

THE PENNY POETS.—XXVII.

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POEMS

BY

WALT WHITMAN.

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XXVII.

POEMS BY WALT WHITMAN.

"I heard that you ask'd for something to prove this puzzle the New World,
And to define America, her athletic Democracy,
Therefore I send you my poems that you behold in them what you wanted."

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XXVII.—WALT WHITMAN.

INTRODUCTORY.

“EVER since what might be called thoughts, or the budding of thought, fairly began in my youthful mind,” wrote Walt Whitman in his old age, “I had had a desire to attempt some worthy record of that entire faith and acceptance (‘to justify the ways of God to man’ is Milton’s well-known and ambitious phrase) which is the foundation of moral America. I fully believe in a clue and purpose in Nature entire and several. One main genesis motive of the ‘Leaves’ was my conviction that the crowning growth of the United States is to be spiritual and heroic. To help start and favour that growth—or even to call attention to it, or the need of it—is the beginning, middle, and final purpose of the poems.”

And in order to achieve this purpose, he tells us, he wanted his utterances “to show that we, here and to-day, are eligible to the grandest and best, more eligible now than any times of old were.” He determined “to endow the democratic averages of America” with fuller ranges of heroism and loftiness than those with which Greek and feudal poets endowed their demi-gods and heroes. So “without yielding an inch, the working man and working woman were to be in my pages from first to last.” Hence it is that with all their defects of form these utterances of his “are in spirit the Poems of the Morning,” “emanating buoyancy and gladness,” not to an elect few, but to the millions of average common-place men and women. And the profoundest service which he sought to render to his reader was “to fill him with vigorous and clean manliness and religiousness and give him *good heart* as a radical possession and habit.”

To give the common man of the Democratic average “good heart” not as an occasional exaltation, but as “a radical possession and a habit,” that was the aim and object of all his singing. And his gospel is that the world is good, and all things in it are ordered for the best.

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

“How beautiful and perfect are the animals!
How perfect the earth, and the minutest thing upon it!
What is called good is perfect, and what is called bad is just as perfect.”

And yet he is not blind to the miseries and wretchedness of life. For he tells us—

“I sit and look out upon all the sorrows of the world, and upon all oppression
and shame,
I hear secret convulsive sobs from young men at anguish with themselves,
remorseful after deeds done,
I see in low life the mother misused by her children, dying, neglected, gaunt,
desperate,
I see the wife misused by her husband, I see the treacherous seducer of young
women,

I mark the ranklings of jealousy and unrequited love attempted to be hid, I
 see these sights on the earth,
 I see the workings of battle, pestilence, tyranny, I see martyrs and prisoners,
 I observe a famine at sea, I observe the sailors casting lots who shall be kill'd
 to preserve the lives of the rest,
 I observe the slights and degradations cast by arrogant persons upon labourers,
 the poor, and upon negroes, and the like;
 All these—all the meanness and agony without end I sitting look out upon,
 See, hear, and am silent."

But although "I cannot understand it or argue it out," he believes in Browning's phrase that God's in his Heaven and all's right with the world.

"Roaming in thought over the Universe, I saw the little that is Good steadily hastening towards immortality,
 And the vast all that is call'd Evil I saw hastening to merge itself and become lost and dead."

"Do I contradict myself?" he asks in his "Song of Myself." "Very well, I contradict myself. (I am large, I contain multitudes.)" And as he "sounds his barbaric yawp over the roof of the world," he troubles himself little about these inconsistencies, which after all but too faithfully correspond to the nineteenth century and the United States, of which he sought to make his poems a faithful and self-willed record.

Whitman has described the way in which he was trained to sing:—

"Along in my sixteenth year I had become possessor of a stout, well-cramm'd one thousand page octavo volume (I have it yet), containing Walter Scott's poetry entire—an inexhaustible mine and treasury of poetic forage (especially the endless forests and jungles of notes)—has been so to me for fifty years, and remains so to this day.*

"Later, at intervals, summers and falls, I used to go off, sometimes for a week at a stretch, down in the country, or to Long Island's seashores—there, in the presence of outdoor influences, I went over thoroughly the Old and New Testaments, and absorb'd (probably to better advantage for me than in any library or indoor room—it makes such difference *where* you read) Shakspeare, Ossian, the best translated versions I could get of Homer, Eschylus, Sophocles, the old German Nibelungen, the ancient Hindoo poems, and one or two other masterpieces, Dante's among them. As it happen'd, I read the latter mostly in an old wood. The Iliad (Buckley's prose version) I read first thoroughly on the peninsula of Orient, northeast end of Long Island, in a shelter'd hollow of rocks and sand, with the sea on each side.

"These, however, and much more might have gone on and come to naught (almost positively would have come to naught), if a sudden, vast, terrible, direct and indirect stimulus for new and national declamatory expression had not been given to me. It is certain, I say, that, although I had made a start before, only from the occurrence of the Secession War, and what it show'd me as by flashes of lightning, with the emotional depths it sounded and arous'd (of course, I don't mean in my own heart only, I saw it just as plainly in others, in millions)—that only from the strong flare and provocation of that war's sights and scenes the final reasons-for-being of an autochthonic and passionate song definitely came forth.

