

Every one else seem'd fill'd with gloom,  
Many no doubt thought of capitulation.

But when my General pass'd me,  
As he stood in his boat and look'd toward the coming sun,  
I saw something different from capitulation.

*Terminus*

Enough, the Centenarian's story ends,  
The two, the past and present, have interchanged,  
I myself as connector, as chansonnier of a great future, am  
now speaking.

And is this the ground Washington trod ?  
And these waters I listlessly daily cross, are these the waters  
he cross'd,  
As resolute in defeat as other generals in their proudest  
triumphs ?

I must copy the story, and send it eastward and westward,  
I must preserve that look as it beam'd on you rivers of  
Brooklyn.

See—as the annual round returns the phantoms return,  
It is the 27th of August and the British have landed,  
The battle begins and goes against us, behold through the  
smoke Washington's face,  
The brigade of Virginia and Maryland have march'd forth  
to intercept the enemy,  
They are cut off, murderous artillery from the hills plays  
upon them,  
Rank after rank falls, while over them silently droops the  
flag,  
Baptized that day in many a young man's bloody wounds,  
In death, defeat, and sisters', mothers' tears.

Ah, hills and slopes of Brooklyn ! I perceive you are more  
valuable than your owners supposed ;  
In the midst of you stands an encampment very old,  
Stands forever the camp of that dead brigade.



## 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  
prosperes 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 re-  
    sponding,)  
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, vigil 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 woollen  
 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*

### NOT THE PILOT

Not the pilot has charged himself to bring his ship into  
 port, though beaten back and many times baffled ;  
 Not the pathfinder penetrating inland weary and long,  
 By deserts parch'd, snows chill'd, rivers wet, perseveres till  
 he reaches his destination,  
 More than I have charged myself, heeded or unheeded, to  
 compose a march for these States,  
 For a battle-call, rousing to arms if need be, years, centuries  
 hence.

### YEAR THAT TREMBLED AND REEL'D BENEATH ME

YEAR that trembled and reel'd beneath me !  
 Your summer wind was warm enough, yet the air I breathed  
 froze me,  
 A thick gloom fell through the sunshine and darken'd me,  
 Must I change my triumphant songs ? said I to myself,  
 Must I indeed learn to chant the cold dirges of the baffled ?  
 And sullen hymns of defeat ?

### THE WOUND-DRESSER

#### 1

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.)

## LONG, TOO LONG AMERICA

LONG, too long America,  
Traveling roads all even and peaceful you learn'd from  
joys and prosperity only,  
But now, ah now, to learn from crises of anguish, advancing,  
grappling with direst fate and recoiling not,  
And now to conceive and show to the world what your  
children en-masse really are,  
(For who except myself has yet conceiv'd what your  
children en-masse really are?)



GIVE ME THE SPLENDID SILENT SUN

1

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 gluttoned, 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 inces-  
 sant 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  
 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 mili-  
 tary 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.

### DIRGE FOR TWO VETERANS

THE last sunbeam  
 Lightly falls from the finish'd Sabbath,  
 On the pavement here, and there beyond it is looking,  
 Down a new-made double grave.



Lo, the moon ascending,  
Up from the east the silvery round moon,  
Beautiful over the house-tops, ghastly, phantom moon,  
Immense and silent moon.

I see a sad procession,  
And I hear the sound of coming full-key'd bugles,  
All the channels of the city streets they're flooding,  
As with voices and with tears.

I hear the great drums pounding,  
And the small drums steady whirring,  
And every blow of the great convulsive drums,  
Strikes me through and through.

For the son is brought with the father,  
(In the foremost ranks of the fierce assault they fell,  
Two veterans son and father dropt together,  
And the double grave awaits them.)

Now nearer blow the bugles,  
And the drums strike more convulsive,  
And the daylight o'er the pavement quite has faded,  
And the strong dead-march enwraps me.

In the eastern sky up-buoying,  
The sorrowful vast phantom moves illumin'd,  
( 'Tis some mother's large transparent face,  
In heaven brighter growing.)

O strong dead-march you please me !  
O moon immense with your silvery face you soothe me !  
O my soldiers twain ! O my veterans passing to burial !  
What I have I also give you.

The moon gives you light,  
And the bugles and the drums give you music,  
And my heart, O my soldiers, my veterans,  
My heart gives you love.



## 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.)



## 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.

## THE ARTILLERYMAN'S VISION

WHILE my wife at my side lies slumbering, and the wars  
 are over long,  
 And my head on the pillow rests at home, and the vacant  
 midnight passes,  
 And through the stillness, through the dark, I hear, just  
 hear, the breath of my infant,  
 There in the room as I wake from sleep this vision presses  
 upon me ;  
 The engagement opens **there** and then in fantasy unreal,  
 The skirmishers begin, they crawl cautiously ahead, I  
 hear the irregular snap ! snap !  
 I hear the sounds of the different missiles, the short *t-h-t !*  
*t-h-t !* of the rifle-balls,  
 I see the shells exploding leaving small white clouds, I  
 hear the great shells shrieking as they pass,  
 The grape like the hum and whirr of wind through the  
 trees, (tumultuous now the contest rages,)  
 All the scenes at the batteries rise in detail before me again,  
 The crashing and smoking, the pride of the men in their  
 pieces,  
 The chief-gunner ranges and sights his piece and selects  
 a fuse of the right time,



After firing I see him lean aside and look eagerly off to note  
the effect ;  
Elsewhere I hear the cry of a regiment charging, (the young  
colonel leads himself this time with brandish'd sword,)  
I see the gaps cut by the enemy's volleys, (quickly fill'd up,  
no delay,)  
I breathe the suffocating smoke, then the flat clouds hover  
low concealing all ;  
Now a strange lull for a few seconds, not a shot fired on  
either side,  
Then resumed the chaos louder than ever, with eager calls  
and orders of officers,  
While from some distant part of the field the wind wafts  
to my ears a shout of applause, (some special success,)  
And ever the sound of the cannon far or near, (rousing even  
in dreams a devilish exultation and all the old mad  
joy in the depths of my soul,)  
And ever the hastening of infantry, shifting positions,  
batteries, cavalry, moving hither and thither,  
(The falling, dying, I heed not, the wounded dripping and  
red I heed not, some to the rear are hobbling,)  
Grime, heat, rush, aide-de-camps galloping by or on a full  
run,  
With the patter of small arms, the warning s-s-t of the  
rifles, (these in my vision I hear or see,)  
And bombs bursting in air, and at night the vari-color'd  
rockets.

### 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 dark-  
 ling 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 marvellous you see or have  
 seen?

### NOT YOUTH PERTAINS TO ME

Nor youth pertains to me,  
 Nor delicatessen, I cannot beguile the time with talk,  
 Awkward in the parlor, neither a dancer nor elegant,  
 In the learn'd coterie sitting constrain'd and still, for  
 learning inures not to me,  
 Beauty, knowledge, inure not to me—yet there are two or  
 three things inure to me,  
 I have nourish'd the wounded and sooth'd many a dying  
 soldier,  
 And at intervals waiting or in the midst of camp,  
 Composed these songs.

### RACE OF VETERANS

RACE of veterans—race of victors!  
 Race of the soil, ready for conflict—race of the conquering  
 march!  
 (No more credulity's race, abiding-temper'd race,)  
 Race henceforth owning no law but the law of itself,  
 Race of passion and the storm.

### WORLD TAKE GOOD NOTICE

WORLD take good notice, silver stars fading,  
 Milky hue ript, weft of white detaching,  
 Coals thirty-eight, baleful and burning,  
 Scarlet, significant, hands off warning,  
 Now and henceforth flaunt from these shores.



## O TAN-FACED PRAIRIE-BOY

O TAN-FACED prairie-boy,  
Before you came to camp came many a welcome gift,  
Praises and presents came and nourishing food, till at last  
among the recruits,  
You came, taciturn, with nothing to give—we but look'd  
on each other,  
When lo ! more than all the gifts of the world you gave me.

## 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 you 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.

## HOW SOLEMN AS ONE BY ONE

(Washington City, 1865)

How solemn as one by one,  
As the ranks returning worn and sweaty, as the men file  
by where I stand,  
As the faces the masks appear, as I glance at the faces  
studying the masks,



(As I glance upward out of this page studying you, dear friend, whoever you are,) How solemn the thought of my whispering soul to each in the ranks, and to you, I see behind each mask that wonder a kindred soul, O the bullet could never kill what you really are, dear friend, Nor the bayonet stab what you really are ; The soul ! yourself I see, great as any, good as the best, Waiting secure and content, which the bullet could never kill, Nor the bayonet stab O friend.

### 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.



## DELICATE CLUSTER

DELICATE cluster ! flag of teeming life !  
 Covering all my lands—all my seashores lining !  
 Flag of death ! (how I watch'd you through the smoke of  
     battle pressing !  
 How I heard you flap and rustle, cloth defiant !)  
 Flag cerulean—sunny flag, with the orbs of night dappled !  
 Ah my silvery beauty—ah my woolly white and crimson !  
 Ah to sing the song of you, my matron mighty !  
 My sacred one, my mother.

## 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 under-  
     stand—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.

