through the States as during life, each man and  
     woman my neighbor,  
 The Louisianian, the Georgian, as near to me, and I as near to  
     him and her,  
 The Mississippian and Arkansian yet with me, and I yet with  
     any of them,  
 Yet upon the plains west of the spinal river, yet in my house of  
     adobie,  
 Yet returning eastward, yet in the Seaside State or in  
     Maryland,  
 Yet Kanadian cheerily braving the winter, the snow and ice  
     welcome to me,  
 Yet a true son either of Maine or of the Granite State, or the  
     Narragansett Bay State, or the Empire State,  
 Yet sailing to other shores to annex the same, yet welcoming  
     every new brother,  
 Hereby applying these leaves to the new ones from the hour  
     they unite with the old ones,  
 Coming among the new ones myself to be their companion  
     and equal, coming personally to you now,  
 Enjoining you to acts, characters, spectacles, with me.

## 15

With me with firm holding, yet haste, haste on.

For your life adhere to me,  
 (I may have to be persuaded many times before I consent to  
     give myself really to you, but what of that?  
 Must not Nature be persuaded many times?)

No dainty dolce affettuoso I,  
 Beraded, sun-burnt, gray-neck'd, forbidding, I have arrived,  
 To be wrestled with as I pass for the solid prizes of the  
     universe,  
 For such I afford whoever can persevere to win them.



## 16

On my way a moment I pause,  
 Here for you! and here for America!  
 Still the present I raise aloft, still the future of the States I  
     harbinger glad and sublime,  
 And for the past I pronounce what the air holds of the red  
     aborigines.

The red aborigines,  
 Leaving natural breaths, sounds of rain and winds, calls as of  
     birds and animals in the woods, syllabled to us for names,  
 Okonee, Koosa, Ottawa, Monongahela, Sauk, Natchez,  
     Chattahoochee, Kaqueta, Oronoco,  
 Wabash, Miami, Saginaw, Chippewa, Oshkosh, Walla-Walla,  
 Leaving such to the States they melt, they depart, charging the  
     water and the land with names.

## 17

Expanding and swift, henceforth,  
 Elements, breeds, adjustments, turbulent, quick and  
     audacious,  
 A world primal again, vistas of glory incessant and branching,  
 A new race dominating previous ones and grander far, with  
     new contests,  
 New politics, new literatures and religions, new inventions  
     and arts.

These, my voice announcing—I will sleep no more but arise,  
 You oceans that have been calm within me! how I feel you,  
     fathomless, stirring, preparing unprecedented waves and  
     storms.

## 18

See, steamers steaming through my poems,  
 See, in my poems immigrants continually coming and landing,

See, in arriere, the wigwam, the trail, the hunter's hut, the flat-boat, the maize-leaf, the claim, the rude fence, and the backwoods village,  
 See, on the one side the Western Sea and on the other the Eastern Sea, how they advance and retreat upon my poems as upon their own shores,  
 See, pastures and forests in my poems—see, animals wild and tame—see, beyond the Kaw, countless herds of buffalo feeding on short curly grass,  
 See, in my poems, cities, solid, vast, inland, with paved streets, with iron and stone edifices, ceaseless vehicles, and commerce,  
 See, the many-cylinder'd steam printing-press—see, the electric telegraph stretching across the continent,  
 See, through Atlantica's depths pulses American Europe reaching, pulses of Europe duly return'd,  
 See, the strong and quick locomotive as it departs, panting, blowing the steam-whistle,  
 See, ploughmen ploughing farms—see, miners digging mines—see, the numberless factories,  
 See, mechanics busy at their benches with tools—see from among them superior judges, philosophers, Presidents, emerge, drest in working dresses,  
 See, lounging through the shops and fields of the States, me well-belov'd, close-held by day and night,  
 Hear the loud echoes of my songs there—read the hints come at last.

## 19

O camerado close! O you and me at last, and us two only.  
 O a word to clear one's path ahead endlessly!  
 O something ecstatic and undemonstrable! O music wild!  
 O now I triumph—and you shall also;  
 O hand in hand—O wholesome pleasure—O one more desirer and lover!  
 O to haste firm holding—to haste, haste on with me.

*From Pent-Up Aching Rivers.*

From pent-up aching rivers,  
 From that of myself without which I were nothing,  
 From what I am determin'd to make illustrious, even if I stand  
     sole among men,  
 From my own voice resonant, singing the phallus,  
 Singing the song of procreation,  
 Singing the need of superb children and therein superb grown  
     people,  
 Singing the muscular urge and the blending,  
 Singing the bedfellow's song, (O resistless yearning!  
 O for any and each the body correlative attracting!  
 O for you whoever you are your correlative body! O it, more  
     than all else, you delighting!)  
 From the hungry gnaw that eats me night and day,  
 From native moments, from bashful pains, singing them,  
 Seeking something yet unfound though I have diligently  
     sought it many a long year.  
 Singing the true song of the soul fitful at random,  
 Renascent with grossest Nature or among animals,  
 Of that, of them and what goes with them my poems  
     informing,  
 Of the smell of apples and lemons, of the pairing of birds,  
 Of the wet of woods, of the lapping of waves,  
 Of the mad pushes of waves upon the land, I them chanting,  
 The overture lightly sounding, the strain anticipating,  
 The welcome nearness, the sight of the perfect body,  
 The swimmer swimming naked in the bath, or motionless on  
     his back lying and floating,  
 The female form approaching, I pensive, love-flesh tremulous  
     aching,  
 The divine list for myself or you or for any one making,  
 The face, the limbs, the index from head to foot, and what it  
     arouses,

The mystic deliria, the madness amorous, the utter  
abandonment,  
(Hark close and still what I now whisper to you,  
I love you, O you entirely possess me,  
O that you and I escape from the rest and go utterly off, free  
and lawless,  
Two hawks in the air, two fishes swimming in the sea not  
more lawless than we;)  
The furious storm through me careering, I passionately  
trembling.  
The oath of the inseparableness of two together, of the  
woman that loves me and whom I love more than my  
life, that oath swearing,  
(O I willingly stake all for you,  
O let me be lost if it must be so!  
O you and I! what is it to us what the rest do or think?  
What is all else to us? only that we enjoy each other and  
exhaust each other if it must be so;)  
From the master, the pilot I yield the vessel to,  
The general commanding me, commanding all, from him  
permission taking,  
From time the programme hastening, (I have loiter'd too long  
as it is.)  
From sex, from the warp and from the woof,  
From privacy, from frequent repinings alone,  
From plenty of persons near and yet the right person not near,  
From the soft sliding of hands over me and thrusting of  
fingers through my hair and beard,  
From the long sustain'd kiss upon the mouth or bosom,  
From the close pressure that makes me or any man drunk,  
fainting with excess,  
From what the divine husband knows, from the work of  
fatherhood,  
From exultation, victory and relief, from the bedfellow's  
embrace in the night,  
From the act-poems of eyes, hands, hips and bosoms,  
From the cling of the trembling arm,  
From the bending curve and the clinch,

From side by side the pliant coverlet off-throwing,  
From the one so unwilling to have me leave, and me just as  
    unwilling to leave,  
(Yet a moment O tender waiter, and I return,)  
From the hour of shining stars and dropping dews,  
From the night a moment I emerging flitting out,  
Celebrate you act divine and you children prepared for,  
And you stalwart loins.

*Me Imperturbe.*

Me imperturbe, standing at ease in Nature,  
Master of all or mistress of all, aplomb in the midst of  
    irrational things,  
Inbued as they, passive, receptive, silent as they,  
Finding my occupation, poverty, notoriety, foibles, crimes, less  
    important than I thought,  
Me toward the Mexican sea, or in the Mannahatta or the  
    Tennessee, or far north or inland,  
A river man, or a man of the woods or of any farm-life of  
    these States or of the coast, or the lakes of Kanada,  
Me wherever my life is lived, O to be self-balanced for  
    contingencies,  
To confront night, storms, hunger, ridicule, accidents, rebuffs,  
    as the trees and animals do.

*I Hear America Singing.*

I hear America singing, the varied carols I hear,  
Those of mechanics, each one singing his as it should be blithe  
and strong,  
The carpenter singing his as he measures his plank or beam,  
The mason singing his as he makes ready for work, or leaves  
off work,  
The boatman singing what belongs to him in his boat, the  
deckhand singing on the steamboat deck,  
The shoemaker singing as he sits on his bench, the hatter  
singing as he stands,  
The wood-cutter's song, the ploughboy's on his way in the  
morning, or at noon intermission or at sundown,  
The delicious singing of the mother, or of the young wife at  
work, or of the girl sewing or washing,  
Each singing what belongs to him or her and to none else,  
The day what belongs to the day—at night the party of young  
fellows, robust, friendly,  
Singing with open mouths their strong melodious songs.

*As I Ebb'd with the Ocean of Life.*

I

As I ebb'd with the ocean of life,  
As I wended the shores I know,  
As I walk'd where the ripples continually wash you  
    Paumanok,  
Where they rustle up hoarse and sibilant,  
Where the fierce old mother endlessly cries for her castaways,  
I musing late in the autumn day, gazing off southward,  
Held by this electric self out of the pride of which I utter  
    poems,  
Was seiz'd by the spirit that trails in the lines underfoot,  
The rim, the sediment that stands for all the water and all the  
    land of the globe.

Fascinated, my eyes reverting from the south, dropt, to follow  
    those slender windrows,  
Chaff, straw, splinters of wood, weeds, and the sea-gluten,  
Scum, scales from shining rocks, leaves of salt-lettuce, left by  
    the tide,  
Miles walking, the sound of breaking waves the other side  
    of me,  
Paumanok there and then as I thought the old thought of  
    likenesses,  
These you presented to me you fish-shaped island,  
As I wended the shores I know,  
As I walk'd with that electric self seeking types.

2

As I wend to the shores I know not,  
As I list to the dirge, the voices of men and women wreck'd,



As I inhale the impalpable breezes that set in upon me,  
 As the ocean so mysterious rolls toward me closer and closer,  
 I too but signify at the utmost a little wash'd-up drift,  
 A few sands and dead leaves to gather,  
 Gather, and merge myself as part of the sands and drift.

O baffled, balk'd, bent to the very earth,  
 Oppress'd with myself that I have dared to open my mouth,  
 Aware now that amid all that blab whose echoes recoil upon  
     me I have not once had the least idea who or what I am,  
 But that before all my arrogant poems the real Me stands yet  
     untouch'd, untold, altogether unreach'd,  
 Withdrawn far, mocking me with mock-congratulatory signs  
     and bows,  
 With peals of distant ironical laughter at every word I have  
     written,  
 Pointing in silence to these songs, and then to the sand  
     beneath.  
 I perceive I have not really understood any thing, not a single  
     object, and that no man ever can,  
 Nature here in sight of the sea taking advantage of me to dart  
     upon me and sting me,  
 Because I have dared to open my mouth to sing at all.

## 3

You oceans both, I close with you,  
 We murmur alike reproachfully rolling sands and drift,  
     knowing not why,  
 These little shreds indeed standing for you and me and all.

You friable shore with trails of debris,  
 You fish-shaped island, I take what is underfoot,  
 What is yours is mine my father.

I too Paumanok,  
 I too have bubbled up, floating the measureless float, and  
     been wash'd on your shores,

I too am but a trail of drift and debris,  
 I too leave little wrecks upon you, you fish-shaped island.

I throw myself upon your breast my father,  
 I cling to you so that you cannot unloose me,  
 I hold you so firm till you answer me something.

Kiss me my father,  
 Touch me with your lips as I touch those I love,  
 Breathe to me while I hold you close the secret of the  
     murmuring I envy.

## 4

Ebb, ocean of life, (the flow will return,)  
 Cease not your moaning you fierce old mother,  
 Endlessly cry for your castaways, but fear not, deny not me,  
 Rustle not up so hoarse and angry against my feet as I touch  
     you or gather from you.

I mean tenderly by you and all,  
 I gather for myself and for this phantom looking down where  
     we lead, and following me and mine.

Me and mine, loose windrows, little corpses,  
 Froth, snowy white, and bubbles,  
 (See, from my dead lips the ooze exuding at last,  
 See, the prismatic colors glistening and rolling,)  
 Tufts of straw, sand, fragments,  
 Buoy'd hither from many moods, one contradicting another,  
 From the storm, the long calm, the darkness, the swell,  
 Musing, pondering, a breath, a briny tear, a dab of liquid or  
     soil,  
 Up just as much out of fathomless workings fermented and  
     thrown,  
 A limp blossom or two, torn, just as much over waves  
     floating, drifted at random,  
 Just as much for us that sobbing dirge of Nature,

Just as much whence we come that blare of the cloud-  
trumpets,  
We, capricious, brought hither we know not whence, spread  
out before you,  
You up there walking or sitting,  
Whoever you are, we too lie in drifts at your feet.

*You Felons on Trial in Courts.*

You felons on trial in courts,  
You convicts in prison-cells, you sentenced assassins chain'd  
and handcuff'd with iron,  
Who am I too that I am not on trial or in prison?  
Me ruthless and devilish as any, that my wrists are not chain'd  
with iron, or my ankles with iron?

You prostitutes flaunting over the trottoirs or obscene in your  
rooms,  
Who am I that I should call you more obscene than myself?  
O culpable! I acknowledge—I exposé!  
(O admirers, praise not me—compliment not me—you make  
me wince,  
I see what you do not—I know what you do not.)

Inside these breast-bones I lie smutch'd and choked,  
Beneath this face that appears so impassive hell's tides  
continually run,  
Lusts and wickedness are acceptable to me,  
I walk with delinquents with passionate love,  
I feel I am of them—I belong to those convicts and prostitutes  
myself,  
And henceforth I will not deny them—for how can I deny  
myself?

*The World below the Brine.*

The world below the brine,  
Forests at the bottom of the sea, the branches and leaves,  
Sea-lettuce, vast lichens, strange flowers and seeds, the thick  
tangle, openings, and pink turf,  
Different colors, pale gray and green, purple, white, and gold,  
the play of light through the water,  
Dumb swimmers there among the rocks, coral, gluten, grass,  
rushes, and the aliment of the swimmers,  
Sluggish existences grazing there suspended, or slowly  
crawling close to the bottom,  
The sperm-whale at the surface blowing air and spray, or  
disporting with his flukes,  
The leaden-eyed shark, the walrus, the turtle, the hairy sea-  
leopard, and the sting-ray,  
Passions there, wars, pursuits, tribes, sight in those ocean-  
depths, breathing that thick-breathing air, as so many do,  
The change thence to the sight here, and to the subtle air  
breathed by beings like us who walk this sphere,  
The change onward from ours to that of beings who walk  
other spheres.

*I Sit and Look Out.*

I sit and look out upon all the sorrows of the world, and upon  
all oppression and shame,  
I hear secret convulsive sobs from young men at anguish with  
themselves, remorseful after deeds done,  
I see in low life the mother misused by her children, dying,  
neglected, gaunt, desperate,  
I see the wife misused by her husband, I see the treacherous  
seducer of young women,  
I mark the ranklings of jealousy and unrequited love  
attempted to be hid, I see these sights on the earth,  
I see the workings of battle, pestilence, tyranny, I see martyrs  
and prisoners,  
I observe a famine at sea, I observe the sailors casting lots  
who shall be kill'd to preserve the lives of the rest,  
I observe the slights and degradations cast by arrogant  
persons upon laborers, the poor, and upon negroes, and  
the like;  
All these—all the meanness and agony without end I sitting  
look out upon,  
See, hear, and am silent.

*All Is Truth.*

O me, man of slack faith so long,  
 Standing aloof, denying portions so long,  
 Only aware to-day of compact all-diffused truth,  
 Discovering to-day there is no lie or form of lie, and can be  
     none, but grows as inevitably upon itself as the truth  
     does upon itself,  
 Or as any law of the earth or any natural production of the  
     earth does.

(This is curious and may not be realized immediately, but it  
     must be realized,  
 I feel in myself that I represent falsehoods equally with the  
     rest,  
 And that the universe does.)

Where has fail'd a perfect return indifferent of lies or the  
     truth?  
 Is it upon the ground, or in water or fire? or in the spirit of  
     man? or in the meat and blood?

Meditating among liars and retreating sternly into myself, I  
     see that there are really no liars or lies after all,  
 And that nothing fails its perfect return, and that what are  
     called lies are perfect returns,  
 And that each thing exactly represents itself and what has  
     preceded it,  
 And that the truth includes all, and is compact just as much as  
     space is compact,  
 And that there is no flaw or vacuum in the amount of the  
     truth—but that all is truth without exception;  
 And henceforth I will go celebrate any thing I see or am,  
 And sing and laugh and deny nothing.

*Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking.*

Out of the cradle endlessly rocking,  
 Out of the mocking-bird's throat, the musical shuttle,  
 Out of the Ninth-month midnight,  
 Over the sterile sands and the fields beyond, where the child  
     leaving his bed wander'd alone, bareheaded, barefoot,  
 Down from the shower'd halo,  
 Up from the mystic play of shadows twining and twisting as if  
     they were alive,  
 Out from the patches of briars and blackberries,  
 From the memories of the bird that chanted to me,  
 From your memories sad brother, from the fitful risings and  
     fallings I heard,  
 From under that yellow half-moon late-risen and swollen as if  
     with tears,  
 From those beginning notes of yearning and love there in the  
     mist,  
 From the thousand responses of my heart never to cease,  
 From the myriad thence-arous'd words,  
 From the word stronger and more delicious than any,  
 From such as now they start the scene revisiting,  
 As a flock, twittering, rising, or overhead passing,  
 Borne hither, ere all eludes me, hurriedly,  
 A man, yet by these tears a little boy again,  
 Throwing myself on the sand, confronting the waves,  
 I, chanter of pains and joys, uniter of here and hereafter,  
 Taking all hints to use them, but swiftly leaping beyond them,  
 A reminiscence sing.

Once Paumanok,  
 When the lilac-scent was in the air and Fifth-month grass was  
     growing,  
 Up this seashore in some briars,  
 Two feather'd guests from Alabama, two together,



And their nest, and four light-green eggs spotted with brown,  
 And every day the he-bird to and fro near at hand,  
 And every day the she-bird crouch'd on her nest, silent, with  
     bright eyes,  
 And every day I, a curious boy, never too close, never  
     disturbing them,  
 Cautiously peering, absorbing, translating.

*Shine! shine! shine!*  
*Pour down your warmth, great sun!*  
*While we bask, we two together.*

*Two together!*  
*Winds blow south, or winds blow north,*  
*Day come white, or night come black,*  
*Home, or rivers and mountains from home,*  
*Singing all time, minding no time,*  
*While we two keep together.*

Till of a sudden,  
 May-be kill'd, unknown to her mate,  
 One forenoon the she-bird crouch'd not on the nest,  
 Nor return'd that afternoon, nor the next,  
 Nor ever appear'd again.

And thenceforward all summer in the sound of the sea,  
 And at night under the full of the moon in calmer weather,  
 Over the hoarse surging of the sea,  
 Or flitting from brier to brier by day,  
 I saw, I heard at intervals the remaining one, the he-bird,  
 The solitary guest from Alabama.

*Blow! blow! blow!*  
*Blow up sea-winds along Paumanok's shore;*  
*I wait and I wait till you blow my mate to me.*

Yes, when the stars glisten'd,  
 All night long on the prong of a moss-scallop'd stake,

Down almost amid the slapping waves,  
Sat the lone singer wonderful causing tears.

He call'd on his mate,  
He pour'd forth the meanings which I of all men know.

Yes my brother I know,  
The rest might not, but I have treasur'd every note,  
For more than once dimly down to the beach gliding,  
Silent, avoiding the moonbeams, blending myself with the  
    shadows,  
Recalling now the obscure shapes, the echoes, the sounds and  
    sights after their sorts.  
The white arms out in the breakers tirelessly tossing,  
I, with bare feet, a child, the wind wafting my hair,  
Listen'd long and long.

Listen'd to keep, to sing, now translating the notes,  
Following you my brother.

*Soothe! soothe! soothe!*  
*Close on its wave soothes the wave behind,*  
*And again another behind embracing and lapping, every one*  
*close,*  
*But my love soothes not me, not me.*

*Low hangs the moon, it rose late,*  
*It is lagging—O I think it is heavy with love, with love.*

*O madly the sea pushes upon the land,*  
*With love, with love.*

*O night! do I not see my love fluttering out among the*  
*breakers?*  
*What is that little black thing I see there in the white?*

*Loud! loud! loud!*  
*Loud I call to you, my love!*

*High and clear I shoot my voice over the waves,  
Surely you must know who is here, is here,  
You must know who I am, my love.*

*Low-hanging moon!  
What is that dusky spot in your brown yellow?  
O it is the shape, the shape of my mate!  
O moon do not keep her from me any longer.*

*Land! land! O land!  
Whichever way I turn, O I think you could give me my mate  
back again if you only would,  
For I am almost sure I see her dimly whichever way I look.*

*O rising stars!  
Perhaps the one I want so much will rise, will rise with some  
of you.*

*O throat! O trembling throat!  
Sound clearer through the atmosphere!  
Pierce the woods, the earth,  
Somewhere listening to catch you must be the one I want.*

*Shake out carols!  
Solitary here, the night's carols!  
Carols of lonesome love! death's carols!  
Carols under that lagging, yellow, waning moon!  
O under that moon where she droops almost down into the  
sea!  
O reckless despairing carols.*

*But soft! sink low!  
Soft! let me just murmur,  
And do you wait a moment you husky-nois'd sea,  
For somewhere I believe I heard my mate responding to me,  
So faint, I must be still, be still to listen,  
But not altogether still, for then she might not come  
immediately to me.*

*Hither my love!  
 Here I am! here!  
 With this just-sustain'd note I announce myself to you,  
 This gentle call is for you my love, for you.*

*Do not be decoy'd elsewhere,  
 That is the whistle of the wind, it is not my voice,  
 That is the fluttering, the fluttering of the spray,  
 Those are the shadows of leaves.*

*O darkness! O in vain!  
 O I am very sick and sorrowful.*

*O brown halo in the sky near the moon, drooping upon the  
 sea!*

*O troubled reflection in the sea!  
 O throat! O throbbing heart!  
 And I singing uselessly, uselessly all the night.*

*O past! O happy life! O songs of joy!  
 In the air, in the woods, over fields,  
 Loved! loved! loved! loved! loved!  
 But my mate no more, no more with me!  
 We two together no more.*

*The aria sinking,  
 All else continuing, the stars shining,  
 The winds blowing, the notes of the bird continuous echoing,  
 With angry moans the fierce old mother incessantly moaning,  
 On the sands of Paumanok's shore gray and rustling,  
 The yellow half-moon enlarged, sagging down, drooping, the  
 face of the sea almost touching,  
 The boy ecstatic, with his bare feet the waves, with his hair  
 the atmosphere dallying,  
 The love in the heart long pent, now loose, now at last  
 tumultuously bursting,  
 The aria's meaning, the ears, the soul, swiftly depositing,  
 The strange tears down the cheeks coursing,*

The colloquy there, the trio, each uttering,  
 The undertone, the savage old mother incessantly crying,  
 To the boy's soul's questions sullenly timing, some drown'd  
     secret hissing,  
 To the outseting bard.

Demon or bird! (said the boy's soul,  
 Is it indeed toward your mate you sing? or is it really to me?  
 For I, that was a child, my tongue's use sleeping, now I have  
     heard you,  
 Now in a moment I know what I am for, I awake,  
 And already a thousand singers, a thousand songs, clearer,  
     louder and more sorrowful than yours,  
 A thousand warbling echoes have started to life within me,  
     never to die.  
 O you singer solitary, singing by yourself, projecting me,  
 O solitary me listening, never more shall I cease perpetuating  
     you,  
 Never more shall I escape, never more the reverberations,  
 Never more the cries of unsatisfied love be absent from me,  
 Never again leave me to be the peaceful child I was before  
     what there in the night,  
 By the sea under the yellow and sagging moon,  
 The messenger there arous'd, the fire, the sweet hell within,  
 The unknown want, the destiny of me.

O give me the clew! (it lurks in the night here somewhere,  
 O if I am to have so much, let me have more!

A word then, (for I will conquer it,  
 The word final, superior to all,  
 Subtle, sent up—what is it?—I listen;  
 Are you whispering it, and have been all the time, you sea-  
     waves?  
 Is that it from your liquid rims and wet sands?

Whereto answering, the sea,  
 Delaying not, hurrying not,

Whisper'd me through the night, and very plainly before day-  
break,  
Lisp'd to me the low and delicious word death,  
And again death, death, death, death,  
Hissing melodious, neither like the bird nor like my arous'd  
child's heart,  
But edging near as privately for me rustling at my feet,  
Creeping thence steadily up to my ears and laving me softly  
all over,  
Death, death, death, death, death.

Which I do not forget,  
But fuse the song of my dusky demon and brother,  
That he sang to me in the moonlight on Paumanok's gray  
beach,  
With the thousand responsive songs at random,  
My own songs awaked from that hour,  
And with them the key, the word up from the waves,  
The word of the sweetest song and all songs,  
That strong and delicious word which, creeping to my feet,  
(Or like some old crone rocking the cradle, swathed in sweet  
garments, bending aside,)  
The sea whisper'd me.

*Native Moments.*

Native moments—when you come upon me—ah you are here  
now,  
Give me now libidinous joys only,  
Give me the drench of my passions, give me life coarse and  
rank,  
To-day I go consort with Nature's darlings, to-night too,  
I am for those who believe in loose delights, I share the  
midnight orgies of young men,  
I dance with the dancers and drink with the drinkers,  
The echoes ring with our indecent calls, I pick out some low  
person for my dearest friend,  
He shall be lawless, rude, illiterate, he shall be one condemn'd  
by others for deeds done,  
I will play a part no longer, why should I exile myself from  
my companions?  
O you shunn'd persons, I at least do not shun you,  
I come forthwith in your midst, I will be your poet,  
I will be more to you than to any of the rest.

*Once I Pass'd through a Populous City.*

Once I pass'd through a populous city imprinting my brain  
for future use with its shows, architecture, customs,  
traditions,  
Yet now of all that city I remember only a woman I casually  
met there who detain'd me for love of me,  
Day by day and night by night we were together—all else has  
long been forgotten by me,  
I remember I say only that woman who passionately clung  
to me,  
Again we wander, we love, we separate again,  
Again she holds me by the hand, I must not go,  
I see her close beside me with silent lips sad and tremulous.



*Once I Passed through a Populous City*  
*[draft version]\**

Once I passed through a populous celebrated city, imprinting  
on my brain for future use, its shows, with its shows,  
architecture, customs and traditions

But now of all that city I remember only the man who  
wandered with me, there, for love of me,  
Day by day, and night by night, we were together,

All else has long been forgotten by me—I remember, I say,  
only one rude and ignorant man who, when I departed,  
long and long held me by the hand, with silent lip, sad  
and tremulous.—

\*Whitman had this version set in type, but altered it before publication. [Ed.]

*Facing West from California's Shores.*

Facing west from California's shores,  
Inquiring, tireless, seeking what is yet unfound,  
I, a child, very old, over waves, towards the house of  
maternity, the land of migrations, look afar,  
Look off the shores of my Western sea, the circle almost  
circled;  
For starting westward from Hindustan, from the vales of  
Kashmere,  
From Asia, from the north, from the God, the sage, and the  
hero,  
From the south, from the flowery peninsulas and the spice  
islands,  
Long having wander'd since, round the earth having  
wander'd,  
Now I face home again, very pleas'd and joyous,  
(But where is what I started for so long ago?  
And why is it yet unfound?)

*As Adam Early in the Morning.*

As Adam early in the morning,  
Walking forth from the bower refresh'd with sleep,  
Behold me where I pass, hear my voice, approach,  
Touch me, touch the palm of your hand to my body as I pass,  
Be not afraid of my body.

*Live Oak, with Moss.*

## I.

Not the heat flames up and consumes,  
Not the sea-waves hurry in and out,  
Not the air, delicious and dry, the air of the ripe summer,  
    bears lightly along white down-balls of myriads of seeds,  
    wafted, sailing gracefully, to drop where they may,  
Not these—O none of these, more than the flames of me,  
    consuming, burning for his love whom I love—O none,  
    more than I, hurrying in and out;  
Does the tide hurry, seeking something, and never give up?—  
    O I, the same to seek my life-long lover;  
O nor down-balls, nor perfumes, nor the high rain-emitting  
    clouds, are borne through the open air, more than my  
    copious soul is borne through the open air, wafted in all  
    directions, for friendship, for love.—

## II.

I saw in Louisiana a live-oak growing,  
All alone stood it, and the moss hung down from the  
    branches,  
Without any companion it grew there, glistening out joyous  
    leaves of dark green,  
And its look, rude, unbending, lusty, made me think of  
    myself;  
But I wondered how it could utter joyous leaves, standing  
    alone there without its friend, its lover—For I knew I  
    could not;  
And I plucked a twig with a certain number of leaves upon it,  
    and twined around it a little moss, and brought it away—  
    And I have placed it in sight in my room,

It is not needed to remind me as of my friends, (for I believe  
lately I think of little else than of them,)  
Yet it reminds to me a curious token—it makes me think of  
manly love,  
For all that, and though the live oak glistens there in  
Louisiana, solitary in a wide flat space, uttering joyous  
leaves all its life, without a friend, a lover, near—I know  
very well I could not.

### III.

When I heard at the close of the day how I had been praised  
in the Capitol, still it was not a happy night for me that  
followed;  
Nor when I caroused—Nor when my favorite plans were  
accomplished—was I really happy,  
But that day I rose at dawn from the bed of perfect health,  
electric, inhaling sweet breath,  
When I saw the full moon in the west grow pale and  
disappear in the morning light,  
When I wandered alone over the beach, and undressing,  
bathed, laughing with the waters, and saw the sun rise,  
And when I thought how my friend, my lover, was coming,  
then O I was happy;  
Each breath tasted sweeter—and all that day my food  
nourished me more—And the beautiful day passed well,  
And the next came with equal joy—And with the next, at  
evening, came my friend  
And that night, while all was still, I heard the waters roll  
slowly continually up the shores,  
I heard the hissing rustle of the liquid and sands, as directed  
to me, whispering, to congratulate me,—For the friend I  
love lay sleeping by my side,  
In the stillness his face was inclined towards me, while the  
moon's clear beams shone,  
And his arm lay lightly over my breast—And that night I was  
happy.

## IV.

This moment as I sit alone, yearning and pensive, it seems to me there are other men, in other lands, yearning and pensive.

It seems to me I can look over and behold them, in Germany, France, Spain—Or far away in China, India, or Russia—talking other dialects,

And it seems to me if I could know those men I should love them as I love men in my own lands,

It seems to me they are as wise, beautiful, benevolent, as any in my own lands;

O I think we should be brethren—I think I should be happy with them.

## V.

Long I thought that knowledge alone would suffice me—O if I could but obtain knowledge!

Then the lands of the prairies engrossed me—the south savannas engrossed me—For them I would live—I would be their orator;

Then I met the examples of old and new heroes—I heard of warriors, sailors, and all dauntless persons—And it seemed to me that I too had it in me to be as dauntless as any, and would be so;

And then to finish all, it came to me to strike up the songs of the New World—And then I believed my life must be spent in singing;

But now take notice, Land of the prairies, Land of the south savannas, Ohio's land,

Take notice, you Kanuck woods—and you, Lake Huron—and all that with you roll toward Niagara—and you Niagara also,

And you, Californian mountains—That you all find someone else that he be your singer of songs,

For I can be your singer of songs no longer—I have ceased to enjoy them.

I have found him who loves me, as I him, in perfect love,  
With the rest I dispense—I sever from all that I thought would  
suffice me, for it does not—it is now empty and tasteless  
to me,  
I heed the grandeur of The States, and the examples of heroes,  
no more,  
I am indifferent to my own songs—I am to go with him I love,  
and he is to go with me,  
It is to be enough for each of us that we are together—We  
never separate again.—

## VI.

What think you I have taken my pen to record?  
Not the battle-ship, perfect-model'd, majestic, that I saw  
today arrive in the offing, under full sail,  
Nor the splendors of the past day—nor the splendors of the  
night that envelopes me—Nor the glory and growth of  
the great city spread around me,  
But the two men I saw to-day on the pier, parting the parting  
of dear friends,  
The one to remain hung on the other's neck and passionately  
kissed him—while the one to depart tightly prest the one  
to remain in his arms.

## VII.

You bards of ages hence! when you refer to me, mind not so  
much my poems,  
Nor speak of me that I prophesied of The States and led them  
the way of their glories,  
But come, I will inform you who I was underneath that  
impassive exterior—I will tell you what to say of me,  
Publish my name and hang up my picture as that of the  
tenderest lover,  
The friend, the lover's portrait, of whom his friend, his lover,  
was fondest,

Who was not proud of his songs, but of the measureless ocean  
of love within him, and freely poured it forth,  
Who often walked lonesome walks thinking of his dearest  
friends, his lovers,  
Who pensive, away from one he loved, often lay sleepless and  
dissatisfied at night,  
Who, dreading lest the one he loved might after all be  
indifferent to him, felt the sick feeling—O sick! sick!  
Whose happiest days were those, far away through fields, in  
woods, on hills, he and another, wandering hand in hand,  
they twain, apart from other men.  
Who ever, as he sauntered the streets, curved with his arm the  
manly shoulder of his friend—while the curving arm of  
his friend rested upon him also.

VIII.

Hours continuing long, sore and heavy-hearted,  
Hours of the dusk, when I withdraw to a lonesome and  
unfrequented spot, seating myself, leaning my face in my  
hands,  
Hours sleepless, deep in the night, when I go forth, speeding  
swiftly the country roads, or through the city streets, or  
pacing miles and miles, stifling plaintive cries,  
Hours discouraged, distracted,—For he, the one I cannot  
content myself without—soon I saw him content with  
himself without me,  
Hours when I am forgotten—(O weeks and months are  
passing, but I believe I am never to forget!)  
Sullen and suffering hours—(I am ashamed—but it is  
useless—I am what I am;)  
Hours of torment—I wonder if other men ever have the like,  
out of the like feelings?  
Is there even one other like me—distracted—his friend, his  
lover, lost to him?  
Is he too as I am now? Does he still rise in the morning,  
dejected, thinking who is lost to him?



And at night awaking, think who is lost?  
 Does he too harbor his friendship silent and endless? harbor  
 his anguish and passion?  
 Does some stray reminder, or the casual mention of a name,  
 bring the fit back upon him, taciturn and deprest?  
 Does he see himself reflected in me? In these hours does he see  
 the face of his hours reflected?

## IX.

I dreamed in a dream of a city where all the men were like  
 brothers,  
 O I saw them tenderly love each other—I often saw them, in  
 numbers, walking hand in hand;  
 I dreamed that was the city of robust friends—Nothing was  
 greater there than manly love—it led the rest,  
 It was seen every hour in the actions of the men of that city,  
 and in all their looks and words.—

## X.

O you whom I often and silently come where you are, that I  
 may be with you,  
 As I walk by your side, or sit near, or remain in the same  
 room with you,  
 Little you know the subtle electric fire that for your sake is  
 playing within me.—

## XI.

Earth! Though you look so impassive, ample and spheric  
 there—I now suspect that is not all,  
 I now suspect there is something terrible in you, ready to  
 break forth,  
 For an athlete loves me,—and I him—But toward him there is  
 something fierce and terrible in me,  
 I dare not tell it in words—not even in these songs.

*XII.*

To the young man, many things to absorb, to engraft, to  
develop, I teach, that he be my eleve,  
But if through him speed not the blood of friendship, hot and  
red—If he be not silently selected by lovers, and do not  
silently select lovers—of what use were it for him to seek  
to become eleve of mine?

## CALAMUS

*In Paths Untrodden.*

In paths untrodden,  
 In the growth by margins of pond-waters,  
 Escaped from the life that exhibits itself,  
 From all the standards hitherto publish'd, from the pleasures,  
     profits, conformities,  
 Which too long I was offering to feed my soul,  
 Clear to me now standards not yet publish'd, clear to me that  
     my soul,  
 That the soul of the man I speak for rejoices in comrades,  
 Here by myself away from the clank of the world,  
 Tallying and talk'd to here by tongues aromatic,  
 No longer abash'd (for in this secluded spot I can respond as I  
     would not dare elsewhere,)  
 Strong upon me the life that does not exhibit itself, yet  
     contains all the rest,  
 Resolv'd to sing no songs to-day but those of manly attachment,  
 Projecting them along that substantial life,  
 Bequeathing hence types of athletic love,  
 Afternoon this delicious Ninth-month in my forty-first year,  
 I proceed for all who are or have been young men,  
 To tell the secret of my nights and days,  
 To celebrate the need of comrades.

*Scented Herbage of My Breast.*

Scented herbage of my breast,  
 Leaves from you I glean, I write, to be perused best  
     afterwards,  
 Tomb-leaves, body-leaves growing up above me above death,  
 Perennial roots, tall leaves, O the winter shall not freeze you  
     delicate leaves,

Every year shall you bloom again, out from where you retired  
you shall emerge again;  
O I do not know whether many passing by will discover you  
or inhale your faint odor, but I believe a few will;  
O slender leaves! O blossoms of my blood! I permit you to  
tell in your own way of the heart that is under you,  
O I do not know what you mean there underneath yourselves,  
you are not happiness,  
You are often more bitter than I can bear, you burn and sting  
me,  
Yet you are beautiful to me you faint tinged roots, you make  
me think of death,  
Death is beautiful from you, (what indeed is finally beautiful  
except death and love?)  
O I think it is not for life I am chanting here my chant of  
lovers, I think it must be for death,  
For how calm, how solemn it grows to ascend to the  
atmosphere of lovers,  
Death or life I am then indifferent, my soul declines to prefer,  
(I am not sure but the high soul of lovers welcomes death  
most,)  
Indeed O death, I think now these leaves mean precisely the  
same as you mean,  
Grow up taller sweet leaves that I may see! grow up out of my  
breast!  
Spring away from the conceal'd heart there!  
Do not fold yourself so in your pink-tinged roots timid leaves!  
Do not remain down there so ashamed, herbage of my breast!  
Come I am determin'd to unbare this broad breast of mine, I  
have long enough stifled and choked;  
Emblematic and capricious blades I leave you, now you serve  
me not,  
I will say what I have to say by itself,  
I will sound myself and comrades only, I will never again utter  
a call only their call,  
I will raise with it immortal reverberations through the States,  
I will give an example to lovers to take permanent shape and  
will through the States,

Through me shall the words be said to make death  
exhilarating,  
Give me your tone therefore O death, that I may accord  
with it,  
Give me yourself, for I see that you belong to me now above  
all, and are folded inseparably together, you love and  
death are,  
Nor will I allow you to balk me any more with what I was  
calling life,  
For now it is convey'd to me that you are the purports  
essential,  
That you hide in these shifting forms of life, for reasons, and  
that they are mainly for you,  
That you beyond them come forth to remain, the real reality,  
That behind the mask of materials you patiently wait, no  
matter how long,  
That you will one day perhaps take control of all,  
That you will perhaps dissipate this entire show of  
appearance,  
That may-be you are what it is all for, but it does not last so  
very long,  
But you will last very long.

*Whoever You Are Holding Me Now in Hand.*

Whoever you are holding me now in hand,  
Without one thing all will be useless,  
I give you fair warning before you attempt me further,  
I am not what you supposed, but far different.

Who is he that would become my follower?  
Who would sign himself a candidate for my affections?

The way is suspicious, the result uncertain, perhaps  
destructive,  
You would have to give up all else, I alone would expect to be  
your sole and exclusive standard,  
Your novitiate would even then be long and exhausting,

The whole past theory of your life and all conformity to the  
lives around you would have to be abandon'd,  
Therefore release me now before troubling yourself any  
further, let go your hand from my shoulders,  
Put me down and depart on your way.

Or else by stealth in some wood for trial,  
Or back of a rock in the open air,  
(For in any roof'd room of a house I emerge not, nor in  
company,  
And in libraries I lie as one dumb, a gawk, or unborn, or dead,)  
But just possibly with you on a high hill, first watching lest  
any person for miles around approach unawares,  
Or possibly with you sailing at sea, or on the beach of the sea  
of some quiet island,  
Here to put your lips upon mine I permit you,  
With the comrade's long-dwelling kiss or the new husband's  
kiss,  
For I am the new husband and I am the comrade.

Or if you will, thrusting me beneath your clothing,  
Where I may feel the throbs of your heart or rest upon your  
hip,  
Carry me when you go forth over land or sea;  
For thus merely touching you is enough, is best,  
And thus touching you would I silently sleep and be carried  
eternally.

But these leaves conning you con at peril,  
For these leaves and me you will not understand,  
They will elude you at first and still more afterward, I will  
certainly elude you,  
Even while you should think you had unquestionably caught  
me, behold!  
Already you see I have escaped from you.

For it is not for what I have put into it that I have written this  
book,

Nor is by reading it you will acquire it,  
 Nor do those know me best who admire me and vauntingly  
     praise me,  
 Nor will the candidates for my love (unless at most a very  
     few) prove victorious,  
 Nor will my poems do good only, they will do just as much  
     evil, perhaps more,  
 For all is useless without that which you may guess at many  
     times and not hit, that which I hinted at;  
 Therefore release me and depart on your way.

*For You O Democracy.*

Come, I will make the continent indissoluble,  
 I will make the most splendid race the sun ever shone upon,  
 I will make divine magnetic lands,  
     With the love of comrades,  
     With the life-long love of comrades.

I will plant companionship thick as trees along all the rivers  
     of America, and along the shores of the great lakes, and  
     all over the prairies,  
 I will make inseparable cities with their arms about each  
     other's necks,  
     By the love of comrades,  
     By the manly love of comrades.

For you these from me, O Democracy, to serve you ma  
     femme!  
 For you, for you I am trilling these songs.

*These I Singing in Spring.*

These I singing in spring collect for lovers,  
 (For who but I should understand lovers and all their sorrow  
     and joy?  
 And who but I should be the poet of comrades?)

Collecting I traverse the garden the world, but soon I pass the  
gates,  
Now along the pond-side, now wading in a little, fearing not  
the wet,  
Now by the post-and-rail fences where the old stones thrown  
there, pick'd from the fields, have accumulated,  
(Wild-flowers and vines and weeds come up through the  
stones and partly cover them, beyond these I pass,)  
Far, far in the forest, or sauntering later in summer, before I  
think where I go,  
Solitary, smelling the earthy smell, stopping now and then in  
the silence;  
Alone I had thought, yet soon a troop gathers around me,  
Some walk by my side and some behind, and some embrace  
my arms or neck,  
They the spirits of dear friends dead or alive, thicker they  
come, a great crowd, and I in the middle.  
Collecting, dispensing, singing, there I wander with them,  
Plucking something for tokens, tossing toward whoever is  
near me,  
Here, lilac, with a branch of pine,  
Here, out of my pocket, some moss which I pull'd off a live-  
oak in Florida as it hung trailing down,  
Here, some pinks and laurel leaves, and a handful of sage,  
And here what I now draw from the water, wading in the  
pond-side,  
(O here I last saw him that tenderly loves me, and returns  
again never to separate from me,  
And this, O this shall henceforth be the token of comrades,  
this calamus-root shall,  
Interchange it youths with each other! let none render it back!)  
And twigs of maple and a bunch of wild orange and chestnut,  
And stems of currants and plum-blows, and the aromatic cedar,  
These I compass'd around by a thick cloud of spirits,  
Wandering, point to or touch as I pass, or throw them loosely  
from me,  
Indicating to each one what he shall have, giving something  
to each;



But what I drew from the water by the pond-side, that I  
 reserve,  
 I will give of it, but only to them that love as I myself am  
 capable of loving.

*Of the Terrible Doubt of Appearances.*

Of the terrible doubt of appearances,  
 Of the uncertainty after all, that we may be deluded,  
 That may-be reliance and hope are but speculations after all,  
 That may-be identity beyond the grave is a beautiful fable  
 only,  
 May-be the things I perceive, the animals, plants, men, hills,  
 shining and flowing waters,  
 The skies of day and night, colors, densities, forms, may-be  
 these are (as doubtless they are) only apparitions, and the  
 real something has yet to be known,  
 (How often they dart out of themselves as if to confound me  
 and mock me!  
 How often I think neither I know, nor any man knows, aught  
 of them,)  
 May-be seeming to me what they are (as doubtless they  
 indeed but seem) as from my present point of view, and  
 might prove (as of course they would) nought of what  
 they appear, or nought anyhow, from entirely changed  
 points of view;  
 To me these and the like of these are curiously answer'd by  
 my lovers, my dear friends,  
 When he whom I love travels with me or sits a long while  
 holding me by the hand,  
 When the subtle air, the impalpable, the sense that words and  
 reason hold not, surround us and pervade us,  
 Then I am charged with untold and untellable wisdom, I am  
 silent, I require nothing further,  
 I cannot answer the question of appearances or that of  
 identity beyond the grave,  
 But I walk or sit indifferent, I am satisfied,  
 He ahold of my hand has completely satisfied me.

*The Base of All Metaphysics.*

And now gentlemen,  
A word I give to remain in your memories and minds,  
As base and final too for all metaphysics.

(So to the students the old professor,  
At the close of his crowded course.)

Having studied the new and antique, the Greek and Germanic  
systems,  
Kant having studied and stated, Fichte and Schelling and  
Hegel,  
Stated the lore of Plato, and Socrates greater than Plato,  
And greater than Socrates sought and stated, Christ divine  
having studied long,  
I see reminiscent to-day those Greek and Germanic systems,  
See the philosophies all, Christian churches and tenets see,  
Yet underneath Socrates clearly see, and underneath Christ  
the divine I see,  
The dear love of man for his comrade, the attraction of friend  
to friend,  
Of the well-married husband and wife, of children and  
parents,  
Of city for city and land for land.

*Are You the New Person Drawn toward Me?*

Are you the new person drawn toward me?  
To begin with take warning, I am surely far different from  
what you suppose;  
Do you suppose you will find in me your ideal?  
Do you think it is so easy to have me become your lover?  
Do you think the friendship of me would be unalloy'd  
satisfaction?  
Do you think I am trusty and faithful?  
Do you see no further than this façade, this smooth and  
tolerant manner of me?

Do you suppose yourself advancing on real ground toward a  
real heroic man?

Have you no thought O dreamer that it may be all maya,  
illusion?

*Roots and Leaves Themselves Alone.*

Roots and leaves themselves alone are these,  
Scents brought to men and women from the wild woods and  
pond-side,  
Breast-sorrel and pinks of love, fingers that wind around  
tighter than vines,  
Gushes from the throats of birds hid in the foliage of trees as  
the sun is risen,  
Breezes of land and love set from living shores to you on the  
living sea, to you O sailors!  
Frost-mellow'd berries and Third-month twigs offer'd fresh to  
young persons wandering out in the fields when the  
winter breaks up,  
Love-buds put before you and within you whoever you are,  
Buds to be unfolded on the old terms,  
If you bring the warmth of the sun to them they will open and  
bring form, color, perfume, to you,  
If you become the aliment and the wet they will become  
flowers, fruits, tall branches and trees.

*Of Him I Love Day and Night.*

Of him I love day and night I dream'd I heard he was dead,  
And I dream'd I went where they had buried him I love, but  
he was not in that place,  
And I dream'd I wander'd searching among burial-places to  
find him,  
And I found that every place was a burial-place;  
The houses full of life were equally full of death, (this house  
is now,)

The streets, the shipping, the places of amusement, the  
Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia, the Mannahatta, were as  
full of the dead as of the living,  
And fuller, O vastly fuller of the dead than of the living;  
And what I dream'd I will henceforth tell to every person and  
age,  
And I stand henceforth bound to what I dream'd,  
And now I am willing to disregard burial-places and dispense  
with them,  
And if the memorials of the dead were put up indifferently  
everywhere, even in the room where I eat or sleep, I  
should be satisfied,  
And if the corpse of any one I love, or if my own corpse, be  
duly render'd to powder and pour'd in the sea, I shall be  
satisfied,  
Or if it be distributed to the winds I shall be satisfied.

*City of Orgies.*

City of orgies, walks and joys,  
City whom that I have lived and sung in your midst will one  
day make you illustrious,  
Not the pageants of you, not your shifting tableaux, your  
spectacles, repay me,  
Not the interminable rows of your houses, nor the ships at the  
wharves,  
Nor the processions in the streets, nor the bright windows  
with goods in them,  
Nor to converse with learn'd persons, or bear my share in the  
soiree or feast;  
Not those, but as I pass O Manhattan, your frequent and  
swift flash of eyes offering me love,  
Offering response to my own—these repay me,  
Lovers, continual lovers, only repay me.

*To a Stranger.*

Passing stranger! you do not know how longingly I look upon  
you,  
You must be he I was seeking, or she I was seeking, (it comes  
to me as of a dream,)  
I have somewhere surely lived a life of joy with you,  
All is recall'd as we flit by each other, fluid, affectionate,  
chaste, matured,  
You grew up with me, were a boy with me or a girl with me,  
I ate with you and slept with you, your body has become not  
yours only nor left my body mine only,  
You give me the pleasure of your eyes, face, flesh, as we pass,  
you take of my beard, breast, hands, in return,  
I am not to speak to you, I am to think of you when I sit  
alone or wake at night alone,  
I am to wait, I do not doubt I am to meet you again,  
I am to see to it that I do not lose you.

*I Hear It Was Charged against Me.*

I hear it was charged against me that I sought to destroy  
institutions,  
But really I am neither for nor against institutions,  
(What indeed have I in common with them? or what with the  
destruction of them?)  
Only I will establish in the Mannahatta and in every city of  
these States inland and seaboard,  
And in the fields and woods, and above every keel little or  
large that dents the water,  
Without edifices or rules or trustees or any argument,  
The institution of the dear love of comrades.

*We Two Boys Together Clinging.*

We two boys together clinging,  
One the other never leaving,

Up and down the roads going, North and South excursions  
 making,  
 Power enjoying, elbows stretching, fingers clutching,  
 Arm'd and fearless, eating, drinking, sleeping, loving,  
 No law less than ourselves owning, sailing, soldiering,  
 thieving, threatening,  
 Misers, menials, priests alarming, air breathing, water  
 drinking, on the turf or the sea-beach dancing,  
 Cities wrenching, ease scorning, statutes mocking, feebleness  
 chasing,  
 Fulfilling our foray.

*Here the Frailest Leaves of Me.*

Here the frailest leaves of me and yet my strongest lasting,  
 Here I shade and hide my thoughts, I myself do not expose  
 them,  
 And yet they expose me more than all my other poems.

*A Glimpse.*

A glimpse through an interstice caught,  
 Of a crowd of workmen and drivers in a bar-room around the  
 stove late of a winter night, and I unremark'd seated in a  
 corner,  
 Of a youth who loves me and whom I love, silently  
 approaching and seating himself near, that he may hold  
 me by the hand,  
 A long while amid the noises of coming and going, of  
 drinking and oath and smutty jest,  
 There we two, content, happy in being together, speaking  
 little, perhaps not a word.

*Sometimes with One I Love.*

Sometimes with one I love I fill myself with rage for fear I  
 effuse unreturn'd love,

But now I think there is no unreturn'd love, the pay is certain  
one way or another,  
(I loved a certain person ardently and my love was not  
return'd,  
Yet out of that I have written these songs.)

*Among the Multitude.*

Among the men and women the multitude,  
I perceive one picking me out by secret and divine signs,  
Acknowledging none else, not parent, wife, husband, brother,  
child, any nearer than I am,  
Some are baffled, but that one is not—that one knows me.

Ah lover and perfect equal,  
I meant that you should discover me so by faint indirections,  
And I when I meet you mean to discover you by the like  
in you.

*That Shadow My Likeness.*

That shadow my likeness that goes to and fro seeking a  
livelihood, chattering, chaffering,  
How often I find myself standing and looking at it where it  
flits,  
How often I question and doubt whether that is really me;  
But among my lovers and caroling these songs,  
O I never doubt whether that is really me.

*Full of Life Now.*

Full of life now, compact, visible,  
I, forty years old the eighty-third year of the States,  
To one a century hence or any number of centuries hence,  
To you yet unborn these, seeking you.

When you read these I that was visible am become invisible,  
Now it is you, compact, visible, realizing my poems,  
    seeking me,  
Fancying how happy you were if I could be with you and  
    become your comrade;  
Be it as if I were with you. (Be not too certain but I am now  
    with you.)



*To Him That Was Crucified.*

My spirit to yours dear brother,  
Do not mind because many sounding your name do not  
understand you,  
I do not sound your name, but I understand you,  
I specify you with joy O my comrade to salute you, and to  
salute those who are with you, before and since, and  
those to come also,  
That we all labor together transmitting the same charge and  
succession,  
We few equals indifferent of lands, indifferent of times,  
We, enclosers of all continents, all castes, allowers of all  
theologies,  
Compassionaters, perceivers, rapport of men,  
We walk silent among disputes and assertions, but reject not  
the disputers nor any thing that is asserted,  
We hear the bawling and din, we are reach'd at by divisions,  
jealousies, recriminations on every side,  
They close peremptorily upon us to surround us, my comrade,  
Yet we walk unheld, free, the whole earth over, journeying up  
and down till we make our ineffaceable mark upon time  
and the diverse eras,  
Till we saturate time and eras, that the men and women of  
races, ages to come, may prove brethren and lovers as  
we are.

*To a Common Prostitute.*

Be composed—be at ease with me—I am Walt Whitman,  
liberal and lusty as Nature,  
Not till the sun excludes you do I exclude you,  
Not till the waters refuse to glisten for you and the leaves to  
rustle for you, do my words refuse to glisten and rustle  
for you.  
My girl I appoint with you an appointment, and I charge you  
that you make preparation to be worthy to meet me,  
And I charge you that you be patient and perfect till I come.  
  
Till then I salute you with a significant look that you do not  
forget me.

*To You.*

Stranger, if you passing meet me and desire to speak to me,  
    why should you not speak to me?  
And why should I not speak to you?

*Mannahatta.*

I was asking for something specific and perfect for my city,  
Whereupon lo! upsprang the aboriginal name.

Now I see what there is in a name, a word, liquid, sane,  
    unruly, musical, self-sufficient,  
I see that the word of my city is that word from of old,  
Because I see that word nested in nests of water-bays,  
    superb,  
Rich, hemm'd thick all around with sailships and steamships,  
    an island sixteen miles long, solid-founded,  
Numberless crowded streets, high growths of iron, slender,  
    strong, light, splendidly uprising toward clear skies,  
Tides swift and ample, well-loved by me, toward sundown,  
The flowing sea-currents, the little islands, larger adjoining  
    islands, the heights, the villas,  
The countless masts, the white shore-steamers, the lighters,  
    the ferry-boats, the black sea-steamers well-model'd,  
The down-town streets, the jobbers' houses of business, the  
    houses of business of the ship-merchants and money-  
    brokers, the river-streets,  
Immigrants arriving, fifteen or twenty thousand a week,  
The carts hauling goods, the manly race of drivers of horses,  
    the brown-faced sailors,  
The summer air, the bright sun shining, and the sailing clouds  
    aloft,  
The winter snows, the sleigh-bells, the broken ice in the  
    river, passing along up or down with the flood-tide or  
    ebb-tide,  
The mechanics of the city, the masters, well-form'd, beautiful-  
    faced, looking you straight in the eyes,  
Trottoirs throng'd, vehicles, Broadway, the women, the shops  
    and shows,

A million people—manners free and superb—open voices—  
hospitality—the most courageous and friendly young  
men,  
City of hurried and sparkling waters! city of spires and masts!  
City nested in bays! my city!

*A Hand-Mirror.*

Hold it up sternly—see this it sends back, (who is it? is it you?)  
Outside fair costume, within ashes and filth,  
No more a flashing eye, no more a sonorous voice or springy  
    step,  
Now some slave's eye, voice, hands, step,  
A drunkard's breath, unwholesome eater's face, venerealee's  
    flesh,  
Lungs rotting away piecemeal, stomach sour and cankerous,  
Joints rheumatic, bowels clogged with abomination,  
Blood circulating dark and poisonous streams,  
Words babble, hearing and touch callous,  
No brain, no heart left, no magnetism of sex;  
Such from one look in this looking-glass ere you go hence,  
Such a result so soon—and from such a beginning!

*Visor'd.*

A mask, a perpetual natural disguiser of herself,  
Concealing her face, concealing her form,  
Changes and transformations every hour, every moment,  
Falling upon her even when she sleeps.

*As if a Phantom Caress'd Me.*

As if a phantom caress'd me,  
I thought I was not alone walking here by the shore;  
But the one I thought was with me as now I walk by the  
    shore, the one I loved that caress'd me,  
As I lean and look through the glimmering light, that one has  
    utterly disappear'd,  
And those appear that are hateful to me and mock me.



*So Long!*

To conclude, I announce what comes after me.

I remember I said before my leaves sprang at all,  
I would raise my voice jocund and strong with reference to  
consummations.

When America does what was promis'd,  
When through these States walk a hundred millions of superb  
persons,  
When the rest part away for superb persons and contribute to  
them,  
When breeds of the most perfect mothers denote America,  
Then to me and mine our due fruition.

I have press'd through in my own right,  
I have sung the body and the soul, war and peace have I sung,  
and the songs of life and death,  
And the songs of birth, and shown that there are many births.

I have offer'd my style to every one, I have journey'd with  
confident step;  
While my pleasure is yet at the full I whisper *So long!*  
And take the young woman's hand and the young man's hand  
for the last time.

I announce natural persons to arise,  
I announce justice triumphant,  
I announce uncompromising liberty and equality,  
I announce the justification of candor and the justification of  
pride.

I announce that the identity of these States is a single identity  
only,

I announce the Union more and more compact, indissoluble,  
I announce splendors and majesties to make all the previous  
politics of the earth insignificant.

I announce adhesiveness, I say it shall be limitless, unloosen'd,  
I say you shall yet find the friend you were looking for.

I announce a man or woman coming, perhaps you are the  
one, (*So long!*)

I announce the great individual, fluid as Nature, chaste,  
affectionate, compassionate, fully arm'd.

I announce a life that shall be copious, vehement, spiritual,  
bold,

I announce an end that shall lightly and joyfully meet its  
translation.

I announce myriads of youths, beautiful, gigantic, sweet-  
blooded,

I announce a race of splendid and savage old men.

O thicker and faster—(*So long!*)

O crowding too close upon me,

I foresee too much, it means more than I thought,

It appears to me I am dying.

Hasten throat and sound your last,

Salute me—salute the days once more. Peel the old cry once  
more.

Screaming electric, the atmosphere using,

At random glancing, each as I notice absorbing,

Swiftly on, but a little while alighting,

Curious envelop'd messages delivering,

Sparkles hot, seed ethereal down in the dirt dropping,

Myself unknowing, my commission obeying, to question it  
never daring,

To ages and ages yet the growth of the seed leaving,

To troops out of the war arising, they the tasks I have set  
 promulging,  
 To women certain whispers of myself bequeathing, their  
 affection me more clearly explaining,  
 To young men my problems offering—no dallier I—I the  
 muscle of their brains trying,  
 So I pass, a little time vocal, visible, contrary,  
 Afterward a melodious echo, passionately bent for, (death  
 making me really undying,)  
 The best of me then when no longer visible, for toward that I  
 have been incessantly preparing.

What is there more, that I lag and pause and crouch extended  
 with unshut mouth?  
 Is there a single final farewell?

My songs cease, I abandon them,  
 From behind the screen where I hid I advance personally  
 solely to you.

Camerado, this is no book,  
 Who touches this touches a man,  
 (Is it night? Are we here together alone?)  
 It is I you hold and who holds you,  
 I spring from the pages into your arms—decease calls me forth.

O how your fingers drowse me,  
 Your breath falls around me like dew, your pulse lulls the  
 tympan of my ears,  
 I feel immersed from head to foot,  
 Delicious, enough.

Enough O deed impromptu and secret,  
 Enough O gliding present—enough O summ'd-up past.

Dear friend whoever you are take this kiss,  
 I give it especially to you, do not forget me,  
 I feel like one who has done work for the day to retire awhile,

I receive now again of my many translations, from my  
    avataras ascending, while others doubtless await me,  
An unknown sphere more real than I dream'd, more direct,  
    darts awakening rays about me, *So long!*  
Remember my words, I may again return,  
I love you, I depart from materials,  
I am as one disembodied, triumphant, dead.

1865-66

DRUM-TAPS [1865]  
AND  
SEQUEL TO DRUM-TAPS [1865-66]

*Shut Not Your Doors.*

Shut not your doors to me proud libraries,  
For that which was lacking on all your well-fill'd shelves, yet  
needed most, I bring,  
Forth from the war emerging, a book I have made,  
The words of my book nothing, the drift of it every thing,  
A book separate, not link'd with the rest nor felt by the  
intellect,  
But you ye untold latencies will thrill to every page.

*Beat! Beat! Drums!*

Beat! beat! drums!—blow! bugles! blow!  
Through the windows—through doors—burst like a ruthless  
force,  
Into the solemn church, and scatter the congregation,  
Into the school where the scholar is studying;  
Leave not the bridegroom quiet—no happiness must he have  
now with his bride,  
Nor the peaceful farmer any peace, ploughing his field or  
gathering his grain,

So fierce you whirr and pound you drums—so shrill you  
bugles blow.

Beat! beat! drums!—blow! bugles! blow!  
Over the traffic of cities—over the rumble of wheels in the  
streets;  
Are beds prepared for sleepers at night in the houses? no  
sleepers must sleep in those beds,  
No bargainers' bargains by day—no brokers or speculators—  
would they continue?  
Would the talkers be talking? would the singer attempt to  
sing?  
Would the lawyer rise in the court to state his case before the  
judge?  
Then rattle quicker, heavier drums—you bugles wilder blow.

Beat! beat! drums!—blow! bugles! blow!  
Make no parley—stop for no expostulation,  
Mind not the timid—mind not the weeper or prayer,  
Mind not the old man beseeching the young man,  
Let not the child's voice be heard, nor the mother's entreaties,  
Make even the trestles to shake the dead where they lie  
awaiting the hearses,  
So strong you thump O terrible drums—so loud you bugles  
blow.

*City of Ships.*

City of ships!  
(O the black ships! O the fierce ships!  
O the beautiful sharp-bow'd steam-ships and sail-ships!)  
City of the world! (for all races are here,  
All the lands of the earth make contributions here;)  
City of the sea! city of hurried and glittering tides!  
City whose gleeful tides continually rush or recede, whirling  
in and out with eddies and foam!  
City of wharves and stores—city of tall façades of marble and  
iron!

Proud and passionate city—mettlesome, mad, extravagant  
 city!  
 Spring up O city—not for peace alone, but be indeed yourself,  
 warlike!  
 Fear not—submit to no models but your own O city!  
 Behold me—incarnate me as I have incarnated you!  
 I have rejected nothing you offer'd me—whom you adopted I  
 have adopted,  
 Good or bad I never question you—I love all—I do not  
 condemn any thing,  
 I chant and celebrate all that is yours—yet peace no more,  
 In peace I chanted peace, but now the drum of war is mine,  
 War, red war is my song through your streets, O city!

*Cavalry Crossing a Ford.*

A line in long array where they wind betwixt green islands,  
 They take a serpentine course, their arms flash in the sun—  
 hark to the musical clank,  
 Behold the silvery river, in it the splashing horses loitering  
 stop to drink,  
 Behold the brown-faced men, each group, each person a  
 picture, the negligent rest on the saddles,  
 Some emerge on the opposite bank, others are just entering  
 the ford—while,  
 Scarlet and blue and snowy white,  
 The guidon flags flutter gayly in the wind.

*Bivouac on a Mountain Side.*

I see before me now a traveling army halting,  
 Below a fertile valley spread, with barns and the orchards of  
 summer,  
 Behind, the terraced sides of a mountain, abrupt, in places  
 rising high,  
 Broken, with rocks, with clinging cedars, with tall shapes  
 dingily seen,

The numerous camp-fires scatter'd near and far, some away  
up on the mountain,  
The shadowy forms of men and horses, looming, large-sized,  
flickering,  
And over all the sky—the sky! far, far out of reach, studded,  
breaking out, the eternal stars.

*An Army Corps on the March.*

With its cloud of skirmishers in advance,  
With now the sound of a single shot snapping like a whip,  
and now an irregular volley,  
The swarming ranks press on and on, the dense brigades  
press on,  
Glittering dimly, toiling under the sun—the dust-cover'd men,  
In columns rise and fall to the undulations of the ground,  
With artillery interspers'd—the wheels rumble, the horses  
sweat,  
As the army corps advances.

*By the Bivouac's Fitful Flame.*

By the bivouac's fitful flame,  
A procession winding around me, solemn and sweet and  
slow—but first I note,  
The tents of the sleeping army, the fields' and woods' dim  
outline,  
The darkness lit by spots of kindled fire, the silence,  
Like a phantom far or near an occasional figure moving,  
The shrubs and trees, (as I lift my eyes they seem to be  
stealthily watching me,)  
While wind in procession thoughts, O tender and wondrous  
thoughts,  
Of life and death, of home and the past and loved, and of  
those that are far away;  
A solemn and slow procession there as I sit on the ground,  
By the bivouac's fitful flame.



*Come Up from the Fields Father.*

Come up from the fields father, here's a letter from our Pete,  
 And come to the front door mother, here's a letter from thy  
 dear son.

Lo, 'tis autumn,  
 Lo, where the trees, deeper green, yellower and redder,  
 Cool and sweeten Ohio's villages with leaves fluttering in the  
 moderate wind,  
 Where apples ripe in the orchards hang and grapes on the  
 trellis'd vines,  
 (Smell you the smell of the grapes on the vines?  
 Smell you the buckwheat where the bees were lately buzzing?)  
 Above all, lo, the sky so calm, so transparent after the rain,  
 and with wondrous clouds,  
 Below too, all calm, all vital and beautiful, and the farm  
 prospers well.

Down in the fields all prospers well,  
 But now from the fields come father, come at the daughter's  
 call,  
 And come to the entry mother, to the front door come right  
 away.

Fast as she can she hurries, something ominous, her steps  
 trembling,  
 She does not tarry to smooth her hair nor adjust her cap.

Open the envelope quickly,  
 O this is not our son's writing, yet his name is sign'd,  
 O a strange hand writes for our dear son, O stricken mother's  
 soul!  
 All swims before her eyes, flashes with black, she catches the  
 main words only,  
 Sentences broken, *gunshot wound in the breast, cavalry  
 skirmish, taken to hospital,*  
*At present low, but will soon be better.*

Ah now the single figure to me,  
Amid all teeming and wealthy Ohio with all its cities and  
farms,  
Sickly white in the face and dull in the head, very faint,  
By the jamb of a door leans.

*Grieve not so, dear mother, (the just-grown daughter speaks  
through her sobs,  
The little sisters huddle around speechless and dismay'd,)  
See, dearest mother, the letter says Pete will soon be better.*

Alas poor boy, he will never be better, (nor may-be needs to  
be better, that brave and simple soul,)  
While they stand at home at the door he is dead already,  
The only son is dead.

But the mother needs to be better,  
She with thin form presently drest in black,  
By day her meals untouch'd, then at night fitfully sleeping,  
often waking,  
In the midnight waking, weeping, longing with one deep  
longing,  
O that she might withdraw unnoticed, silent from life escape  
and withdraw,  
To follow, to seek, to be with her dear dead son.

*Vigil Strange I Kept on the Field One Night.*

Vigil strange I kept on the field one night;  
When you my son and my comrade dropt at my side that day,  
One look I but gave which your dear eyes return'd with a  
look I shall never forget,  
One touch of your hand to mine O boy, reach'd up as you lay  
on the ground,  
Then onward I sped in the battle, the even-contested battle,  
Till late in the night reliev'd to the place at last again I made  
my way,

Found you in death so cold dear comrade, found your body  
     son of responding kisses, (never again on earth  
     responding,)

Bared your face in the starlight, curious the scene, cool blew  
     the moderate night-wind,

Long there and then in vigil I stood, dimly around me the  
     battle-field spreading,

Vigil wondrous and vigil sweet there in the fragrant silent  
     night,

But not a tear fell, not even a long-drawn sigh, long, long I  
     gazed,

Then on the earth partially reclining sat by your side leaning  
     my chin in my hands,

Passing sweet hours, immortal and mystic hours with you  
     dearest comrade—not a tear, not a word,

Vigil of silence, love and death, vigil for you my son and my  
     soldier,

As onward silently stars aloft, eastward new ones upward  
     stole,

Vigil final for you brave boy, (I could not save you, swift was  
     your death,

I faithfully loved you and cared for you living, I think we shall  
     surely meet again,)

Till at latest lingering of the night, indeed just as the dawn  
     appear'd,

My comrade I wrapt in his blanket, envelop'd well his  
     form,

Folded the blanket well, tucking it carefully over head and  
     carefully under feet,

And there and then and bathed by the rising sun, my son in  
     his grave, in his rude-dug grave I deposited,

Ending my vigil strange with that, vigil of night and battle-  
     field dim,

Vigil for boy of responding kisses, (never again on earth  
     responding,)

Vigil for comrade swiftly slain, I never forget, how as day  
     brighten'd,

I rose from the chill ground and folded my soldier well in his  
blanket,  
And buried him where he fell.

*A March in the Ranks Hard-Prest,  
and the Road Unknown.*

A march in the ranks hard-prest, and the road unknown,  
A route through a heavy wood with muffled steps in the  
darkness,  
Our army foil'd with loss severe, and the sullen remnant  
retreating,  
Till after midnight glimmer upon us the lights of a dim-lighted  
building,  
We come to an open space in the woods, and halt by the  
dim-lighted building,  
'Tis a large old church at the crossing roads, now an  
impromptu hospital,  
Entering but for a minute I see a sight beyond all the pictures  
and poems ever made,  
Shadows of deepest, deepest black, just lit by moving candles  
and lamps,  
And by one great pitchy torch stationary with wild red flame  
and clouds of smoke,  
By these, crowds, groups of forms vaguely I see on the floor,  
some in the pews laid down,  
At my feet more distinctly a soldier, a mere lad, in danger of  
bleeding to death, (he is shot in the abdomen,)  
I stanch the blood temporarily, (the youngster's face is white  
as a lily,)  
Then before I depart I sweep my eyes o'er the scene fain to  
absorb it all,  
Faces, varieties, postures beyond description, most in  
obscurity, some of them dead,  
Surgeons operating, attendants holding lights, the smell of  
ether, the odor of blood,  
The crowd, O the crowd of the bloody forms, the yard  
outside also fill'd,

Some on the bare ground, some on planks or stretchers, some  
 in the death-spasm sweating,  
 An occasional scream or cry, the doctor's shouted orders or  
 calls,  
 The glisten of the little steel instruments catching the glint of  
 the torches,  
 These I resume as I chant, I see again the forms, I smell the  
 odor,  
 Then hear outside the orders given, *Fall in, my men, fall in;*  
 But first I bend to the dying lad, his eyes open, a half-smile  
 gives he me,  
 Then the eyes close, calmly close, and I speed forth to the  
 darkness,  
 Resuming, marching, ever in darkness marching, on in the  
 ranks,  
 The unknown road still marching.

*A Sight in Camp in the Daybreak Gray and Dim.*

A sight in camp in the daybreak gray and dim,  
 As from my tent I emerge so early sleepless,  
 As slow I walk in the cool fresh air the path near by the  
 hospital tent,  
 Three forms I see on stretchers lying, brought out there  
 untended lying,  
 Over each the blanket spread, ample brownish woolen blanket,  
 Gray and heavy blanket, folding, covering all.

Curious I halt and silent stand,  
 Then with light fingers I from the face of the nearest the first  
 just lift the blanket;  
 Who are you elderly man so gaunt and grim, with well-gray'd  
 hair, and flesh all sunken about the eyes?  
 Who are you my dear comrade?

Then to the second I step—and who are you my child and  
 darling?  
 Who are you sweet boy with cheeks yet blooming?