"I went down to the war fields in Virginia (end of 1862), lived thenceforward in camp—saw great battles and the days and nights afterward—partook of all the fluctuations, gloom, despair, hopes again arous'd, courage evoked—death readily risk'd—the cause, too—along and filling those agonistic and lurid following years,

* Lockhart's 1833 (or '34) edition with Scott's latest and copious revisions and annotations. (All the poems were thoroughly read by me, but the ballads of the "Border Minstrelsy" over and over again.)

1863-'64-'65—the real parturition years (more than 1776-'83) of this henceforth homogeneous Union. Without those three or four years and the experiences they gave, 'Leaves of Grass' would not now be existing."

It was thus he learned in suffering what he taught in song. He emerged from that terrible testing time with an unalterable conviction that "the New World needs the poems of realities and science and of the democratic average and basic equality. In the centre of all and object of all stands the Human Being, towards whose heroic and spiritual evolution everything directly or indirectly tends, Old World or New." And when he asked himself, how best can I express my own distinctive era and surroundings, America, Democracy? he came to the conclusion that "the trunk and centre whence the answer was to radiate, and to which all should return from straying, however far a distance, must be an identical body and soul, a personality—which personality, after many considerations and ponderings, I deliberately settled should be myself—indeed, could not be any other."

Hence the apparent egotism of Walt Whitman is merely his deliberate attempt to assert American individuality and to help in forming a great aggregate nation through the forming of myriads of fully-developed and enclosing individuals. As such it was welcomed by the most illustrious of American philosophers. When Walt Whitman's poems appeared, Emerson wrote to him:—

"I am not blind to the worth of the wonderful gift of *Leaves of Grass*. I find it the most extraordinary piece of wit and wisdom that America has yet contributed. . . . I give you joy of your free and brave thought. I have great joy in it. I find incomparable things, said incomparably well, as they must be. I find the courage of treatment which so delights us, and which large perception only can inspire."

To define America and her athletic Democracy is also to define other lands where Democracies not less athletic speak the tongue which Whitman spoke. Nor was the "good grey poet" slow to gain recognition among the great workers of the older world. Tennyson, Swinburne, Rossetti and Symonds paid homage to the essential genius of this somewhat uncouth offspring of the Latter Day.

It may not be without profit for those who may be apt to be offended at the ungainly garb in which Whitman chose to clothe his thoughts to reproduce here J. Addington Symonds' acknowledgment of how Whitman helped him:—

"The great thing is, if possible, to induce people to study Whitman for themselves. I am convinced that, especially for young men, his spirit, if intelligently understood and sympathised with, must be productive of incalculable good. This I venture to emphasise by relating what he did for me. I had received the ordinary English gentleman's education at Harrow and Oxford. Being physically below the average in health and strength, my development proceeded more upon the intellectual than the athletic side. In a word, I was decidedly academical, and in danger of becoming a prig. What was more, my constitution in the year 1865 seemed to have broken down, and no career in life lay open to me. In the autumn of that year, my friend Frederick Myers read me aloud a poem from *Leaves of Grass*.

"My academical prejudices, the literary instincts trained by two decades of Greek and Latin studies, the refinements of culture and the exclusiveness of aristocratic breeding, revolted against the uncouthness, roughness, irregularity, coarseness, of the poet and his style. But, in course of a short time, Whitman delivered my soul of these debilities. He taught me to comprehend the harmony between the democratic spirit, science and that larger religion to which the modern world is being led by the conception of human brotherhood, and by the spirituality inherent in any really scientific view of the universe. He gave body, concrete vitality, to the religious creed which I had already been forming for myself upon the study of Goethe, Greek and Roman Stoics, Giordano

Bruno, and the founders of the evolutionary doctrine. He inspired me with faith, and made me feel that optimism was not unreasonable. This gave me great cheer in those evil years of enforced idleness and intellectual torpor which my health imposed upon me.

"Moreover, he helped to free me from any conceits and pettinesses to which academical culture is liable. He opened my eyes to the beauty, goodness, and greatness which may be found in all worthy human beings, the humblest and the highest. He made me respect personality more than attainments or position in the world. Through him I stripped my soul of social prejudices. Through him I have been able to fraternize in comradeship with men of all classes and several races, irrespective of their caste, creed, occupation and special training. To him I owe some of the best friends I now can claim—sons of the soil, hard workers, 'natural and nonchalant,' 'powerful uneducated persons.'"

What Whitman did for Symonds he has done for multitudes of men of lesser note.

"Let the reader," says Mr. Rossetti, "ask, Is Whitman powerful? Is he American? Is he new? Is he rousing? Does he feel and make me feel? If all these be answered in the affirmative, can we deny to Whitman the right to be regarded as indeed a true and a great poet?"

Mr. Page Hopps, in a characteristic appreciation of the poet and his genius, published in the *Truthseeker*, says: Of all American poets, Walt Whitman is the most truly American; that is to say, the nearest to our ideal of a poet of the vast, fresh, new world, such as America is. He is hot-blooded, untamed, unconventional, with an eye like a child's full of wonder and delight, but with a heart like a man's for all the fascinations of a life fresh, free, and energetic, with the smell of woods and the roar of towns, and the rush and lap of waters, and the opening up of far-spreading lands, all brought into such marvellous, swift, and singular prominence. To him things are not what they seem; in all common things he sees deep, pathetic, living meanings. He sees the one humanity making all beings and all actions one tremendous unity, but he also sees everywhere Him whom we name God.