## LO, VICTRESS ON THE PEAKS

Lo, Victress on the peaks,  
 Where thou with mighty brow regarding the world,  
 (The world O Libertad, that vainly conspired against thee,)   
 Out of its countless beleaguering toils, after thwarting  
     them all,



Dominant, with the dazzling sun around thee,  
Flauntest now unharm'd in immortal soundness and bloom  
—lo, in these hours supreme,  
No poem proud, I chanting bring to thee, nor mastery's  
rapturous verse,  
But a cluster containing night's darkness and blood-  
dripping wounds,  
And psalms of the dead.

### SPIRIT WHOSE WORK IS DONE

(*Washington City, 1865*)

SPIRIT whose work is done—spirit of dreadful hours !  
Ere departing fade from my eyes your forests of bayonets ;  
Spirit of gloomiest fears and doubts, (yet onward ever  
unfaltering pressing,)  
Spirit of many a solemn day and many a savage scene—  
electric spirit,  
That with muttering voice through the war now closed,  
like a tireless phantom flitted,  
Rousing the land with breath of flame, while you beat and  
beat the drum,  
Now as the sound of the drum, hollow and harsh to the last,  
reverberates round me,  
As your ranks, your immortal ranks, return, return from  
the battles,  
As the muskets of the young men yet lean over their  
shoulders,  
As I look on the bayonets bristling over their shoulders,  
As those slanted bayonets, whole forests of them appearing  
in the distance, approach and pass on, returning home-  
ward,  
Moving with steady motion, swaying to and fro to the right  
and left,  
Evenly lightly rising and falling while the steps keep time ;  
Spirit of hours I knew, all hectic red one day, but pale as  
death next day,  
Touch my mouth ere you depart, press my lips close,  
Leave me your pulses of rage—bequeath them to me—fill  
me with currents convulsive,



Let them scorch and blister out of my chants when you are  
gone,  
Let them identify you to the future in these songs.

### ADIEU TO A SOLDIER

ADIEU O soldier,  
You of the rude campaigning, (which we shared,)  
The rapid march, the life of the camp,  
The hot contention of opposing fronts, the long manœuvre,  
Red battles with their slaughter, the stimulus, the strong  
terrific game,  
Spell of all brave and manly hearts, the trains of time  
through you and like of you all fill'd,  
With war and war's expression.

Adieu dear comrade,  
Your mission is fulfill'd—but I, more warlike,  
Myself and this contentious soul of mine,  
Still on our own campaigning bound,  
Through untried roads with ambushes opponents lined,  
Through many a sharp defeat and many a crisis, often  
baffled,  
Here marching, ever marching on, a war fight out—aye  
here,  
To fiercer, weightier battles give expression.

### TURN O LIBERTAD

TURN O Libertad, for the war is over,  
From it and all henceforth expanding, doubting no more,  
resolute, sweeping the world,  
Turn from lands retrospective recording proofs of the  
past,  
From the singers that sing the trailing glories of the past,  
From the chants of the feudal world, the triumphs of kings,  
slavery, caste,  
Turn to the world, the triumphs reserv'd and to come—  
give up that backward world,



Leave to the singers of hitherto, give them the trailing  
past,  
But what remains remains for singers for you—wars to  
come are for you,  
(Lo, how the wars of the past have duly inured to you, and  
the wars of the present also inure ;)  
Then turn, and be not alarm'd O Libertad—turn your  
undying face,  
To where the future, greater than all the past,  
Is swiftly, surely preparing for you.

### TO THE LEAVEN'D SOIL THEY TROD

To the leaven'd soil they trod calling I sing for the last,  
(Forth from my tent emerging for good, loosing, untying  
the tent-ropes,)  
In the freshness the forenoon air, in the far-stretching  
circuits and vistas again to peace restored,  
To the fiery fields emanative and the endless vistas beyond,  
to the South and the North,  
To the leaven'd soil of the general Western world to attest  
my songs,  
To the Alleghanian hills and the tireless Mississippi,  
To the rocks I calling sing, and all the trees in the woods,  
To the plains of the poems of heroes, to the prairies spread-  
ing wide,  
To the far-off sea and the unseen winds, and the same  
impalpable air ;  
And responding they answer all, (but not in words,)  
The average earth, the witness of war and peace, acknow-  
ledges mutely,  
The prairie draws me close, as the father to bosom broad  
the son,  
The Northern ice and rain that began me nourish me to the  
end,  
But the hot sun of the South is to fully ripen my songs.



# MEMORIES OF PRESIDENT LINCOLN

## WHEN LILACS LAST IN THE DOORYARD BLOOM'D

### 1

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 settle-  
ments,  
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 depôt, 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 nether-  
ward 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 work-  
 men homeward returning.



## 12

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.

## 13

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.

## 14

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 throb'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 shadowy 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  
unfalteringly.*

*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.

## HUSH'D BE THE CAMPS TO-DAY

(May 4, 1865)

Hush'd be the camps to-day,

And soldiers let us drape our war-worn weapons,

And each with musing soul retire to celebrate,

Our dear commander's death.

No more for him life's stormy conflicts,

Nor victory, nor defeat—no more time's dark events,

Charging like ceaseless clouds across the sky.

But sing poet in our name,

Sing of the love we bore him—because you, dweller in camps,  
know it truly.

As they invault the coffin there,

Sing—as they close the doors of earth upon him—one  
verse,

For the heavy hearts of soldiers.

## THIS DUST WAS ONCE THE MAN

THIS dust was once the man,

Gentle, plain, just and resolute, under whose cautious hand,

Against the foulest crime in history known in any land or  
age,

Was saved the Union of these States.



## BY BLUE ONTARIO'S SHORE

### 1

By blue Ontario's shore,  
As I mused of these warlike days and of peace return'd,  
and the dead that return no more,  
A Phantom gigantic superb, with stern visage accosted me,  
*Chant me the poem, it said, that comes from the soul of  
America, chant me the carol of victory,  
And strike up the marches of Libertad, marches more powerful  
yet,  
And sing me before you go the song of the throes of Democracy.*  
(Democracy, the destin'd conqueror, yet treacherous lip-  
smiles everywhere,  
And death and infidelity at every step.)

### 2

A Nation announcing itself,  
I myself make the only growth by which I can be appre-  
ciated,  
I reject none, accept all, then reproduce all in my own  
forms.  
A breed whose proof is in time and deeds,  
What we are we are, nativity is answer enough to objections,  
We wield ourselves as a weapon is wielded,  
We are powerful and tremendous in ourselves,  
We are executive in ourselves, we are sufficient in the  
variety of ourselves,  
We are the most beautiful to ourselves and in ourselves,  
We stand self-pois'd in the middle, branching thence over  
the world,  
From Missouri, Nebraska, or Kansas, laughing attacks to  
scorn.  
Nothing is sinful to us outside of ourselves,  
Whatever appears, whatever does not appear, we are  
beautiful or sinful in ourselves only.



(O Mother—O Sisters dear !  
If we are lost, no victor else has destroy'd us,  
It is by ourselves we go down to eternal night.)

## 3

Have you thought there could be but a single supreme ?  
There can be any number of supremes—one does not  
countervail another any more than one eyesight  
countervails another, or one life countervails another.

All is eligible to all,  
All is for individuals, all is for you,  
No condition is prohibited, not God's or any.

All comes by the body, only health puts you rapport with  
the universe.

Produce great Persons, the rest follows.

## 4

Piety and conformity to them that like,  
Peace, obesity, allegiance, to them that like,  
I am he who tauntingly compels men, women, nations,  
Crying, Leap from your seats and contend for your lives !

I am he who walks the States with a barb'd tongue, ques-  
tioning every one I meet,  
Who are you that wanted only to be told what you knew  
before ?  
Who are you that wanted only a book to join you in your  
nonsense ?

(With pangs and cries as thine own O bearer of many  
children,  
These clamors wild to a race of pride I give.)

O lands, would you be freer than all that has ever been  
before ?  
If you would be freer than all that has been before, come  
listen to me.

Fear grace, elegance, civilization, delicatessen,  
Fear the mellow sweet, the sucking of honey-juice,



Beware the advancing mortal ripening of Nature,  
Beware what precedes the decay of the ruggedness of  
states and men.

## 5

Ages, precedents, have long been accumulating undirected  
materials,  
America brings builders, and brings its own styles.

The immortal poets of Asia and Europe have done their  
work and pass'd to other spheres,  
A work remains, the work of surpassing all they have done.

America, curious toward foreign characters, stands by its  
own at all hazards,  
Stands removed, spacious, composite, sound, initiates the  
true use of precedents,  
Does not repel them or the past or what they have pro-  
duced under their forms,  
Takes the lesson with calmness, perceives the corpse slowly  
borne from the house,  
Perceives that it waits a little while in the door, that it was  
fittest for its days,  
That its life has descended to the stalwart and well-shaped  
heir who approaches,  
And that he shall be fittest for his days.

Any period one nation must lead,  
One land must be the promise and reliance of the future.

These States are the amplest poem,  
Here is not merely a nation but a teeming Nation of nations,  
Here the doings of men correspond with the broadcast  
doings of the day and night,  
Here is what moves in magnificent masses careless of  
particulars,  
Here are the roughs, beards, friendliness, combativeness,  
the soul loves,  
Here the flowing trains, here the crowds, equality, diversity,  
the soul loves.