Then to the third—a face nor child nor old, very calm, as of  
 beautiful yellow-white ivory;  
 Young man I think I know you—I think this face is the face of  
 the Christ himself,  
 Dead and divine and brother of all, and here again he lies.

*As Toilsome I Wander'd Virginia's Woods.*

As toilsome I wander'd Virginia's woods,  
 To the music of rustling leaves kick'd by my feet, (for 'twas  
 autumn,)  
 I mark'd at the foot of a tree the grave of a soldier;  
 Mortally wounded he and buried on the retreat, (easily all  
 could I understand,)  
 The halt of a mid-day hour, when up! no time to lose—yet  
 this sign left,  
 On a tablet scrawl'd and nail'd on the tree by the grave,  
*Bold, cautious, true, and my loving comrade.*

Long, long I muse, then on my way go wandering,  
 Many a changeful season to follow, and many a scene of life,  
 Yet at times through changeful season and scene, abrupt,  
 alone, or in the crowded street,  
 Comes before me the unknown soldier's grave, comes the  
 inscription rude in Virginia's woods,  
*Bold, cautious, true, and my loving comrade.*

*The Wound-Dresser.*

I

An old man bending I come among new faces,  
 Years looking backward resuming in answer to children,  
 Come tell us old man, as from young men and maidens that  
 love me,  
 (Arous'd and angry, I'd thought to beat the alarum, and urge  
 relentless war,

But soon my fingers fail'd me, my face droop'd and I resign'd  
 myself,  
 To sit by the wounded and soothe them, or silently watch the  
 dead;)

Years hence of these scenes, of these furious passions, these  
 chances,  
 Of unsurpass'd heroes, (was one side so brave? the other was  
 equally brave;)

Now be witness again, paint the mightiest armies of earth,  
 Of those armies so rapid so wondrous what saw you to tell us?  
 What stays with you latest and deepest? of curious panics,  
 Of hard-fought engagements or sieges tremendous what  
 deepest remains?

## 2

O maidens and young men I love and that love me,  
 What you ask of my days those the strangest and sudden your  
 talking recalls,  
 Soldier alert I arrive after a long march cover'd with sweat  
 and dust,  
 In the nick of time I come, plunge in the fight, loudly shout in  
 the rush of successful charge,  
 Enter the captur'd works—yet lo, like a swift-running river  
 they fade,  
 Pass and are gone they fade—I dwell not on soldiers' perils or  
 soldiers' joys,  
 (Both I remember well—many the hardships, few the joys, yet  
 I was content.)

But in silence, in dreams' projections,  
 While the world of gain and appearance and mirth goes on,  
 So soon what is over forgotten, and waves wash the imprints  
 off the sand,  
 With hinged knees returning I enter the doors, (while for you  
 up there,  
 Whoever you are, follow without noise and be of strong  
 heart.)

Bearing the bandages, water and sponge,  
Straight and swift to my wounded I go,  
Where they lie on the ground after the battle brought in,  
Where their priceless blood reddens the grass the ground,  
Or to the rows of the hospital tent, or under the roof'd  
    hospital,  
To the long rows of cots up and down each side I return,  
To each and all one after another I draw near, not one do I  
    miss,  
An attendant follows holding a tray, he carries a refuse pail,  
Soon to be fill'd with clotted rags and blood, emptied, and  
    fill'd again.

I onward go, I stop,  
With hinged knees and steady hand to dress wounds,  
I am firm with each, the pangs are sharp yet unavoidable,  
One turns to me his appealing eyes—poor boy! I never knew  
    you,  
Yet I think I could not refuse this moment to die for you, if  
    that would save you.

## 3

On, on I go, (open doors of time! open hospital doors!)  
The crush'd head I dress, (poor crazed hand tear not the  
    bandage away,)  
The neck of the cavalry-man with the bullet through and  
    through I examine,  
Hard the breathing rattles, quite glazed already the eye, yet  
    life struggles hard,  
(Come sweet death! be persuaded O beautiful death!  
In mercy come quickly.)

From the stump of the arm, the amputated hand,  
I undo the clotted lint, remove the slough, wash off the matter  
    and blood,  
Back on his pillow the soldier bends with curv'd neck and side  
    falling head,



His eyes are closed, his face is pale, he dares not look on the  
 bloody stump,  
 And has not yet look'd on it.

I dress a wound in the side, deep, deep,  
 But a day or two more, for see the frame all wasted and  
 sinking,  
 And the yellow-blue countenance see.

I dress the perforated shoulder, the foot with the bullet-  
 wound,  
 Cleanse the one with a gnawing and putrid gangrene, so  
 sickening, so offensive,  
 While the attendant stands behind aside me holding the tray  
 and pail.

I am faithful, I do not give out,  
 The fractur'd thigh, the knee, the wound in the abdomen,  
 These and more I dress with impassive hand, (yet deep in my  
 breast a fire, a burning flame.)

## 4

Thus in silence in dreams' projections,  
 Returning, resuming, I thread my way through the hospitals,  
 The hurt and wounded I pacify with soothing hand,  
 I sit by the restless all the dark night, some are so young,  
 Some suffer so much, I recall the experience sweet and sad,  
 (Many a soldier's loving arms about this neck have cross'd  
 and rested,  
 Many a soldier's kiss dwells on these bearded lips.)

*When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer.*

When I heard the learn'd astronomer,  
 When the proofs, the figures, were ranged in columns  
 before me,

When I was shown the charts and diagrams, to add, divide,  
and measure them,  
When I sitting heard the astronomer where he lectured with  
much applause in the lecture-room,  
How soon unaccountable I became tired and sick,  
Till rising and gliding out I wander'd off by myself,  
In the mystical moist night-air, and from time to time,  
Look'd up in perfect silence at the stars.

*A Farm Picture.*

Through the ample open door of the peaceful country barn,  
A sunlight pasture field with cattle and horses feeding,  
And haze and vista, and the far horizon fading away.

*Give Me the Splendid Silent Sun.*

I

Give me the splendid silent sun with all his beams full-dazzling,  
Give me juicy autumnal fruit ripe and red from the orchard,  
Give me a field where the unmow'd grass grows,  
Give me an arbor, give me the trellis'd grape,  
Give me fresh corn and wheat, give me serene-moving animals  
teaching content,  
Give me nights perfectly quiet as on high plateaus west of the  
Mississippi, and I looking up at the stars,  
Give me odorous at sunrise a garden of beautiful flowers  
where I can walk undisturb'd,  
Give me for marriage a sweet-breath'd woman of whom I  
should never tire,  
Give me a perfect child, give me away aside from the noise of  
the world a rural domestic life,  
Give me to warble spontaneous songs recluse by myself, for  
my own ears only,  
Give me solitude, give me Nature, give me again O Nature  
your primal sanities!

These demanding to have them, (tired with ceaseless  
 excitement, and rack'd by the war-strife,)  
 These to procure incessantly asking, rising in cries from my  
 heart,  
 While yet incessantly asking still I adhere to my city,  
 Day upon day and year upon year O city, walking your  
 streets,  
 Where you hold me enchain'd a certain time refusing to give  
 me up,  
 Yet giving to make me glutted, enrich'd of soul, you give me  
 forever faces;  
 (O I see what I sought to escape, confronting, reversing my  
 cries,  
 I see my own soul trampling down what it ask'd for.)

## 2

Keep your splendid silent sun,  
 Keep your woods O Nature, and the quiet places by the woods,  
 Keep your fields of clover and timothy, and your corn-fields  
 and orchards,  
 Keep the blossoming buckwheat fields where the Ninth-  
 month bees hum;  
 Give me faces and streets—give me these phantoms incessant  
 and endless along the trottoirs!  
 Give me interminable eyes—give me women—give me  
 comrades and lovers by the thousand!  
 Let me see new ones every day—let me hold new ones by the  
 hand every day!  
 Give me such shows—give me the streets of Manhattan!  
 Give me Broadway, with the soldiers marching—give me the  
 sound of the trumpets and drums!  
 (The soldiers in companies or regiments—some starting away,  
 flush'd and reckless,  
 Some, their time up, returning with thinn'd ranks, young, yet  
 very old, worn, marching, noticing nothing;)  
 Give me the shores and wharves heavy-fringed with black  
 ships!

O such for me! O an intense life, full to repletion and varied!  
 The life of the theatre, bar-room, huge hotel, for me!  
 The saloon of the steamer! the crowded excursion for me! the  
   torchlight procession!  
 The dense brigade bound for the war, with high piled military  
   wagons following;  
 People, endless, streaming, with strong voices, passions,  
   pageants,  
 Manhattan streets with their powerful throbs, with beating  
   drums as now,  
 The endless and noisy chorus, the rustle and clank of muskets,  
   (even the sight of the wounded,)  
 Manhattan crowds, with their turbulent musical chorus!  
 Manhattan faces and eyes forever for me.

*To a Certain Civilian.*

Did you ask dulcet rhymes from me?  
 Did you seek the civilian's peaceful and languishing rhymes?  
 Did you find what I sang erewhile so hard to follow?  
 Why I was not singing erewhile for you to follow, to  
   understand—nor am I now;  
 (I have been born of the same as the war was born,  
 The drum-corps' rattle is ever to me sweet music, I love well  
   the martial dirge,  
 With slow wail and convulsive throb leading the officer's  
   funeral;)  
 What to such as you anyhow such a poet as I? therefore leave  
   my works,  
 And go lull yourself with what you can understand, and with  
   piano-tunes,  
 For I lull nobody, and you will never understand me.

*Years of the Modern.*

Years of the modern! years of the unperform'd!  
 Your horizon rises, I see it parting away for more august  
   dramas,

I see not America only, not only Liberty's nation but other  
     nations preparing,  
 I see tremendous entrances and exits, new combinations, the  
     solidarity of races,  
 I see that force advancing with irresistible power on the  
     world's stage,  
 (Have the old forces, the old wars, played their parts? are the  
     acts suitable to them closed?)  
 I see Freedom, completely arm'd and victorious and very  
     haughty, with Law on one side and Peace on the other,  
 A stupendous trio all issuing forth against the idea of caste;  
 What historic denouements are these we so rapidly approach?  
 I see men marching and countermarching by swift millions,  
 I see the frontiers and boundaries of the old aristocracies  
     broken,  
 I see the landmarks of European kings removed,  
 I see this day the People beginning their landmarks, (all others  
     give way;)  
 Never were such sharp questions ask'd as this day,  
 Never was average man, his soul, more energetic, more like a  
     God,  
 Lo, how he urges and urges, leaving the masses no rest!  
 His daring foot is on land and sea everywhere, he colonizes  
     the Pacific, the archipelagoes,  
 With the steamship, the electric telegraph, the newspaper, the  
     wholesale engines of war,  
 With these and the world-spreading factories he interlinks all  
     geography, all lands;  
 What whispers are these O lands, running ahead of you,  
     passing under the seas?  
 Are all nations communing? is there going to be but one heart  
     to the globe?  
 Is humanity forming en-masse? for lo, tyrants tremble, crowns  
     grow dim,  
 The earth, restive, confronts a new era, perhaps a general  
     divine war,  
 No one knows what will happen next, such portents fill the  
     days and nights;

Years prophetic! the space ahead as I walk, as I vainly try to  
pierce it, is full of phantoms,  
Unborn deeds, things soon to be, project their shapes  
around me,  
This incredible rush and heat, this strange ecstatic fever of  
dreams O years!  
Your dreams O years, how they penetrate through me! (I  
know not whether I sleep or wake;)  
The perform'd America and Europe grow dim, retiring in  
shadow behind me,  
The unperform'd, more gigantic than ever, advance, advance  
upon me.

*Over the Carnage Rose Prophetic a Voice.*

Over the carnage rose prophetic a voice,  
Be not dishearten'd, affection shall solve the problems of  
freedom yet,  
Those who love each other shall become invincible,  
They shall yet make Columbia victorious.

Sons of the Mother of All, you shall yet be victorious,  
You shall yet laugh to scorn the attacks of all the remainder of  
the earth.

No danger shall balk Columbia's lovers,  
If need be a thousand shall sternly immolate themselves for  
one.

One from Massachusetts shall be a Missourian's comrade,  
From Maine and from hot Carolina, and another an  
Oregonese, shall be friends triune,  
More precious to each other than all the riches of the earth.

To Michigan, Florida perfumes shall tenderly come,  
Not the perfumes of flowers, but sweeter, and wafted beyond  
death.

It shall be customary in the houses and streets to see manly  
 affection,  
 The most dauntless and rude shall touch face to face lightly,  
 The dependence of Liberty shall be lovers,  
 The continuance of Equality shall be comrades.

These shall tie you and band you stronger than hoops of iron,  
 I, ecstatic, O partners! O lands! with the love of lovers tie you.

(Were you looking to be held together by lawyers?  
 Or by an agreement on a paper? or by arms?  
 Nay, nor the world, nor any living thing, will so cohere.)

*As I Lay with My Head in Your Lap Camerado.*

As I lay with my head in your lap camerado,  
 The confession I made I resume, what I said to you and the  
 open air I resume,  
 I know I am restless and make others so,  
 I know my words are weapons full of danger, full of death,  
 For I confront peace, security, and all the settled laws, to  
 unsettle them,  
 I am more resolute because all have denied me than I could  
 ever have been had all accepted me,  
 I heed not and have never heeded either experience, cautions,  
 majorities, nor ridicule,  
 And the threat of what is call'd hell is little or nothing to me,  
 And the lure of what is call'd heaven is little or nothing to me;  
 Dear camerado! I confess I have urged you onward with me,  
 and still urge you, without the least idea what is our  
 destination,  
 Or whether we shall be victorious, or utterly quell'd and  
 defeated.

*Out of the Rolling Ocean the Crowd.*

Out of the rolling ocean the crowd came a drop gently to me,  
 Whispering *I love you, before long I die,*

*I have travel'd a long way merely to look on you to touch  
you,  
For I could not die till I once look'd on you,  
For I fear'd I might afterward lose you.*

Now we have met, we have look'd, we are safe,  
Return in peace to the ocean my love,  
I too am part of that ocean my love, we are not so much  
separated,  
Behold the great rondure, the cohesion of all, how perfect!  
But as for me, for you, the irresistible sea is to separate us,  
As for an hour carrying us diverse, yet cannot carry us diverse  
forever;  
Be not impatient—a little space—know you I salute the air,  
the ocean and the land,  
Every day at sundown for your dear sake my love.

*I Saw Old General at Bay.*

I saw old General at bay,  
(Old as he was, his gray eyes yet shone out in battle like  
stars,)  
His small force was now completely hemm'd in, in his works,  
He call'd for volunteers to run the enemy's lines, a desperate  
emergency,  
I saw a hundred and more step forth from the ranks, but two  
or three were selected,  
  
I saw them receive their orders aside, they listen'd with care,  
the adjutant was very grave,  
I saw them depart with cheerfulness, freely risking their lives.

*Look Down Fair Moon.*

Look down fair moon and bathe this scene,  
Pour softly down night's nimbus floods on faces ghastly,  
swollen, purple,



On the dead on their backs with arms toss'd wide,  
 Pour down your unstinted nimbus sacred moon.

*Reconciliation.*

Word over all, beautiful as the sky,  
 Beautiful that war and all its deeds of carnage must in time be  
 utterly lost,  
 That the hands of the sisters Death and Night incessantly  
 softly wash again, and ever again, this soil'd world;  
 For my enemy is dead, a man divine as myself is dead,  
 I look where he lies white-faced and still in the coffin—I draw  
 near,  
 Bend down and touch lightly with my lips the white face in  
 the coffin.

*When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd.*

I

When lilacs last in the dooryard bloom'd,  
 And the great star early droop'd in the western sky in the  
 night,  
 I mourn'd, and yet shall mourn with ever-returning spring.

Ever-returning spring, trinity sure to me you bring,  
 Lilac blooming perennial and drooping star in the west,  
 And thought of him I love.

2

O powerful western fallen star!  
 O shades of night—O moody, tearful night!  
 O great star disappear'd—O the black murk that hides the  
 star!  
 O cruel hands that hold me powerless—O helpless soul of me!  
 O harsh surrounding cloud that will not free my soul.

## 3

In the dooryard fronting an old farm-house near the white-  
wash'd palings,  
Stands the lilac-bush tall-growing with heart-shaped leaves of  
rich green,  
With many a pointed blossom rising delicate, with the  
perfume strong I love,  
With every leaf a miracle—and from this bush in the  
dooryard,  
With delicate-color'd blossoms and heart-shaped leaves of  
rich green,  
A sprig with its flower I break.

## 4

In the swamp in secluded recesses,  
A shy and hidden bird is warbling a song.

Solitary the thrush,  
The hermit withdrawn to himself, avoiding the settlements,  
Sings by himself a song.

Song of the bleeding throat,  
Death's outlet song of life, (for well dear brother I know,  
If thou wast not granted to sing thou would'st surely die.)

## 5

Over the breast of the spring, the land, amid cities,  
Amid lanes and through old woods, where lately the violets  
peep'd from the ground, spotting the gray debris,  
Amid the grass in the fields each side of the lanes, passing the  
endless grass,  
Passing the yellow-spear'd wheat, every grain from its shroud  
in the dark-brown fields uprisen,  
Passing the apple-tree blows of white and pink in the  
orchards,

Carrying a corpse to where it shall rest in the grave,  
Night and day journeys a coffin.

## 6

Coffin that passes through lanes and streets,  
Through day and night with the great cloud darkening the  
land,  
With the pomp of the inloop'd flags with the cities draped in  
black,  
With the show of the States themselves as of crape-veil'd  
women standing,  
With processions long and winding and the flambeaus of the  
night,  
With the countless torches lit, with the silent sea of faces and  
the unbared heads,  
With the waiting depot, the arriving coffin, and the sombre  
faces,  
With dirges through the night, with the thousand voices rising  
strong and solemn,  
With all the mournful voices of the dirges pour'd around the  
coffin,  
The dim-lit churches and the shuddering organs—where amid  
these you journey,  
With the tolling tolling bells' perpetual clang,  
Here, coffin that slowly passes,  
I give you my sprig of lilac.

## 7

(Nor for you, for one alone,  
Blossoms and branches green to coffins all I bring,  
For fresh as the morning, thus would I chant a song for you O  
sane and sacred death.

All over bouquets of roses,  
O death, I cover you over with roses and early lilies,  
But mostly and now the lilac that blooms the first,

Copious I break, I break the sprigs from the bushes,  
With loaded arms I come, pouring for you,  
For you and the coffins all of you O death.)

## 8

O western orb sailing the heaven,  
Now I know what you must have meant as a month since I  
    walk'd,  
As I walk'd in silence the transparent shadowy night,  
As I saw you had something to tell as you bent to me night  
    after night,  
As you droop'd from the sky low down as if to my side,  
    (while the other stars all look'd on,)  
As we wander'd together the solemn night, (for something I  
    know not what kept me from sleep,)  
As the night advanced, and I saw on the rim of the west how  
    full you were of woe,  
As I stood on the rising ground in the breeze in the cool  
    transparent night,  
As I watch'd where you pass'd and was lost in the netherward  
    black of the night,  
As my soul in its trouble dissatisfied sank, as where you sad  
    orb,  
Concluded, dropt in the night, and was gone.

## 9

Sing on there in the swamp,  
O singer bashful and tender, I hear your notes, I hear your  
    call,  
I hear, I come presently, I understand you,  
But a moment I linger, for the lustrous star has detain'd me,  
The star my departing comrade holds and detains me.

## 10

O how shall I warble myself for the dead one there I loved?  
 And how shall I deck my song for the large sweet soul that  
     has gone?  
 And what shall my perfume be for the grave of him I love?

Sea-winds blown from east and west,  
 Blown from the Eastern sea and blown from the Western sea,  
     till there on the prairies meeting,  
 These and with these and the breath of my chant,  
 I'll perfume the grave of him I love.

## 11

O what shall I hang on the chamber walls?  
 And what shall the pictures be that I hang on the walls,  
 To adorn the burial-house of him I love?

Pictures of growing spring and farms and homes,  
 With the Fourth-month eve at sundown, and the gray smoke  
     lucid and bright,  
 With floods of the yellow gold of the gorgeous, indolent,  
     sinking sun, burning, expanding the air,  
 With the fresh sweet herbage under foot, and the pale green  
     leaves of the trees prolific,  
 In the distance the flowing glaze, the breast of the river, with a  
     wind-dapple here and there,  
 With ranging hills on the banks, with many a line against the  
     sky, and shadows,  
 And the city at hand with dwellings so dense, and stacks of  
     chimneys,  
 And all the scenes of life and the workshops, and the  
     workmen homeward returning.

## I 2

Lo, body and soul—this land,  
My own Manhattan with spires, and the sparkling and  
    hurrying tides, and the ships,  
The varied and ample land, the South and the North in the  
    light, Ohio's shores and flashing Missouri,  
And ever the far-spreading prairies cover'd with grass and corn.

Lo, the most excellent sun so calm and haughty,  
The violet and purple morn with just-felt breezes,  
The gentle soft-born measureless light,  
The miracle spreading bathing all, the fulfill'd noon,  
The coming eve delicious, the welcome night and the stars,  
Over my cities shining all, enveloping man and land.

## I 3

Sing on, sing on you gray-brown bird,  
Sing from the swamps, the recesses, pour your chant from the  
    bushes,  
Limitless out of the dusk, out of the cedars and pines.

Sing on dearest brother, warble your reedy song,  
Loud human song, with voice of uttermost woe.

O liquid and free and tender!  
O wild and loose to my soul—O wondrous singer!  
You only I hear—yet the star holds me, (but will soon depart,)  
Yet the lilac with mastering odor holds me.

## I 4

Now while I sat in the day and look'd forth,  
In the close of the day with its light and the fields of spring,  
    and the farmers preparing their crops,  
In the large unconscious scenery of my land with its lakes and  
    forests,

In the heavenly aerial beauty, (after the perturb'd winds and  
the storms,)
Under the arching heavens of the afternoon swift passing, and  
the voices of children and women,
The many-moving sea-tides, and I saw the ships how they  
sail'd,
And the summer approaching with richness, and the fields all  
busy with labor,
And the infinite separate houses, how they all went on, each  
with its meals and minutia of daily usages,
And the streets how their throbbings throbb'd, and the cities  
pent—lo, then and there,
Falling upon them all and among them all, enveloping me  
with the rest,
Appear'd the cloud, appear'd the long black trail,
And I knew death, its thought, and the sacred knowledge of  
death.

Then with the knowledge of death as walking one side of me,  
And the thought of death close-walking the other side of me,  
And I in the middle as with companions, and as holding the  
hands of companions,
I fled forth to the hiding receiving night that talks not,  
Down to the shores of the water, the path by the swamp in  
the dimness,
To the solemn shadow cedars and ghostly pines so still.

And the singer so shy to the rest receiv'd me,  
The gray-brown bird I know receiv'd us comrades three,  
And he sang the carol of death, and a verse for him I love.

From deep secluded recesses,  
From the fragrant cedars and the ghostly pines so still,  
Came the carol of the bird.

And the charm of the carol rapt me,  
As I held as if by their hands my comrades in the night,  
And the voice of my spirit tallied the song of the bird.

*Come lovely and soothing death,  
Undulate round the world, serenely arriving, arriving,  
In the day, in the night, to all, to each,  
Sooner or later delicate death.*

*Prais'd be the fathomless universe,  
For life and joy, and for objects and knowledge curious,  
And for love, sweet love—but praise! praise! praise!  
For the sure-enwinding arms of cool-enfolding death.*

*Dark mother always gliding near with soft feet,  
Have none chanted for thee a chant of fullest welcome?  
Then I chant it for thee, I glorify thee above all,  
I bring thee a song that when thou must indeed come, come  
unflinchingly.*

*Approach strong deliveress,  
When it is so, when thou hast taken them I joyously sing the  
dead,  
Lost in the loving floating ocean of thee,  
Laved in the flood of thy bliss O death.*

*From me to thee glad serenades,  
Dances for thee I propose saluting thee, adornments and  
feastings for thee,  
And the sights of the open landscape and the high-spread sky  
are fitting,  
And life and the fields, and the huge and thoughtful night.*

*The night in silence under many a star,  
The ocean shore and the husky whispering wave whose voice  
I know,  
And the soul turning to thee O vast and well-veil'd death,  
And the body gratefully nestling close to thee.*

*Over the tree-tops I float thee a song,  
Over the rising and sinking waves, over the myriad fields and  
the prairies wide,*



*Over the dense-pack'd cities all and the teeming wharves and  
ways,  
I float this carol with joy, with joy to thee O death.*

## 15

To the tally of my soul,  
Loud and strong kept up the gray-brown bird,  
With pure deliberate notes spreading filling the night.

Loud in the pines and cedars dim,  
Clear in the freshness moist and the swamp-perfume,  
And I with my comrades there in the night.

While my sight that was bound in my eyes unclosed,  
As to long panoramas of visions.

And I saw askant the armies,  
I saw as in noiseless dreams hundreds of battle-flags,  
Borne through the smoke of the battles and pierc'd with  
missiles I saw them,  
And carried hither and yon through the smoke, and torn and  
bloody,  
And at last but a few shreds left on the staffs, (and all in  
silence,)  
And the staffs all splinter'd and broken.

I saw battle-corpses, myriads of them,  
And the white skeletons of young men, I saw them,  
I saw the debris and debris of all the slain soldiers of the war,  
But I saw they were not as was thought,  
They themselves were fully at rest, they suffer'd not,  
The living remain'd and suffer'd, the mother suffer'd,  
And the wife and the child and the musing comrade suffer'd,  
And the armies that remain'd suffer'd.

## 16

Passing the visions, passing the night,  
Passing, unloosing the hold of my comrades' hands,  
Passing the song of the hermit bird and the tallying song of  
    my soul,  
Victorious song, death's outlet song, yet varying ever-altering  
    song,  
As low and wailing, yet clear the notes, rising and falling,  
    flooding the night,  
Sadly sinking and fainting, as warning and warning, and yet  
    again bursting with joy,  
Covering the earth and filling the spread of the heaven,  
As that powerful psalm in the night I heard from recesses,  
Passing, I leave thee lilac with heart-shaped leaves,  
I leave thee there in the door-yard, blooming, returning with  
    spring.

I cease from my song for thee,  
From my gaze on thee in the west, fronting the west,  
    communing with thee,  
O comrade lustrous with silver face in the night.

Yet each to keep and all, retrievements out of the night,  
The song, the wondrous chant of the gray-brown bird,  
And the tallying chant, the echo arous'd in my soul,  
With the lustrous and drooping star with the countenance full  
    of woe,  
With the holders holding my hand nearing the call of the bird,  
Comrades mine and I in the midst, and their memory ever to  
    keep, for the dead I loved so well,  
For the sweetest, wisest soul of all my days and lands—and  
    this for his dear sake,  
Lilac and star and bird twined with the chant of my soul,  
There in the fragrant pines and the cedars dusk and dim.

*O Captain! My Captain!*

O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done,  
 The ship has weather'd every rack, the prize we sought is won,  
 The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,  
 While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring;  
     But O heart! heart! heart!  
     O the bleeding drops of red,  
     Where on the deck my Captain lies,  
     Fallen cold and dead.

O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear the bells;  
 Rise up—for you the flag is flung—for you the bugle trills,  
 For you bouquets and ribbon'd wreaths—for you the shores  
     a-crowding,  
 For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning;  
     Here Captain! dear father!  
     This arm beneath your head!  
     It is some dream that on the deck,  
     You've fallen cold and dead.

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still,  
 My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will,  
 The ship is anchor'd safe and sound, its voyage closed and  
     done,  
 From fearful trip the victor ship comes in with object won;  
     Exult O shores, and ring O bells!  
     But I with mournful tread,  
     Walk the deck my Captain lies,  
     Fallen cold and dead.

*Old War-Dreams.*

In midnight sleep of many a face of anguish,  
 Of the look at first of the mortally wounded, (of that  
     indescribable look,)  
 Of the dead on their backs with arms extended wide,  
     I dream, I dream, I dream.

Of scenes of Nature, fields and mountains,  
 Of skies so beautiful after a storm, and at night the moon so  
 unearthly bright,  
 Shining sweetly, shining down, where we dig the trenches and  
 gather the heaps,  
     I dream, I dream, I dream.

Long have they pass'd, faces and trenches and fields,  
 Where through the carnage I moved with a callous  
 composure, or away from the fallen,  
 Onward I sped at the time—but now of their forms at night,  
     I dream, I dream, I dream.

*Chanting the Square Deific.*

I

Chanting the square deific, out of the One advancing, out of  
 the sides,  
 Out of the old and new, out of the square entirely divine,  
 Solid, four-sided, (all the sides needed,) from this side Jehovah  
 am I,  
 Old Brahm I, and I Saturnius am;  
 Not Time affects me—I am Time, old, modern as any,  
 Unpersuadable, relentless, executing righteous judgments,  
 As the Earth, the Father, the brown old Kronos, with laws,  
 Aged beyond computation, yet ever new, ever with those  
 mighty laws rolling,  
 Relentless I forgive no man—whoever sins dies—I will have  
 that man's life;  
 Therefore let none expect mercy—have the seasons,  
 gravitation, the appointed days, mercy? no more have I,  
 But as the seasons and gravitation, and as all the appointed  
 days that forgive not,  
 I dispense from this side judgments inexorable without the  
 least remorse.

## 2

Consolator most mild, the promis'd one advancing,  
 With gentle hand extended, the mightier God am I,  
 Foretold by prophets and poets in their most rapt prophecies  
     and poems,  
 From this side, lo! the Lord Christ gazes—lo! Hermes I—lo!  
     mine is Hercules' face,  
 All sorrow, labor, suffering, I, tallying it, absorb in myself,  
 Many times have I been rejected, taunted, put in prison, and  
     crucified, and many times shall be again,  
 All the world have I given up for my dear brothers' and  
     sisters' sake, for the soul's sake,  
 Wending my way through the homes of men, rich or poor,  
     with the kiss of affection,  
 For I am affection, I am the cheer-bringing God, with hope  
     and all-enclosing charity,  
 With indulgent words as to children, with fresh and sane  
     words, mine only,  
 Young and strong I pass knowing well I am destin'd myself to  
     an early death;  
 But my charity has no death—my wisdom dies not, neither  
     early nor late,  
 And my sweet love bequeath'd here and elsewhere never dies.

## 3

Aloof, dissatisfied, plotting revolt,  
 Comrade of criminals, brother of slaves,  
 Crafty, despised, a drudge, ignorant,  
 With sudra face and worn brow, black, but in the depths of  
     my heart, proud as any,  
 Lifted now and always against whoever scorning assumes to  
     rule me,  
 Morose, full of guile, full of reminiscences, brooding, with  
     many wiles,  
 (Though it was thought I was baffled and dispel'd, and my  
     wiles done, but that will never be,)

Defiant, I, Satan, still live, still utter words, in new lands duly  
 appearing, (and old ones also,)  
 Permanent here from my side, warlike, equal with any, real  
 as any,  
 Nor time nor change shall ever change me or my words.

## 4

Santa Spirita, breather, life,  
 Beyond the light, lighter than light,  
 Beyond the flames of hell, joyous, leaping easily above hell,  
 Beyond Paradise, perfumed solely with mine own perfume,  
 Including all life on earth, touching, including God, including  
 Saviour and Satan,  
 Ethereal, pervading all, (for without me what were all? what  
 were God?)  
 Essence of forms, life of the real identities, permanent,  
 positive, (namely the unseen,)  
 Life of the great round world, the sun and stars, and of man,  
 I, the general soul,  
 Here the square finishing, the solid, I the most solid,  
 Breathe my breath also through these songs.

*I Heard You Solemn-Sweet Pipes of the Organ.*

I heard you solemn-sweet pipes of the organ as last Sunday  
 morn I pass'd the church,  
 Winds of autumn, as I walk'd the woods at dusk I heard your  
 long-stretch'd sighs up above so mournful,  
 I heard the perfect Italian tenor singing at the opera, I heard  
 the soprano in the midst of the quartet singing;  
 Heart of my love! you too I heard murmuring low through  
 one of the wrists around my head,  
 Heard the pulse of you when all was still ringing little bells  
 last night under my ear.

1867

*One's-Self I Sing.*

One's-Self I sing, a simple separate person,  
Yet utter the word Democratic, the word En-Masse.

Of physiology from top to toe I sing,  
Not physiognomy alone nor brain alone is worthy for the  
    Muse, I say the Form complete is worthier far,  
The Female equally with the Male I sing.

Of Life immense in passion, pulse, and power,  
Cheerful, for freest action form'd under the laws divine,  
The Modern Man I sing.

*The Runner.*

On a flat road runs the well-train'd runner,  
He is lean and sinewy with muscular legs,  
He is thinly clothed, he leans forward as he runs,  
With lightly closed fists and arms partially rais'd.



*When I Read the Book.*

When I read the book, the biography famous,  
And is this then (said I) what the author calls a man's life?  
And so will some one when I am dead and gone write my life?  
(As if any man really knew aught of my life,  
Why even I myself I often think know little or nothing of my  
    real life,  
Only a few hints, a few diffused faint clues and indirections  
I seek for my own use to trace out here.)

*Passage to India.*

## I

Singing my days,  
 Singing the great achievements of the present,  
 Singing the strong light works of engineers,  
 Our modern wonders (the antique ponderous Seven outvied,)  
 In the Old World the east the Suez canal,  
 The New by its mighty railroad spann'd,  
 The seas inlaid with eloquent gentle wires;  
 Yet first to sound, and ever sound, the cry with thee O soul,  
 The Past! the Past! the Past!

The Past—the dark unfathom'd retrospect!  
 The teeming gulf—the sleepers and the shadows!  
 The past—the infinite greatness of the past!  
 For what is the present after all but a growth out of the past?  
 (As a projectile form'd, impell'd, passing a certain line, still  
     keeps on,  
 So the present, utterly form'd, impell'd by the past.)

## 2

Passage O soul to India!  
 Eclaircise the myths Asiatic, the primitive fables.

Not you alone proud truths of the world,  
 Nor you alone ye facts of modern science,  
 But myths and fables of eld, Asia's, Africa's fables,  
 The far-darting beams of the spirit, the unloos'd dreams,  
 The deep diving bibles and legends,  
 The daring plots of the poets, the elder religions;  
 O you temples fairer than lilies pour'd over by the rising sun!  
 O you fables spurning the known, eluding the hold of the  
     known, mounting to heaven!  
 You lofty and dazzling towers, pinnacled, red as roses,  
     burnish'd with gold!  
 Towers of fables immortal fashion'd from mortal dreams!  
 You too I welcome and fully the same as the rest!  
 You too with joy I sing.

Passage to India!

Lo, soul, seest thou not God's purpose from the first?  
 The earth to be spann'd, connected by network,  
 The races, neighbors, to marry and be given in marriage,  
 The oceans to be cross'd, the distant brought near,  
 The lands to be welded together.

A worship new I sing,  
 You captains, voyagers, explorers, yours,  
 You engineers, you architects, machinists, yours,  
 You, not for trade or transportation only,  
 But in God's name, and for thy sake O soul.

3

Passage to India!

Lo soul for thee of tableaux twain,  
 I see in one the Suez canal initiated, open'd,  
 I see the procession of steamships, the Empress Eugenie's  
     leading the van,  
 I mark from on deck the strange landscape, the pure sky, the  
     level sand in the distance,

I pass swiftly the picturesque groups, the workmen gather'd,  
The gigantic dredging machines.

In one again, different, (yet thine, all thine, O soul, the same,)

I see over my own continent the Pacific railroad surmounting  
every barrier,

I see continual trains of cars winding along the Platte carrying  
freight and passengers,

I hear the locomotives rushing and roaring, and the shrill  
steam-whistle,

I hear the echoes reverberate through the grandest scenery in  
the world,

I cross the Laramie plains, I note the rocks in grotesque  
shapes, the buttes,

I see the plentiful larkspur and wild onions, the barren,  
colorless, sage-deserts,

I see in glimpses afar or towering immediately above me the  
great mountains, I see the Wind river and the Wahsatch  
mountains,

I see the Monument mountain and the Eagle's Nest, I pass the  
Promontory, I ascend the Nevadas,

I scan the noble Elk mountain and wind around its base,

I see the Humboldt range, I thread the valley and cross the  
river,

I see the clear waters of lake Tahoe, I see forests of majestic  
pines,

Or crossing the great desert, the alkaline plains, I behold  
enchancing mirages of waters and meadows,

Marking through these and after all, in duplicate slender lines,

Bridging the three or four thousand miles of land travel,

Tying the Eastern to the Western sea,

The road between Europe and Asia.

(Ah Genoese thy dream! thy dream!

Centuries after thou art laid in thy grave,

The shore thou foundest verifies thy dream.)

## 4

Passage to India!  
 Struggles of many a captain, tales of many a sailor dead,  
 Over my mood stealing and spreading they come,  
 Like clouds and cloudlets in the unreach'd sky.

Along all history, down the slopes,  
 As a rivulet running, sinking now, and now again to the  
     surface rising,  
 A ceaseless thought, a varied train—lo, soul, to thee, thy  
     sight, they rise,  
 The plans, the voyages again, the expeditions;  
 Again Vasco de Gama sails forth,  
 Again the knowledge gain'd, the mariner's compass,  
 Lands found and nations born, thou born America,  
 For purpose vast, man's long probation fill'd,  
 Thou rondure of the world at last accomplish'd.

## 5

O vast Rondure, swimming in space,  
 Cover'd all over with visible power and beauty,  
 Alternate light and day and the teeming spiritual darkness,  
 Unspeakable high processions of sun and moon and  
     countless stars above,  
 Below, the manifold grass and waters, animals, mountains,  
     trees,  
 With inscrutable purpose, some hidden prophetic intention,  
 Now first it seems my thought begins to span thee.

Down from the gardens of Asia descending radiating,  
 Adam and Eve appear, then their myriad progeny after them,  
 Wandering, yearning, curious, with restless explorations,  
 With questionings, baffled, formless, feverish, with never-  
     happy hearts,  
 With that sad incessant refrain, *Wherefore unsatisfied soul?*  
     and *Whither O mocking life?*

Ah who shall soothe these feverish children?  
Who justify these restless explorations?  
Who speak the secret of impassive earth?  
Who bind it to us? what is this separate Nature so unnatural?  
What is this earth to our affections? (unloving earth, without  
a throb to answer ours,  
Cold earth, the place of graves.)

Yet soul be sure the first intent remains, and shall be carried  
out,  
Perhaps even now the time has arrived.

After the seas are all cross'd, (as they seem already cross'd,)  
After the great captains and engineers have accomplish'd their  
work,  
After the noble inventors, after the scientists, the chemist, the  
geologist, ethnologist,  
Finally shall come the poet worthy that name,  
The true son of God shall come singing his songs.

Then not your deeds only O voyagers, O scientists and  
inventors, shall be justified,  
All these hearts as of fretted children shall be sooth'd,  
All affection shall be fully responded to, the secret shall be  
told,  
All these separations and gaps shall be taken up and hook'd  
and link'd together,  
The whole earth, this cold, impassive, voiceless earth, shall be  
completely justified,  
Trinitas divine shall be gloriously accomplish'd and  
compacted by the true son of God, the poet,  
(He shall indeed pass the straits and conquer the mountains,  
He shall double the cape of Good Hope to some purpose,)  
Nature and Man shall be disjoin'd and diffused no more,  
The true son of God shall absolutely fuse them.

## 6

Year at whose wide-flung door I sing!  
 Year of the purpose accomplish'd!  
 Year of the marriage of continents, climates and oceans!  
 (No mere doge of Venice now wedding the Adriatic,)  
 I see O year in you the vast terraqueous globe given and  
     giving all,  
 Europe to Asia, Africa join'd, and they to the New World,  
 The lands, geographies, dancing before you, holding a festival  
     garland,  
 As brides and bridegrooms hand in hand.

Passage to India!

Cooling airs from Caucasus far, soothing cradle of man,  
 The river Euphrates flowing, the past lit up again.

Lo soul, the retrospect brought forward,  
 The old, most populous, wealthiest of earth's lands,  
 The streams of the Indus and the Ganges and their many  
     affluents,  
 (I my shores of America walking to-day behold, resuming all,)  
 The tale of Alexander on his warlike marches suddenly dying,  
 On one side China and on the other side Persia and Arabia,  
 To the south the great seas and the bay of Bengal,  
 The flowing literatures, tremendous epics, religions, castes,  
 Old occult Brahma interminably far back, the tender and ju-  
     nior Buddha,  
 Central and southern empires and all their belongings,  
     possessors,  
 The wars of Tamerlane, the reign of Aurungzebe,  
 The traders, rulers, explorers, Moslems, Venetians,  
     Byzantium, the Arabs, Portuguese,  
 The first travelers famous yet, Marco Polo, Batouta the Moor,  
 Doubts to be solv'd, the map incognita, blanks to be fill'd,  
 The foot of man unstay'd, the hands never at rest,  
 Thyself O soul that will not brook a challenge.

The mediæval navigators rise before me,  
 The world of 1492, with its awaken'd enterprise,  
 Something swelling in humanity now like the sap of the earth  
     in spring,  
 The sunset splendor of chivalry declining.

And who art thou sad shade?  
 Gigantic, visionary, thyself a visionary,  
 With majestic limbs and pious beaming eyes,  
 Spreading around with every look of thine a golden world,  
 Enhuing it with gorgeous hues.

As the chief histrion,  
 Down to the footlights walks in some great scena,  
 Dominating the rest I see the Admiral himself,  
 (History's type of courage, action, faith,)  
 Behold him sail from Palos leading his little fleet,  
 His voyage behold, his return, his great fame,  
 His misfortunes, calumniators, behold him a prisoner,  
     chain'd,  
 Behold his dejection, poverty, death.

(Curious in time I stand, noting the efforts of heroes,  
 Is the deferment long? bitter the slander, poverty, death?  
 Lies the seed unreck'd for centuries in the ground? lo, to  
     God's due occasion,  
 Uprising in the night, it sprouts, blooms,  
 And fills the earth with use and beauty.)

## 7

Passage indeed O soul to primal thought,  
 Not lands and seas alone, thy own clear freshness,  
 The young maturity of brood and bloom,  
 To realms of budding bibles.

O soul, repressless, I with thee and thou with me,  
 Thy circumnavigation of the world begin,



Of man, the voyage of his mind's return,  
 To reason's early paradise,  
 Back, back to wisdom's birth, to innocent intuitions,  
 Again with fair creation.

## 8

O we can wait no longer,  
 We too take ship O soul,  
 Joyous we too launch out on trackless seas,  
 Fearless for unknown shores on waves of ecstasy to sail,  
 Amid the wafting winds, (thou pressing me to thee, I thee to  
     me, O soul,)  
 Caroling free, singing our song of God,  
 Chanting our chant of pleasant exploration.

With laugh and many a kiss,  
 (Let others deprecate, let others weep for sin, remorse,  
     humiliation,)  
 O soul thou pleasest me, I thee.

Ah more than any priest O soul we too believe in God,  
 But with the mystery of God we dare not dally.

O soul thou pleasest me, I thee,  
 Sailing these seas or on the hills, or waking in the night,  
 Thoughts, silent thoughts, of Time and Space and Death, like  
     waters flowing,  
 Bear me indeed as through the regions infinite,  
 Whose air I breathe, whose ripples hear, lave me all over,  
 Bathe me O God in thee, mounting to thee,  
 I and my soul to range in range of thee.

O Thou transcendent,  
 Nameless, the fibre and the breath,  
 Light of the light, shedding forth universes, thou centre of  
     them,  
 Thou mightier centre of the true, the good, the loving,

Thou moral, spiritual fountain—affection's source—thou  
reservoir,

(O pensive soul of me—O thirst unsatisfied—waitest not  
there?

Waitest not haply for us somewhere there the Comrade  
perfect?)

Thou pulse—thou motive of the stars, suns, systems,  
That, circling, move in order, safe, harmonious,  
Athwart the shapeless vastnesses of space,  
How should I think, how breathe a single breath, how speak,  
if, out of myself,  
I could not launch, to those, superior universes?

Swiftly I shrivel at the thought of God,  
At Nature and its wonders, Time and Space and Death,  
But that I, turning, call to thee O soul, thou actual Me,  
And lo, thou gently masterest the orbs,  
Thou matest Time, smilest content at Death,  
And fillest, swellest full the vastnesses of Space.

Greater than stars or suns,  
Bounding O soul thou journeyest forth;  
What love than thine and ours could wider amplify?  
What aspirations, wishes, outvie thine and ours O soul?  
What dreams of the ideal? what plans of purity, perfection,  
strength?  
What cheerful willingness for others' sake to give up all?  
For others' sake to suffer all?

Reckoning ahead O soul, when thou, the time achiev'd,  
The seas all cross'd, weather'd the capes, the voyage done,  
Surrounded, copest, frontest God, yieldest, the aim attain'd,  
As fill'd with friendship, love complete, the Elder Brother  
found,  
The Younger melts in fondness in his arms.

## 9

Passage to more than India!  
 Are thy wings plumed indeed for such far flights?  
 O soul, voyagest thou indeed on voyages like those?  
 Disportest thou on waters such as those?  
 Soundest below the Sanscrit and the Vedas?  
 Then have thy bent unleash'd.

Passage to you, your shores, ye aged fierce enigmas!  
 Passage to you, to mastership of you, ye strangling problems!  
 You, strew'd with the wrecks of skeletons, that, living, never  
 reach'd you.

Passage to more than India!  
 O secret of the earth and sky!  
 Of you O waters of the sea! O winding creeks and rivers!  
 Of you O woods and fields! of you strong mountains of my  
 land!  
 Of you O prairies! of you gray rocks!  
 O morning red! O clouds! O rain and snows!  
 O day and night, passage to you!

O sun and moon and all you stars! Sirius and Jupiter!  
 Passage to you!

Passage, immediate passage! the blood burns in my veins!  
 Away O soul! hoist instantly the anchor!  
 Cut the hawsers—haul out—shake out every sail!  
 Have we not stood here like trees in the ground long enough?  
 Have we not grovel'd here long enough, eating and drinking  
 like mere brutes?  
 Have we not darken'd and dazed ourselves with books long  
 enough?

Sail forth—steer for the deep waters only,  
 Reckless O soul, exploring, I with thee, and thou with me,

For we are bound where mariner has not yet dared to go,  
And we will risk the ship, ourselves and all.

O my brave soul!

O farther farther sail!

O daring joy, but safe! are they not all the seas of God?

O farther, farther, farther sail!

*Proud Music of the Storm.*

## I

Proud music of the storm,  
 Blast that careers so free, whistling across the prairies,  
 Strong hum of forest tree-tops—wind of the mountains,  
 Personified dim shapes—you hidden orchestras,  
 You serenades of phantoms with instruments alert,  
 Blending with Nature's rhythmus all the tongues of nations;  
 You chords left as by vast composers—you choruses,  
 You formless, free, religious dances—you from the Orient,  
 You undertone of rivers, roar of pouring cataracts,  
 You sounds from distant guns with galloping cavalry,  
 Echoes of camps with all the different bugle-calls,  
 Trooping tumultuous, filling the midnight late, bending me  
     powerless,  
 Entering my lonesome slumber-chamber, why have you  
     seiz'd me?

## 2

Come forward O my soul, and let the rest retire,  
 Listen, lose not, it is toward thee they tend,  
 Parting the midnight, entering my slumber-chamber,  
 For thee they sing and dance O soul.

A festival song,  
 The duet of the bridegroom and the bride, a marriage-march,  
 With lips of love, and hearts of lovers fill'd to the brim with  
     love,  
 The red-flush'd cheeks and perfumes, the cortege swarming  
     full of friendly faces young and old,  
 To flutes' clear notes and sounding harps' cantabile.

Now loud approaching drums,  
Victoria! see'st thou in powder-smoke the banners torn but  
flying? the rout of the baffled?  
Hearest those shouts of a conquering army?

(Ah soul, the sobs of women, the wounded groaning in agony,  
The hiss and crackle of flames, the blacken'd ruins, the  
embers of cities,  
The dirge and desolation of mankind.)

Now airs antique and mediæval fill me,  
I see and hear old harpers with their harps at Welsh festivals,  
I hear the minnesingers singing their lays of love,  
I hear the minstrels, gleemen, troubadours, of the middle ages.

Now the great organ sounds,  
Tremulous, while underneath, (as the hid footholds of the  
earth,  
On which arising rest, and leaping forth depend,  
All shapes of beauty, grace and strength, all hues we know,  
Green blades of grass and warbling birds, children that  
gambol and play, the clouds of heaven above,)  
The strong base stands, and its pulsations intermits not,  
Bathing, supporting, merging all the rest, maternity of all the  
rest,  
And with it every instrument in multitudes,  
The players playing, all the world's musicians,  
The solemn hymns and masses rousing adoration,  
All passionate heart-chants, sorrowful appeals,  
The measureless sweet vocalists of ages,  
And for their solvent setting earth's own diapason,  
Of winds and woods and mighty ocean waves,  
A new composite orchestra, binder of years and climes,  
ten-fold renewer,  
As of the far-back days the poets tell, the Paradiso,  
The straying thence, the separation long, but now the  
wandering done,

The journey done, the journeyman come home,  
And man and art with Nature fused again.

Tutti! for earth and heaven;  
(The Almighty leader now for once has signal'd with his  
wand.)

The manly strophe of the husbands of the world,  
And all the wives responding.

The tongues of violins,  
(I think O tongues ye tell this heart, that cannot tell itself,  
This brooding yearning heart, that cannot tell itself.)

## 3

Ah from a little child,  
Thou knowest soul how to me all sounds became music,  
My mother's voice in lullaby or hymn,  
(The voice, O tender voices, memory's loving voices,  
Last miracle of all, O dearest mother's, sister's, voices;)  
The rain, the growing corn, the breeze among the long-leav'd  
corn,  
The measur'd sea-surf beating on the sand,  
The twittering bird, the hawk's sharp scream,  
The wild-fowl's notes at night as flying low migrating north or  
south,  
The psalm in the country church or mid the clustering trees,  
the open air camp-meeting,  
The fiddler in the tavern, the glee, the long-strung sailor-song,  
The lowing cattle, bleating sheep, the crowing cock at dawn.

All songs of current lands come sounding round me,  
The German airs of friendship, wine and love,  
Irish ballads, merry jigs and dances, English warbles,  
Chansons of France, Scotch tunes, and o'er the rest,  
Italia's peerless compositions.

Across the stage with pallor on her face, yet lurid passion,  
Stalks Norma brandishing the dagger in her hand.

I see poor crazed Lucia's eyes' unnatural gleam,  
Her hair down her back falls loose and dishevel'd.

I see where Ernani walking the bridal garden,  
Amid the scent of night-roses, radiant, holding his bride by  
the hand,  
Hears the infernal call, the death-pledge of the horn.

To crossing swords and gray hairs bared to heaven,  
The clear electric base and baritone of the world,  
The trombone duo, Libertad forever!

From Spanish chestnut trees' dense shade,  
By old and heavy convent walls a wailing song,  
Song of lost love, the torch of youth and life quench'd in  
despair,  
Song of the dying swan, Fernando's heart is breaking.

Awaking from her woes at last retriev'd Amina sings,  
Copious as stars and glad as morning light the torrents of her  
joy.

(The teeming lady comes,  
The lustrious orb, Venus contralto, the blooming mother,  
Sister of loftiest gods, Alboni's self I hear.)

## 4

I hear those odes, symphonies, operas,  
I hear in the *William Tell* the music of an arous'd and angry  
people,  
I hear Meyerbeer's *Huguenots*, the *Prophet*, or *Robert*,  
Grounod's *Faust*, or Mozart's *Don Juan*.



I hear the dance-music of all nations,  
The waltz, some delicious measure, lapsing, bathing me in  
bliss,  
The bolero to tinkling guitars and clattering castanets.

I see religious dances old and new,  
I hear the sound of the Hebrew lyre,  
I see the crusaders marching bearing the cross on high, to the  
martial clang of cymbals,  
I hear dervishes monotonously chanting, interspers'd with  
frantic shouts, as they spin around turning always  
towards Mecca,  
I see the rapt religious dances of the Persians and the Arabs,  
Again, at Eleusis, home of Ceres, I see the modern Greeks  
dancing,  
I hear them clapping their hands as they bend their bodies,  
I hear the metrical shuffling of their feet.

I see again the wild old Corybantian dance, the performers  
wounding each other,  
I see the Roman youth to the shrill sound of flageolets  
throwing and catching their weapons,  
As they fall on their knees and rise again.

I hear from the Mussulman mosque the muezzin calling,  
I see the worshippers within, nor form nor sermon, argument  
nor word,  
But silent, strange, devout, rais'd, glowing heads, ecstatic  
faces.

I hear the Egyptian harp of many strings  
The primitive chants of the Nile boatmen,  
The sacred imperial hymns of China,  
To the delicate sounds of the king, (the stricken wood and  
stone,)  
Or to Hindu flutes and the fretting twang of the vina,  
A band of bayaderes.

## 5

Now Asia, Africa leave me, Europe seizing inflates me,  
 To organs huge and bands I hear as from vast concourses of  
     voices,  
 Luther's strong humn *Eine feste Burg ist unser Gott*,  
 Rossini's *Stabat Mater dolorosa*,  
 Or floating in some high cathedral dim with gorgeous color'd  
     windows,  
 The passionate *Agnus Dei* or *Gloria in Excelsis*.

Composers! mighty maestros!  
 And you, sweet singers of old lands, soprani, tenori, bassi!  
 To you a new bard caroling in the West,  
 Obeisant sends his love.

(Such led to thee O soul,  
 All senses, shows and objects, lead to thee,  
 But now it seems to me sound leads o'er all the rest.)

I hear the annual singing of the children in St. Paul's cathedral,  
 Or, under the high roof of some colossal hall, the symphonies,  
     oratorios of Beethoven, Handel, or Haydn,  
 The *Creation* in billows of godhood laves me.

Give me to hold all sounds, (I madly struggling cry,  
 Fill me with all the voices of the universe,  
 Endow me with their throbbings, Nature's also,  
 The tempests, waters, winds, operas and chants, marches and  
     dances,  
 Utter, pour in, for I would take them all!

## 6

Then I woke softly,  
 And pausing, questioning awhile the music of my dream,  
 And questioning all those reminiscences, the tempest in its  
     fury,

And all the songs of sopranos and tenors,  
And those rapt oriental dances of religious fervor,  
And the sweet varied instruments, and the diapason of organs,  
And all the artless plaints of love and grief and death,  
I said to my silent curious soul out of the bed of the slumber-  
chamber,  
Come, for I have found the clew I sought so long,  
Let us go forth refresh'd amid the day,  
Cheerfully tallying life, walking the world, the real,  
Nourish'd henceforth by our celestial dream.

And I said, moreover,  
Haply what thou hast heard O soul was not the sound of  
winds,  
Nor dream of raging storm, nor sea-hawk's flapping wings  
nor harsh scream,  
Nor vocalism of sun-bright Italy,  
Nor German organ majestic, nor vast concourse of voices, nor  
layers of harmonies,  
Nor strophes of husbands and wives, nor sound of marching  
soldiers,  
Nor flutes, nor harps, nor the bugle-calls of camps,  
But to a new rhythmus fitted for thee,  
Poems bridging the way from Life to Death, vaguely wafted in  
night air, uncaught, unwritten,  
Which let us go forth in the bold day and write.

*A Noiseless Patient Spider.*

A noiseless patient spider,  
I mark'd where on a little promontory it stood isolated,  
Mark'd how to explore the vacant vast surrounding,  
It launch'd forth filament, filament, filament, out of itself,  
Ever unreeling them, ever tirelessly speeding them.

And you O my soul where you stand,  
Surrounded, detached, in measureless oceans of space,  
Ceaselessly musing, venturing, throwing, seeking the spheres  
to connect them,  
Till the bridge you will need be form'd, till the ductile anchor  
hold,  
Till the gossamer thread you fling catch somewhere, O my  
soul.

*The Last Invocation.*

At the last, tenderly,  
From the walls of the powerful fortress'd house,  
From the clasp of the knitted locks, from the keep of the  
    well-closed doors,  
Let me be wafted.

Let me glide noiselessly forth;  
With the key of softness unlock the locks—with a whisper,  
Set ope the doors O soul.

Tenderly—be not impatient,  
(Strong is your hold O mortal flesh,  
Strong is your hold O love.)

*On the Beach at Night.*

On the beach at night,  
Stands a child with her father,  
Watching the east, the autumn sky.

Up through the darkness,

While ravening clouds, the burial clouds, in black masses  
spreading,  
Lower sullen and fast athwart and down the sky,  
Amid a transparent clear belt of ether yet left in the east,  
Ascends large and calm the lord-star Jupiter,  
And nigh at hand, only a very little above,  
Swim the delicate sisters the Pleiades.

From the beach the child holding the hand of her father,  
Those burial-clouds that lower victorious soon to devour all,  
Watching, silently weeps.

Weep not, child,  
Weep not, my darling,  
With these kisses let me remove your tears,  
The ravening clouds shall not long be victorious,  
They shall not long possess the sky, they devour the stars only  
in apparition,  
Jupiter shall emerge, be patient, watch again another night,  
the Pleiades shall emerge,  
They are immortal, all those stars both silvery and golden  
shall shine out again,  
The great stars and the little ones shall shine out again, they  
endure,  
The vast immortal suns and the long-enduring pensive moons  
shall again shine.

Then dearest child mournest thou only for Jupiter?  
Considerest thou alone the burial of the stars?

Something there is,  
(With my lips soothing thee, adding I whisper,  
I give thee the first suggestion, the problem and indirection,)  
Something there is more immortal even than the stars,  
(Many the burials, many the days and nights, passing away,)  
Something that shall endure longer even than lustrous Jupiter,  
Longer than sun or any revolving satellite,  
Or the radiant sisters the Pleiades.

*Sparkles from the Wheel.*

Where the city's ceaseless crowd moves on the livelong day,  
Withdrawn I join a group of children watching, I pause aside  
with them.

By the curb toward the edge of the flagging,  
A knife-grinder works at his wheel sharpening a great knife,  
Bending over he carefully holds it to the stone, by foot and  
knee,  
With measur'd tread he turns rapidly, as he presses with light  
but firm hand,  
Forth issue then in copious golden jets,  
Sparkles from the wheel.

The scene and all its belongings, how they seize and affect me,  
The sad sharp-chinn'd old man with worn clothes and broad  
shoulder-band of leather,  
Myself effusing and fluid, a phantom curiously floating, now  
here absorb'd and arrested,  
The group, (an unminde'd point set in a vast surrounding,)  
The attentive, quiet children, the loud, proud, restive base of  
the streets,  
The low hoarse purr of the whirling stone, the light-press'd  
blade,  
Diffusing, dropping, sideways-darting, in tiny showers of gold,  
Sparkles from the wheel.



*Gods.*

Lover divine and perfect Comrade,  
Waiting content, invisible yet, but certain,  
Be thou my God.

Thou, thou, the Ideal Man,  
Fair, able, beautiful, content, and loving,  
Complete in body and dilate in spirit,  
Be thou my God.

O Death, (for Life has served its turn,)  
Opener and usher to the heavenly mansion,  
Be thou my God.

Aught, aught of mightiest, best I see, conceive, or know,  
(To break the stagnant tie—thee, thee to free, O soul,)  
Be thou my God.

All great ideas, the races' aspirations,  
All heroisms, deeds of rapt enthusiasts,  
Be ye my Gods.

Or Time and Space,  
Or shape of Earth divine and wondrous,  
Or some fair shape I viewing, worship,  
Or lustrous orb of sun or star by night,  
Be ye my Gods.

*Joy, Shipmate, Joy!*

Joy, shipmate, joy!  
(Pleas'd to my soul at death I cry,  
Our life is closed, our life begins,  
The long, long anchorage we leave,  
The ship is clear at last, she leaps!  
She swiftly courses from the shore,  
Joy, shipmate, joy.

*Ethiopia Saluting the Colors.*

Who are you dusky woman, so ancient hardly human,  
 With your woolly-white and turban'd head, and bare bony  
 feet?

Why rising by the roadside here, do you the colors greet?

('Tis while our army lines Carolina's sands and pines,  
 Forth from thy hovel door thou Ethiopia com'st to me,  
 As under doughty Sherman I march toward the sea.)

*Me master years a hundred since from my parents sunder'd,  
 A little child, they caught me as the savage beast is caught,  
 Then hither me across the sea the cruel slaver brought.*

No further does she say, but lingering all the day,  
 Her high-borne turban'd head she wags, and rolls her  
 darkling eye,  
 And courtesies to the regiments, the guidons moving by.

What is it fateful woman, so blear, hardly human?  
 Why wag your head with turban bound, yellow, red and green?  
 Are the things so strange and marvelous you see or have seen?

1872

*The Mystic Trumpeter.*

I

Hark, some wild trumpeter, some strange musician,  
Hovering unseen in air, vibrates capricious tunes to-night.

I hear thee trumpeter, listening alert I catch thy notes,  
Now pouring, whirling like a tempest round me,  
Now low, subdued, now in the distance lost.

2

Come nearer bodiless one, haply in thee resounds  
Some dead composer, haply thy pensive life  
Was fill'd with aspirations high, unform'd ideals,  
Waves, oceans musical, chaotically surging,  
That now ecstatic ghost, close to me bending, thy cornet  
    echoing, pealing,  
Gives out to no one's ears but mine, but freely gives to mine,  
That I may thee translate.

3

Blow trumpeter free and clear, I follow thee,  
While at thy liquid prelude, glad, serene,

The fretting world, the streets, the noisy hours of day  
 withdraw,  
 A holy calm descends like dew upon me,  
 I walk in cool refreshing night the walks of Paradise,  
 I scent the grass, the moist air and the roses;  
 Thy song expands my numb'd imbonded spirit, thou freest,  
 launchest me.  
 Floating and basking upon heaven's lake.

## 4

Blow again trumpeter! and for my sensuous eyes,  
 Bring the old pageants, show the feudal world,  
 What charm thy music works! thou makest pass before me,  
 Ladies and cavaliers long dead, barons are in their castle halls,  
 the troubadours are singing,  
 Arm'd knights go forth to redress wrongs, some in quest of  
 the holy Graal;  
 I see the tournament, I see the contestants incased in heavy  
 armor seated on stately champing horses,  
 I hear the shouts, the sounds of blows and smiting steel;  
 I see the Crusaders' tumultuous armies—hark, how the  
 cymbals clang,  
 Lo, where the monks walk in advance, bearing the cross on  
 high.

## 5

Blow again trumpeter! and for thy theme,  
 Take now the enclosing theme of all, the solvent and the  
 setting,  
 Love, that is pulse of all, the sustenance and the pang,  
 The heart of man and woman all for love,  
 No other theme but love—knitting, enclosing, all-diffusing love.

O how the immortal phantoms crowd around me!  
 I see the vast alembic ever working, I see and know the flames  
 that heat the world,

The glow, the blush, the beating hearts of lovers,  
 So blissful happy some, and some so silent, dark, and nigh to  
 death;  
 Love, that is all the earth to lovers—love, that mocks time  
 and space,  
 Love, that is day and night—love, that is sun and moon and  
 stars,  
 Love, that is crimson, sumptuous, sick with perfume,  
 No other words but words of love, no other thought but love.

## 6

Blow again trumpeter—conjure war's alarums.

Swift to thy spell a shuddering hum like distant thunder rolls,  
 Lo, where the arm'd men hasten—lo, mid the clouds of dust  
 the glint of bayonets,  
 I see the grime-faced cannoneers, I mark the rosy flash amid  
 the smoke, I hear the cracking of the guns;  
 Nor war alone—thy fearful music-song, wild player, brings  
 every sight of fear,  
 The deeds of ruthless brigands, rapine, murder—I hear the  
 cries for help!  
 I see ships foundering at sea, I behold on deck and below deck  
 the terrible tableaux.

## 7

O trumpeter, methinks I am myself the instrument thou  
 playest,  
 Thou melt'st my heart, my brain—thou movest, drawest,  
 changest them at will;  
 And now thy sullen notes send darkness through me,  
 Thou takest away all cheering light, all hope,  
 I see the enslaved, the overthrown, the hurt, the opprest of the  
 whole earth,  
 I feel the measureless shame and humiliation of my race, it  
 becomes all mine,

Mine too the revenges of humanity, the wrongs of ages,  
 baffled feuds and hatreds,  
 Utter defeat upon me weighs—all lost—the foe victorious,  
 (Yet 'mid the ruins Pride colossal stands unshaken to the last,  
 Endurance, resolution to the last.)

## 8

Now trumpeter for thy close,  
 Vouchsafe a higher strain than any yet,  
 Sing to my soul, renew its languishing faith and hope,  
 Rouse up my slow belief, give me some vision of the future,  
 Give me for once its prophecy and joy.

O glad, exulting, culminating song!  
 A vigor more than earth's is in thy notes,  
 Marches of victory—man disenthral'd—the conqueror at last,  
 Hymns to the universal God from universal man—all joy!  
 A reborn race appears—a perfect world, all joy!  
 Women and men in wisdom innocence and health—all joy!  
 Riotous laughing bacchanals fill'd with joy!  
 War, sorrow, suffering gone—the rank earth purged—nothing  
 but joy left!  
 The ocean fill'd with joy—the atmosphere all joy!  
 Joy! joy! in freedom, worship, love! joy in the ecstasy of life!  
 Enough to merely be! enough to breathe!  
 Joy! joy! all over joy!

*Prayer of Columbus.*

A batter'd wreck'd old man,  
 Thrown on this savage shore, far, far from home,  
 Pent by the sea and dark rebellious brows, twelve dreary  
     months,  
 Sore, stiff with many toils, sicken'd and nigh to death,  
 I take my way along the island's edge,  
 Venting a heavy heart.

I am too full of woe!  
 Haply I may not live another day;  
 I cannot rest O God, I cannot eat or drink or sleep,  
 Till I put forth myself, my prayer, once more to Thee,  
 Breathe, bathe myself once more in Thee, commune with  
     Thee,  
 Report myself once more to Thee.

Thou knowest my years entire, my life,  
 My long and crowded life of active work, not adoration  
     merely;  
 Thou knowest the prayers and vigils of my youth,  
 Thou knowest my manhood's solemn and visionary  
     meditations,  
 Thou knowest how before I commenced I devoted all to come  
     to Thee,  
 Thou knowest I have in age ratified all those vows and strictly  
     kept them,



Thou knowest I have not once lost nor faith nor ecstasy in  
 Thee,  
 In shackles, prison'd, in disgrace, repining not,  
 Accepting all from Thee, as duly come from Thee.

All my emprises have been fill'd with Thee,  
 My speculations, plans, begun and carried on in thoughts of  
 Thee,  
 Sailing the deep or journeying the land for Thee;  
 Intentions, purports, aspirations mine, leaving results to Thee.

O I am sure they really came from Thee,  
 The urge, the ardor, the unconquerable will,  
 The potent, felt, interior command, stronger than words,  
 A message from the Heavens whispering to me even in sleep,  
 These sped me on.

By me and these the work so far accomplish'd,  
 By me earth's elder cloy'd and stifled lands uncloy'd, unloos'd,  
 By me the hemispheres rounded and tied, the unknown to the  
 known.

The end I know not, it is all in Thee,  
 Or small or great I know not—haply what broad fields, what  
 lands,  
 Haply the brutish measureless human undergrowth I know,  
 Transplanted there may rise to stature, knowledge worthy  
 Thee,  
 Haply the swords I know may there indeed be turn'd to  
 reaping-tools,  
 Haply the lifeless cross I know, Europe's dead cross, may bud  
 and blossom there.

One effort more, my altar this bleak sand;  
 That Thou O God my life hast lighted,  
 With ray of light, steady, ineffable, vouchsafed of Thee,  
 Light rare untellable, lighting the very light,  
 Beyond all signs, descriptions, languages;

For that O God, be it my latest word, here on my knees,  
Old, poor, and paralyzed, I thank Thee.

My terminus near,  
The clouds already closing in upon me,  
The voyage balk'd, the course disputed, lost,  
I yield my ships to Thee.

My hands, my limbs grow nerveless,  
My brain feels rack'd, bewilderd,  
Let the old timbers part, I will not part,  
I will cling fast to Thee, O God, though the waves buffet me,  
Thee, Thee at least I know.

Is it the prophet's thought I speak, or am I raving?  
What do I know of life? what of myself?  
I know not even my own work past or present,  
Dim ever-shifting guesses of it spread before me,  
Of newer better worlds, their mighty parturition,  
Mocking, perplexing me.

And these things I see suddenly, what mean they?  
As if some miracle, some hand divine unseal'd my eyes,  
Shadowy vast shapes smile through the air and sky,  
And on the distant waves sail countless ships,  
And anthems in new tongues I hear saluting me.

*To a Locomotive in Winter.*

Thee for my recitative,  
 Thee in the driving storm even as now, the snow, the winter-  
 day declining,  
 Thee in thy panoply, thy measur'd dual throbbing and thy  
 beat convulsive,  
 Thy black cylindric body, golden brass and silvery steel,  
 Thy ponderous side-bars, parallel and connecting rods,  
 gyrating, shuttling at thy sides,  
 Thy metrical, now swelling pant and roar, now tapering in the  
 distance,  
 Thy great protruding head-light fix'd in front,  
 Thy long, pale, floating vapor-pennants, tinged with delicate  
 purple,  
 The dense and murky clouds out-belching from thy smoke-  
 stack,  
 Thy knitted frame, thy springs and valves, the tremulous  
 twinkle of thy wheels,  
 Thy train of cars behind, obedient, merrily following,  
 Through gale or calm, now swift, now slack, yet steadily  
 careering;  
 Type of the modern—emblem of motion and power—pulse of  
 the continent,  
 For once come serve the Muse and merge in verse, even as  
 here I see thee,  
 With storm and buffeting gusts of wind and falling snow,  
 By day thy warning ringing bell to sound its notes,  
 By night thy silent signal lamps to swing.  
  
 Fierce-throated beauty!  
 Roll through my chant with all thy lawless music, thy  
 swinging lamps at night,  
 Thy madly-whistled laughter, echoing, rumbling like an  
 earthquake, rousing all,

Law of thyself complete, thine own track firmly holding,  
(No sweetness debonair of tearful harp or glib piano thine,) Thy trills of shrieks by rocks and hills return'd,  
Launch'd o'er the prairies wide, across the lakes,  
To the free skies unpent and glad and strong.

*The Ox-Tamer.*

In a far-away northern country in the placid pastoral region,  
Lives my farmer friend, the theme of my recitative, a famous  
tamer of oxen,  
There they bring him the three-year-olds and the four-year-  
olds to break them,  
He will take the wildest steer in the world and break him and  
tame him,  
He will go fearless without any whip where the young bullock  
chafes up and down the yard,  
The bullock's head tosses restless high in the air with raging eyes,  
Yet see you! how soon his rage subsides—how soon this  
tamer tames him;  
See you! on the farms hereabout a hundred oxen young and  
old, and he is the man who has tamed them,  
They all know him, all are affectionate to him;  
See you! some are such beautiful animals, so lofty looking;  
Some are buff-color'd, some mottled, one has a white line  
running along his back, some are brindled,  
Some have wide flaring horns (a good sign)—see you! the  
bright hides,  
See, the two with stars on their foreheads—see, the round  
bodies and broad backs,  
How straight and square they stand on their legs—what fine  
sagacious eyes!  
How they watch their tamer—they wish him near them—how  
they turn to look after him!  
What yearning expression! how uneasy they are when he  
moves away from them;  
Now I marvel what it can be he appears to them, (books,  
politics, poems, depart—all else departs,)  
I confess I envy only his fascination—my silent, illiterate friend,  
Whom a hundred oxen love there in his life on farms,  
In the northern country far, in the placid pastoral region.