I hear and behold God in every object, yet understand God not in the least, I see something of God each hour of the twenty-four, and each moment then, In the faces of men and women I see God, and in my own face in the glass; I find letters from God dropt in the street, and every one is signed by God's

name,
And I leave them where they are, for I know that wheresoe'er I go
Others will punctually come for ever and ever."

The reader will form his own judgment after perusing the poems collected in this booklet. They are arranged without regard to any other consideration than that of presenting them in the order and in the fashion that seems most likely to attract attention and present the poet's message in such a way as to secure its favourable reception.

SELECTIONS FROM WALT WHITMAN.

I.—SONG OF MYSELF (*Extracts*).

I.

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

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

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

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

II.

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

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

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

Have you reckon'd a thousand acres much? have you reckon'd the earth
much?

Have you practis'd so long to learn to read?

Have you felt so proud to get at the meaning of poems?

Stop this day and night with me and you shall possess the origin of all poems,
 You shall possess the good of the earth and sun, (there are millions of suns
 left,)

 You shall no longer take things at second or third hand, nor look through the
 eyes of the dead, nor feed on the spectres in books,
 You shall not look through my eyes either, nor take things from me,
 You shall listen to all sides and filter them from your self.

III.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

IV.

Trippers and askers surround me,
 People I meet, the effect upon me of my early life or the ward and city I
 live in, or the nation,
 The latest dates, discoveries, inventions, societies, authors old and new,
 My dinner, dress, associates, looks, compliments, dues,
 The real or fancied indifference of some man or woman I love,
 The sickness of one of my folks or of myself, or ill-doing or loss or lack of
 money, or depressions or exaltations,

Battles, the horrors of fratricidal war, the fever of doubtful news, the fitful events;

These come to me days and nights and go from me again,
But they are not the Me myself.

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

Backward I see in my own days where I sweated through fog with linguists
and contenders,

I have no mockings, or arguments, I witness and wait.

V.

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

Loafe with me on the grass, loose the stop from your throat,
Not words, not music or rhyme I want, not custom or lecture, not even the
best,

Only the lull I like, the hum of your valvèd voice.

And I know that the hand of God is the promise of my own,
And I know that the spirit of God is the brother of my own,
And that all the men ever born are also my brothers, and the women my
sisters and lovers,

And that a kelson of the creation is love,
And limitless are leaves stiff or drooping in the fields,
And brown ants in the little wells beneath them,
And mossy scabs of the worm fence, heap'd stones, elder, mullein and poke-
weed.

VI.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Tenderly will I use you curling grass,
It may be you transpire from the breasts of young men,

It may be if I had known them I would have loved them,
 It may be you are from old people, or from offspring taken soon out of their
 mothers' laps,
 And here you are the mothers' laps.

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

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

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

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

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

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

VII.

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

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

I am not an earth nor an adjunct of an earth,
 I am the mate and companion of people, all just as immortal and fathomless
 as myself,

(They do not know how immortal, but I know.)

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

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

VIII.

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

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

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

The blab of the pave, tires of carts, sluff of boot-soles, talk of the promenaders,
The heavy omnibus, the driver with his interrogating thumb, the clank of the
shod horses on the granite floor,

The snow-sleighs, clinking, shouted jokes, pelts of snow-balls,
The hurrahs for popular favourites, the fury of rous'd mobs,
The flap of the curtain'd litter, a sick man inside borne to the hospital,
The meeting of enemies, the sudden oath, the blows and fall,
The excited crowd, the policeman with his star quickly working his passage
to the centre of the crowd,

The impassive stones that receive and return so many echoes,
What groans of over-fed or half-starv'd who fall sunstruck or in fits,
What exclamations of women taken suddenly who hurry home and give birth
to babes,

What living and buried speech is always vibrating here, what howls restrain'd
by decorum,

Arrests of criminals, slights, adulterous offers made, acceptances, rejections
with convex lips,

I mind them or the show or resonance of them—I come and I depart.

IX.

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

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

X.

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

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

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

I saw the marriage of the trapper in the open air in the far west, the bride
was a red girl,

Her father and his friends sat near cross-legged and dumbly smoking, they
had moccasins to their feet and large thick blankets hanging from their
shoulders,

On a bank lounged the trapper, he was drest mostly in skins, his luxuriant beard and curls protected his neck, he held his bride by the hand, She had long eyelashes, her head was bare, her coarse straight locks descended upon her voluptuous limbs and reach'd to her feet.

The runaway slave came to my house and stopt outside, I heard his motions crackling the twigs of the woodpile, Through the swung half-door of the kitchen I saw him limpsy and weak, And went where he sat on a log and led him in and assured him, And brought water and fill'd a tub for his sweated body and bruis'd feet, And gave him a room that enter'd from my own, and gave him some coarse clean clothes,

And remember perfectly well his revolving eyes and his awkwardness, And remember putting plasters on the galls of his neck and ankles; He staid with me a week before he was recuperated and pass'd north, I had him sit next me at table, my fire-lock lean'd in the corner.

XII.

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

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

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

XIII.