## 6

Land of lands and bards to corroborate !  
Of them standing among them, one lifts to the light a  
west-bred face,



To him the hereditary countenance bequeath'd both  
mother's and father's,  
His first parts substances, earth, water, animals, trees,  
Built of the common stock, having room for far and  
near,  
Used to dispense with other lands, incarnating this land,  
Attracting it body and soul to himself, hanging on its neck  
with incomparable love,  
Plunging his seminal muscle into its merits and demerits,  
Making its cities, beginnings, events, diversities, wars,  
vocal in him,  
Making its rivers, lakes, bays, embouchure in him,  
Mississippi with yearly freshets and changing chutes,  
Columbia, Niagara, Hudson, spending themselves  
lovingly in him,  
If the Atlantic coast stretch or the Pacific coast stretch, he  
stretching with them North or South,  
Spanning between them East and West, and touching  
whatever is between them,  
Growths growing from him to offset the growths of pine,  
cedar, hemlock, live-oak, locust, chestnut, hickory,  
cottonwood, orange, magnolia,  
Tangles as tangled in him as any canebrake or swamp,  
He likening sides and peaks of mountains, forests coated  
with northern transparent ice,  
Off him pasturage sweet and natural as savanna, upland,  
prairie,  
Through him flights, whirls, screams, answering those of  
the fish-hawk, mocking-bird, night-heron, and eagle,  
His spirit surrounding his country's spirit, unclosed to good  
and evil,  
Surrounding the essences of real things, old times and  
present times,  
Surrounding just found shores, islands, tribes of red  
aborigines,  
Weather-beaten vessels, landings, settlements, embryo  
stature and muscle,  
The haughty defiance of the Year One, war, peace, the  
formation of the Constitution,  
The separate States, the simple elastic scheme, the im-  
migran<sup>t</sup>s,  
The Union always swarming with blatherers and always  
sure and impregnable,



The unsurvey'd interior, log-houses, clearings, wild animals,  
hunters, trappers,  
Surrounding the multiform agriculture, mines, tempera-  
ture, the gestation of new States,  
Congress convening every Twelfth-month, the members  
duly coming up from the uttermost parts,  
Surrounding the noble character of mechanics and farmers,  
especially the young men,  
Responding their manners, speech, dress, friendships, the  
gait they have of persons who never knew how it felt  
to stand in the presence of superiors,  
The freshness and candor of their physiognomy, the  
copiousness and decision of their phrenology,  
The picturesque looseness of their carriage, their fierceness  
when wrong'd,  
The fluency of their speech, their delight in music, their  
curiosity, good temper and open-handedness, the  
whole composite make,  
The prevailing ardor and enterprise, the large amateness,  
The perfect equality of the female with the male, the fluid  
movement of the population,  
The superior marine, free commerce, fisheries, whaling,  
gold-digging.  
Wharf-hemm'd cities, railroad and steamboat lines inter-  
secting all points,  
Factories, mercantile life, labor-saving machinery, the  
Northeast, Northwest, Southwest,  
Manhattan firemen, the Yankee swap, southern plantation  
life,  
Slavery—the murderous, treacherous conspiracy to raise it  
upon the ruins of all the rest,  
On and on to the grapple with it—Assassin! then your  
life or ours be the stake, and respite no more.

## 7

(Lo, high toward heaven, this day,  
Libertad, from the conqueress' field return'd,  
I mark the new aureola around your head,  
No more of soft astral, but dazzling and fierce,  
With war's flames and the lambent lightnings playing,  
And your port immovable where you stand,  
With still the inextinguishable glance and the clinch'd and  
lifted fist,



And your foot on the neck of the menacing one, the scorner  
utterly crush'd beneath you,  
The menacing arrogant one that strode and advanced with  
his senseless scorn, bearing the murderous knife,  
The wide-swelling one, the braggart that would yesterday  
do so much,  
To-day a carrion dead and damn'd, the despised of all the  
earth,  
An offal rank, to the dunghill maggots spurn'd.)

## 8

Others take finish, but the Republic is ever constructive and  
ever keeps vista,  
Others adorn the past, but you O days of the present, I  
adorn you,  
O days of the future I believe in you—I isolate myself for  
your sake,  
O America because you build for mankind I build for you,  
O well-beloved stone-cutters, I lead them who plan with  
decision and science,  
Lead the present with friendly hand toward the future.

(Bravas to all impulses sending sane children to the next  
age !

But damn that which spends itself with no thought of the  
stain, pains, dismay, feebleness, it is bequeathing.)

## 9

I listened to the Phantom by Ontario's shore,  
I heard the voice arising demanding bards,  
By them all native and grand, by them alone can these  
States be fused into the compact organism of a Nation.

To hold men together by paper and seal or by compulsion  
is no account,

That only holds men together which aggregates all in a  
living principle, as the hold of the limbs of the body or  
the fibres of plants.

Of all races and eras these States with veins full of poetical  
stuff most need poets, and are to have the greatest,  
and use them the greatest,



Their Presidents shall not be their common referee so much  
as their poets shall.

(Soul of love and tongue of fire !

Eye to pierce the deepest deeps and sweep the world !

Ah Mother, prolific and full in all besides, yet how long  
barren, barren ?)

## 10

Of these States the poet is the equable man,  
Not in him but off from him things are grotesque, eccentric,  
fail of their full returns,

Nothing out of its place is good, nothing in its place is bad,  
He bestows on every object or quality its fit proportion,  
neither more nor less,

He is the arbiter of the diverse, he is the key,

He is the equalizer of his age and land,

He supplies what wants supplying, he checks what wants  
checking,

In peace out of him speaks the spirit of peace, large, rich,  
thrifty, building populous towns, encouraging agri-  
culture, arts, commerce, lighting the study of man,  
the soul, health, immortality, government,

In war he is the best backer of the war, he fetches artillery  
as good as the engineer's, he can make every word he  
speaks draw blood,

The years straying toward infidelity he withholds by his  
steady faith,

He is no arguer, he is judgment, (Nature accepts him  
absolutely,)

He judges not as the judge judges but as the sun falling  
round 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 dispute on God and eternity he is silent,

He sees eternity less like a play with a prologue and denoue-  
ment,

He sees eternity in men and women, he does not see men  
and women as dreams or dots.

For the great Idea, the idea of perfect and free individuals,  
For that, the bard walks in advance, leader of leaders,

The attitude of him cheers up slaves and horrifies foreign  
despots.



Without extinction is Liberty, without retrograde is  
 Equality,  
 They live in the feelings of young men and the best women,  
 (Not for nothing have the indomitable heads of the earth  
 been always ready to fall for Liberty.)

## 11

For the great Idea,  
 That, O my brethren, that is the mission of poets.  
 Songs of stern defiance ever ready,  
 Songs of the rapid arming and the march,  
 The flag of peace quick-folded, and instead the flag we know,  
 Warlike flag of the great Idea.

(Angry cloth I saw there leaping !  
 I stand again in leaden rain your flapping folds saluting,  
 I sing you over all, flying beckoning through the fight—O  
 the hard-contested fight !  
 The cannons ope their rosy-flashing muzzles—the hurtled  
 balls scream,  
 The battle-front forms amid the smoke—the volleys pour  
 incessant from the line,  
 Hark, the ringing word *Charge* !—now the tussle and the  
 furious maddening yells,  
 Now the corpses tumble curl'd upon the ground,  
 Cold, cold in death, for precious life of you,  
 Angry cloth I saw there leaping.)

## 12

Are you he who would assume a place to teach or be a poet  
 here in the States ?

The place is august, the terms obdurate.

Who would assume to teach here may well prepare himself  
 body and mind,

He may well survey, ponder, arm, fortify, harden, make  
 lithe himself,

He shall surely be question'd beforehand by me with many  
 and stern questions.

Who are you indeed who would talk or sing to America ?  
 Have you studied out the land, its idioms and men ?



Have you learn'd the physiology, phrenology, politics,  
geography, pride, freedom, friendship of the land?  
its substratums and objects?

Have you consider'd the organic compact of the first day  
of the first year of Independence, sign'd by the Com-  
missioners, ratified by the States, and read by Washing-  
ton at the head of the army?

Have you possess'd yourself of the Federal Constitution?  
Do you see who have left all feudal processes and poems  
behind them, and assumed the poems and processes of  
Democracy?

Are you faithful to things? do you teach what the land and  
sea, the bodies of men, womanhood, amateness,  
heroic angers, teach?

Have you sped through fleeting customs, popularities?

Can you hold your hand against all seductions, follies,  
whirls, fierce contentions? are you very strong? are  
you really of the whole People?

Are you not of some coterie? some school or mere religion?

Are you done with reviews and criticisms of life? animating  
now to life itself?

Have you vivified yourself from the maternity of these  
States?

Have you too the old ever-fresh forbearance and impar-  
tiality?

Do you hold the like love for those hardening to maturity?  
for the last-born? little and big? and for the errant?

What is this you bring my America?

Is it uniform with my country?

Is it not something that has been better told or done  
before?

Have you not imported this or the spirit of it in some ship?

Is it not a mere tale? a rhyme? a prettiness?—is the  
good old cause in it?

Has it not dangled long at the heels of the poets, politicians,  
literats, of enemies' lands?