*The Dalliance of the Eagles.*

Skirting the river road, (my forenoon walk, my rest,) Skyward in air a sudden muffled sound, the dalliance of the eagles,  
The rushing amorous contact high in space together,  
The clinching interlocking claws, a living, fierce, gyrating wheel,  
Four beating wings, two beaks, a swirling mass tight grappling,  
In tumbling turning clustering loops, straight downward falling,  
Till o'er the river pois'd, the twain yet one, a moment's lull,  
A motionless still balance in the air, then parting, talons loosing,  
Upward again on slow-firm pinions slanting, their separate diverse flight,  
She hers, he his, pursuing.

*A Clear Midnight.*

This is thy hour O Soul, thy free flight into the wordless,  
Away from books, away from art, the day erased, the lesson  
done,  
Thee fully forth emerging, silent, gazing, pondering the  
themes thou lovest best,  
Night, sleep, death and the stars.

1888

*As I Sit Writing Here.*

As I sit writing here, sick and grown old,  
Not my least burden is that dulness of the years, querilities,  
Ungracious glooms, aches, lethargy, constipation, whimpering  
*ennui*,  
May filter in my daily songs.



*Broadway.*

What hurrying human tides, or day or night!  
What passions, winnings, losses, ardors, swim thy waters!  
What whirls of evil, bliss and sorrow, stem thee!  
What curious questioning glances—glints of love!  
Leer, envy, scorn, contempt, hope, aspiration!  
Thou portal—thou arena—thou of the myriad long-drawn  
    lines and groups!  
(Could but thy flagstones, curbs, façades, tell their inimitable  
    tales;  
Thy windows rich, and huge hotels—thy side-walks wide;)   
Thou of the endless sliding, mincing, shuffling feet!  
Thou, like the parti-colored world itself—like infinite,  
    teeming, mocking life!  
Thou visor'd, vast, unspeakable show and lesson!

*Unseen Buds.*

Unseen buds, infinite, hidden well,  
Under the snow and ice, under the darkness, in every square  
    or cubic inch,  
Germinal, exquisite, in delicate lace, microscopic, unborn,  
Like babes in wombs, latent, folded, compact, sleeping;  
Billions of billions, and trillions of trillions of them waiting,  
(On earth and in the sea—the universe—the stars there in the  
    heavens,)  
Urging slowly, surely forward, forming endless,  
And waiting ever more, forever more behind.

*Good-Bye My Fancy!*

Good-bye my Fancy!  
Farewell dear mate, dear love!  
I'm going away, I know not where,  
Or to what fortune, or whether I may ever see you again,  
So Good-bye my Fancy.

Now for my last—let me look back a moment;  
The slower fainter ticking of the clock is in me,  
Exit, nightfall, and soon the heart-thud stopping.

Long have we lived, joy'd, caress'd together;  
Delightful!—now separation—Good-bye my Fancy.

Yet let me not be too hasty,  
Long indeed have we lived, slept, filter'd, become really  
    blended into one;  
Then if we die we die together, (yes, we'll remain one,)  
If we go anywhere we'll go together to meet what happens,  
May-be we'll be better off and blither, and learn something,  
May-be it is yourself now really ushering me to the true  
    songs, (who knows?)  
May-be it is you the mortal knob really undoing, turning—so  
    now finally,  
Good-bye—and hail! my Fancy.



# PROSE WRITINGS



## “THE CHILD’S CHAMPION”

Just after sunset one evening in summer—that pleasant hour when the air is balmy, the light loses its glare, and all around is imbued with soothing quiet—on the door-step of a house there sat an elderly woman waiting the arrival of her son. The house was in a straggling village some fifty miles from the great city, whose spires and ceaseless clang rise up, where the Hudson pours forth its waters. She who sat on the door-step was a widow; her neat white cap covered locks of gray, and her dress though clean, was patched and exceeding homely. Her house, for the tenement she occupied was her own, was very little, and very old. Trees clustered around it so thickly as almost to hide its color—that blackish gray color which belongs to old wooden houses that have never been painted; and to get to it, you had to enter a little rickety gate, and walk through a short path, bordered by carrot-beds, and beets, and other vegetables. The son whom she was expecting was her only child. About a year before, he had been bound apprentice to a rich farmer in the place, and after finishing his daily tasks, he was in the habit of spending half an hour at his mother’s. On the present occasion, the shadows of the night had settled heavily before the youth made his appearance; when he did, his walk was slow and dragging, and all his motions were languid, as if from great weariness. He opened the gate, came through the path, and sat down by his mother in silence.

“You are sullen, to-night, Charley,” said the widow, after a minute’s pause, when she found that he returned no answer to her greetings. As she spoke, she put her hand fondly on his head; it was as wet as if it had been dipped in the water. His

shirt, too, was soaked; and as she passed her fingers down his shoulder, she felt a sharp twinge in her heart, for she knew that moisture to be hard wrung sweat of severe toil, exacted from her young child, (he was but twelve years old,) by an unyielding task-master.

“You have worked hard to-day, my son.”

“I’ve been mowing.”

The widow’s heart felt another pang. “Not all day, Charley?” she said in a low voice, and there was a slight quiver in it.

“Yes, mother, all day,” replied the boy; “Mr. Ellis said he couldn’t afford to hire men, for wages is so high. I’ve swung the scythe ever since an hour before sunrise. Feel of my hands.” There were blisters on them like great lumps.

Tears started in the widow’s eyes. She dared not trust herself with a reply, though her heart was bursting with the thought that she could not better his condition. There was no earthly means of support on which she had dependence enough to encourage her child in the wish she knew was coming; the wish—not uttered for the first time—to be freed from his bondage.

“Mother,” at length said the boy, “I can stand it no longer. I cannot and will not stay at Mr. Ellis’s. Ever since the day I first went into his house, I’ve been a slave, and if I have to work there much longer, I know I shall run away, and go to sea, or somewhere else. I’d as lieve be in my grave as there.” And the child burst into a passionate fit of weeping.

His mother was silent, for she was in deep grief herself. After some minutes had flown, however, she gathered sufficient self-possession to speak to her son in a soothing tone, endeavoring to win him from his sorrows, and cheer up his heart. She told him that time was swift; that in the course of years he would be his own master; that all people had their troubles; with other ready arguments, which though they had little effect in calming her own distress, she hoped would act as a solace on the disturbed temper of the boy. And as the half hour to which he was limited had now elapsed, she took him by the hand and led him to the gate to set forth on his return. The child seemed pacified, though occasionally one of those convulsive sighs that remain



after a fit of weeping, would break from his throat. At the gate, he threw his arms round his mother's neck; each pressed a long kiss on the lips of the other, and the youngster bent his steps toward his master's house.

As her child passed out of sight, the widow returned, shut the gate, and entered her lonesome room. There was no light in the old cottage that night; the heart of its occupant was dark and cheerless. Sore agony, and grief, and tears, and convulsive wrastlings were there. The thought of a beloved son condemned to labor—labor that would bend down a man—struggling from day to day under the hard rule of a soulless gold-worshipper; the knowledge that years must pass thus; the sickening idea of her own poverty, and of living mainly on the grudging charity of neighbors—these racked the widow's heart, and made her bed a sleepless one. O, you, who, living in plenty and peace, fret at some little misfortune or some trifling disappointment—behold this spectacle, and blush at your unmanliness! Little do you know of the dark trials (compared to yours as night's great veil to a daylight cloud) that are still going on around you; the pangs of hunger—the faintness of the soul at seeing those we love trampled down, without our having the power to aid them—the wasting away of the body in sickness incurable—and those dull achings of the heart when the consciousness comes upon the poor man's mind, that while he lives he will in all probability live in want and wretchedness.

The boy bent his steps to his employer's as has been said. In his way down the village street, he had to pass a public house, the only one the place contained; and when he came off against it, he heard the sound of a fiddle, drowned however at intervals by much laughter and talking. The windows were up; and, the house standing close to the road, Charles thought it would be no harm to take a look and see what was going on within. Half-a-dozen footsteps brought him to the low casement, on which he leaned his elbow, and where he had a full view of the room and its occupants. In one corner was an old man known in the village as Black Dave: he it was whose musical performances had a moment before drawn Charles's attention to the

tavern; and he it was who now exerted himself in a most violent manner to give with divers flourishes and extra twangs, a tune popular among that thick-lipped race whose fondness for melody is so well known. In the middle of the room were five or six sailors, some of them quite drunk, and others in the earlier stages of that process; while on benches around were more sailors, and here and there a person dressed in landsmen's attire, but hardly behind the sea-gentlemen in uproariousness and mirth. The individuals in the middle of the room were dancing—that is, they were going through certain contortions and shufflings, varied occasionally by exceeding hearty stamps upon the sanded floor. In short, the whole party were engaged in a drunken frolic, which was in no respect different from a thousand other drunken frolics, except perhaps that there was less than the ordinary amount of anger and quarrelling. Indeed, every one seemed in remarkably good humor. But what excited the boy's attention more than any other object, was an individual seated on one of the benches opposite, who though evidently enjoying the spree as much as if he were an old hand at such business, seemed in every other particular to be far out of his element. His appearance was youthful; he might have been twenty-one or two. His countenance was intelligent—and had the air of city life and society. He was dressed not gaudily, but in all respects fashionably, his coat being of the finest black broadcloth, his linen delicate and spotless as snow, and his whole aspect a counterpart to those which may be nightly seen in the dress circles of our most respectable theatres. He laughed and talked with the rest; and it must be confessed his jokes, like the most of those that passed current there, were by no means distinguished for their refinement or purity. Near the door, was a small table covered with decanters, and with glasses, some of which had been used but were used again indiscriminately, and a box of very thick and long cigars.

“Come, boys,” said one of the sailors, taking advantage of a momentary pause in the hubbub to rap his enormous knuckles on the table, and call attention to himself; the gentleman in question had but one eye, and two most extensive whiskers.

"Come, boys, let's take a drink, I know you're all a getting dry, so curse me if you shant have a suck at my expense."

This polite invitation was responded to by a general moving of the company toward the little table, holding the before-mentioned decanters and glasses. Clustering there around, each gentleman helped himself to a very respectable portion of that particular liquor which suited his fancy; and steadiness and accuracy being at that time by no means distinguishing traits of the arms and legs of the party, a goodly amount of fluid was spilled upon the floor. This piece of extravagance excited the ire of the personage who was treating; and his anger was still further increased when he discovered two or three loiterers who seemed disposed to slight his civil request to drink.

"Walk up boys, walk up. Don't let there be any skulkers among us, or blast my eyes if he shant go down on his marrow bones and gobble up the rum we've spilt. Hallo!" he exclaimed, as he spied Charles, "Hallo! you chap in the window, come here and take a sup."

As he spoke, he stepped to the open casement, put his brawny hands under the boy's armpits, and lifted him into the room bodily.

"There, my lads," he said to his companions, "there's a new recruit for you. Not so coarse a one either," he added as he took a fair view of the boy, who, though not what is called pretty, was fresh, and manly looking, and large for his age.

"Come youngster, take a glass," he continued; and he poured one nearly full of strong brandy.

Now Charles was not exactly frightened, for he was a lively fellow and had often been at the country merry-makings, and with the young men of the place who were very fond of him; but he was certainly rather abashed at his abrupt introduction to the midst of strangers. So, putting the glass aside, he looked up with a pleasant smile in his new acquaintance's face.

"I've no need of any thing now," he said, "but I'm just as much obliged to you as if I was."

"Poh! man, drink it down," rejoined the sailor; "drink it down, it won't hurt you." And by way of showing its excel-

lence, the one-eyed worthy drained it himself to the very last drop. Then filling it again he renewed his hospitable efforts to make the lad go through the same operation.

“I’ve no occasion; beside, it makes my head ache, and I have promised my mother not to drink any,” was the boy’s answer.

A little irritated by his continued refusals, the sailor, with a loud oath, declared that Charles should swallow the brandy whether he would or no. Placing one of his tremendous paws on the back of the boy’s head, with the other he thrust the edge of the glass to his lips, swearing at the same time, that if he shook it so as to spill its contents, the consequences would be of a nature by no means agreeable to his back and shoulders. Disliking the liquor, and angry at the attempt to overbear him, the undaunted child lifted his hand and struck the arm of the sailor with a blow so sudden, that the glass fell and was smashed to pieces on the floor, while the liquid was about equally divided between the face of Charles, the clothes of the sailor, and the sand. By this time the whole of the company had their attention drawn to the scene. Some of them laughed when they saw Charles’s undisguised antipathy to the drink; but they laughed still more heartily when he discomfitted the sailor. All of them, however, were content to let the matter go as chance would have it—all but the young man of the black coat, who had before been spoken of. Why was it that from the first moment of seeing him, the young man’s heart had moved with a strange feeling of kindness toward the boy? He felt anxious to know more of him—he felt that he should love him. O, it is passing wondrous, how in the hurried walks of life and business, we meet with young beings, strangers, who seem to touch the fountains of our love, and draw forth their swelling waters. The wish to love and to be beloved, which the forms of custom, and the engrossing anxiety for gain, so generally smother, will sometimes burst forth in spite of all obstacles; and, kindled by one, who, till the hour was unknown to us, will burn with a lovely and a pure brightness. No scrap is this of sentimental fiction; ask your own heart, reader, and your own memory, for endorsement to its truth.

Charles stood, his cheek flushed and his heart throbbing,

wiping the trickling drops from his face with a handkerchief. At first, the sailor, between his drunkenness and his surprise, was pretty much in the condition of one who is suddenly awakened out of a deep sleep, and cannot call his consciousness about him. When he saw the state of things, however, and heard the jeering laugh of his companions, his dull eye, lighting up with anger, fell upon the boy who had withstood him. He seized the child with a grip of iron; he bent Charles half way over, and with the side of his heavy foot, gave him a sharp and solid kick. He was about repeating the performance, for the child hung like a rag in his grasp; but all of a sudden his ears rung as if pistols had snapped close to them; lights of various hues flickered in his eye, (he had but one, it must be remembered,) and a strong propelling power caused him to move from his position, and keep moving until he was brought up by the wall. A blow—a cuff, given in such a scientific and effectual manner, that the hand from which it came was evidently no stranger to the pugilistic art—had been suddenly planted on the ear of the sailor. It was planted by the young stranger of the black coat. He had watched with interest the proceedings of the sailor and the boy: two or three times he was on the point of interfering, but when he witnessed the kick, his rage was uncontrollable. He sprung from his seat like a mad tiger. Assuming, unconsciously, however, the attitude of a boxer, he struck the sailor in a manner to cause those unpleasant sensations just described; and he would probably have followed up his attack in a method by no means consistent with the sailor's personal case, had not Charles, now thoroughly terrified, clung round his leg, and prevented his advancing. The scene was a strange one, and for a moment quite a silent one. The company had started from their seats and held startled but quiet positions; in the middle of the room stood the young man, in his not at all ungraceful posture, every nerve strained, and his eyes flashing very brilliantly. He seemed to be rooted like a rock, and clasping him with an appearance of confidence in his protection, hung the boy.

"Dare! you scoundrel!" cried the young man, his voice thick with agitation; "dare to touch this boy again, and I'll batter you till no sense is left in your body."

The sailor, now partially recovered, made some gestures from which it might be inferred that he resented this ungentle treatment.

“Come on, drunken brute!” continued the angry youth; “I wish you would—you’ve not had half what you deserve.”

Upon sobriety and sense more fully taking their seats in the brain of the one-eyed mariner, however, that worthy determined in his own mind, that it would be most prudent to let the matter drop. Expressing, therefore, his conviction to that effect, adding certain remarks to the purport that he “meant no harm to the lad,” that he was surprised at such a gentleman getting so “up about a little piece of fun,” and so forth. He proposed that the company should go on with their jollity just as if nothing had happened. In truth, he of the single eye was not a bad hearted fellow; the fiery enemy, whose advances he had so often courted that night, had stolen away his good feelings, and set busy devils at work within him, that might have made his hands do some dreadful deed, had not the stranger interfered.

In a few minutes the frolic of the party was upon its former footing. The young man sat down on one of the benches, with the boy by his side; and, while the rest were loudly laughing and talking, the two held communion together. The stranger learned from Charles all the particulars of his simple story—how his father had died years since—how his mother had worked hard for a bare living, and how he himself for many dreary months had been the bond-child of a hard hearted, avaricious master. More and more interested, drawing the child close to his side, the young man listened to his plainly told history; and thus an hour passed away. It was now past midnight. The young man told Charles that on the morrow he would take steps to have him liberated from his servitude; for the present night, he said, it would perhaps be best for the boy to stay and share his bed at the inn; and little persuading did the child need to do so. As they retired to sleep, very pleasant thoughts filled the mind of the young man; thoughts of a worthy action performed; of unsullied affection; thoughts, too—newly awakened ones—of walking in a steadier and wiser path than formerly. All his imaginings seemed to be interwoven with the youth who

lay by his side; he folded his arms around him, and, while he slept, the boy's cheek rested on his bosom. Fair were those two creatures in their unconscious beauty—glorious, but yet how differently glorious! One of them was innocent and sinless of all wrong: the other—O to that other, what evil had not been present, either in action or to his desires!

Who was the stranger? To those who, from ties of relationship or otherwise, felt an interest in him, the answer to such a question was not a pleasant theme to dwell upon. His name was Lankton—parentless—a dissipated young man—a brawler—one whose too frequent companions were rowdies, blacklegs, and swindlers. The New-York police officers were not altogether strangers to his countenance; and certain reporters who note the transactions there, had more than once received gratuities for leaving out his name from the disgraceful notoriety of their columns. He had been bred to the profession of medicine: beside that, he had a very respectable income, and his house was in a pleasant street on the west side of the city. Little of his time, however, did Mr. John Lankton spend at his domestic hearth; and the elderly lady who officiated as housekeeper was by no means surprised to have him gone for a week or a month at a time, and she knowing nothing of his whereabouts. Living as he did, the young man was an unhappy being. It was not so much that his associates were below his own capacity, for Lankton, though sensible and well-bred, was by no means talented or refined—but that he lived without any steady purpose—that he had no one to attract him to his home—that he too easily allowed himself to be tempted—which caused his life to be of late one continued scene of dissatisfaction. This dissatisfaction he sought to drive away (ah! foolish youth!) by mixing in all kinds of parties and places where the object was pleasure. On the present occasion, he had left the city a few days before, and was passing the time at a place near the village where Charles and his mother lived. He had that day fallen in with those who were his companions in the tavern spree—and thus it happened that they were all together: for Lankton hesitated not to make himself at home with any associates that suited his fancy.

The next morning, the poor widow rose from her sleepless cot, and from that lucky trait in our nature which makes one extreme follow another, she set about her daily toil with a lightened heart. Ellis, the farmer, rose too, short as the nights were, an hour before day; for his God was gain, and a prime article of his creed was to get as much work as possible from every one around him. He roused up all his people, and finding that Charles had not been home the preceding night, he muttered threats against him, and calling a messenger, to whom he hinted that any minutes which he stayed beyond a most exceeding short period, would be subtracted from his breakfast time, dispatched him to the widow's to find what was her son about.

What was he about? With one of the brightest and earliest rays of the warm sun a gentle angel entered his apartment, and hovering over the sleepers on invisible wings, looked down with a pleasant smile and blessed them. Then noiselessly taking a stand by the bed, the angel bent over the boy's face, and whispered strange words into his ear: thus it came that he had beautiful visions. No sound was heard but the slight breathing of those who slumbered there in each others arms; and the angel paused a moment, and smiled another and a doubly sweet smile as he drank in the scene with his large soft eyes. Bending over again to the boy's lips, he touched them with a kiss, as the languid wind touches a flower. He seemed to be going now—and yet he lingered. Twice or thrice he bent over the brow of the young man—and went not. Now the angel was troubled; for he would have pressed the young man's forehead with a kiss, as he did the child's; but a spirit from the Pure Country, who touches anything tainted by evil thoughts, does it at the risk of having his breast pierced with pain, as with a barbed arrow. At that moment a very pale bright ray of sunlight darted through the window and settled on the young man's features. Then the beautiful spirit knew that permission was granted him: so he softly touched the young man's face with his, and silently and swiftly wafted himself away on the unseen air.

In the course of the day Ellis was called upon by young Lankton, and never perhaps in his life was the farmer more puzzled than at the young man's proposals—his desire to pro-



vide for a boy who could do him no pecuniary good—and his willingness to disburse money for that purpose. In that department of Ellis’s structure where the mind was, or ought to have been situated, there never had entered the slightest thought assimilating to those which actuated the young man in his proceedings in this business. Yet Ellis was a church member and a county officer.

The widow, too, was called upon, not only that day, but the next and the next.

It needs not to particularise the subsequent events of Lankton’s and the boy’s history: how the reformation of the profligate might be dated to begin from that time; how he gradually severed the guilty ties that had so long galled him—how he enjoyed his own home, and loved to be there, and why he loved to be there; how the close knit love of the boy and him grew not slack with time; and how, when at length he became head of a family of his own, he would shudder when he thought of his early danger and escape.

Loved reader, own you the moral of this simple story? Draw it forth—pause a moment, ere your eye wanders to a more bright and eloquent page—and dwell upon it.

PREFACES AND  
AFTERWORDS FROM  
*LEAVES OF GRASS*

PREFACE TO  
*LEAVES OF GRASS*, 1855

AMERICA does not repel the past or what it has produced under its forms or amid other politics or the idea of castes or the old religions . . . . accepts the lesson with calmness . . . is not so impatient as has been supposed that the slough still sticks to opinions and manners and literature while the life which served its requirements has passed into the new life of the new forms . . . perceives that the corpse is slowly borne from the eating and sleeping rooms of the house . . . perceives that it waits a little while in the door . . . that it was fittest for its days . . . that its action has descended to the stalwart and well-shaped heir who approaches . . . and that he shall be fittest for his days.

The Americans of all nations at any time upon the earth have probably the fullest poetical nature. The United States themselves are essentially the greatest poem. In the history of the earth hitherto the largest and most stirring appear tame and orderly to their ampler largeness and stir. Here at last is something in the doings of man that corresponds with the broadcast doings of the day and night. Here is not merely a nation but a teeming nation of nations. Here is action untied from strings necessarily blind to particulars and details magnificently moving in vast masses. Here is the hospitality which forever indicates heroes . . . . Here are the rougs and beards and space and ruggedness and nonchalance that the soul loves. Here the

performance disdaining the trivial unapproached in the tremendous audacity of its crowds and groupings and the push of its perspective spreads with crampless and flowing breadth and showers its prolific and splendid extravagance. One sees it must indeed own the riches of the summer and winter, and need never be bankrupt while corn grows from the ground or the orchards drop apples or the bays contain fish or men beget children upon women.

Other states indicate themselves in their deputies . . . but the genius of the United States is not best or most in its executives or legislatures, nor in its ambassadors or authors or colleges or churches or parlors, nor even in its newspapers or inventors . . . but always most in the common people. Their manners speech dress friendships—the freshness and candor of their physiognomy—the picturesque looseness of their carriage . . . their deathless attachment to freedom—their aversion to anything indecorous or soft or mean—the practical acknowledgment of the citizens of one state by the citizens of all other states—the fierceness of their roused resentment—their curiosity and welcome of novelty—their self-esteem and wonderful sympathy—their susceptibility to a slight—the air they have of persons who never knew how it felt to stand in the presence of superiors—the fluency of their speech—their delight in music, the sure symptom of manly tenderness and native elegance of soul . . . their good temper and openhandedness—the terrible significance of their elections—the President's taking off his hat to them not they to him—these too are unrhymed poetry. It awaits the gigantic and generous treatment worthy of it.

The largeness of nature or the nation were monstrous without a corresponding largeness and generosity of the spirit of the citizen. Not nature nor swarming states nor streets and steamships nor prosperous business nor farms nor capital nor learning may suffice for the ideal of man . . . nor suffice the poet. No reminiscences may suffice either. A live nation can always cut a deep mark and can have the best authority the cheapest . . . namely from its own soul. This is the sum of the profitable uses of individuals or states and of present action and grandeur and of the subjects of poets.—As if it were neces-

sary to trot back generation after generation to the eastern records! As if the beauty and sacredness of the demonstrable must fall behind that of the mythical! As if men do not make their mark out of any times! As if the opening of the western continent by discovery and what has transpired since in North and South America were less than the small theatre of the antique or the aimless sleepwalking of the middle ages! The pride of the United States leaves the wealth and finesse of the cities and all returns of commerce and agriculture and all the magnitude of geography or shows of exterior victory to enjoy the breed of full-sized men or one full-sized man unconquerable and simple.

The American poets are to enclose old and new for America is the race of races. Of them a bard is to be commensurate with a people. To him the other continents arrive as contributions . . . he gives them reception for their sake and his own sake. His spirit responds to his country's spirit . . . he incarnates its geography and natural life and rivers and lakes. Mississippi with annual freshets and changing chutes, Missouri and Columbia and Ohio and Saint Lawrence with the falls and beautiful masculine Hudson, do not embouchure where they spend themselves more than they embouchure into him. The blue breadth over the inland sea of Virginia and Maryland and the sea off Massachusetts and Maine and over Manhattan bay and over Champlain and Erie and over Ontario and Huron and Michigan and Superior, and over the Texan and Mexican and Floridian and Cuban seas and over the seas off California and Oregon, is not tallied by the blue breadth of the waters below more than the breadth of above and below is tallied by him. When the long Atlantic coast stretches longer and the Pacific coast stretches longer he easily stretches with them north or south. He spans between them also from east to west and reflects what is between them. On him rise solid growths that offset the growths of pine and cedar and hemlock and liveoak and locust and chestnut and cypress and hickory and limetree and cottonwood and tuliptree and cactus and wildvine and tamarind and persimmon . . . and tangles as tangled as any canebrake or swamp . . . and forests coated with transpar-

ent ice and icicles hanging from the boughs and crackling in the wind . . . . and sides and peaks of mountains . . . . and pasturage sweet and free as savannah or upland or prairie . . . . with flights and songs and screams that answer those of the wildpigeon and highhold and orchard-oriole and coot and surf-duck and redshouldered-hawk and fish-hawk and white-ibis and indian-hen and cat-owl and water-pheasant and quabird and pied-sheldrake and blackbird and mockingbird and buzzard and condor and night-heron and eagle. To him the hereditary countenance descends both mother's and father's. To him enter the essences of the real things and past and present events—of the enormous diversity of temperature and agriculture and mines—the tribes of red aborigines—the weatherbeaten vessels entering new ports or making landings on rocky coast—the first settlements north or south—the rapid stature and muscle—the haughty defiance of '76, and the war and peace and formation of the constitution . . . . the union always surrounded by blatherers and always calm and impregnable—the perpetual coming of immigrants—the wharf hem'd cities and superior marine—the unsurveyed interior—the loghouses and clearings and wild animals and hunters and trappers . . . . the free commerce—the fisheries and whaling and gold-digging—the endless gestation of new states—the convening of Congress every December, the members duly coming up from all climates and uttermost parts . . . . the noble character of the young mechanics and of all free American workmen and workwomen . . . . the general ardor and friendliness and enterprise—the perfect equality of the female with the male . . . . the large amativeness—the fluid movement of the population—the factories and mercantile life and laborsaving machinery—the Yankee swap—the New-York firemen and the target excursion—the southern plantation life—the character of the northeast and of the northwest and southwest—slavery and the tremulous spreading of hands to protect it, and the stern opposition to it which shall never cease till it ceases or the speaking of tongues and the moving of lips cease. For such the expression of the American poet is to be transcendent and new. It is to be indirect and not direct or descriptive or epic.

Its quality goes through these to much more. Let the age and wars of other nations be chanted and their eras and characters be illustrated and that finish the verse. Not so the great psalm of the republic. Here the theme is creative and has vista. Here comes one among the wellbeloved stonemasons and plans with decision and science and sees the solid and beautiful forms of the future where there are now no solid forms.

Of all nations the United States with veins full of poetical stuff most need poets and will doubtless have the greatest and use them the greatest. Their Presidents shall not be their common referee so much as their poets shall. Of all mankind the great poet is the equable man. Not in him but off from him things are grotesque or eccentric or fail of their sanity. Nothing out of its place is good and nothing in its place is bad. He bestows on every object or quality its fit proportions neither more nor less. He is the arbiter of the diverse and he is the key. He is the equalizer of his age and land . . . he supplies what wants supplying and checks what wants checking. If peace is the routine out of him speaks the spirit of peace, large, rich, thrifty, building vast and populous cities, encouraging agriculture and the arts and commerce—lighting the study of man, the soul, immortality—federal, state or municipal government, marriage, health, freetrade, intertravel by land and sea . . . nothing too close, nothing too far off . . . the stars not too far off. In war he is the most deadly force of the war. Who recruits him recruits horse and foot . . . he fetches parks of artillery the best that engineer ever knew. If the time becomes slothful and heavy he knows how to arouse it . . . he can make every word he speaks draw blood. Whatever stagnates in the flat of custom or obedience or legislation he never stagnates. Obedience does not master him, he masters it. High up out of reach he stands turning a concentrated light . . . he turns the pivot with his finger . . . he baffles the swiftest runners as he stands and easily overtakes and envelops them. The time straying toward infidelity and confessions and persiflage he withholds by his steady faith . . . he spreads out his dishes . . . he offers the sweet firm-fibred meat that grows men and women. His brain is the ultimate brain. He is no arguer . . . he is judgment. He judges not

as the judge judges but as the sun falling around a helpless thing. As he sees the farthest he has the most faith. His thoughts are the hymns of the praise of things. In the talk on the soul and eternity and God off of his equal plane he is silent. He sees eternity less like a play with a prologue and denouement . . . he sees eternity in men and women . . . he does not see men and women as dreams or dots. Faith is the antiseptic of the soul . . . it pervades the common people and preserves them . . . they never give up believing and expecting and trusting. There is that indescribable freshness and unconsciousness about an illiterate person that humbles and mocks the power of the noblest expressive genius. The poet sees for a certainty how one not a great artist may be just as sacred and perfect as the greatest artist. . . . The power to destroy or remould is freely used by him but never the power of attack. What is past is past. If he does not expose superior models and prove himself by every step he takes he is not what is wanted. The presence of the greatest poet conquers . . . not parleying or struggling or any prepared attempts. Now he has passed that way see after him! there is not left any vestige of despair or misanthropy or cunning or exclusiveness or the ignominy of a nativity or color or delusion of hell or the necessity of hell . . . and no man thenceforward shall be degraded for ignorance or weakness or sin.

The greatest poet hardly knows pettiness or triviality. If he breathes into any thing that was before thought small it dilates with the grandeur and life of the universe. He is a seer . . . he is individual . . . he is complete in himself . . . the others are as good as he, only he sees it and they do not. He is not one of the chorus . . . he does not stop for any regulation . . . he is the president of regulation. What the eyesight does to the rest he does to the rest. Who knows the curious mystery of the eyesight? The other senses corroborate themselves, but this is removed from any proof but its own and foreruns the identities of the spiritual world. A single glance of it mocks all the investigations of man and all the instruments and books of the earth and all reasoning. What is marvellous? what is unlikely? what is impossible or baseless or vague? after you have once just opened the space of a peachpit and given audience to far and

near and to the sunset and had all things enter with electric swiftness softly and duly without confusion or jostling or jam.

The land and sea, the animals fishes and birds, the sky of heaven and the orbs, the forests mountains and rivers, are not small themes . . . but folks expect of the poet to indicate more than the beauty and dignity which always attach to dumb real objects . . . they expect him to indicate the path between reality and their souls. Men and women perceive the beauty well enough . . . probably as well as he. The passionate tenacity of hunters, woodmen, early risers, cultivators of gardens and orchards and fields, the love of healthy women for the manly form, sea-faring persons, drivers of horses, the passion for light and the open air, all is an old varied sign of the unfailing perception of beauty and of a residence of the poetic in outdoor people. They can never be assisted by poets to perceive . . . some may but they never can. The poetic quality is not marshalled in rhyme or uniformity or abstract addresses to things nor in melancholy complaints or good precepts, but is the life of these and much else and is in the soul. The profit of rhyme is that it drops seeds of a sweeter and more luxuriant rhyme, and of uniformity that it conveys itself into its own roots in the ground out of sight. The rhyme and uniformity of perfect poems show the free growth of metrical laws and bud from them as unerringly and loosely as lilacs or roses on a bush, and take shapes as compact as the shapes of chestnuts and oranges and melons and pears, and shed the perfume impalpable to form. The fluency and ornaments of the finest poems or music or orations or recitations are not independent but dependent. All beauty comes from beautiful blood and a beautiful brain. If the greatnesses are in conjunction in a man or woman it is enough . . . the fact will prevail through the universe . . . but the gaggery and gilt of a million years will not prevail. Who troubles himself about his ornaments or fluency is lost. This is what you shall do: Love the earth and sun and the animals, despise riches, give alms to every one that asks, stand up for the stupid and crazy, devote your income and labor to others, hate tyrants, argue not concerning God, have patience and indulgence toward the people, take off your hat to nothing known



or unknown or to any man or number of men, go freely with powerful uneducated persons and with the young and with the mothers of families, read these leaves in the open air every season of every year of your life, re-examine all you have been told at school or church or in any book, dismiss whatever insults your own soul, and your very flesh shall be a great poem and have the richest fluency not only in its words but in the silent lines of its lips and face and between the lashes of your eyes and in every motion and joint of your body. . . . . The poet shall not spend his time in unneeded work. He shall know that the ground is always ready ploughed and manured . . . others may not know it but he shall. He shall go directly to the creation. His trust shall master the trust of everything he touches . . . and shall master all attachment.

The known universe has one complete lover and that is the greatest poet. He consumes an eternal passion and is indifferent which chance happens and which possible contingency of fortune or misfortune and persuades daily and hourly his delicious pay. What balks or breaks others is fuel for his burning progress to contact and amorous joy. Other proportions of the reception of pleasure dwindle to nothing to his proportions. All expected from heaven or from the highest he is rapport with in the sight of the daybreak or a scene of the winter woods or the presence of children playing or with his arm round the neck of a man or woman. His love above all love has leisure and expanse . . . he leaves room ahead of himself. He is no irresolute or suspicious lover . . . he is sure . . . he scorns intervals. His experience and the showers and thrills are not for nothing. Nothing can jar him . . . suffering and darkness cannot—death and fear cannot. To him complaint and jealousy and envy are corpses buried and rotten in the earth . . . he saw them buried. The sea is not surer of the shore or the shore of the sea than he is of the fruition of his love and of all perfection and beauty.

The fruition of beauty is no chance of hit or miss . . . it is inevitable as life . . . it is exact and plumb as gravitation. From the eyesight proceeds another eyesight and from the hearing proceeds another hearing and from the voice proceeds another

voice eternally curious of the harmony of things with man. To these respond perfections not only in the committees that were supposed to stand for the rest but in the rest themselves just the same. These understand the law of perfection in masses and floods . . . that its finish is to each for itself and onward from itself . . . that it is profuse and impartial . . . that there is not a minute of the light or dark nor an acre of the earth or sea without it—nor any direction of the sky nor any trade or employment nor any turn of events. This is the reason that about the proper expression of beauty there is precision and balance . . . one part does not need to be thrust above another. The best singer is not the one who has the most lithe and powerful organ . . . the pleasure of poems is not in them that take the handsomest measure and similes and sound.

Without effort and without exposing in the least how it is done the greatest poet brings the spirit of any or all events and passions and scenes and persons some more and some less to bear on your individual character as you hear or read. To do this well is to compete with the laws that pursue and follow time. What is the purpose must surely be there and the clue of it must be there . . . and the faintest indication is the indication of the best and then becomes the clearest indication. Past and present and future are not disjoined but joined. The greatest poet forms the consistence of what is to be from what has been and is. He drags the dead out of their coffins and stands them again on their feet . . . he says to the past, Rise and walk before me that I may realize you. He learns the lesson . . . he places himself where the future becomes present. The greatest poet does not only dazzle his rays over character and scenes and passions . . . he finally ascends and finishes all . . . he exhibits the pinnacles that no man can tell what they are for or what is beyond . . . he glows a moment on the extremest verge. He is most wonderful in his last half-hidden smile or frown . . . by that flash of the moment of parting the one that sees it shall be encouraged or terrified afterward for many years. The greatest poet does not moralize or make applications of morals . . . he knows the soul. The soul has that measureless pride which consists in never acknowledging any

lessons but its own. But it has sympathy as measureless as its pride and the one balances the other and neither can stretch too far while it stretches in company with the other. The inmost secrets of art sleep with the twain. The greatest poet has lain close betwixt both and they are vital in his style and thoughts.

The art of art, the glory of expression and the sunshine of the light of letters is simplicity. Nothing is better than simplicity . . . nothing can make up for excess or for the lack of definiteness. To carry on the heave of impulse and pierce intellectual depths and give all subjects their articulations are powers neither common nor very uncommon. But to speak in literature with the perfect rectitude and insouciance of the movements of animals and the unimpeachableness of the sentiment of trees in the woods and grass by the roadside is the flawless triumph of art. If you have looked on him who has achieved it you have looked on one of the masters of the artists of all nations and times. You shall not contemplate the flight of the graygull over the bay or the mettlesome action of the blood horse or the tall leaning of sunflowers on their stalk or the appearance of the sun journeying through heaven or the appearance of the moon afterward with any more satisfaction than you shall contemplate him. The greatest poet has less a marked style and is more the channel of thoughts and things without increase or diminution, and is the free channel of himself. He swears to his art, I will not be meddlesome, I will not have in my writing any elegance or effect or originality to hang in the way between me and the rest like curtains. I will have nothing hang in the way, not the richest curtains. What I tell I tell for precisely what it is. Let who may exalt or startle or fascinate or soothe I will have purposes as health or heat or snow has and be as regardless of observation. What I experience or portray shall go from my composition without a shred of my composition. You shall stand by my side and look in the mirror with me.

The old red blood and stainless gentility of great poets will be proved by their unconstraint. A heroic person walks at his ease through and out of that custom or precedent or authority that suits him not. Of the traits of the brotherhood of writers savans musicians inventors and artists nothing is finer than

silent defiance advancing from new free forms. In the need of poems philosophy politics mechanism science behaviour, the craft of art, an appropriate native grand-opera, shipcraft, or any craft, he is greatest forever and forever who contributes the greatest original practical example. The cleanest expression is that which finds no sphere worthy of itself and makes one.

The messages of great poets to each man and woman are, Come to us on equal terms, Only then can you understand us, We are no better than you, What we enclose you enclose, What we enjoy you may enjoy. Did you suppose there could be only one Supreme? We affirm there can be unnumbered Supremes, and that one does not countervail another any more than one eyesight countervails another . . . and that men can be good or grand only of the consciousness of their supremacy within them. What do you think is the grandeur of storms and dismemberments and the deadliest battles and wrecks and the wildest fury of the elements and the power of the sea and the motion of nature and of the throes of human desires and dignity and hate and love? It is that something in the soul which says, Rage on, Whirl on, I tread master here and everywhere, Master of the spasms of the sky and of the shatter of the sea, Master of nature and passion and death, And of all terror and all pain.

The American bards shall be marked for generosity and affection and for encouraging competitors . . . They shall be kosmos . . . without monopoly or secrecy . . . glad to pass any thing to any one . . . hungry for equals night and day. They shall not be careful of riches and privilege . . . they shall be riches and privilege . . . they shall perceive who the most affluent man is. The most affluent man is he that confronts all the shows he sees by equivalents out of the stronger wealth of himself. The American bard shall delineate no class of persons nor one or two out of the strata of interests nor love most nor trust most nor the soul most nor the body most . . . and not be for the eastern states more than the western or the northern states more than the southern.

Exact science and its practical movements are no checks on the greatest poet but always his encouragement and support.

The outset and remembrance are there . . . there the arms that lifted him first and brace him best . . . there he returns after all his goings and comings. The sailor and traveler . . . the anatomist chemist astronomer geologist phrenologist spiritualist mathematician historian and lexicographer are not poets, but they are the lawgivers of poets and their construction underlies the structure of every perfect poem. No matter what rises or is uttered they sent the seed of the conception of it . . . of them and by them stand the visible proofs of souls . . . always of their fatherstuff must be begotten the sinewy races of bards. If there shall be love and content between the father and the son and if the greatness of the son is the exuding of the greatness of the father there shall be love between the poet and the man of demonstrable science. In the beauty of poems are the tuft and final applause of science.

Great is the faith of the flush of knowledge and of the investigation of the depths of qualities and things. Cleaving and circling here swells the soul of the poet yet is president of itself always. The depths are fathomless and therefore calm. The innocence and nakedness are resumed . . . they are neither modest nor immodest. The whole theory of the special and supernatural and all that was twined with it or educed out of it departs as a dream. What has ever happened . . . what happens and whatever may or shall happen, the vital laws enclose all . . . they are sufficient for any case and for all cases . . . none to be hurried or retarded . . . any miracle of affairs or persons inadmissible in the vast clear scheme where every motion and every spear of grass and the frames and spirits of men and women and all that concerns them are unspeakably perfect miracles all referring to all and each distinct and in its place. It is also not consistent with the reality of the soul to admit that there is anything in the known universe more divine than men and women.

Men and women and the earth and all upon it are simply to be taken as they are, and the investigation of their past and present and future shall be unintermitted and shall be done with perfect candor. Upon this basis philosophy speculates ever looking toward the poet, ever regarding the eternal tendencies

of all toward happiness never inconsistent with what is clear to the senses and to the soul. For the eternal tendencies of all toward happiness make the only point of sane philosophy. Whatever comprehends less than that . . . whatever is less than the laws of light and of astronomical motion . . . or less than the laws that follow the thief the liar the glutton and the drunkard through his life and doubtless afterward . . . . . or less than vast stretches of time or the slow formation of density or the patient upheaving of strata—is of no account. Whatever would put God in a poem or system of philosophy as contending against some being or influence is also of no account. Sanity and ensemble characterise the great master . . . spoilt in one principle all is spoilt. The great master has nothing to do with miracles. He sees health for himself in being one of the mass . . . . he sees the hiatus in singular eminence. To the perfect shape comes common ground. To be under the general law is great for that is to correspond with it. The master knows that he is unspeakably great and that all are unspeakably great . . . . that nothing for instance is greater than to conceive children and bring them up well . . . that to be is just as great as to perceive or tell.

In the make of the great masters the idea of political liberty is indispensable. Liberty takes the adherence of heroes wherever men and women exist . . . . but never takes any adherence or welcome from the rest more than from poets. They are the voice and exposition of liberty. They out of ages are worthy the grand idea . . . . to them it is confided and they must sustain it. Nothing has precedence of it and nothing can warp or degrade it. The attitude of great poets is to cheer up slaves and horrify despots. The turn of their necks, the sound of their feet, the motions of their wrists, are full of hazard to the one and hope to the other. Come nigh them awhile and though they neither speak or advise you shall learn the faithful American lesson. Liberty is poorly served by men whose good intent is quelled from one failure or two failures or any number of failures, or from the casual indifference or ingratitude of the people, or from the sharp show of the tushes of power, or the bringing to bear soldiers and cannon or any penal statutes. Liberty relies

upon itself, invites no one, promises nothing, sits in calmness and light, is positive and composed, and knows no discouragement. The battle rages with many a loud alarm and frequent advance and retreat . . . the enemy triumphs . . . the prison, the handcuffs, the iron necklace and anklet, the scaffold, garrote and leadballs do their work . . . the cause is asleep . . . the strong throats are choked with their own blood . . . the young men drop their eyelashes toward the ground when they pass each other . . . and is liberty gone out of that place? No never. When liberty goes it is not the first to go nor the second or third to go . . . it waits for all the rest to go . . . it is the last. . . When the memories of the old martyrs are faded utterly away . . . when the large names of patriots are laughed at in the public halls from the lips of the orators . . . when the boys are no more christened after the same but christened after tyrants and traitors instead . . . when the laws of the free are grudgingly permitted and laws for informers and bloodmoney are sweet to the taste of the people . . . when I and you walk abroad upon the earth stung with compassion at the sight of numberless brothers answering our equal friendship and calling no man master—and when we are elated with noble joy at the sight of slaves . . . when the soul retires in the cool communion of the night and surveys its experience and has much extasy over the word and deed that put back a helpless innocent person into the gripe of the gripers or into any cruel inferiority . . . when those in all parts of these states who could easier realize the true American character but do not yet—when the swarms of cringers, suckers, doughfaces, lice of politics, planners of sly involutions for their own preferment to city offices or state legislatures or the judiciary or congress or the presidency, obtain a response of love and natural deference from the people whether they get the offices or no . . . when it is better to be a bound booby and rogue in office at a high salary than the poorest free mechanic or farmer with his hat unmoved from his head and firm eyes and a candid and generous heart . . . and when servility by town or state or the federal government or any oppression on a large scale or small scale can be tried on without its own punishment following

duly after in exact proportion against the smallest chance of escape . . . . or rather when all life and all the souls of men and women are discharged from any part of the earth—then only shall the instinct of liberty be discharged from that part of the earth.

As the attributes of the poets of the kosmos concentrate in the real body and soul and in the pleasure of things they possess the superiority of genuineness over all fiction and romance. As they emit themselves facts are showered over with light . . . . the daylight is lit with more volatile light . . . . also the deep between the setting and rising sun goes deeper many fold. Each precise object or condition or combination or process exhibits a beauty . . . . the multiplication table its—old age its—the carpenter's trade its—the grand-opera its . . . . the hugehulled cleanshaped New-York clipper at sea under steam or full sail gleams with unmatched beauty . . . . the American circles and large harmonies of government gleam with theirs . . . . and the commonest definite intentions and actions with theirs. The poets of the kosmos advance through all interpositions and coverings and turmoils and stratagems to first principles. They are of use . . . . they dissolve poverty from its need and riches from its conceit. You large proprietor they say shall not realize or perceive more than any one else. The owner of the library is not he who holds a legal title to it having bought and paid for it. Any one and every one is owner of the library who can read the same through all the varieties of tongues and subjects and styles, and in whom they enter with ease and take residence and force toward paternity and maternity, and make supple and powerful and rich and large. . . . . These American states strong and healthy and accomplished shall receive no pleasure from violations of natural models and must not permit them. In paintings or mouldings or carvings in mineral or wood, or in the illustrations of books or newspapers, or in any comic or tragic prints, or in the patterns of woven stuffs or any thing to beautify rooms or furniture or costumes, or to put upon cornices or monuments or on the prows or sterns of ships, or to put anywhere before the human eye indoors or out, that which distorts honest shapes or which creates unearthly



beings or places or contingencies is a nuisance and revolt. Of the human form especially it is so great it must never be made ridiculous. Of ornaments to a work nothing outre can be allowed . . . but those ornaments can be allowed that conform to the perfect facts of the open air and that flow out of the nature of the work and come irrepressibly from it and are necessary to the completion of the work. Most works are most beautiful without ornament. . . Exaggerations will be revenged in human physiology. Clean and vigorous children are jetted and conceived only in those communities where the models of natural forms are public every day. . . . Great genius and the people of these states must never be demeaned to romances. As soon as histories are properly told there is no more need of romances.

The great poets are also to be known by the absence in them of tricks and by the justification of perfect personal candor. Then folks echo a new cheap joy and a divine voice leaping from their brains: How beautiful is candor! All faults may be forgiven of him who has perfect candor. Henceforth let no man of us lie, for we have seen that openness wins the inner and outer world and that there is no single exception, and that never since our earth gathered itself in a mass have deceit or subterfuge or prevarication attracted its smallest particle or the faintest tinge of a shade—and that through the enveloping wealth and rank of a state or the whole republic of states a sneak or sly person shall be discovered and despised . . . and that the soul has never been once fooled and never can be fooled . . . and thrift without the loving nod of the soul is only a foetid puff . . . and there never grew up in any of the continents of the globe nor upon any planet or satellite or star, nor upon the asteroids, nor in any part of ethereal space, nor in the midst of density, nor under the fluid wet of the sea, nor in that condition which precedes the birth of babes, nor at any time during the changes of life, nor in that condition that follows what we term death, nor in any stretch of abeyance or action afterward of vitality, nor in any process of formation or reformation anywhere, a being whose instinct hated the truth.

Extreme caution or prudence, the soundest organic health,

large hope and comparison and fondness for women and children, large alimentiveness and destructiveness and causality, with a perfect sense of the oneness of nature and the propriety of the same spirit applied to human affairs . . . these are called up of the float of the brain of the world to be parts of the greatest poet from his birth out of his mother's womb and from her birth out of her mother's. Caution seldom goes far enough. It has been thought that the prudent citizen was the citizen who applied himself to solid gains and did well for himself and his family and completed a lawful life without debt or crime. The greatest poet sees and admits these economies as he sees the economies of food and sleep, but has higher notions of prudence than to think he gives much when he gives a few slight attentions at the latch of the gate. The premises of the prudence of life are not the hospitality of it or the ripeness and harvest of it. Beyond the independence of a little sum laid aside for burial-money, and of a few clapboards around and shingles overhead on a lot of American soil owned, and the easy dollars that supply the year's plain clothing and meals, the melancholy prudence of the abandonment of such a great being as a man is to the toss and pallor of years of moneymaking with all their scorching days and icy nights and all their stifling deceits and underhanded dodgings, or infinitessimals of parlors, or shameless stuffing while others starve . . . and all the loss of the bloom and odor of the earth and of the flowers and atmosphere and of the sea and of the true taste of the women and men you pass or have to do with in youth or middle age, and the issuing sickness and desperate revolt at the close of a life without elevation or naivete, and the ghastly chatter of a death without serenity or majesty, is the great fraud upon modern civilization and forethought, blotching the surface and system which civilization undeniably drafts, and moistening with tears the immense features it spreads and spreads with such velocity before the reached kisses of the soul. . . Still the right explanation remains to be made about prudence. The prudence of the mere wealth and respectability of the most esteemed life appears too faint for the eye to observe at all when little and large alike drop quietly aside at the thought of the prudence suitable for immortal-

ity. What is wisdom that fills the thinness of a year or seventy or eighty years to wisdom spaced out by ages and coming back at a certain time with strong reinforcements and rich presents and the clear faces of wedding-guests as far as you can look in every direction running gaily toward you? Only the soul is of itself . . . all else has reference to what ensues. All that a person does or thinks is of consequence. Not a move can a man or woman make that affects him or her in a day or a month or any part of the direct lifetime or the hour of death but the same affects him or her onward afterward through the indirect lifetime. The indirect is always as great and real as the direct. The spirit receives from the body just as much as it gives to the body. Not one name of word or deed . . . not of venereal sores or discolorations . . . not the privacy of the onanist . . . not of the putrid veins of gluttons or rumdrinkers . . . not speculation or cunning or betrayal or murder . . . no serpentine poison of those that seduce women . . . not the foolish yielding of women . . . not prostitution . . . not of any depravity of young men . . . not of the attainment of gain by discreditable means . . . not any nastiness of appetite . . . nor any harshness of officer to men or judges to prisoners or fathers to sons or sons to fathers or of husbands to wives or bosses to their boys . . . not of greedy looks or malignant wishes . . . nor any of the wiles practised by people upon themselves . . . ever is or ever can be stamped on the programme but it is duly realized and returned, and that returned in further performances . . . and they returned again. Nor can the push of charity or personal force ever be any thing else than the profoundest reason, whether it bring arguments to hand or no. No specification is necessary . . . to add or subtract or divide is in vain. Little or big, learned or unlearned, white or black, legal or illegal, sick or well, from the first inspiration down the windpipe to the last expiration out of it, all that a male or female does that is vigorous and benevolent and clean is so much sure profit to him or her in the unshakable order of the universe and through the whole scope of it forever. If the savage or felon is wise it is well . . . if the greatest poet or savan is wise it is simply the same . . . if the President or chief justice is wise it is the same . . . if the young mechanic or farmer is wise it is no more

or less . . . if the prostitute is wise it is no more nor less. The interest will come round . . . all will come round. All the best actions of war and peace . . . all help given to relatives and strangers and the poor and old and sorrowful and young children and widows and the sick, and to all shunned persons . . . all furtherance of fugitives and of the escape of slaves . . . all the self-denial that stood steady and aloof on wrecks and saw others take the seats of the boats . . . all offering of substance or life for the good old cause, or for a friend's sake or opinion's sake . . . all pains of enthusiasts scoffed at by their neighbors . . . all the vast sweet love and precious suffering of mothers . . . all honest men baffled in strifes recorded or unrecorded . . . all the grandeur and good of the few ancient nations whose fragments of annals we inherit . . . and all the good of the hundreds of far mightier and more ancient nations unknown to us by name or date or location . . . all that was ever manfully begun, whether it succeeded or no . . . all that has at any time been well suggested out of the divine heart of man or by the divinity of his mouth or by the shaping of his great hands . . . and all that is well thought or done this day on any part of the surface of the globe . . . or on any of the wandering stars or fixed stars by those there as we are here . . . or that is henceforth to be well thought or done by you whoever you are, or by any one—these singly and wholly inured at their time and inure now and will inure always to the identities from which they sprung or shall spring. . . Did you guess any of them lived only its moment? The world does not so exist . . . no parts palpable or impalpable so exist . . . no result exists now without being from its long antecedent result, and that from its antecedent, and so backward without the farthest mentionable spot coming a bit nearer the beginning than any other spot. . . . Whatever satisfies the soul is truth. The prudence of the greatest poet answers at last the craving and glut of the soul, is not contemptuous of less ways of prudence if they conform to its ways, puts off nothing, permits no let-up for its own case or any case, has no particular sabbath or judgment-day, divides not the living from the dead or the righteous from the unrighteous, is satisfied with

the present, matches every thought or act by its correlative, knows no possible forgiveness or deputed atonement . . . knows that the young man who composedly periled his life and lost it has done exceeding well for himself, while the man who has not periled his life and retains it to old age in riches and ease has perhaps achieved nothing for himself worth mentioning . . . and that only that person has no great prudence to learn who has learnt to prefer real longlived things, and favors body and soul the same, and perceives the indirect assuredly following the direct, and what evil or good he does leaping onward and waiting to meet him again—and who in his spirit in any emergency whatever neither hurries or avoids death.

The direct trial of him who would be the greatest poet is today. If he does not flood himself with the immediate age as with vast oceanic tides . . . . . and if he does not attract his own land body and soul to himself and hang on its neck with incomparable love and plunge his semitic muscle into its merits and demerits . . . and if he be not himself the age transfigured . . . . and if to him is not opened the eternity which gives similitude to all periods and locations and processes and animate and inanimate forms, and which is the bond of time, and rises up from its inconceivable vagueness and infiniteness in the swimming shape of today, and is held by the ductile anchors of life, and makes the present spot the passage from what was to what shall be, and commits itself to the representation of this wave of an hour and this one of the sixty beautiful children of the wave—let him merge in the general run and wait his development. . . . . Still the final test of poems or any character or work remains. The prescient poet projects himself centuries ahead and judges performer or performance after the changes of time. Does it live through them? Does it still hold on untired? Will the same style and the direction of genius to similar points be satisfactory now? Has no new discovery in science or arrival at superior planes of thought and judgment and behaviour fixed him or his so that either can be looked down upon? Have the marches of tens and hundreds and thousands of years made willing detours to the right hand and the left hand for his

sake? Is he beloved long and long after he is buried? Does the young man think often of him? and the young woman think often of him? and do the middleaged and the old think of him?

A great poem is for ages and ages in common and for all degrees and complexions and all departments and sects and for a woman as much as a man and a man as much as a woman. A great poem is no finish to a man or woman but rather a beginning. Has any one fancied he could sit at last under some due authority and rest satisfied with explanations and realize and be content and full? To no such terminus does the greatest poet bring . . . he brings neither cessation or sheltered fatness and ease. The touch of him tells in action. Whom he takes he takes with firm sure grasp into live regions previously unattained . . . . thenceforward is no rest . . . . they see the space and ineffable sheen that turn the old spots and lights into dead vacuums. The companion of him beholds the birth and progress of stars and learns one of the meanings. Now there shall be a man cohered out of tumult and chaos . . . . the elder encourages the younger and shows him how . . . they two shall launch off fearlessly together till the new world fits an orbit for itself and looks unabashed on the lesser orbits of the stars and sweeps through the ceaseless rings and shall never be quiet again.

There will soon be no more priests. Their work is done. They may wait awhile . . perhaps a generation or two . . dropping off by degrees. A superior breed shall take their place . . . . the gangs of kosmos and prophets en masse shall take their place. A new order shall arise and they shall be the priests of man, and every man shall be his own priest. The churches built under their umbrage shall be the churches of men and women. Through the divinity of themselves shall the kosmos and the new breed of poets be interpreters of men and women and of all events and things. They shall find their inspiration in real objects today, symptoms of the past and future . . . . They shall not deign to defend immortality or God or the perfection of things or liberty or the exquisite beauty and reality of the soul. They shall arise in America and be responded to from the remainder of the earth.

The English language befriends the grand American expres-

sion . . . it is brawny enough and limber and full enough. On the tough stock of a race who through all change of circumstance was never without the idea of political liberty, which is the animus of all liberty, it has attracted the terms of daintier and gayer and subtler and more elegant tongues. It is the powerful language of resistance . . . it is the dialect of common sense. It is the speech of the proud and melancholy races and of all who aspire. It is the chosen tongue to express growth faith self-esteem freedom justice equality friendliness amplitude prudence decision and courage. It is the medium that shall well nigh express the inexpressible.

No great literature nor any like style of behaviour or oratory or social intercourse or household arrangements or public institutions or the treatment by bosses of employed people, nor executive detail or detail of the army or navy, nor spirit of legislation or courts or police or tuition or architecture or songs or amusements or the costumes of young men, can long elude the jealous and passionate instinct of American standards. Whether or no the sign appears from the mouths of the people, it throbs a live interrogation in every freeman's and free-woman's heart after that which passes by or this built to remain. Is it uniform with my country? Are its disposals without ignominious distinctions? Is it for the evergrowing communes of brothers and lovers, large, well-united, proud beyond the old models, generous beyond all models? Is it something grown fresh out of the fields or drawn from the sea for use to me today here? I know that what answers for me an American must answer for any individual or nation that serves for a part of my materials. Does this answer? or is it without reference to universal needs? or sprung of the needs of the less developed society of special ranks? or old needs of pleasure overlaid by modern science and forms? Does this acknowledge liberty with audible and absolute acknowledgement, and set slavery at nought for life and death? Will it help breed one goodshaped and wellhung man, and a woman to be his perfect and independent mate? Does it improve manners? Is it for the nursing of the young of the republic? Does it solve readily with the sweet milk of the nipples of the breasts of the mother of many chil-

dren? Has it too the old ever-fresh forbearance and impartiality? Does it look with the same love on the last born and on those hardening toward stature, and on the errant, and on those who disdain all strength of assault outside of their own?

The poems distilled from other poems will probably pass away. The coward will surely pass away. The expectation of the vital and great can only be satisfied by the demeanor of the vital and great. The swarms of the polished deprecating and reflectors and the polite float off and leave no remembrance. America prepares with composure and goodwill for the visitors that have sent word. It is not intellect that is to be their warrant and welcome. The talented, the artist, the ingenious, the editor, the statesman, the erudite . . . they are not unappreciated . . . they fall in their place and do their work. The soul of the nation also does it work. No disguise can pass on it . . . no disguise can conceal from it. It rejects none, it permits all. Only toward as good as itself and toward the like of itself will it advance half-way. An individual is as superb as a nation when he has the qualities which make a superb nation. The soul of the largest and wealthiest and proudest nation may well go half-way to meet that of its poets. The signs are effectual. There is no fear of mistake. If the one is true the other is true. The proof of a poet is that his country absorbs him as affectionately as he has absorbed it.

LETTER TO RALPH WALDO EMERSON,  
FROM *LEAVES OF GRASS*, 1856

BROOKLYN, *August*, 1856.

HERE are thirty-two Poems, which I send you, dear Friend and Master, not having found how I could satisfy myself with sending any usual acknowledgment of your letter. The first edition, on which you mailed me that till now unanswered letter, was twelve poems—I printed a thousand copies, and they readily sold; these thirty-two Poems I stereotype, to print several thou-



sand copies of. I much enjoy making poems. Other work I have set for myself to do, to meet people and The States face to face, to confront them with an American rude tongue; but the work of my life is making poems. I keep on till I make a hundred, and then several hundred—perhaps a thousand. The way is clear to me. A few years, and the average annual call for my Poems is ten or twenty thousand copies—more, quite likely. Why should I hurry or compromise? In poems or in speeches I say the word or two that has got to be said, adhere to the body, step with the countless common footsteps, and remind every man and woman of something.

Master, I am a man who has perfect faith. Master, we have not come through centuries, caste, heroisms, fables, to halt in this land today. Or I think it is to collect a ten-fold impetus that any halt is made. As nature, inexorable, onward, resistless, impassive amid the threats and screams of disputants, so America. Let all defer. Let all attend respectfully the leisure of These States, their politics, poems, literature, manners, and their free-handed modes of training their own offspring. Their own comes, just matured, certain, numerous and capable enough, with egotistical tongues, with sinewed wrists, seizing openly what belongs to them. They resume Personality, too long left out of mind. Their shadows are projected in employments, in books, in the cities, in trade; their feet are on the flights of the steps of the Capitol; they dilate, a larger, brawnier, more candid, more democratic, lawless, positive native to The States, sweet-bodied, completer, dauntless, flowing, masterful, beard-faced, new race of men.

Swiftly, on limitless foundations, the United States too are founding a literature. It is all as well done, in my opinion, as could be practicable. Each element here is in condition. Every day I go among the people of Manhattan Island, Brooklyn, and other cities, and among the young men, to discover the spirit of them, and to refresh myself. These are to be attended to; I am myself more drawn here than to those authors, publishers, importations, reprints, and so forth. I pass coolly through those, understanding them perfectly well, and that they do the indispensable service, outside of men like me, which nothing else

could do. In poems, the young men of The States shall be represented, for they out-rival the best of the rest of the earth.

The lists of ready-made literature which America inherits by the mighty inheritance of the English language—all the rich repertoire of traditions, poems, historicis, metaphysics, plays, classics, translations, have made, and still continue, magnificent preparations for that other plainly signified literature, to be our own, to be electric, fresh, lusty, to express the full-sized body, male and female—to give the modern meanings of things, to grow up beautiful, lasting, commensurate with America, with all the passions of home, with the inimitable sympathies of having been boys and girls together, and of parents who were with our parents.

What else can happen The States, even in their own despite? That huge English flow, so sweet, so undeniable, has done incalculable good here, and is to be spoken of for its own sake with generous praise and with gratitude. Yet the price The States have had to lie under for the same has not been a small price. Payment prevails; a nation can never take the issues of the needs of other nations for nothing. America, grandest of lands in the theory of its politics, in popular reading, in hospitality, breadth, animal beauty, cities, ships, machines, money, credit, collapses quick as lightning at the repeated, admonishing, stern words, Where are any mental expressions from you, beyond what you have copied or stolen? Where the born throngs of poets, literats, orators, you promised? Will you but tag after other nations? They struggled long for their literature, painfully working their way, some with deficient languages, some with priest-craft, some in the endeavor just to live—yet achieved for their times, works, poems, perhaps the only solid consolation left to them through ages afterward of shame and decay. You are young, have the perfectest of dialects, a free press, a free government, the world forwarding its best to be with you. As justice has been strictly done to you, from this hour do strict justice to yourself. Strangle the singers who will not sing you loud and strong. Open the doors of The West. Call for new great masters to comprehend new arts, new perfections, new wants. Submit to the most robust bard till he rem-

edy your barrenness. Then you will not need to adopt the heirs of others; you will have true heirs, begotten of yourself, blooded with your own blood.

With composure I see such propositions, seeing more and more every day of the answers that serve. Expressions do not yet serve, for sufficient reasons; but that is getting ready, beyond what the earth has hitherto known, to take home the expressions when they come, and to identify them with the populace of The States, which is the schooling cheaply procured by any outlay any number of years. Such schooling The States extract from the swarms of reprints, and from the current authors and editors. Such service and extract are done after enormous, reckless, free modes, characteristic of The States. Here are to be attained results never elsewhere thought possible; the modes are very grand too. The instincts of the American people are all perfect, and tend to make heroes. It is a rare thing in a man here to understand The States.

All current nourishments to literature serve. Of authors and editors I do not know how many there are in The States, but there are thousands, each one building his or her step to the stairs by which giants shall mount. Of the twenty-four modern mammoth two-double, three-double, and four-double cylinder presses now in the world, printing by steam, twenty-one of them are in These States. The twelve thousand large and small shops for dispensing books and newspapers—the same number of public libraries, any one of which has all the reading wanted to equip a man or woman for American reading—the three thousand different newspapers, the nutriment of the imperfect ones coming in just as usefully as any—the story papers, various, full of strong-flavored romances, widely circulated—the one-cent and two-cent journals—the political ones, no matter what side—the weeklies in the country—the sporting and pictorial papers—the monthly magazines, with plentiful imported feed—the sentimental novels, numberless copies of them—the low-priced flaring tales, adventures, biographies—all are prophetic; all waft rapidly on. I see that they swell wide, for reasons. I am not troubled at the movement of them, but greatly pleased. I see plying shuttles, the active ephemeral myr-

iads of books also, faithfully weaving the garments of a generation of men, and a generation of women, they do not perceive or know. What a progress popular reading and writing has made in fifty years! What a progress fifty years hence! The time is at hand when inherent literature will be a main part of These States, as general and real as steam-power, iron, corn, beef, fish. First-rate American persons are to be supplied. Our perennial materials for fresh thoughts, histories, poems, music, orations, religions, recitations, amusements, will then not be disregarded, any more than our perennial fields, mines, rivers, seas. Certain things are established, and are immovable; in those things millions of years stand justified. The mothers and fathers of whom modern centuries have come, have not existed for nothing; they too had brains and hearts. Of course all literature, in all nations and years, will share marked attributes in common, as we all, of all ages, share the common human attributes. America is to be kept coarse and broad. What is to be done is to withdraw from precedents, and be directed to men and women—also to The States in their federalness; for the union of the parts of the body is not more necessary to their life than the union of These States is to their life.

A profound person can easily know more of the people than they know of themselves. Always waiting untold in the souls of the armies of common people, is stuff better than anything that can possibly appear in the leadership of the same. That gives final verdicts. In every department of These States, he who travels with a coterie, or with selected persons, or with imitators, or with infidels, or with the owners of slaves, or with that which is ashamed of the body of a man, or with that which is ashamed of the body of a woman, or with any thing less than the bravest and the openest, travels straight for the slopes of dissolution. The genius of all foreign literature is clipped and cut small, compared to our genius, and is essentially insulting to our usages, and to the organic compacts of These States. Old forms, old poems, majestic and proper in their own lands here in this land are exiles; the air here is very strong. Much that stands well and has a little enough place provided for it in the small scales of European kingdoms, empires, and the like, here

stands haggard, dwarfed, ludicrous, or has no place little enough provided for it. Authorities, poems, models, laws, names, imported into America, are useful to America today to destroy them, and so move disencumbered to great works, great days.

Just so long, in our country or any country, as no revolutionists advance, and are backed by the people, sweeping off the swarms of routine representatives, officers in power, book-makers, teachers, ecclesiastics, politicians, just so long, I perceive, do they who are in power fairly represent that country, and remain of use, probably of very great use. To supersede them, when it is the pleasure of These States, full provision is made; and I say the time has arrived to use it with a strong hand. Here also the souls of the armies have not only overtaken the souls of the officer, but passed on, and left the souls of the officers behind out of sight many weeks' journey; and the souls of the armies now go en-masse without officers. Here also formulas, glosses, blanks, minutiae, are choking the throats of the spokesmen to death. Those things most listened for, certainly those are the things least said. There is not a single *History of the World*. There is not one of *America*, or of the organic compacts of These States, or of *Washington*, or *Jefferson*, nor of *Language*, nor any *Dictionary of the English Language*. There is no great author; every one has demeaned himself to some etiquette or some impotence. There is no manhood or life-power in poems; there are shoats and geldings more like. Or literature will be dressed up, a fine gentleman, distasteful to our instincts, foreign to our soil. Its neck bends right and left wherever it goes. Its costumes and jewelry prove how little it knows Nature. Its flesh is soft; it shows less and less of the indefinable hard something that is Nature. Where is any thing but the shaved Nature of synods and schools? Where is a savage and luxuriant man? Where is an overseer? In lives, in poems, in codes of law, in Congress, in tuitions, theatres, conversations, argumentations, not a single head lifts itself clean out, with proof that it is their master, and has subordinated them to itself, and is ready to try their superiors. None believes in These States, boldly illustrating them in himself. Not a man faces

round at the rest with terrible negative voice, refusing all terms to be bought off from his own eye-sight, or from the soul that he is, or from friendship, or from the body that he is, or from the soil and sea. To creeds, literature, art, the army, the navy, the executive, life is hardly proposed, but the sick and dying are proposed to cure the sick and dying. The churches are one vast lie; the people do not believe them, and they do not believe themselves; the priests are continually telling what they know well enough is not so, and keeping back what they know is so. The spectacle is a pitiful one. I think there can never be again upon the festive earth more bad-disordered persons deliberately taking seats, as of late in These States, at the heads of the public tables—such corpses' eyes for judges—such a rascal and thief in the Presidency.

Up to the present, as helps best, the people, like a lot of large boys, have no determined tastes, are quite unaware of the grandeur of themselves, and of their destiny, and of their immense strides—accept with voracity whatever is presented them in novels, histories, newspapers, poems, schools, lectures, every thing. Pretty soon, through these and other means, their development makes the fibre that is capable of itself, and will assume determined tastes. The young men will be clear what they want, and will have it. They will follow none except him whose spirit leads them in the like spirit with themselves. Any such man will be welcome as the flowers of May. Others will be put out without ceremony. How much is there anyhow, to the young men of These States, in a parcel of helpless dandies, who can neither fight, work, shoot, ride, run, command—some of them devout, some quite insane, some castrated—all second-hand, or third, fourth, or fifth hand—waited upon by waiters, putting not this land first, but always other lands first, talking of art, doing the most ridiculous things for fear of being called ridiculous, smirking and skipping along, continually taking off their hats—no one behaving, dressing, writing, talking, loving, out of any natural and manly tastes of his own, but each one looking cautiously to see how the rest behave, dress, write, talk, love—pressing the noses of dead books upon themselves and upon their country—favoring no poets, philosophers, literats

here, but dog-like danglers at the heels of the poets, philosophers, literats, of enemies' lands—favoring mental expressions, models of gentlemen and ladies, social habitudes in These States, to grow up in sneaking defiance of the popular substratums of The States? Of course they and the likes of them can never justify the strong poems of America. Of course no feed of theirs is to stop and be made welcome to muscle the bodies, male and female, for Manhattan Island, Brooklyn, Boston, Worcester, Hartford, Portland, Montreal, Detroit, Buffalo, Cleaveland, Milwaukee, St. Louis, Indianapolis, Chicago, Cincinnati, Iowa City, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Raleigh, Savannah, Charleston, Mobile, New Orleans, Galveston, Brownsville, San Francisco, Havana, and a thousand equal cities, present and to come. Of course what they and the likes of them have been used for, draws toward its close, after which they will all be discharged, and not one of them will ever be heard of any more.

America, having duly conceived, bears out of herself offspring of her own to do the workmanship wanted. To freedom, to strength, to poems, to personal greatness, it is never permitted to rest, not a generation or part of a generation. To be ripe beyond further increase is to prepare to die. The architects of These States laid their foundations, and passed to further, spheres. What they laid is a work done; as much more remains. Now are needed other architects, whose duty is not less difficult, but perhaps more difficult. Each age forever needs architects. America is not finished, perhaps never will be; now America is a divine true sketch. There are Thirty-Two States sketched—the population thirty millions. In a few years there will be Fifty States. Again in a few years there will be A Hundred States, the population hundreds of millions, the freshest and freest of men. Of course such men stand to nothing less than the freshest and freest expression.