The negro holds firmly the reins of his four horses, the block swags underneath on its tied-over chain,

The negro that drives the long dray of the stone-yard, steady and tall he stands pois'd on one leg on the string-piece,

His blue shirt exposes his ample neck and breast and loosens over his hip-band,

His glance is calm and commanding, he tosses the slouch of his hat away from his forehead,

The sun falls on his crispy hair and mustache, falls on the black of his polish'd and perfect limbs.

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

In me the caresser of life wherever moving, backward as well as forward sluing,

To niches aside and junior bending, not a person or object missing, Absorbing all to myself and for this song.

Oxen that rattle the yoke and chain or halt in the leafy shade, what is that you express in your eyes?

It seems to me more than all the print I have read in my life,

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

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

XIV.

The wild gander leads his flock through the cool night,
Ya-honk he says, and sounds it down to me like an invitation,
The pert may suppose it meaningless, but I listening close,
Find its purpose and place up there toward the wintry sky.

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

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

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

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

XV.

The pure contralto sings in the organ loft,
The carpenter dresses his plank, the tongue of his foreplane whistles its wild
ascending lisp,
The married and unmarried children ride home to their Thanksgiving dinner,
The pilot seizes the king-pin, he heaves down with a strong arm,
The mate stands braced in the whale-boat, lance and harpoon are ready,
The duck-shooter walks by silent and cautious stretches,
The deacons are ordain'd with cross'd hands at the altar,
The spinning-girl retreats and advances to the hum of the big wheel,
The farmer stops by the bars as he walks on a First-day loafe and looks at
the oats and rye,
The lunatic is carried at last to the asylum a confirm'd case,
(He will never sleep any more as he did in the cot in his mother's bed-room;)
The jour printer with gray head and gaunt jaws works at his case,
He turns his quid of tobacco while his eyes blurr with the manuscript;

The malform'd limbs are tied to the surgeon's table,
What is removed drops horribly in a pail;
The quadroon girl is sold at the auction-stand, the drunkard nods by the bar-
room stove,
The machinist rolls up his sleeves, the policeman travels his beat, the gate-
keeper marks who pass,
The young fellow drives the express-wagon, (I love him, though I do not
know him;)
The half-breed straps on his light boots to compete in the race,
The western turkey-shooting draws old and young, some lean on their rifles,
some sit on logs,
Out from the crowd steps the marksman, takes his position, levels his piece;
The groups of newly-come immigrants cover the wharf or levee,
As the woolly-pates hoe in the sugar-field, the overseer views them from his
saddle,
The bugle calls in the ball-room, the gentlemen run for their partners, the
dancers bow to each other,
The youth lies awake in the cedar-roof'd garret and harks to the musical rain,
The Wolverine sets traps on the creek that helps fill the Huron,
The squaw wrapped in her yellow-hemm'd cloth is offering moccasins and bead-
bags for sale,
The connoisseur peers along the exhibition-gallery with half-shut eyes bent
sideways,
As the deck-hands make fast the steamboat the plank is thrown for the shore-
going passengers,
The young sister holds out the skein while the elder sister winds it off in a
ball, and stops now and then for the knots,
The one-year wife is recovering and happy having a week ago borne her first
child,
The clean-hair'd Yankee girl works with her sewing-machine or in the factory
or mill,
The paving-man leans on his two-handed rammer, the reporter's lead flies
swiftly over the note-book, the sign-painter is lettering with blue and
gold,
The canal boy trots on the tow-path, the book-keeper counts at his desk, the
shoemaker waxes his thread,
The conductor beats time for the band and all the performers follow him,
The child is baptized, the convert is making his first professions,
The regatta is spread on the bay, the race is begun, (how the white sails
sparkle!)
The drover watching his drove sings out to them that would stray,
The pedler sweats with his pack on his back, (the purchaser higgling about
the odd cent;)
The bride unrumpled her white dress, the minute-hand of the clock moves slowly,
The opium-eater reclines with rigid head and just-open'd lips,
The prostitute draggles her shawl, her bonnet bobs on her tipsy and pimpled
neck,
The crowd laugh at her blackguard oaths, the men jeer and wink to each other
(Miserable! I do not laugh at your oaths nor jeer you;)
The President holding a cabinet council is surrounded by the great Secretaries,
On the piazza walk three matrons stately and friendly with twined arms,
The crew of the fish-smack pack repeated layers of halibut in the hold,
The Missourian crosses the plains toting his wares and his cattle,
As the fare-collector goes through the train he gives notice by the jingling of
loose change,

The floor-men are laying the floor, the tanners are tanning the roof, the masons
 are calling for mortar,
 In single file each shouldering his hod pass onward the laborers;
 Seasons pursuing each other the indescribable crowd is gather'd, it is the fourth
 of Seventh-month, (what salutes of cannon and small arms!)
 Seasons pursuing each other the plougher ploughs, the mower mows, and the
 winter-grain falls in the ground;
 Off on the lakes the pike-fisher watches and waits by the hole in the frozen
 surface,
 The stumps stand thick round the clearing, the squatter strikes deep with his axe,
 Flatboatmen make fast towards dusk near the cotton-wood or pecan-trees,
 Coon-seekers go through the regions of the Red river or through those drain'd
 by the Tennessee, or through those of the Arkansas,
 Torches shine in the dark that hangs on the Chattahooche or Altamahaw,
 Patriarchs sit at supper with sons and grandsons and great-grandsons around
 them,
 In walls of adobie, in canvas tents, rest hunters and trappers after their day's
 sport,
 The city sleeps and the country sleeps,
 The living sleep for their time, the dead sleep for their time,
 The old husband sleeps by his wife and the young husband sleeps by his wife;
 And these tend inward to me, and I tend outward to them,
 And such as it is to be of these more or less I am,
 And of these one and all I weave the song of myself.