Does it not assume that what is notoriously gone is still  
here?

Does it answer universal needs? will it improve manners?

Does it sound with trumpet-voice the proud victory of the  
Union in that secession war?

Can your performance face the open fields and the seaside?



Will it absorb into me as I absorb food, air, to appear again  
in my strength, gait, face ?

Have real employments contributed to it ? original makers,  
not mere amanuenses ?

Does it meet modern discoveries, calibres, facts, face to  
face ?

What does it mean to American persons, progresses, cities ?  
Chicago, Kanada, Arkansas ?

Does it see behind the apparent custodians the real cus-  
dians standing, menacing, silent, the mechanics,  
Manhattanese, Western men, Southerners, significant  
alike in their apathy, and in the promptness of their  
love ?

Does it see what finally befalls, and has always finally  
befallen, each temporizer, patcher, outsider, partialist,  
alarmist, infidel, who has ever ask'd anything of  
America ?

What mocking and scornful negligence ?

The track strew'd with the dust of skeletons,

By the roadside others disdainfully toss'd.

## 13

Rhymes and rhymers pass away, poems distill'd from poems  
pass away,

The swarms of reflectors and the polite pass, and leave  
ashes,

Admirers, importers, obedient persons, make but the soil  
of literature,

America justifies itself, give it time, no disguise can deceive  
it or conceal from it, it is impassive enough,

Only toward the likes of itself will it advance to meet them,  
If its poets appear it will in due time advance to meet  
them, there is no fear of mistake,

(The proof of a poet shall be sternly deferr'd till his country  
absorbs him as affectionately as he has absorb'd it.)

He masters whose spirit masters, he tastes sweetest who  
results sweetest in the long run,

The blood of the brawn beloved of time is unconstraint ;  
In the need of songs, philosophy, an appropriate native  
grand-opera, shipcraft, any craft,

He or she is greatest who contributes the greatest original  
practical example.



Already a nonchalant breed, silently emerging, appears on  
the streets,  
People's lips salute only doers, lovers, satisfiers, positive  
knowers,  
There will shortly be no more priests, I say their work is  
done,  
Death is without emergencies here, but life is perpetual  
emergencies here,  
Are your body, days, manners, superb? after death you  
shall be superb,  
Justice, health, self-esteem, clear the way with irresistible  
power;  
How dare you place anything before a man?

## 14

Fall behind me States!  
A man before all—myself, typical, before all.  
Give me the pay I have served for,  
Give me to sing the songs of the great Idea, take all the  
rest,  
I have loved the earth, sun, animals, I have despised riches,  
I have given alms to every one that ask'd, stood up for the  
stupid and crazy, devoted my income and labor to  
others,  
Hated tyrants, argued not concerning God, had patience  
and indulgence toward the people, taken off my hat  
to nothing known or unknown,  
Gone freely with powerful uneducated persons and with the  
young, and with the mothers of families,  
Read these leaves to myself in the open air, tried them by  
trees, stars, rivers,  
Dismiss'd whatever insulted my own soul or defiled my  
body,  
Claim'd nothing to myself which I have not carefully  
claim'd for others on the same terms,  
Sped to the camps, and comrades found and accepted from  
every State,  
(Upon this breast has many a dying soldier lean'd to breathe  
his last,  
This arm, this hand, this voice, have nourish'd, rais'd,  
restor'd,  
To life recalling many a prostrate form;)



I am willing to wait to be understood by the growth of the  
taste of myself,  
Rejecting none, permitting all.

(Say O Mother, have I not to your thought been faithful ?  
Have I not through life kept you and yours before me ?)

## 15

I swear I begin to see the meaning of these things,  
It is not the earth, it is not America who is so great,  
It is I who am great or to be great, it is You up there, or  
any one,  
It is to walk rapidly through civilizations, governments,  
theories,  
Through poems, pageants, shows, to form individuals.

Underneath all, individuals,  
I swear nothing is good to me now that ignores individuals,  
The American compact is altogether with individuals.  
The only government is that which makes minute of  
individuals,  
The whole theory of the universe is directed unerringly to  
one single individual—namely to You.

(Mother ! with subtle sense severe, with the naked sword  
in your hand,  
I saw you at last refuse to treat but directly with individuals.)

## 16

Underneath all, Nativity,  
I swear I will stand by my own nativity, pious or impious  
so be it ;  
I swear I am charm'd with nothing except nativity,  
Men, women, cities, nations, are only beautiful from  
nativity.

Underneath all is the Expression of love for men and  
women,

(I swear I have seen enough of mean and impotent modes  
of expressing love for men and women,  
After this day I take my own modes of expressing love for  
men and women.)



I swear I will have each quality of my race in myself,  
(Talk as you like, he only suits these States whose manners  
favor the audacity and sublime turbulence of the  
States.)

Underneath the lessons of things, spirits, Nature, govern-  
ments, ownerships, I swear I perceive other lessons,  
Underneath all to me is myself, to you yourself, (the same  
monotonous old song.)

## 17

O I see flashing that this America is only you and me,  
Its power, weapons, testimony, are you and me,  
Its crimes, lies, thefts, defections, are you and me,  
Its Congress is you and me, the officers, capitols, armies,  
ships, are you and me,  
Its endless gestations of new States are you and me,  
The war (that war so bloody and grim, the war I will  
henceforth forget) was you and me,  
Natural and artificial are you and me,  
Freedom, language, poems, employments, are you and me,  
Past, present, future, are you and me.

I dare not shirk any part of myself,  
Not any part of America good or bad,  
Not to build for that which builds for mankind,  
Not to balance ranks, complexions, creeds, and the sexes,  
Not to justify science nor the march of equality,  
Nor to feed the arrogant blood of the brawn belov'd of time.

I am for those that have never been master'd,  
For men and women whose tempers have never been  
master'd,  
For those whom laws, theories, conventions, can never  
master.

I am for those who walk abreast with the whole earth,  
Who inaugurate one to inaugurate all.

I will not be outfaced by irrational things,  
I will penetrate what it is in them that is sarcastic upon me,  
I will make cities and civilizations defer to me,  
This is what I have learnt from America—it is the amount,  
and it I teach again.



(Democracy, while weapons were everywhere aim'd at  
your breast,  
I saw you serenely give birth to immortal children, saw in  
dreams your dilating form,  
Saw you with spreading mantle covering the world.)

## 18

I will confront these shows of the day and night,  
I will know if I am to be less than they,  
I will see if I am not as majestic as they,  
I will see if I am not as subtle and real as they,  
I will see if I am to be less generous than they,  
I will see if I have no meaning, while the houses and ships  
have meaning,  
I will see if the fishes and birds are to be enough for them-  
selves, and I am not to be enough for myself.

I match my spirit against yours, you orbs, growths, moun-  
tains, brutes,  
Copious as you are I absorb you all in myself, and become  
the master myself,  
America isolated yet embodying all, what is it finally  
except myself?  
These States, what are they except myself?

I know now why the earth is gross, tantalizing, wicked, it is  
for my sake,  
I take you specially to be mine, you terrible, rude forms.

(Mother, bend down, bend close to me your face,  
I know not what these plots and wars and deferments are  
for,  
I know not fruition's success, but I know that through war  
and crime your work goes on, and must yet go on.)

## 19

Thus by blue Ontario's shore,  
While the winds fann'd me and the waves came trooping  
toward me,  
I thrill'd with the power's pulsations, and the charm of my  
theme was upon me,  
Till the tissues that held me parted their ties upon me.



And I saw the free souls of poets,  
 The loftiest bards of past ages strode before me,  
 Strange large men, long unwaked, undisclosed, were  
 disclosed to me.

## 20

O my rapt verse, my call, mock me not !  
 Not for the bards of the past, not to invoke them have I  
 launch'd you forth,  
 Not to call even those lofty bards here by Ontario's shores,  
 Have I sung so capricious and loud my savage song.

Bards for my own land only I invoke,  
 (For the war the war is over, the field is clear'd,)  
 Till they strike up marches henceforth triumphant and  
 onward,  
 To cheer O Mother your boundless expectant soul.

Bards of the great Idea ! bards of the peaceful inventions !  
 (for the war, the war is over !)  
 Yet bards of latent armies, a million soldiers waiting ever-  
 ready,  
 Bards with songs as from burning coals or the lightning's  
 fork'd stripes !  
 Ample Ohio's, Kanada's bards—bards of California !  
 inland bards—bards of the war !  
 You by my charm I invoke.

## REVERSALS

LET that which stood in front go behind,  
 Let that which was behind advance to the front,  
 Let bigots, fools, unclean persons, offer new propositions,  
 Let the old propositions be postponed,  
 Let a man seek pleasure everywhere except in himself,  
 Let a woman seek happiness everywhere except in herself.



## AUTUMN RIVULETS

### AS CONSEQUENT FROM STORE OF SUMMER

#### RAINS

As consequent from store of summer rains,  
Or wayward rivulets in autumn flowing,  
Or many a herb-lined brook's reticulations,  
Or subterranean sea-rills making for the sea,  
Songs of continued years I sing.

Life's ever-modern rapids first, (soon, soon to blend,  
With the old streams of death.)