Poets here, literats here, are to rest on organic different bases from other countries; not a class set apart, circling only in the circle of themselves, modest and pretty, desperately scratching for rhymes, pallid with white paper, shut off, aware of the old pictures and traditions of the race, but unaware of the actual race around them—not breeding in and in among each other

till they all have the scrofula. Lands of ensemble, bards of ensemble! Walking freely out from the old traditions, as our politics has walked out, American poets and literats recognize nothing behind them superior to what is present with them—recognize with joy the sturdy living forms of the men and women of These States, the divinity of sex, the perfect eligibility of the female with the male, all The States, liberty and equality, real articles, the different trades, mechanics, the young fellows of Manhattan Island, customs, instincts, slang, Wisconsin, Georgia, the noble Southern heart, the hot blood, the spirit that will be nothing less than master, the filibuster spirit, the Western man, native-born perceptions, the eye for forms, the perfect models of made things, the wild smack of freedom, California, money, electric-telegraphs, free-trade, iron and the iron mines—recognize without demur those splendid resistless black poems, the steam-ships of the sea-board states, and those other resistless splendid poems, the locomotives, followed through the interior states by trains of rail-road cars.

A word remains to be said, as of one ever present, not yet permitted to be acknowledged, discarded or made dumb by literature, and the results apparent. To the lack of an avowed, empowered, unabashed development of sex, (the only salvation for the same,) and to the fact of speakers and writers fraudulently assuming as always dead what every one knows to be always alive, is attributable the remarkable non-personality and indistinctness of modern productions in books, art, talk; also that in the scanned lives of men and women most of them appear to have been for some time past of the neuter gender; and also the stinging fact that in orthodox society today, if the dresses were changed, the men might easily pass for women and the women for men.

Infidelism usurps most with foetid polite face; among the rest infidelism about sex. By silence or obedience the pens of savans, poets, historians, biographers, and the rest, have long connived at the filthy law, and books enslaved to it, that what makes the manhood of a man, that sex, womanhood, maternity, desires, lusty animations, organs, acts, are unmentionable and to be ashamed of, to be driven to skulk out of literature



with whatever belongs to them. This filthy law has to be repealed—it stands in the way of great reforms. Of women just as much as men, it is the interest that there should not be infidelity about sex, but perfect faith. Women in These States approach the day of that organic equality with men, without which, I see, men cannot have organic equality among themselves. This empty dish, gallantry, will then be filled with something. This tepid wash, this diluted deferential love, as in songs, fictions, and so forth, is enough to make a man vomit; as to manly friendship, everywhere observed in The States, there is not the first breath of it to be observed in print. I say that the body of a man or woman, the main matter, is so far quite unexpressed in poems; but that the body is to be expressed, and sex is. Of bards for These States, if it come to a question, it is whether they shall celebrate in poems the eternal decency of the amativeness of Nature, the motherhood of all, or whether they shall be the bards of the fashionable delusion of the inherent nastiness of sex, and of the feeble and querulous modesty of deprivation. This is important in poems, because the whole of the other expressions of a nation are but flanges out of its great poems. To me, henceforth, that theory of any thing, no matter what, stagnates in its vitals, cowardly and rotten, while it cannot publicly accept, and publicly name, with specific words, the things on which all existence, all souls, all realization, all decency, all health, all that is worth being here for, all of woman and of man, all beauty, all purity, all sweetness, all friendship, all strength, all life, all immortality depend. The courageous soul, for a year or two to come, may be proved by faith in sex, and by disdaining concessions.

To poets and literats—to every woman and man, today or any day, the conditions of the present, needs, dangers, prejudices, and the like, are the perfect conditions on which we are here, and the conditions for wording the future with undis-suable words. These States, receivers of the stamina of past ages and lands, initiate the outlines of repayment a thousand fold. They fetch the American great masters, waited for by old worlds and new, who accept evil as well as good, ignorance as well as erudition, black as soon as white, foreign-born materi-

als as well as home-born, reject none, force discrepancies into range, surround the whole, concentrate them on present periods and places, show the application to each and any one's body and soul, and show the true use of precedents. Always America will be agitated and turbulent. This day it is taking shape, not to be less so, but to be more so, stormily, capriciously, on native principles, with such vast proportions of parts! As for me, I love screaming, wrestling, boiling-hot days.

Of course, we shall have a national character, an identity. As it ought to be, and as soon as it ought to be, it will be. That, with much else, takes care of itself, is a result, and the cause of greater results. With Ohio, Illinois, Missouri, Oregon—with the states around the Mexican sea—with cheerfully welcomed immigrants from Europe, Asia, Africa—with Connecticut, Vermont, New Hampshire, Rhode Island—with all varied interests, facts, beliefs, parties, genesis—there is being fused a determined character, fit for the broadest use for the freewomen and freemen of The States, accomplished and to be accomplished, without any exception whatever—each indeed free, each idiomatic, as becomes live states and men, but each adhering to one enclosing general form of politics, manners, talk, personal style, as the plenteous varieties of the race adhere to one physical form. Such character is the brain and spine to all, including literature, including poems. Such character, strong, limber, just, open-mouthed, American-blooded, full of pride, full of ease, of passionate friendliness, is to stand compact upon that vast basis of the supremacy of Individuality—that new moral American continent without which, I see, the physical continent remained incomplete, may-be a carcass, a bloat—that newer America, answering face to face with The States, with ever-satisfying and ever-unsurveyable seas and shores.

Those shores you found. I say you have led The States there—have led Me there. I say that none has ever done, or ever can do, a greater deed for The States, than your deed. Others may line out the lines, build cities, work mines, break up farms; it is yours to have been the original true Captain who put to sea, intuitive, positive, rendering the first report, to be told less

by any report, and more by the mariners of a thousand bays, in each tack of their arriving and departing, many years after you.

Receive, dear Master, these statements and assurances through me, for all the young men, and for an earnest that we know none before you, but the best following you; and that we demand to take your name into our keeping, and that we understand what you have indicated, and find the same indicated in ourselves, and that we will stick to it and enlarge upon it through These States.

WALT WHITMAN

PREFACE TO "AS A STRONG BIRD  
ON PINIONS FREE," 1872

The impetus and ideas urging me, for some years past, to an utterance, or attempt at utterance, of New World songs, and an epic of Democracy, having already had their publish'd expression, as well as I can expect to give it, in "Leaves of Grass," the present and any future pieces from me are really but the surplusage forming after that volume, or the wake eddying behind it. I fulfill'd in that an imperious conviction, and the commands of my nature as total and irresistible as those which make the sea flow, or the globe revolve. But of this supplementary volume, I confess I am not so certain. Having from early manhood abandon'd the business pursuits and applications usual in my time and country, and obediently yielded myself up ever since to the impetus mention'd, and to the work of expressing those ideas, it may be that mere habit has got dominion of me, when there is no real need of saying any thing further. But what is life but an experiment? and mortality but an exercise? with reference to results beyond. And so shall my poems be. If incomplete here, and superfluous there, *n'importe*—the earnest trial and persistent exploration shall at least be mine, and other success failing shall be success enough. I have been more anxious, anyhow, to suggest the songs of vital endeavor, and manly evo-

lution, and furnish something for races of outdoor athletes, than to make perfect rhymes, or reign in the parlors. I ventur'd from the beginning my own way, taking chances—and would keep on venturing.

I will therefore not conceal from any persons, known or unknown to me, who take an interest in the matter, that I have the ambition of devoting yet a few years to poetic composition. The mighty present age! To absorb and express in poetry, anything of it—of its world—America—cities and States—the years, the events of our Nineteenth century—the rapidity of movement—the violent contrasts, fluctuations of light and shade, of hope and fear—the entire revolution made by science in the poetic method—these great new underlying facts and new ideas rushing and spreading everywhere;—truly a mighty age! As if in some colossal drama, acted again like those of old under the open sun, the Nations of our time, and all the characteristics of Civilization, seem hurrying, stalking across, flitting from wing to wing, gathering, closing up, toward some long-prepared, most tremendous denouement. Not to conclude the infinite scenas of the race's life and toil and happiness and sorrow, but haply that the boards be clear'd from oldest, worst incumbrances, accumulations, and Man resume the eternal play anew, and under happier, freer auspices. To me, the United States are important because in this colossal drama they are unquestionably designated for the leading parts, for many a century to come. In them history and humanity seem to seek to culminate. Our broad areas are even now the busy theatre of plots, passions, interests, and suspended problems, compared to which the intrigues of the past of Europe, the wars of dynasties, the scope of kings and kingdoms, and even the development of peoples, as hitherto, exhibit scales of measurement comparatively narrow and trivial. And on these areas of ours, as on a stage, sooner or later, something like an *eclaircissement* of all the past civilization of Europe and Asia is probably to be evolved.

The leading parts. Not to be acted, emulated here, by us again, that role till now foremost in history—not to become a con-

queror nation, or to achieve the glory of mere military, or diplomatic, or commercial superiority—but to become the grand producing land of nobler men and women—of copious races, cheerful, healthy, tolerant, free—to become the most friendly nation, (the United States indeed)—the modern composite nation, form'd from all, with room for all, welcoming all immigrants—accepting the work of our own interior development, as the work fitly filling ages and ages to come;—the leading nation of peace, but neither ignorant nor incapable of being the leading nation of war;—not the man's nation only, but the woman's nation—a land of splendid mothers, daughters, sisters, wives.

Our America to-day I consider in many respects as but indeed a vast seething mass of *materials*, ampler, better, (worse also,) than previously known—eligible to be used to carry towards its crowning stage, and build for good, the great ideal nationality of the future, the nation of the body and the soul,\*—no limit here to land, help, opportunities, mines, products, demands, supplies, &c.;—with (I think) our political organization, National, State, and Municipal, permanently establish'd, as far ahead as we can calculate—but, so far, no social, literary, religious, or esthetic organizations, consistent with our politics, or becoming to us—which organizations can only come, in time, through great democratic ideas, religion—through science, which now, like a new sunrise, ascending, begins to illuminate all—and through our own begotten poets and literatures. (The moral of a late well-written book on civilization seems to be that the only real foundation-walls and bases—and also *sine*

\*The problems of the achievements of this crowning stage through future first-class National Singers, Orators, Artists, and others—of creating in literature an *imaginative* New World, the correspondent and counterpart of the current Scientific and Political New Worlds,—and the perhaps distant, but still delightful prospect, (for our children, if not in our own day,) of delivering America, and, indeed, all Christian lands everywhere, from the thin moribund and watery, but appallingly extensive nuisance of conventional poetry—by putting something really alive and substantial in its place—I have undertaken to grapple with, and argue, in the preceding “Democratic Vistas.”

*qua non* afterward—of true and full civilization, is the eligibility and certainty of boundless products for feeding, clothing, sheltering everybody—perennial fountains of physical and domestic comfort, with intercommunication, and with civil and ecclesiastical freedom—and that then the esthetic and mental business will take care of itself. Well, the United States have establish'd this basis, and upon scales of extent, variety, vitality, and continuity, rivaling those of Nature; and have now to proceed to build an edifice upon it. I say this edifice is only to be fitly built by new literatures, especially the poetic. I say a modern image-making creation is indispensable to fuse and express the modern political and scientific creations—and then the trinity will be complete.)

When I commenced, years ago, elaborating the plan of my poems, and continued turning over that plan, and shifting it in my mind through many years, (from the age of twenty-eight to thirty-five,) experimenting much, and writing and abandoning much, one deep purpose underlay the others, and has underlain it and its execution ever since—and that has been the religious purpose. Amid many changes, and a formulation taking far different shape from what I at first supposed, this basic purpose has never been departed from in the composition of my verses. Not of course to exhibit itself in the old ways, as in writing hymns or psalms with an eye to the church-pew, or to express conventional pietism, or the sickly yearnings of devotees, but in new ways, and aiming at the widest sub-bases and inclusions of humanity, and tallying the fresh air of sea and land. I will see, (said I to myself,) whether there is not, for my purposes as poet, a religion, and a sound religious germenancy in the average human race, at least in their modern development in the United States, and in the hardy common fibre and native yearnings and elements, deeper and larger, and affording more profitable returns, than all mere sects or churches—as boundless, joyous, and vital as Nature itself—a germenancy that has too long been unencouraged, unsung, almost unknown. With science, the old theology of the East, long in its dotage, begins evidently to die and disappear. But (to my mind) science—and may be such will

prove its principal service—as evidently prepares the way for One indescribably grander—Time’s young but perfect offspring—the new theology—heir of the West—lusty and loving, and wondrous beautiful. For America, and for to-day, just the same as any day, the supreme and final science is the science of God—what we call science being only its minister—as Democracy is, or shall be also. And a poet of America (I said) must fill himself with such thoughts, and chant his best out of them. And as those were the convictions and aims, for good or bad, of “Leaves of Grass,” they are no less the intention of this volume. As there can be, in my opinion, no sane and complete personality, nor any grand and electric nationality, without the stock element of religion imbuing all the other elements, (like heat in chemistry, invisible itself, but the life of all visible life,) so there can be no poetry worthy the name without that element behind all. The time has certainly come to begin to discharge the idea of religion, in the United States, from mere ecclesiasticism, and from Sundays and churches and church-going, and assign it to that general position, chiefest, most indispensable, most exhilarating, to which the others are to be adjusted, inside of all human character, and education, and affairs. The people, especially the young men and women of America, must begin to learn that religion, (like poetry,) is something far, far different from what they supposed. It is, indeed, too important to the power and perpetuity of the New World to be consign’d any longer to the churches, old or new, Catholic or Protestant—Saint this, or Saint that. It must be consign’d henceforth to democracy *en masse*, and to literature. It must enter into the poems of the nation. It must make the nation.

The Four Years’ War is over—and in the peaceful, strong, exciting, fresh occasions of to-day, and of the future, that strange, sad war is hurrying even now to be forgotten. The camp, the drill, the lines of sentries, the prisons, the hospitals,—(ah! the hospitals!)—all have passed away—all seem now like a dream. A new race, a young and lusty generation, already sweeps in with oceanic currents, obliterating the war, and all its scars, its mounded graves, and all its reminiscences of hatred, conflict,

death. So let it be obliterated. I say the life of the present and the future makes undeniable demands upon us each and all, south, north, east, west. To help put the United States (even if only in imagination) hand in hand, in one unbroken circle in a chant—to rouse them to the unprecedented grandeur of the part they are to play, and are even now playing—to the thought of their great future, and the attitude conform'd to it—especially their great esthetic, moral, scientific future, (of which their vulgar material and political present is but as the preparatory tuning of instruments by an orchestra,) these, as hitherto, are still, for me, among my hopes, ambitions.

“Leaves of Grass,” already publish'd, is, in its intentions, the song of a great composite *democratic individual*, male or female. And following on and amplifying the same purpose, I suppose I have in my mind to run through the chants of this volume, (if ever completed,) the thread-voice, more or less audible, of an aggregated, inseparable, unprecedented, vast, composite, electric *democratic nationality*.

Purposing, then, to still fill out, from time to time through years to come, the following volume, (unless prevented,) I conclude this preface to the first instalment of it, pencil'd in the open air, on my fifty-third birth-day, by wafting to you, dear reader, whoever you are, (from amid the fresh scent of the grass, the pleasant coolness of the forenoon breeze, the lights and shades of tree-boughs silently dappling and playing around me, and the notes of the cat-bird for undertone and accompaniment,) my true good-will and love. W. W.

Washington, D. C., May 31, 1872.

## PREFACE TO THE CENTENNIAL EDITION OF *LEAVES OF GRASS*, 1876

At the eleventh hour, under grave illness, I gather up the pieces of prose and poetry left over since publishing, a while since, my first and main volume, “Leaves of Grass”—pieces, here, some



new, some old—nearly all of them (sombre as many are, making this almost death's book) composed in by-gone atmospheres of perfect health—and preceded by the freshest collection, the little "Two Rivulets," now send them out, embodied in the present melange, partly as my contribution and outpouring to celebrate, in some sort, the feature of the time, the first centennial of our New World nationality—and then as chyle and nutriment to that moral, indissoluble union, equally representing all, and the mother of many coming centennials.

And e'en for flush and proof of our America—for reminder, just as much, or more, in moods of towering pride and joy, I keep my special chants of death and immortality\* to stamp the coloring-finish of all, present and past. For terminus and temperer to all, they were originally written; and that shall be their office at the last.

\*PASSAGE TO INDIA.—As in some ancient legend-play, to close the plot and the hero's career, there is a farewell gathering on ship's deck and on shore, a loosening of hawsers and ties, a spreading of sails to the wind—a starting out on unknown seas, to fetch up no one knows whither—to return no more—and the curtain falls, and there is the end of it—so I have reserv'd that poem, with its cluster, to finish and explain much that, without them, would not be explain'd, and to take leave, and escape for good, from all that has preceded them. (Then probably "Passage to India," and its cluster, are but freer vent and fuller expression to what, from the first, and so on throughout, more or less lurks in my writings, underneath every page, every line, everywhere.)

I am not sure but the last inclosing sublimation of race or poem is, what it thinks of death. After the rest has been comprehended and said, even the grandest—after those contributions to mightiest nationality, or to sweetest song, or to the best personalism, male or female, have been glean'd from the rich and varied themes of tangible life, and have been fully accepted and sung, and the pervading fact of visible existence, with the duty it devolves, is rounded and apparently completed, it still remains to be really completed by suffusing through the whole and several, that other pervading invisible fact, so large a part, (is it not the largest part?) of life here, combining the rest, and furnishing, for person or State, the only permanent and unitary meaning to all, even the meanest life, consistently with the dignity of the universe, in Time. As from the eligibility to this thought, and the cheerful conquest of this fact, flash forth the first distinctive proofs of the soul, so to me, (extending it only a little further,) the ultimate Democratic purports, the ethereal and spiritual ones, are to concentrate here, and as fixed stars, radiate hence. For, in my opinion, it is no less than this idea of immortality, above all other ideas, that is to enter into, and vivify, and give crowning religious stamp, to democracy in the New World.

For some reason—not explainable or definite to my own mind, yet secretly pleasing and satisfactory to it—I have not hesitated to embody in, and run through the volume, two altogether distinct veins, or strata—politics for one, and for the other, the pensive thought of immortality. Thus, too, the prose and poetic, the dual forms of the present book. The volume, therefore, after its minor episodes, probably divides into these two, at first sight far diverse, veins of topic and treatment. Three points, in especial, have become very dear to me, and all through I seek to make them again and again, in many forms and repetitions, as will be seen: 1. That the true growth-characteristics of the democracy of the New World are henceforth to radiate in superior literary, artistic and religious expressions, far more than in its republican forms, universal suffrage, and frequent elections, (though these are unspeakably important.) 2. That the vital political mission of the United States is, to practically solve and settle the problem of two sets of rights—the fusion, thorough

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It was originally my intention, after chanting in “Leaves of Grass” the songs of the body and existence, to then compose a further, equally needed volume, based on those convictions of perpetuity and conservation which, enveloping all precedents, make the unseen soul govern absolutely at last. I meant, while in a sort continuing the theme of my first chants, to shift the slides, and exhibit the problem and paradox of the same ardent and fully appointed personality entering the sphere of the resistless gravitation of spiritual law, and with cheerful face estimating death, not at all as the cessation, but as somehow what I feel it must be, the entrance upon by far the greatest part of existence, and something that life is at least as much for, as it is for itself. But the full construction of such a work is beyond my powers, and must remain for some bard in the future. The physical and the sensuous, in themselves or in their immediate continuations, retain holds upon me which I think are never entirely releas’d; and those holds I have not only not denied, but hardly wish’d to weaken.

Meanwhile, not entirely to give the go-by to my original plan, and far more to avoid a mark’d hiatus in it, than to entirely fulfil it, I end my books with thoughts, or radiations from thoughts, on death, immortality, and a free entrance into the spiritual world. In those thoughts, in a sort, I make the first steps or studies toward the mighty theme, from the point of view necessitated by my foregoing poems, and by modern science. In them I also seek to set the keystone to my democracy’s enduring arch. I recollate them now, for the press, in order to partially occupy and offset days of strange sickness, and the heaviest affliction and bereavement of my life; and I fondly please myself with the notion of leaving that cluster to you, O unknown reader of the future, as “some-

compatibility and junction of individual State prerogatives, with the indispensable necessity of centrality and Oneness—the national identity power—the sovereign Union, relentless, permanently comprising all, and over all, and in that never yielding an inch: then 3d. Do we not, amid a general malaria of fogs and vapors, our day, unmistakably see two pillars of promise, with grandest, indestructible indications—one, that the morbid facts of American politics and society everywhere are but passing incidents and flanges of our unbounded impetus of growth? weeds, annuals, of the rank, rich soil—not central, enduring, perennial things? The other, that all the hitherto experience of the States, their first century, has been but preparation, adolescence—and that this Union is only now and henceforth, (*i.e.* since the secession war,) to enter on its full democratic career?

Of the whole, poems and prose, (not attending at all to chronological order, and with original dates and passing allusions in

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thing to remember me by,” more especially than all else. Written in former days of perfect health, little did I think the pieces had the purport that now, under present circumstances, opens to me.

[As I write these lines, May 31, 1875, it is again early summer—again my birth-day—now my fifty-sixth. Amid the outside beauty, and freshness, the sunlight and verdure of the delightful season, O how different the moral atmosphere amid which I now revise this Volume, from the jocund influence surrounding the growth and advent of “Leaves of Grass.” I occupy myself, arranging these pages for publication, still envelopt in thoughts of the death two years since of my dear Mother, the most perfect and magnetic character, the rarest combination of practical, moral and spiritual, and the least selfish, of all and any I have ever known—and by me O so much the most deeply loved—and also under the physical affliction of a tedious attack of paralysis, obstinately lingering and keeping its hold upon me, and quite suspending all bodily activity and comfort.]

Under these influences, therefore, I still feel to keep “Passage to India” for last words even to this centennial dithyramb. Not as, in antiquity, at highest festival of Egypt, the noisome skeleton of death was sent on exhibition to the revelers, for zest and shadow to the occasion’s joy and light—but as the marble statue of the normal Greeks at Elis, suggesting death in the form of a beautiful and perfect young man, with closed eyes, leaning on an inverted torch—emblem of rest and aspiration after action—of crown and point which all lives and poems should steadily have reference to, namely, the justified and noble termination of our identity, this grade of it, and outlet-preparation to another grade.

the heat and impression of the hour, left shuffled in, and undisturb'd,) the chants of "Leaves of Grass," my former volume, yet serve as the indispensable deep soil, or basis, out of which, and out of which only, could come the roots and stems more definitely indicated by these later pages. (While that volume radiates physiology alone, the present one, though of the like origin in the main, more palpably doubtless shows the pathology which was pretty sure to come in time from the other).

In that former and main volume, composed in the flush of my health and strength, from the age of 30 to 50 years, I dwelt on birth and life, clothing my ideas in pictures, days, transactions of my time, to give them positive place, identity—saturating them with that vehemence of pride and audacity of freedom necessary to loosen the mind of still-to-be-form'd America from the accumulated folds, the superstitions, and all the long, tenacious and stifling anti-democratic authorities of the Asiatic and European past—my enclosing purport being to express, above all artificial regulation and aid, the eternal bodily composite, cumulative, natural character of one's self.\*

Estimating the American Union as so far, and for some time

\*Namely, a character, making most of common and normal elements, to the superstructure of which not only the precious accumulations of the learning and experiences of the Old World, and the settled social and municipal necessities and current requirements, so long a-building, shall still faithfully contribute, but which at its foundations and carried up thence, and receiving its impetus from the democratic spirit, and accepting its gauge in all departments from the democratic formulas, shall again directly be vitalized by the perennial influences of Nature at first hand, and the old heroic stamina of Nature, the strong air of prairie and mountain, the dash of the briny sea, the primary antiseptics—of the passions, in all their fullest heat and potency, of courage, rankness, amativeness, and of immense pride. Not to lose at all, therefore, the benefits of artificial progress and civilization, but to re-occupy for Western tenancy the oldest though ever-fresh fields, and reap from them the savage and sane nourishment indispensable to a hardy nation, and the absence of which, threatening to become worse and worse, is the most serious lack and defect to-day of our New World literature.

Not but what the brawn of "Leaves of Grass" is, I hope, thoroughly spiritualized everywhere, for final estimate, but, from the very subjects, the direct effect is a sense of the life, as it should be, of flesh and blood, and physical urge,

to come, in its yet formative condition, I bequeath poems and essays as nutriment and influences to help truly assimilate and harden, and especially to furnish something toward what the States most need of all, and which seems to me yet quite un-supplied in literature, namely, to show them, or begin to show them, themselves distinctively, and what they are for. For though perhaps the main points of all ages and nations are points of resemblance, and, even while granting evolution, are substantially the same, there are some vital things in which this Republic, as to its individualities, and as a compacted Nation, is to specially stand forth, and culminate modern humanity. And these are the very things it least morally and mentally knows—(though, curiously enough, it is at the same time faithfully acting upon them.)

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and animalism. While there are other themes, and plenty of abstract thoughts and poems in the volume—while I have put in it passing and rapid but actual glimpses of the great struggle between the nation and the slave-power, (1861–'65,) as the fierce and bloody panorama of that contest unroll'd itself: while the whole book, indeed, revolves around that four years' war, which, as I was in the midst of it, becomes, in "Drum-Taps," pivotal to the rest entire—and here and there, before and afterward, not a few episodes and speculations—*that*—namely, to make a type-portrait for living, active, worldly, healthy personality, objective as well as subjective, joyful and potent, and modern and free, distinctively for the use of the United States, male and female, through the long future—has been, I say, my general object. (Probably, indeed, the whole of these varied songs, and all my writings, both volumes, only ring changes in some sort, on the ejaculation, How vast, how eligible, how joyful, how real, is a human being, himself or herself.)

Though from no definite plan at the time, I see now that I have unconsciously sought, by indirections at least as much as directions, to express the whirls and rapid growth and intensity of the United States, the prevailing tendency and events of the Nineteenth century, and largely the spirit of the whole current world, my time; for I feel that I have partaken of that spirit, as I have been deeply interested in all those events, the closing of long-stretch'd eras and ages, and, illustrated in the history of the United States, the opening of larger ones. (The death of President Lincoln, for instance, fitly, historically closes, in the civilization of feudalism, many old influences—drops on them, suddenly, a vast, gloomy, as it were, separating curtain.)

Since I have been ill, (1873–74–75,) mostly without serious pain, and with plenty of time and frequent inclination to judge my poems, (never composed

I count with such absolute certainty on the great future of the United States—different from, though founded on, the past—that I have always invoked that future, and surrounded myself with it, before or while singing my songs. (As ever, all tends to followings—America, too, is a prophecy. What, even of the best and most successful, would be justified by itself alone? by the present, or the material ostent alone? Of men or States, few realize how much they live in the future. That, rising like pinacles, gives its main significance to all You and I are doing today. Without it, there were little meaning in lands or poems—little purport in human lives. All ages, all Nations and States, have been such prophecies. But where any former ones with prophecy so broad, so clear, as our times, our lands—as those of the West?)

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with eye on the book-market, nor for fame, nor for any pecuniary profit.) I have felt temporary depression more than once, for fear that in “Leaves of Grass” the *moral* parts were not sufficiently pronounc’d. But in my clearest and calmest moods I have realized that as those “Leaves,” all and several, surely prepare the way for, and necessitate morals, and are adjusted to them, just the same as Nature does and is, they are what, consistently with my plan, they must and probably should be. (In a certain sense, while the Moral is the purport and last intelligence of all Nature, there is absolutely nothing of the moral in the works, or laws, or shows of Nature. Those only lead inevitably to it—begin and necessitate it.)

Then I meant “Leaves of Grass,” as publish’d, to be the Poem of average Identity, (of *yours*, whoever you are, now reading these lines.) A man is not greatest as victor in war, nor inventor or explorer, nor even in science, or in his intellectual or artistic capacity, or exemplar in some vast benevolence. To the highest democratic view, man is most acceptable in living well the practical life and lot which happens to him as ordinary farmer, sea-farer, mechanic, clerk, laborer, or driver—upon and from which position as a central basis or pedestal, while performing its labors, and his duties as citizen, son, husband, father and employ’d person, he preserves his physique, ascends, developing, radiating himself in other regions—and especially where and when, (greatest of all, and nobler than the proudest mere genius or magnate in any field,) he fully realizes the conscience, the spiritual, the divine faculty, cultivated well, exemplified in all his deeds and words, through life, uncompromising to the end—a flight loftier than any of Homer’s or Shakspeare’s—broader than all poems and bibles—namely, Nature’s own, and in the midst of it, Yourself, your own Identity, body and soul. (All serves, helps—but in the centre of all, absorbing all, giving, for your purpose, the only meaning and vitality to all, mas-

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Without being a scientist, I have thoroughly adopted the conclusions of the great savans and experimentalists of our time, and of the last hundred years, and they have interiorly tinged the chyle of all my verse, for purposes beyond. Following the modern spirit, the real poems of the present, ever solidifying and expanding into the future, must vocalize the vastness and splendor and reality with which scientism has invested man and the universe, (all that is called creation,) and must henceforth launch humanity into new orbits, consonant with that vastness, splendor, and reality, (unknown to the old poems,) like new systems of orbs, balanced upon themselves, revolving in limitless space more subtle than the stars. Poetry, so largely hitherto and even at present wedded to children's tales, and to

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ter or mistress of all, under the law, stands Yourself.) To sing the Song of that law of average Identity, and of Yourself, consistently with the divine law of the universal, is a main intention of those "Leaves."

Something more may be added—for, while I am about it, I would make a full confession. I also sent out "Leaves of Grass" to arouse and set flowing in men's and women's hearts, young and old, endless streams of living, pulsating love and friendship, directly from them to myself, now and ever. To this terrible, irrepressible yearning, (surely more or less down underneath in most human souls)—this never-satisfied appetite for sympathy, and this boundless offering of sympathy—this universal democratic comradeship—this old, eternal, yet ever-new interchange of adhesiveness, so fitly emblematic of America—I have given in that book, undisguisedly, declaredly, the openest expression. Besides, important as they are in my purpose as emotional expressions for humanity, the special meaning of the "Calamus" cluster of "Leaves of Grass," (and more or less running through the book, and cropping out in "Drum-Taps,") mainly resides in its political significance. In my opinion, it is by a fervent, accepted development of comradeship, the beautiful and sane affection of man for man, latent in all the young fellows, north and south, east and west—it is by this, I say, and by what goes directly and indirectly along with it, that the United States of the future, (I cannot too often repeat,) are to be most effectually welded together, intercalated, anneal'd into a living union.

Then, for enclosing clue of all, it is imperatively and ever to be borne in mind that "Leaves of Grass" entire is not to be construed as an intellectual or scholastic effort or poem mainly, but more as a radical utterance out of the Emotions and the Physique—an utterance adjusted to, perhaps born of, Democracy and the Modern—in its very nature regardless of the old conventions, and, under the great laws, following only its own impulses.

mere amorousness, upholstery and superficial rhyme, will have to accept, and, while not denying the past, nor the themes of the past, will be revived by this tremendous innovation, the cosmic spirit, which must henceforth, in my opinion, be the background and underlying impetus, more or less visible, of all first-class songs.

Only, (for me, at any rate, in all my prose and poetry,) joyfully accepting modern science, and loyally following it without the slightest hesitation, there remains ever recognized still a higher flight, a higher fact, the eternal soul of man, (of all else too,) the spiritual, the religious—which it is to be the greatest office of scientism, in my opinion, and of future poetry also, to free from fables, crudities and superstitions, and launch forth in renew'd faith and scope a hundred fold. To me, the worlds of religiousness, of the conception of the divine, and of the ideal, though mainly latent, are just as absolute in humanity and the universe as the world of chemistry, or anything in the objective worlds. To me

The prophet and the bard,  
Shall yet maintain themselves—in higher circles yet,  
Shall mediate to the modern, to democracy—interpret yet to  
them,  
God and eidólons.

To me, the crown of savantism is to be, that it surely opens the way for a more splendid theology, and for ampler and diviner songs. No year, nor even century, will settle this. There is a phase of the real, lurking behind the real, which it is all for. There is also in the intellect of man, in time, far in prospective recesses, a judgment, a last appellate court, which will settle it.

In certain parts in these flights, or attempting to depict or suggest them, I have not been afraid of the charge of obscurity, in either of my two volumes—because human thought, poetry or melody, must leave dim escapes and outlets—must possess a certain fluid, aerial character, akin to space itself, obscure to those of little or no imagination, but indispensable to the highest purposes. Poetic style, when address'd to the soul, is less



definite form, outline, sculpture, and becomes vista, music, half-tints, and even less than half-tints. True, it may be architecture; but again it may be the forest wild-wood, or the best effect thereof, at twilight, the waving oaks and cedars in the wind, and the impalpable odor.

Finally, as I have lived in fresh lands, inchoate, and in a revolutionary age, future-founding, I have felt to identify the points of that age, these lands, in my recitatives, altogether in my own way. Thus my form has strictly grown from my purports and facts, and is the analogy of them. Within my time the United States have emerged from nebulous vagueness and suspense, to full orbic, (though varied,) decision—have done the deeds and achiev'd the triumphs of half a score of centuries—and are henceforth to enter upon their real history—the way being now, (*i.e.* since the result of the Secession War,) clear'd of death-threatening impedimenta, and the free areas around and ahead of us assured and certain, which were not so before—(the past century being but preparations, trial voyages and experiments of the ship, before her starting out upon deep water.)

In estimating my volumes, the world's current times and deeds, and their spirit, must be first profoundly estimated. Out of the hundred years just ending, (1776–1876,) with their genesis of inevitable wilful events, and new experiments and introductions, and many unprecedented things of war and peace, (to be realized better, perhaps only realized, at the remove of a century hence;) out of that stretch of time, and especially out of the immediately preceding twenty-five years, (1850–75,) with all their rapid changes, innovations, and audacious movements—and bearing their own inevitable wilful birth-marks—the experiments of my poems too have found genesis.

W. W.

“A BACKWARD GLANCE O’ER TRAVEL’D  
ROADS,” 1888

Perhaps the best of songs heard, or of any and all true love, or life’s fairest episodes, or sailors’, soldiers’ trying scenes on land or sea, is the *résumé* of them, or any of them, long afterwards, looking at the actualities away back past, with all their practical excitations gone. How the soul loves to gloat amid such reminiscences!

So here I sit gossiping in the early candle-light of old age—I and my book—casting backward glances over our travel’d road. After completing, as it were, the journey—(a varied jaunt of years, with many halts and gaps of intervals—or some lengthen’d ship-voyage, wherein more than once the last hour had apparently arrived, and we seem’d certainly going down—yet reaching port in a sufficient way through all discomfitures at last)—After completing my poems, I am curious to review them in the light of their own (at the time unconscious, or mostly unconscious) intentions, with certain unfoldings of the thirty years they seek to embody. These lines, therefore, will probably blend the weft of first purposes and speculations, with the warp of that experience afterwards, always bringing strange developments.

Result of seven or eight stages and struggles extending through nearly thirty years, (as I nigh my three-score-and-ten I live largely on memory,) I look upon “Leaves of Grass,” now finish’d to the end of its opportunities and powers, as my definitive *carte visite* to the coming generations of the New World,\* if I may assume to say so. That I have not gain’d the acceptance of my own time, but have fallen back on fond dreams of the future—anticipations—(“still lives the song, though Regnar dies”)—That from a worldly and business point of view

\*When Champollion, on his death-bed, handed to the printer the revised proof of his “Egyptian Grammar,” he said gayly, “Be careful of this—it is my *carte de visite* to posterity.”

“Leaves of Grass” has been worse than a failure—that public criticism on the book and myself as author of it yet shows mark’d anger and contempt more than anything else—(“I find a solid line of enemies to you everywhere,”—letter from W. S. K., Boston, May 28, 1884)—And that solely for publishing it I have been the object of two or three pretty serious special official buffetings—is all probably no more than I ought to have expected. I had my choice when I commenc’d. I bid neither for soft eulogies, big money returns, nor the approbation of existing schools and conventions. As fulfill’d, or partially fulfill’d, the best comfort of the whole business (after a small band of the dearest friends and upholders ever vouchsafed to man or cause—doubtless all the more faithful and uncompromising—this little phalanx!—for being so few) is that, unstopp’d and unwarped by any influence outside the soul within me, I have had my say entirely my own way, and put it unerringly on record—the value thereof to be decided by time.

In calculating that decision, William O’Connor and Dr. Bucke are far more peremptory than I am. Behind all else that can be said, I consider “Leaves of Grass” and its theory experimental—as, in the deepest sense, I consider our American republic itself to be, with its theory. (I think I have at least enough philosophy not to be too absolutely certain of any thing, or any results.) In the second place, the volume is a *sortie*—whether to prove triumphant, and conquer its field of aim and escape and construction, nothing less than a hundred years from now can fully answer. I consider the point that I have positively gain’d a hearing, to far more than make up for any and all other lacks and withholdings. Essentially, *that* was from the first, and has remain’d throughout, the main object. Now it seems to be achiev’d, I am certainly contented to waive any otherwise momentous drawbacks, as of little account. Candidly and dispassionately reviewing all my intentions, I feel that they were creditable—and I accept the result, whatever it may be.

After continued personal ambition and effort, as a young fellow, to enter with the rest into competition for the usual rewards, business, political, literary, &c.—to take part in the great

*mêlée*, both for victory's prize itself and to do some good—After years of those aims and pursuits, I found myself remaining possess'd, at the age of thirty-one to thirty-three, with a special desire and conviction. Or rather, to be quite exact, a desire that had been flitting through my previous life, or hovering on the flanks, mostly indefinite hitherto, had steadily advanced to the front, defined itself, and finally dominated everything else. This was a feeling or ambition to articulate and faithfully express in literary or poetic form, and uncompromisingly, my own physical, emotional, moral, intellectual, and aesthetic Personality, in the midst of, and tallying, the momentous spirit and facts of its immediate days, and of current America—and to exploit that Personality, identified with place and date, in a far more candid and comprehensive sense than any hitherto poem or book.

Perhaps this is in brief, or suggests, all I have sought to do. Given the Nineteenth Century, with the United States, and what they furnish as area and points of view, "Leaves of Grass" is, or seeks to be, simply a faithful and doubtless self-will'd record. In the midst of all, it gives one man's—the author's—identity, ardors, observations, faiths and thoughts, color'd hardly at all with any decided coloring from other faiths or other identities. Plenty of songs had been sung—beautiful, matchless songs—adjusted to other lands than these—another spirit and stage of evolution; but I would sing, and leave out or put in, quite solely with reference to America and to-day. Modern science and democracy seem'd to be throwing out their challenge to poetry to put them in its statements in contradistinction to the songs and myths of the past. As I see it now (perhaps too late,) I have unwittingly taken up that challenge and made an attempt at such statements—which I certainly would not assume to do now, knowing more clearly what it means.

For grounds for "Leaves of Grass," as a poem, I abandon'd the conventional themes, which do not appear in it: none of the stock ornamentation, or choice plots of love or war, or high, exceptional personages of Old-World song; nothing, as I may say, for beauty's sake—no legend, or myth, or romance, nor euphemism, nor rhyme. But the broadest average of humanity

and its identities in the now ripening Nineteenth Century, and especially in each of their countless examples and practical occupations in the United States to-day.

One main contrast of the ideas behind every page of my verses, compared with establish'd poems, is their different relative attitude towards God, towards the objective universe, and still more (by reflection, confession, assumption, &c.) the quite changed attitude of the ego, the one chanting or talking, towards himself and towards his fellow-humanity. It is certainly time for America, above all, to begin this readjustment in the scope and basic point of view of verse; for everything else has changed. As I write, I see in an article on Wordsworth, in one of the current English magazines, the lines, "A few weeks ago an eminent French critic said that, owing to the special tendency to science and to its all-devouring force, poetry would cease to be read in fifty years." But I anticipate the very contrary. Only a firmer, vastly broader, new area begins to exist—nay, is already form'd—to which the poetic genius must emigrate. Whatever may have been the case in years gone by, the true use for the imaginative faculty of modern times is to give ultimate vivification to facts, to science, and to common lives, endowing them with the glows and glories and final illustriousness which belong to every real thing, and to real things only. Without that ultimate vivification—which the poet or other artist alone can give—reality would seem incomplete, and science, democracy, and life itself, finally in vain.

Few appreciate the moral revolutions, our age, which have been profounder far than the material or inventive or war-produced ones. The Nineteenth Century, now well towards its close (and ripening into fruit the seeds of the two preceding centuries\*)—the uprisings of national masses and shiftings of boundary-lines—the historical and other prominent facts of

\*The ferment and germination even of the United States to-day, dating back to, and in my opinion mainly founded on, the Elizabethan age in English history, the age of Francis Bacon and Shakspeare. Indeed, when we pursue it, what growth or advent is there that does not date back, back, until lost—perhaps its most tantalizing clues lost—in the receded horizons of the past?

the United States—the war of attempted Secession—the stormy rush and haste of nebulous forces—never can future years witness more excitement and din of action—never completer change of army front along the whole line, the whole civilized world. For all these new and evolutionary facts, meanings, purposes, new poetic messages, new forms and expressions, are inevitable.

My Book and I—what a period we have presumed to span! those thirty years from 1850 to '80—and America in them! Proud, proud indeed may we be, if we have cull'd enough of that period in its own spirit to worthily waft a few live breaths of it to the future!

Let me not dare, here or anywhere, for my own purposes, or any purposes, to attempt the definition of Poetry, nor answer the question what it is. Like Religion, Love, Nature, while those terms are indispensable, and we all give a sufficiently accurate meaning to them, in my opinion no definition that has ever been made sufficiently encloses the name Poetry; nor can any rule or convention ever so absolutely obtain but some great exception may arise and disregard and overturn it.

Also it must be carefully remember'd that first-class literature does not shine by any luminosity of its own; nor do its poems. They grow of circumstances, and are evolutionary. The actual living light is always curiously from elsewhere—follows unaccountable sources, and is lunar and relative at the best. There are, I know, certain controlling themes that seem endlessly appropriated to the poets—as war, in the past—in the Bible, religious rapture and adoration—always love, beauty, some fine plot, or pensive or other emotion. But, strange as it may sound at first, I will say there is something striking far deeper and towering far higher than those themes for the best elements of modern song.

Just as all the old imaginative works rest, after their kind, on long trains of presuppositions, often entirely unmention'd by themselves, yet supplying the most important bases of them, and without which they could have had no reason for being, so “Leaves of Grass,” before a line was written, presupposed

something different from any other, and, as it stands, is the result of such presupposition. I should say, indeed, it were useless to attempt reading the book without first carefully tallying that preparatory background and quality in the mind. Think of the United States to-day—the facts of these thirty-eight or forty empires soldier'd in one—sixty or seventy millions of equals, with their lives, their passions, their future—these incalculable, modern, American, seething multitudes around us, of which we are inseparable parts! Think, in comparison, of the petty environage and limited area of the poets of past or present Europe, no matter how great their genius. Think of the absence and ignorance, in all cases hitherto, of the multitudinousness, vitality, and the unprecedented stimulants of to-day and here. It almost seems as if a poetry with cosmic and dynamic features of magnitude and limitlessness suitable to the human soul, were never possible before. It is certain that a poetry of absolute faith and equality for the use of the democratic masses never was.

In estimating first-class song, a sufficient Nationality, or, on the other hand, what may be call'd the negative and lack of it, (as in Goethe's case, it sometimes seems to me,) is often, if not always, the first element. One needs only a little penetration to see, at more or less removes, the material facts of their country and radius, with the coloring of the moods of humanity at the time, and its gloomy or hopeful prospects, behind all poets and each poet, and forming their birth-marks. I know very well that my "Leaves" could not possibly have emerged or been fashion'd or completed, from any other era than the latter half of the Nineteenth Century, nor any other land than democratic America, and from the absolute triumph of the National Union arms.

And whether my friends claim it for me or not, I know well enough, too, that in respect to pictorial talent, dramatic situations, and especially in verbal melody and all the conventional technique of poetry, not only the divine works that to-day stand ahead in the world's reading, but dozens more, transcend (some of them immeasurably transcend) all I have done, or could do. But it seem'd to me, as the objects in Nature, the

themes of aestheticism, and all special exploitations of the mind and soul, involve not only their own inherent quality, but the quality, just as inherent and important, of *their point of view*,\* the time had come to reflect all themes and things, old and new, in the lights thrown on them by the advent of America and democracy—to chant those themes through the utterance of one, not only the grateful and reverent legatee of the past, but the born child of the New World—to illustrate all through the genesis and ensemble of to-day; and that such illustration and ensemble are the chief demands of America's prospective imaginative literature. Not to carry out, in the approved style, some choice plot of fortune or misfortune, or fancy, or fine thoughts, or incidents, or courtesies—all of which has been done overwhelmingly and well, probably never to be excell'd—but that while in such aesthetic presentation of objects, passions, plots, thoughts, &c., our lands and days do not want, and probably will never have, anything better than they already possess from the bequests of the past, it still remains to be said that there is even towards all those a subjective and contemporary point of view appropriate to ourselves alone, and to our new genius and environments, different from anything hitherto; and that such conception of current or gone-by life and art is for us the only means of their assimilation consistent with the Western world.

Indeed, and anyhow, to put it specifically, has not the time arrived when, (if it must be plainly said, for democratic America's sake, if for no other) there must imperatively come a readjustment of the whole theory and nature of Poetry? The question is important, and I may turn the argument over and repeat it: Does not the best thought of our day and Republic conceive of a birth and spirit of song superior to anything past or present? To the effectual and moral consolidation of our lands (already, as materially establish'd, the greatest factors in known history, and far, far greater through what they prelude and necessitate, and are to be in future)—to conform with and build on the

\*According to Immanuel Kant, the last essential reality, giving shape and significance to all the rest.



concrete realities and theories of the universe furnish'd by science, and henceforth the only irrefragable basis for anything, verse included—to root both influences in the emotional and imaginative action of the modern time, and dominate all that precedes or opposes them—is not either a radical advance and step forward, or a new verteber of the best song indispensable?

The New World receives with joy the poems of the antique, with European feudalism's rich fund of epics, plays, ballads—seeks not in the least to deaden or displace those voices from our ear and area—holds them indeed as indispensable studies, influences, records, comparisons. But though the dawn-dazzle of the sun of literature is in those poems for us of to-day—though perhaps the best parts of current character in nations, social groups, or any man's or woman's individuality, Old World or New, are from them—and though if I were ask'd to name the most precious bequest to current American civilization from all the hitherto ages, I am not sure but I would name those old and less old songs ferried hither from east and west—some serious words and debits remain; some acrid considerations demand a hearing. Of the great poems receiv'd from abroad and from the ages, and to-day enveloping and penetrating America, is there one that is consistent with these United States, or essentially applicable to them as they are and are to be? Is there one whose underlying basis is not a denial and insult to democracy? What a comment it forms, anyhow, on this era of literary fulfilment, with the splendid day-rise of science and resuscitation of history, that our chief religious and poetical works are not our own, not adapted to our light, but have been furnish'd by far-back ages out of their arriere and darkness, or, at most, twilight dimness! What is there in those works that so imperiously and scornfully dominates all our advanced civilization, and culture?

Even Shakspeare, who so suffuses current letters and art (which indeed have in most degrees grown out of him,) belongs essentially to the buried past. Only he holds the proud distinction for certain important phases of that past, of being the loftiest of the singers life has yet given voice to. All, however, relate to and rest upon conditions, standards, politics, sociologies,

ranges of belief, that have been quite eliminated from the Eastern hemisphere, and never existed at all in the Western. As authoritative types of song they belong in America just about as much as the persons and institutes they depict. True, it may be said, the emotional, moral, and aesthetic natures of humanity have not radically changed—that in these the old poems apply to our times and all times, irrespective of date; and that they are of incalculable value as pictures of the past. I willingly make those admissions, and to their fullest extent; then advance the points herewith as of serious, even paramount importance.

I have indeed put on record elsewhere my reverence and eulogy for those never-to-be-excell'd poetic bequests, and their indescribable preciousness as heirlooms for America. Another and separate point must now be candidly stated. If I had not stood before those poems with uncover'd head, fully aware of their colossal grandeur and beauty of form and spirit, I could not have written "Leaves of Grass." My verdict and conclusions as illustrated in its pages are arrived at through the temper and inculcation of the old works as much as through anything else—perhaps more than through anything else. As America fully and fairly construed is the legitimate result and evolutionary outcome of the past, so I would dare to claim for my verse. Without stopping to qualify the averment, the Old World has had the poems of myths, fictions, feudalism, conquest, caste, dynastic wars, and splendid exceptional characters and affairs, which have been great; but the New World needs the poems of realities and science and of the democratic average and basic equality, which shall be greater. In the centre of all, and object of all, stands the Human Being, towards whose heroic and spiritual evolution poems and everything directly or indirectly tend, Old World or New.

Continuing the subject, my friends have more than once suggested—or may be the garrulity of advancing age is possessing me—some further embryonic facts of "Leaves of Grass," and especially how I enter'd upon them. Dr. Bucke has, in his volume, already fully and fairly described the preparation of my poetic field, with the particular and general plowing, plant-

ing, seeding, and occupation of the ground, till everything was fertilized, rooted, and ready to start its own way for good or bad. Not till after all this, did I attempt any serious acquaintance with poetic literature. Along in my sixteenth year I had become possessor of a stout, well-cramm'd one thousand page octavo volume (I have it yet,) containing Walter Scott's poetry entire—an inexhaustible mine and treasury of poetic forage (especially the endless forests and jungles of notes)—has been so to me for fifty years, and remains so to this day.\*

Later, at intervals, summers and falls, I used to go off, sometimes for a week at a stretch, down in the country, or to Long Island's seashores—there, in the presence of outdoor influences, I went over thoroughly the Old and New Testaments, and absorb'd (probably to better advantage for me than in any library or indoor room—it makes such difference *where* you read,) Shakspeare, Ossian, the best translated versions I could get of Homer, Eschylus, Sophocles, the old German Nibelungen, the ancient Hindoo poems, and one or two other masterpieces, Dante's among them. As it happen'd, I read the latter mostly in an old wood. The Iliad (Buckley's prose version,) I read first thoroughly on the peninsula of Orient, northeast end of Long Island, in a shelter'd hollow of rocks and sand, with the sea on each side. (I have wonder'd since why I was not overwhelm'd by those mighty masters. Likely because I read them, as described, in the full presence of Nature, under the sun, with the far-spreading landscape and vistas, or the sea rolling in.)

Toward the last I had among much else look'd over Edgar Poe's poems—of which I was not an admirer, tho' I always saw

\*Sir Walter Scott's COMPLETE POEMS; especially including BORDER MINSTRELSY; then Sir Tristrem; Lay of the Last Minstrel; Ballads from the German; Marmion; Lady of the Lake; Vision of Don Roderick; Lord of the Isles; Rokeby; Bridal of Triermain; Field of Waterloo; Harold the Dauntless; all the Dramas; various Introductions, endless interesting Notes, and Essays on Poetry, Romance, &c.

Lockhart's 1833 (or '34) edition with Scott's latest and copious revisions and annotations. (All the poems were thoroughly read by me, but the ballads of the Border Minstrelsy over and over again.)

that beyond their limited range of melody (like perpetual chimes of music bells, ringing from lower *b* flat up to *g*) they were melodious expressions, and perhaps never excell'd ones, of certain pronounc'd phases of human morbidity. (The Poetic area is very spacious—has room for all—has so many mansions!) But I was repaid in Poe's prose by the idea that (at any rate for our occasions, our day) there can be no such thing as a long poem. The same thought had been haunting my mind before, but Poe's argument, though short, work'd the sum out and proved it to me.

Another point had an early settlement, clearing the ground greatly. I saw, from the time my enterprise and questionings positively shaped themselves (how best can I express my own distinctive era and surroundings, America, Democracy?) that the trunk and centre whence the answer was to radiate, and to which all should return from straying however far a distance, must be an identical body and soul, a personality—which personality, after many considerations and ponderings I deliberately settled should be myself—indeed could not be any other. I also felt strongly (whether I have shown it or not) that to the true and full estimate of the Present both the Past and the Future are main considerations.

These, however, and much more might have gone on and come to naught (almost positively would have come to naught,) if a sudden, vast, terrible, direct and indirect stimulus for new and national declamatory expression had not been given to me. It is certain, I say, that, although I had made a start before, only from the occurrence of the Secession War, and what it show'd me as by flashes of lightning, with the emotional depths it sounded and arous'd (of course, I don't mean in my own heart only, I saw it just as plainly in others, in millions)—that only from the strong flare and provocation of that war's sights and scenes the final reasons-for-being of an autochthonic and passionate song definitely came forth.

I went down to the war fields in Virginia (end of 1862), lived thenceforward in camp—saw great battles and the days and nights afterward—partook of all the fluctuations, gloom, de-

spair, hopes again arous'd, courage evok'd—death readily risk'd—*the cause*, too—along and filling those agonistic and lurid following years, 1863-'64-'65—the real parturition years (more than 1776-'83) of this henceforth homogeneous Union. Without those three or four years and the experiences they gave, "Leaves of Grass" would not now be existing.

But I set out with the intention also of indicating or hinting some point-characteristics which I since see (though I did not then, at least not definitely) were bases and object-urgings toward those "Leaves" from the first. The word I myself put primarily for the description of them as they stand at last, is the word Suggestiveness. I round and finish little, if anything; and could not, consistently with my scheme. The reader will always have his or her part to do, just as much as I have had mine. I seek less to state or display any theme or thought, and more to bring you, reader, into the atmosphere of the theme or thought—there to pursue your own flight. Another impetus-word is Comradeship as for all lands, and in a more commanding and acknowledg'd sense than hitherto. Other word-signs would be Good Cheer, Content, and Hope.

The chief trait of any given poet is always the spirit he brings to the observation of Humanity and Nature—the mood out of which he contemplates his subjects. What kind of temper and what amount of faith report these things? Up to how recent a date is the song carried? What the equipment, and special raciness of the singer—what his tinge of coloring? The last value of artistic expressers, past and present—Greek *æsthetes*, Shakspeare—or in our own day Tennyson, Victor Hugo, Carlyle, Emerson—is certainly involv'd in such questions. I say the profoundest service that poems or any other writings can do for their reader is not merely to satisfy the intellect, or supply something polish'd and interesting, nor even to depict great passions, or persons or events, but to fill him with vigorous and clean manliness, religiousness, and give him *good heart* as a radical possession and habit. The educated world seems to have been growing more and more ennuyed for ages, leaving to

our time the inheritance of it all. Fortunately there is the original inexhaustible fund of buoyancy, normally resident in the race, forever eligible to be appeal'd to and relied on.

As for native American individuality, though certain to come, and on a large scale, the distinctive and ideal type of Western character (as consistent with the operative political and even money-making features of United States' humanity in the Nineteenth Century as chosen knights, gentlemen and warriors were the ideals of the centuries of European feudalism) it has not yet appear'd. I have allow'd the stress of my poems from beginning to end to bear upon American individuality and assist it—not only because that is a great lesson in Nature, amid all her generalizing laws, but as counterpoise to the leveling tendencies of Democracy—and for other reasons. Defiant of ostensible literary and other conventions, I avowedly chant “the great pride of man in himself,” and permit it to be more or less a *motif* of nearly all my verse. I think this pride indispensable to an American. I think it not inconsistent with obedience, humility, deference, and self-questioning.

Democracy has been so retarded and jeopardized by powerful personalities, that its first instincts are fain to clip, conform, bring in stragglers, and reduce everything to a dead level. While the ambitious thought of my song is to help the forming of a great aggregate Nation, it is, perhaps, altogether through the forming of myriads of fully develop'd and enclosing individuals. Welcome as are equality's and fraternity's doctrines and popular education, a certain liability accompanies them all, as we see. That primal and interior something in man, in his soul's abysms, coloring all, and, by exceptional fruitions, giving the last majesty to him—something continually touch'd upon and attain'd by the old poems and ballads of feudalism, and often the principal foundation of them—modern science and democracy appear to be endangering, perhaps eliminating. But that forms an appearance only; the reality is quite different. The new influences upon the whole, are surely preparing the way for grander individualities than ever. To-day and here personal force is behind everything, just the same. The times and depic-

tions from the Iliad to Shakspeare inclusive can happily never again be realized—but the elements of courageous and lofty manhood are unchanged.

Without yielding an inch the working-man and working-woman were to be in my pages from first to last. The ranges of heroism and loftiness with which Greek and feudal poets endow'd their god-like or lordly born characters—indeed prouder and better based and with fuller ranges than those—I was to endow the democratic averages of America. I was to show that we, here and to-day, are eligible to the grandest and the best—more eligible now than any times of old were. I will also want my utterances (I said to myself before beginning) to be in spirit the poems of the morning. (They have been founded and mainly written in the sunny forenoon and early midday of my life.) I will want them to be the poems of women entirely as much as men. I have wish'd to put the complete Union of the States in my songs without any preference or partiality whatever. Henceforth, if they live and are read, it must be just as much South as North—just as much along the Pacific as Atlantic—in the valley of the Mississippi, in Canada, up in Maine, down in Texas, and on the shores of Puget Sound.

From another point of view "*Leaves of Grass*" is avowedly the song of Sex and Amativeness, and even Animality—though meanings that do not usually go along with those words are behind all, and will duly emerge; and all are sought to be lifted into a different light and atmosphere. Of this feature, intentionally palpable in a few lines, I shall only say the espousing principle of those lines so gives breath of life to my whole scheme that the bulk of the pieces might as well have been left unwritten were those lines omitted. Difficult as it will be, it has become, in my opinion, imperative to achieve a shifted attitude from superior men and women towards the thought and fact of sexuality, as an element in character, personality, the emotions, and a theme in literature. I am not going to argue the question by itself; it does not stand by itself. The vitality of it is altogether in its relations, bearings, significance—like the clef of a symphony. At last analogy the lines I allude to, and the spirit in

which they are spoken, permeate all "Leaves of Grass," and the work must stand or fall with them, as the human body and soul must remain as an entirety.

Universal as are certain facts and symptoms of communities or individuals all times, there is nothing so rare in modern conventions and poetry as their normal recognizance. Literature is always calling in the doctor for consultation and confession, and always giving evasions and swathing suppressions in place of that "heroic nudity"\* on which only a genuine diagnosis of serious cases can be built. And in respect to editions of "Leaves of Grass" in time to come (if there should be such) I take occasion now to confirm those lines with the settled convictions and deliberate renewals of thirty years, and to hereby prohibit, as far as word of mine can do so, any elision of them.

Then still a purpose enclosing all, and over and beneath all. Ever since what might be call'd thought, or the budding of thought, fairly began in my youthful mind, I had had a desire to attempt some worthy record of that entire faith and acceptance ("to justify the ways of God to man" is Milton's well-known and ambitious phrase) which is the foundation of moral America. I felt it all as positively then in my young days as I do now in my old ones; to formulate a poem whose every thought or fact should directly or indirectly be or connive at an implicit belief in the wisdom, health, mystery, beauty of every process, every concrete object, every human or other existence, not only consider'd from the point of view of all, but of each.

While I can not understand it or argue it out, I fully believe in a clue and purpose in Nature, entire and several; and that invisible spiritual results, just as real and definite as the visible, eventuate all concrete life and all materialism, through Time. My book ought to emanate buoyancy and gladness legitimately enough, for it was grown out of those elements, and has been the comfort of my life since it was originally commenced.

One main genesis-motive of the "Leaves" was my conviction (just as strong to-day as ever) that the crowning growth of the United States is to be spiritual and heroic. To help start and fa-

\*"Nineteenth Century," July, 1883.



vor that growth—or even to call attention to it, or the need of it—is the beginning, middle and final purpose of the poems. (In fact, when really cipher'd out and summ'd to the last, plowing up in earnest the interminable average fallows of humanity—not “good government” merely, in the common sense—is the justification and main purpose of these United States.)

Isolated advantages in any rank or grace or fortune—the direct or indirect threads of all the poetry of the past—are in my opinion distasteful to the republican genius, and offer no foundation for its fitting verse. Establish'd poems, I know, have the very great advantage of chanting the already perform'd, so full of glories, reminiscences dear to the minds of men. But my volume is a candidate for the future. “All original art,” says Taine, anyhow, “is self-regulated, and no original art can be regulated from without; it carries its own counterpoise, and does not receive it from elsewhere—lives on its own blood”—a solace to my frequent bruises and sulky vanity.

As the present is perhaps mainly an attempt at personal statement or illustration, I will allow myself as further help to extract the following anecdote from a book, “Annals of Old Painters,” conn'd by me in youth. Rubens, the Flemish painter, in one of his wanderings through the galleries of old convents, came across a singular work. After looking at it thoughtfully for a good while, and listening to the criticisms of his suite of students, he said to the latter, in answer to their questions (as to what school the work implied or belong'd,) “I do not believe the artist, unknown and perhaps no longer living, who has given the world this legacy, ever belong'd to any school, or ever painted anything but this one picture, which is a personal affair—a piece out of a man's life.”

“Leaves of Grass” indeed (I cannot too often reiterate) has mainly been the outcropping of my own emotional and other personal nature—an attempt, from first to last, to put a *Person*, a human being (myself, in the latter half of the Nineteenth Century, in America,) freely, fully and truly on record. I could not find any similar personal record in current literature that satisfied me. But it is not on “Leaves of Grass” distinctively as *literature*, or a specimen thereof, that I feel to dwell, or advance

claims. No one will get at my verses who insists upon viewing them as a literary performance, or attempt at such performance, or as aiming mainly toward art or aestheticism.

I say no land or people or circumstances ever existed so needing a race of singers and poems differing from all others, and rigidly their own, as the land and people and circumstances of our United States need such singers and poems to-day, and for the future. Still further, as long as the States continue to absorb and be dominated by the poetry of the Old World, and remain unsupplied with autochthonous song, to express, vitalize and give color to and define their material and political success, and minister to them distinctively, so long will they stop short of first-class Nationality and remain defective.

In the free evening of my day I give to you, reader, the foregoing garrulous talk, thoughts, reminiscences,

As idly drifting down the ebb,  
Such ripples, half-caught voices, echo from the shore.

Concluding with two items for the imaginative genius of the West, when it worthily rises—First, what Herder taught to the young Goethe, that really great poetry is always (like the Homeric or Biblical canticles) the result of a national spirit, and not the privilege of a polish'd and select few; Second, that the strongest and sweetest songs yet remain to be sung.

## DEMOCRATIC VISTAS

As the greatest lessons of Nature through the universe are perhaps the lessons of variety and freedom, the same present the greatest lessons also in New World politics and progress. If a man were ask'd, for instance, the distinctive points contrasting modern European and American political and other life with the old Asiatic cultus, as lingering-bequeath'd yet in China and Turkey, he might find the amount of them in John Stuart Mill's profound essay on Liberty in the future, where he demands two main constituents, or sub-strata, for a truly grand nationality—1st, a large variety of character—and 2d, full play for human nature to expand itself in numberless and even conflicting directions—(seems to be for general humanity much like the influences that make up, in their limitless field, that perennial health-action of the air we call the weather—an infinite number of currents and forces, and contributions, and temperatures, and cross purposes, whose ceaseless play of counterpart upon counterpart brings constant restoration and vitality.) With this thought—and not for itself alone, but all it necessitates, and draws after it—let me begin my speculations.

America, filling the present with greatest deeds and problems, cheerfully accepting the past, including feudalism, (as, indeed, the present is but the legitimate birth of the past, including feudalism,) counts, as I reckon, for her justification and success, (for who, as yet, dare claim success?) almost entirely on the future. Nor is that hope unwarranted. To-day, ahead, though dimly yet, we see, in vistas, a copious, sane, gigantic offspring. For our New World I consider far less important for what it has

done, or what it is, than for results to come. Sole among nationalities, these States have assumed the task to put in forms of lasting power and practicality, on areas of amplitude rivaling the operations of the physical kosmos, the moral political speculations of ages, long, long deferr'd, the democratic republican principle, and the theory of development and perfection by voluntary standards, and self-reliance. Who else, indeed, except the United States, in history, so far, have accepted in unwitting faith, and, as we now see, stand, act upon, and go security for, these things?

But precluding no longer, let me strike the key-note of the following strain. First premising that, though the passages of it have been written at widely different times, (it is, in fact, a collection of memoranda, perhaps for future designers, comprehenders,) and though it may be open to the charge of one part contradicting another—for there are opposite sides to the great question of democracy, as to every great question—I feel the parts harmoniously blended in my own realization and convictions, and present them to be read only in such oneness, each page and each claim and assertion modified and temper'd by the others. Bear in mind, too, that they are not the result of studying up in political economy, but of the ordinary sense, observing, wandering among men, these States, these stirring years of war and peace. I will not gloss over the appalling dangers of universal suffrage in the United States. In fact, it is to admit and face these dangers I am writing. To him or her within whose thought rages the battle, advancing, retreating, between democracy's convictions, aspirations, and the people's crudeness, vice, caprices, I mainly write this essay. I shall use the words America and democracy as convertible terms. Not an ordinary one is the issue. The United States are destined either to surmount the gorgeous history of feudalism, or else prove the most tremendous failure of time. Not the least doubtful am I on any prospects of their material success. The triumphant future of their business, geographic and productive departments, on larger scales and in more varieties than ever, is certain. In those respects the republic must soon (if she does

not already) outstrip all examples hitherto afforded, and dominate the world.\*

Admitting all this, with the priceless value of our political institutions, general suffrage, (and fully acknowledging the latest, widest opening of the doors,) I say that, far deeper than these, what finally and only is to make of our western world a nation-

\*“From a territorial area of less than nine hundred thousand square miles, the Union has expanded into over four millions and a half—fifteen times larger than that of Great Britain and France combined—with a shore-line, including Alaska, equal to the entire circumference of the earth, and with a domain within these lines far wide than that of the Romans in their proudest days of conquest and renown. With a river, lake, and coastwise commerce estimated at over two thousand millions of dollars per year; with a railway traffic of four to six thousand millions per year, and the annual domestic exchanges of the country running up to nearly ten thousand millions per year; with over two thousand millions of dollars invested in manufacturing, mechanical, and mining industry; with over five hundred millions of acres of land in actual occupancy, valued, with their appurtenances, at over seven thousand millions of dollars; and producing annually crops valued at over three thousand millions of dollars; with a realm which, if the density of Belgium’s population were possible, would be vast enough to include all the present inhabitants of the world; and with equal rights guaranteed to even the poorest and humblest of our forty millions of people—we can, with a manly pride akin to that which distinguish’d the palmiest days of Rome, claim,” &c., &c., &c.—*Vice-President Colfax’s Speech, July 4, 1870.*

LATER—*London “Times,” (Weekly,) June 23, ’82.*

“The wonderful wealth-producing power of the United States defies and sets at naught the grave drawbacks of a mischievous protective tariff, and has already obliterated, almost wholly, the traces of the greatest of modern civil wars. What is especially remarkable in the present development of American energy and success is its wide and equable distribution. North and south, east and west, on the shores of the Atlantic and the Pacific, along the chain of the great lakes, in the valley of the Mississippi, and on the coasts of the gulf of Mexico, the creation of wealth and the increase of population are signally exhibited. It is quite true, as has been shown by the recent apportionment of population in the House of Representatives, that some sections of the Union have advanced, relatively to the rest, in an extraordinary and unexpected degree. But this does not imply that the States which have gain’d no additional representatives or have actually lost some have been stationary or have receded. The fact is that the present tide of prosperity has risen so high that it has overflow’d all barriers, and has fill’d up the back-waters, and establish’d something like an approach to uniform success.”

ality superior to any hither known, and outtopping the past, must be vigorous, yet unsuspected Literatures, perfect personalities and sociologies, original, transcendental, and expressing (what, in highest sense, are not yet express'd at all,) democracy and the modern. With these, and out of these, I promulgate new races of Teachers, and of perfect Women, indispensable to endow the birth-stock of a New World. For feudalism, caste, the ecclesiastic traditions, though palpably retreating from political institutions, still hold essentially, by their spirit, even in this country, entire possession of the more important fields, indeed the very subsoil, of education, and of social standards and literature.

I say that democracy can never prove itself beyond cavil, until it founds and luxuriantly grows its own forms of art, poems, schools, theology, displacing all that exists, or that has been produced anywhere in the past, under opposite influences. It is curious to me that while so many voices, pens, minds, in the press, lecture-rooms, in our Congress, &c., are discussing intellectual topics, pecuniary dangers, legislative problems, the suffrage, tariff and labor questions, and the various business and benevolent needs of America, with propositions, remedies, often worth deep attention, there is one need, a hiatus the profoundest, that no eye seems to perceive, no voice to state. Our fundamental want to-day in the United States, with closest, amplest reference to present conditions, and to the future, is of a class, and the clear idea of a class, of native authors, literatures, far different, far higher in grade than any yet known, sacerdotal, modern, fit to cope with our occasions, lands, permeating the whole mass of American mentality, taste, belief, breathing into it a new breath of life, giving it decision, affecting politics far more than the popular superficial suffrage, with results inside and underneath the elections of Presidents or Congresses—radiating, begetting appropriate teachers, schools, manners, and, as its grandest result, accomplishing, (what neither the schools nor the churches and their clergy have hitherto accomplish'd, and without which this nation will no more stand, permanently, soundly, than a house will stand without a

substratum,) a religious and moral character beneath the political and productive and intellectual bases of the States. For know you not, dear, earnest reader, that the people of our land may all read and write, and may all possess the right to vote—and yet the main things may be entirely lacking?—(and this to suggest them.)

View'd, to-day, from a point of view sufficiently over-arching, the problem of humanity all over the civilized world is social and religious, and is to be finally met and treated by literature. The priest departs, the divine literatus comes. Never was anything more wanted than, to-day, and here in the States, the poet of the modern is wanted, or the great literatus of the modern. At all times, perhaps, the central point in any nation, and that whence it is itself really sway'd the most, and whence it sways others, is its national literature, especially its archetypal poems. Above all previous lands, a great original literature is surely to become the justification and reliance, (in some respects the sole reliance,) of American democracy.

Few are aware how the great literature penetrates all, gives hue to all, shapes aggregates and individuals, and, after subtle ways, with irresistible power, constructs, sustains, demolishes at will. Why tower, in reminiscence, above all the nations of the earth, two special lands, petty in themselves, yet inexpressibly gigantic, beautiful, columnar? Immortal Judah lives, and Greece immortal lives, in a couple of poems.

Nearer than this. It is not generally realized, but it is true, as the genius of Greece, and all the sociology, personality, politics and religion of those wonderful states, resided in their literature or esthetics, that what was afterwards the main support of European chivalry, the feudal, ecclesiastical, dynastic world over there—forming its osseous structure, holding it together for hundreds, thousands of years, preserving its flesh and bloom, giving it form, decision, rounding it out, and so saturating it in the conscious and unconscious blood, breed, belief, and intuitions of men, that it still prevails powerful to this day, in defiance of the mighty changes of time—was its literature,

permeating to the very marrow, especially that major part, its enchanting songs, ballads, and poems.\*

To the ostent of the senses and eyes, I know, the influences which stamp the world's history are wars, uprisings or down-falls of dynasties, changeful movements of trade, important inventions, navigation, military or civil governments, advent of powerful personalities, conquerors, &c. These of course play their part; yet, it may be, a single new thought, imagination, abstract principle, even literary style, fit for the time, put in shape by some great literatus, and projected among mankind, may duly cause changes, growths, removals, greater than the longest and bloodiest war, or the most stupendous merely political, dynastic, or commercial overturn.