XVII.

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

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

XVIII.

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

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

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

Vivas to those who have fai'd!
 And to those whose war-vessels sank in the sea
 And to those themselves who sank in the sea!
 And to all generals that lost engagements, and all overcome heroes!
 And the numberless unknown heroes equal to the greatest heroes known!

XIX.

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

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

This is the press of a bashful hand, this the float and odor of hair,
This the touch of my lips to yours, this the murmur of yearning,
This the far-off depth and height reflecting my own face,
This the thoughtful merge of myself, and the outlet again.

MS | Do you guess I have some intricate purpose?
Well I have, for the Fourth-month showers have, and the mica on the side of
a rock has.

Do you take it I would astonish?
Does the daylight astonish? does the early redstart twittering through the
woods?

Do I astonish more than they?

This hour I tell things in confidence,
I might not tell everybody, but I will tell you.

XX.

Who goes there? hankering, gross, mystical, nude;
How is it I extract strength from the beef I eat?

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

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

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

Whimpering and truckling fold with powders for invalids, conformity goes to
the fourth-remov'd,

I wear my hat as I please indoors or out.

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

Having pried through the strata, analyzed to a hair, counsel'd with doctors
and calculated close,

I find no sweeter fat than sticks to my own bones.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

XXI.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

XXII.

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

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

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

I am not the poet of goodness only, I do not decline to be the poet of wicked-
 ness also.

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

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

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

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

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

XXIII.

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

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

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

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

Hurrah for positive science! long live exact demonstration!
 Fetch stonecrop mixt with cedar and branches of lilac,
 This is the lexicographer, this the chemist, this made a grammar of the old
 cartouches,

These mariners put the ship through dangerous unknown seas,
 This is the geologist, this works with the scalpel, and this is a mathematician.

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

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

XXIV.

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

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

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

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

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

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

I hear bravuras of birds, bustle of growing wheat, gossip of flames, clack of
 sticks cooking my meals,
 I hear the sound I love, the sound of the human voice,
 I hear all sounds running together, combined, fused or following,
 Sounds of the city and sounds out of the city, sounds of the day and night,
 Talkative young ones to those that like them, the loud laugh of work-people
 at their meals,
 The angry base of disjointed friendship, the faint tones of the sick,
 The judge with hands tight to the desk, his pallid lips pronouncing a death-
 sentence,
 The heave'e'yo of stevedores unlading ships by the wharves, the refrain of the
 anchor-lifters,
 The ring of alarm-bells, the cry of fire, the whirr of swift-streaking engines
 and hose-carts with premonitory tinkles and color'd lights,
 The steam-whistle, the solid roll of the train of approaching cars,
 The slow march play'd at the head of the association marching two and two,
 (They go to guard some corpse, the flag-tops are draped with black muslin).

XXX.

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

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

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

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

XXXI.

I believe a leaf of grass is no less than the journey-work of the stars,
 And the pismire is equally perfect, and a grain of sand, and the egg of the
 wren,

And the tree-toad is a chef-d'œuvre for the highest,
 And the running blackberry would adorn the parlours of heaven,
 And the narrowest hinge in my hand puts to scorn all machinery,
 And the cow crunching with depress'd head surpasses any statue,
 And a mouse is miracle enough to stagger sextillions of infidels.

I find I incorporate gneiss, coal, long-threaded moss, fruits, grains, esculent
 roots,

And am stucco'd with quadrupeds and birds all over,
 And have distanced what is behind me for good reasons,
 But call any thing back again when I desire it.

In vain the speeding or shyness,
 In vain the plutonic rocks send their old heat against my approach,
 In vain the mastodon retreats beneath its own powder'd bones,
 In vain objects stand leagues off and assume manifold shapes,
 In vain the ocean settling in hollows and the great monsters lying low,
 In vain the buzzard houses herself with the sky,
 In vain the snake slides through the creepers and logs,
 In vain the elk takes to the inner passes of the woods,
 In vain the razor-bill'd auk sails far north to Labrador,
 I follow quickly, I ascend to the nest in the fissure of the cliff.

XXXII.

I think I could turn and live with animals, they are so placid and self-contain'd,
 I stand and look at them long and long.
 They do not sweat and whine about their condition,
 They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins,
 They do not make me sick discussing their duty to God,

Not one is dissatisfied, not one is demented with the mania of owning things,
 Not one kneels to another, nor to his kind that lived thousands of years ago,
 Not one is respectable or unhappy over the whole earth.

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

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

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

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

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

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

XXXIII.