Some threading Ohio's farm-fields or the woods,  
Some down Colorado's cañons from sources of perpetual  
snow,  
Some half-hid in Oregon, or away southward in Texas,  
Some in the north finding their way to Erie, Niagara,  
Ottawa,  
Some to Atlantica's bays, and so to the great salt brine.

In you whoe'er you are my book perusing,  
In I myself, in all the world, these currents flowing,  
All, all toward the mystic ocean tending.

Currents for starting a continent new,  
Overtures sent to the solid out of the liquid,  
Fusion of ocean and land, tender and pensive waves,  
(Not safe and peaceful only, waves rous'd and ominous too,  
Out of the depths the storm's abysmic waves, who knows  
whence ?  
Raging over the vast, with many a broken spar and tatter'd  
sail.)

Or from the sea of Time, collecting vasting all, I bring,  
A windrow-drift of weeds and shells.



O little shells, so curious-convolute, so limpid-cold and  
 voiceless,  
 Will you not little shells to the tympan of temples held,  
 Murmurs and echoes still call up, eternity's music faint  
 and far,  
 Wafted inland, sent from Atlantica's rim, strains for the  
 soul of the prairies,  
 Whisper'd reverberations, chords for the ear of the West  
 joyously sounding,  
 Your tidings old, yet ever new and untranslatable,  
 Infinitesimals out of my life, and many a life,  
 (For not my life and years alone I give—all, all I give,)  
 These waifs from the deep, cast high and dry,  
 Wash'd on America's shores ?

## THE RETURN OF THE HEROES

### 1

For the lands and for these passionate days and for myself,  
 Now I awhile retire to thee O soil of autumn fields,  
 Reclining on thy breast, giving myself to thee,  
 Answering the pulses of thy sane and equable heart,  
 Tuning a verse for thee.

O earth that hast no voice, confide to me a voice,  
 O harvest of my lands—O boundless summer growths,  
 O lavish brown parturient earth—O infinite teeming womb,  
 A song to narrate thee.

### 2

Ever upon this stage,  
 Is acted God's calm annual drama,  
 Gorgeous processions, songs of birds,  
 Sunrise that fullest feeds and freshens most the soul,  
 The heaving sea, the waves upon the shore, the musical,  
 strong waves,  
 The woods, the stalwart trees, the slender, tapering trees,  
 The liliput countless armies of the grass,  
 The heat, the showers, the measureless pasturages,  
 The scenery of the snows, the winds' free orchestra,  
 The stretching light-hung roof of clouds, the clear cerulean  
 and the silvery fringes,



The high dilating stars, the placid beckoning stars,  
The moving flocks and herds, the plains and emerald  
meadows,  
The shows of all the varied lands and all the growths and  
products.

## 3

Fecund America—to-day,  
Thou art all over set in births and joys !  
Thou groan'st with riches, thy wealth clothes thee as a  
swathing-garment,  
Thou laughest loud with ache of great possessions,  
A myriad-twining life like interlacing vines binds all thy  
vast demesne,  
As some huge ship freighted to water's edge thou ridest  
into port,  
As rain falls from the heaven and vapors rise from earth, so  
have the precious values fallen upon thee and risen  
out of thee ;  
Thou envy of the globe ! thou miracle !  
Thou, bathed, choked, swimming in plenty,  
Thou lucky Mistress of the tranquil barns,  
Thou Prairie Dame that sittest in the middle and lookest  
out upon thy world, and lookest East and lookest West,  
Dispensatress, that by a word givest a thousand miles, a  
million farms, and missest nothing,  
Thou all-acceptress—thou hospitable, (thou only art  
hospitable as God is hospitable.)

## 4

When late I sang sad was my voice,  
Sad were the shows around me with deafening noises of  
hatred and smoke of war ;  
In the midst of the conflict, the heroes, I stood,  
Or pass'd with slow step through the wounded and dying.  
But now I sing not war,  
Nor the measur'd march of soldiers, nor the tents of camps,  
Nor the regiments hastily coming up deploying in line of  
battle ;  
No more the sad, unnatural shows of war.  
Ask'd room those flush'd immortal ranks, the first forth-  
stepping armies ?



Ask room alas the ghastly ranks, the armies dread that  
follow'd.

(Pass, pass, ye proud brigades, with your tramping sinewy  
legs,

With your shoulders young and strong, with your knapsacks  
and your muskets ;

How elate I stood and watch'd you, where starting off you  
march'd.

Pass—then rattle drums again,

For an army heaves in sight, O another gathering army,

Swarming, trailing on the rear, O you dread accruing army,

O you regiments so piteous, with your mortal diarrhoea,  
with your fever,

O my land's maim'd darlings, with the plenteous bloody  
bandage and the crutch,

Lo, your pallid army follows.)

## 5

But on these days of brightness,

On the far-stretching beauteous landscape, the roads and  
lanes, the high-piled farm-wagons, and the fruits and  
barns,

Should the dead intrude ?

Ah the dead to me mar not, they fit well in Nature,

They fit very well in the landscape under the trees and  
grass,

And along the edge of the sky in the horizon's far margin.

Nor do I forget you Departed,

Nor in winter or summer my lost ones,

But most in the open air as now when my soul is rapt and  
at peace, like pleasing phantoms,

Your memories rising glide silently by me.

## 6

I saw the day the return of the heroes,

(Yet the heroes never surpass'd shall never return,

Them that day I saw not.)



I saw the interminable corps, I saw the processions of armies,  
I saw them approaching, defiling by with divisions,  
Streaming northward, their work done, camping awhile in  
clusters of mighty camps.

No holiday soldiers—youthful, yet veterans,  
Worn, swart, handsome, strong, of the stock of homestead  
and workshop,  
Harden'd of many a long campaign and sweaty march,  
Inured on many a hard-fought bloody field.

A pause—the armies wait,  
A million flush'd embattled conquerors wait,  
The world too waits, then soft as breaking night and sure  
as dawn,  
They melt, they disappear.

Exult O lands ! victorious lands !  
Not there your victory on those red shuddering fields,  
But here and hence your victory.

Melt, melt away ye armies—disperse ye blue-clad soldiers,  
Resolve ye back again, give up for good your deadly arms,  
Other the arms the fields henceforth for you, or South or  
North,  
With saner wars, sweet wars, life-giving wars.

## 7

Loud O my throat, and clear O soul !  
The season of thanks and the voice of full-yielding,  
The chant of joy and power for boundless fertility.

All till'd and untill'd fields expand before me,  
I see the true arenas of my race, or first or last,  
Man's innocent and strong arenas.

I see the heroes at other toils,  
I see well-wielded in their hands the better weapons.

I see where the Mother of All,  
With full-spanning eye gazes forth, dwells long,  
And counts the varied gathering of the products.



Busy the far, the sunlit panorama,  
Prairie, orchard and yellow grain of the North,  
Cotton and rice of the South and Louisianian cane,  
Open unseeded fallows, rich fields of clover and timothy,  
Kine and horses feeding, and droves of sheep and swine,  
And many a stately river flowing and many a jocund brook,  
And healthy uplands with herby-perfumed breezes,  
And the good green grass, that delicate miracle the ever-  
recurring grass.

## 8

Toil on heroes ! harvest the products !  
Not alone on those warlike fields the Mother of All,  
With dilated form and lambent eyes watch'd you.

Toil on heroes ! toil well ! handle the weapons well !  
The Mother of All, yet here as ever she watches you.

Well-pleased America thou beholdest,  
Over the fields of the West those crawling monsters,  
The human-divine inventions, the labor-saving implements ;  
Beholdest moving in every direction imbued as with life  
the revolving hay-rakes,  
The steam-power reaping-machines and the horse-power  
machines,  
The engines, thrashers of grain and cleaners of grain, well  
separating the straw, the nimble work of the patent  
pitchfork,  
Beholdest the newer saw-mill, the southern cotton-gin, and  
the rice-cleanser.

Beneath thy look O Maternal,  
With these and else and with their own strong hands the  
heroes harvest.

All gather and all harvest,  
Yet but for thee O Powerful, not a scythe might swing as  
now in security,  
Not a maize-stalk dangle as now its silken tassels in peace.  
Under thee only they harvest, even but a wisp of hay under  
thy great face only,  
Harvest the wheat of Ohio, Illinois, Wisconsin, every  
barbed spear under thee,



Harvest the maize of Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee, each  
ear in its light-green sheath,  
Gather the hay to its myriad mows in the odorous tranquil  
barns,  
Oats to their bins, the white potato, the buckwheat of  
Michigan, to theirs ;  
Gather the cotton in Mississippi or Alabama, dig and hoard  
the golden the sweet potato of Georgia and the Caro-  
linas,  
Clip the wool of California or Pennsylvania,  
Cut the flax in the Middle States, or hemp or tobacco in  
the Borders,  
Pick the pea and the bean, or pull apples from the trees or  
bunches of grapes from the vines,  
Or aught that ripens in all these States or North or South,  
Under the beaming sun and under thee.

### 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  
pondside,  
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 furni-  
ture, 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, slap-  
ping,  
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.

## OLD IRELAND

FAR hence amid an isle of wondrous beauty,  
Crouching over a grave an ancient sorrowful mother,  
Once a queen, now lean and tatter'd seated on the ground,  
Her old white hair drooping dishevel'd round her shoulders,  
At her feet fallen an unused royal harp,  
Long silent, she too long silent, mourning her shrouded  
hope and heir,  
Of all the earth her heart most full of sorrow because most  
full of love.