In short, as, though it may not be realized, it is strictly true, that a few first-class poets, philosophers, and authors, have substantially settled and given status to the entire religion, education, law, sociology, &c., of the hitherto civilized world, by tinging and often creating the atmospheres out of which they have arisen, such also must stamp, and more than ever stamp, the interior and real democratic construction of this American continent, to-day, and days to come. Remember also this fact of difference, that, while through the antique and through the mediæval ages, highest thoughts and ideals realized themselves, and their expression made its way by other arts, as much as, or even more than by, technical literature, (not open to the mass of persons, or even to the majority of eminent persons,) such literature in our day and for current purposes, is not only more eligible than all the other arts put together, but has become the

\*See, for hereditaments, specimens, Walter Scott's *Border Minstrelsy*, Percy's collection, Ellis's early English *Metrical Romances*, the European continental poems of Walter of Aquitania, and the *Nibelungen*, of pagan stock, but monkish-feudal redaction; the history of the *Troubadours*, by Fauriel; even the far-back cumbrous old Hindu epics, as indicating the Asian eggs out of which European chivalry was hatch'd; Ticknor's chapters on the *Cid*, and on the Spanish poems and poets of Calderon's time. Then always, and, of course, as the superbest poetic culmination-expression of feudalism, the Shakspearean dramas, in the attitudes, dialogue, characters, &c., of the princes, lords and gentlemen, the pervading atmosphere, the implied and express'd standard of manners, the high port and proud stomach, the regal embroidery of style, &c.



only general means of morally influencing the world. Painting, sculpture, and the dramatic theatre, it would seem, no longer play an indispensable or even important part in the workings and mediumship of intellect, utility, or even high esthetics. Architecture remains, doubtless with capacities, and a real future. Then music, the combiner, nothing more spiritual, nothing more sensuous, a god, yet completely human, advances, prevails, holds highest place; supplying in certain wants and quarters what nothing else could supply. Yet in the civilization of to-day it is undeniable that, over all the arts, literature dominates, serves beyond all—shapes the character of church and school—or, at any rate, is capable of doing so. Including the literature of science, its scope is indeed unparallel'd.

Before proceeding further, it were perhaps well to discriminate on certain points. Literature tills its crops in many fields, and some may flourish, while others lag. What I say in these *Vistas* has its main bearing on imaginative literature, especially poetry, the stock of all. In the department of science, and the specialty of journalism, there appear, in these States, promises, perhaps fulfilments, of highest earnestness, reality, and life. These, of course, are modern. But in the region of imaginative, spinal and essential attributes, something equivalent to creation is, for our age and lands, imperatively demanded. For not only is it not enough that the new blood, new frame of democracy shall be vivified and held together merely by political means, superficial suffrage, legislation, &c., but it is clear to me that, unless it goes deeper, gets at least as firm and as warm a hold in men's hearts, emotions and belief, as, in their days, feudalism or ecclesiasticism, and inaugurates its own perennial sources, welling from the centre forever, its strength will be defective, its growth doubtful, and its main charm wanting. I suggest, therefore, the possibility, should some two or three really original American poets, (perhaps artists or lecturers,) arise, mounting the horizon like planets, stars of the first magnitude, that, from their eminence, fusing contributions, races, far localities, &c., together, they would give more compaction and more moral identity, (the quality to-day most needed,) to these States, than all its Constitutions, legislative and judicial ties, and all its hith-

erto political, warlike, or materialistic experiences. As, for instance, there could hardly happen anything that would more serve the States, with all their variety of origins, their diverse climes, cities, standards, &c., than possessing an aggregate of heroes, characters, exploits, sufferings, prosperity or misfortune, glory or disgrace, common to all, typical of all—no less, but even greater would it be to possess the aggregation of a cluster of mighty poets, artists, teachers, fit for us, national expressers, comprehending and effusing for the men and women of the States, what is universal, native, common to all, inland and seaboard, northern and southern. The historians say of ancient Greece, with her ever-jealous autonomies, cities, and states, that the only positive unity she ever own'd or receiv'd, was the sad unity of a common subjection, at the last, to foreign conquerors. Subjection, aggregation of that sort, is impossible to America; but the fear of conflicting and irreconcilable interiors, and the lack of a common skeleton, knitting all close, continually haunts me. Or, if it does not, nothing is plainer than the need, a long period to come, of a fusion of the States into the only reliable identity, the moral and artistic one. For, I say, the true nationality of the States, the genuine union, when we come to a mortal crisis, is, and is to be, after all, neither the written law, nor, (as is generally supposed,) either self-interest, or common pecuniary or material objects—but the fervid and tremendous IDEA, melting everything else with resistless heat, and solving all lesser and definite distinctions in vast, indefinite, spiritual, emotional power.

It may be claim'd (and I admit the weight of the claim,) that common and general worldly prosperity, and a populace well-to-do, and with all life's material comforts, is the main thing, and is enough. It may be argued that our republic is, in performance, really enacting to-day the grandest arts, poems, &c., by beating up the wilderness into fertile farms, and in her railroads, ships, machinery, &c. And it may be ask'd, Are these not better, indeed, for America, than any utterances even of greatest rhapsode, artist, or literatus?

I too hail those achievements with pride and joy; then answer that the soul of man will not with such only—nay not

with such at all—be finally satisfied; but needs what, (standing on these and on all things, as the feet stand on the ground,) is address'd to the loftiest, to itself alone.

Out of such considerations, such truths, arises for treatment in these Vistas the important question of character, of an American stock-personality, with literatures and arts for outlets and return-expressions, and, of course, to correspond, within outlines common to all. To these, the main affair, the thinkers of the United States, in general so acute, have either given feeblest attention, or have remain'd, and remain, in a state of somnolence.

For my part, I would alarm and caution even the political and business reader, and to the utmost extent, against the prevailing delusion that the establishment of free political institutions, and plentiful intellectual smartness, with general good order, physical plenty, industry, &c., (desirable and precious advantages as they all are,) do, of themselves, determine and yield to our experiment of democracy the fruitage of success. With such advantages at present fully, or almost fully, possess'd—the Union just issued, victorious, from the struggle with the only foes it need ever fear, namely, those within itself, the interior ones,) and with unprecedented materialistic advancement—society, in these States, is canker'd, crude, superstitious, and rotten. Political, or law-made society is, and private, or voluntary society, is also. In any vigor, the element of the moral conscience, the most important, the verteber to State or man, seems to me either entirely lacking, or seriously enfeebled or ungrown.

I say we had best look our times and lands searchingly in the face, like a physician diagnosing some deep disease. Never was there, perhaps, more hollowness at heart than at present, and here in the United States. Genuine belief seems to have left us. The underlying principles of the States are not honestly believ'd in, (for all this hectic glow, and these melo-dramatic screamings,) nor is humanity itself believ'd in. What penetrating eye does not everywhere see through the mask? The spectacle is appalling. We live in an atmosphere of hypocrisy throughout. The men believe not in the women, nor the women in the men. A scornful superciliousness rules in literature. The aim of all the

*littérateurs* is to find something to make fun of. A lot of churches, sects, &c., the most dismal phantasms I know, usurp the name of religion. Conversation is a mass of badinage. From deceit in the spirit, the mother of all false deeds, the offspring is already incalculable. An acute and candid person, in the revenue department in Washington, who is led by the course of his employment to regularly visit the cities, north, south and west, to investigate frauds, has talk'd much with me about his discoveries. The depravity of the business classes of our country is not less than has been supposed, but infinitely greater. The official services of America, national, state, and municipal, in all their branches and departments, except the judiciary, are saturated in corruption, bribery, falsehood, mal-administration; and the judiciary is tainted. The great cities reek with respectable as much as non-respectable robbery and scoundrelism. In fashionable life, flippancy, tepid amours, weak infidelism, small aims, or no aims at all, only to kill time. In business, (this all-devouring modern word, business,) the one sole object is, by any means, pecuniary gain. The magician's serpent in the fable ate up all the other serpents; and money-making is our magician's serpent, remaining to-day sole master of the field. The best class we show, is but a mob of fashionably dress'd speculators and vulgarians. True, indeed, behind this fantastic farce, enacted on the visible stage of society, solid things and stupendous labors are to be discover'd, existing crudely and going on in the background, to advance and tell themselves in time. Yet the truths are none the less terrible. I say that our New World democracy, however great a success in uplifting the masses out of their sloughs, in materialistic development, products, and in a certain highly-deceptive superficial popular intellectuality, is, so far, an almost complete failure in its social aspects, and in really grand religious, moral, literary, and esthetic results. In vain do we march with unprecedented strides to empire so colossal, outvying the antique, beyond Alexander's, beyond the proudest sway of Rome. In vain have we annex'd Texas, California, Alaska, and reach north for Canada and south for Cuba. It is as if we were somehow being endow'd with a vast and more and more thoroughly-appointed body, and then left with little or no soul.

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Let me illustrate further, as I write, with current observations, localities, &c. The subject is important, and will bear repetition. After an absence, I am now again (September, 1870) in New York city and Brooklyn, on a few weeks' vacation. The splendor, picturesqueness, and oceanic amplitude and rush of these great cities, the unsurpass'd situation, rivers and bay, sparkling sea-tides, costly and lofty new buildings, façades of marble and iron, of original grandeur and elegance of design, with the masses of gay color, the preponderance of white and blue, the flags flying, the endless ships, the tumultuous streets, Broadway, the heavy, low, musical roar, hardly ever intermitted, even at night; the jobbers' houses, the rich shops, the wharves, the great Central Park, and the Brooklyn Park of hills, (as I wander among them this beautiful fall weather, musing, watching, absorbing)—the assemblages of the citizens in their groups, conversations, trades, evening amusements, or along the by-quarters—these, I say, and the like of these, completely satisfy my senses of power, fulness, motion, &c., and give me, through such senses and appetites, and through my esthetic conscience, a continued exaltation and absolute fulfilment. Always and more and more, as I cross the East and North rivers, the ferries, or with the pilots in their pilot-houses, or pass an hour in Wall street, or the gold exchange, I realize, (if we must admit such partialisms,) that not Nature alone is great in her fields of freedom and the open air, in her storms, the shows of night and day, the mountains, forests, seas—but in the artificial, the work of man too is equally great—in this profusion of teeming humanity—in these ingenuities, streets, goods, houses, ships—these hurrying, feverish, electric crowds of men, their complicated business genius, (not least among the geniuses,) and all this might, many-threaded wealth and industry concentrated here.

But sternly discarding, shutting our eyes to the glow and grandeur of the general superficial effect, coming down to what is of the only real importance, Personalities, and examining minutely, we question, we ask, Are there, indeed, *men* here worthy the name? Are there athletes? Are there perfect women, to match the generous material luxuriance? Is there a pervad-

ing atmosphere of beautiful manners? Are there crops of fine youths, and majestic old persons? Are there arts worthy freedom and a rich people? Is there a great moral and religious civilization—the only justification of a great material one? Confess that to severe eyes, using the moral microscope upon humanity, a sort of dry and flat Sahara appears, these cities, crowded with petty grotesques, malformations, phantoms, playing meaningless antics. Confess that everywhere, in shop, street, church, theatre, bar-room, official chair, are pervading flippancy and vulgarity, low cunning, infidelity—everywhere the youth puny, impudent, foppish, prematurely ripe—everywhere an abnormal libidinousness, unhealthy forms, male, female, painted, padded, dyed, chignon'd, muddy complexions, bad blood, the capacity for good motherhood deceasing or deceas'd, shallow notions of beauty, with a range of manners, or rather lack of manners, (considering the advantages enjoy'd,) probably the meanest to be seen in the world.\*

Of all this, and these lamentable conditions, to breathe into them the breath recuperative of sane and heroic life, I say a new founded literature, not merely to copy and reflect existing surfaces, or pander to what is called taste—not only to amuse, pass away time, celebrate the beautiful, the refined, the past, or exhibit technical, rhythmic, or grammatical dexterity—but a literature underlying life, religious, consistent with science, handling the elements and forces with competent power, teaching and training men—and, as perhaps the most precious of its re-

\*Of these rapidly-sketch'd hiatuses, the two which seem to me most serious are, for one, the condition, absence, or perhaps the singular abeyance, of moral conscientious fibre all through American society; and, for another, the appalling depletion of women in their powers of sane athletic maternity, their crowning attribute, and ever making the woman, in loftiest spheres, superior to the man.

I have sometimes thought, indeed, that the sole avenue and means of a reconstructed sociology depended, primarily, on a new birth, elevation, expansion, invigoration of woman, affording, for races to come, (as the conditions that antedate birth are indispensable,) a perfect motherhood. Great, great, indeed, far greater than they know, is the sphere of women. But doubtless the question of such new sociology all goes together, includes many varied and complex influences and premises, and the man as well as the woman, and the woman as well as the man.

sults, achieving the entire redemption of woman out of these incredible holds and webs of silliness, millinery, and every kind of dyspeptic depletion—and thus insuring to the States a strong and sweet Female Race, a race of perfect Mothers—is what is needed.

And now, in the full conception of these fact and points, and all that they infer, pro and con—with yet unshaken faith in the elements of the American masses, the composites, of both sexes, and even consider'd as individuals—and ever recognizing in them the broadest bases of the best literary and esthetic appreciation—I proceed with my speculations, Vistas.

First, let us see what we can make out of a brief, general, sentimental consideration of political democracy, and whence it has arisen, with regard to some of its current features, as an aggregate, and as the basic structure of our future literature and authorship. We shall, it is true, quickly and continually find the origin-idea of the singleness of man, individualism, asserting itself, and cropping forth, even from the opposite ideas. But the mass, or lump character, for imperative reasons, is to be ever carefully weigh'd, borne in mind, and provided for. Only from it, and from its proper regulation and potency, comes the other, comes the chance of individualism. The two are contradictory, but our task is to reconcile them.\*

The political history of the past may be summ'd up as having grown out of what underlies the words, order, safety, caste, and especially out of the need of some prompt deciding authority, and of cohesion at all cost. Leaping time, we come to the period within the memory of people now living, when, as from some lair where they had slumber'd long, accumulating wrath,

\*The question hinted here is one which time only can answer. Must not the virtue of modern Individualism, continually enlarging, usurping all, seriously affect, perhaps keep down entirely, in America, the like of the ancient virtue of Patriotism, the fervid and absorbing love of general country? I have no doubt myself that the two will merge, and will mutually profit and brace each other, and that from them a greater product, a third, will arise. But I feel that at present they and their oppositions form a serious problem and paradox in the United States.

sprang up and are yet active, (1790, and on even to the present, 1870,) those noisy eruptions, destructive iconoclasm, a fierce sense of wrongs, amid which moves the form, well known in modern history, in the old world, stain'd with much blood, and mark'd by savage reactionary clamors and demands. These bear, mostly, as on one inclosing point of need.

For after the rest is said—after the many time-honor'd and really true things for subordination, experience, rights of property, &c., have been listen'd to and acquiesced in—after the valuable and well-settled statement of our duties and relations in society is thoroughly conn'd over and exhausted—it remains to bring forward and modify everything else with the idea of that Something a man is, (last precious consolation of the drudging poor,) standing apart from all else, divine in his own right, and a woman in hers, sole and untouchable by any canons of authority, or any rule derived from precedent, state-safety, the acts of legislatures, or even from what is called religion, modesty, or art. The radiation of this truth is the key of the most significant doings of our immediately preceding three centuries, and has been the political genesis and life of America. Advancing visibly, it still more advances invisibly. Underneath the fluctuations of the expressions of society, as well as the movements of the politics of the leading nations of the world, we see steadily pressing ahead and strengthening itself, even in the midst of immense tendencies toward aggregation, this image of completeness in separatism, of individual personal dignity, of a single person, either male or female, characterized in the main, not from extrinsic acquirements or position, but in the pride of himself or herself alone; and, as an eventual conclusion and summing up, (or else the entire scheme of things is aimless, a cheat, a crash,) the simple idea that the last, best dependence is to be upon humanity itself, and its own inherent, normal, full-grown qualities, without any superstitious support whatever. This idea of perfect individualism it is indeed that deepest tinges and gives character to the idea of the aggregate. For it is mainly or altogether to serve independent separatism that we favor a strong generalization, consolidation. As it is to give the best vitality and freedom to the rights of the States,



(every bit as important as the right of nationality, the union,) that we insist on the identity of the Union at all hazards.

The purpose of democracy—supplanting old belief in the necessary absoluteness of establish'd dynastic rulership, temporal, ecclesiastical, and scholastic, as furnishing the only security against chaos, crime, and ignorance—is, through many transmigrations, and amid endless ridicules—arguments, and ostensible failures, to illustrate, at all hazards, this doctrine or theory that man, properly train'd in sanest, highest freedom, may and must become a law, and series of laws, unto himself, surrounding and providing for, not only his own personal control, but all his relations to other individuals, and to the State; and that, while other theories, as in the past histories of nations, have proved wise enough, and indispensable perhaps for their conditions, *this*, as matters now stand in our civilized world, is the only scheme worth working from, as warranting results like those of Nature's laws, reliable, when once establish'd, to carry on themselves.

The argument of the matter is extensive, and, we admit, by no means all on one side. What we shall offer will be far, far from sufficient. But while leaving unsaid much that should properly even prepare the way for the treatment of this many-sided question of political liberty, equality, or republicanism—leaving the whole history and consideration of the feudal plan and its products, embodying humanity, its politics and civilization, through the retrospect of past time, (which plan and products, indeed, make up all of the past, and a large part of the present)—leaving unanswer'd, at least by any specific and local answer, many a well-wrought argument and instance, and many a conscientious declamatory cry and warning—as, very lately, from an eminent and venerable person abroad\*—things, problems, full

\*“SHOOTING NIAGARA.”—I was at first roused to much anger and abuse by this essay from Mr. Carlyle, so insulting to the theory of America—but happening to think afterwards how I had more than once been in the like mood, during which his essay was evidently cast, and seen persons and things in the same light, (indeed some might say there are signs of the same feeling in these Vistas)—I have since read it again, not only as a study, expressing as it does certain judgments from the highest feudal point of view, but have read it with respect as coming from an earnest soul, and as contributing certain sharp-cutting metallic grains, which, if not gold or silver, may be good hard, honest iron.

of doubt, dread, suspense, (not new to me, but old occupiers of many an anxious hour in city's din, or night's silence,) we still may give a page or so, whose drift is opportune. Time alone can finally answer these things. But as a substitute in passing, let us, even if fragmentarily, throw forth a short direct or indirect suggestion of the premises of that other plan, in the new spirit, under the new forms, started here in our America.

As to the political section of Democracy, which introduces and breaks ground for further and vaster sections, few probably are the minds, even in these republican States, that fully comprehend the aptness of that phrase, "THE GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE, BY THE PEOPLE, FOR THE PEOPLE," which we inherit from the lips of Abraham Lincoln; a formula whose verbal shape is homely wit, but whose scope includes both the totality and all minutiae of the lesson.

The People! Like our huge earth itself, which, to ordinary scansion, is full of vulgar contradictions and offence, man, viewed in the lump, displeases, and is a constant puzzle and affront to the merely educated classes. The rare, cosmical, artist-mind, lit with the Infinite, alone confronts his manifold and oceanic qualities—but taste, intelligence and culture, (so-called,) have been against the masses and remain so. There is plenty of glamour about the most damnable crimes and hog-gish meannesses, special and general, of the feudal and dynastic world over there with its *personnel* of lords and queens and courts, so well-dress'd and so handsome. But the People are ungrammatical, untidy, and their sins gaunt and ill-bred.

Literature, strictly consider'd, has never recognized the People, and, whatever may be said, does not to-day. Speaking generally, the tendencies of literature, as hitherto pursued, have been to make mostly critical and querulous men. It seems as if, so far, there were some natural repugnance between a literary and professional life, and the rude rank spirit of the democracies. There is, in later literature, a treatment of benevolence, a charity business, rife enough it is true; but I know nothing more rare, even in this country, than a fit scientific estimate and

reverent appreciation of the People—of their measureless wealth of latent power and capacity, their vast, artistic contrasts of lights and shades—with, in America, their entire reliability in emergencies, and a certain breadth of historic grandeur, of peace or war, far surpassing all the vaunted samples of book-heroes, or any *haut ton* coteries, in all the records of the world.

The movements of the late secession war, and their results, to any sense that studies well and comprehends them, show that popular democracy, whatever its faults and dangers, practically justifies itself beyond the proudest claims and wildest hopes of its enthusiasts. Probably no future age can know, but I well know, how the gist of this fiercest and most resolute of the world's war-like contentions resided exclusively in the unnamed, unknown rank and file; and how the brunt of its labor of death was, to all essential purposes, volunteer'd. The People, of their own choice, fighting, dying for their own idea, insolently attack'd by the secession-slave-power, and its very existence imperil'd. Descending to detail, entering any of the armies, and mixing with the private soldiers, we see and have seen august spectacles. We have seen the alacrity with which the American-born populace, the peaceablest and most good-natured race in the world, and the most personally independent and intelligent, and the least fitted to submit to the irksomeness and exasperation of regimental discipline, sprang, at the first tap of the drum, to arms—not for gain, nor even glory, nor to repel invasion—but for an emblem, a mere abstraction—for the life, *the safety of the flag*. We have seen the unequal'd docility and obedience of these soldiers. We have seen them tried long and long by hopelessness, mismanagement, and by defeat; have seen the incredible slaughter toward or through which the armies, (as at first Fredericksburg, and afterward at the Wilderness,) still unhesitatingly obey'd orders to advance. We have seen them in trench, or crouching behind breastwork, or tramping in deep mud, or amid pouring rain or thick-falling snow, or under forced marches in hottest summer (as on the road to get to Gettysburg)—vast suffocating swarms, divisions,

corps, with every single man so grimed and black with sweat and dust, his own mother would not have known him—his clothes all dirty, stain'd and torn, with sour, accumulated sweat for perfume—many a comrade, perhaps a brother, sun-struck, staggering out, dying, by the roadside, of exhaustion—yet the great bulk bearing steadily on, cheery enough, hollow-bellied from hunger, but sinewy with unconquerable resolution.

We have seen this race proved by wholesale by drearier, yet more fearful tests—the wound, the amputation, the shatter'd face or limb, the slow hot fever, long impatient anchorage in bed, and all the forms of maiming, operation and disease. Alas! America have we seen, though only in her early youth, already to hospital brought. There have we watch'd these soldiers, many of them only boys in years—mark'd their decorum, their religious nature and fortitude, and their sweet affection. Wholesale, truly. For at the front, and through the camps, in countless tents, stood the regimental, brigade and division hospitals; while everywhere amid the land, in or near cities, rose clusters of huge, white-wash'd, crowded, one-story wooden barracks; and there ruled agony with bitter scourge, yet seldom brought a cry; and there stalk'd death by day and night along the narrow aisles between the rows of cots, or by the blankets on the ground, and touch'd lightly many a poor sufferer, often with blessed, welcome touch.

I know not whether I shall be understood, but I realize that it is finally from what I learn'd personally mixing in such scenes that I am now penning these pages. One night in the gloomiest period of the war, in the Patent office hospital in Washington city, as I stood by the bedside of a Pennsylvania soldier, who lay, conscious of quick approaching death, yet perfectly calm, and with noble, spiritual manner, the veteran surgeon, turning aside, said to me, that though he had witness'd many, many deaths of soldiers, and had been a worker at Bull Run, Antietam, Fredericksburg, &c., he had not seen yet the first case of man or boy that met the approach of dissolution with cowardly qualms or terror. My own observation fully bears out the remark.

What have we here, if not, towering above all talk and argument, the plentifully-supplied, last-needed proof of democracy,

in its personalities? Curiously enough, too, the proof on this point comes, I should say, every bit as much from the south, as from the north. Although I have spoken only of the latter, yet I deliberately include all. Grand, common stock! to me the accomplish'd and convincing growth, prophetic of the future; proof undeniable to sharpest sense, of perfect beauty, tenderness and pluck, that never feudal lord, nor Greek, nor Roman breed, yet rival'd. Let no tongue ever speak in disparagement of the American races, north or south, to one who has been through the war in the great army hospitals.

Meantime, general humanity, (for to that we return, as, for our purposes, what it really is, to bear in mind,) has always, in every department, been full of perverse maleficence, and is so yet. In downcast hours the soul thinks it always will be—but soon recovers from such sickly moods. I myself see clearly enough the crude, defective streaks in all the strata of the common people; the specimens and vast collections of the ignorant, the credulous, the unfit and uncouth, the incapable, and the very low and poor. The eminent person just mention'd sneeringly asks whether we expect to elevate and improve a nation's politics by absorbing such morbid collections and qualities therein. The point is a formidable one, and there will doubtless always be numbers of solid and reflective citizens who will never get over it. Our answer is general, and is involved in the scope and letter of this essay. We believe the ulterior object of political and all other government, (having, of course, provided for the police, the safety of life, property, and for the basic statute and common law, and their administration, always first in order,) to be among the rest, not merely to rule, to repress disorder, &c., but to develop, to open up to cultivation, to encourage the possibilities of all beneficent and manly outcroppage, and of that aspiration for independence, and the pride and self-respect latent in all characters. (Or, if there be exceptions, we cannot, fixing our eyes on them alone, make theirs the rule for all.)

I say the mission of government, henceforth, in civilized lands, is not repression alone, and not authority alone, not even of law, nor by that favorite standard of the eminent writer, the rule of

the best men, the born heroes and captains of the race, (as if such ever, or one time out of a hundred, get into the big places, elective or dynastic)—but higher than the highest arbitrary rule, to train communities through all their grades, beginning with individuals and ending there again, to rule themselves. What Christ appear'd for in the moral-spiritual field for human-kind, namely, that in respect to the absolute soul, there is in the possession of such by each single individual, something so transcendent, so incapable of gradations, (like life,) that, to that extent, it places all beings on a common level, utterly regardless of the distinctions of intellect, virtue, station, or any height or lowliness whatever—is tallied in like manner, in this other field, by democracy's rule that men, the nation, as a common aggregate of living identities, affording in each a separate and complete subject for freedom, worldly thrift and happiness, and for a fair chance for growth, and for protection in citizenship, &c., must, to the political extent of the suffrage or vote, if no further, be placed, in each and in the whole, on one broad, primary, universal, common platform.

The purpose is not altogether direct; perhaps it is more indirect. For it is not that democracy is of exhaustive account, in itself. Perhaps, indeed, it is, (like Nature,) of no account in itself. It is that, as we see, it is the best, perhaps only, fit and full means, formulator, general caller-forth, trainer, for the million, not for grand material personalities only, but for immortal souls. To be a voter with the rest is not so much; and this, like every institute, will have its imperfections. But to become an enfranchised man, and now, impediments removed, to stand and start without humiliation, and equal with the rest; to commence, or have the road clear'd to commence, the grand experiment of development, whose end, (perhaps requiring several generations,) may be the forming of a full-grown man or woman—that *is* something. To ballast the State is also secured, and in our times is to be secured, in no other way.

We do not, (at any rate I do not,) put it either on the ground that the People, the masses, even the best of them, are, in their latent or exhibited qualities, essentially sensible and good—nor on the ground of their rights; but that good or bad, rights or no

rights, the democratic formula is the only safe and preservative one for coming times. We endow the masses with the suffrage for their own sake, no doubt; then, perhaps still more, from another point of view, for community's sake. Leaving the rest to the sentimentalists, we present freedom as sufficient in its scientific aspect, cold as ice, reasoning, deductive, clear and passionless as crystal.

Democracy too is law, and of the strictest, amplest kind. Many suppose, (and often in its own ranks the error,) that it means a throwing aside of law, and running riot. But, briefly, it is the superior law, not alone that of physical force, the body, which, adding to, it supersedes with that of the spirit. Law is the unshakable order of the universe forever; and the law over all, and law of laws, is the law of successions; that of the superior law, in time, gradually supplanting and overwhelming the inferior one. (While, for myself, I would cheerfully agree—first covenanting that the formative tendencies shall be administer'd in favor, or at least not against it, and that this reservation be closely construed—that until the individual or community show due signs, or be so minor and fractional as not to endanger the State, the condition of authoritative tutelage may continue, and self-government must abide its time.) Nor is the esthetic point, always an important one, without fascination for highest aiming souls. The common ambition strains for elevations, to become some privileged exclusive. The master sees greatness and health in being part of the mass; nothing will do as well as common ground. Would you have in yourself the divine, vast, general law? Then merge yourself in it.

And, topping democracy, this most alluring record, that it alone can bind, and ever seeks to bind, all nations, all men, of however various and distant lands, into a brotherhood, a family. It is the old, yet ever-modern dream of earth, out of her eldest and her youngest, her fond philosophers and poets. Not that half only, individualism, which isolates. There is another half, which is adhesiveness or love, that fuses, ties and aggregates, making the races comrades, and fraternizing all. Both are to be vitalized by religion, (sole worthiest elevator of man or State,) breathing into the proud, material tissues, the breath of

life. For I say at the core of democracy, finally, is the religious element. All the religions, old and new, are there. Nor may the scheme step forth, clothed in resplendent beauty and command, till these, bearing the best, the latest fruit, the spiritual, shall fully appear.

A portion of our pages we might indite with reference toward Europe, especially the British part of it, more than our own land, perhaps not absolutely needed for the home reader. But the whole question hangs together, and fastens and links all peoples. The liberalist of to-day has this advantage over antique or medieval times, that his doctrine seeks not only to individualize but to universalize. The great word Solidarity has arisen. Of all dangers to a nation, as things exist in our day, there can be no greater one than having certain portions of the people set off from the rest by a line drawn—they not privileged as others, but degraded, humiliated, made of no account. Much quackery teems, of course, even on democracy's side, yet does not really affect the orbic quality of the matter. To work in, if we may so term it, and justify God, his divine aggregate, the People, (or, the veritable horn'd and sharp-tail'd Devil, *his* aggregate, if there be who convulsively insist upon it)—this, I say, is what democracy is for; and this is what our America means, and is doing—may I not say, has done? If not, she means nothing more, and does nothing more, than any other land. And as, by virtue of its kosmical, antiseptic power, Nature's stomach is fully strong enough not only to digest the morbid matter always presented, not to be turn'd aside, and perhaps, indeed, intuitively gravitating thither—but even to change such contributions into nutriment for highest use and life—so American democracy's. That is the lesson we, these days, send over to European lands by every western breeze.

And, truly, whatever may be said in the way of abstract argument, for or against the theory of a wider democratizing of institutions in any civilized country, much trouble might well be saved to all European lands by recognizing this palpable fact, (for a palpable fact it is,) that some form of such democ-



ratizing is about the only resource now left. *That*, or chronic dissatisfaction continued, mutterings which grow annually louder and louder, till, in due course, and pretty swiftly in most cases, the inevitable crisis, crash, dynastic ruin. Anything worthy to be call'd statesmanship in the Old World, I should say, among the advanced students, adepts, or men of any brains, does not debate to-day whether to hold on, attempting to lean back and monarchize, or to look forward and democratize—but *how*, and in what degree and part, most prudently to democratize.

The eager and often inconsiderate appeals of reformers and revolutionists are indispensable, to counterbalance the inertness and fossilism making so large a part of human institutions. The latter will always take care of themselves—the danger being that they rapidly tend to ossify us. The former is to be treated with indulgence, and even with respect. As circulation to air, so is agitation and a plentiful degree of speculative license to political and moral sanity. Indirectly, but surely, goodness, virtue, law, (of the very best,) follow freedom. These, to democracy, are what the keel is to the ship, or saltness to the ocean.

The true gravitation-hold of liberalism in the United States will be a more universal ownership of property, general homesteads, general comfort—a vast, intertwining reticulation of wealth. As the human frame, or, indeed, any object in this manifold universe, is best kept together by the simple miracle of its own cohesion, and the necessity, exercise and profit thereof, so a great and varied nationality, occupying millions of square miles, were firmest held and knit by the principle of the safety and endurance of the aggregate of its middling property owners. So that, from another point of view, ungracious as it may sound, and a paradox after what we have been saying, democracy looks with suspicious, ill-satisfied eye upon the very poor, the ignorant, and on those out of business. She asks for men and women with occupations, well-off, owners of houses and acres, and with cash in the bank—and with some cravings for

literature, too; and must have them, and hastens to make them. Luckily, the seed is already well-sown, and has taken ineradicable root.\*

Huge and mighty are our days, our republican lands—and most in their rapid shiftings, their changes, all in the interest of the cause. As I write this particular passage, (November, 1868,) the din of disputation rages around me. Acrid the temper of the parties, vital the pending questions. Congress convenes; the President sends his message; reconstruction is still in abeyance; the nomination and the contest for the twenty-first Presidential draw close, with loudest threat and bustle. Of these, and all the like of these, the eventuations I know not; but well I know that behind them, and whatever their eventuations, the vital things remain safe and certain, and all the needed work goes on. Time, with soon or later superciliousness, disposes of Presidents, Congressmen, party platforms, and such. Anon, it clears the stage of each and any mortal shred that thinks itself so potent to its day; and at and after which, (with precious, golden exceptions once or twice in a century,) all that relates to sir potency is flung to moulder in a burial-vault, and no one bothers himself the least bit about it afterward. But the People ever remain, tendencies continue, and all the idiocratic transfers in unbroken chain go on.

In a few years the dominion-heart of America will be far inland, toward the West. Our future national capital may not be where the present one is. It is possible, nay likely, that in less than fifty years, it will migrate a thousand or two miles, will be

\*For fear of mistake, I may as well distinctly specify, as cheerfully included in the model and standard of these Vistas, a practical, stirring, worldly, money-making, even materialistic character. It is undeniable that our farms, stores, offices, dry-goods, coal and groceries, enginery, cash-accounts, trades, earnings, markets, &c., should be attended to in earnest, and actively pursued, just as if they had a real and permanent existence. I perceive clearly that the extreme business energy, and this almost maniacal appetite for wealth prevalent in the United States, are parts of amelioration and progress, indispensably needed to prepare the very results I demand. My theory includes riches, and the getting of riches, and the amplest products, power, activity, inventions, movements, &c. Upon them, as upon substrata, I raise the edifice design'd in these Vistas.

re-founded, and every thing belonging to it made on a different plan, original, far more superb. The main social, political, spine-character of the States will probably run along the Ohio, Missouri and Mississippi rivers, and west and north of them, including Canada. Those regions, with the group of powerful brothers toward the Pacific, (destined to the mastership of that sea and its countless paradises of islands,) will compact and settle the traits of America, with all the old retain'd, but more expanded, grafted on newer, hardier, purely native stock. A giant growth, composite from the rest, getting their contribution, absorbing it, to make it more illustrious. From the north, intellect, the sun of things, also the idea of unswayable justice, anchor amid the last, the wildest tempests. From the south the living soul, the animus of good and bad, haughtily admitting no demonstration but its own. While from the west itself comes solid personality, with blood and brawn, and the deep quality of all-accepting fusion.

Political democracy, as it exists and practically works in America, with all its threatening evils, supplies a training-school for making first-class men. It is life's gymnasium, not of good only, but of all. We try often, though we fall back often. A brave delight, fit for freedom's athletes, fills these arenas, and fully satisfies, out of the action in them, irrespective of success. Whatever we do not attain, we at any rate attain the experiences of the fight, the hardening of the strong campaign, and throb with currents of attempt at least. Time is ample. Let the victors come after us. Not for nothing does evil play its part among us. Judging from the main portions of the history of the world, so far, justice is always in jeopardy, peace walks amid hourly pitfalls, and of slavery, misery, meanness, the craft of tyrants and the credulity of the populace, in some of their protean forms, no voice can at any time say, They are not. The clouds break a little, and the sun shines out—but soon and certain the lowering darkness falls again, as if to last forever. Yet is there an immortal courage and prophecy in every sane soul that cannot, must not, under any circumstances, capitulate. *Vive*, the attack—the perennial assault! *Vive*, the unpopular cause—the spirit that

audaciously aims—the never-abandon'd efforts, pursued the same amid opposing proofs and precedents.

Once, before the war, (Alas! I dare not say how many times the mood has come!) I, too, was fill'd with doubt and gloom. A foreigner, an acute and good man, had impressively said to me, that day—putting in form, indeed, my own observations: “I have travel'd much in the United States, and watch'd their politicians, and listen'd to the speeches of the candidates, and read the journals, and gone into the public houses, and heard the unguarded talk of men. And I have found your vaunted America honeycomb'd from top to toe with infidelism, even to itself and its own programme. I have mark'd the brazen hell-faces of secession and slavery gazing defiantly from all the windows and doorways. I have everywhere found, primarily, thieves and scalliwags arranging the nominations to offices, and sometimes filling the offices themselves. I have found the north just as full of bad stuff as the south. Of the holders of public office in the Nation or the States or their municipalities, I have found that not one in a hundred has been chosen by any spontaneous selection of the outsiders, the people, but all have been nominated and put through by little or large caucuses of the politicians, and have got in by corrupt rings and electioneering, not capacity or desert. I have noticed how the millions of sturdy farmers and mechanics are thus the helpless supple-jacks of comparatively few politicians. And I have noticed more and more, the alarming spectacle of parties usurping the government, and openly and shamelessly wielding it for party purposes.”

Sad, serious, deep truths. Yet are there other, still deeper, amply confronting, dominating truths. Over those politicians and great and little rings, and over all their insolence and wiles, and over the powerfulest parties, looms a power, too sluggish maybe, but ever holding decisions and decrees in hand, ready, with stern process, to execute them as soon as plainly needed—and at times, indeed, summarily crushing to atoms the mightiest parties, even in the hour of their pride.

In saner hours far different are the amounts of these things from what, at first sight, they appear. Though it is no doubt im-

portant who is elected governor, mayor, or legislator, (and full of dismay when incompetent or vile ones get elected, as they sometimes do,) there are other, quieter contingencies, infinitely more important. Shams, &c., will always be the show, like ocean's scum; enough, if waters deep and clear make up the rest. Enough, that while the piled embroider'd shoddy gaud and fraud spreads to the superficial eye, the hidden warp and weft are genuine, and will wear forever. Enough, in short, that the race, the land which could raise such as the late rebellion, could also put it down.

The average man of a land at last only is important. He, in these States, remains immortal owner and boss, deriving good uses, somehow, out of any sort of servant in office, even the basest; (certain universal requisites, and their settled regularity and protection, being first secured,) a nation like ours, in a sort of geological formation state, trying continually new experiments, choosing new delegations, is not served by the best men only, but sometimes more by those that provoke it—by the combats they arouse. Thus national rage, fury, discussion, &c., better than content. Thus, also, the warning signals, invaluable for after times.

What is more dramatic than the spectacle we have seen repeated, and doubtless long shall see—the popular judgment taking the successful candidates on trial in the offices—standing off, as it were, and observing them and their doings for a while, and always giving, finally, the fit, exactly due reward? I think, after all, the sublimest part of political history, and its culmination, is currently issuing from the American people. I know nothing grander, better exercise, better digestion, more positive proof of the past, the triumphant result of faith in human kind, than a well-contested American national election.

Then still the thought returns, (like the thread-passage in overtures,) giving the key and echo to these pages. When I pass to and fro, different latitudes, different seasons, beholding the crowds of the great cities, New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Cincinnati, Chicago, St. Louis, San Francisco, New Orleans, Baltimore—when I mix with these interminable swarms of

alert, turbulent, good-natured, independent citizens, mechanics, clerks, young persons—at the idea of this mass of men, so fresh and free, so loving and so proud, a singular awe falls upon me. I feel, with dejection and amazement, that among our geniuses, and talented writers or speakers, few or none have yet really spoken to this people, created a single image-making work for them, or absorb'd the central spirit and the idiosyncrasies which are theirs—and which, thus, in highest ranges, so far remain entirely uncelebrated, unexpress'd.

Dominion strong is the body's; dominion stronger is the mind's. What has fill'd, and fills to-day our intellect, our fancy, furnishing the standards therein, is yet foreign. The great poems, Shakspeare included, are poisonous to the idea of the pride and dignity of the common people, the life-blood of democracy. The models of our literature, as we get it from other lands, ultramarine, have had their birth in courts, and bask'd and grown in castle sunshine; all smells of princes' favors. Of workers of a certain sort, we have, indeed, plenty, contributing after their kind; many elegant, many learn'd, all complacent. But touch'd by the national test, or tried by the standards of democratic personality, they wither to ashes. I say I have not seen a single writer, artist, lecturer, or what not, that has confronted the voiceless but ever erect and active, pervading, underlying will and typic aspiration of the land, in a spirit kindred to itself. Do you call those genteel little creatures American poets? Do you term that perpetual, pistareen, paste-pot work, American art, American drama, taste, verse? I think I hear, echoed as from some mountain-top afar in the west, the scornful laugh of the Genius of these States.

Democracy, in silence, biding its time, ponders its own ideals, not of literature and art only—not of men only, but of women. The idea of the women of America, (extricated from this daze, this fossil and unhealthy air which hangs about the word *lady*,) develop'd, raised to become the robust equals, workers, and, it may be, even practical and political deciders with the men—greater than man, we may admit, through their divine maternity, always their towering, emblematical attribute—but great,

at any rate, as man, in all departments; or, rather, capable of being so, soon as they realize it, and can bring themselves to give up toys and fictions, and launch forth, as men do, amid real, independent, stormy life.

Then, as towards our thought's finalè, (and, in that, overarching the true scholar's lesson,) we have to say there can be no complete or epical presentation of democracy in the aggregate, or anything like it, at this day, because its doctrines will only be effectually incarnated in any one branch, when, in all, their spirit is at the foot and centre. Far, far, indeed, stretch, in distance, our Vistas! How much is still to be disentangled, freed! How long it takes to make this American world see that it is, in itself, the final authority and reliance!

Did you, too, O friend, suppose democracy was only for elections, for politics, and for a party name? I say democracy is only of use there that it may pass on and come to its flower and fruits in manners, in the highest forms of interaction between men, and their beliefs—in religion, literature, colleges, and schools—democracy in all public and private life, and in the army and navy.\* I have intimated that, as a paramount scheme, it has yet few or no full realizers and believers. I do not see, either, that it owes any serious thanks to noted propagandists or champions, or has been essentially help'd, though often harm'd, by them. It has been and is carried on by all the moral forces, and by trade, finance, machinery, intercommunications, and, in fact, by all the developments of history, and can no more be stopp'd than the tides, or the earth in its orbit. Doubtless, also, it resides, crude and latent, well down in the hearts of the fair average of the American-born people, mainly in the agricultural regions. But it is not yet, there or anywhere, the fully-receiv'd, the fervid, the absolute faith.

\*The whole present system of the officering and personnel of the army and navy of these States, and the spirit and letter of their trebly-aristocratic rules and regulations, is a monstrous exotic, a nuisance and revolt, and belong here just as much as orders of nobility, or the Pope's council of cardinals. I say if the present theory of our army and navy is sensible and true, then the rest of America is an unmitigated fraud.

I submit, therefore, that the fruition of democracy, on aught like a grand scale, resides altogether in the future. As, under any profound and comprehensive view of the gorgeous-composite feudal world, we see in it, through the long ages and cycles of ages, the results of a deep, integral, human and divine principle, or fountain, from which issued laws, ecclesia, manners, institutes, costumes, personalities, poems, (hitherto unequal'd,) faithfully partaking of their source, and indeed only arising either to betoken it, or to furnish parts of that varied-flowing display, whose centre was one and absolute—so, long ages hence, shall the due historian or critic make at least an equal retrospect, an equal history for the democratic principle. It too must be adorn'd, credited with its results—then, when it, with imperial power, through amplest time, has dominated mankind—has been the source and test of all the moral, esthetic, social, political, and religious expressions and institutes of the civilized world—has begotten them in spirit and in form, and has carried them to its own unprecedented heights—has had, (it is possible,) monastics and ascetics, more numerous, more devout than the monks and priests of all previous creeds—has sway'd the ages with a breadth and rectitude tallying Nature's own—has fashion'd, systematized, and triumphantly finish'd and carried out, in its own interest, and with unparallel'd success, a new earth and a new man.

Thus we presume to write, as it were, upon things that exist not, and travel by maps yet unmade, and a blank. But the throes of birth are upon us; and we have something of this advantage in seasons of strong formations, doubts, suspense—for then the afflatus of such themes haply may fall upon us, more or less; and then, hot from surrounding war and revolution, our speech, though without polish'd coherence, and a failure by the standard called criticism, comes forth, real at least as the lightnings.

And may-be we, these days, have, too, our own reward—(for there are yet some, in all lands, worthy to be so encouraged.) Though not for us the joy of entering at the last the conquer'd city—not ours the chance ever to see with our own eyes the peerless power and splendid *eclat* of the democratic



principle, arriv'd at meridian, filling the world with effulgence and majesty far beyond those of past history's kings, or all dynastic sway—there is yet, to whoever is eligible among us, the prophetic vision, the joy of being toss'd in the brave turmoil of these times—the promulgation and the path, obedient, lowly reverent to the voice, the gesture of the god, or holy ghost, which others see not, hear not—with the proud consciousness that amid whatever clouds, seductions, or heart-wearying postponements, we have never deserted, never despair'd, never abandon'd the faith.

So much contributed, to be conn'd well, to help prepare and brace our edifice, our plann'd Idea—we still proceed to give it in another of its aspects—perhaps the main, the high façade of all. For to democracy, the leveler, the unyielding principle of the average, is surely join'd another principle, equally unyielding, closely tracking the first, indispensable to it, opposite, (as the sexes are opposite,) and whose existence, confronting and ever modifying the other, often clashing, paradoxical, yet neither of highest avail without the other, plainly supplies to these grand cosmic politics of ours, and to the launch'd forth mortal dangers of republicanism, to-day or any day, the counterpart and offset whereby Nature restrains the deadly original relentlessness of all her first-class laws. This second principle is individuality, the pride and centripetal isolation of a human being in himself—identity—personalism. Whatever the name, its acceptance and thorough infusion through the organizations of political commonalty now shooting Aurora-like about the world, are of utmost importance, as the principle itself is needed for very life's sake. It forms, in a sort, or is to form, the compensating balance-wheel of the successful working machinery of aggregate America.

And, if we think of it, what does civilization itself rest upon—and what object has it, with its religions, arts, schools, &c., but rich, luxuriant, varied personalism? To that, all bends; and it is because toward such result democracy alone, on anything like Nature's scale, breaks up the limitless fallows of humankind, and plants the seed, and gives fair play, that its claims

now precede the rest. The literature, songs, esthetics, &c., of a country are of importance principally because they furnish the materials and suggestions of personality for the women and men of that country; and enforce them in a thousand effective ways.\* As the topmost claim of a strong consolidating of the nationality of these States, is, that only by such powerful compaction can the separate States secure that full and free swing within their spheres, which is becoming to them, each after its kind, so will individuality, with unimpeded branchings, flourish best under imperial republican forms.

Assuming Democracy to be at present in its embryo condition, and that the only large and satisfactory justification of it resides in the future, mainly through the copious production of perfect characters among the people, and through the advent of a sane and pervading religiousness, it is with regard to the atmosphere and spaciousness fit for such characters, and of certain nutri-

\*After the rest is satiated, all interest culminates in the field of persons, and never flags there. Accordingly in this field have the great poets and literatures signally toil'd. They too, in all ages, all lands, have been creators, fashioning, making types of men and women, as Adam and Eve are made in the divine fable. Behold, shaped, bred by orientalism, feudalism, through their long growth and culmination, and breeding back in return—(when shall we have an equal series, typical of democracy?)—behold, commencing in primal Asia, (apparently formulated, in what beginning we know, in the gods of the mythologies, and coming down thence,) a few samples out of the countless product, bequeath'd to the moderns, bequeath'd to America as studies. For the men, Yudishtura, Rama, Arjuna, Solomon, most of the Old and New Testament characters; Achilles, Ulysses, Theseus, Prometheus, Hercules, Æneas, Plutarch's heroes; the Merlin of Celtic bards; the Cid, Arthur and his knights, Siegfried and Hagen in the Nibelungen; Roland and Oliver; Roustam in the Shah-Nemah; and so on to Milton's Satan, Cervantes' Don Quixote, Shakspeare's Hamlet, Richard II., Lear, Marc Antony, &c., and the modern Faust. These, I say, are models, combined, adjusted to other standards than America's, but of priceless value to her and hers.

Among women, the goddesses of the Egyptian, Indian and Greek mythologies, certain Bible characters, especially the Holy Mother; Cleopatra, Penelope; the portraits of Brunhelde and Chriemhilde in the Nibelungen; Oriana, Una, &c.; the modern Consuelo, Walter Scott's Jeanie and Effie Deans, &c., &c. (Yet woman portray'd or outlin'd at her best, or as perfect human mother, does not hitherto, it seems to me, fully appear in literature.)

ment and cartoon-draftings proper for them, and indicating them for New World purposes, that I continue the present statement—an exploration, as of new ground, wherein, like other primitive surveyors, I must do the best I can, leaving it to those who come after me to do much better. (The service, in fact, if any, must be to break a sort of first path or track, no matter how rude and ungeometrical.)

We have frequently printed the word Democracy. Yet I cannot too often repeat that it is a word the real gist of which still sleeps, quite unawaken'd, notwithstanding the resonance and the many angry tempests out of which its syllables have come, from pen or tongue. It is a great word, whose history, I suppose, remains unwritten, because that history has yet to be enacted. It is, in some sort, younger brother of another great and often-used word, Nature, whose history also waits unwritten. As I perceive, the tendencies of our day, in the States, (and I entirely respect them,) are toward those vast and sweeping movements, influences, moral and physical, of humanity, now and always current over the planet, on the scale of the impulses of the elements. Then it is also good to reduce the whole matter to the consideration of a single self, a man, a woman, on permanent grounds. Even for the treatment of the universal, in politics, metaphysics, or anything, sooner or later we come down to one single, solitary soul.

There is, in sanest hours, a consciousness, a thought that rises, independent, lifted out from all else, calm, like the stars, shining eternal. This is the thought of identity—yours for you, whoever you are, as mine for me. Miracle of miracles, beyond statement, most spiritual and vaguest of earth's dreams, yet hardest basic fact, and only entrance to all facts. In such devout hours, in the midst of the significant wonders of heaven and earth, (significant only because of the Me in the centre,) creeds, conventions, fall away and become of no account before this simple idea. Under the luminousness of real vision, it alone takes possession, takes value. Like the shadowy dwarf in the fable, once liberated and look'd upon, it expands over the whole earth, and spreads to the roof of heaven.

The quality of BEING, in the object's self, according to its own central idea and purpose, and of growing therefrom and thereto—not criticism by other standards, and adjustments thereto—is the lesson of Nature. True, the full man wisely gathers, culls, absorbs; but if, engaged disproportionately in that, he slights or overlays the precious idiocracy and special nativity and intention that he is, the man's self, the main thing, is a failure, however wide his general cultivation. Thus, in our times, refinement and delicatessen are not only attended to sufficiently but threaten to eat us up, like a cancer. Already, the democratic genius watches, ill-pleased, these tendencies. Provision for a little healthy rudeness, savage virtue, justification of what one has in one's self, whatever it is, is demanded. Negative qualities, even deficiencies, would be a relief. Singleness and normal simplicity and separation, amid this more and more complex, more and more artificialized state of society—how pensively we yearn for them! how we would welcome their return!

In some such direction, then—at any rate enough to preserve the balance—we feel called upon to throw what weight we can, not for absolute reasons, but current ones. To prune, gather, trim, conform, and ever cram and stuff, and be genteel and proper, is the pressure of our days. While aware that much can be said even in behalf of all this, we perceive that we have not now to consider the question of what is demanded to serve a half-starved and barbarous nation, or set of nations, but what is most applicable, most pertinent, for numerous congeries of conventional, over-corpulent societies, already becoming stifled and rotten with flatulent, infidelistic literature, and polite conformity and art. In addition to establish'd sciences, we suggest a science as it were of healthy average personalism, on original-universal grounds, the object of which should be to raise up and supply through the States a copious race of superb American men and women, cheerful, religious, ahead of any yet known.

America has yet morally and artistically originated nothing. She seems singularly unaware that the models of persons,

books, manners, &c., appropriate for former conditions and for European lands, are but exiles and exotics here. No current of her life, as shown on the surfaces of what is authoritatively called her society, accepts or runs into social or esthetic democracy; but all the currents set squarely against it. Never, in the Old World, was thoroughly upholster'd exterior appearance and show, mental and other, built entirely on the idea of caste, and on the sufficiency of mere outside acquisition—never were glibness, verbal intellect, more the test, the emulation—more loftily elevated as head and sample—than they are on the surface of our republican States this day. The writers of a time hint the mottoes of its gods. The word of the modern, say these voices, is the word Culture.

We find ourselves abruptly in close quarters with the enemy. This word Culture, or what it has come to represent, involves, by contrast, our whole theme, and has been, indeed, the spur, urging us to engagement. Certain questions arise. As now taught, accepted and carried out, are not the processes of culture rapidly creating a class of supercilious infidels, who believe in nothing? Shall a man lose himself in countless masses of adjustments, and be so shaped with reference to this, that, and the other, that the simply good and healthy and brave parts of him are reduced and clipp'd away, like the bordering of box in a garden? You can cultivate corn and roses and orchards—but who shall cultivate the mountain peaks, the ocean, and the tumbling gorgeousness of the clouds? Lastly—is the readily-given reply that culture only seeks to help, systematize, and put in attitude, the elements of fertility and power, a conclusive reply?

I do not so much object to the name, or word, but I should certainly insist, for the purposes of these States, on a radical change of category, in the distribution of precedence. I should demand a programme of culture, drawn out, not for a single class alone, or for the parlors or lecture-rooms, but with an eye to practical life, the west, the working-men, the facts of farms and jack-planes and engineers, and of the broad range of the women also of the middle and working strata, and with reference to the perfect equality of women, and of a grand and powerful motherhood. I should demand of this programme or

theory a scope generous enough to include the widest human area. It must have for its spinal meaning the formation of a typical personality of character, eligible to the uses of the high average of men—and *not* restricted by conditions ineligible to the masses. The best culture will always be that of the manly and courageous instincts, and loving perceptions, and of self-respect—aiming to form, over this continent, an idiocracy of universalism, which, true child of America, will bring joy to its mother, returning to her in her own spirit, recruiting myriads of offspring, able, natural, perceptive, tolerant, devout believers in her, America, and with some definite instinct why and for what she has arisen, most vast, most formidable of historic births, and is, now and here, with wonderful step, journeying though Time.

The problem, as it seems to me, presented to the New World, is, under permanent law and order, and after preserving cohesion, (ensemble-Individuality,) at all hazards, to vitalize man's free play of special Personalism, recognizing in it something that calls ever more to be consider'd, fed, and adopted as the substratum for the best that belongs to us, (government indeed is for it,) including the new esthetics of our future.

To formulate beyond this present vagueness—to help line and put before us the species, or a specimen of the species, of the democratic ethnology of the future, is a work toward which the genius of our land, with peculiar encouragement, invites her well-wishers. Already certain limnings, more or less grotesque, more or less fading and watery, have appear'd. We too, (repressing doubts and qualms,) will try our hand.

Attempting, then, however crudely, a basic model or portrait of personality for general use for the manliness of the States, (and doubtless that is most useful which is most simple and comprehensive for all, and toned low enough,) we should prepare the canvas well beforehand. Parentage must consider itself in advance. (Will the time hasten when fatherhood and motherhood shall become a science—and the noblest science?) To our model, a clear-blooded, strong-fibred physique, is indispensable; the questions of food, drink, air, exercise, assimila-

tion, digestion, can never be intermitted. Out of these we descry a well-begotten selfhood—in youth, fresh, ardent, emotional, aspiring, full of adventure; at maturity, brave, perceptive, under control, neither too talkative nor too reticent, neither flip-pant nor sombre; of the bodily figure, the movements easy, the complexion showing the best blood, somewhat flush'd, breast expanded, an erect attitude, a voice whose sound outvies music, eyes of calm and steady gaze, yet capable also of flashing—and a general presence that holds its own in the company of the highest. (For it is native personality, and that alone, that endows a man to stand before presidents or generals, or in any distinguish'd collection, with *aplomb*—and *not* culture, or any knowledge or intellect whatever.)

With regard to the mental educational part of our model, enlargement of intellect, stores of cephalic knowledge, &c., the concentration thitherward of all the customs of our age, especially in America, is so overweening, and provides so fully for that part, that, important and necessary as it is, it really needs nothing from us here—except, indeed, a phrase of warning and restraint. Manners, costumes, too, though important, we need not dwell upon here. Like beauty, grace of motion, &c., they are results. Causes, original things, being attended to, the right manners unerringly follow. Much is said, among artists, of “the grand style,” as if it were a thing by itself. When a man, artist or whoever, has health, pride, acuteness, noble aspirations, he has the motive-elements of the grandest style. The rest is but manipulation, (yet that is no small matter.)

Leaving still unspecified several sterling parts of any model fit for the future personality of America, I must not fail, again and ever, to pronounce myself on one, probably the least attended to in modern times—a hiatus, indeed, threatening its gloomiest consequences after us. I mean the simple, unsophisticated Conscience, the primary moral element. If I were asked to specify in what quarter lie the grounds of darkest dread, respecting the America of our hopes, I should have to point to this particular. I should demand the invariable application to individuality, this day and any day, of that old, ever-true plumb-rule of per-

sons, eras, nations. Our triumphant modern civilizée, with his all-schooling and his wondrous appliances, will still show himself but an amputation while this deficiency remains. Beyond, (assuming a more hopeful tone,) the vertebration of the manly and womanly personalism of our western world, can only be, and is, indeed, to be, (I hope,) its all penetrating Religiousness.

The ripeness of Religion is doubtless to be looked for in this field of individuality, and is a result that no organization, or church can ever achieve. As history is poorly retain'd by what the technists call history, and is not given out from their pages, except the learner has in himself the sense of the well-wrapt, never yet written, perhaps impossible to be written, history—so Religion, although casually arrested, and, after a fashion, preserv'd in the churches and creeds, does not depend at all upon them, but is a part of the identified soul, which, when greatest, knows not bibles in the old way, but in new ways—the identified soul, which can really confront Religion when it extricates itself entirely from the churches, and not before.

Personalism fuses this, and favors it. I should say, indeed, that only in the perfect uncontamination and solitariness of individuality may the spirituality of religion positively come forth at all. Only here, and on such terms, the meditation, the devout ecstasy, the soaring flight. Only here, communion with the mysteries, the eternal problems, whence? whither? Alone, and identity, and the mood—and the soul emerges, and all statements, churches, sermons, melt away like vapors. Alone, and silent thought and awe, and aspiration—and then the interior consciousness, like a hitherto unseen inscription, in magic ink, beams out its wondrous lines to the sense. Bibles may convey, and priests expound, but it is exclusively for the noiseless operation of one's isolated Self, to enter the pure ether of veneration, reach the divine levels, and commune with the unutterable.

To practically enter into politics is an important part of American personalism. To every young man, north and south, earnestly studying these things, I should here, as an offset to what I have said in former pages, now also say, that may-be to views of very largest scope, after all, perhaps the political, (per-



haps the literary and sociological,) America goes best about its development its own way—sometimes, to temporary sight, appalling enough. It is the fashion among dillettants and fops (perhaps I myself am not guiltless,) to decry the whole formulation of the active politics of America, as beyond redemption, and to be carefully kept away from. See you that you do not fall into this error. America, it may be, is doing very well upon the whole, notwithstanding these antics of the parties and their leaders, these half-brain'd nominees, the many ignorant ballots, and many elected failures and blatherers. It is the dillettants, and all who shirk their duty, who are not doing well. As for you, I advise you to enter more strongly yet into politics. I advise every young man to do so. Always inform yourself; always do the best you can; always vote. Disengage yourself from parties. They have been useful, and to some extent remain so; but the floating, uncommitted electors, farmers, clerks, mechanics, the masters of parties—watching aloof, inclining victory this side or that side—such are the ones most needed, present and future. For America, if eligible at all to downfall and ruin, is eligible within herself, not without; for I see clearly that the combined foreign world could not beat her down. But these savage, wolfish parties alarm me. Owing no law but their own will, more and more combative, less and less tolerant of the idea of ensemble and of equal brotherhood, the perfect equality of the States, the ever-overarching American ideas, it behooves you to convey yourself implicitly to no party, nor submit blindly to their dictators, but steadily hold yourself judge and master over all of them.

So much, (hastily toss'd together, and leaving far more unsaid,) for an ideal, or intimations of an ideal, toward American manhood. But the other sex, in our land, requires at least a basis of suggestion.

I have seen a young American woman, one of a large family of daughters, who, some years since, migrated from her meagre country home to one of the northern cities, to gain her own support. She soon became an expert seamstress, but finding the employment too confining for health and comfort, she went

boldly to work for others, to house-keep, cook, clean, &c. After trying several places, she fell upon one where she was suited. She has told me that she finds nothing degrading in her position; it is not inconsistent with personal dignity, self-respect, and the respect of others. She confers benefits and receives them. She has good health; her presence itself is healthy and bracing; her character is unstain'd; she has made herself understood, and preserves her independence, and has been able to help her parents, and educate and get places for her sisters; and her course of life is not without opportunities for mental improvement, and of much quiet, uncosting happiness and love.

I have seen another woman who, from taste and necessity conjoin'd, has gone into practical affairs, carries on a mechanical business, partly works at it herself, dashes out more and more into real hardy life, is not abash'd by the coarseness of the contact, knows how to be firm and silent at the same time, holds her own with unvarying coolness and decorum, and will compare any day with superior carpenters, farmers, and even boatmen and drivers. For all that, she has not lost the charm of the womanly nature, but preserves and bears it fully, though through such rugged presentation.

Then there is the wife of a mechanic, mother of two children, a woman of merely passable English education, but of fine wit, with all her sex's grace and intuitions, who exhibits, indeed, such a noble female personality, that I am fain to record it here. Never abnegating her own proper independence, but always genially preserving it, and what belongs to it—cooking, washing, child-nursing, house-tending—she beams sunshine out of all these duties, and makes them illustrious. Physiologically sweet and sound, loving work, practical, she yet knows that there are intervals, however few, devoted to recreation, music, leisure, hospitality—and affords such intervals. Whatever she does, and wherever she is, that charm, that indescribable perfume of genuine womanhood attends her, goes with her, exhales from her, which belongs of right to all the sex, and is, or ought to be, the invariable atmosphere and common aureola of old as well as young.

My dear mother once described to me a resplendent person,

down on Long Island, whom she knew in early days. She was known by the name of the Peacemaker. She was well toward eighty years old, of happy and sunny temperament, had always lived on a farm, and was very neighborly, sensible and discreet, an invariable and welcom'd favorite, especially with young married women. She had numerous children and grandchildren. She was uneducated, but possess'd a native dignity. She had come to be a tacitly agreed upon domestic regulator, judge, settler of difficulties, shepherdess, and reconciler in the land. She was a sight to draw near and look upon, with her large figure, her profuse snow-white hair, (uncoif'd by any head-dress or cap,) dark eyes, clear complexion, sweet breath; and peculiar personal magnetism.

The foregoing portraits, I admit, are frightfully out of line from these imported models of womanly personality—the stock feminine characters of the current novelists, or of the foreign court poems, (Ophelias, Enids, princesses, or ladies of one thing or another,) which fill the envying dreams of so many poor girls, and are accepted by our men, too, as supreme ideals of feminine excellence to be sought after. But I present mine just for a change.

Then there are mutterings, (we will not now stop to heed them here, but they must be heeded,) of something more revolutionary. The day is coming when the deep questions of woman's entrance amid the arenas of practical life, politics, the suffrage, &c., will not only be argued all around us, but may be put to decision, and real experiment.

Of course, in these States, for both man and woman, we must entirely recast the types of higher personality from what the oriental, feudal, ecclesiastical worlds bequeath us, and which yet possess the imaginative and esthetic fields of the United States, pictorial and melodramatic, not without use as studies, but making sad work, and forming a strange anachronism upon the scenes and exigencies around us. Of course, the old undying elements remain. The task is, to successfully adjust them to new combinations, our own days. Nor is this so incredible. I can conceive a community, to-day and here, in which, on a suf-

ficient scale, the perfect personalities, without noise meet; say in some pleasant western settlement or town, where a couple of hundred best men and women, of ordinary worldly status, have by luck been drawn together, with nothing extra of genius or wealth, but virtuous, chaste, industrious, cheerful, resolute, friendly and devout. I can conceive such a community organized in running order, powers judiciously delegated—farming, building, trade, courts, mails, schools, elections, all attended to; and then the rest of life, the main thing, freely branching and blossoming in each individual, and bearing golden fruit. I can see there, in every young and old man, after his kind, and in every woman after hers, a true personality, develop'd, exercised proportionately in body, mind, and spirit. I can imagine this case as one not necessarily rare or difficult, but in buoyant accordance with the municipal and general requirements of our times. And I can realize in it the culmination of something better than any stereotyped *eclat* of history or poems. Perhaps, unsung, undramatized, unput in essays or biographies—perhaps even some such community already exists, in Ohio, Illinois, Missouri, or somewhere, practically fulfilling itself, and thus outvying, in cheapest vulgar life, all that has been hitherto shown in best ideal pictures.

In short, and to sum up, America, betaking herself to formative action, (as it is about time for more solid achievement, and less windy promise,) must, for her purposes, cease to recognize a theory of character grown of feudal aristocracies, or form'd by merely literary standards, or from any ultramarine, full-dress formulas of culture, polish, caste, &c., and must sternly promulgate her own new standard, yet old enough, and accepting the old, the perennial elements, and combining them into groups, unities, appropriate to the modern, the democratic, the west, and to the practical occasions and needs of our own cities, and of the agricultural regions. Ever the most precious in the common. Ever the fresh breeze of field, or hill, or lake, is more than any palpitation of fans, though of ivory, and redolent with perfume; and the air is more than the costliest perfumes.

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And now, for fear of mistake, we may not intermit to beg our absolution from all that genuinely is, or goes along with, even Culture. Pardon us, venerable shade! if we have seem'd to speak lightly of your office. The whole civilization of the earth, we know, is yours, with all the glory and the light thereof. It is, indeed, in your own spirit, and seeking to tally the loftiest teachings of it, that we aim these poor utterances. For you, too, mighty minister! know that there is something greater than you, namely, the fresh, eternal qualities of Being. From them, and by them, as you, at your best, we too evoke the last, the needed help, to vitalize our country and our days. Thus we pronounce not so much against the principle of culture; we only supervise it, and promulge along with it, as deep, perhaps a deeper, principle. As we have shown the New World including in itself the all-leveling aggregate of democracy, we show it also including the all-varied, all-permitting, all-free theorem of individuality, and erecting therefore a lofty and hitherto unoccupied framework or platform, broad enough for all, eligible to every farmer and mechanic—to the female equally with the male—a towering selfhood, not physically perfect only—not satisfied with the mere mind's and learning's stores, but religious, possessing the idea of the infinite, (rudder and compass sure amid this troublous voyage, o'er darkest, wildest wave, through stormiest wind, of man's or nation's progress)—realizing, above the rest, that known humanity, in deepest sense, is fair adhesion to itself, for purposes beyond—and that, finally, the personality of mortal life is most important with reference to the immortal, the unknown, the spiritual, the only permanently real, which as the ocean waits for and receives the rivers, waits for us each and all.

Much is there, yet demanding line and outline in our Vistas, not only on these topics, but others quite unwritten. Indeed, we could talk the matter, and expand it, through lifetime. But it is necessary to return to our original premises. In view of them, we have again pointedly to confess that all the objective grandeurs of the world, for highest purposes, yield themselves up, and depend on mentality alone. Here, and here only, all

balances, all rests. For the mind, which alone builds the permanent edifice, haughtily builds it to itself. By it, with what follows it, are convey'd to mortal sense the culminations of the materialistic, the known, and a prophecy of the unknown. To take expression, to incarnate, to endow a literature with grand and archetypal models—to fill with pride and love the utmost capacity, and to achieve spiritual meanings, and suggest the future—these, and these only, satisfy the soul. We must not say one word against real materials; but the wise know that they do not become real till touched by emotions, the mind. Did we call the latter imponderable? Ah, let us rather proclaim that the slightest song-tune, the countless ephemera of passions arous'd by orators and tale-tellers, are more dense, more weighty than the engines there in the great factories, or the granite blocks in their foundations.

Approaching thus the momentous spaces, and considering with reference to a new and greater personalism, the needs and possibilities of American imaginative literature, through the medium-light of what we have already broach'd, it will at once be appreciated that a vast gulf of difference separates the present accepted condition of these spaces, inclusive of what is floating in them, from any condition adjusted to, or fit for, the world, the America, there sought to be indicated, and the copious races of complete men and women, along these Vistas crudely outlined. It is, in some sort, no less a difference than lies between that long-continued nebular state and vagueness of the astronomical worlds, compared with the subsequent state, the definitely-form'd worlds themselves, duly compacted, clustering in systems, hung up there, chandeliers of the universe, beholding and mutually lit by each other's lights, serving for ground of all substantial foothold, all vulgar uses—yet serving still more as an undying chain and echelon of spiritual proofs and shows. A boundless field to fill! A new creation, with needed orbic works launch'd forth, to revolve in free and lawful circuits—to move, self-poised, through the ether, and shine like heaven's own suns! With such, and nothing less, we suggest that New World literature, fit to rise upon, cohere, and signalize in time, these States.

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What, however, do we more definitely mean by New World literature? Are we not doing well enough here already? Are not the United States this day busily using, working, more printer's type, more presses, than any other country? uttering and absorbing more publications than any other? Do not our publishers fatten quicker and deeper? (helping themselves, under shelter of a delusive and sneaking law, or rather absence of law, to most of their forage, poetical, pictorial, historical, romantic, even comic, without money and without price—and fiercely resisting the timidest proposal to pay for it.) Many will come under this delusion—but my purpose is to dispel it. I say that a nation may hold and circulate rivers and oceans of very readable print, journals, magazines, novels, library-books, "poetry," &c.—such as the States to-day possess and circulate—of unquestionable aid and value—hundreds of new volumes annually composed and brought out here, respectable enough, indeed unsurpass'd in smartness and erudition—with further hundreds, or rather millions, (as by free forage or theft aforementioned,) also thrown into the market—and yet, all the while, the said nation, land, strictly speaking, may possess no literature at all.

Repeating our inquiry, what, then, do we mean by real literature? especially the democratic literature of the future? Hard questions to meet. The clues are inferential, and turn us to the past. At best, we can only offer suggestions, comparisons, circuits.

It must still be reiterated, as, for the purpose of these memoranda, the deep lesson of history and time, that all else in the contributions of a nation or age, through its politics, materials, heroic personalities, military eclat, &c., remains crude, and defers, in any close and thorough-going estimate, until vitalized by national, original archetypes in literature. They only put the nation in form, finally tell anything—prove, complete anything—perpetuate anything. Without doubt, some of the richest and most powerful and populous communities of the antique world, and some of the grandest personalities and events, have, to after and present times, left themselves entirely

unbequeath'd. Doubtless, greater than any that have come down to us, were among those lands, heroisms, persons, that have not come down to us all, even by name, date, or location. Others have arrived safely, as from voyages over wide, century-stretching seas. The little ships, the miracles that have buoy'd them, and by incredible chances safely convey'd them, (or the best of them, their meaning and essence,) over long wastes, darkness, lethargy, ignorance, &c., have been a few inscriptions—a few immortal compositions, small in size, yet compassing what measureless values of reminiscence, contemporary portraitures, manners, idioms and beliefs, with deepest inference, hint and thought, to tie and touch forever the old, new body, and the old, new soul! These! and still these! bearing the freight so dear—dearer than pride—dearer than love. All the best experience of humanity, folded, saved, freighted to us here. Some of these tiny ships we call Old and New Testament, Homer, Eschylus, Plato, Juvenal, &c. Precious minims! I think, if were forced to choose, rather than have you, and the likes of you, and what belongs to, and has grown of you, blotted out and gone, we could better afford, appalling as that would be, to lose all actual ships, this day fasten'd by wharf, or floating on wave, and see them, with all their cargoes, scuttled and sent to the bottom.

Gather'd by geniuses of city, race or age, and put by them in highest of art's forms, namely, the literary form, the peculiar combinations and the outshows of that city, age, or race, its particular modes of the universal attributes and passions, its faiths, heroes, lovers and gods, wars, traditions, struggles, crimes, emotions, joys, (or the subtle spirit of these,) having been pass'd on to us to illumine our own selfhood, and its experiences—what they supply, indispensable and highest, if taken away, nothing else in all the world's boundless storehouses could make up to us, or ever again return.