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

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

By the city's quadrangular houses—in log huts, camping with lumbermen,
 Along the ruts of the turnpike, along the dry gulch and rivulet bed,
 Weeding my onion-patch or hoeing rows of carrots and parsnips, crossing
 savannas, trailing in forests,
 Prospecting, gold-digging, girdling the trees of a new purchase,
 Scorch'd ankle-deep by the hot sand, hauling my boat down the shallow river,
 Where the panther walks to and fro on a limb overhead, where the buck turns
 furiously at the hunter,
 Where the rattlesnake suns his flabby length on a rock, where the otter is
 feeding on fish,
 Where the alligator in his tough pimples sleeps by the bayou,
 Where the black bear is searching for roots or honey, where the beaver past
 the mud with his paddle-shaped tail;
 Over the growing sugar, over the yellow-flower'd cotton plant, over the rice in
 its low moist field,

Over the sharp-peak'd farm house, with its scallop'd scum and slender shoots
 from the gutters,
 Over the western persimmon, over the long-leav'd corn, over the delicate blue-
 flower flax,
 Over the white and brown buckwheat, a hummer and buzzer there with the rest,
 Over the dusky green of the rye as it ripples and shades in the breeze;
 Scaling mountains, pulling myself cautiously up, holding on by low scragged
 limbs,
 Walking the path worn in the grass and beat through the leaves of the brush,
 Where the quail is whistling betwixt the woods and the wheat-lot,
 Where the bat flies in the Seventh-month eve, where the great gold-bug drops
 through the dark,
 Where the brook puts out of the roots of the old tree and flows to the meadow,
 Where cattle stand and shake away flies with the tremulous shuddering of their
 hides,
 Where the cheese-cloth hangs in the kitchen, where andirons straddle the hearth-
 slab, where cobwebs fall in festoons from the rafters;
 Where trip-hammers crash, where the press is whirling its cylinders,
 Wherever the human heart beats with terrible throes under its ribs,
 Where the pear-shaped balloon is floating aloft, (floating in it myself and looking
 composedly down),
 Where the life-car is drawn on the slip-noose, where the heat hatches pale-green
 eggs in the dented sand,
 Where the she-whale swims with her calf and never forsakes it,
 Where the steamship trails hindways its long pennant of smoke,
 Where the fin of the shark cuts like a black chip out of the water,
 Where the half-burn'd brig is riding on unknown currents,
 Where shells grow to her slimy deck, where the dead are corrupting below;
 Where the dense-starr'd flag is borne at the head of the regiments,
 Approaching Manhattan up by the long-stretching island,
 Under Niagara, the cataract falling like a veil over my countenance,
 Upon a doorstep, upon the horse-block of hard wood outside,
 Upon the racecourse, or enjoying picnics or jigs or a good game of base-ball,
 At he-festivals, with blackguard gibes, ironical license, bull-dances, drinking,
 laughter,
 At the cider-mill tasting the sweets of the brown mash, sucking the juice through
 a straw,
 At apple-peelings wanting kisses for all the red fruit I find,
 At musters, beach-parties, friendly bees, huskings, house-raisings;
 Where the mocking-bird sounds his delicious gurgles, cackles, screams, weeps,
 Where the hay-rick stands in the barn-yard, where the dry-stalks are scatter'd,
 where the brood-cow waits in the hovel,
 Where the bull advances to do his masculine work, where the stud to the mare,
 where the cock is treading the hen,
 Where the heifers browse, where geese nip their food with short jerks,
 Where sun-down shadows lengthen over the limitless and lonesome prairie,
 Where herds of buffalo make a crawling spread of the square miles far and
 near,
 Where the humming-bird shimmers, where the neck of the long-lived swan is
 curving and winding,
 Where the laughing-gull scoots by the shore, where she laughs her near-human
 laugh,
 Where bee-hives range on a gray bench in the garden half hid by the high
 weeds,
 Where band-neck'd partridges roost in a ring on the ground with their heads out,

Where burial coaches enter the arch'd gates of a cemetery,
 Where winter wolves bark amid wastes of snow and icicled trees,
 Where the yellow-crown'd heron comes to the edge of the marsh at night and
 feeds upon small crabs,
 Where the splash of swimmers and divers cools the warm noon,
 Where the katy-did works her chromatic reed on the walnut-tree over the well,
 Through patches of citrons and cucumbers with silver-wired leaves,
 Through the salt-lick or orange glade, or under conical firs,
 Through the gymnasium, through the curtain'd saloon, through the office or
 public hall;
 Pleas'd with the native and pleas'd with the foreign, pleas'd with the new
 and old,
 Pleas'd with the homely woman as well as the handsome,
 Pleas'd with the quakeress as she puts off her bonnet and talks melodiously,
 Pleas'd with the tune of the choir of the whitewash'd church,
 Pleas'd with the earnest words of the sweating Methodist preacher, impress'd
 seriously at the camp-meeting;
 Looking in at the shop-windows of Broadway the whole forenoon, flattening the
 flesh of my nose on the thick plate-glass.
 Wandering the same afternoon with my face turn'd up to the clouds, or down
 a lane or along the beach,
 My right and left arms round the sides of two friends, and I in the middle;
 Coming home with the silent and dark-cheek'd bush-boy, (behind me, he rides
 at the drape of the day),
 Far from the settlements studying the print of animals' feet, or the moccasin
 print,
 By the cot in the hospital reaching lemonade to a feverish patient,
 Nigh the coffin'd corpse when all is still, examining with a candle;
 Voyaging to every port to dicker and adventure,
 Hurrying with the modern crowd as eager and fickle as any,
 Hot toward one I hate, ready in my madness to knife him,
 Solitary at midnight in my back yard, my thoughts gone from me a long while,
 Walking the old hills of Judæa with the beautiful gentle God by my side,
 Speeding through space, speeding through heaven and the stars,
 Speeding amid the seven satellites and the broad ring, and the diameter of
 eighty thousand miles,
 Speeding with tail'd meteors, throwing fire-balls like the rest,
 Carrying the crescent child that carries its own full mother in its belly,
 Storming, enjoying, planning, loving, cautioning,
 Backing and filling, appearing and disappearing,
 I tread day and night such roads.