Yet a word ancient mother,  
You need crouch there no longer on the cold ground with  
forehead between your knees,  
O you need not sit there veil'd in your old white hair so  
dishevel'd,  
For know you the one you mourn is not in that grave,  
It was an illusion, the son you love was not really dead,  
The Lord is not dead, he is risen again young and strong in  
another country,  
Even while you wept there by your fallen harp by the  
grave,  
What you wept for was translated, pass'd from the grave,  
The winds favor'd and the sea sail'd it,  
And now with rosy and new blood,  
Moves to-day in a new country.



## THE CITY DEAD-HOUSE

By the city dead-house by the gate,  
As idly sauntering wending my way from the clangor,  
I curious pause, for lo, an outcast form, a poor dead  
prostitute brought,  
Her corpse they deposit unclaim'd, it lies on the damp  
brick pavement,  
The divine woman, her body, I see the body, I look on it  
alone,  
That house once full of passion and beauty, all else I notice  
not,  
Nor stillness so cold, nor running water from faucet, nor  
odors morbidic impress me,  
But the house alone—that wondrous house—that delicate  
fair house—that ruin !  
That immortal house more than all the rows of dwellings  
ever built !  
Or white-domed capitol with majestic figure surmounted,  
or all the old high-spired cathedrals,  
That little house alone more than them all—poor, desperate  
house !  
Fair, fearful wreck—tenement of a soul—itself a soul,  
Unclaim'd, avoided house—take one breath from my  
tremulous lips,  
Take one tear dropt aside as I go for thought of  
you,  
Dead house of love—house of madness and sin, crumbled,  
crush'd,  
House of life, erewhile talking and laughing—but ah, poor  
house, dead even then,  
Months, years, an echoing, garnish'd house—but dead,  
dead, dead.

## THIS COMPOST

## 1

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 ?  
Where have you drawn off all the foul liquid and meat ?  
I do not see any of it upon you to-day, or perhaps I am  
deceiv'd,  
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 diseases' 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.

#### TO A FOIL'D EUROPEAN REVOLUTIONNAIRE

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 anything 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.

### UNNAMED LANDS

NATIONS ten thousand years before these States, and many  
times ten thousand years before these States,  
Garner'd clusters of ages that men and women like us grew  
up and travel'd their course and pass'd on,  
What vast-built cities, what orderly republics, what pastoral  
tribes and nomads,  
What histories, rulers, heroes, perhaps transcending all  
others,  
What laws, customs, wealth, arts, traditions,  
What sort of marriage, what costumes, what physiology  
and phrenology,  
What of liberty and slavery among them, what they thought  
of death and the soul,  
Who were witty and wise, who beautiful and poetic, who  
brutish and undevelop'd,  
Not a mark, not a record remains—and yet all remains.

O I know that those men and women were not for nothing,  
any more than we are for nothing,  
I know that they belong to the scheme of the world every  
bit as much as we now belong to it.

Afar they stand, yet near to me they stand,  
Some with oval countenances learn'd and calm,



Some naked and savage, some like huge collections of  
insects,  
Some in tents, herdsmen, patriarchs, tribes, horsemen,  
Some prowling through woods, some living peaceably on  
farms, laboring, reaping, filling barns,  
Some traversing paved avenues, amid temples, palaces,  
factories, libraries, shows, courts, theatres, wonderful  
monuments.

Are those billions of men really gone ?  
Are those women of the old experience of the earth  
gone ?  
Do their lives, cities, arts, rest only with us ?  
Did they achieve nothing for good for themselves ?

I believe of all those men and women that fill'd the un-  
named lands, every one exists this hour here or else-  
where, invisible to us,  
In exact proportion to what he or she grew from in life, and  
out of what he or she did, felt, became, loved, sinn'd,  
in life.

I believe that was not the end of those nations or any  
person of them, any more than this shall be the end of  
my nation, or of me ;  
Of their languages, governments, marriage, literature,  
products, games, wars, manners, crimes, prisons,  
slaves, heroes, poets,  
I suspect their results curiously await in the yet unseen  
world, counterparts of what accrued to them in the  
seen world,  
I suspect I shall meet them there,  
I suspect I shall there find each old particular of those  
unnamed lands.

### SONG OF PRUDENCE

MANHATTAN's streets I saunter'd pondering,  
On Time, Space, Reality—on such as these, and abreast  
with them Prudence.



The last explanation always remains to be made about  
prudence,  
Little and large alike drop quietly aside from the prudence  
that suits immortality.

The soul is of itself,  
All verges to it, all has reference to what ensues  
All that a person does, says, thinks, is of consequence,  
Not a move can a man or woman make, that affects him  
or her in a day, month, 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 just as much as the direct,  
The spirit receives from the body just as much as it gives  
to the body, if not more.

Not one word or deed, not venereal sore, discoloration,  
privacy of the onanist,  
Putridity of gluttons or rum-drinkers, speculation, cunning,  
betrayal, murder, seduction, prostitution,  
But has results beyond death as really as before death.

(Charity and personal force are the only investments worth  
anything.

No specification is necessary, all that a male or female  
does, that is vigorous, benevolent, clean, is so much  
profit to him or her,  
In the unshakable order of the universe and through the  
whole scope of it forever.

Who has been wise receives interest,  
Savage, felon, President, judge, farmer, sailor, mechanic,  
literate, young, old, it is the same,  
The interest will come round—all will come round.

Singly, wholly, to affect now, affected their time, will  
forever affect, all of the past and all of the present and  
all of the future,  
All the brave actions of war and peace,



All help given to relatives, strangers, the poor, old, sorrowful, young children, widows, the sick, and to shunn'd persons,

All self-denial that stood steady and aloof on wrecks, and saw others fill 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 scoff'd at by their neighbors,

All the limitless, sweet love and precious suffering of mothers,

All honest men baffled in strifes recorded or unrecorded,

All the grandeur and good of ancient nations whose fragments we inherit,

All the good of the dozens of ancient nations unknown to us by name, date, location,

All that was ever manfully begun, whether it succeeded or no,

All suggestions of the divine mind of man or the divinity of his mouth, or the shaping of his great hands,

All that is well thought or said this day on any part of the globe, or on any of the wandering stars, or on any of the fix'd stars, by those there as we are here,

All that is henceforth to be thought or done by you whoever you are, or by any one,

These inure, have inured, shall inure, to the identities from which they sprang, or shall spring.

Did you guess anything lived only its moment ?

The world does not so exist, no parts palpable or impalpable so exist,

No consummation exists without being from some long previous consummation, and that from some other,

Without the farthest conceivable one coming a bit nearer the beginning than any.

Whatever satisfies souls is true ;

Prudence entirely satisfies the craving and glut of souls,

Itself only finally satisfies the soul,

The soul has that measureless pride which revolts from every lesson but its own.

Now I breathe the word of the prudence that walks abreast with time, space, reality,



That answers the pride which refuses every lesson but its own.

What is prudence is indivisible,  
 Declines to separate one part of life from every part,  
 Divides not the righteous from the unrighteous or the living  
 from the dead,  
 Matches every thought or act by its correlative,  
 Knows no possible forgiveness or deputed atonement,  
 Knows that the young man who composedly peril'd his  
 life and lost it has done exceedingly well for himself  
 without doubt,  
 That he who never peril'd his life, but retains it to old age  
 in riches and ease, has probably achiev'd nothing for  
 himself worth mentioning,  
 Knows that only that person has really learn'd who has  
 learn'd to prefer results,  
 Who favors body and soul the same,  
 Who perceives the indirect assuredly following the direct,  
 Who in his spirit in any emergency whatever neither hurries  
 nor avoids death.

## THE SINGER IN THE PRISON

### 1

*O sight of pity, shame and dole !  
 O fearful thought—a convict soul.*

RANG the refrain along the hall, the prison,  
 Rose to the roof, the vaults of heaven above,  
 Pouring in floods of melody in tones so pensive sweet and  
 strong the like whereof was never heard,  
 Reaching the far-off sentry and the armed guards, who  
 ceas'd their pacing,  
 Making the hearer's pulses stop for ecstasy and awe.

### 2

The sun was low in the west one winter day,  
 When down a narrow aisle amid the thieves and outlaws  
 of the land,



(There by the hundreds seated, sear-faced murderers, wily  
 counterfeiters,  
 Gather'd to Sunday church in prison walls, the keepers  
 round,  
 Plenteous, well-armed, watching with vigilant eyes,)  
 Calmly a lady walk'd holding a little innocent child by  
 either hand,  
 Whom seating on their stools beside her on the platform,  
 She, first preluding with the instrument a low and musical  
 prelude,  
 In voice surpassing all, sang forth a quaint old hymn.

A soul confined by bars and bands,  
 Cries, help ! O help ! and wrings her hands,  
 Blinded her eyes, bleeding her breast,  
 Nor pardon finds, nor balm of rest,  
 Ceaseless she paces to and fro,  
 O heart-sick days ! O nights of woe !  
 Nor hand of friend, nor loving face,  
 Nor favor comes, nor word of grace.

It was not I that sinn'd the sin,  
 The ruthless body dragg'd me in ;  
 Though long I strove courageously,  
 The body was too much for me.