For us, along the great highways of time, those monuments stand—those forms of majesty and beauty. For us those beacons burn through all the nights. Unknown Egyptians, gravating hieroglyphs; Hindus, with hymn and apothegm and endless epic; Hebrew prophet, with spirituality, as in flashes of light-



ning, conscience like red-hot iron, plaintive songs and screams of vengeance for tyrannies and enslavement; Christ, with bent head, brooding love and peace, like a dove; Greek, creating eternal shapes of physical and esthetic proportion; Roman, lord of satire, the sword, and the codex;—of the figures, some far off and veil'd, others nearer and visible; Dante, stalking with lean form, nothing but fibre, not a grain of superfluous flesh; Angelo, and the great painters, architects, musicians; rich Shakspeare, luxuriant as the sun, artist and singer of feudalism in its sunset, with all the gorgeous colors, owner thereof, and using them at will; and so to such as German Kant and Hegel, where they, though near us, leaping over the ages, sit again, impassive, imperturbable, like the Egyptian gods. Of these, and the like of these, is it too much, indeed, to return to our favorite figure, and view them as orbs and systems of orbs, moving in free paths in the spaces of that other heaven, the kosmic intellect, the soul?

Ye powerful and resplendent ones! ye were, in your atmospheres, grown not for America, but rather for her foes, the feudal and the old—while our genius is democratic and modern. Yet could ye, indeed, but breathe your breath of life into our New World's nostrils—not to enslave us, as now, but, for our needs, to breed a spirit like your own—perhaps, (dare we to say it?) to dominate, even destroy, what you yourselves have left! On your plane, and no less, but even higher and wider, must we mete and measure for to-day and here. I demand races of orbic bards, with unconditional uncompromising sway. Come forth, sweet democratic despots of the west!

By points like these we, in reflection, token what we mean by any land's or people's genuine literature. And thus compared and tested, judging amid the influence of loftiest products only, what do our current copious fields of print, covering in manifold forms, the United States, better, for an analogy, present, than, as in certain regions of the sea, those spreading, undulating masses of squid, through which the whale swimming, with head half out, feeds?

Not but that doubtless our current so-called literature, (like

an endless supply of small coin,) performs a certain service, and may-be, too, the service needed for the time, (the preparation-service, as children learn to spell.) Everybody reads, and truly nearly everybody writes, either books, or for the magazines or journals. The matter has magnitude, too, after a sort. But is it really advancing? or, has it advanced for a long while? There is something impressive about the huge editions of the dailies and weeklies, the mountain-stacks of white paper piled in the press-vaults, and the proud, crashing, ten-cylinder presses, which I can stand and watch any time by the half hour. Then, (though the States in the field of imagination present not a single first-class work, not a single great literatus,) the main objects, to amuse, to titillate, to pass away time, to circulate the news, and rumors of news, to rhyme and read rhyme, are yet attain'd, and on a scale of infinity. To-day, in books, in the rivalry of writers, especially novelists, success, (so-call'd), is for him or her who strikes the mean flat average, the sensational appetite for stimulus, incidents, persiflage, &c., and depicts, to the common calibre, sensual, exterior life. To such, or the luckiest of them, as we see, the audiences are limitless and profitable; but they cease presently. While this day, or any day, to workmen portraying interior or spiritual life, the audiences were limited, and often laggard—but they last forever.

Compared with the past, our modern science soars, and our journals serve—but ideal and even ordinary romantic literature, does not, I think, substantially advance. Behold the prolific brood of the contemporary novel, magazine-tale, theatre-play, &c. The same endless thread of tangled and superlative love-story, inherited, apparently from the Amadis and Palmerins of the 13th, 14th, and 15th centuries over there in Europe. The costumes and associations brought down to date, the seasoning hotter and more varied, the dragons and ogres left out—but the *thing*, I should say, has not advanced—is just as sensational, just as strain'd—remains about the same, nor more, nor less.

What is the reason our time, our lands, that we see no fresh local courage, sanity, of our own—the Mississippi, stalwart Western men, real mental and physical facts, Southerners, &c., in the body of our literature? especially the poetic part of it. But

always, instead, a parcel of dandies and ennuyees, dapper little gentlemen from abroad, who flood us with their thin sentiment of parlors, parasols, piano-songs, tinkling rhymes, the five-hundredth importation—or whimpering and crying about something, chasing one aborted conceit after another, and forever occupied in dyspeptic amours with dyspeptic women. While, current and novel, the grandest events and revolutions, and stormiest passions of history, are crossing to-day with unparalleled'd rapidity and magnificence over the stages of our own and all the continents, offering new materials, opening new vistas, with largest needs, inviting the daring launching forth of conceptions in literature, inspired by them, soaring in highest regions, serving art in its highest, (which is only the other name for serving God, and serving humanity,) where is the man of letters, where is the book, with any nobler aim than to follow in the old track, repeat what has been said before—and, as its utmost triumph, sell well, and be erudite or elegant?

Mark the roads, the processes, through which these States have arrived, standing easy, henceforth ever-equal, ever-compact, in their range to-day. European adventures? the most antique? Asiatic or African? old history—miracles—romances? Rather, our own unquestion'd facts. They hasten, incredible, blazing bright as fire. From the deeds and days of Columbus down to the present, and including the present—and especially the late Secession war—when I con them, I feel, every leaf, like stopping to see if I have not made a mistake, and fall'n on the splendid figments of some dream. But it is no dream. We stand, live, move, in the huge flow of our age's materialism—in its spirituality. We have had founded for us the most positive of lands. The founders have pass'd to other spheres—but what are these terrible duties they have left us?

Their politics the United States have, in my opinion, with all their faults, already substantially establish'd, for good, on their own native, sound, long-vista'd principles, never to be overturn'd, offering a sure basis for all the rest. With that, their future religious forms, sociology, literature, teachers, schools,

costumes, &c., are of course to make a compact whole, uniform, on tallying principles. For how can we remain, divided, contradicting ourselves, this way?\* I say we can only attain harmony and stability by consulting ensemble and the ethic purports, and faithfully building upon them. For the New World, indeed, after two grand stages of preparation-strata, I perceive that now a third stage, being ready for, (and without which the other two were useless,) with unmistakable signs appears. The First stage was the planning and putting on record the political foundation rights of immense masses of people—indeed all people—in the organization of republican National, State, and municipal governments, all constructed with reference to each, and each to all. This is the American programme, not for classes, but for universal man, and is embodied in the compacts of the Declaration of Independence, and, as it began and has now grown, with its amendments, the Federal Constitution—and in the State governments, with all their interiors, and with general suffrage; those having the sense not only of what is in themselves, but that their certain several things started, planted, hundreds of others in the same direction duly arise and follow. The Second stage relates to material prosperity, wealth, produce, labor-saving machines, iron, cotton, local, State and continental railways, intercommunication, and trade with all lands, steamships, mining, general employment, organizations of great cities, cheap appliances for comfort, numberless technical schools, books, newspapers, a currency for money circulation, &c. The Third stage, rising out of the previous ones, to make them and all illustrious, I, now, for one, promulge, announcing a native expression-spirit, getting into form, adult, and through mentality, for these States, self-contain'd, different

\*Note, to-day, an instructive, curious spectacle and conflict. Science, (twin, in its fields, of Democracy in its)—Science, testing absolutely all thoughts, all works, has already burst well upon the world—a sun, mounting, most illuminating, most glorious—surely never again to set. But against it, deeply entrenched, holding possession, yet remains, (not only through the churches and schools, but by imaginative literature, and unregenerate poetry,) the fossil theology of the mythic-materialistic, superstitious, untaught and credulous, fable-loving, primitive ages of humanity.

from others, more expansive, more rich and free, to be evidenced by original authors and poets to come, by American personalities, plenty of them, male and female, traversing the States, none excepted—and by native superber tableaux and growths of language, songs, operas, orations, lectures, architecture—and by a sublime and serious Religious Democracy sternly taking command, dissolving the old, sloughing off surfaces, and from its own interior and vital principles, reconstructing, democratizing society.

For America, type of progress, and of essential faith in man, above all his errors and wickedness—few suspect how deep, how deep it really strikes. The world evidently supposes, and we have evidently supposed so too, that the States are merely to achieve the equal franchise, an elective government—to inaugurate the respectability of labor, and become a nation of practical operatives, law-abiding, orderly and well off. Yes, those are indeed parts of the task of America; but they not only do not exhaust the progressive conception, but rather arise, teeming with it, as the mediums of deeper, higher progress. Daughter of a physical revolution—mother of the true revolutions, which are of the interior life, and of the arts. For so long as the spirit is not changed, any change of appearance is of no avail.

The old men, I remember as a boy, were always talking of American independence. What is independence? Freedom from all laws or bonds except those of one's own being, control'd by the universal ones. To lands, to man, to woman, what is there at last to each, but the inherent soul, nativity, idiocrasy free, highest-poised, soaring its own flight, following out itself?

At present, these States, in their theology and social standards, (of greater importance than their political institutions,) are entirely held possession of by foreign lands. We see the sons and daughters of the New World, ignorant of its genius, not yet inaugurating the native, the universal, and the near, still importing the distant, the partial, and the dead. We see London, Paris, Italy—not original, superb, as where they belong—but second-hand here, where they do not belong. We see the shreds of Hebrews, Romans, Greeks; but where, on her own soil, do we see, in any faithful, highest, proud expression, America her-

self? I sometimes question whether she has a corner in her own house.

Not but that in one sense, and a very grand one, good theology, good art, or good literature, has certain features shared in common. The combination fraternizes, ties the races—is, in many particulars, under laws applicable indifferently to all, irrespective of climate or date, and, from whatever source, appeals to emotions, pride, love, spirituality, common to humankind. Nevertheless, they touch a man closest, (perhaps only actually touch him,) even in these, in their expression through autochthonic lights and shades, flavors, fondnesses, aversions, specific incidents, illustrations, out of his own nationality, geography, surroundings, antecedents, &c. The spirit and the form are one, and depend far more on association, identity and place, than is supposed. Subtly interwoven with the materiality and personality of a land, a race—Teuton, Turk, Californian, or what not—there is always something—I can hardly tell what it is—history but describes the results of it—it is the same as the untellable look of some human faces. Nature, too, in her stolid forms, is full of it—but to most it is there a secret. This something is rooted in the invisible roots, the profoundest meanings of that place, race, or nationality; and to absorb and again effuse it, uttering words and products as from its midst, and carrying it into highest regions, is the work, or a main part of the work, of any country's true author, poet, historian, lecturer, and perhaps even priest and philosopher. Here, and here only, are the foundations for our really valuable and permanent verse, drama, &c.

But at present, (judged by any higher scale than that which finds the chief ends of existence to be to feverishly make money during one-half of it, and by some "amusement," or perhaps foreign travel, flippantly kill time, the other half,) and consider'd with reference to purposes of patriotism, health, a noble personality, religion, and the democratic adjustments, all these swarms of poems, literary magazines, dramatic plays, resultant so far from American intellect, and the formation of our best ideas, are useless and a mockery. They strengthen and nourish

no one, express nothing characteristic, give decision and purpose to no one, and suffice only the lowest level of vacant minds.

Of what is called the drama, or dramatic presentation in the United States, as now put forth at the theatres, I should say it deserves to be treated with the same gravity, and on a par with the questions of ornamental confectionery at public dinners, or the arrangement of curtains and hangings in a ball room—nor more, nor less. Of the other, I will not insult the reader's intelligence, (once really entering into the atmosphere of these *Vistas*,) by supposing it necessary to show, in detail, why the copious dribble, either of our little or well-known rhymesters, does not fulfil, in any respect, the needs and august occasions of this land. America demands a poetry that is bold, modern, and all-surrounding and kosmical, as she is herself. It must in no respect ignore science or the modern, but inspire itself with science and the modern. It must bend its vision toward the future, more than the past. Like America, it must extricate itself from even the greatest models of the past, and, while courteous to them, must have entire faith in itself, and the products of its own democratic spirit only. Like her, it must place in the van, and hold up at all hazards, the banner of the divine pride of man in himself, (the radical foundation of the new religion.) Long enough have the People been listening to poems in which common humanity, deferential, bends low, humiliated, acknowledging superiors. But America listens to no such poems. Erect, inflated, and fully self-esteeming be the chant; and then America will listen with pleased ears.

Nor may the genuine gold, the gems, when brought to light at last, be probably usher'd forth from any of the quarters currently counted on. To-day, doubtless, the infant genius of American poetic expression, (eluding those highly-refined imported and gilt-edged themes, and sentimental and butterfly flights, pleasant to orthodox publishers—causing tender spasms in the coteries, and warranted not to chafe the sensitive cuticle of the most exquisitely artificial gossamer delicacy,) lies sleeping far away, happily unrecognized and uninjur'd by the coteries, the

art-writers, the talkers and critics of the saloons, or the lecturers in the colleges—lies sleeping, aside, unrecking itself, in some western idiom, or native Michigan or Tennessee repartee, or stump-speech—or in Kentucky or Georgia, or the Carolinas—or in some slang or local song or allusion of the Manhattan, Boston, Philadelphia or Baltimore mechanic—or up in the Maine woods—or off in the hut of the California miner, or crossing the Rocky mountains, or along the Pacific railroad—or on the breasts of the young farmers of the northwest, or Canada, or boatmen of the lakes. Rude and coarse nursing-beds, these; but only from such beginnings and stocks, indigenous here, may haply arrive, be grafted, and sprout in time, flowers of genuine American aroma, and fruits truly and fully our own.

I say it were a standing disgrace to these States—I say it were a disgrace to any nation, distinguish'd above others by the variety and vastness of its territories, its materials, its inventive activity, and the splendid practicality of its people, not to rise and soar above others also in its original styles in literature and art, and its own supply of intellectual and esthetic masterpieces, archetypal, and consistent with itself. I know not a land except ours that has not, to some extent, however small, made its title clear. The Scotch have their born ballads, subtly expressing their past and present, and expressing character. The Irish have theirs. England, Italy, France, Spain, theirs. What has America? With exhaustless mines of the richest ore of epic, lyric, tale, tune, picture, &c., in the Four Years' War; with, indeed, I sometimes think, the richest masses of material ever afforded a nation, more variegated, and on a larger scale—the first sign of proportionate, native, imaginative Soul, and first-class works to match, is, (I cannot too often repeat,) so far wanting.

Long ere the second centennial arrives, there will be some forty to fifty great States, among them Canada and Cuba. When the present century closes, our population will be sixty or seventy millions. The Pacific will be ours, and the Atlantic mainly ours. There will be daily electric communication with every part of the globe. What an age! What a land! Where, elsewhere, one so



great? The individuality of one nation must then, as always, lead the world. Can there be any doubt who the leader ought to be? Bear in mind, though, that nothing less than the mightiest original non-subordinated SOUL has ever really, gloriously led, or ever can lead. (This Soul—its other name, in these Vistas, is LITERATURE.)

In fond fancy leaping those hundred years ahead, let us survey America's works, poems, philosophies, fulfilling prophecies, and giving form and decision to best ideals. Much that is now undream'd of, we might then perhaps see establish'd, luxuriantly cropping forth, richness, vigor of letters and of artistic expression, in whose products character will be a main requirement, and not merely erudition or elegance.

Intense and loving comradeship, the personal and passionate attachment of man to man—which, hard to define, underlies the lessons and ideals of the profound saviours of every land and age, and which seems to promise, when thoroughly develop'd, cultivated and recognized in manners and literature, the most substantial hope and safety of the future of these States, will then be fully express'd.\*

A strong-fibred joyousness and faith, and the sense of health *al fresco*, may well enter into the preparation of future noble American authorship. Part of the test of a great literatus shall be the absence in him of the idea of the covert, the lurid, the maleficent, the devil, the grim estimates inherited from the Pu-

\*It is to the development, identification, and general prevalence of that fervid comradeship, (the adhesive love, at least rivaling the amative love hitherto possessing imaginative literature, if not going beyond it,) that I look for the counterbalance and offset of our materialistic and vulgar American democracy, and for the spiritualization thereof. Many will say it is a dream, and will not follow my inferences: but I confidently expect a time when there will be seen, running like a half-hid warp through all the myriad audible and visible worldly interests of America, threads of manly friendship, fond and loving, pure and sweet, strong and life-long, carried to degrees hitherto unknown, not only giving tone to individual character, and making it unprecedentedly emotional, muscular, heroic, and refined, but having the deepest relations to general politics. I say democracy infers such loving comradeship, as its most inevitable twin or counterpart, without which it will be incomplete, in vain, and incapable of perpetuating itself.

ritans, hell, natural depravity, and the like. The great literatus will be known, among the rest, by his cheerful simplicity, his adherence to natural standards, his limitless faith in God, his reverence, and by the absence in him of doubt, ennui, burlesque, persiflage, or any strain'd and temporary fashion.

Nor must I fail, again and yet again, to clinch, reiterate more plainly still, (O that indeed such survey as we fancy, may show in time this part completed also!) the lofty aim, surely the proudest and the purest, in whose service the future literatus, of whatever field, may gladly labor. As we have intimated, offsetting the material civilization of our race, our nationality, its wealth, territories, factories, population, products, trade, and military and naval strength, and breathing breath of life into all these, and more, must be its moral civilization—the formulation, expression, and aidancy whereof, is the very highest height of literature. The climax of this loftiest range of civilization, rising above all the gorgeous shows and results of wealth, intellect, power, and art, as such—above even theology and religious fervor—is to be its development, from the eternal bases, and the fit expression, of absolute Conscience, moral soundness, Justice. Even in religious fervor there is a touch of animal heat. But moral conscientiousness, crystalline, without flaw, not Godlike only, entirely human, awes and enchants forever. Great is emotional love, even in the order of the rational universe. But if we must make gradations, I am clear there is something greater. Power, love, veneration, products, genius, esthetics, tried by subtlest comparisons, analyses, and in serenest moods, somewhere fail, somehow become vain. Then noiseless, with flowing steps, the lord, the sun, the last ideal comes. By the names right, justice, truth, we suggest, but do not describe it. To the world of men it remains a dream, an idea as they call it. But no dream is it to the wise—but the proudest, almost only solid lasting thing of all. Its analogy in the material universe is what holds together this world, and every object upon it, and carries its dynamics on forever sure and safe. Its lack, and the persistent shirking of it, as in life, sociology, literature, politics, business, and even sermonizing, these times, or any times, still

leaves the abysm, the mortal flaw and smutch, mocking civilization to-day, with all its unquestion'd triumphs, and all the civilization so far known.\*

Present literature, while magnificently fulfilling certain popular demands, with plenteous knowledge and verbal smartness, is profoundly sophisticated, insane, and its very joy is morbid. It needs tally and express Nature, and the spirit of Nature, and to know and to obey the standards. I say the question of Nature, largely consider'd, involves the questions of the esthetic, the emotional, and the religious—and involves happiness. A fitly born and bred race, growing up in right conditions of outdoor as much as in-door harmony, activity and development, would probably, from and in those conditions, find it enough merely *to live*—and would, in their relations to the sky, air, water, trees, &c., and to the countless common shows, and in the fact of life itself, discover and achieve happiness—with Being suffused night and day by wholesome extasy, surpassing all the pleasures that wealth, amusement, and even gratified intellect, erudition, or the sense of art, can give.

In the prophetic literature of these States (the reader of my speculations will miss their principal stress unless he allows well for the point that a new Literature, perhaps a new Metaphysics, certainly a new Poetry, are to be, in my opinion, the

\*I am reminded as I write that out of this very conscience, or idea of conscience, of intense moral right, and in its name and strain'd construction, the worst fanaticisms, wars, persecutions, murders, &c., have yet, in all lands, in the past, been broach'd, and have come to their devilish fruition. Much is to be said—but I may say here, and in response, that side by side with the unflagging stimulation of the elements of religion and conscience must henceforth move with equal sway, science, absolute reason, and the general proportionate development of the whole man. These scientific facts, deductions, are divine too—precious counted parts of moral civilization, and, with physical health, indispensable to it, to prevent fanaticism. For abstract religion, I perceive, is easily led astray, ever credulous, and is capable of devouring, remorseless, like fire and flame. Conscience, too, isolated from all else, and from the emotional nature, may but attain the beauty and purity of glacial, snowy ice. We want, for these States, for the general character, a cheerful, religious fervor, endued with the ever-present modifications of the human emotions, friendship, benevolence, with a fair field for scientific inquiry, the right of individual judgment, and always the cooling influences of material Nature.

only sure and worthy supports and expressions of the American Democracy,) Nature, true Nature, and the true idea of Nature, long absent, must, above all, become fully restored, enlarged, and must furnish the pervading atmosphere to poems, and the test of all high literary and esthetic compositions. I do not mean the smooth walks, trimm'd hedges, poseys and nightingales of the English poets, but the whole orb, with its geologic history, the kosmos, carrying fire and snow, that rolls through the illimitable areas, light as a feather, though weighing billions of tons. Furthermore, as by what we now partially call Nature is intended, at most, only what is entertainable by the physical conscience, the sense of matter, and of good animal health—on these it must be distinctly accumulated, incorporated, that man, comprehending these, has, in towering superaddition, the moral and spiritual consciences, indicating his destination beyond the ostensible, the mortal.

To the heights of such estimate of Nature indeed ascending, we proceed to make observations for our Vistas, breathing rarest air. What is I believe called Idealism seems to me to suggest, (guarding against extravagance, and ever modified even by its opposite,) the course of inquiry and desert of favor for our New World metaphysics, their foundation of and in literature, giving hue to all.\*

\*The culmination and fruit of literary artistic expression, and its final fields of pleasure for the human soul, are in metaphysics, including the mysteries of the spiritual world, the soul itself, and the question of the immortal continuation of our identity. In all ages, the mind of man has brought up here—and always will. Here, at least, of whatever race or era, we stand on common ground. Applause, too, is unanimous, antique or modern. Those authors who work well in this field—though their reward, instead of a handsome percentage, or royalty, may be but simply the laurel-crown of the victors in the great Olympic games—will be dearest to humanity, and their works, however esthetically defective, will be treasur'd forever. The altitude of literature and poetry has always been religion—and always will be. The Indian Vedas, the Naçkas of Zoroaster, the Talmud of the Jews, the Old Testament, the Gospel of Christ and his disciples, Plato's works, the Koran of Mohammed, the Edda of Snorro, and so on toward our own day, to Swedenborg, and to the invaluable contributions of Leibnitz, Kant and Hegel—these, with such poems only in which, (while singing well of persons and events, of the passions of man, and the shows of the material universe,) the religious tone, the consciousness of mys-

The elevating and etherealizing ideas of the unknown and of unreality must be brought forward with authority, as they are the legitimate heirs of the known, and of reality, and at least as great as their parents. Fearless of scoffing, and of the ostent, let us take our stand, our ground, and never desert it, to confront the growing excess and arrogance of realism. To the cry, now victorious—the cry of sense, science, flesh, incomes, farms, merchandise, logic, intellect, demonstrations, solid perpetuities, buildings of brick and iron, or even the facts of the shows of trees, earth, rocks, &c., fear not, my brethren, my sisters, to sound out with equally determin'd voice, that conviction brooding within the recesses of every envision'd soul—illusions! apparitions! figments all! True, we must not condemn the show, neither absolutely deny it, for the indispensability of its meanings; but how clearly we see that, migrate in soul to what we

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tery, the recognition of the future, of the unknown, of Deity over and under all, and of the divine purpose, are never absent, but indirectly give tone to all—exhibit literature's real heights and elevations, towering up like the great mountains of the earth.

Standing on this ground—the last, the highest, only permanent ground—and sternly criticising, from it, all works, either of the literary, or any art, we have peremptorily to dismiss every pretensive production, however fine its esthetic or intellectual points, which violates or ignores, or even does not celebrate, the central divine idea of All, suffusing universe, of eternal trains of purpose, in the development, by however slow degrees, of the physical, moral, and spiritual kosmos. I say he has studied, meditated to no profit, whatever may be his mere erudition, who has not absorb'd this simple consciousness and faith. It is not entirely new—but it is for Democracy to elaborate it, and look to build upon and expand from it, with uncompromising reliance. Above the doors of teaching the inscription is to appear, Though little or nothing can be absolutely known, perceiv'd, except from a point of view which is evanescent, yet we know at least one permanency, that Time and Space, in the will of God, furnish successive chains, completions of material births and beginnings, solve all discrepancies, fears and doubts, and eventually fulfil happiness—and that the prophecy of those births, namely spiritual results, throws the true arch over all teaching, all science. The local considerations of sin, disease, deformity, ignorance, death, &c., and their measurement by the superficial mind, and ordinary legislation and theology, are to be met by science, boldly accepting, promulging this faith, and planting the seeds of superber laws—of the explication of the physical universe through the spiritual—and clearing the way for a religion, sweet and unimpugnable alike to little child or great saven.

can already conceive of superior and spiritual points of view, and, palpable as it seems under present relations, it all and several might, nay certainly would, fall apart and vanish.

I hail with joy the oceanic, variegated, intense practical energy, the demand for facts, even the business materialism of the current age, our States. But wo to the age or land in which these things, movements, stopping at themselves, do not tend to ideas. As fuel to flame, and flame to the heavens, so must wealth, science, materialism—even this democracy of which we make so much—unerringly feed the highest mind, the soul. Infinitude the flight: fathomless the mystery. Man, so diminutive, dilates beyond the sensible universe, competes with, out-comes space and time, meditating even one great idea. Thus, and thus only, does a human being, his spirit, ascend above, and justify, objective Nature, which, probably nothing in itself, is incredibly and divinely serviceable, indispensable, real, here. And as the purport of objective Nature is doubtless folded, hidden, somewhere here—as somewhere here is what this globe and its manifold forms, and the light of day, and night's darkness, and life itself, with all its experiences, are for—it is here the great literature, especially verse, must get its inspiration and throbbing blood. Then may we attain to a poetry worthy the immortal soul of man, and which, while absorbing materials, and, in their own sense, the shows of Nature, will, above all, have, both directly and indirectly, a freeing, fluidizing, expanding, religious character, exulting with science, fructifying the moral elements, and stimulating aspirations, and meditations on the unknown.

The process, so far, is indirect and peculiar, and though it may be suggested, cannot be defined. Observing, rapport, and with intuition, the shows and forms presented by Nature, the sensuous luxuriance, the beautiful in living men and women, the actual play of passions, in history and life—and, above all, from those developments either in Nature or human personality in which power, (dearest of all to the sense of the artist,) transacts itself—out of these, and seizing what is in them, the poet, the esthetic worker in any field, by the divine magic of his

genius, projects them, their analogies, by curious removes, in directions, in literature and art. (No useless attempt to repeat the material creation, by daguerrotyping the exact likeness by mortal mental means.) This is the image-making faculty, coping with material creation, and rivaling, almost triumphing over it. This alone, when all the other parts of a specimen of literature or art are ready and waiting, can breathe into it the breath of life, and endow it with identity.

“The true question to ask,” says the librarian of Congress in a paper read before the Social Science Convention at New York, October, 1869, “The true question to ask respecting a book, is, *has it help'd any human soul?*” This is the hint, statement, not only of the great literatus, his book, but of every great artist. It may be that all works of art are to be first tried by their art qualities, their image-forming talent, and their dramatic, pictorial, plot-constructing, euphonious and other talents. Then, whenever claiming to be first-class works, they are to be strictly and sternly tried by their foundation in, and radiation, in the highest sense, and always indirectly, of the ethic principles, and eligibility to free, arouse, dilate.

As, within the purposes of the Kosmos, and vivifying all meteorology, and all the congeries of the mineral, vegetable and animal worlds—all the physical growth and development of man, and all the history of the race in politics, religions, wars, &c., there is a moral purpose, a visible or invisible intention, certainly underlying all—its results and proof needing to be patiently waited for—needing intuition, faith, idiosyncrasy, to its realization, which many, and especially the intellectual, do not have—so in the product, or congeries of the product, of the greatest literatus. This is the last, profoundest measure and test of a first-class literary or esthetic achievement, and when understood and put in force must fail, I say, lead to works, books, nobler than any hitherto known. Lo! Nature, (the only complete actual poem,) existing calmly in the divine scheme, containing all, content, careless of the criticisms of a day, or these endless and wordy chatterers. And lo! to the consciousness of the soul, the permanent identity, the thought, the something, before which the magnitude even of democracy, art,

literature, &c., dwindles, becomes partial, measurable—something that fully satisfies, (which those do not.) That something is the All, and the idea of All, with the accompanying idea of eternity, and of itself, the soul, buoyant, indestructible, sailing space forever, visiting every region, as a ship the sea. And again lo! the pulsations in all matter, all spirit, throbbing forever—the eternal beats, eternal systole and diastole of life in things—wherefrom I feel and know that death is not the ending, as was thought, but rather the real beginning—and that nothing ever is or can be lost, nor ever die, nor soul, nor matter.

In the future of these States must arise poets immenser far, and make great poems of death. The poems of life are great, but there must be the poems of the purports of life, not only in itself, but beyond itself. I have eulogized Homer, the sacred bards of Jewry, Eschylus, Juvenal, Shakspeare, &c., and acknowledged their inestimable value. But, (with perhaps the exception, in some, not all respects, of the second-mention'd,) I say there must, for future and democratic purposes, appear poets, (dare I to say so?) of higher class even than any of those—poets not only possess'd of the religious fire and abandon of Isaiah, luxuriant in the epic talent of Homer, or for proud characters as in Shakspeare, but consistent with the Hegelian formulas, and consistent with modern science. America needs, and the world needs, a class of bards who will, now and ever, so link and tally the rational physical being of man, with the ensembles of time and space, and with this vast and multiform show, Nature, surrounding him, ever tantalizing him, equally a part, and yet not a part of him, as to essentially harmonize, satisfy, and put at rest. Faith, very old, now scared away by science, must be restored, brought back by the same power that caused her departure—restored with new sway, deeper, wider, higher than ever. Surely, this universal ennui, this coward fear, this shuddering at death, these low, degrading views, are not always to rule the spirit pervading future society, as it has the past, and does the present. What the Roman Lucretius sought most nobly, yet all too blindly, negatively to do for his age and its successors, must be done positively by some great coming



literatus, especially poet, who, while remaining fully poet, will absorb whatever science indicates, with spiritualism, and out of them, and out of his own genius, will compose the great poem of death. Then will man indeed confront Nature, and confront time and space, both with science, and *con amore*, and take his right place, prepared for life, master of fortune and misfortune. And then that which was long wanted will be supplied, and the ship that had it not before in all her voyages, will have an anchor.

There are still other standards, suggestions, for products of high literatures. That which really balances and conserves the social and political world is not so much legislation, police, treaties, and dread of punishment, as the latent eternal intuitional sense, in humanity, of fairness, manliness, decorum, &c. Indeed, this perennial regulation, control, and oversight, by self-suppliance, is *sine qua non* to democracy; and a highest widest aim of democratic literature may well be to bring forth, cultivate, brace, and strengthen this sense, in individuals and society. A strong mastership of the general inferior self by the superior self, is to be aided, secured, indirectly, but surely, by the literatus, in his works, shaping, for individual or aggregate democracy, a great passionate body, in and along with which goes a great masterful spirit.

And still, providing for contingencies, I fain confront the fact, the need of powerful native philosophers and orators and bards, these States, as rallying points to come, in times of danger, and to fend off ruin and defection. For history is long, long, long. Shift and turn the combinations of the statement as we may, the problem of the future of America is in certain respects as dark as it is vast. Pride, competition, segregation, vicious wilfulness, and license beyond example, brood already upon us. Unwieldy and immense, who shall hold in behemoth? who bridle leviathan? Flaunt it as we choose, athwart and over the roads of our progress loom huge uncertainty, and dreadful, threatening gloom. It is useless to deny it: Democracy grows rankly up the thickest, noxious, deadliest plants and fruits of all—brings

worse and worse invaders—needs newer, larger, stronger, keener compensations and compellers.

Our lands, embracing so much, (embracing indeed the whole, rejecting none,) hold in their breast that flame also, capable of consuming themselves, consuming us all. Short as the span of our national life has been, already have death and downfall crowded close upon us—and will again crowd close, no doubt, even if warded off. Ages to come may never know, but I know, how narrowly during the late secession war—and more than once, and more than twice or thrice—our Nationality, (wherein bound up, as in a ship in a storm, depended, and yet depend, all our best life, all hope, all value,) just grazed, just by a hair escaped destruction. Alas! to think of them! the agony and bloody sweat of certain of those hours! those cruel, sharp, suspended crises!

Even to-day, amid these whirls, incredible flippancy, and blind fury of parties, infidelity, entire lack of first-class captains and leaders, added to the plentiful meanness and vulgarity of the ostensible masses—that problem, the labor question, beginning to open like a yawning gulf, rapidly widening every year—what prospect have we? We sail a dangerous sea of seething currents, cross and under-currents, vortices—all so dark, untried—and whither shall we turn? It seems as if the Almighty had spread before this nation charts of imperial destinies, dazzling as the sun, yet with many a deep intestine difficulty, and human aggregate of cankerous imperfection,—saying, lo! the roads, the only plans of development, long and varied with all terrible balks and ebullitions. You said in your soul, I will be empire of empires, overshadowing all else, past and present, putting the history of old-world dynasties, conquests behind me, as of no account—making a new history, a history of democracy, making old history a dwarf—I alone inaugurating largeness, culminating time. If these, O lands of America, are indeed the prizes, the determinations of your soul, be it so. But behold the cost, and already specimens of the cost. Thought you greatness was to ripen for you like a pear? If you would have greatness, know that you must conquer it through ages, centuries—must pay for it with a proportionate price. For you

too, as for all lands, the struggle, the traitor, the wily person in office, scrofulous wealth, the surfeit of prosperity, the demonism of greed, the hell of passion, the decay of faith, the long postponement, the fossil-like lethargy, the ceaseless need of revolutions, prophets, thunderstorms, deaths, births, new projections and invigorations of ideas and men.

Yet I have dream'd, merged in that hidden-tangled problem of our fate, whose long unraveling stretches mysteriously through time—dream'd out, portray'd, hinted already—a little or a larger band—a band of brave and true, unprecedented yet—arm'd and equipt at every point—the members separated, it may be, by different dates and States, or south, or north, or east, or west—Pacific, Atlantic, Southern, Canadian—a year, a century here, and other centuries there—but always one, compact in soul, conscience-conserving, God-inculcating, inspired achievers, not only in literature, the greatest art, but achievers in all art—a new, undying order, dynasty, from age to age transmitted—a band, a class, at least as fit to cope with current years, our dangers, needs, as those who, for their times, so long, so well, in armor or in cowl, upheld and made illustrious, that far-back feudal, priestly world. To offset chivalry, indeed, those vanish'd countless knights, old altars, abbeys, priests, ages and strings of ages, a knightlier and more sacred cause today demands, and shall supply, in a New World, to larger, grander work, more than the counterpart and tally of them.

Arrived now, definitely, at an apex for these Vistas, I confess that the promulgation and belief in such a class or institution—a new and greater literatus order—its possibility, (nay certainty,) underlies these entire speculations—and that the rest, the other parts, as superstructures, are all founded upon it. It really seems to me the condition, not only of our future national and democratic development, but of our perpetuation. In the highly artificial and materialistic bases of modern civilization, with the corresponding arrangements and methods of living, the force-infusion of intellect alone, the depraving influences of riches just as much as poverty, the absence of all high ideals in character—with the long series of tendencies, shap-

ings, which few are strong enough to resist, and which now seem with steam-engine speed, to be everywhere turning out the generations of humanity like uniform iron castings—all of which, as compared with the feudal ages, we can yet do nothing better than accept, make the best of, and even welcome, upon the whole, for their oceanic practical grandeur, and their restless wholesale kneading of the masses—I say of all this tremendous and dominant play of solely materialistic bearings upon current life in the United States, with the results as already seen, accumulating, and reaching far into the future, that they must either be confronted and met by at least an equally subtle and tremendous force-infusion for purposes of spiritualization, for the pure conscience, for genuine esthetics, and for absolute and primal manliness and womanliness—or else our modern civilization, with all its improvements, is in vain, and we are on the road to a destiny, a status, equivalent, in its real world, to that of the fabled damned.

Prospecting thus the coming unsped days, and that new order in them—marking the endless train of exercise, development, unwind, in nation as in man, which life is for—we see, fore-indicated, amid these prospects and hopes, new law-forces of spoken and written language—not merely the pedagogue-forms, correct, regular, familiar with precedents, made for matters of outside propriety, fine words, thoughts definitely told out—but a language fann'd by the breath of Nature, which leaps overhead, cares mostly for impetus and effects, and for what it plants and invigorates to grow—tallies life and character, and seldomer tells a thing than suggests or necessitates it. In fact, a new theory of literary composition for imaginative works of the very first class, and especially for highest poems, is the sole course open to these States. Books are to be call'd for, and supplied, on the assumption that the process of reading is not a half-sleep, but, in highest sense, an exercise, a gymnast's struggle; that the reader is to do something for himself, must be on the alert, must himself or herself construct indeed the poem, argument, history, metaphysical essay—the text furnishing the hints, the clue, the start or frame-work. Not the

book needs so much to get the complete thing, but the reader of the book does. That were to make a nation of supple and athletic minds, well-train'd, intuitive, used to depend on themselves, and not on a few coteries of writers.

Investigating here, we see, not that it is a little thing we have, in having the bequeath'd libraries, countless shelves of volumes, records, &c.; yet how serious the danger, depending entirely on them, of the bloodless vein, the nerveless arm, the false application, at second or third hand. We see that the real interest of this people of ours in the theology, history, poetry, politics, and personal models of the past, (the British islands, for instance, and indeed all the past,) is not necessarily to mould ourselves or our literature upon them, but to attain fuller, more definite comparisons, warnings, and the insight to ourselves, our own present and our own far grander, different, future history, religion, social customs, &c. We see that almost everything that has been written, sung, or stated, of old, with reference to humanity under the feudal and oriental institutes, religions, and for other lands, needs to be re-written, re-sung, re-stated, in terms consistent with the institution of these States, and to come in range and obedient uniformity with them.

We see, as in the universes of the material kosmos, after meteorological, vegetable, and animal cycles, man at last arises, born through them, to prove them, concentrate them, to turn upon them with wonder and love—to command them, adorn them, and carry them upward into superior realms—so, out of the series of the preceding social and political universes, now arise these States. We see that while many were supposing things established and completed, really the grandest things always remain; and discover that the work of the New World is not ended, but only fairly begun.

We see our land, America, her literature, esthetics, &c., as, substantially, the getting in form, or effusement and statement, of deepest basic elements and loftiest final meanings, of history and man—and the portrayal, (under the eternal laws and conditions of beauty,) of our own physiognomy, the subjective tie and expression of the objective, as from our own combination, continuation, and points of view—and the deposit and record

of the national mentality, character, appeals, heroism, wars, and even liberties—where these, and all, culminate in native literary and artistic formulation, to be perpetuated; and not having which native, first-class formulation, she will flounder about, and her other, however imposing, eminent greatness, prove merely a passing gleam; but truly having which, she will understand herself, live nobly, nobly contribute, emanate, and, swinging, poised safely on herself, illumin'd and illuming, become a full-form'd world, and divine Mother not only of material but spiritual worlds, in ceaseless succession through time—the main thing being the average, the bodily, the concrete, the democratic, the popular, on which all the superstructures of the future are to permanently rest.

# FROM SPECIMEN DAYS

## A Happy Hour's Command.

*Down in the Woods, July 2d, 1882.*—If I do it at all I must delay no longer. Incongruous and full of skips and jumps as is that huddle of diary-jottings, war-memoranda of 1862-'65, Nature-notes of 1877-'81, with Western and Canadian observations afterwards, all bundled up and tied by a big string, the resolution and indeed mandate comes to me this day, this hour,—(and what a day! what an hour just passing! the luxury of riant grass and blowing breeze, with all the shows of sun and sky and perfect temperature, never before so filling me body and soul)—to go home, untie the bundle, reel out diary-scrap and memoranda, just as they are, large or small, one after another, into print-pages,\* and let the melange's lackings and wants of connection take care of themselves. It will illustrate one phase of humanity anyhow; how few of life's days and hours (and they not by relative value or proportion, but by chance) are ever noted. Probably another point too, how we give long preparations for some object, planning and delving and fashioning, and

\*The pages from [463 to 480] are nearly verbatim an off-hand letter of mine in January, 1882, to an insisting friend. Following, I give some gloomy experiences. The war of attempted secession has, of course, been the distinguishing event of my time. I commenced at the close of 1862, and continued steadily through '63, '64, and '65, to visit the sick and wounded of the army, both on the field and in the hospitals in and around Washington city. From the first I kept little note-books for impromptu jottings in pencil to refresh my memory of names and circumstances, and what was specially wanted, &c. In these I brief'd cases, persons, sights, occurrences in camp, by the bedside, and not seldom by the corpses of the dead. Some were scratch'd down from narratives I heard and itemized while watching, or waiting, or tending somebody amid those scenes. I have dozens of such little note-books left, forming a special history of those years, for myself alone, full of associations never to be possibly said or sung. I wish I could convey to the reader the associations that attach to these soil'd and creas'd livraisons, each composed of a sheet or two of paper,

then, when the actual hour for doing arrives, find ourselves still quite unprepared, and tumble the thing together, letting hurry and crudeness tell the story better than fine work. At any rate I obey my happy hour's command, which seems curiously imperative. May-be, if I don't do anything else, I shall send out the most wayward, spontaneous, fragmentary book ever printed.

### Answer to an Insisting Friend.

You ask for items, details of my early life—of genealogy and parentage, particularly of the women of my ancestry, and of its far back Netherlands stock on the maternal side—of the region where I was born and raised, and my father and mother before me, and theirs before them—with a word about Brooklyn and New York cities, the times I lived there as lad and young man.

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folded small to carry in the pocket, and fasten'd with a pin. I leave them just as I threw them by after the war, blotch'd here and there with more than one blood-stain, hurriedly written, sometimes at the clinique, not seldom amid the excitement of uncertainty, or defeat, or of action, or getting ready for it, or a march. Most of the pages from [487 to 556] are verbatim copies of those lurid and blood-smutch'd little note-books.

Very different are most of the memoranda that follow. Some time after the war ended I had a paralytic stroke, which prostrated me for several years. In 1876 I began to get over the worst of it. From this date, portions of several seasons, especially summers, I spent at a secluded haunt down in Camden county, New Jersey—Timber creek, quite a little river (it enters from the great Delaware, twelve miles away)—with primitive solitudes, winding stream, re-cluse and woody banks, sweet-feeding springs, and all the charms that birds, grass, wild-flowers, rabbits and squirrels, old oaks, walnut trees, &c., can bring. Through these times, and on these spots, the diary from page [556] onward was mostly written.

The COLLECT afterward gathers up the odds and ends of whatever pieces I can now lay hands on, written at various times past, and swoops all together like fish in a net.

I suppose I publish and leave the whole gathering, first, from that eternal tendency to perpetuate and preserve which is behind all Nature, authors included; second, to symbolize two or three specimen interiors, personal and other, out of the myriads of my time, the middle range of the Nineteenth century in the New World; a strange, unloosen'd, wondrous time. But the book is probably without any definite purpose that can be told in a statement.



You say you want to get at these details mainly as the go-befores and embryos of "Leaves of Grass." Very good; you shall have at least some specimens of them all. I have often thought of the meaning of such things—that one can only encompass and complete matters of that kind by exploring behind, perhaps very far behind, themselves directly, and so into their genesis, antecedents, and cumulative stages. Then as luck would have it, I lately whiled away the tedium of a week's half-sickness and confinement, by collating these very items for another (yet unfulfill'd, probably abandon'd,) purpose; and if you will be satisfied with them, authentic in date-occurrence and fact simply, and told my own way, garrulous-like, here they are. I shall not hesitate to make extracts, for I catch at any thing to save labor; but those will be the best versions of what I want to convey.

#### Genealogy—Van Velsor and Whitman.

The later years of the last century found the Van Velsor family, my mother's side, living on their own farm at Cold Spring, Long Island, New York State, near the eastern edge of Queens county, about a mile from the harbor.\* My father's side—probably the fifth generation from the first English arrivals in New England—were at the same time farmers on their own land—(and a fine domain it was, 500 acres, all good soil, gently sloping east and south, about one-tenth woods, plenty of grand old trees,) two or three miles off, at West Hills, Suffolk county. The Whitman name in the Eastern States, and so branching West and South, starts undoubtedly from one John Whitman, born 1602, in Old England, where he grew up, married, and his eldest son was born in 1629. He came over in the "True Love" in 1640 to America, and lived in Weymouth, Mass.,

\*Long Island was settled first on the west end by the Dutch, from Holland, then on the east end by the English—the dividing line of the two nationalities being a little west of Huntington, where my father's folks lived, and where I was born.

which place became the mother-hive of the New-Englanders of the name: he died in 1692. His brother, Rev. Zechariah Whitman, also came over in the "True Love," either at that time or soon after, and lived at Milford, Conn. A son of this Zechariah, named Joseph, migrated to Huntington, Long Island, and permanently settled there. Savage's "Genealogical Dictionary" (vol. iv, p. 524) gets the Whitman family establish'd at Huntington, per this Joseph, before 1664. It is quite certain that from that beginning, and from Joseph, the West Hill Whitmans, and all others in Suffolk county, have since radiated, myself among the number. John and Zechariah both went to England and back again divers times; they had large families, and several of their children were born in the old country. We hear of the father of John and Zechariah, Abijah Whitman, who goes over into the 1500's, but we know little about him, except that he also was for some time in America.

These old pedigree-remembrances come up to me vividly from a visit I made not long since (in my 63d year) to West Hills, and to the burial grounds of my ancestry, both sides. I extract from notes of that visit, written there and then:

### The Old Whitman and Van Velsor Cemeteries.

*July 29, 1881.*—After more than forty years' absence, (except a brief visit, to take my father there once more, two years before he died,) went down Long Island on a week's jaunt to the place where I was born, thirty miles from New York city. Rode around the old familiar spots, viewing and pondering and dwelling long upon them, everything coming back to me. Went to the old Whitman homestead on the upland and took a view eastward, inclining south, over the broad and beautiful farm lands of my grandfather (1780,) and my father. There was the new house (1810,) the big oak a hundred and fifty or two hundred years old; there the well, the sloping kitchen-garden, and a little way off even the well-kept remains of the dwelling of my great-grandfather (1750-'60) still standing, with its mighty timbers and low ceilings. Near by, a stately grove of tall, vigorous black-walnuts, beautiful, Apollo-like, the sons or grandsons,

no doubt, of black-walnuts during or before 1776. On the other side of the road spread the famous apple orchard, over twenty acres, the trees planted by hands long mouldering in the grave (my uncle Jesse's,) but quite many of them evidently capable of throwing out their annual blossoms and fruit yet.

I now write these lines seated on an old grave (doubtless of a century since at least) on the burial hill of the Whitmans of many generations. Fifty and more graves are quite plainly traceable, and as many more decay'd out of all form—depress'd mounds, crumbled and broken stones, cover'd with moss—the gray and sterile hill, the clumps of chestnuts outside, the silence, just varied by the southing wind. There is always the deepest eloquence of sermon or poem in any of these ancient graveyards of which Long Island has so many; so what must this one have been to me? My whole family history, with its succession of links, from the first settlement down to date, told here—three centuries concentrate on this sterile acre.

The next day, July 30, I devoted to the maternal locality, and if possible was still more penetrated and impress'd. I write this paragraph on the burial hill of the Van Velsors, near Cold Spring, the most significant depository of the dead that could be imagin'd, without the slightest help from art, but far ahead of it, soil sterile, a mostly bare plateau-flat of half an acre, the top of a hill, brush and well grown trees and dense woods bordering all around, very primitive, secluded, no visitors, no road (you cannot drive here, you have to bring the dead on foot, and follow on foot.) Two or three-score graves quite plain; as many more almost rubb'd out. My grandfather Cornelius and my grandmother Amy (Naomi) and numerous relatives nearer or remoter, on my mother's side, lie buried here. The scene as I stood or sat, the delicate and wild odor of the woods, a slightly drizzling rain, the emotional atmosphere of the place, and the inferr'd reminiscences, were fitting accompaniments.

### The Maternal Homestead.

I went down from this ancient grave place eighty or ninety rods to the site of the Van Velsor homestead, where my mother was

born (1795,) and where every spot had been familiar to me as a child and youth (1825-'40.) Then stood there a long rambling, dark-gray, shingle-sided house, with sheds, pens, a great barn, and much open road-space. Now of all those not a vestige left; all had been pull'd down, erased, and the plough and harrow pass'd over foundations, road-spaces and everything, for many summers; fenced in at present, and grain and clover growing like any other fine fields. Only a big hole from the cellar, with some little heaps of broken stone, green with grass and weeds, identified the place. Even the copious old brook and spring seem'd to have mostly dwindled away. The whole scene, with what it arous'd, memories of my young days there half a century ago, the vast kitchen and ample fireplace and the sitting-room adjoining, the plain furniture, the meals, the house full of merry people, my grandmother Amy's sweet old face in its Quaker cap, my grandfather "the Major," jovial, red, stout, with sonorous voice and characteristic physiognomy, with the actual sights themselves, made the most pronounc'd half-day's experience of my whole jaunt.

For there with all those wooded, hilly, healthy surroundings, my dearest mother, Louisa Van Velsor, grew up—(her mother, Amy Williams, of the Friends' or Quakers' denomination—the Williams family, seven sisters and one brother—the father and brother sailors, both of whom met their deaths at sea.) The Van Velsor people were noted for fine horses, which the men bred and train'd from blooded stock. My mother, as a young woman, was a daily and daring rider. As to the head of the family himself, the old race of the Netherlands, so deeply grafted on Manhattan island and in Kings and Queens counties, never yielded a more mark'd and full Americanized specimen than Major Cornelius Van Velsor.

### Two Old Family Interiors.

Of the domestic and inside life of the middle of Long Island, at and just before that time, here are two samples:

"The Whitmans, at the beginning of the present century, lived in a long story-and-a-half farm-house, hugely timber'd, which is

still standing. A great smoke-canopied kitchen, with vast hearth and chimney, form'd one end of the house. The existence of slavery in New York at that time, and the possession by the family of some twelve or fifteen slaves, house and field servants, gave things quite a patriarchal look. The very young darkies could be seen, a swarm of them, toward sundown, in this kitchen, squatted in a circle on the floor, eating their supper of Indian pudding and milk. In the house, and in food and furniture, all was rude, but substantial. No carpets or stoves were known, and no coffee, and tea or sugar only for the women. Rousing wood fires gave both warmth and light on winter nights. Pork, poultry, beef, and all the ordinary vegetables and grains were plentiful. Cider was the men's common drink, and used at meals. The clothes were mainly homespun. Journeys were made by both men and women on horseback. Both sexes labor'd with their own hands—the men on the farm—the women in the house and around it. Books were scarce. The annual copy of the almanac was a treat, and was pored over through the long winter evenings. I must not forget to mention that both these families were near enough to the sea to behold it from the high places, and to hear in still hours the roar of the surf; the latter, after a storm, giving a peculiar sound at night. Then all hands, male and female, went down frequently on beach and bathing parties, and the men on practical expeditions for cutting salt hay, and for clamming and fishing.”—*John Burrough's* NOTES.

“The ancestors of Walt Whitman, on both the paternal and maternal sides, kept a good table, sustain'd the hospilities, decors, and an excellent social reputation in the county, and they were often of mark'd individuality. If space permitted, I should consider some of the men worthy special description; and still more some of the women. His great-grandmother on the paternal side, for instance, was a large swarthy woman, who lived to a very old age. She smoked tobacco, rode on horseback like a man, managed the most vicious horse, and, becoming a widow in later life, went forth every day over her farm-lands, frequently in the saddle, directing the labor of her slaves, with language in which, on exciting occasions, oaths were not spared. The two immediate grandmothers were, in the best sense, superior women. The ma-

ternal one (Amy Williams before marriage) was a Friend, or Quakeress, of sweet, sensible character, housewifely proclivities, and deeply intuitive and spiritual. The other, (Hannah Brush,) was an equally noble, perhaps stronger character, lived to be very old, had quite a family of sons, was a natural lady, was in early life a school-mistress, and had great solidity of mind. W. W. himself makes much of the women in his ancestry.”—*The same*.

Out from these arrieres of persons and scenes, I was born May 31, 1819. And now to dwell awhile on the locality itself— as the successive growth-stages of my infancy, childhood, youth and manhood were all pass'd on Long Island, which I sometimes feel as if I had incorporated. I roam'd, as boy and man, and have lived in nearly all parts, from Brooklyn to Montauk point.

### Paumanok, and My Life on It as Child and Young Man.

Worth fully and particularly investigating indeed this Paumanok, (to give the spot its aboriginal name,\*) stretching east through Kings, Queens and Suffolk counties, 120 miles altogether— on the north Long Island sound, a beautiful, varied and picturesque series of inlets, “necks” and sea-like expansions, for a hundred miles to Orient point. On the ocean side the great south bay dotted with countless hummocks, mostly small, some quite large, occasionally long bars of sand out two hundred rods to a mile-and-a-half from the shore. While now and then, as at Rockaway and far east along the Hamptons, the beach makes right on the island, the sea dashing up without intervention. Several light-houses on the shores east; a long his-

\*“Paumanok, (or Paumanake, or Paumanack, the Indian name of Long Island,) over a hundred miles long; shaped like a fish—plenty of sea shore, sandy, stormy, uninviting, the horizon boundless, the air too strong for invalids, the bays a wonderful resort for aquatic birds, the south-side meadows cover'd with salt hay, the soil of the island generally tough, but good for the locust-tree, the apple orchard, and the blackberry, and with numberless springs of the sweetest water in the world. Years ago, among the bay-men—a strong, wild race, now extinct, or rather entirely changed—a native of Long Island was called a *Paumanacker*, or *Creole-Paumanacker*.”—*John Burroughs*.

tory of wrecks tragedies, some even of late years. As a youngster, I was in the atmosphere and traditions of many of these wrecks—of one or two almost an observer. Off Hempstead beach for example, was the loss of the ship “Mexico” in 1840, (alluded to in “the Sleepers” in L. of G.) And at Hampton, some years later, the destruction of the brig “Elizabeth,” a fearful affair, in one of the worst winter gales, where Margaret Fuller went down, with her husband and child.

Inside the outer bars or beach this south bay is everywhere comparatively shallow; of cold winters all thick ice on the surface. As a boy I often went forth with a chum or two, on those frozen fields, with hand-sled, axe and eel-spear, after messes of eels. We would cut holes in the ice, sometimes striking quite an eel-bonanza, and filling our baskets with great, fat, sweet, white-meated fellows. The scenes, the ice, drawing the hand-sled, cutting holes, spearing the eels, &c., were of course just such fun as is dearest to boyhood. The shores of this bay, winter and summer, and my doings there in early life, are woven all through L. of G. One sport I was very fond of was to go on a bay-party in summer to gather sea-gull’s eggs. (The gulls lay two or three eggs, more than half the size of hen’s eggs, right on the sand, and leave the sun’s heat to hatch them.)

The eastern end of Long Island, the Peconic bay region, I knew quite well too—sail’d more than once around Shelter Island, and down to Montauk—spent many an hour on Turtle hill by the old light-house, on the extreme point, looking out over the ceaseless roll of the Atlantic. I used to like to go down there and fraternize with the blue-fishers, or the annual squads of sea-bass takers. Sometimes, along Montauk peninsula, (it is some 15 miles long, and good grazing,) met the strange, unkempt, half-barbarous herdsmen, at that time living there entirely aloof from society or civilization, in charge, on those rich pasturages, of vast droves of horses, kine or sheep, own’d by farmers of the eastern towns. Sometimes, too, the few remaining Indians, or half-breeds, at that period left on Montauk peninsula, but now I believe altogether extinct.

More in the middle of the island were the spreading Hempstead plains, then (1830-’40) quite prairie-like, open, uninhab-

ited, rather sterile, cover'd with kill-calf and huckleberry bushes, yet plenty of fair pasture for the cattle, mostly milch-cows, who fed there by hundreds, even thousands, and at evening, (the plains too were own'd by the towns, and this was the use of them in common,) might be seen taking their way home, branching off regularly in the right places. I have often been out on the edges of these plains toward sundown, and can yet recall in fancy the interminable cow processions, and hear the music of the tin or copper bells clanking far or near, and breathe the cool of the sweet and slightly aromatic evening air, and note the sunset.

Through the same region of the island, but further east, extended wide central tracts of pine and scrub-oak, (charcoal was largely made here,) monotonous and sterile. But many a good day or half-day did I have, wandering through those solitary cross-roads, inhaling the peculiar and wild aroma. Here, and all along the island and its shores, I spent intervals many years, all seasons, sometimes riding, sometimes boating, but generally afoot, (I was always then a good walker,) absorbing fields, shores, marine incidents, characters, the bay-men, farmers, pilots—always had a plentiful acquaintance with the latter, and with fishermen—went every summer on sailing trips—always liked the bare sea-beach, south side, and have some of my happiest hours on it to this day.

As I write, the whole experience comes back to me after the lapse of forty and more years—the soothing rustle of the waves, and the saline smell—boyhood's times, the clam-digging, bare-foot, and with trowsers roll'd up—hauling down the creek—the perfume of the sedge-meadows—the hay-boat, and the chowder and fishing excursions;—or, of later years, little voyages down and out New York bay, in the pilot boats. Those same later years, also, while living in Brooklyn, (1836-'50) I went regularly every week in the mild seasons down to Coney island, at that time a long, bare unfrequented shore, which I had all to myself, and where I loved, after bathing, to race up and down the hard sand, and declaim Homer or Shakspeare to the surf and sea-gulls by the hour. But I am getting ahead too rapidly, and must keep more in my traces.



### My First Reading.—Lafayette.

From 1824 to '28 our family lived in Brooklyn in Front, Cranberry and Johnson streets. In the latter my father built a nice house for a home, and afterwards another in Tillary street. We occupied them, one after the other, but they were mortgaged, and we lost them. I yet remember Lafayette's visit.\* Most of these years I went to the public schools. It must have been about 1829 or '30 that I went with my father and mother to hear Elias Hicks preach in a ball-room on Brooklyn heights. At about the same time employ'd as a boy in an office, lawyers', father and two sons, Clarke's, Fulton street, near Orange. I had a nice desk and window-nook to myself; Edward C. kindly help'd me at my handwriting and composition, and, (the signal event of my life up to that time,) subscribed for me to a big circulating library. For a time I now revel'd in romance-reading of all kinds; first, the "Arabian Nights," all the volumes, an amazing treat. Then, with sorties in very many other directions, took in Walter Scott's novels, one after another, and his poetry, (and continue to enjoy novels and poetry to this day.)

### Printing Office.—Old Brooklyn.

After about two years went to work in a weekly newspaper and printing office, to learn the trade. The paper was the "Long Island Patriot," owned by S. E. Clements, who was also postmaster. An old printer in the office, William Hartshorne, a revolutionary character, who had seen Washington, was a spe-

\*"On the visit of General Lafayette to this country, in 1824, he came over to Brooklyn in state, and rode through the city. The children of the schools turn'd out to join in the welcome. An edifice for a free public library for youths was just then commencing, and Lafayette consented to stop on his way and lay the corner-stone. Numerous children arriving on the ground, where a huge irregular excavation for the building was already dug, surrounded with heaps of rough stone, several gentlemen assisted in lifting the children to safe or convenient spots to see the ceremony. Among the rest, Lafayette, also helping the children, took up the five-year-old Walt Whitman, and pressing the child a moment to his breast, and giving him a kiss, handed him down to a safe spot in the excavation."—*John Burroughs*.

cial friend of mine, and I had many a talk with him about long past times. The apprentices, including myself, boarded with his grand-daughter. I used occasionally to go out riding with the boss, who was very kind to us boys; Sundays he took us all to a great old rough, fortress-looking stone church, on Joralemon street, near where the Brooklyn city hall now is—(at that time broad fields and country roads everywhere around.\*) Afterward I work'd on the "Long Island Star," Alden Spooner's paper. My father all these years pursuing his trade as carpenter and builder, with varying fortune. There was a growing family of children—eight of us—my brother Jesse the oldest, myself the second, my dear sisters Mary and Hannah Louisa, my brothers Andrew, George, Thomas Jefferson, and then my youngest brother, Edward, born 1835, and always badly crippled, as I am myself of late years.

### Growth—Health—Work.

I develop'd (1833-4-5) into a healthy, strong youth (grew too fast, though, was nearly as big as a man at 15 or 16.) Our family at this period moved back to the country, my dear mother very ill for a long time, but recover'd. All these years I was down Long Island more or less every summer, now east, now west, sometimes months at a stretch. At 16, 17, and so on, was

\*Of the Brooklyn of that time (1830-40) hardly anything remains, except the lines of the old streets. The population was then between ten and twelve thousand. For a mile Fulton street was lined with magnificent elm trees. The character of the place was thoroughly rural. As a sample of comparative values, it may be mention'd that twenty-five acres in what is now the most costly part of the city, bounded by Flatbush and Fulton avenues, were then bought by Mr. Parmentier, a French *émigré*, for \$4000. Who remembers the old places as they were? Who remembers the old citizens of that time? Among the former were Smith & Wood's, Coe Downing's, and other public houses at the ferry, the old Ferry itself, Love lane, the Heights as then, the Wallabout with the wooden bridge, and the road out beyond Fulton street to the old toll-gate. Among the latter were the majestic and genial General Jeremiah Johnson, with others, Gabriel Furman, Rev. E. M. Johnson, Alden Spooner, Mr. Pierrepont, Mr. Joralemon, Samuel Willoughby, Jonathan Trotter, George Hall, Cyrus P. Smith, N. B. Morse, John Dikeman, Adrian Hegeman, William Udall, and old Mr. Duflon, with his military garden.

fond of debating societies, and had an active membership with them, off and on, in Brooklyn and one or two country towns on the island. A most omnivorous novel-reader, these and later years, devour'd everything I could get. Fond of the theatre, also, in New York, went whenever I could—sometimes witnessing fine performances.

1836–7, work'd as compositor in printing offices in New York city. Then, when little more than eighteen, and for a while afterwards, went to teaching country schools down in Queens and Suffolk counties, Long Island, and “boarded round.” (This latter I consider one of my best experiences and deepest lessons in human nature behind the scenes, and in the masses.) In '39, '40, I started and publish'd a weekly paper in my native town, Huntington. Then returning to New York city and Brooklyn, work'd on as printer and writer, mostly prose, but an occasional shy at “poetry.”

### My Passion for Ferries.

Living in Brooklyn or New York city from this time forward, my life then, and still more the following years, was curiously identified with Fulton ferry, already becoming the greatest of its sort in the world for general importance, volume, variety, rapidity, and picturesqueness. Almost daily, later, ('50 to '60,) I cross'd on the boats, often up in the pilot-houses where I could get a full sweep, absorbing shows, accompaniments, surroundings. What oceanic currents, eddies, underneath—the great tides of humanity also, with ever-shifting movements. Indeed, I have always had a passion for ferries; to me they afford inimitable, streaming, never-failing, living poems. The river and bay scenery, all about New York island, any time of a fine day—the hurrying, splashing sea-tides—the changing panorama of steamers, all sizes, often a string of big ones outward bound to distant ports—the myriads of white-sail'd schooners, sloops, skiffs, and the marvellously beautiful yachts—the majestic sound boats as they rounded the Battery and came along towards 5, afternoon, eastward bound—the prospect off toward Staten island, or down the Narrows, or the other way up the Hudson—what

refreshment of spirit such sights and experiences gave me years ago (and many a time since.) My old pilot friends, the Balsirs, Johnny Cole, Ira Smith, William White, and my young ferry friend, Tom Gere—how well I remember them all.

### Broadway Sights.

Besides Fulton ferry, off and on for years, I knew and frequented Broadway—that noted avenue of New York's crowded and mixed humanity, and of so many notables. Here I saw, during those times, Andrew Jackson, Webster, Clay, Seward, Martin Van Buren, filibuster Walker, Kossuth, Fitz Greene Halleck, Bryant, the Prince of Wales, Charles Dickens, the first Japanese ambassadors, and lots of other celebrities of the time. Always something novel or inspiring; yet mostly to me the hurrying and vast amplitude of those never-ending human currents. I remember seeing James Fenimore Cooper in a court-room in Chambers street, back of the city hall, where he was carrying on a law case—(I think it was a charge of libel he had brought against some one.) I also remember seeing Edgar A. Poe, and having a short interview with him, (it must have been in 1845 or '6,) in his office, second story of a corner building, (Duane or Pearl street.) He was editor and owner or part owner of "the Broadway Journal." The visit was about a piece of mine he had publish'd. Poe was very cordial, in a quiet way, appear'd well in person, dress, &c. I have a distinct and pleasing remembrance of his looks, voice, manner and matter; very kindly and human, but subdued, perhaps a little jaded. For another of my reminiscences, here on the west side, just below Houston street, I once saw (it must have been about 1832, of a sharp, bright January day) a bent, feeble but stout-built very old man, bearded, swathed in rich furs, with a great ermine cap on his head, led and assisted, almost carried, down the steps of his high front stoop (a dozen friends and servants, emulous, carefully holding, guiding him) and then lifted and tuck'd in a gorgeous sleigh, envelop'd in other furs, for a ride. The sleigh was drawn by as fine a team of horses as I ever saw. (You needn't think all the best animals are brought up nowadays; never was

such horseflesh as fifty years ago on Long Island, or south, or in New York city; folks look'd for spirit and mettle in a nag, not tame speed merely.) Well, I, a boy of perhaps thirteen or fourteen, stopp'd and gazed long at the spectacle of that fur-swathed old man, surrounded by friends and servants, and the careful seating of him in the sleigh. I remember the spirited, champing horses, the driver with his whip, and a fellow-driver by his side, for extra prudence. The old man, the subject of so much attention, I can almost see now. It was John Jacob Astor.

The years 1846, '47, and there along, see me still in New York city, working as writer and printer, having my usual good health, and a good time generally.

### Omnibus Jaunts and Drivers.

One phase of those days must by no means go unrecorded—namely, the Broadway omnibuses, with their drivers. The vehicles still (I write this paragraph in 1881) give a portion of the character of Broadway—the Fifth avenue, Madison avenue, and Twenty-third street lines yet running. But the flush days of the old Broadway stages, characteristic and copious, are over. The Yellow-birds, the Red-birds, the original Broadway, the Fourth avenue, the Knickerbocker, and a dozen others of twenty or thirty years ago, are all gone. And the men specially identified with them, and giving vitality and meaning to them—the drivers—a strange, natural, quick-eyed and wondrous race—(not only Rabelais and Cervantes would have gloated upon them, but Homer and Shakspeare would)—how well I remember them, and must here give a word about them. How many hours, forenoons and afternoons—how many exhilarating night-times I have had—perhaps June or July, in cooler air—riding the whole length of Broadway, listening to some yarn, (and the most vivid yarns ever spun, and the rarest mimicry)—or perhaps I declaiming some stormy passage from Julius Caesar or Richard, (you could roar as loudly as you chose in that heavy, dense, uninterrupted street-bass.) Yes, I knew all the drivers then, Broadway Jack, Dressmaker, Balky Bill, George Storms, Old Elephant, his brother Young Elephant

(who came afterward,) Tippy, Pop Rice, Big Frank, Yellow Joe, Pete Callahan, Patsy Dee, and dozens more; for there were hundreds. They had immense qualities, largely animal—eating, drinking, women—great personal pride, in their way—perhaps a few slouches here and there, but I should have trusted the general run of them, in their simple good-will and honor, under all circumstances. Not only for comradeship, and sometimes affection—great studies I found them also. (I suppose the critics will laugh heartily, but the influence of those Broadway omnibus jaunts and drivers and declamations and escapades undoubtedly enter'd into the gestation of "Leaves of Grass.")

### Plays and Operas Too.

And certain actors and singers, had a good deal to do with the business. All through these years, off and on, I frequented the old Park, the Bowery, Broadway and Chatham-square theatres, and the Italian operas at Chambers-street, Astor-place or the Battery—many seasons was on the free list, writing for papers even as quite a youth. The old Park theatre—what names, reminiscences, the words bring back! Placide, Clarke, Mrs. Vernon, Fisher, Clara F., Mrs. Wood, Mrs. Seguin, Ellen Tree, Hackett, the younger Kean, Macready, Mrs. Richardson, Rice—singers, tragedians, comedians. What perfect acting! Henry Placide in "Napoleon's Old Guard" or "Grandfather Whitehead,"—or "the Provoked Husband" of Cibber, with Fanny Kemble as Lady Townley—or Sheridan Knowles in his own "Virginius"—or inimitable Power in "Born to Good Luck." These, and many more, the years of youth and onward. Fanny Kemble—name to conjure up great mimic scenes withal—perhaps the greatest. I remember well her rendering of Bianca in "Fazio," and Marianna in "the Wife." Nothing finer did ever stage exhibit—the veterans of all nations said so, and my boyish heart and head felt it in every minute cell. The lady was just matured, strong, better than merely beautiful, born from the footlights, had had three years' practice in London and through the British towns, and then she came to give America that young maturity and roseate power in all their noon, or rather forenoon, flush. It

was my good luck to see her nearly every night she play'd at the old Park—certainly in all her principal characters.

I heard, these years, well render'd, all the Italian and other operas in vogue, "Sonnambula," "the Puritans," "Der Freischutz," "Huguenots," "Fille d'Regiment," "Faust," "Etoile du Nord," "Poliuto," and others. Verdi's "Ernani," "Rigoletto," and "Trovatore," with Donizetti's "Lucia" or "Favorita" or "Lucrezia," and Auber's "Massaniello," or Rossini's "William Tell" and "Gazza Ladra," were among my special enjoyments. I heard Alboni every time she sang in New York and vicinity—also Grisi, the tenor Mario, and the baritone Badiali, the finest in the world.

This musical passion follow'd my theatrical one. As boy or young man I had seen, (reading them carefully the day beforehand,) quite all Shakspeare's acting dramas, play'd wonderfully well. Even yet I cannot conceive anything finer than old Booth in "Richard Third," or "Lear," (I don't know which was best,) or Iago, (or Pescara, or Sir Giles Overreach, to go outside of Shakspeare)—or Tom Hamblin in "Macbeth"—or old Clarke, either as the ghost in "Hamlet," or as Prospero in "the Tempest," with Mrs. Austin as Ariel, and Peter Richings as Caliban. Then other dramas, and fine players in them, Forrest as Metamora or Damon or Brutus—John R. Scott as Tom Cringle or Rolla—or Charlotte Cushman's Lady Gay Spanker in "London Assurance." Then of some years later, at Castle Garden, Battery, I yet recall the splendid seasons of the Havana musical troupe under Maretzek—the fine band, the cool sea-breezes, the unsurpass'd vocalism—Steffanone, Bosio, Truffi, Marini in "Marino Faliero," "Don Pasquale," or "Favorita." No better playing or singing ever in New York. It was here too I afterward heard Jenny Lind. (The Battery—its past associations—what tales those old trees and walks and sea-walls could tell!)

### Through Eight Years.

In 1848, '49, I was occupied as editor of the "daily Eagle" newspaper, in Brooklyn. The latter year went off on a leisurely journey and working expedition (my brother Jeff with me)

through all the middle States, and down the Ohio and Mississippi rivers. Lived awhile in New Orleans, and work'd there on the editorial staff of "daily Crescent" newspaper. After a time plodded back northward, up the Mississippi, and around to, and by way of the great lakes, Michigan, Huron, and Erie, to Niagara falls and lower Canada, finally returning through central New York and down the Hudson; traveling altogether probably 8000 miles this trip, to and fro. '51, '53, occupied in house-building in Brooklyn. (For a little of the first part of that time in printing a daily and weekly paper, "the Freeman.") '55, lost my dear father this year by death. Commenced putting "Leaves of Grass" to press for good, at the job printing office of my friends, the brothers Rome, in Brooklyn, after many MS. doings and undosings—(I had great trouble in leaving out the stock "poetical" touches, but succeeded at last.) I am now (1856-'7) passing through my 37th year.