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

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

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

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

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

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

I understand the large hearts of heroes,
 The courage of present times and all times,
 How the skipper saw the crowded and rudderless wreck of the steamship, and
 Death chasing it up and down the storm,
 How he knuckled tight and gave not back an inch, and was faithful of days
 and faithful of nights,
 And chalk'd in large letters on a board, *Be of good cheer, we will not desert you;*
 How he follow'd with them and tack'd with them three days and would not
 not give it up,
 How he saved the drifting company at last,
 How the lank loose-gown'd women look'd when boated from the side of their
 prepared graves,
 How the silent old-faced infants and the lifted sick, and the sharp-lipp'd un-
 shaved men;
 All this I swallow, it tastes good, I like it well, it becomes mine,
 I am the man, I suffer'd, I was there.

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

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

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

I am the mash'd fireman with breast-bone broken,
 Tumbling walls buried me in their debris,
 Heat and smoke I inspired, I heard the yelling shouts of my comrades,

I heard the distant click of their picks and shovels,
They have clear'd the beams away, they tenderly lift me forth.

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

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

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

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

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

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

XXXIV.

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

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

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

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

None obey'd the command to kneel,
 Some made a mad and helpless rush, some stood stark and straight,
 A few fell at once, shot in the temple or heart, the living and dead lay
 together,
 The maim'd and mangled dug in the dirt, the new-comers saw them there,
 Some half-kill'd attempted to crawl away,
 These were despatch'd with bayonets or batter'd with the blunts of muskets,
 A youth not seventeen years old seiz'd his assassin till two more came to
 release him,
 The three were all torn and cover'd with the boy's blood.
 At eleven o'clock began the burning of the bodies;
 That is the tale of the murder of the four hundred and twelve young men.

XXXV.

Would you hear of an old-time sea-fight?
 Would you learn who won by the light of the moon and stars?
 List to the yarn, as my grandmother's father the sailor told it to me.
 Our foe was no skulk in his ship I tell you, (said he,
 His was the surly English pluck, and there is no tougher or truer, and never
 was, and never will be:
 Along the lower'd eve he came horribly raking us.
 We closed with him, the yards entangled, the cannon touch'd,
 My captain lash'd fast with his own hand.
 We had receiv'd some eighteen pound shots under the water,
 On our lower gun-deck two large pieces had burst at the first fire, killing all
 around and blowing up overhead.
 Fighting at sun-down, fighting at dark,
 Ten o'clock at night, the full moon well up, our leaks on the gain, and five
 feet of water reported,
 The master-at-arms loosing the prisoners confined in the after-hold to give them
 a chance for themselves.
 The transit to and from the magazine is now stopt by the sentinels,
 They see so many strange faces they do not know whom to trust.
 Our frigate takes fire,
 The other asks if we demand quarter?
 If our colors are struck and the fighting done?
 Now I laugh content, for I hear the voice of my little captain,
We have not struck, he composedly cries, *we have just begun our part of the fighting.*
 Only three guns are in use,
 One is directed by the captain himself against the enemy's mainmast,
 Two well serv'd with grape and canister silence his musketry and clear his decks.
 The tops alone second the fire of this little battery, especially the main-top,
 They hold out bravely during the whole of the action.
 Not a moment's cease,
 The leaks gain fast on the pumps, the fire eats toward the powder-magazine.

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

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

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

XXXVI.

Stretch'd and still lies the midnight,
Two great hulls motionless on the breast of the darkness,
Our vessel riddled and slowly sinking, preparations to pass to the one we have
conquer'd,
The captain on the quarter-deck coldly giving his orders through a countenance
white as a sheet.

Near by the corpse of the child that serv'd in the cabin,
The dead face of an old salt with long white hair and carefully curl'd whiskers,
The flames spite of all that can be done flickering aloft and below,
The husky voices of the two or three officers yet fit for duty,
Formless stacks of bodies and bodies by themselves, dabs of flesh upon the
masts and spars,

Cut of cordage, dangle of rigging, slight shock of the soothe of waves,
Black and impassive guns, litter of powder parcels, strong scent,
A few large stars overhead, silent and mournful shining,
Delicate sniffs of sea-breeze, smells of sedgy grass and fields by the shore,
death-messages given in charge to survivors,
The hiss of the surgeon's knife, the gnawing teeth of his saw,
Wheeze, cluck, swash of falling blood, short wild scream, and long, dull,
tapering groan,
These so, these irretrievable.

XXXVII.

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

For me the keepers of convicts shoulder their carbines and keep watch,
It is I let out in the morning and barr'd at night.

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

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

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

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

XXXVIII.

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

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

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

I troop forth replenish'd with supreme power, one of an average unending
 procession,

Inland and sea-coast we go, and pass all boundary lines,
 Our swift ordinances on their way over the whole earth,
 The blossoms we wear in our hats the growth of thousands of years.