Dear prison'd soul bear up a space,  
 For soon or late the certain grace ;  
 To set thee free and bear thee home,  
 The heavenly pardoner death shall come.

*Convict no more, nor shame, nor dole !  
 Depart—a God-enfranchis'd soul !*

## 3

The singer ceas'd,  
 One glance swept from her clear calm eyes o'er all those  
 upturn'd faces,  
 Strange sea of prison faces, a thousand varied, crafty,  
 brutal, seam'd and beauteous faces,  
 Then rising, passing back along the narrow aisle between  
 them,



While her gown touch'd them rustling in the silence,  
She vanish'd with her children in the dusk.

While upon all, convicts and armed keepers ere they stirr'd,  
(Convict forgetting prison, keeper his loaded pistol,)  
A hush and pause fell down a wondrous minute,  
With deep half-stifled sobs and sound of bad men bow'd  
and moved to weeping,

And youth's convulsive breathings, memories of home,  
The mother's voice in lullaby, the sister's care, the happy  
childhood,

The long-pent spirit rous'd to reminiscence ;

A wondrous minute then—but after in the solitary night,  
to many, many there,

Years after, even in the hour of death, the sad refrain, the  
tune, the voice, the words,

Resumed, the large calm lady walks the narrow aisle,

The wailing melody again, the singer in the prison sings,

*O sight of pity, shame and dole !*

*O fearful thought—a convict soul.*

### WARBLE FOR LILAC-TIME

WARBLE me now for joy of lilac-time, (returning in reminis-  
cence,)

Sort me O tongue and lips for Nature's sake, souvenirs of  
earliest summer,

Gather the welcome signs, (as children with pebbles or  
stringing shells,)

Put in April and May, the hylas croaking in the ponds, the  
elastic air,

Bees, butterflies, the sparrow with its simple notes,

Blue-bird and darting swallow, nor forget the high-hole  
flashing his golden wings,

The tranquil sunny haze, the clinging smoke, the vapor,

Shimmer of waters with fish in them, the cerulean above,

All that is jocund and sparkling, the brooks running,

The maple woods, the crisp February days and the sugar-  
making,

The robin where he hops, bright-eyed, brown-breasted,



With musical clear call at sunrise, and again at sunset,  
 Or flitting among the trees of the apple-orchard, building  
     the nest of his mate,  
 The melted snow of March, the willow, sending forth its  
     yellow-green sprouts,  
 For spring-time is here ! the summer is here ! and what is  
     this in it and from it ?  
 Thou, soul, unloosen'd—the restlessness after I know not  
     what ;  
 Come, let us lag here no longer, let us be up and away !  
 O if one could but fly like a bird !  
 O to escape, to sail forth as in a ship !  
 To glide with thee O soul, o'er all, in all, as a ship o'er the  
     waters ;  
 Gathering these hints, the preludes, the blue sky, the grass,  
     the morning drops of dew,  
 The lilac-scent, the bushes with dark green heart-shaped  
     leaves,  
 Wood-violets, the little delicate pale blossoms called  
     innocence,  
 Samples and sorts not for themselves alone, but for their  
     atmosphere,  
 To grace the bush I love—to sing with the birds,  
 A warble for joy of lilac-time, returning in reminiscence.

## OUTLINES FOR A TOMB

(G. P., *Buried* 1870)

### 1

WHAT may we chant, O thou within this tomb ?  
 What tablets, outlines, hang for thee, O millionaire ?  
 The life thou lived'st we know not,  
 But that thou walk'dst thy years in barter, 'mid the haunts  
     of brokers,  
 Nor heroism thine, nor war, nor glory.

### 2

Silent, my soul,  
 With drooping lids, as waiting, ponder'd,  
 Turning from all the samples, monuments of heroes.



While through the interior vistas,  
Noiseless uprose, phantasmic, (as by night Auroras of the  
north,)

Lambent tableaux, prophetic, bodiless scenes,  
Spiritual projections.

In one, among the city streets a laborer's home appear'd,  
After his day's work done, cleanly, sweet-air'd, the gaslight  
burning,

The carpet swept and a fire in the cheerful stove.

In one, the sacred parturition scene,  
A happy painless mother birth'd a perfect child.

In one, at a bounteous morning meal,  
Sat peaceful parents with contented sons.

In one, by twos and threes, young people,  
Hundreds concentrating, walk'd the paths and streets and  
roads,

Toward a tall-domed school.

In one a trio beautiful,  
Grandmother, loving daughter, loving daughter's daughter,  
sat,  
Chatting and sewing.

In one, along a suite of noble rooms,  
'Mid plenteous books and journals, paintings on the walls,  
fine statuettes,  
Were groups of friendly journeymen, mechanics young and  
old,  
Reading, conversing.

All, all the shows of laboring life,  
City and country, women's, men's and children's,  
Their wants provided for, hued in the sun and tinged for  
once with joy,  
Marriage, the street, the factory, farm, the house-room,  
lodging-room,  
Labor and toil, the bath, gymnasium, playground, library,  
college,  
The student, boy or girl, led forward to be taught,



The sick cared for, the shoeless shod, the orphan father'd  
 and mother'd,  
 The hungry fed, the houseless housed ;  
 (The intentions perfect and divine,  
 The workings, details, haply human.)

## 3

O thou within this tomb,  
 From thee such scenes, thou stintless, lavish giver,  
 Tallying the gifts of earth, large as the earth,  
 Thy name an earth, with mountains, fields and tides.  
 Nor by your streams alone, you rivers,  
 By you, your banks Connecticut,  
 By you and all your teeming life old Thames,  
 By you Potomac laving the ground Washington trod, by  
 you Patapsco,  
 You Hudson, you endless Mississippi—nor you alone,  
 But to the high seas launch, my thought, his memory.

## OUT FROM BEHIND THIS MASK

*(To Confront a Portrait)*

## 1

Out from behind this bending rough-cut mask,  
 These lights and shades, this drama of the whole,  
 This common curtain of the face contain'd in me for me, in  
 you for you, in each for each,  
 (Tragedies, sorrows, laughter, tears—O heaven !  
 The passionate teeming plays this curtain hid !)  
 This glaze of God's serenest purest sky,  
 This film of Satan's seething pit,  
 This heart's geography's map, this limitless small con-  
 tinent, this soundless sea ;  
 Out from the convolutions of this globe,  
 This subtler astronomic orb than sun or moon, than Jupiter,  
 Venus, Mars,  
 This condensation of the universe, (nay here the only  
 universe,  
 Here the idea, all in this mystic handful wrapt ;) )



These burin'd eyes, flashing to you to pass to future time,  
 To launch and spin through space revolving sideling, from  
     these to emanate,  
 To you whoe'er you are—a look.

## 2

A traveler of thoughts and years, of peace and war,  
 Of youth long sped and middle age declining,  
 (As the first volume of a tale perused and laid away, and  
     this the second,  
 Songs, ventures, speculations, presently to close,)  
 Lingering a moment here and now, to you I opposite turn,  
 As on the road or at some crevice door by chance, or open'd  
     window,  
 Pausing, inclining, baring my head, you specially I greet,  
 To draw and clinch your soul for once inseparably with  
     mine,  
 Then travel travel on.

## VOCALISM

## 1

VOCALISM, measure, concentration, determination, and the  
     divine power to speak words ;  
 Are you full-lung'd and limber-lipp'd from long trial ?  
     from vigorous practice ? from physique ?  
 Do you move in these broad lands as broad as they ?  
 Come duly to the divine power to speak words ?  
 For only at last after many years, after chastity, friendship,  
     procreation, prudence, and nakedness,  
 After treading ground and breasting river and lake,  
 After a loosen'd throat, after absorbing eras, temperaments,  
     races, after knowledge, freedom, crimes,  
 After complete faith, after clarifyings, elevations, and  
     removing obstructions,  
 After these and more, it is just possible there comes to a  
     man, a woman, the divine power to speak words ;  
 Then toward that man or that woman swiftly hasten all—  
     none refuse, all attend,  
 Armies, ships, antiquities, libraries, paintings, machines,  
     cities, hate, despair, amity, pain, theft, murder, aspira-  
     tion, form in close ranks,



They debouch as they are wanted to march obediently  
through the mouth of that man or that woman.

## 2

O what is it in me that makes me tremble so at voices ?  
Surely whoever speaks to me in the right voice, him or her  
I shall follow,  
As the water follows the moon, silently, with fluid steps,  
anywhere around the globe.

All waits for the right voices ;  
Where is the practis'd and perfect organ ? where is the  
develop'd soul ?  
For I see every word utter'd thence has deeper, sweeter, new  
sounds, impossible on less terms.

I see brains and lips closed, tympan and temples unstruck,  
Until that comes which has the quality to strike and to  
unclose,  
Until that comes which has the quality to bring forth what  
lies slumbering forever ready in all words.

## 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 anything 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 com-  
rade,  
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.

### 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 pro-  
stitutes myself,  
And henceforth I will not deny them—for how can I deny  
myself ?

### LAWS FOR CREATIONS

Laws for creations,  
For strong artists and leaders, for fresh broods of teachers  
and perfect literats for America,  
For noble savans and coming musicians.