#### Sources of Character—Results—1860.

To sum up the foregoing from the outset (and, of course, far, far more unrecorded,) I estimate three leading sources and formative stamps to my own character, now solidified for good or bad, and its subsequent literary and other outgrowth—the maternal nativity-stock brought hither from far-away Netherlands, for one, (doubtless the best)—the subterranean tenacity and central bony structure (obstinacy, wilfulness) which I get from my paternal English elements, for another—and the combination of my Long Island birth-spot, sea-shores, childhood's scenes, absorptions, with teeming Brooklyn and New York—with, I suppose, my experiences afterward in the secession outbreak, for the third.

For, in 1862, startled by news that my brother George, an officer in the 51st New York volunteers, had been seriously wounded (first Fredericksburg battle, December 13th,) I hurriedly went down to the field of war in Virginia. But I must go back a little.



## Opening of the Secession War.

News of the attack on fort Sumter and *the flag* at Charleston harbor, S.C., was receiv'd in New York city late at night (13th April, 1861,) and was immediately sent out in extras of the newspapers. I had been to the opera in Fourteenth street that night, and after the performance was walking down Broadway toward twelve o'clock, on my way to Brooklyn, when I heard in the distance the loud cries of the newsboys, who came presently tearing and yelling up the street, rushing from side to side even more furiously than usual. I bought an extra and cross'd to the Metropolitan hotel (Niblo's) where the great lamps were still brightly blazing, and, with a crowd of others, who gather'd impromptu, read the news, which was evidently authentic. For the benefit of some who had no papers, one of us read the telegram aloud, while all listen'd silently and attentively. No remark was made by any of the crowd, which had increas'd to thirty or forty, but all stood a minute or two, I remember, before they dispers'd. I can almost see them there now, under the lamps at midnight again.

## National Uprising and Volunteering.

I have said somewhere that the three Presidentiads preceding 1861 show'd how the weakness and wickedness of rulers are just as eligible here in America under republican, as in Europe under dynastic influences. But what can I say of that prompt and splendid wrestling with secession slavery, the arch-enemy personified, the instant he unmistakably show'd his face? The volcanic upheaval of the nation, after that firing on the flag at Charleston, proved for certain something which had been previously in great doubt, and at once substantially settled the question of disunion. In my judgment it will remain as the grandest and most encouraging spectacle yet vouchsafed in any age, old or new, to political progress and democracy. It was not for what came to the surface merely—though that was important—but what it indicated below, which was of eternal importance.

Down in the abysses of New World humanity there had form'd and harden'd a primal hard-pan of national Union will, determin'd and in the majority, refusing to be tamper'd with or argued against, confronting all emergencies, and capable at any time of bursting all surface bonds, and breaking out like an earthquake. It is, indeed, the best lesson of the century, or of America, and it is a mighty privilege to have been part of it. (Two great spectacles, immortal proofs of democracy, unequal'd in all the history of the past, are furnish'd by the secession war—one at the beginning, the other at its close. Those are, the general, voluntary, arm'd upheaval, and the peaceful and harmonious disbanding of the armies in the summer of 1865.)

### Contemptuous Feeling.

Even after the bombardment of Sumter, however, the gravity of the revolt, and the power and will of the slave States for a strong and continued military resistance to national authority, were not at all realized at the North, except by a few. Nine-tenths of the people of the free States look'd upon the rebellion, as started in South Carolina, from a feeling one-half of contempt, and the other half composed of anger and incredulity. It was not thought it would be join'd in by Virginia, North Carolina, or Georgia. A great and cautious national official predicted that it would blow over "in sixty days," and folks generally believ'd the prediction. I remember talking about it on a Fulton ferry-boat with the Brooklyn mayor, who said he only "hoped the Southern fire-eaters would commit some overt act of resistance, as they would then be at once so effectually squelch'd, we would never hear of secession again—but he was afraid they never would have the pluck to really do anything." I remember, too, that a couple of companies of the Thirteenth Brooklyn, who rendezvou'd at the city armory, and started thence as thirty days' men, were all provided with pieces of rope, conspicuously tied to their musket barrels, with which to bring back each man a prisoner from the audacious South, to be led in a noose, on our men's early and triumphant return!

## Battle of Bull Run, July, 1861.

All this sort of feeling was destin'd to be arrested and revers'd by a terrible shock—the battle of first Bull Run—certainly, as we now know it, one of the most singular fights on record. (All battles, and their results, are far more matters of accident than is generally thought; but this was throughout a casualty, a chance. Each side supposed it had won, till the last moment. One had, in point of fact, just the same right to be routed as the other. By a fiction, or series of fictions, the national forces at the last moment exploded in a panic and fled from the field.) The defeated troops commenced pouring into Washington over the Long Bridge at daylight on Monday, 22d—day drizzling all through with rain. The Saturday and Sunday of the battle (20th, 21st,) had been parch'd and hot to an extreme—the dust, the grime and smoke, in layers, sweated in, follow'd by other layers again sweated in, absorb'd by those excited souls—their clothes all saturated with the clay-powder filling the air—stirr'd up everywhere on the dry roads and trodden fields by the regiments, swarming wagons, artillery, &c.—all the men with this coating of murk and sweat and rain, now recoiling back, pouring over the Long Bridge—a horrible march of twenty miles, returning to Washington baffled, humiliated, panic-struck. Where are the vaunts, and the proud boasts with which you went forth? Where are your banners, and your bands of music, and your ropes to bring back your prisoners? Well, there isn't a band playing—and there isn't a flag but clings ashamed and lank to its staff.

The sun rises, but shines not. The men appear, at first sparsely and shame-faced enough, then thicker, in the streets of Washington—appear in Pennsylvania avenue, and on the steps and basement entrances. They come along in disorderly mobs, some in squads, stragglers, companies. Occasionally, a rare regiment, in perfect order, with its officers (some gaps, dead, the true braves,) marching in silence, with lowering faces, stern, weary to sinking, all black and dirty, but every man with his musket, and stepping alive; but these are the exceptions. Side-

walks of Pennsylvania avenue, Fourteenth street, &c., crowded, jamm'd with citizens, darkies, clerks, everybody, lookers-on; women in the windows, curious expressions from faces, as those swarms of dirt-cover'd return'd soldiers there (will they never end?) move by; but nothing said, no comments; (half our lookers-on secesh of the most venomous kind—they say nothing; but the devil snickers in their faces.) During the forenoon Washington gets all over motley with these defeated soldiers—queer-looking objects, strange eyes and faces, drench'd (the steady rain drizzles on all day) and fearfully worn, hungry, haggard, blister'd in the feet. Good people (but not over-many of them either,) hurry up something for their grub. They put wash-kettles on the fire, for soup, for coffee. They set tables on the side-walks—wagon-loads of bread are purchas'd, swiftly cut in stout chunks. Here are two aged ladies, beautiful, the first in the city for culture and charm, they stand with store of eating and drink at an improvis'd table of rough plank, and give food, and have the store replenish'd from their house every half-hour all that day; and there in the rain they stand, active, silent, white-hair'd, and give food, though the tears stream down their cheeks, almost without intermission, the whole time. Amid the deep excitement, crowds and motion, and desperate eagerness, it seems strange to see many, very many, of the soldiers sleeping—in the midst of all, sleeping sound. They drop down anywhere, on the steps of houses, up close by the basements or fences, on the sidewalk, aside on some vacant lot, and deeply sleep. A poor seventeen or eighteen year old boy lies there, on the stoop of a grand house; he sleeps so calmly, so profoundly. Some clutch their muskets firmly even in sleep. Some in squads; comrades, brothers, close together—and on them, as they lay, sulkily drips the rain.

As afternoon pass'd, and evening came, the streets, the bar-rooms, knots everywhere, listeners, questioners, terrible yarns, bugaboo, mask'd batteries, our regiment all cut up, &c.—stories and story-tellers, windy, bragging, vain centres of street-crowds. Resolution, manliness, seem to have abandon'd Washington. The principal hotel, Willard's, is full of shoulder-straps—thick, crush'd, creeping with shoulder-straps. (I see

them, and must have a word with them. There you are, shoulder-straps!—but where are your companies? where are your men? Incompetents! never tell me of chances of battle, of getting stray'd, and the like. I think this is your work, this retreat, after all. Sneak, blow, put on airs there in Willard's sumptuous parlors and bar-rooms, or anywhere—no explanation shall save you. Bull Run is your work; had you been half or one-tenth worthy your men, this would never have happen'd.)

Meantime, in Washington, among the great persons and their entourage, a mixture of awful consternation, uncertainty, rage, shame, helplessness, and stupefying disappointment. The worst is not only imminent, but already here. In a few hours—perhaps before the next meal—the secesh generals, with their victorious hordes, will be upon us. The dream of humanity, the vaunted Union we thought so strong, so impregnable—lo! it seems already smash'd like a china plate. One bitter, bitter hour—perhaps proud America will never again know such an hour. She must pack and fly—no time to spare. Those white palaces—the dome-crown'd capitol there on the hill, so stately over the trees—shall they be left—or destroy'd first? For it is certain that the talk among certain of the magnates and officers and clerks and officials everywhere, for twenty-four hours in and around Washington after Bull Run, was loud and undisguised for yielding out and out, and substituting the southern rule, and Lincoln promptly abdicating and departing. If the secesh officers and forces had immediately follow'd, and by a bold Napoleonic movement had enter'd Washington the first day, (or even the second,) they could have had things their own way, and a powerful faction north to back them. One of our returning colonels express'd in public that night, amid a swarm of officers and gentlemen in a crowded room, the opinion that it was useless to fight, that the southerners had made their title clear, and that the best course for the national government to pursue was to desist from any further attempt at stopping them, and admit them again to the lead, on the best terms they were willing to grant. Not a voice was rais'd against this judgment, amid that large crowd of officers and gentlemen. (The fact is, the hour was one of the three or four of those crises we

had then and afterward, during the fluctuations of four years, when human eyes appear'd at least just as likely to see the last breath of the Union as to see it continue.)

### The Stupor Passes—Something Else Begins.

But the hour, the day, the night pass'd, and whatever returns, an hour, a day, a night like that can never again return. The President, recovering himself, begins that very night—sternly, rapidly sets about the task of reorganizing his forces, and placing himself in positions for future and surer work. If there were nothing else of Abraham Lincoln for history to stamp him with, it is enough to send him with his wreath to the memory of all future time, that he endured that hour, that day, bitterer than gall—indeed a crucifixion day—that it did not conquer him—that he unflinchingly stemm'd it, and resolv'd to lift himself and the Union out of it.

Then the great New York papers at once appear'd, (commencing that evening, and following it up the next morning, and incessantly through many days afterwards,) with leaders that rang out over the land with the loudest, most reverberating ring of clearest bugles, full of encouragement, hope, inspiration, unflinching defiance. Those magnificent editorials! they never flagg'd for a fortnight. The "Herald" commenced them—I remember the articles well. The "Tribune" was equally cogent and inspiriting—and the "Times," "Evening Post," and other principal papers, were not a whit behind. They came in good time, for they were needed. For in the humiliation of Bull Run, the popular feeling north, from its extreme of superciliousness, recoil'd to the depth of gloom and apprehension.

(Of all the days of the war, there are two especially I can never forget. Those were the day following the news, in New York and Brooklyn, of that first Bull Run defeat, and the day of Abraham Lincoln's death. I was home in Brooklyn on both occasions. The day of the murder we heard the news very early in the morning. Mother prepared breakfast—and other meals afterward—as usual; but not a mouthful was eaten all day by either of us. We each drank half a cup of coffee; that was all.

Little was said. We got every newspaper morning and evening, and the frequent extras of that period, and pass'd them silently to each other.)

### Down at the Front.

FALMOUTH, VA., *opposite Fredericksburgh, December 21, 1862.*—Begin my visits among the camp hospitals in the army of the Potomac. Spend a good part of the day in a large brick mansion on the banks of the Rappahannock, used as a hospital since the battle—seems to have receiv'd only the worst cases. Out doors, at the foot of a tree, within ten yards of the front of the house, I notice a heap of amputated feet, legs, arms, hands, &c., a full load for a one-horse cart. Several dead bodies lie near, each cover'd with its brown woolen blanket. In the doorway, towards the river, are fresh graves, mostly of officers, their names on pieces of barrel-staves or broken boards, stuck in the dirt. (Most of these bodies were subsequently taken up and transported north to their friends.) The large mansion is quite crowded upstairs and down, everything impromptu, no system, all bad enough, but I have no doubt the best that can be done; all the wounds pretty bad, some frightful, the men in their old clothes, unclean and bloody. Some of the wounded are rebel soldiers and officers, prisoners. One, a Mississippian, a captain, hit badly in leg, I talk'd with some time; he ask'd me for papers, which I gave him. (I saw him three months afterward in Washington, with his leg amputated, doing well.) I went through the rooms, downstairs and up. Some of the men were dying. I had nothing to give at that visit, but wrote a few letters to folks home, mothers, &c. Also talk'd to three or four, who seem'd most susceptible to it, and needing it.

### After First Fredericksburg.

*December 23 to 31.*—The results of the late battle are exhibited everywhere about here in thousands of cases, (hundreds die every day,) in the camp, brigade, and division hospitals. These are merely tents, and sometimes very poor ones, the wounded

lying on the ground, lucky if their blankets are spread on layers of pine or hemlock twigs, or small leaves. No cots; seldom even a mattress. It is pretty cold. The ground is frozen hard, and there is occasional snow. I go around from one case to another. I do not see that I do much good to these wounded and dying; but I cannot leave them. Once in a while some youngster holds on to me convulsively, and I do what I can for him; at any rate, stop with him and sit near him for hours, if he wishes it.

Besides the hospitals, I also go occasionally on long tours through the camps, talking with the men, &c. Sometimes at night among the groups around the fires, in their shebang enclosures of bushes. These are curious shows, full of characters and groups. I soon get acquainted anywhere in camp, with officers or men, and am always well used. Sometimes I go down on picket with the regiments I know best. As to rations, the army here at present seems to be tolerably well supplied, and the men have enough, such as it is, mainly salt pork and hard tack. Most of the regiments lodge in the flimsy little shelter-tents. A few have built themselves huts of logs and mud, with fire-places.

### Back to Washington.

*January, '63.*—Left camp at Falmouth, with some wounded, a few days since, and came here by Aquia creek railroad, and so on government steamer up the Potomac. Many wounded were with us on the cars and boat. The cars were just common platform ones. The railroad journey of ten or twelve miles was made mostly before sunrise. The soldiers guarding the road came out from their tents or shebangs of bushes with ruffled hair and half-awake look. Those on duty were walking their posts, some on banks over us, others down far below the level of the track. I saw large cavalry camps off the road. At Aquia creek landing were numbers of wounded going north. While I waited some three hours, I went around among them. Several wanted word sent home to parents, brothers, wives, &c., which I did for them, (by mail the next day from Washington.) On the boat I had my hands full. One poor fellow died going up.



I am now remaining in and around Washington, daily visiting the hospitals. Am much in Patent-office, Eighth street, H street, Armory-square, and others. Am now able to do a little good, having money, (as almoner of others home,) and getting experience. To-day, Sunday afternoon and till nine in the evening, visited Campbell hospital; attended specially to one case in ward 1, very sick with pleurisy and typhoid fever, young man, farmer's son, D. F. Russell, company E, 60th New York, downhearted and feeble; a long time before he would take any interest; wrote a letter home to his mother, in Malone, Franklin county, N.Y., at his request; gave him some fruit and one or two other gifts; envelop'd and directed his letter, &c. Then went thoroughly through ward 6, observ'd every case in the ward, without, I think, missing one; gave perhaps from twenty to thirty persons, each one some little gift, such as oranges, apples, sweet crackers, figs, &c.

*Thursday, Jan. 21.*—Devoted the main part of the day to Armory-square hospital; went pretty thoroughly through wards in F, G, H, and I; some fifty cases in each ward. In ward F supplied the men throughout with writing paper and stamp'd envelope each; distributed in small portions, to proper subjects, a large jar of first-rate preserv'd berries, which had been donated to me by a lady—her own cooking. Found several cases I thought good subjects for small sums of money, which I furnish'd. (The wounded men often come up broke, and it helps their spirits to have even the small sum I give them.) My paper and envelopes all gone, but distributed a good lot of amusing reading matter; also, as I thought judicious, tobacco, oranges, apples, &c. Interesting cases in ward I; Charles Miller, bed 19, company D, 53d Pennsylvania, is only sixteen years of age, very bright, courageous boy, left leg amputated below the knee; next bed to him, another young lad very sick; gave each appropriate gifts. In the bed above, also, amputation of the left leg; gave him a little jar of raspberries; bed 1, this ward, gave a small sum; also to a soldier on crutches, sitting on his bed near. . . . (I am more and more surprised at the very great proportion of youngsters from fifteen to twenty-one in the army. I afterwards found a still greater proportion among the southerners.)

Evening, same day, went to see D. F. R., before alluded to; found him remarkably changed for the better; up and dress'd—quite a triumph; he afterwards got well, and went back to his regiment. Distributed in the wards a quantity of note-paper, and forty or fifty stamp'd envelopes, of which I had recruited my stock, and the men were much in need.

### Fifty Hours Left Wounded on the Field.

Here is a case of a soldier I found among the crowded cots in the Patent-office. He likes to have some one to talk to, and we will listen to him. He got badly hit in his leg and side at Fredericksburgh that eventful Saturday, 13th of December. He lay the succeeding two days and nights helpless on the field, between the city and those grim terraces of batteries; his company and regiment had been compell'd to leave him to his fate. To make matters worse, it happen'd he lay with his head slightly down hill, and could not help himself. At the end of some fifty hours he was brought off, with other wounded, under a flag of truce. I ask him how the rebels treated him as he lay during those two days and nights within reach of them—whether they came to him—whether they abused him? He answers that several of the rebels, soldiers and others, came to him at one time and another. A couple of them, who were together, spoke roughly and sarcastically, but nothing worse. One middle-aged man, however, who seem'd to be moving around the field, among the dead and wounded, for benevolent purposes, came to him in a way he will never forget; treated our soldier kindly, bound up his wounds, cheer'd him, gave him a couple of biscuits and a drink of whiskey and water; asked him if he could eat some beef. This good secesh, however, did not change our soldier's position, for it might have caused the blood to burst from the wounds, clotted and stagnated. Our soldier is from Pennsylvania; has had a pretty severe time; the wounds proved to be bad ones. But he retains a good heart, and is at present on the gain. (It is not uncommon for the men to remain on the field this way, one, two, or even four or five days.)

## Hospital Scenes and Persons.

*Letter Writing.*—When eligible, I encourage the men to write, and myself, when called upon, write all sorts of letters for them, (including love letters, very tender ones.) Almost as I reel off these memoranda, I write for a new patient to his wife. M. de F., of the 17th Connecticut, company H, has just come up (February 17th) from Windmill point, and is received in ward H, Armory-square. He is an intelligent looking man, has a foreign accent, black-eyed and hair'd, a Hebraic appearance. Wants a telegraphic message sent to his wife, New Canaan, Conn. I agree to send the message—but to make things sure I also sit down and write the wife a letter, and despatch it to the post-office immediately, as he fears she will come on, and he does not wish her to, as he will surely get well.

*Saturday, January 30th.*—Afternoon, visited Campbell hospital. Scene of cleaning up the ward, and giving the men all clean clothes—through the ward (6) the patients dressing or being dress'd—the naked upper half of the bodies—the good-humor and fun—the shirts, drawers, sheets of beds, &c., and the general fixing up for Sunday. Gave J. L. 50 cents.

*Wednesday, February 4th.*—Visited Armory-square hospital, went pretty thoroughly through wards E and D. Supplied paper and envelopes to all who wish'd—as usual, found plenty of men who needed those articles. Wrote letters. Saw and talk'd with two or three members of the Brooklyn 14th regt. A poor fellow in ward D, with a fearful wound in a fearful condition, was having some loose splinters of bone taken from the neighborhood of the wound. The operation was long, and one of great pain—yet, after it was well commenced, the soldier bore it in silence. He sat up, propp'd—was much wasted—had laid a long time quiet in one position (not for days only but weeks,) a bloodless, brown-skinn'd face, with eyes full of determination—belong'd to a New York regiment. There was an unusual cluster of surgeons, medical cadets, nurses, &c., around his bed—I thought the whole thing was done with tenderness, and done well. In one case, the wife sat by the side of her husband, his sickness

typhoid fever, pretty bad. In another, by the side of her son, a mother—she told me she had seven children, and this was the youngest. (A fine, kind, healthy, gentle mother, good-looking, not very old, with a cap on her head, and dress'd like home—what a charm it gave to the whole ward.) I liked the woman nurse in ward E—I noticed how she sat a long time by a poor fellow who just had, that morning, in addition to his other sickness, bad hemorrhage—she gently assisted him, reliev'd him of the blood, holding a cloth to his mouth, as he coughed it up—he was so weak he could only just turn his head over on the pillow.

One young New York man, with a bright, handsome face, had been lying several months from a most disagreeable wound, receiv'd at Bull Run. A bullet had shot him right through the bladder, hitting him front, low in the belly, and coming out back. He had suffer'd much—the water came out of the wound, by slow but steady quantities, for many weeks—so that he lay almost constantly in a sort of puddle—and there were other disagreeable circumstances. He was of good heart, however. At present comparatively comfortable, had a bad throat, was delighted with a stick of horehound candy I gave him, with one or two other trifles.

### Patent-Office Hospital.

*February 23.*—I must not let the great hospital at the Patent-office pass away without some mention. A few weeks ago the vast area of the second story of that noblest of Washington buildings was crowded close with rows of sick, badly wounded and dying soldiers. They were placed in three very large apartments. I went there many times. It was a strange, solemn, and, with all its features of suffering and death, a sort of fascinating sight. I go sometimes at night to soothe and relieve particular cases. Two of the immense apartments are fill'd with high and ponderous glass cases, crowded with models in miniature of every kind of utensil, machine or invention, it ever enter'd into the mind of man to conceive; and with curiosities and foreign

presents. Between these cases are lateral openings, perhaps eight feet wide and quite deep, and in these were placed the sick, besides a great long double row of them up and down through the middle of the hall. Many of them were very bad cases, wounds and amputations. Then there was a gallery running above the hall in which there were beds also. It was, indeed, a curious scene, especially at night when lit up. The glass cases, the beds, the forms lying there, the gallery above, and the marble pavement under foot—the suffering, and the fortitude to bear it in various degrees—occasionally, from some, the groan that could not be repress'd—sometimes a poor fellow dying, with emaciated face and glassy eye, the nurse by his side, the doctor also there, but no friend, no relative—such were the sights but lately in the Patent-office. (The wounded have since been removed from there, and it is now vacant again.)

### The White House by Moonlight.

*February 24th.*—A spell of fine soft weather. I wander about a good deal, sometimes at night under the moon. To-night took a long look at the President's house. The white portico—the palace-like, tall, round columns, spotless as snow—the walls also—the tender and soft moonlight, flooding the pale marble, and making peculiar faint languishing shades, not shadows—everywhere a soft transparent hazy, thin, blue moon-lace, hanging in the air—the brilliant and extra-plentiful clusters of gas, on and around the façade, columns, portico, &c.—everything so white, so marbly pure and dazzling, yet soft—the White House of future poems, and of dreams and dramas, there in the soft and copious moon—the gorgeous front, in the trees, under the lustrous flooding moon, full of reality, full of illusion—the forms of the trees, leafless, silent, in trunk and myriad-angles of branches, under the stars and sky—the White House of the land, and of beauty and night—sentries at the gates, and by the portico, silent, pacing there in blue overcoats—stopping you not at all, but eyeing you with sharp eyes, whichever way you move.

## An Army Hospital Ward.

Let me specialize a visit I made to the collection of barrack-like one-story edifices, Campbell hospital, out on the flats, at the end of the then horse railway route, on Seventh street. There is a long building appropriated to each ward. Let us go into ward 6. It contains to-day, I should judge, eighty or a hundred patients, half sick, half wounded. The edifice is nothing but boards, well whitewash'd inside, and the usual slender-framed iron bedsteads, narrow and plain. You walk down the central passage, with a row on either side, their feet towards you, and their heads to the wall. There are fires in large stoves, and the prevailing white of the walls is reliev'd by some ornaments, stars, circles, &c., made of evergreens. The view of the whole edifice and occupants can be taken at once, for there is no partition. You may hear groans or other sounds of unendurable suffering from two or three of the cots, but in the main there is quiet—almost a painful absence of demonstration; but the pallid face, the dull'd eye, and the moisture on the lip, are demonstration enough. Most of these sick or hurt are evidently young fellows from the country, farmers' sons, and such like. Look at the fine large frames, the bright and broad countenances, and the many yet lingering proofs of strong constitution and physique. Look at the patient and mute manner of our American wounded as they lie in such a sad collection; representatives from all New England, and from New York, and New Jersey, and Pennsylvania—indeed from all the States and all the cities—largely from the west. Most of them are entirely without friends or acquaintances here—no familiar face, and hardly a word of judicious sympathy or cheer, through their sometimes long and tedious sickness, or the pangs of aggravated wounds.

### A Connecticut Case.

This young man in bed 25 is H. D. B., of the 27th Connecticut, company B. His folks live at Northford, near New Haven. Though not more than twenty-one, or thereabouts, he has

knock'd much around the world, on sea and land, and has seen some fighting on both. When I first saw him he was very sick, with no appetite. He declined offers of money—said he did not need anything. As I was quite anxious to do something, he confess'd that he had a hankering for a good home-made rice pudding—thought he could relish it better than anything. At this time his stomach was very weak. (The doctor, whom I consulted, said nourishment would do him more good than anything; but things in the hospital, though better than usual, revolted him.) I soon procured B. his rice-pudding. A Washington lady, (Mrs. O'C.), hearing his wish, made the pudding herself, and I took it up to him the next day. He subsequently told me he lived upon it for three or four days. This B. is a good sample of the American eastern young man—the typical Yankee. I took a fancy to him, and gave him a nice pipe, for a keepsake. He receiv'd afterwards a box of things from home, and nothing would do but I must take dinner with him, which I did, and a very good one it was.

### Two Brooklyn Boys.

Here in this same ward are two young men from Brooklyn, members of the 51ST New York. I had known both the two as young lads at home, so they seem near to me. One of them, J. L., lies there with an amputated arm, the stump healing pretty well. (I saw him lying on the ground at Fredericksburgh last December, all bloody, just after the arm was taken off. He was very phlegmatic about it, munching away at a cracker in the remaining hand—made no fuss.) He will recover, and thinks and talks yet of meeting the Johnny Rebs.

### A Secesh Brave.

The grand soldiers are not comprised in those of one side, any more than the other. Here is a sample of an unknown southerner, a lad of seventeen. At the War department, a few days ago, I witness'd a presentation of captured flags to the Secre-

tary. Among others a soldier named Gant, of the 104th Ohio volunteers, presented a rebel battle-flag, which one of the officers stated to me was borne to the mouth of our cannon and planted there by a boy but seventeen years of age, who actually endeavor'd to stop the muzzle of the gun with fence-rails. He was kill'd in the effort, and the flag-staff was sever'd by a shot from one of our men.

### The Wounded from Chancellorsville.

*May, '63.*—As I write this, the wounded have begun to arrive from Hooker's command from bloody Chancellorsville. I was down among the first arrivals. The men in charge told me the bad cases were yet to come. If that is so I pity them, for these are bad enough. You ought to see the scene of the wounded arriving at the landing here at the foot of Sixth street, at night. Two boat loads came about half-past seven last night. A little after eight it rain'd a long and violent shower. The pale, helpless soldiers had been debark'd, and lay around on the wharf and neighborhood anywhere. The rain was, probably, grateful to them; at any rate they were exposed to it. The few torches light up the spectacle. All around—on the wharf, on the ground, out on side places—the men are lying on blankets, old quilts, &c., with bloody rags bound round heads, arms, and legs. The attendants are few, and at night few outsiders also—only a few hard-work'd transportation men and drivers. (The wounded are getting to be common, and people grow callous.) The men, whatever their condition, lie there, and patiently wait till their turn comes to be taken up. Near by, the ambulances are now arriving in clusters, and one after another is call'd to back up and take its load. Extreme cases are sent off on stretchers. The men generally make little or no ado, whatever their sufferings. A few groans that cannot be suppress'd, and occasionally a scream of pain as they lift a man into the ambulance. To-day, as I write, hundreds more are expected, and to-morrow and the next day more, and so on for many days. Quite often they arrive at the rate of 1000 a day.



## A Night Battle, Over a Week Since.

May 12.—There was part of the late battle at Chancellorsville, (second Fredericksburgh,) a little over a week ago, Saturday, Saturday night and Sunday, under Gen. Joe Hooker, I would like to give just a glimpse of—(a moment's look in a terrible storm at sea—of which a few suggestions are enough, and full details impossible.) The fighting had been very hot during the day, and after an intermission the latter part, was resumed at night, and kept up with furious energy till 3 o'clock in the morning. That afternoon (Saturday) an attack sudden and strong by Stonewall Jackson had gain'd a great advantage to the southern army, and broken our lines, entering us like a wedge, and leaving things in that position at dark. But Hooker at 11 at night made a desperate push, drove the secesh forces back, restored his original lines, and resumed his plans. This night scrimmage was very exciting, and afforded countless strange and fearful pictures. The fighting had been general both at Chancellorsville and northeast at Fredericksburgh. (We hear of some poor fighting episodes, skedaddling on our part. I think not of it. I think of the fierce bravery, the general rule.) One corps, the 6th, Sedgewick's, fights four dashing and bloody battles in thirty-six hours, retreating in great jeopardy, losing largely but maintaining itself, fighting with the sternest desperation under all circumstances, getting over the Rappahannock only by the skin of its teeth, yet getting over. It lost many, many brave men, yet it took vengeance, ample vengeance.

But it was the tug of Saturday evening, and through the night and Sunday morning, I wanted to make a special note of. It was largely in the woods, and quite a general engagement. The night was very pleasant, at times the moon shining out full and clear, all Nature so calm in itself, the early summer grass so rich, and foliage of the trees—yet there the battle raging, and many good fellows lying helpless, with new accessions to them, and every minute amid the rattle of muskets and crash of cannon, (for there was an artillery contest too,) the red life-blood oozing out from heads or trunks or limbs upon that green and dew-cool grass. Patches of the woods take fire, and several of

the wounded, unable to move, are consumed—quite large spaces are swept over, burning the dead also—some of the men have their hair and beards singed—some, burns on their faces and hands—others holes burnt in their clothing. The flashes of fire from the cannon, the quick flaring flames and smoke, and the immense roar—the musketry so general, the light nearly bright enough for each side to see the other—the crashing, tramping of men—the yelling—close quarters—we hear the scesh yells—our men cheer loudly back, especially if Hooker is in sight—hand to hand conflicts, each side stands up to it, brave determin'd as demons, they often charge upon us—a thousand deeds are done worth to write newer greater poems on—and still the woods on fire—still many are not only scorch'd—too many, unable to move, are burn'd to death.

Then the camps of the wounded—O heavens, what scene is this?—is this indeed *humanity*—these butchers' shambles? There are several of them. There they lie, in the largest, in an open space in the woods, from 200 to 300 poor fellows—the groans and screams—the odor of blood, mixed with the fresh scent of the night, the grass, the trees—that slaughter-house! O well is it their mothers, their sisters cannot see them—cannot conceive, and never conceiv'd, these things. One man is shot by a shell, both in the arm and leg—both are amputated—there lie the rejected members. Some have their legs blown off—some bullets through the breast—some indescribably horrid wounds in the face or head, all mutilated, sickening, torn, gouged out—some in the abdomen—some mere boys—many rebels, badly hurt—they take their regular turns with the rest, just the same as any—the surgeons use them just the same. Such is the camp of the wounded—such a fragment, a reflection afar off of the bloody scene—while over all the clear, large moon comes out at times softly, quietly shining. Amid the woods, that scene of flitting souls—amid the crack and crash and yelling sounds—the impalpable perfume of the woods—and yet the pungent, stifling smoke—the radiance of the moon, looking from heaven at intervals so placid—the sky so heavenly—the clear-obscure up there, those buoyant upper oceans—a few large placid stars beyond, coming silently and languidly out, and then

disappearing—the melancholy, draped night above, around. And there, upon the road, the fields, and in those woods, that contest, never one more desperate in any age or land—both parties now in force—masses—no fancy battle, no semi-play, but fierce and savage demons fighting there—courage and scorn of death the rule, exceptions almost none.

What history, I say, can ever give—for who can know—the mad, determin'd tussle of the armies, in all their separate large and little squads—as this—each steep'd from crown to toe in desperate, mortal purports? Who know the conflict, hand-to-hand—the many conflicts in the dark, those shadowy-tangled, flashing moonbeam'd woods—the writhing groups and squads—the cries, the din, the cracking guns and pistols—the distant cannon—the cheers and calls and threats and awful music of the oaths—the indescribable mix—the officers' orders, persuasions, encouragements—the devils fully rous'd in human hearts—the strong shout, *Charge, men, charge*—the flash of the naked sword, and rolling flame and smoke? And still the broken, clear and clouded heaven—and still again the moonlight pouring silvery soft its radiant patches over all. Who paint the scene, the sudden partial panic of the afternoon, at dusk? Who paint the irrepressible advance of the second division of the Third corps, under Hooker himself, suddenly order'd up—those rapid-filing phantoms through the woods? Who show what moves there in the shadows, fluid and firm—to save, (and it did save,) the army's name, perhaps the nation? as there the veterans hold the field. (Brave Berry falls not yet—but death has mark'd him—soon he falls.)

### Unnamed Remains the Bravest Soldier.

Of scenes like these, I say, who writes—whoe'er can write the story? Of many a score—aye, thousands, north and south, of unwrit heroes, unknown heroisms, incredible, impromptu, first-class desperations—who tells? No history ever—no poem sings, no music sounds, those bravest men of all—those deeds. No formal general's report, nor book in the library, nor column in the paper, embalms the bravest, north or south, east or west.

Unnamed, unknown, remain, and still remain, the bravest soldiers. Our manliest—our boys—our hardy darlings; no picture gives them. Likely, the typic one of them (standing, no doubt, for hundreds, thousands,) crawls aside to some bush-clump, or ferny tuft, on receiving his death-shot—there sheltering a little while, soaking roots, grass and soil, with red blood—the battle advances, retreats, flits from the scene, sweeps by—and there haply with pain and suffering (yet less, far less, than is supposed,) the last lethargy winds like a serpent round him—the eyes glaze in death—none recks—perhaps the burial-squads, in truce, a week afterwards, search not the secluded spot—and there, at last, the Bravest Soldier crumbles in mother earth, unburied and unknown.

### Some Specimen Cases.

*June 18th.*—In one of the hospitals I find Thomas Haley, company M, 4th New York cavalry—a regular Irish boy, a fine specimen of youthful physical manliness—shot through the lungs—inevitably dying—came over to this country from Ireland to enlist—has not a single friend or acquaintance here—is sleeping soundly at this moment, (but it is the sleep of death)—has a bullet-hole straight through the lung. I saw Tom when first brought here, three days since, and didn't suppose he could live twelve hours—(yet he looks well enough in the face to a casual observer.) He lies there with his frame exposed above the waist, all naked, for coolness, a fine built man, the tan not yet bleach'd from his cheeks and neck. It is useless to talk to him, as with his sad hurt, and the stimulants they give him, and the utter strangeness of every object, face, furniture, &c., the poor fellow, even when awake, is like some frighten'd, shy animal. Much of the time he sleeps, or half sleeps. (Sometimes I thought he knew more than he show'd.) I often come and sit by him in perfect silence; he will breathe for ten minutes as softly and evenly as a young babe asleep. Poor youth, so handsome, athletic, with profuse beautiful shining hair. One time as I sat looking at him while he lay asleep, he suddenly, without the least start, awaken'd, open'd his eyes, gave me a long steady

look, turning his face very slightly to gaze easier—one long, clear, silent look—a slight sigh—and then turn'd back and went into his doze again. Little he knew, poor death-stricken boy, the heart of the stranger that hover'd near.

W. H. E., Co. F., 2d N.J.—His disease is pneumonia. He lay sick at the wretched hospital below Aquia creek, for seven or eight days before brought here. He was detail'd from his regiment to go there and help as nurse, but was soon taken down himself. Is an elderly, sallow-faced, rather gaunt, gray-hair'd man, a widower, with children. He express'd a great desire for good, strong green tea. An excellent lady, Mrs. W., of Washington, soon sent him a package; also a small sum of money. The doctor said give him the tea at pleasure; it lay on the table by his side, and he used it every day. He slept a great deal; could not talk much, as he grew deaf. Occupied bed 15, ward I, Armory. (The same lady above, Mrs. W., sent the men a large package of tobacco.)

J. G. lies in bed 52, ward I; is of company B, 7th Pennsylvania. I gave him a small sum of money, some tobacco, and envelopes. To a man adjoining also gave twenty-five cents; he flush'd in the face when I offer'd it—refused at first, but as I found he had not a cent, and was very fond of having the daily papers to read, I prest it on him. He was evidently very grateful, but said little.

J. T. L., of company F, 9th New Hampshire, lies in bed 37, ward I. Is very fond of tobacco. I furnish him some; also with a little money. Has gangrene of the feet; a pretty bad case; will surely have to lose three toes. Is a regular specimen of an old-fashion'd, rude, hearty, New England countryman, impressing me with his likeness to that celebrated singed cat, who was better than she look'd.

Bed 3, ward E, Armory, has a great hankering for pickles, something pungent. After consulting the doctor, I gave him a small bottle of horse-radish; also some apples; also a book. Some of the nurses are excellent. The woman-nurse in this ward I like very much. (Mrs. Wright—a year afterwards I found her in Mansion house hospital, Alexandria—she is a perfect nurse.)

In one bed a young man, Marcus Small, company K, 7th Maine—sick with dysentery and typhoid fever—pretty critical case—I talk with him often—he thinks he will die—looks like it indeed. I write a letter for him home to East Livermore, Maine—I let him talk to me a little, but not much, advise him to keep very quiet—do most of the talking myself—stay quite a while with him, as he holds on to my hand—talk to him in a cheering, but slow, low and measured manner—talk about his furlough, and going home as soon as he is able to travel.

Thomas Lindly, 1st Pennsylvania cavalry, shot very badly through the foot—poor young man, he suffers horribly, has to be constantly dosed with morphine, his face ashy and glazed, bright young eyes—I give him a large handsome apple, lay it in sight, tell him to have it roasted in the morning, as he generally feels easier then, and can eat a little breakfast. I write two letters for him.

Opposite, an old Quaker lady is sitting by the side of her son, Amer Moore, 2d U.S. artillery—shot in the head two weeks since, very low, quite rational—from hips down paralyzed—he will surely die. I speak a very few words to him every day and evening—he answers pleasantly—wants nothing—(he told me soon after he came about his home affairs, his mother had been an invalid, and he fear'd to let her know his condition.) He died soon after she came.

### My Preparations for Visits.

In my visits to the hospitals I found it was in the simple matter of personal presence, and emanating ordinary cheer and magnetism, that I succeeded and help'd more than by medical nursing, or delicacies, or gifts of money, or anything else. During the war I possess'd the perfection of physical health. My habit, when practicable, was to prepare for starting out on one of those daily or nightly tours of from a couple to four or five hours, by fortifying myself with previous rest, the bath, clean clothes, a good meal, and as cheerful an appearance as possible.

### Ambulance Processions.

*June 25, Sundown.*—As I sit writing this paragraph I see a train of about thirty huge four-horse wagons, used as ambulances, fill'd with wounded, passing up Fourteenth street, on their way, probably, to Columbian, Carver, and mount Pleasant hospitals. This is the way the men come in now, seldom in small numbers, but almost always in these long, sad processions. Through the past winter, while our army lay opposite Fredericksburgh, the like strings of ambulances were of frequent occurrence along Seventh street, passing slowly up from the steamboat wharf, with loads from Aquia creek.

### Bad Wounds—The Young.

The soldiers are nearly all young men, and far more American than is generally supposed—I should say nine-tenths are native-born. Among the arrivals from Chancellorsville I find a large proportion of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois men. As usual, there are all sorts of wounds. Some of the men fearfully burnt from the explosions of artillery caissons. One ward has a long row of officers, some with ugly hurts. Yesterday was perhaps worse than usual. Amputations are going on—the attendants are dressing wounds. As you pass by, you must be on your guard where you look. I saw the other day a gentleman, a visitor apparently from curiosity, in one of the wards, stop and turn a moment to look at an awful wound they were probing. He turn'd pale, and in a moment more he had fainted away and fallen on the floor.

### The Most Inspiring of All War's Shows.

*June 29.*—Just before sundown this evening a very large cavalry force went by—a fine sight. The men evidently had seen service. First came a mounted band of sixteen bugles, drums and cymbals, playing wild martial tunes—made my heart jump. Then the principal officers, then company after company, with their officers at their heads, making of course the

main part of the cavalcade; then a long train of men with led horses, lots of mounted negroes with special horses—and a long string of baggage-wagons, each drawn by four horses—and then a motley rear guard. It was a pronouncedly warlike and gay show; the sabres clank'd, the men look'd young and healthy and strong; the electric tramping of so many horses on the hard road, and the gallant bearing, fine seat, and bright faced appearance of a thousand and more handsome young American men, were so good to see. An hour later another troop went by, smaller in numbers, perhaps three hundred men. They too look'd like serviceable men, campaigners used to field and fight.

*July 3.*—This forenoon, for more than an hour, again long strings of cavalry, several regiments, very fine men and horses, four or five abreast. I saw them in Fourteenth street, coming in town from north. Several hundred extra horses, some of the mares with colts, trotting along. (Appear'd to be a number of prisoners too.) How inspiriting always the cavalry regiments. Our men are generally well mounted, feel good, are young, gay on the saddle, their blankets in a roll behind them, their sabres clanking at their sides. This noise and movement and the tramp of many horses' hoofs has a curious effect upon one. The bugles play—presently you hear them afar off, deaden'd, mix'd with other noises. Then just as they had all pass'd, a string of ambulances commenc'd from the other way, moving up Fourteenth street north, slowly wending along, bearing a large lot of wounded to the hospitals.

### Battle of Gettysburg.

*July 4th.*—The weather to-day, upon the whole, is very fine, warm, but from a smart rain last night, fresh enough, and no dust, which is a great relief for this city. I saw the parade about noon, Pennsylvania avenue, from Fifteenth street down toward the capitol. There were three regiments of infantry, (I suppose the ones doing patrol duty here,) two or three societies of Odd Fellows, a lot of children in barouches, and a squad of policemen. (A useless imposition upon the soldiers—they have work



enough on their backs without piling the like of this.) As I went down the Avenue, saw a big flaring placard on the bulletin board of a newspaper office, announcing "Glorious Victory for the Union Army!" Meade had fought Lee at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, yesterday and day before, and repuls'd him most signally, taken 3,000 prisoners, &c. (I afterwards saw Meade's despatch, very modest, and a sort of order of the day from the President himself, quite religious, giving thanks to the Supreme, and calling on the people to do the same.) I walk'd on to Armory hospital—took along with me several bottles of blackberry and cherry syrup, good and strong, but innocent. Went through several of the wards, announc'd to the soldiers the news from Meade, and gave them all a good drink of the syrups with ice water, quite refreshing—prepar'd it all myself, and serv'd it around. Meanwhile the Washington bells are ringing their sundown peals for Fourth of July, and the usual fusilades of boys' pistols, crackers, and guns.

### A Cavalry Camp.

I am writing this, nearly sundown, watching a cavalry company (acting Signal service,) just come in through a shower, making their night's camp ready on some broad, vacant ground, a sort of hill, in full view opposite my window. There are the men in their yellow-striped jackets. All are dismounted; the freed horses stand with drooping heads and wet sides; they are to be led off presently in groups, to water. The little wall-tents and shelter tents spring up quickly. I see the fires already blazing, and pots and kettles over them. Some among the men are driving in tent-poles, wielding their axes with strong, slow blows. I see great huddles of horses, bundles of hay, groups of men (some with unbuckled sabres yet on their sides,) a few officers, piles of wood, the flames of the fires, saddles, harness, &c. The smoke streams upward, additional men arrive and dismount—some drive in stakes, and tie their horses to them; some go with buckets for water, some are chopping wood, and so on.

*July 6th.*—A steady rain, dark and thick and warm. A train of six-mule wagons has just pass'd bearing pontoons, great

square-end flat-boats, and the heavy planking for overlaying them. We hear that the Potomac above here is flooded, and are wondering whether Lee will be able to get back across again, or whether Meade will indeed break him to pieces. The cavalry camp on the hill is a ceaseless field of observation for me. This forenoon there stand the horses, tether'd together, dripping, steaming, chewing their hay. The men emerge from their tents, dripping also. The fires are half quench'd.

*July 10th.*—Still the camp opposite—perhaps fifty or sixty tents. Some of the men are cleaning their sabres (pleasant to-day), some brushing boots, some laying off, reading, writing—some cooking, some sleeping. On long temporary cross-sticks back of the tents are cavalry accoutrements—blankets and overcoats are hung out to air—there are the squads of horses tether'd, feeding, continually stamping and whisking their tails to keep off flies. I sit long in my third story window and look at the scene—a hundred little things going on—peculiar objects connected with the camp that could not be described, any one of them justly, without much minute drawing and coloring in words.

### A New York Soldier.

This afternoon, July 22d, I have spent a long time with Oscar F. Wilber, company G, 154th New York, low with chronic diarrhœa, and a bad wound also. He asked me to read him a chapter in the New Testament. I complied, and ask'd him what I should read. He said, "Make your own choice." I open'd at the close of one of the first books of the evangelists, and read the chapters describing the latter hours of Christ, and the scenes at the crucifixion. The poor, wasted young man ask'd me to read the following chapter also, how Christ rose again. I read very slowly, for Oscar was feeble. It pleased him very much, yet the tears were in his eyes. He ask'd me if I enjoy'd religion. I said, "Perhaps not, my dear, in the way you mean, and yet, may-be, it is the same thing." He said, "It is my chief reliance." He talk'd of death, and said he did not fear it. I said, "Why, Oscar, don't you think you will get well?" He said, "I may, but it is not

probable." He spoke calmly of his condition. The wound was very bad, it discharg'd much. Then the diarrhœa had prostrated him, and I felt that he was even then the same as dying. He behaved very manly and affectionate. The kiss I gave him as I was about leaving he return'd fourfold. He gave me his mother's address, Mrs. Sally D. Wilber, Alleghany post-office, Cattaraugus county, N.Y. I had several such interviews with him. He died a few days after the one just described.

### Home-Made Music.

*August 8th.*—To-night, as I was trying to keep cool, sitting by a wounded soldier in Armory-square, I was attracted by some pleasant singing in an adjoining ward. As my soldier was asleep, I left him, and entering the ward where the music was, I walk'd half-way down and took a seat by the cot of a young Brooklyn friend, S. R., badly wounded in the hand at Chancellorsville, and who has suffer'd much, but at that moment in the evening was wide awake and comparatively easy. He had turn'd over on his left side to get a better view of the singers, but the mosquito-curtains of the adjoining cots obstructed the sight. I stept round and loop'd them all up, so that he had a clear show, and then sat down again by him, and look'd and listen'd. The principal singer was a young lady-nurse of one of the wards, accompanying on a melodeon, and join'd by the lady-nurses of other wards. They sat there, making a charming group, with their handsome, healthy faces, and standing up a little behind them were some ten or fifteen of the convalescent soldiers, young men, nurses, &c., with books in their hands, singing. Of course it was not such a performance as the great soloists at the New York opera house take a hand in, yet I am not sure but I receiv'd as much pleasure under the circumstances, sitting there, as I have had from the best Italian compositions, express'd by world-famous performers. The men lying up and down the hospital, in their cots, (some badly wounded—some never to rise thence,) the cots themselves, with their drapery of white curtains, and the shadows down the lower and upper parts of the ward; then the silence of the

men, and the attitudes they took—the whole was a sight to look around upon again and again. And there sweetly rose those voices up to the high, whitewash'd wooden roof, and pleasantly the roof sent it all back again. They sang very well, mostly quaint old songs and declamatory hymns, to fitting tunes. Here, for instance:

My days are swiftly gliding by, and I a pilgrim stranger,  
 Would not detain them as they fly, those hours of toil and danger;  
 For O we stand on Jordan's strand, our friends are passing over,  
 And just before, the shining shore we may almost discover.

We'll gird our loins my brethren dear, our distant home discerning,  
 Our absent Lord has left us word, let every lamp be burning,  
 For O we stand on Jordan's strand, our friends are passing over,  
 And just before, the shining shore we may almost discover.

### Abraham Lincoln.

*August 12th.*—I see the President almost every day, as I happen to live where he passes to or from his lodgings out of town. He never sleeps at the White House during the hot season, but has quarters at a healthy location some three miles north of the city, the Soldiers' home, a United States military establishment. I saw him this morning about 8½ coming in to business, riding on Vermont avenue, near L street. He always has a company of twenty-five or thirty cavalry, with sabres drawn and held upright over their shoulders. They say this guard was against his personal wish, but he let his counselors have their way. The party makes no great show in uniform or horses. Mr. Lincoln on the saddle generally rides a good-sized, easy-going gray horse, is dress'd in plain black, somewhat rusty and dusty, wears a black stiff hat, and looks about as ordinary in attire, &c., as the commonest man. A lieutenant, with yellow straps, rides at his left, and following behind, two by two, come the cavalry men, in their yellow-striped jackets. They are generally going at a slow trot, as that is the pace set them by the one they wait upon. The sabres and accoutrements clank, and the en-

tirely unornamental *cortège* as it trots towards Lafayette square arouses no sensation, only some curious stranger stops and gazes. I see very plainly ABRAHAM LINCOLN's dark brown face, with the deep-cut lines, the eyes, always to me with a deep latent sadness in the expression. We have got so that we exchange bows, and very cordial ones. Sometimes the President goes and comes in an open barouche. The cavalry always accompany him, with drawn sabres. Often I notice as he goes out evenings—and sometimes in the morning, when he returns early—he turns off and halts at the large and handsome residence of the Secretary of War, on K street, and holds conference there. If in his barouche, I can see from my window he does not alight, but sits in his vehicle, and Mr. Stanton comes out to attend him. Sometimes one of his sons, a boy of ten or twelve, accompanies him, riding at his right on a pony. Earlier in the summer I occasionally saw the President and his wife, toward the latter part of the afternoon, out in a barouche, on a pleasure ride through the city. Mrs. Lincoln was dress'd in complete black, with a long crape veil. The equipage is of the plainest kind, only two horses, and they nothing extra. They pass'd me once very close, and I saw the President in the face fully, as they were moving slowly, and his look, though abstracted, happen'd to be directed steadily in my eye. He bow'd and smiled, but far beneath his smile I noticed well the expression I have alluded to. None of the artists or pictures has caught the deep, though subtle and indirect expression of this man's face. There is something else there. One of the great portrait painters of two or three centuries ago is needed.

### Heated Term.

There has lately been much suffering here from heat; we have had it upon us now eleven days. I go around with an umbrella and a fan. I saw two cases of sun-stroke yesterday, one in Pennsylvania avenue, and another in Seventh street. The City railroad company loses some horses every day. Yet Washington is having a livelier August, and is probably putting in a more energetic and satisfactory summer, than ever before during its

existence. There is probably more human electricity, more population to make it, more business, more light-heartedness, than ever before. The armies that swiftly circumambiated from Fredericksburgh—march'd, struggled, fought, had out their mighty clinch and hurl at Gettysburg—wheel'd, circumambiated again, return'd to their ways, touching us not, either at their going or coming. And Washington feels that she has pass'd the worst; perhaps feels that she is henceforth mistress. So here she sits with her surrounding hills spotted with guns, and is conscious of a character and identity different from what it was five or six short weeks ago, and very considerably pleasanter and prouder.

### Soldiers and Talks.

Soldiers, soldiers, soldiers, you meet everywhere about the city, often superb-looking men, though invalids dress'd in worn uniforms, and carrying canes or crutches. I often have talks with them, occasionally quite long and interesting. One, for instance, will have been all through the peninsula under McClellan—narrates to me the fights, the marches, the strange, quick changes of that eventful campaign, and gives glimpses of many things untold in any official reports or books or journals. These, indeed, are the things that are genuine and precious. The man was there, has been out two years, has been through a dozen fights, the superfluous flesh of talking is long work'd off him, and he gives me little but the hard meat and sinew. I find it refreshing, these hardy, bright, intuitive, American young men, (experienc'd soldiers with all their youth.) The vocal play and significance moves one more than books. Then there hangs something majestic about a man who has borne his part in battles, especially if he is very quiet regarding it when you desire him to unbosom. I am continually lost at the absence of blowing and blowers among these old-young American militaires. I have found some man or other who has been in every battle since the war began, and have talk'd with them about each one in every part of the United States, and many of the engagements on the rivers and harbors too. I find men here

from every State in the Union, without exception. (There are more Southerners, especially border State men, in the Union army than is generally supposed. \*) I now doubt whether one can get a fair idea of what this war practically is, or what genuine America is, and her character, without some such experience as this I am having.

### Death of a Wisconsin Officer.

Another characteristic scene of that dark and bloody 1863, from notes of my visit to Armory-square hospital, one hot but pleasant summer day. In ward H we approach the cot of a young lieutenant of one of the Wisconsin regiments. Tread the bare board floor lightly here, for the pain and panting of death are in this cot. I saw the lieutenant when he was first brought here from Chancellorsville, and have been with him occasionally from day to day and night to night. He had been getting along pretty well till night before last, when a sudden hemorrhage that could not be stopt came upon him, and to-day it still continues at intervals. Notice that water-pail by the side of the bed, with a quantity of blood and bloody pieces of muslin, nearly full; that tells the story. The poor young man is struggling painfully for breath, his great dark eyes with a glaze already upon them, and the choking faint but audible in his throat. An attendant sits by him, and will not leave him till the last; yet little or nothing can be done. He will die here in an hour or two, without the presence of kith or kin. Meantime the ordinary chat and business of the ward a little way off goes on indifferently. Some of the inmates are laughing and joking, others are playing checkers or cards, others are reading, &c.

\*MR. GARFIELD (*In the House of Representatives, April 15, '79.*) "Do gentlemen know that (leaving out all the border States) there were fifty regiments and seven companies of white men in our army fighting for the Union from the States that went into rebellion? Do they know that from the single State of Kentucky more Union soldiers fought under our flag than Napoleon took into the battle of Waterloo? more than Wellington took with all the allied armies against Napoleon? Do they remember that 186,000 color'd men fought under our flag against the rebellion and for the Union, and that of that number 90,000 were from the States which went into rebellion?"

I have noticed through most of the hospitals that as long as there is any chance for a man, no matter how bad he may be, the surgeon and nurses work hard, sometimes with curious tenacity, for his life, doing everything, and keeping somebody by him to execute the doctor's orders, and minister to him every minute night and day. See that screen there. As you advance through the dusk of early candle-light, a nurse will step forth on tip-toe, and silently but imperiously forbid you to make any noise, or perhaps to come near at all. Some soldier's life is flickering there, suspended between recovery and death. Perhaps at this moment the exhausted frame has just fallen into a light sleep that a step might shake. You must retire. The neighboring patients must move in their stocking feet. I have been several times struck with such mark'd efforts—everything bent to save a life from the very grip of the destroyer. But when that grip is once firmly fix'd, leaving no hope or chance at all, the surgeon abandons the patient. If it is a case where stimulus is any relief, the nurse gives milk-punch or brandy, or whatever is wanted, *ad libitum*. There is no fuss made. Not a bit of sentimentalism or whining have I seen about a single death-bed in hospital or on the field, but generally impassive indifference. All is over, as far as any efforts can avail; it is useless to expend emotions or labors. While there is a prospect they strive hard—at least most surgeons do; but death certain and evident, they yield the field.

### Hospitals Ensemble.

*Aug., Sep., and Oct., '63.*—I am in the habit of going to all, and to Fairfax seminary, Alexandria, and over Long bridge to the great Convalescent camp. The journals publish a regular directory of them—a long list. As a specimen of almost any one of the larger of these hospitals, fancy to yourself a space of three to twenty acres of ground, on which are group'd ten or twelve very large wooden barracks, with, perhaps, a dozen or twenty, and sometimes more than that number, small buildings, capable altogether of accommodating from five hundred to a thousand or fifteen hundred persons. Sometimes these wooden



barracks or wards, each of them perhaps from a hundred to a hundred and fifty feet long, are rang'd in a straight row, evenly fronting the street; others are plann'd so as to form an immense V; and others again are ranged around a hollow square. They make altogether a huge cluster, with the additional tents, extra wards for contagious diseases, guard-houses, sutler's stores, chaplain's house; in the middle will probably be an edifice devoted to the offices of the surgeon in charge and the ward surgeons, principal attaches, clerks, &c. The wards are either letter'd alphabetically, ward G, ward K, or else numerically, 1, 2, 3, &c. Each has its ward surgeon and corps of nurses. Of course, there is, in the aggregate, quite a muster of employees, and over all the surgeon in charge. Here in Washington, when the army hospitals are fill'd, (as they have been already several times,) they contain a population more numerous in itself than the whole of the Washington of ten or fifteen years ago. Within sight of the capitol, as I write, are some thirty or forty such collections, at times holding from fifty to seventy thousand men. Looking from any eminence and studying the topography in my rambles, I use them as landmarks. Through the rich August verdure of the trees, see that white group of buildings off yonder in the outskirts; then another cluster half a mile to the left of the first; then another a mile to the right, and another a mile beyond, and still another between us and the first. Indeed, we can hardly look in any direction but these clusters are dotting the landscape and environs. That little town, as you might suppose it, off there on the brow of a hill, is indeed a town, but of wounds, sickness, and death. It is Finley hospital, northeast of the city, on Kendall green, as it used to be call'd. That other is Campbell hospital. Both are large establishments. I have known these two alone to have from two thousand to twenty-five hundred inmates. Then there is Carver hospital, larger still, a wall'd and military city regularly laid out, and guarded by squads of sentries. Again, off east, Lincoln hospital, a still larger one; and half a mile further Emory hospital. Still sweeping the eye around down the river toward Alexandria, we see, to the right, the locality where the Convalescent camp stands, with its five, eight, or sometimes ten thousand inmates. Even all these

are but a portion. The Harewood, Mount Pleasant, Armory-square, Judiciary hospitals, are some of the rest, and all large collections.

### A Silent Night Ramble.

*October 20th.*—To-night, after leaving the hospital at 10 o'clock, (I had been on self-imposed duty some five hours, pretty closely confined,) I wander'd a long time around Washington. The night was sweet, very clear, sufficiently cool, a voluptuous half-moon, slightly golden, the space near it of a transparent blue-gray tinge. I walk'd up in Pennsylvania avenue, and then to Seventh street, and a long while around the Patent-office. Somehow it look'd rebukefully strong, majestic, there in the delicate moonlight. The sky, the planets, the constellations all so bright, so calm, so expressively silent, so soothing, after those hospital scenes. I wander'd to and fro till the moist moon set, long after midnight.

### Spiritual Characters Among the Soldiers.

Every now and then, in hospital or camp, there are beings I meet—specimens of unworldliness, disinterestedness, and animal purity and heroism—perhaps some unconscious Indianian, or from Ohio or Tennessee—on whose birth the calmness of heaven seems to have descended, and whose gradual growing up, whatever the circumstances of work-life or change, or hardship, or small or no education that attended it, the power of a strange spiritual sweetness, fibre and inward health, have also attended. Something veil'd and abstracted is often a part of the manners of these beings. I have met them, I say, not seldom in the army, in camp, and in the hospitals. The Western regiments contain many of them. They are often young men, obeying the events and occasions about them, marching, soldiering, fighting, foraging, cooking, working on farms or at some trade before the war—unaware of their own nature, (as to that, who is aware of his own nature?) their companions

only understanding that they are different from the rest, more silent, "something odd about them," and apt to go off and meditate and muse in solitude.

### Cattle Drovers about Washington.

Among other sights are immense droves of cattle with their drivers, passing through the streets of the city. Some of the men have a way of leading the cattle by a peculiar call, a wild, pen-sive hoot, quite musical, prolong'd, indescribable, sounding something between the cooing of a pigeon and the hoot of an owl. I like to stand and look at the sight of one of these immense droves—a little way off—as the dust is great.) There are always men on horseback, cracking their whips and shouting—the cattle low—some obstinate ox or steer attempts to escape—then a lively scene—the mounted men, always excellent riders and on good horses, dash after the recusant, and wheel and turn—a dozen mounted drovers, their great slouch'd, broad-brim'd hats, very picturesque—another dozen on foot—everybody cover'd with dust—long goads in their hands—an immense drove of perhaps 1000 cattle—the shouting, hooting, movement, &c.

### Hospital Perplexity.

To add to other troubles, amid the confusion of this great army of sick, it is almost impossible for a stranger to find any friend or relative, unless he has the patient's specific address to start upon. Besides the directory printed in the newspapers here, there are one or two general directories of the hospitals kept at provost's headquarters, but they are nothing like complete; they are never up to date, and, as things are, with the daily streams of coming and going and changing, cannot be. I have known cases, for instance such as a farmer coming here from northern New York to find a wounded brother, faithfully hunting round for a week, and then compell'd to leave and go home without getting any trace of him. When he got home he found a letter from the brother giving the right address.

## Down at the Front.

CULPEPPER, VA., *Feb.* '64.—Here I am pretty well down toward the extreme front. Three or four days ago General S., who is now in chief command, (I believe Meade is absent, sick,) moved a strong force southward from camp as if intending business. They went to the Rapidan; there has since been some manœuvering and a little fighting, but nothing of consequence. The telegraphic accounts given Monday morning last, make entirely too much of it, I should say. What General S. intended we here know not, but we trust in that competent commander. We were somewhat excited, (but not so very much either,) on Sunday, during the day and night, as orders were sent out to pack up and harness, and be ready to evacuate, to fall back towards Washington. But I was very sleepy and went to bed. Some tremendous shouts arousing me during the night, I went forth and found it was from the men above mention'd, who were returning. I talk'd with some of the men; as usual I found them full of gayety, endurance, and many fine little outshows, the signs of the most excellent good manliness of the world. It was a curious sight to see those shadowy columns moving through the night. I stood unobserv'd in the darkness and watch'd them long. The mud was very deep. The men had their usual burdens, overcoats, knapsacks, guns and blankets. Along and along they filed by me, with often a laugh, a song, a cheerful word, but never once a murmur. It may have been odd, but I never before so realized the majesty and reality of the American people *en masse*. It fell upon me like a great awe. The strong ranks moved neither fast nor slow. They had march'd seven or eight miles already through the slipping unctuous mud. The brave First corps stopt here. The equally brave Third corps moved on to Brandy station. The famous Brooklyn 14th are here, guarding the town. You see their red legs actively moving everywhere. Then they have a theatre of their own here. They give musical performances, nearly everything done capitally. Of course the audience is a jam. It is good sport to attend one of these entertainments of the 14th. I like to look

around at the soldiers, and the general collection in front of the curtain, more than the scene on the stage.

### Paying the Bounties.

One of the things to note here now is the arrival of the paymaster with his strong box, and the payment of bounties to veterans re-enlisting. Major H. is here to-day, with a small mountain of greenbacks, rejoicing the hearts of the 2d division of the First corps. In the midst of a rickety shanty, behind a little table, sit the major and clerk Eldridge, with the rolls before them, and much moneys. A re-enlisted man gets in cash about \$200 down, (and heavy instalments following, as the pay-days arrive, one after another.) The show of the men crowding around is quite exhilarating; I like to stand and look. They feel elated, their pockets full, and the ensuing furlough, the visit home. It is a scene of sparkling eyes and flush'd cheeks. The soldier has many gloomy and harsh experiences, and this makes up for some of them. Major H. is order'd to pay first all the re-enlisted men of the First corps their bounties and back pay, and then the rest. You hear the peculiar sound of the rustling of the new and crisp greenbacks by the hour, through the nimble fingers of the major and my friend clerk E.

### Rumors, Changes, &c.

About the excitement of Sunday, and the orders to be ready to start, I have heard since that the said orders came from some cautious minor commander, and that the high principalities knew not and thought not of any such move; which is likely. The rumor and fear here intimated a long circuit by Lee, and flank attack on our right. But I cast my eyes at the mud, which was then at its deepest and palmiest condition, and retired composedly to rest. Still it is about time for Culpepper to have a change. Authorities have chased each other here like clouds in a stormy sky. Before the first Bull Run this was the rendezvous and camp of instruction of the secession troops. I am

stopping at the house of a lady who has witness'd all the eventful changes of the war, along this route of contending armies. She is a widow, with a family of young children, and lives here with her sister in a large handsome house. A number of army officers board with them.

### Virginia.

Dilapidated, fenceless, and trodden with war as Virginia is, wherever I move across her surface, I find myself rous'd to surprise and admiration. What capacity for products, improvements, human life, nourishment and expansion. Everywhere that I have been in the Old Dominion, (the subtle mockery of that title now!) such thoughts have fill'd me. The soil is yet far above the average of any of the northern States. And how full of breadth the scenery, everywhere distant mountains, everywhere convenient rivers. Even yet prodigal in forest woods, and surely eligible for all the fruits, orchards, and flowers. The skies and atmosphere most luscious, as I feel certain, from more than a year's residence in the State, and movements hither and yon. I should say very healthy, as a general thing. Then a rich and elastic quality, by night and by day. The sun rejoices in his strength, dazzling and burning, and yet, to me, never unpleasantly weakening. It is not the panting tropical heat, but invigorates. The north tempers it. The nights are often unsurpassable. Last evening (Feb. 8,) I saw the first of the new moon, the outlined old moon clear along with it; the sky and air so clear, such transparent hues of color, it seem'd to me I had never really seen the new moon before. It was the thinnest cut crescent possible. It hung delicate just above the sulky shadow of the Blue mountains. Ah, if it might prove an omen and good prophecy for this unhappy State.

### Summer of 1864.

I am back again in Washington, on my regular daily and nightly rounds. Of course there are many specialties. Dotting a ward here and there are always cases of poor fellows, long-

suffering under obstinate wounds, or weak and dishearten'd from typhoid fever, or the like; mark'd cases, needing special and sympathetic nourishment. These I sit down and either talk to, or silently cheer them up. They always like it hugely, (and so do I.) Each case has its peculiarities, and needs some new adaptation. I have learnt to thus conform—learnt a good deal of hospital wisdom. Some of the poor young chaps, away from home for the first time in their lives, hunger and thirst for affection; this is sometimes the only thing that will reach their condition. The men like to have a pencil, and something to write in. I have given them cheap pocket-diaries, and almanacs for 1864, interleav'd with blank paper. For reading I generally have some old pictorial magazines or story papers—they are always acceptable. Also the morning or evening papers of the day. The best books I do not give, but lend to read through the wards, and then take them to others, and so on; they are very punctual about returning the books. In these wards, or on the field, as I thus continue to go round, I have come to adapt myself to each emergency, after its kind or call, however trivial, however solemn, every one justified and made real under its circumstances—not only visits and cheering talk and little gifts—not only washing and dressing wounds, (I have some cases where the patient is unwilling any one should do this but me)—but passages from the Bible, expounding them, prayer at the bedside, explanations of doctrine, &c. (I think I see my friends smiling at this confession, but I was never more in earnest in my life.) In camp and everywhere, I was in the habit of reading or giving recitations to the men. They were very fond of it, and liked declamatory poetical pieces. We would gather in a large group by ourselves, after supper, and spend the time in such readings, or in talking, and occasionally by an amusing game called the game of twenty questions.

### A New Army Organization Fit for America.

It is plain to me out of the events of the war, north and south, and out of all considerations, that the current military theory, practice, rules and organization, (adopted from Europe from

the feudal institutes, with, of course, the “modern improvements,” largely from the French,) though tacitly follow’d, and believ’d in by the officers generally, are not at all consonant with the United States, nor our people, nor our days. What it will be I know not—but I know that as entire an abnegation of the present military system, and the naval too, and a building up from radically different root-bases and centres appropriate to us, must eventually result, as that our political system has resulted and become establish’d, different from feudal Europe, and built up on itself from original perennial, democratic premises. We have undoubtedly in the United States the greatest military power—an exhaustless, intelligent, brave and reliable rank and file—in the world, any land, perhaps all lands. The problem is to organize this in the manner fully appropriate to it, to the principles of the republic, and to get the best service out of it. In the present struggle, as already seen and review’d, probably three-fourths of the losses, men, lives, &c., have been sheer superfluity, extravagance, waste.

### Death of a Hero.

I wonder if I could ever convey to another—to you, for instance, reader dear—the tender and terrible realities of such cases, (many, many happen’d,) as the one I am now going to mention. Stewart C. Glover, company E, 5th Wisconsin—was wounded May 5, in one of those fierce tussles of the Wilderness—died May 21—aged about 20. He was a small and beardless young man—a splendid soldier—in fact almost an ideal American, of his age. He had serv’d nearly three years, and would have been entitled to his discharge in a few days. He was in Hancock’s corps. The fighting had about ceas’d for the day, and the general commanding the brigade rode by and call’d for volunteers to bring in the wounded. Glover responded among the first—went out gayly—but while in the act of bearing in a wounded sergeant to our lines, was shot in the knee by a rebel sharpshooter; consequence, amputation and death. He had resided with his father, John Glover, an aged and feeble man, in Batavia, Genesee county, N.Y., but was at school in Wisconsin, after the



war broke out, and there enlisted—soon took to soldier-life, liked it, was very manly, was belov'd by officers and comrades. He kept a little diary, like so many of the soldiers. On the day of his death he wrote the following in it, *to-day the doctor says I must die—all is over with me—ah, so young to die*. On another blank leaf he pencill'd to his brother, *dear brother Thomas, I have been brave but wicked—pray for me*.

### Hospital Scenes—Incidents.

It is Sunday afternoon, middle of summer, hot and oppressive, and very silent through the ward. I am taking care of a critical case, now lying in a half lethargy. Near where I sit is a suffering rebel, from the 8th Louisiana; his name is Irving. He has been here a long time, badly wounded, and lately had his leg amputated; it is not doing very well. Right opposite me is a sick soldier-boy, laid down with his clothes on, sleeping, looking much wasted, his pallid face on his arm. I see by the yellow trimming on his jacket that he is a cavalry boy. I step softly over and find by his card that he is named William Cone, of the 1st Maine cavalry, and his folks live in Skowhegan.

*Ice Cream Treat.*—One hot day toward the middle of June, I gave the inmates of Carver hospital a general ice cream treat, purchasing a large quantity, and, under convoy of the doctor or head nurse, going around personally through the wards to see to its distribution.

*An Incident.*—In one of the fights before Atlanta, a rebel soldier, of large size, evidently a young man, was mortally wounded top of the head, so that the brains partially exuded. He lived three days, lying on his back on the spot where he first dropt. He dug with his heel in the ground during that time a hole big enough to put in a couple of ordinary knapsacks. He just lay there in the open air, and with little intermission kept his heel going night and day. Some of our soldiers then moved him to a house, but he died in a few minutes.

*Another.*—After the battle at Columbia, Tennessee, where we repuls'd about a score of vehement rebel charges, they left a great many wounded on the ground, mostly within our range.

Whenever any of these wounded attempted to move away by any means, generally by crawling off, our men without exception brought them down by a bullet. They let none crawl away, no matter what his condition.