All must have reference to the ensemble of the world, and  
the compact truth of the world,  
There shall be no subject too pronounced—all works shall  
illustrate the divine law of indirections.

What do you suppose creation is ?  
What do you suppose will satisfy the soul, except to walk  
free and own no superior ?  
What do you suppose I would intimate to you in a hundred  
ways, but that man or woman is as good as God ?  
And that there is no God any more divine than Yourself ?  
And that that is what the oldest and newest myths finally  
mean ?  
And that you or any one must approach creations through  
such laws ?

#### 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.

#### I WAS LOOKING A LONG WHILE

I was looking a long while for Intentions,  
For a clew to the history of the past for myself, and for  
these chants—and now I have found it,  
It is not in those paged fables in the libraries, (them I  
neither accept nor reject,)



It is no more in the legends than in all else,  
 It is in the present—it is this earth to-day,  
 It is in Democracy—(the purport and aim of all the past,)  
 It is the life of one man or one woman to-day—the average  
 man of to-day,

It is in languages, social customs, literatures, arts,  
 It is in the broad show of artificial things, ships, machinery,  
 politics, creeds, modern improvements, and the inter-  
 change of nations,  
 All for the modern—all for the average man of to-day.

### THOUGHT

OF persons arrived at high positions, ceremonies, wealth,  
 scholarships, and the like ;  
 (To me all that those persons have arrived at sinks away  
 from them, except as it results to their bodies and  
 souls,  
 So that often to me they appear gaunt and naked,  
 And often to me each one mocks the others, and mocks  
 himself or herself,  
 And of each one the core of life, namely happiness, is full  
 of the rotten excrement of maggots,  
 And often to me those men and women pass unwittingly  
 the true realities of life, and go toward false realities,  
 And often to me they are alive after what custom has  
 served them, but nothing more,  
 And often to me they are sad, hasty, unwaked sonnambules  
 walking the dusk.)

### MIRACLES

WHY, who makes much of a miracle ?  
 As to me I know of nothing else but miracles,  
 Whether I walk the streets of Manhattan,  
 Or dart my sight over the roofs of houses toward the sky,  
 Or wade with naked feet along the beach just in the edge  
 of the water,  
 Or stand under trees in the woods,



Or talk by day with any one I love, or sleep in the bed at  
night with any one I love,  
Or sit at table at dinner with the rest,  
Or look at strangers opposite me riding in the car,  
Or watch honey-bees busy around the hive of a summer  
forenoon,  
Or animals feeding in the fields,  
Or birds, or the wonderfulness of insects in the air,  
Or the wonderfulness of the sundown, or of stars shining  
so quiet and bright,  
Or the exquisite delicate thin curve of the new moon in  
spring ;  
These with the rest, one and all, are to me miracles,  
The whole referring, yet each distinct and in its place.

To me every hour of the light and dark is a miracle,  
Every cubic inch of space is a miracle,  
Every square yard of the surface of the earth is spread with  
the same,  
Every foot of the interior swarms with the same,  
To me the sea is a continual miracle,  
The fishes that swim—the rocks—the motion of the waves—  
the ships with men in them,  
What stranger miracles are there ?

### 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 unminded 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.

### TO A PUPIL

Is reform needed? is it through you?  
 The greater the reform needed, the greater the Personality  
 you need to accomplish it.

You! do you not see how it would serve to have eyes,  
 blood, complexion, clean and sweet?  
 Do you not see how it would serve to have such a body  
 and soul that when you enter the crowd an atmosphere  
 of desire and command enters with you, and every one  
 is impress'd with your Personality?

O the magnet! the flesh over and over!  
 Go, dear friend, if need be give up all else, and commence  
 to-day to inure yourself to pluck, reality, self-esteem,  
 definiteness, elevatedness,  
 Rest not till you rivet and publish yourself of your own  
 Personality.

### 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 sym-  
pathy ;  
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.

### WHAT AM I AFTER ALL

WHAT am I after all but a child, pleas'd with the sound of  
my own name ? repeating it over and over ;  
I stand apart to hear—it never tires me.

To you your name also ;

Did you think there was nothing but two or three pro-  
nunciations in the sound of your name ?

### KOSMOS

Who includes diversity and is Nature,  
Who is the amplitude of the earth, and the coarseness and  
sexuality of the earth, and the great charity of the  
earth, and the equilibrium also,



Who has not look'd forth from the windows the eyes for  
nothing, or whose brain held audience with messengers  
for nothing,  
Who contains believers and disbelievers, who is the most  
majestic lover,  
Who holds duly his or her triune proportion of realism,  
spiritualism, and of the æsthetic or intellectual,  
Who having consider'd the body finds all its organs and  
parts good,  
Who, out of the theory of the earth and of his or her  
body understands by subtle analogies all other  
theories,  
The theory of a city, a poem, and of the large politics of  
these States ;  
Who believes not only in our globe with its sun and moon,  
but in other globes with their suns and moons,  
Who, constructing the house of himself or herself, not for  
a day but for all time, sees races, eras, dates, genera-  
tions,  
The past, the future, dwelling there, like space, inseparable  
together.

### OTHERS MAY PRAISE WHAT THEY LIKE

OTHERS may praise what they like ;  
But I, from the banks of the running Missouri, praise  
nothing in art or aught else,  
Till it has well inhaled the atmosphere of this river, also  
the western prairie-scent,  
And exudes it all again.

### 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 wonder-  
ful, 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.

### TESTS

ALL submit to them where they sit, inner, secure, un-  
approachable to analysis in the soul,

Not traditions, not the outer authorities are the judges,

They are the judges of outer authorities and of all traditions,

They corroborate as they go only whatever corroborates  
themselves, and touches themselves ;

For all that, they have it forever in themselves to  
corroborate far and near without one exception.

### THE TORCH

ON my Northwest coast in the midst of the night a fisher-  
men's group stands watching,

Out on the lake that expands before them, others are  
spearing salmon,

The canoe, a dim shadowy thing, moves across the black  
water,

Bearing a torch ablaze at the prow.

### O STAR OF FRANCE

1870-71

O STAR of France,

The brightness of thy hope and strength and fame,

Like some proud ship that led the fleet so long,

Beseems to-day a wreck driven by the gale, a mastless  
hulk,

And 'mid its teeming madden'd half-drown'd crowds,

Nor helm nor helmsman.



Dim smitten star,  
Orb not of France alone, pale symbol of my soul, its dearest  
hopes,  
The struggle and the daring, rage divine for liberty,  
Of aspirations toward the far ideal, enthusiast's dreams of  
brotherhood,  
Of terror to the tyrant and the priest.

Star crucified—by traitors sold,  
Star panting o'er a land of death, heroic land,  
Strange, passionate, mocking, frivolous land.

Miserable ! yet for thy errors, vanities, sins, I will not now  
rebuke thee,  
(Thy unexampled woes and pangs have quell'd them all,  
And left thee sacred.

In that amid thy many faults thou ever aimedst highly,  
In that thou wouldst not really sell thyself however great  
the price,  
In that thou surely wakedst weeping from thy drugg'd  
sleep,  
In that alone among thy sisters thou, giantess, didst rend  
the ones that shamed thee,  
In that thou couldst not, wouldst not, wear the usual  
chains,  
This cross, thy livid face, thy pierced hands and feet,  
The spear thrust in thy side.

O star ! O ship of France, beat back and baffled long !  
Bear up O smitten orb ! O ship continue on !

Sure as the ship of all, the Earth itself,  
Product of deathly fire and turbulent chaos,  
Forth from its spasms of fury and its poisons,  
Issuing at last in perfect power and beauty,  
Onward beneath the sun following its course,  
So thee O ship of France !  
Finish'd the days, the clouds dispel'd,  
The travail o'er, the long-sought extrication,  
When lo ! reborn, high o'er the European world,  
(In gladness answering thence, as face afar to face, re-  
flecting ours Columbia,)



Again thy star O France, fair lustrous star,  
In heavenly peace, clearer, more bright than ever,  
Shall beam immortal.

### THE OX-TAMER

In a far-away northern county 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-  
years-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 county far, in the placid pastoral region.



## AN OLD MAN'S THOUGHT OF SCHOOL

*(For the Inauguration of a Public School, Camden,  
New Jersey, 1874)*

An old man's thought of school,  
An old man gathering youthful memories and blooms  
that youth itself cannot.

Now only do I know you,  
O fair auroral skies—O morning dew upon the grass!

And these I see, these sparkling eyes,  
These stores of mystic meaning, these young lives,  
Building, equipping like a fleet of ships, immortal ships,  
Soon to sail out over the measureless seas,  
On the soul's voyage.

Only a lot of boys and girls?  
Only the tiresome spelling, writing, ciphering classes?  
Only a public school?

Ah more, infinitely more;  
(As George Fox rais'd his warning cry, "Is it this pile of  
brick and mortar, these dead floors, windows, rails,  
you call the church?  
Why this is not the church at all—the church is living, ever  
living souls.")

And you America,  
Cast you the real reckoning for your present?  
The lights and shadows of your future, good or evil?  
To girlhood, boyhood look, the teacher and the school.

## WANDERING AT MORN

WANDERING at morn,  
Emerging from the night from gloomy thoughts, thee in  
my thoughts,  
Yearning for thee harmonious Union! thee, singing bird  
divine!