### A Yankee Soldier.

As I turn'd off the Avenue one cool October evening into Thirteenth street, a soldier with knapsack and overcoat stood at the corner inquiring his way. I found he wanted to go part of the road in my direction, so we walk'd on together. We soon fell into conversation. He was small and not very young, and a tough little fellow, as I judged in the evening light, catching glimpses by the lamps we pass'd. His answers were short, but clear. His name was Charles Carroll; he belong'd to one of the Massachusetts regiments, and was born in or near Lynn. His parents were living, but were very old. There were four sons, and all had enlisted. Two had died of starvation and misery in the prison at Andersonville, and one had been kill'd in the west. He only was left. He was now going home, and by the way he talk'd I inferr'd that his time was nearly out. He made great calcluations on being with his parents to comfort them the rest of their days.

### Union Prisoners South.

Michael Stansbury, 48 years of age, a sea-faring man, a southerner by birth and raising, formerly captain of U.S. light ship Long Shoal, station'd at Long Shoal point, Pamlico sound—though a southerner, a firm Union man—was captur'd Feb. 17, 1863, and has been nearly two years in the Confederate prisons; was at one time order'd releas'd by Governor Vance, but a rebel officer re-arrested him; then sent on to Richmond for exchange—but instead of being exchanged was sent down (as a southern citizen, not a soldier,) to Salisbury, N.C., where he remain'd until lately, when he escap'd among the exchange'd by assuming the name of a dead soldier, and coming up via Wilmington with the rest. Was about sixteen months in Salisbury.

Subsequent to October, '64, there were about 11,000 Union prisoners in the stockade; about 100 of them southern unionists, 200 U.S. deserters. During the past winter 1500 of the prisoners, to save their lives, join'd the confederacy, on condition of being assign'd merely to guard duty. Out of the 11,000 not more than 2500 came out; 500 of these were pitiable, helpless wretches—the rest were in a condition to travel. There were often 60 dead bodies to be buried in the morning; the daily average would be about 40. The regular food was a meal of corn, the cob and husk ground together, and sometimes once a week a ration of sorghum molasses. A diminutive ration of meat might possibly come once a month, not oftener. In the stockade, containing the 11,000 men, there was a partial show of tents, not enough for 2000. A large proportion of the men lived in holes in the ground, in the utmost wretchedness. Some froze to death, others had their hands and feet frozen. The rebel guards would occasionally, and on the least pretence, fire into the prison from mere demonism and wantonness. All the horrors that can be named, starvation, lassitude, filth, vermin, despair, swift loss of self-respect, idiocy, insanity, and frequent murder were there. Stansbury has a wife and child living in Newbern—has written to them from here—is in the U.S. light-house employ still—(had been home to Newbern to see his family, and on his return to the ship was captured in his boat.) Has seen men brought there to Salisbury as hearty as you ever see in your life—in a few weeks completely dead gone, much of it from thinking on their condition—hope all gone. Has himself a hard, sad, strangely deaden'd kind of look, as of one chill'd for years in the cold and dark, where his good manly nature had no room to exercise itself.

### Deserters.

*Oct. 24.*—Saw a large squad of our own deserters, (over 300) surrounded with a cordon of arm'd guards, marching along Pennsylvania avenue. The most motley collection I ever saw, all sorts of rig, all sorts of hats and caps, many fine-looking young fellows, some of them shame-faced, some sickly, most of them

dirty, shirts very dirty and long worn, &c. They tramp'd along without order, a huge huddling mass, not in ranks. I saw some of the spectators laughing, but I felt like anything else but laughing. These deserters are far more numerous than would be thought. Almost every day I see squads of them, sometimes two or three at a time, with a small guard; sometimes ten or twelve, under a larger one. (I hear that desertions from the army now in the field have often averaged 10,000 a month. One of the commonest sights in Washington is a squad of deserters.)

### A Glimpse of War's Hell-Scenes.

In one of the late movements of our troops in the valley, (near Upperville, I think,) a strong force of Moseby's mounted guerillas attack'd a train of wounded, and the guard of cavalry conveying them. The ambulances contain'd about 60 wounded, quite a number of them officers of rank. The rebels were in strength, and the capture of the train and its partial guard after a short snap was effectually accomplish'd. No sooner had our men surrender'd, the rebels instantly commenced robbing the train and murdering their prisoners, even the wounded. Here is the scene or a sample of it, ten minutes after. Among the wounded officers in the ambulances were one, a lieutenant of regulars, and another of higher rank. These two were dragg'd out on the ground on their backs, and were now surrounded by the guerillas, a demoniac crowd, each member of which was stabbing them in different parts of their bodies. One of the officers had his feet pinn'd firmly to the ground by bayonets stuck through them and thrust into the ground. These two officers, as afterwards found on examination, had receiv'd about twenty such thrusts, some of them through the mouth, face, &c. The wounded had all been dragg'd (to give a better chance also for plunder,) out of their wagons; some had been effectually dispatch'd, and their bodies were lying there lifeless and bloody. Others, not yet dead, but horribly mutilated, were moaning or groaning. Of our men who surrender'd, most had been thus maim'd or slaughter'd.

At this instant a force of our cavalry, who had been following

the train at some interval, charged suddenly upon the secesh captors, who proceeded at once to make the best escape they could. Most of them got away, but we gobbled two officers and seventeen men, in the very acts just described. The sight was one which admitted of little discussion, as may be imagined. The seventeen captur'd men and two officers were put under guard for the night, but it was decided there and then that they should die. The next morning the two officers were taken in the town, separate places, put in the centre of the street, and shot. The seventeen men were taken to an open ground, a little one side. They were placed in a hollow square, half-encompass'd by two of our cavalry regiments, one of which regiments had three days before found the bloody corpses of three of their men hamstringed and hung up by the heels to limbs of trees by Moseby's guerillas, and the other had not long before had twelve men, after surrendering, shot and then hung by the neck to limbs of trees, and jeering inscriptions pinn'd to the breast of one of the corpses, who had been a sergeant. Those three, and those twelve, had been found, I say, by these environing regiments. Now, with revolvers, they form'd the grim cordon of the seventeen prisoners. The latter were placed in the midst of the hollow square, unfasten'd, and the ironical remark made to them that they were now to be given "a chance for themselves." A few ran for it. But what use? From every side the deadly pills came. In a few minutes the seventeen corpses strew'd the hollow square. I was curious to know whether some of the Union soldiers, some few, (some one or two at least of the youngsters,) did not abstain from shooting on the helpless men. Not one. There was no exultation, very little said, almost nothing, yet every man there contributed his shot.

Multiply the above by scores, aye hundreds—verify it in all the forms that different circumstances, individuals, places, could afford—light it with every lurid passion, the wolf's, the lion's lapping thirst for blood—the passionate, boiling volcanoes of human revenge for comrades, brothers slain—with the light of burning farms, and heaps of smutting, smouldering black embers—and in the human heart everywhere black, worse embers—and you have an inkling of this war.

## Gifts—Money—Discrimination.

As a very large proportion of the wounded came up from the front without a cent of money in their pockets, I soon discover'd that it was about the best thing I could do to raise their spirits, and show them that somebody cared for them, and practically felt a fatherly or brotherly interest in them, to give them small sums in such cases, using tact and discretion about it. I am regularly supplied with funds for this purpose by good women and men in Boston, Salem, Providence, Brooklyn, and New York. I provide myself with a quantity of bright new ten-cent and five-cent bills, and, when I think it incumbent, I give 25 or 30 cents, or perhaps 50 cents, and occasionally a still larger sum to some particular case. As I have started this subject, I take opportunity to ventilate the financial question. My supplies, altogether voluntary, mostly confidential, often seeming quite Providential, were numerous and varied. For instance, there were two distant and wealthy ladies, sisters, who sent regularly, for two years, quite heavy sums, enjoining that their names should be kept secret. The same delicacy was indeed a frequent condition. From several I had *carte blanche*. Many were entire strangers. From these sources, during from two to three years, in the manner described, in the hospitals, I bestowed, as almoner for others, many, many thousands of dollars. I learn'd one thing conclusively—that beneath all the ostensible greed and heartlessness of our times there is no end to the generous benevolence of men and women in the United States, when once sure of their object. Another thing became clear to me—while *cash* is not amiss to bring up the rear, tact and magnetic sympathy and unction are, and ever will be, sovereign still.

## Items from My Note Books.

Some of the half-eras'd, and not over-legible when made, memoranda of things wanted by one patient or another, will convey quite a fair idea. D. S. G., bed 52, wants a good book; has a sore, weak throat; would like some horehound candy; is from

New Jersey, 28th regiment. C. H. L., 145th Pennsylvania, lies in bed 6, with jaundice and erysipelas; also wounded; stomach easily nauseated; bring him some oranges, also a little tart jelly; hearty, full-blooded young fellow—(he got better in a few days, and is now home on a furlough.) J. H. G., bed 24, wants an undershirt, drawers, and socks; has not had a change for quite a while; is evidently a neat, clean boy from New England—(I supplied him; also with a comb, tooth-brush, and some soap and towels; I noticed afterward he was the cleanest of the whole ward.) Mrs. G., lady-nurse, ward F, wants a bottle of brandy—has two patients imperatively requiring stimulus—low with wounds and exhaustion. (I supplied her with a bottle of first-rate brandy from the Christian commission rooms.)

### A Case from Second Bull Run.

Well, poor John Mahay is dead. He died yesterday. His was a painful and long-lingering case, (see p. [490] *ante*.) I have been with him at times for the past fifteen months. He belonged to company A, 101st New York, and was shot through the lower region of the abdomen at second Bull Run, August, '62. One scene at his bedside will suffice for the agonies of nearly two years. The bladder had been perforated by a bullet going entirely through him. Not long since I sat a good part of the morning by his bedside, ward E, Armory square. The water ran out of his eyes from the intense pain, and the muscles of his face were distorted, but he utter'd nothing except a low groan now and then. Hot moist cloths were applied, and reliev'd him somewhat. Poor Mahay, a mere boy in age, but old in misfortune. He never knew the love of parents, was placed in infancy in one of the New York charitable institutions, and subsequently bound out to a tyrannical master in Sullivan county, (the scars of whose cowhide and club remain'd yet on his back.) His wound here was a most disagreeable one, for he was a gentle, cleanly, and affectionate boy. He found friends in his hospital life, and, indeed, was a universal favorite. He had quite a funeral ceremony.

### Army Surgeons—Aid Deficiencies.

I must bear my most emphatic testimony to the zeal, manliness, and professional spirit and capacity, generally prevailing among the surgeons, many of them young men, in the hospitals and the army. I will not say much about the exceptions, for they are few; (but I have met some of those few, and very incompetent and airish they were.) I never ceas'd to find the best men, and the hardest and most disinterested workers, among the surgeons in the hospitals. They are full of genius, too. I have seen many hundreds of them and this is my testimony. There are, however, serious deficiencies, wastes, sad want of system, in the commissions, contributions, and in all the voluntary, and a great part of the governmental nursing, edibles, medicines, stores, &c. (I do not say surgical attendance, because the surgeons cannot do more than human endurance permits.) Whatever puffing accounts there may be in the papers of the North, this is the actual fact. No thorough previous preparation, no system, no foresight, no genius. Always plenty of stores, no doubt, but never where they are needed, and never the proper application. Of all harrowing experiences, none is greater than that of the days following a heavy battle. Scores, hundreds of the noblest men on earth, uncomplaining, lie helpless, mangled, faint, alone, and so bleed to death, or die from exhaustion, either actually untouch'd at all, or merely the laying of them down and leaving them, when there ought to be means provided to save them.

### The Blue Everywhere.

This city, its suburbs, the capitol, the front of the White House, the places of amusement, the Avenue, and all the main streets, swarm with soldiers this winter, more than ever before. Some are out from the hospitals, some from the neighboring camps, &c. One source or another, they pour plenteously, and make, I should say, the mark'd feature in the human movement and costume-appearance of our national city. Their blue pants and overcoats are everywhere. The clump of crutches is heard up



the stairs of the paymasters' offices, and there are characteristic groups around the doors of the same, often waiting long and wearily in the cold. Toward the latter part of the afternoon, you see the furlough'd men, sometimes singly, sometimes in small squads, making their way to the Baltimore depot. At all times, except early in the morning, the patrol detachments are moving around, especially during the earlier hours of evening, examining passes, and arresting all soldiers without them. They do not question the one-legged, or men badly disabled or maim'd, but all others are stopt. They also go around evenings though the auditoriums of the theatres, and make officers and all show their passes, or other authority, for being there.

### A Model Hospital.

*Sunday, January 29th, 1865.*—Have been in Armory-square this afternoon. The wards are very comfortable, new floors and plaster walls, and models of neatness. I am not sure but this is a model hospital after all, in important respects. I found several sad cases of old lingering wounds. One Delaware soldier, William H. Millis, from Bridgeville, whom I had been with after the battles of the Wilderness, last May, where he receiv'd a very bad wound in the chest, with another in the left arm, and whose case was serious (pneumonia had set in) all last June and July, I now find well enough to do light duty. For three weeks at the time mention'd he just hovered between life and death.

### Boys in the Army.

As I walk'd home about sunset, I saw in Fourteenth street a very young soldier, thinly clad, standing near the house I was about to enter. I stopt a moment in front of the door and call'd him to me. I knew that an old Tennessee regiment, and also an Indiana regiment, were temporarily stopping in new barracks, near Fourteenth street. This boy I found belonged to the Tennessee regiment. But I could hardly believe he carried a musket. He was but 15 years old, yet had been twelve months a soldier, and had borne his part in several battles, even historic ones. I

ask'd him if he did not suffer from the cold, and if he had no overcoat. No, he did not suffer from cold, and had no overcoat, but could draw one whenever he wish'd. His father was dead, and his mother living in some part of East Tennessee; all the men were from that part of the country. The next forenoon I saw the Tennessee and Indiana regiments marching down the Avenue. My boy was with the former, stepping along with the rest. There were many other boys no older. I stood and watch'd them as they tramp'd along with slow, strong, heavy, regular steps. There did not appear to be a man over 30 years of age, and a large proportion were from 15 to perhaps 22 or 23. They had all the look of veterans, worn, stain'd, impassive, and a certain unbent, lounging gait, carrying in addition to their regular arms and knapsacks, frequently a frying-pan, broom, &c. They were all of pleasant physiognomy; no refinement, nor blanch'd with intellect, but as my eye pick'd them, moving along, rank by rank, there did not seem to be a single repulsive, brutal or markedly stupid face among them.

### Burial of a Lady Nurse.

Here is an incident just occur'd in one of the hospitals. A lady named Miss or Mrs. Billings, who has long been a practical friend of soldiers, and nurse in the army, and had become attached to it in a way that no one can realize but him or her who has had experience, was taken sick, early this winter, linger'd some time, and finally died in the hospital. It was her request that she should be buried among the soldiers, and after the military method. This request was fully carried out. Her coffin was carried to the grave by soldiers, with the usual escort, buried, and a salute fired over the grave. This was at Annapolis a few days since.

### Female Nurses for Soldiers.

There are many women in one position or another, among the hospitals, mostly as nurses here in Washington, and among the military stations; quite a number of them young ladies acting as

volunteers. They are a help in certain ways, and deserve to be mention'd with respect. Then it remains to be distinctly said that few or no young ladies, under the irresistible conventions of society, answer the practical requirements of nurses for soldiers. Middle-aged or healthy and good condition'd elderly women, mothers of children, are always best. Many of the wounded must be handled. A hundred things which cannot be gainsay'd, must occur and must be done. The presence of a good middle-aged or elderly woman, the magnetic touch of hands, the expressive features of the mother, the silent soothing of her presence, her words, her knowledge and privileges arrived at only through having had children, are precious and final qualifications. It is a natural faculty that is required; it is not merely having a genteel young woman at a table in a ward. One of the finest nurses I met was a red-faced illiterate old Irish woman; I have seen her take the poor wasted naked boys so tenderly up in her arms. There are plenty of excellent clean old black women that would make tip-top nurses.

### Southern Escapees.

*Feb. 23, '65.*—I saw a large procession of young men from the rebel army, (deserters they are call'd, but the usual meaning of the word does not apply to them,) passing the Avenue to-day. There were nearly 200, come up yesterday by boat from James river. I stood and watch'd them as they shuffled along, in a slow, tired, worn sort of way; a large proportion of light-hair'd, blonde, light gray-eyed young men among them. Their costumes had a dirt-stain'd uniformity; most had been originally gray; some had articles of our uniform, pants on one, vest or coat on another; I think they were mostly Georgia and North Carolina boys. They excited little or no attention. As I stood quite close to them, several good looking enough youths, (but O what a tale of misery their appearance told,) nodded or just spoke to me, without doubt divining pity and fatherliness out of my face, for my heart was full enough of it. Several of the couples trudg'd along with their arms about each other, some probably brothers, as if they were afraid they might somehow get sepa-

rated. They nearly all look'd what one might call simple, yet intelligent, too. Some had pieces of old carpet, some blankets, and others old bags around their shoulders. Some of them here and there had fine faces, still it was a procession of misery. The two hundred had with them about half a dozen arm'd guards. Along this week I saw some such procession, more or less in numbers, every day, as they were brought up by the boat. The government does what it can for them, and sends them north and west.

*Feb. 27.*—Some three or four hundred more escapees from the confederate army came up on the boat. As the day has been very pleasant indeed, (after a long spell of bad weather,) I have been wandering around a good deal, without any other object than to be out-doors and enjoy it; have met these escaped men in all directions. Their apparel is the same ragged, long-worn motley as before described. I talk'd with a number of the men. Some are quite bright and stylish, for all their poor clothes—walking with an air, wearing their old head-coverings on one side, quite saucily. I find the old, unquestionable proofs, as all along the past four years, of the unscrupulous tyranny exercised by the secession government in conscripting the common people by absolute force everywhere, and paying no attention whatever to the men's time being up—keeping them in military service just the same. One gigantic young fellow, a Georgian, at least six feet three inches high, broad-sized in proportion, attired in the dirtiest, drab, well-smear'd rags, tied with strings, his trousers at the knees all strips and streamers, was complacently standing eating some bread and meat. He appear'd contented enough. Then a few minutes after I saw him slowly walking along. It was plain he did not take anything to heart.

*Feb. 28.*—As I pass'd the military headquarters of the city, not far from the President's house, I stopt to interview some of the crowd of escapees who were lounging there. In appearance they were the same as previously mention'd. Two of them, one about 17, and the other perhaps 25 or '6, I talk'd with some time. They were from North Carolina, born and rais'd there, and had folks there. The elder had been in the rebel service four years. He was first conscripted for two years. He was then kept arbitrarily in the ranks. This is the case with a large proportion

of the secession army. There was nothing downcast in these young men's manners; the younger had been soldiering about a year; he was conscripted; there were six brothers (all the boys of the family) in the army, part of them as conscripts, part as volunteers; three had been kill'd; one had escaped about four months ago, and now this one had got away; he was a pleasant and well-talking lad, with the peculiar North Carolina idiom (not at all disagreeable to my ears.) He and the elder one were of the same company, and escaped together—and wish'd to remain together. They thought of getting transportation away to Missouri, and working there; but were not sure it was judicious. I advised them rather to go to some of the directly northern States, and get farm work for the present. The younger had made six dollars on the boat, with some tobacco he brought; he had three and a half left. The elder had nothing; I gave him a trifle. Soon after, met John Wormley, 9th Alabama, a West Tennessee rais'd boy, parents both dead—had the look of one for a long time on short allowance—said very little—chew'd tobacco at a fearful rate, spitting in proportion—large clear dark-brown eyes, very fine—didn't know what to make of me—told me at last he wanted much to get some clean underclothes, and a pair of decent pants. Didn't care about coat or hat fixings. Wanted a chance to wash himself well, and put on the underclothes. I had the very great pleasure of helping him to accomplish all those wholesome designs.

*March 1st.*—Plenty more butternut or clay-color'd escapees every day. About 160 came in to-day, a large portion South Carolinians. They generally take the oath of allegiance, and are sent north, west, or extreme south-west if they wish. Several of them told me that the desertions in their army, of men going home, leave or no leave, are far more numerous than their desertions to our side. I saw a very forlorn looking squad of about a hundred, late this afternoon, on their way to the Baltimore depot.

### The Capitol by Gas-Light.

To-night I have been wandering awhile in the capitol, which is all lit up. The illuminated rotunda looks fine. I like to stand

aside and look a long, long while up at the dome; it comforts me somehow. The House and Senate were both in session till very late. I look'd in upon them, but only a few moments; they were hard at work on tax and appropriation bills. I wander'd through the long and rich corridors and apartments under the Senate; an old habit of mine, former winters, and now more satisfaction than ever. Not many persons down there, occasionally a flitting figure in the distance.

### The Inauguration.

*March 4.*—The President very quietly rode down to the capitol in his own carriage, by himself, on a sharp trot, about noon, either because he wish'd to be on hand to sign bills, or to get rid of marching in line with the absurd procession, the muslin temple of liberty, and pasteboard monitor. I saw him on his return, at three o'clock, after the performance was over. He was in his plain two-horse barouche, and look'd very much worn and tired; the lines, indeed, of vast responsibilities, intricate questions, and demands of life and death, cut deeper than ever upon his dark brown face; yet all the old goodness, tenderness, sadness, and canny shrewdness, underneath the furrows. (I never see that man without feeling that he is one to become personally attach'd to, for his combination of purest, heartiest tenderness, and native western form of manliness.) By his side sat his little boy, of ten years. There were no soldiers, only a lot of civilians on horseback, with huge yellow scarfs over their shoulders, riding around the carriage. (At the inauguration four years ago, he rode down and back again surrounded by a dense mass of arm'd cavalymen eight deep, with drawn sabres; and there were sharpshooters station'd at every corner on the route.) I ought to make mention of the closing levee of Saturday night last. Never before was such a compact jam in front of the White House—all the grounds fill'd, and away out to the spacious sidewalks. I was there, as I took a notion to go—was in the rush inside with the crowd—surged along the passage-ways, the blue and other rooms, and through the great east room. Crowds of country people, some very funny. Fine

music from the Marine band, off in a side place. I saw Mr. Lincoln, drest all in black, with white kid gloves and a claw-hammer coat, receiving, as in duty bound, shaking hands, looking very disconsolate, and as if he would give anything to be somewhere else.

### Attitude of Foreign Governments During the War.

Looking over my scraps, I find I wrote the following during 1864. The happening to our America, abroad as well as at home, these years, is indeed most strange. The democratic republic has paid her to-day the terrible and resplendent compliment of the united wish of all the nations of the world that her union should be broken, her future cut off, and that she should be compell'd to descend to the level of kingdoms and empires ordinarily great. There is certainly not one government in Europe but is now watching the war in this country, with the ardent prayer that the United States may be effectually split, crippled, and dismember'd by it. There is not one but would help toward dismemberment, if it dared. I say such is the ardent wish to-day of England and of France, as governments, and of all the nations of Europe, as governments. I think indeed it is to-day the real, heartfelt wish of all the nations of the world, with the single exception of Mexico—Mexico, the only one to whom we have ever really done wrong, and now the only one who prays for us and for our triumph, with genuine prayer. Is it not indeed strange? America, made up of all, cheerfully from the beginning opening her arms to all, the result and justifier of all, of Britain, Germany, France and Spain—all here—the accepter, the friend, hope, last resource and general house of all—she who has harm'd none, but been bounteous to so many, to millions, the mother of strangers and exiles, all nations—should now I say be paid this dread compliment of general governmental fear and hatred. Are we indignant? alarm'd? Do we feel jeopardized? No; help'd, braced, concentrated, rather. We are all too prone to wander from ourselves, to affect Europe, and watch her frowns and smiles. We need this hot lesson of general hatred, and henceforth must never forget it.

Never again will we trust the moral sense nor abstract friendliness of a single *government* of the old world.

The Weather.—Does it Sympathize with These Times?

Whether the rains, the heat and cold, and what underlies them all, are affected with what affects man in masses, and follow his play of passionate action, strain'd stronger than usual, and on a larger scale than usual—whether this, or no, it is certain that there is now, and has been for twenty months or more, on this American continent north, many a remarkable, many an unprecedented expression of the subtle world of air above us and around us. There, since this war, and the wide and deep national agitation, strange analogies, different combinations, a different sunlight, or absence of it; different products even out of the ground. After every great battle, a great storm. Even civic events the same. On Saturday last, a forenoon like whirling demons, dark, with slanting rain, full of rage; and then the afternoon, so calm, so bathed with flooding splendor from heaven's most excellent sun, with atmosphere of sweetness; so clear, it show'd the stars, long, long before they were due. As the President came out on the capitol portico, a curious little white cloud, the only one in that part of the sky, appear'd like a hovering bird, right over him.

Indeed, the heavens, the elements, all the meteorological influences, have run riot for weeks past. Such caprices, abruptest alternation of frowns and beauty, I never knew. It is a common remark that (as last summer was different in its spells of intense heat from any preceding it,) the winter just completed has been without parallel. It has remain'd so down to the hour I am writing. Much of the daytime of the past month was sulky, with leaden heaviness, fog, interstices of bitter cold, and some insane storms. But there have been samples of another description. Nor earth nor sky ever knew spectacles of superber beauty than some of the nights lately here. The western star, Venus, in the earlier hours of evening, has never been so large, so clear; it seems as if it told something, as if it held rapport indulgent with humanity, with us Americans. Five or six nights



since, it hung close by the moon, then a little past its first quarter. The star was wonderful, the moon like a young mother. The sky, dark blue, the transparent night, the planets, the moderate west wind, the elastic temperature, the miracle of that great star, and the young and swelling moon swimming in the west, suffused the soul. Then I heard, slow and clear, the deliberate notes of a bugle come up out of the silence, sounding so good through the night's mystery, no hurry, but firm and faithful, floating along, rising, falling leisurely, with here and there a long-drawn note; the bugle, well play'd, sounding tattoo, in one of the army hospitals near here, where the wounded (some of them personally so dear to me,) are lying in their cots and many a sick boy come down to the war from Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Iowa, and the rest.

### Inauguration Ball.

*March 6.*—I have been up to look at the dance and supper-rooms, for the inauguration ball at the Patent office; and I could not help thinking, what a different scene they presented to my view a while since, fill'd with a crowded mass of the worst wounded of the war, brought in from second Bull Run, Antietam, and Fredericksburgh. To-night, beautiful women, perfumes, the violins' sweetness, the polka and the waltz; then the amputation, the blue face, the groan, the glassy eye of the dying, the clotted rag, the odor of wounds and blood, and many a mother's son amid strangers, passing away untended there, (for the crowd of the badly hurt was great, and much for nurse to do, and much for surgeon.)

### Scene at the Capitol.

I must mention a strange scene at the capitol, the hall of Representatives, the morning of Saturday last, (March 4th.) The day just dawn'd, but in half-darkness, everything dim, leaden, and soaking. In that dim light, the members nervous from long drawn duty, exhausted, some asleep, and many half asleep. The gas-light, mix'd with the dingy day-break, produced an un-

earthly effect. The poor little sleepy, stumbling pages, the smell of the hall, the members with heads leaning on their desks, the sounds of the voices speaking, with unusual intonations—the general moral atmosphere also of the close of this important session—the strong hope that the war is approaching its close—the tantalizing dread lest the hope may be a false one—the grandeur of the hall itself, with its effect of vast shadows up toward the panels and spaces over the galleries—all made a mark'd combination.

In the midst of this, with the suddenness of a thunderbolt, burst one of the most angry and crashing storms of rain and hail ever heard. It beat like a deluge on the heavy glass roof of the hall, and the wind literally howl'd and roar'd. For a moment, (and no wonder,) the nervous and sleeping Representatives were thrown into confusion. The slumberers awaked with fear, some started for the doors, some look'd up with blanch'd cheeks and lips to the roof, and the little pages began to cry; it was a scene. But it was over almost as soon as the drowsied men were actually awake. They recover'd themselves; the storm raged on, beating, dashing, and with loud noises at times. But the House went ahead with its business then, I think, as calmly and with as much deliberation as at any time in its career. Perhaps the shock did it good. (One is not without impression, after all, amid these members of Congress, of both the Houses, that if the flat routine of their duties should ever be broken in upon by some great emergency involving real danger; and calling for first-class personal qualities, those qualities would be found generally forthcoming, and from men not now credited with them.)

### A Yankee Antique.

*March 27, 1865.*—Sergeant Calvin F. Harlowe, company C, 29th Massachusetts, 3d brigade, 1st division, Ninth corps—a mark'd sample of heroism and death, (some may say bravado, but I say *heroism*, of grandest, oldest order)—in the late attack by the rebel troops, and temporary capture by them, of fort Steadman, at night. The fort was surprised at dead of night.

Suddenly awaken'd from their sleep, and rushing from their tents, Harlowe, with others, found himself in the hands of the secesh—they demanded his surrender—he answer'd, *Never while I live*. (Of course it was useless. The others surrender'd; the odds were too great.) Again he was ask'd to yield, this time by a rebel captain. Though surrounded, and quite calm, he again refused, call'd sternly to his comrades to fight on, and himself attempted to do so. The rebel captain then shot him—but at the same instant he shot the captain. Both fell together mortally wounded. Harlowe died almost instantly. The rebels were driven out in a very short time. The body was buried next day, but soon taken up and sent home, (Plymouth county, Mass.) Harlowe was only 22 years of age—was a tall, slim, dark-hair'd, blue-eyed young man—had come out originally with the 29th; and that is the way he met his death, after four years' campaign. He was in the Seven Days fight before Richmond, in second Bull Run, Antietam, first Fredericksburgh, Vicksburgh, Jackson, Wilderness, and the campaigns following—was as good a soldier as ever wore the blue, and every old officer in the regiment will bear that testimony. Though so young, and in a common rank, he had a spirit as resolute and brave as any hero in the books, ancient or modern—It was too great to say the words "I surrender"—and so he died. (When I think of such things, knowing them well, all the vast and complicated events of the war, on which history dwells and makes its volumes, fall aside, and for the moment at any rate I see nothing but young Calvin Harlowe's figure in the night, disdaining to surrender.)

### Wounds and Diseases.

The war is over, but the hospitals are fuller than ever, from former and current cases. A large majority of the wounds are in the arms and legs. But there is every kind of wound, in every part of the body. I should say of the sick, from my observation, that the prevailing maladies are typhoid fever and the camp fevers generally, diarrhœa, catarrhal affections and bronchitis, rheumatism and pneumonia. These forms of sickness lead; all

the rest follow. There are twice as many sick as there are wounded. The deaths range from seven to ten per cent. of those under treatment.\*

### Death of President Lincoln.

*April 16, '65.*—I find in my notes of the time, this passage on the death of Abraham Lincoln: He leaves for America's history and biography, so far, not only its most dramatic reminiscence—he leaves, in my opinion, the greatest, best, most characteristic, artistic, moral personality. Not but that he had faults, and show'd them in the Presidency; but honesty, goodness, shrewdness, conscience, and (a new virtue, unknown to other lands, and hardly yet really known here, but the foundation and tie of all, as the future will grandly develop,) UNIONISM, in its truest and amplest sense, form'd the hard-pan of his character. These he seal'd with his life. The tragic splendor of his death, purging, illuminating all, throws round his form, his head, an aureole that will remain and will grow brighter through time, while history lives, and love of country lasts. By many has this Union been help'd; but if one name, one man, must be pick'd out, he, most of all, is the conservator of it, to the future. He was assassinated—but the Union is not assassinated—*ça ira!* One falls, and another falls. The soldier drops, sinks like a wave—but the ranks of the ocean eternally press on. Death does its work, obliterates a hundred, a thousand—President, general, captain, private—but the Nation is immortal.

### Sherman's Army's Jubilation—Its Sudden Stoppage.

When Sherman's armies, (long after they left Atlanta,) were marching through South and North Carolina—after leaving Savannah, the news of Lee's capitulation having been receiv'd—

\*In the U.S. Surgeon-General's office since, there is a formal record and treatment of 253,142 cases of wounds by government surgeons. What must have been the number unofficial, indirect—to say nothing of the Southern armies?

the men never mov'd a mile without from some part of the line sending up continued, inspiring shouts. At intervals all day long sounded out the wild music of those peculiar army cries. They would be commenc'd by one regiment or brigade, immediately taken up by others, and at length whole corps and armies would join in these wild triumphant choruses. It was one of the characteristic expressions of the western troops, and became a habit, serving as a relief and outlet to the men—a vent for their feelings of victory, returning peace, &c. Morning, noon, and afternoon, spontaneous, for occasion or without occasion, these huge, strange cries, differing from any other, echoing through the open air for many a mile, expressing youth, joy, wildness, irrepressible strength, and the ideas of advance and conquest, sounded along the swamps and uplands of the South, floating to the skies. ('There never were men that kept in better spirits in danger or defeat—what then could they do in victory?'—said one of the 15th corps to me, afterwards.) This exuberance continued till the armies arrived at Raleigh. There the news of the President's murder was receiv'd. Then no more shouts or yells, for a week. All the marching was comparatively muffled. It was very significant—hardly a loud word or laugh in many of the regiments. A hush and silence pervaded all.

### No Good Portrait of Lincoln.

Probably the reader has seen physiognomies (often old farmers, sea-captains, and such) that, behind their homeliness, or even ugliness, held superior points so subtle, yet so palpable, making the real life of their faces almost as impossible to depict as a wild perfume or fruit-taste, or a passionate tone of the living voice—and such was Lincoln's face, the peculiar color, the lines of it, the eyes, mouth, expression. Of technical beauty it had nothing—but to the eye of a great artist it furnished a rare study, a feast and fascination. The current portraits are all failures—most of them caricatures.

## Releas'd Union Prisoners from South.

The releas'd prisoners of war are now coming up from the southern prisons. I have seen a number of them. The sight is worse than any sight of battle-fields, or any collection of wounded, even the bloodiest. There was, (as a sample,) one large boat load, of several hundreds, brought about the 25th, to Annapolis; and out of the whole number only three individuals were able to walk from the boat. The rest were carried ashore and laid down in one place or another. Can those be *men*—those little livid brown, ash-streak'd, monkey-looking dwarfs?—are they really not mummied, dwindled corpses? They lay there, most of them, quite still, but with a horrible look in their eyes and skinny lips (often with not enough flesh on the lips to cover their teeth.) Probably no more appalling sight was ever seen on this earth. (There are deeds, crimes, that may be forgiven; but this is not among them. It steps its perpetrators in blackest, escapeless, endless damnation. Over 50,000 have been compell'd to die the death of starvation—reader, did you ever try to realize what *starvation* actually is?—in those prisons—and in a land of plenty.) An indescribable meanness, tyranny, aggravating course of insults, almost incredible—was evidently the rule of treatment through all the southern military prisons. The dead there are not to be pitied as much as some of the living that come from there—if they can be call'd living—many of them are mentally imbecile, and will never recuperate.\*

\*From a review of "ANDERSONVILLE, A STORY OF SOUTHERN MILITARY PRISONS," published serially in the "Toledo Blade," in 1879, and afterwards in book form.

"There is a deep fascination in the subject of Andersonville—for that Golgotha, in which lie the whitening bones of 13,000 gallant young men, represents the dearest and costliest sacrifice of the war for the preservation of our national unity. It is a type, too, of its class. Its more than hundred hecatombs of dead represent several times that number of their brethren, for whom the prison gates of Belle Isle, Danville, Salisbury, Florence, Columbia, and Cahaba open'd only in eternity. There are few families in the North who have not at least one dear relative or friend among these 60,000 whose sad fortune it was to end their service for the Union by lying down and dying for it in a southern

## Death of a Pennsylvania Soldier.

*Frank H. Irwin, company E, 93rd Pennsylvania—died May 1, '65—My letter to his mother.*—Dear madam: No doubt you and Frank's friends have heard the sad fact of his death in hospital here, through his uncle, or the lady from Baltimore, who took his things. (I have not seen them, only heard of them visiting Frank.) I will write you a few lines—as a casual friend that sat by his death-bed. Your son, corporal Frank H. Irwin, was wounded near fort Fisher, Virginia, March 25th, 1865—the wound was in the left knee, pretty bad. He was sent up to Washington, was receiv'd in ward C, Armory-square hospital, March 28th—the wound became worse, and on the 4th of April the leg was amputated a little above the knee—the oper-

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prison pen. The manner of their death, the horrors that cluster'd thickly around every moment of their existence, the loyal, unflinching steadfastness with which they endured all that fate had brought them, has never been adequately told. It was not with them as with their comrades in the field, whose every act was perform'd in the presence of those whose duty it was to observe such matters and report them to the world. Hidden from the view of their friends in the north by the impenetrable veil which the military operations of the rebels drew around the so-called confederacy, the people knew next to nothing of their career or their sufferings. Thousands died there less heeded even than the hundreds who perish'd on the battle-field. Grant did not lose as many men kill'd outright, in the terrible campaign from the Wilderness to the James river—43 days of desperate fighting—as died in July and August at Andersonville. Nearly twice as many died in that prison as fell from the day that Grant cross'd the Rapidan, till he settled down in the trenches before Petersburg. More than four times as many Union dead lie under the solemn sighing pines about that forlorn little village in southern Georgia, than mark the course of Sherman from Chattanooga to Atlanta. The nation stands aghast at the expenditure of life which attended the two bloody campaigns of 1864, which virtually crush'd the confederacy, but no one remembers that more Union soldiers died in the rear of the rebel lines than were kill'd in the front of them. The great military events which stamp'd out the rebellion drew attention away from the sad drama which starvation and disease play'd in those gloomy pens in the far recesses of sombre southern forests."

*From a letter of "Johnny Bouquet," in N.Y. Tribune, March 27, '81.*

"I visited at Salisbury, N.C., the prison pen or the site of it, from which nearly 12,000 victims of southern politicians were buried, being confined in a pen without shelter, exposed to all the elements could do, to all the disease herding animals together could create, and to all the starvation and cruelty an

ation was perform'd by Dr. Bliss, one of the best surgeons in the army—he did the whole operation himself—there was a good deal of bad matter gather'd—the bullet was found in the knee. For a couple of weeks afterwards he was doing pretty well. I visited and sat by him frequently, as he was fond of having me. The last ten or twelve days of April I saw that his case was critical. He previously had some fever, with cold spells. The last week in April he was much of the time flighty—but always mild and gentle. He died first of May. The actual cause of death was pyæmia, (the absorption of the matter in the system instead of its discharge.) Frank, as far as I saw, had everything requisite in surgical treatment, nursing, &c. He had watches much of the time. He was so good and well-behaved and affectionate, I myself liked him very much. I was in the habit of coming in afternoons and sitting by him, and soothing him, and he liked to have me—liked to put his arm out and lay his hand on my knee—would keep it so a long while. Toward the last he was more restless and flighty at night—often fancied himself with his regiment—by his talk sometimes seem'd as if his feelings were hurt by being blamed by his officers for something he was entirely innocent of—said, “I never in my life was

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incompetent and intense caitiff government could accomplish. From the conversation and almost from the recollection of the northern people this place had dropp'd, but not so in the gossip of the Salisbury people, nearly all of whom say that the half was never told; that such was the nature of habitual outrage here that when Federal prisoners escaped the townspeople harbor'd them in their barns, afraid the vengeance of God would fall on them, to deliver even their enemies back to such cruelty. Said one old man at the Boyden House, who join'd in the conversation one evening: ‘There were often men buried out of that prison pen still alive. I have the testimony of a surgeon that he has seen them pull'd out of the dead cart with their eyes open and taking notice, but too weak to lift a finger. There was not the least excuse for such treatment, as the confederate government had seized every sawmill in the region, and could just as well have put up shelter for these prisoners as not, wood being plentiful here. It will be hard to make any honest man in Salisbury say that there was the slightest necessity for those prisoners having to live in old tents, caves and holes half-full of water. Representations were made to the Davis government against the officers in charge of it, but no attention was paid to them. Promotion was the punishment for cruelty there. The inmates were skeletons. Hell could have no terrors for any man who died there, except the inhuman keepers.’”



thought capable of such a thing, and never was." At other times he would fancy himself talking as it seem'd to children or such like, his relatives I suppose, and giving them good advice; would talk to them a long while. All the time he was out of his head not one single bad word or idea escaped him. It was remark'd that many a man's conversation in his senses was not half as good as Frank's delirium. He seem'd quite willing to die—he had become very weak and had suffer'd a good deal, and was perfectly resign'd, poor boy. I do not know his past life, but I feel as if it must have been good. At any rate what I saw of him here, under the most trying circumstances, with a painful wound, and among strangers, I can say that he behaved so brave, so composed, and so sweet and affectionate, it could not be surpass'd. And now like many other noble and good men, after serving his country as a soldier, he has yielded up his young life at the very outset in her service. Such things are gloomy—yet there is a text, "God doeth all things well"—the meaning of which, after due time, appears to the soul.

I thought perhaps a few words, though from a stranger, about your son, from one who was with him at the last, might be worth while—for I loved the young man, though I but saw him immediately to lose him. I am merely a friend visiting the hospitals occasionally to cheer the wounded and sick. W. W.

### The Armies Returning.

May 7.—*Sunday*.—To-day as I was walking a mile or two south of Alexandria, I fell in with several large squads of the returning Western army, (*Sherman's men* as they call'd themselves) about a thousand in all, the largest portion of them half sick, some convalescents, on their way to a hospital camp. These fragmentary excerpts, with the unmistakable Western physiognomy and idioms, crawling along slowly—after a great campaign, blown this way, as it were, out of their latitude—I mark'd with curiosity, and talk'd with off and on for over an hour. Here and there was one very sick; but all were able to walk, except some of the last, who had given out, and were seated on the ground, faint and despondent. These I tried to

cheer, told them the camp they were to reach was only a little way further over the hill, and so got them up and started, accompanying some of the worst a little way, and helping them, or putting them under the support of stronger comrades.

*May 21.*—Saw General Sheridan and his cavalry to-day; a strong, attractive sight; the men were mostly young, (a few middle-aged,) superb-looking fellows, brown, spare, keen, with well-worn clothing, many with pieces of water-proof cloth around their shoulders, hanging down. They dash'd along pretty fast, in wide close ranks, all spatter'd with mud; no holiday soldiers; brigade after brigade. I could have watch'd for a week. Sheridan stood on a balcony, under a big tree, coolly smoking a cigar. His looks and manner impress'd me favorably.

*May 22.*—Have been taking a walk along Pennsylvania avenue and Seventh street north. The city is full of soldiers, running around loose. Officers everywhere, of all grades. All have the weather-beaten look of practical service. It is a sight I never tire of. All the armies are now here (or portions of them,) for to-morrow's review. You see them swarming like bees everywhere.

### The Grand Review.

For two days now the broad spaces of Pennsylvania avenue along to Treasury hill, and so by detour around to the President's house, and so up to Georgetown, and across the aqueduct bridge, have been alive with a magnificent sight, the returning armies. In their wide ranks stretching clear across the Avenue, I watch them march or ride along, at a brisk pace, through two whole days—infantry, cavalry, artillery—some 200,000 men. Some days afterwards one or two other corps; and then, still afterwards, a good part of Sherman's immense army, brought up from Charleston, Savannah, &c.

### Western Soldiers.

*May 26-7.*—The streets, the public buildings and grounds of Washington, still swarm with soldiers from Illinois, Indiana,

Ohio, Missouri, Iowa, and all the Western States. I am continually meeting and talking with them. They often speak to me first, and always show great sociability, and glad to have a good interchange of chat. These Western soldiers are more slow in their movements, and in their intellectual quality also; have no extreme alertness. They are larger in size, have a more serious physiognomy, are continually looking at you as they pass in the street. They are largely animal, and handsomely so. During the war I have been at times with the Fourteenth, Fifteenth, Seventeenth, and Twentieth Corps. I always feel drawn toward the men, and like their personal contact when we are crowded close together, as frequently these days in the street-cars. They all think the world of General Sherman; call him "old Bill," or sometimes "uncle Billy."

### A Soldier on Lincoln.

*May 28.*—As I sat by the bedside of a sick Michigan soldier in hospital to-day, a convalescent from the adjoining bed rose and came to me, and presently we began talking. He was a middle-aged man, belonged to the 2d Virginia regiment, but lived in Racine, Ohio, and had a family there. He spoke of President Lincoln, and said: "The war is over, and many are lost. And now we have lost the best, the fairest, the truest man in America. Take him altogether, he was the best man this country ever produced. It was quite a while I thought very different; but some time before the murder, that's the way I have seen it." There was deep earnestness in the soldier. (I found upon further talk he had known Mr. Lincoln personally, and quite closely, years before.) He was a veteran; was now in the fifth year of his service; was a cavalry man, and had been in a good deal of hard fighting.

### Two Brothers, One South, One North.

*May 28-9.*—I staid to-night a long time by the bedside of a new patient, a young Baltimorean, aged about 19 years, W. S. P., (2d Maryland, southern,) very feeble, right leg amputated, can't

sleep hardly at all—has taken a great deal of morphine, which, as usual, is costing more than it comes to. Evidently very intelligent and well bred—very affectionate—held on to my hand, and put it by his face, not willing to let me leave. As I was lingering, soothing him in his pain, he says to me suddenly, “I hardly think you know who I am—I don’t wish to impose upon you—I am a rebel soldier.” I said I did not know that, but it made no difference. Visiting him daily for about two weeks after that, while he lived, (death had mark’d him, and he was quite alone,) I loved him much, always kiss’d him, and he did me. In an adjoining ward I found his brother, an officer of rank, a Union soldier, a brave and religious man, (Col. Clifton K. Prentiss, sixth Maryland infantry, Sixth corps, wounded in one of the engagements at Petersburg, April 2—linger’d, suffer’d much, died in Brooklyn, Aug. 20, ’65.) It was in the same battle both were hit. One was a strong Unionist, the other Secesh; both fought on their respective sides, both badly wounded, and both brought together here after a separation of four years. Each died for his cause.

### Some Sad Cases Yet.

*May 31.*—James H. Williams, aged 21, 3d Virginia cavalry.—About as mark’d a case of a strong man brought low by a complication of diseases, (laryngitis, fever, debility and diarrhoea,) as I have ever seen—has superb physique, remains swarthy yet, and flushed and red with fever—is altogether flighty—flesh of his great breast and arms tremulous, and pulse pounding away with treble quickness—lies a good deal of the time in a partial sleep, but with low muttering and groans—a sleep in which there is no rest. Powerful as he is, and so young, he will not be able to stand many more days of the strain and sapping heat of yesterday and to-day. His throat is in a bad way, tongue and lips parch’d. When I ask him how he feels, he is able just to articulate, “I feel pretty bad yet, old man,” and looks at me with his great bright eyes. Father, John Williams, Millensport, Ohio.

*June 9-10.*—I have been sitting late to-night by the bedside of a wounded captain, a special friend of mine, lying with a

painful fracture of left leg in one of the hospitals, in a large ward partially vacant. The lights were put out, all but a little candle, far from where I sat. The full moon shone in through the windows, making long, slanting silvery patches on the floor. All was still, my friend too was silent, but could not sleep; so I sat there by him, slowly wafting the fan, and occupied with the musings that arose out of the scene, the long shadowy ward, the beautiful ghostly moonlight on the floor, the white beds, here and there an occupant with huddled form, the bed-clothes thrown off. The hospitals have a number of cases of sun-stroke and exhaustion by heat, from the late reviews. There are many such from the Sixth corps, from the hot parade of day before yesterday. (Some of these shows cost the lives of scores of men.)

*Sunday, Sep. 10.*—Visited Douglas and Stanton hospitals. They are quite full. Many of the cases are bad ones, lingering wounds, and old sickness. There is a more than usual look of despair on the countenances of many of the men; hope has left them. I went through the wards, talking as usual. There are several here from the confederate army whom I had seen in other hospitals, and they recognized me. Two were in a dying condition.

### Calhoun's Real Monument.

In one of the hospital tents for special cases, as I sat to-day tending a new amputation, I heard a couple of neighboring soldiers talking to each other from their cots. One down with fever, but improving, had come up belated from Charleston not long before. The other was what we now call an "old veteran," (*i.e.*, he was a Connecticut youth, probably of less than the age of twenty-five years, the four last of which he had spent in active service in the war in all parts of the country.) The two were chatting of one thing and another. The fever soldier spoke of John C. Calhoun's monument, which he had seen, and was describing it. The veteran said: "I have seen Calhoun's monument. That you saw is not the real monument. But I have seen it. It is the desolated, ruined south; nearly the whole generation

of young men between seventeen and thirty destroyed or maim'd; all the old families used up—the rich impoverish'd, the plantations cover'd with weeds, the slaves unloos'd and become the masters, and the name of southerner blacken'd with every shame—all this is Calhoun's real monument."

### Hospitals Closing.

*October 3.*—There are two army hospitals now remaining. I went to the largest of these (Douglas) and spent the afternoon and evening. There are many sad cases, old wounds, incurable sickness, and some of the wounded from the March and April battles before Richmond. Few realize how sharp and bloody those closing battles were. Our men exposed themselves more than usual; press'd ahead without urging. Then the southerners fought with extra desperation. Both sides knew that with the successful chasing of the rebel cabal from Richmond, and the occupation of that city by the national troops, the game was up. The dead and wounded were unusually many. Of the wounded the last lingering dribblets have been brought to hospital here. I find many rebel wounded here, and have been extra busy to-day 'tending to the worst cases of them with the rest.

*Oct., Nov. and Dec., '65—Sundays.*—Every Sunday of these months visited Harewood hospital out in the woods, pleasant and reclusive, some two and a half or three miles north of the capitol. The situation is healthy, with broken ground, grassy slopes and patches of oak woods, the trees large and fine. It was one of the most extensive of the hospitals, now reduced to four or five partially occupied wards, the numerous others being vacant. In November, this became the last military hospital kept up by the government, all the others being closed. Cases of the worst and most incurable wounds, obstinate illness, and of poor fellows who have no homes to go to, are found here.

*Dec. 10—Sunday.*—Again spending a good part of the day at Harewood. I write this about an hour before sundown. I have walk'd out for a few minutes to the edge of the woods to soothe myself with the hour and scene. It is a glorious, warm, golden-sunny, still afternoon. The only noise is from a crowd of

cawing crows, on some trees three hundred yards distant. Clusters of gnats swimming and dancing in the air in all directions. The oak leaves are thick under the bare trees, and give a strong and delicious perfume. Inside the wards everything is gloomy. Death is there. As I enter'd, I was confronted by it the first thing; a corpse of a poor soldier, just dead, of typhoid fever. The attendants had just straighten'd the limbs, put coppers on the eyes, and were laying it out.

*The roads.*—A great recreation, the past three years, has been in taking long walks out from Washington, five, seven, perhaps ten miles and back; generally with my friend Peter Doyle, who is as fond of it as I am. Fine moonlight nights, over the perfect military roads, hard and smooth—or Sundays—we had these delightful walks, never to be forgotten. The roads connecting Washington and the numerous forts around the city, made one useful result, at any rate, out of the war.

### Typical Soldiers.

Even the typical soldiers I have been personally intimate with,—it seems to me if I were to make a list of them it would be like a city directory. Some few only have I mention'd in the foregoing pages—most are dead—a few yet living. There is Reuben Farwell, of Michigan, (little 'Mitch;') Benton H. Wilson, colorbearer, 185th New York; Wm. Stansberry; Manvill Winterstein, Ohio; Bethuel Smith; Capt. Simms, of 51st New York, (kill'd at Petersburg mine explosion,) Capt. Sam. Poo-ley and Lieut. Fred. McReady, same reg't. Also, same reg't., my brother, George W. Whitman—in active service all through, four years, re-enlisting twice—was promoted, step by step, (several times immediately after battles,) lieutenant, captain, major, and lieut. colonel—was in the actions at Roanoke, Newbern, 2d Bull Run, Chantilly, South Mountain, Antietam, Fredericksburgh, Vicksburgh, Jackson, the bloody conflicts of the Wilderness, and at Spottsylvania, Cold Harbor, and afterwards around Petersburg; at one of these latter was taken prisoner, and pass'd four or five months in secesh military prisons, narrowly escaping with life, from a severe fever, from starvation

and half-nakedness in the winter. (What a history that 51st New York had! Went out early—march'd, fought everywhere—was in storms at sea, nearly wreck'd—storm'd forts—tramp'd hither and yon in Virginia, night and day, summer of '62—afterwards Kentucky and Mississippi—re-enlisted—was in all the engagements and campaigns, as above.) I strengthen and comfort myself much with the certainty that the capacity for just such regiments, (hundreds, thousands of them) is inexhaustible in the United States, and that there isn't a county nor a township in the republic—nor a street in any city—but could turn out, and, on occasion, would turn out, lots of just such typical soldiers, whenever wanted.

### “Convulsiveness.”

As I have look'd over the proof-sheets of the preceding pages, I have once or twice fear'd that my diary would prove, at best, but a batch of convulsively written reminiscences. Well, be it so. They are but parts of the actual distraction, heat, smoke and excitement of those times. The war itself, with the temper of society preceding it, can indeed be best described by that very word *convulsiveness*.

### Three Years Summ'd Up.

During those three years in hospital, camp or field, I made over six hundred visits or tours, and went, as I estimate, counting all, among from eighty thousand to a hundred thousand of the wounded and sick, as sustainer of spirit and body in some degree, in time of need. These visits varied from an hour or two, to all day or night; for with dear or critical cases I generally watch'd all night. Sometimes I took up my quarters in the hospital, and slept or watch'd there several nights in succession. Those three years I consider the greatest privilege and satisfaction, (with all their feverish excitements and physical deprivations and lamentable sights,) and, of course, the most profound lesson of my life. I can say that in my ministerings I comprehended all, whoever came in my way, northern or southern,



and slighted none. It arous'd and brought out and decided undream'd-of depths of emotion. It has given me my most fervent views of the true *ensemble* and extent of the States. While I was with wounded and sick in thousands of cases from the New England States, and from New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, and from Michigan, Wisconsin, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and all the Western States, I was with more or less from all the States, North and South, without exception. I was with many from the border States, especially from Maryland and Virginia, and found, during those lurid years 1862-63, far more Union southerners, especially Tennesseans, than is supposed. I was with many rebel officers and men among our wounded, and gave them always what I had, and tried to cheer them the same as any. I was among the army teamsters considerably, and, indeed, always found myself drawn to them. Among the black soldiers, wounded or sick, and in the contraband camps, I also took my way whenever in their neighborhood, and did what I could for them.

### The Million Dead, Too, Summ'd Up.

The dead in this war—there they lie, strewing the fields and woods and valleys and battle-fields of the south—Virginia, the Peninsula—Malvern hill and Fair Oaks—the banks of the Chickahominy—the terraces of Fredericksburgh—Antietam bridge—the grisly ravines of Manassas—the bloody promenade of the Wilderness—the varieties of the *strayed* dead, (the estimate of the War department is 25,000 national soldiers kill'd in battle and never buried at all, 5,000 drown'd—15,000 inhumed by strangers, or on the march in haste, in hitherto unfound localities—2,000 graves cover'd by sand and mud by Mississippi freshets, 3,000 carried away by caving-in of banks, &c.,)—Gettysburgh, the West, Southwest—Vicksburgh—Chattanooga—the trenches of Petersburg—the numberless battles, camps, hospitals, everywhere—the crop reap'd by the mighty reapers, typhoid, dysentery, inflammations—and blackest and loathesomest of all the dead and living burial-pits, the prison-pens of Andersonville, Salisbury, Belle-Isle, &c., (not

Dante's pictured hell and all its woes, its degradations, filthy torments, excell'd those prisons)—the dead, the dead, the dead—*our* dead—or South or North, ours all, (all, all, all, finally dear to me)—or East or West—Atlantic coast or Mississippi valley—somewhere they crawl'd to die, alone, in bushes, low gullies, or on the sides of hills—(there, in secluded spots, their skeletons, bleach'd bones, tufts of hair, buttons, fragments of clothing, are occasionally found yet)—our young men once so handsome and so joyous, taken from us—the son from the mother, the husband from the wife, the dear friend from the dear friend—the clusters of camp graves, in Georgia, the Carolinas, and in Tennessee—the single graves left in the woods or by the road-side, (hundreds, thousands, obliterated)—the corpses floated down the rivers, and caught and lodged, (dozens, scores, floated down the upper Potomac, after the cavalry engagements, the pursuit of Lee, following Gettysburgh)—some lie at the bottom of the sea—the general million, and the special cemeteries in almost all the States—the infinite dead—(the land entire saturated, perfumed with their impalpable ashes' exhalation in Nature's chemistry distill'd, and shall be so forever, in every future grain of wheat and ear of corn, and every flower that grows, and every breath we draw)—not only Northern dead leavening Southern soil—thousands, aye tens of thousands, of Southerners, crumble to-day in Northern earth.

And everywhere among these countless graves—everywhere in the many soldier Cemeteries of the Nation, (there are now, I believe, over seventy of them)—as at the time in the vast trenches, the depositories of slain, Northern and Southern, after the great battles—not only where the scathing trail passed those years, but radiating since in all the peaceful quarters of the land—we see, and ages yet may see, on monuments and gravestones, singly or in masses, to thousands or tens of thousands, the significant word **Unknown**.

(In some of the cemeteries nearly *all* the dead are unknown. At Salisbury, N.C., for instance, the known are only 85, while the unknown are 12,027, and 11,700 of these are buried in trenches. A national monument has been put up here, by order

of Congress, to mark the spot—but what visible, material monument can ever fittingly commemorate that spot?)

### The Real War Will Never Get in the Books.

And so good-bye to the war. I know not how it may have been, or may be, to others—to me the main interest I found, (and still, on recollection, find,) in the rank and file of the armies, both sides, and in those specimens amid the hospitals, and even the dead on the field. To me the points illustrating the latent personal character and eligibilities of these States, in the two or three millions of American young and middle-aged men, North and South, embodied in those armies—and especially the one-third or one-fourth of their number, stricken by wounds or disease at some time in the course of the contest—were of more significance even than the political interests involved. (As so much of a race depends on how it faces death, and how it stands personal anguish and sickness. As, in the glints of emotions under emergencies, and the indirect traits and asides in Plutarch, we get far profounder clues to the antique world than all its more formal history.)

Future years will never know the seething hell and the black infernal background of countless minor scenes and interiors, (not the official surface-courteousness of the Generals, not the few great battles) of the Secession war; and it is best they should not—the real war will never get in the books. In the mushy influences of current times, too, the fervid atmosphere and typical events of those years are in danger of being totally forgotten. I have at night watch'd by the side of a sick man in the hospital, one who could not live many hours. I have seen his eyes flash and burn as he raised himself and recurr'd to the cruelties on his surrender'd brother, and mutilations of the corpse afterward. (See, in the preceding pages, the incident at Upperville—the seventeen kill'd as in the description, were left there on the ground. After they dropt dead, no one touch'd them—all were made sure of, however. The carcasses were left for the citizens to bury or not, as they chose.)

Such was the war. It was not a quadrille in a ball-room. Its interior history will not only never be written—its practicality, minutiae of deeds and passions, will never be even suggested. The actual soldier of 1862-'65, North and South, with all his ways, his incredible dauntlessness, habits, practices, tastes, language, his fierce friendship, his appetite, rankness, his superb strength and animality, lawless gait, and a hundred unnamed lights and shades of camp, I say, will never be written—perhaps must not and should not be.

The preceding notes may furnish a few stray glimpses into that life, and into those lurid interiors, never to be fully convey'd to the future. The hospital part of the drama from '61 to '65, deserves indeed to be recorded. Of that many-threaded drama, with its sudden and strange surprises, its confounding of prophecies, its moments of despair, the dread of foreign interference, the interminable campaigns, the bloody battles, the mighty and cumbrous and green armies, the drafts and bounties—the immense money expenditure, like a heavy-pouring constant rain—with, over the whole land, the last three years of the struggle, an unending, universal mourning-wail of women, parents, orphans—the marrow of the tragedy concentrated in those Army Hospitals—(it seem'd sometimes as if the whole interest of the land, North and South, was one vast central hospital, and all the rest of the affair but flanges)—those forming the untold and unwritten history of the war—ininitely greater (like life's) than the few scraps and distortions that are ever told or written. Think how much, and of importance, will be—how much, civic and military, has already been—buried in the grave, in eternal darkness.

## “SLANG IN AMERICA”

View'd freely, the English language is the accretion and growth of every dialect, race, and range of time, and is both the free and compacted composition of all. From this point of view, it stands for Language in the largest sense, and is really the greatest of studies. It involves so much; is indeed a sort of universal absorber, combiner, and conqueror. The scope of its etymologies is the scope not only of man and civilization, but the history of Nature in all departments, and of the organic Universe, brought up to date; for all are comprehended in words, and their backgrounds. This is when words become vitaliz'd, and stand for things, as they unerringly and soon come to do, in the mind that enters on their study with fitting spirit, grasp, and appreciation.

Slang, profoundly consider'd, is the lawless germinal element, below all words and sentences, and behind all poetry, and proves a certain perennial rankness and protestantism in speech. As the United States inherit by far their most precious possession—the language they talk and write—from the Old World, under and out of its feudal institutes, I will allow myself to borrow a simile even of those forms farthest removed from American Democracy. Considering Language then as some mighty potentate, into the majestic audience-hall of the monarch ever enters a personage like one of Shakspeare's clowns, and takes position there, and plays a part even in the stateliest ceremonies. Such is Slang, or indirection, an attempt of common humanity to escape from bald literalism, and express itself illimitably, which in highest walks produces poets and poems, and doubtless in pre-historic times gave the start to, and perfected, the whole

immense tangle of the old mythologies. For, curious as it may appear, it is strictly the same impulse-source, the same thing. Slang, too, is the wholesome fermentation or eructation of those processes eternally active in language, by which froth and specks are thrown up, mostly to pass away; though occasionally to settle and permanently chrySTALLIZE.

To make it plainer, it is certain that many of the oldest and solidest words we use, were originally generated from the daring and license of slang. In the processes of word-formation, myriads die, but here and there the attempt attracts superior meanings, becomes valuable and indispensable, and lives forever. Thus the term *right* means literally only straight. *Wrong* primarily meant twisted, distorted. *Integrity* meant oneness. *Spirit* meant breath, or flame. A supercilious person was one who rais'd his eyebrows. To insult was to leap against. If you influenc'd a man, you but flow'd into him. The Hebrew word which is translated prophesy meant to bubble up and pour forth as a fountain. The enthusiast bubbles up with the Spirit of God within him, and it pours forth from him like a fountain. The word prophecy is misunderstood. Many suppose that it is limited to mere prediction; that is but the lesser portion of prophecy. The greater work is to reveal God. Every true religious enthusiast is a prophet.

Language, be it remember'd, is not an abstract construction of the learn'd, or of dictionary-makers, but is something arising out of the work, needs, ties, joys, affections, tastes, of long generations of humanity, and has its bases broad and low, close to the ground. Its final decisions are made by the masses, people nearest the concrete, having most to do with actual land and sea. It impermeates all, the Past as well as the Present, and is the grandest triumph of the human intellect. "Those mighty works of art," says Addington Symonds, "which we call language, in the construction of which whole peoples unconsciously co-operated, the forms of which were determin'd not by individual genius, but by the instincts of successive generations, acting to one end, inherent in the nature of the race— Those poems of pure thought and fancy, cadenced not in words, but in living imagery, fountainheads of inspiration, mirrors of

the mind of nascent nations, which we call Mythologies—these surely are more marvellous in their infantine spontaneity than any more mature production of the races which evolvd them. Yet we are utterly ignorant of their embryology; the true science of Origins is yet in its cradle.”

Daring as it is to say so, in the growth of Language it is certain that the retrospect of slang from the start would be the recalling from their nebulous conditions of all that is poetical in the stories of human utterance. Moreover, the honest delving, as of late years, by the German and British workers in comparative philology, has pierc'd and dispers'd many of the falsest bubbles of centuries; and will disperse many more. It was long recorded that in Scandinavian mythology the heroes in the Norse Paradise drank out of the skulls of their slain enemies. Later investigation proves the word taken for skulls to mean horns of beasts slain in the hunt. And what reader had not been exercis'd over the traces of that feudal custom, by which seigneurs warm'd their feet in the bowels of serfs, the abdomen being open'd for the purpose? It now is made to appear that the serf was only required to submit his unharm'd abdomen as a foot cushion while his lord supp'd, and was required to chafe the legs of the seigneur with his hands.

It is curiously in embryos and childhood, and among the illiterate, we always find the groundwork and start, of this great science, and its noblest products. What a relief most people have in speaking of a man not by his true and formal name, with a “Mister” to it, but by some odd or homely appellation. The propensity to approach a meaning not directly and squarely, but by circuitous styles of expression, seems indeed a born quality of the common people everywhere, evidenced by nick-names, and the inveterate determination of the masses to bestow subtitles, sometimes ridiculous, sometimes very apt. Always among the soldiers during the Secession War, one heard of “Little Mac” (Gen. McClellan), or of “Uncle Billy” (Gen. Sherman.) “The old man” was, of course, very common. Among the rank and file, both armies, it was very general to speak of the different States they came from by their slang names. Those from Maine were call'd Foxes; New Hampshire, Granite Boys; Massachusetts,

Bay Staters; Vermont, Green Mountain Boys; Rhode Island, Gun Flints; Connecticut, Wooden Nutmegs; New York, Knickerbockers; New Jersey, Clam Catchers; Pennsylvania, Logher Heads; Delaware, Muskrats; Maryland, Claw Thumpers; Virginia, Beagles; North Carolina, Tar Boilers; South Carolina, Weasels; Georgia, Buzzards; Louisiana, Creoles; Alabama, Lizards; Kentucky, Corn Crackers; Ohio, Buckeyes; Michigan, Wolverines; Indiana, Hoosiers; Illinois, Suckers; Missouri, Pukes; Mississippi, Tad Poles; Florida, Fly up the Creeks; Wisconsin, Badgers; Iowa, Hawkeyes; Oregon, Hard Cases. Indeed I am not sure but slang names have more than once made Presidents. "Old Hickory," (Gen. Jackson) is one case in point. "Tippecanoe, and Tyler too," another.

I find the same rule in the people's conversations everywhere. I heard this among the men of the city horse-cars, where the conductor is often call'd a "snatcher" (i. e. because his characteristic duty is to constantly pull or snatch the bell-strap, to stop or go on.) Two young fellows are having a friendly talk, amid which, says 1st conductor, "What did you do before you was a snatcher?" Answer of 2d conductor, "Nail'd." (Translation of answer: "I work'd as carpenter.") What is a "boom"? says one editor to another. "Esteem'd contemporary," says the other, "a boom is a bulge." "Barefoot whiskey" is the Tennessee name for the undiluted stimulant. In the slang of the New York common restaurant waiters a plate of ham and beans is known as "stars and stripes," codfish balls as "sleeve-buttons," and hash as "mystery."

The Western States of the Union are, however, as may be supposed, the special areas of slang, not only in conversation, but in names of localities, towns, rivers, etc. A late Oregon traveller says:

"On your way to Olympia by rail, you cross a river called the Shookum-Chuck; your train stops at places named Newaukum, Tumwater, and Toutle; and if you seek further you will hear of whole counties labell'd Wahkiakum, or Snohomish, or Kutsar, or Klikatat; and Cowlitz, Hookium, and Nenolelops greet and offend you. They complain in Olympia that Washington Territory



gets but little immigration; but what wonder? What man, having the whole American continent to choose from, would willingly date his letters from the county of Snohomish or bring up his children in the city of Nenolelops? The village of Tumwater is, as I am ready to bear witness, very pretty indeed; but surely an emigrant would think twice before he establish'd himself either there or at Toutle. Seattle is sufficiently barbarous; Stelicoom is no better; and I suspect that the Northern Pacific Railroad terminus has been fixed at Tacoma because it is one of the few places on Puget Sound whose name does not inspire horror.”

Then a Nevada paper chronicles the departure of a mining party from Reno: “The toughest set of roosters that ever shook the dust off any town left Reno yesterday for the new mining district of Cornucopia. They came here from Virginia. Among the crowd were four New York cock-fighters, two Chicago murderers, three Baltimore bruisers, one Philadelphia prize-fighter, four San Francisco hoodlums, three Virginia beats, two Union Pacific roughs, and two check guerrillas.” Among the far-west newspapers, have been, or are, *The Fairplay* (Colorado) *Flume*, *The Solid Muldoon*, of Ouray, *The Tombstone Epitaph*, of Nevada, *The Jimplecute*, of Texas, and *The Bazoo*, of Missouri. *Shirttail Bend*, *Whiskey Flat*, *Puppytown*, *Wild Yankee Ranch*, *Squaw Flat*, *Rawhide Ranch*, *Loafer's Ravine*, *Squitch Gulch*, *Toenail Lake*, are a few of the names of places in Butte county, Cal.

Perhaps indeed no place or term gives more luxuriant illustrations of the fermentation processes I have mention'd, and their froth and specks, than those Mississippi and Pacific coast regions, at the present day. Hasty and grotesque as are some of the names, others are of an appropriateness and originality unsurpassable. This applies to the Indian words, which are often perfect. Oklahoma is proposed in Congress for the name of one of our new Territories. *Hog-eye*, *Lick-skillet*, *Rake-pocket* and *Steal-easy* are the names of some Texan towns. Miss Bremer found among the aborigines the following names: *Men's*, *Horn-point*; *Round-Wind*; *Stand-and-look-out*; *The-Cloud-that-goes-aside*; *Iron-toe*; *Seek-the-sun*; *Iron-flash*; *Red-bottle*;

White-spindle; Black-dog; Two-feathers-of-honor; Gray-grass; Bushy-tail; Thunder-face; Go-on-the-burning-sod; Spirits-of-the-dead. Women's, Keep-the-fire; Spiritual-woman; Second-daughter-of-the-house; Blue-bird.

Certainly philologists have not given enough attention to this element and its results, which, I repeat, can probably be found working every where to-day, amid modern conditions, with as much life and activity as in far-back Greece or India, under prehistoric ones. Then the wit—the rich flashes of humor and genius and poetry—darting out often from a gang of laborers, railroad-men, miners, drivers or boatmen! How often have I hover'd at the edge of a crowd of them, to hear their repartees and impromptus! You get more real fun from half an hour with them than from the books of all “the American humorists.”

The science of language has large and close analogies in geological science, with its ceaseless evolution, its fossils, and its numberless submerged layers and hidden strata, the infinite go-before of the present. Or, perhaps Language is more like some vast living body, or perennial body of bodies. And slang not only brings the first feeders of it, but is afterward the start of fancy, imagination and humor, breathing into its nostrils the breath of life.

## Suggestions for Further Reading

For many years the standard biography of Walt Whitman was Gay Wilson Allen's *The Solitary Singer* (New York: New York University Press, 1967). It is still the most readable general book on the poet, though it is partial and apologetic on the topic of Whitman's sexuality. There is much new information in Jerome Loving, *Walt Whitman: The Song of Himself* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), and in David Reynolds, *Walt Whitman: A Cultural Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995). Like Allen, Loving and Reynolds play down Whitman's homosexuality, though Reynolds advances a speculative theory about a scandal in Whitman's younger days on Long Island. Gary Schmidgall, on the other hand, sees Whitman as gay in the contemporary sense. See his *Walt Whitman: A Gay Life* (New York: Plume, 1998).

Two useful guidebooks, both by Gay Wilson Allen, are *The New Walt Whitman Handbook* (New York: New York University Press, 1975) and *A Reader's Guide to Walt Whitman* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1970). See also James E. Miller, *A Critical Guide to Leaves of Grass* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957); and the very useful comparison of the different versions of "Song of Myself" in his *Whitman's "Song of Myself": Origin, Growth, Meaning* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1964). D. H. Lawrence wrote an interestingly hostile assessment of Whitman in his *Studies in Classic American Literature*, itself a classic work. The best single appreciative essay on Whitman, by contrast, is Randall Jarrell's "Some Lines from Whitman," in his *Poetry and the Age* (New York: Alfred A.

Knopf, 1953). For samples of more recent criticism, see Ezra Greenspan, ed., *Cambridge Companion to Walt Whitman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); and Betsy Erkkila and Jay Grossman, eds., *Breaking Bounds: Whitman and American Cultural Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

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