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

XLI.

I am he bringing help for the sick as they pant on their backs,
 And for strong upright men I bring yet more needed help.
 I heard what was said of the universe,
 Heard it and heard it of several thousand years;
 It is middling well as far as it goes—but is that all?

Magnifying and applying come I,
 Outbidding at the start the old cautious hucksters,
 Taking myself the exact dimensions of Jehovah,
 Lithographing Kronos, Zeus his son, and Hercules his grandson,
 Buying drafts of Osiris, Isis, Belus, Brahma, Buddha,
 In my portfolio placing Manito loose, Allah on a leaf, the crucifix engraved,
 With Odin and the hideous-faced Mexitli and every idol and image,
 Taking them all for what they are worth and not a cent more,
 Admitting they were alive and did the work of their days,
 (They bore mites as for unfledg'd birds who have now to rise and fly and
 sing for themselves,)
 Accepting the rough deific sketches to fill out better in myself, bestowing
 them freely on each man and woman I see,
 Discovering as much or more in a framer framing a house,
 Putting higher claims for him there with his roll'd-up sleeves driving the
 mallet and chisel,
 Not objecting to special revelations, considering a curl of smoke or a hair on
 the back of my hand just as curious as any revelation,
 Lads ahold of fire-engines and hook-and-ladder ropes no less to me than the
 gods of the antique wars,
 Minding their voices peal through the crash of destruction,
 Their brawny limbs passing straight over charr'd laths, their white foreheads
 whole and unhurt out of the flames;

By the mechanic's wife with her babe at her nipple interceding for every
 person born,
 Three scythes at harvest whizzing in a row from three lusty angels with
 shirts bagg'd out at their waists,
 The snag-tooth'd hostler with red hair redeeming sins past and to come,
 Selling all he possesses, traveling on foot to fee lawyers for his brother and
 sit by him while he is tried for forgery;
 What was strewn in the amplest strewing the square rod about me, and not
 filling the square rod then,
 The bull and the bug never worshipp'd half enough,
 Dung and dirt more admirable than was dream'd,
 The supernatural of no account, myself waiting my time to be one of the
 supremes,
 The day getting ready for me when I shall do as much good as the best,
 and be as prodigious;
 By my life-lumps! becoming already a creator,
 Putting myself here and now to the ambush'd womb of the shadows.

XLIII.

I do not despise you priests, all time, the world over,
 My faith is the greatest of faiths and the least of faiths,
 Enclosing worship ancient and modern and all between ancient and modern,
 Believing I shall come again upon the earth after five thousand years,
 Waiting responses from oracles, honoring the gods, saluting the sun,
 Making a fetich of the first rock or stump, powowing with sticks in the circle
 of obis,
 Helping the llama or brahmin as he trims the lamps of the idols,
 Dancing yet through the streets in a phallic procession, rapt and austere in
 the woods a gymnosophist,
 Drinking mead from the skull-cup, to Shastas and Vedas admirant, minding
 the Koran,
 Walking the teokallis, spotted with gore from the stone and knife, beating
 the serpent-skin drum,
 Accepting the Gospels, accepting him that was crucified, knowing assuredly
 that he is divine,
 To the mass kneeling or the puritan's prayer rising, or sitting patiently in a
 pew,
 Ranting and frothing in my insane crisis, or waiting dead-like till my spirit
 arouses me,
 Looking forth on pavement and land, or outside of pavement and land,
 Belonging to the winders of the circuit of circuits.
 One of that centripetal and centrifugal gang I turn and talk like a man
 leaving charges before a journey.

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

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

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

XLIV.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Were mankind murderous or jealous upon you, my brother, my sister?
 I am sorry for you, they are not murderous or jealous upon me,
 All has been gentle with me, I keep no account with lamentation,
 (What have I to do with lamentation?) *à l'œuvre*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

XLV.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

XLVIII.

I have said that the soul is not more than the body,
And I have said that the body is not more than the soul,
And nothing, not God, is greater to one than one's self is,
And whoever walks a furlong without sympathy walks to his own funeral
drest in his shroud,

And I or you pocketless of a dime may purchase the pick of the earth,
And to glance with an eye or show a bean in its pod confounds the learning
of all times,
And there is no trade or employment but the young man following it may
become a hero,
And there is no object so soft but it makes a hub for the wheel'd universe,
And I say to any man or woman, Let your soul stand cool and composed
before a million universes.

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

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

Why should I wish to see God better than this day?
I see something of God each hour of the twenty-four, and each moment then,
In the faces of men and women I see God, and in my own face in the glass,

I find letters from God dropt in the street, and every one is sign'd by God's
name,
And I leave them where they are, for I know that wheresoe'er I go,
Others will punctually come for ever and ever.

XLIX.

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

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

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

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

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

LI.

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

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

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

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

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

II.—SONGS OF SEX.

THERE is one element of Whitman's poetry which I must perforce omit in an edition intended for universal circulation. I refer to his Songs of Sex, especially to those entitled "Children of Adam." Yet although even the most ardent worshippers of Whitman will approve of the omission of these remarkable and more characteristic poems, I confess that I acquiesced in the necessity with regret. For Whitman in his "Backward Glance o'er Travelled Roads" tells us plainly that he prohibits, so far as any words of his can do, any elision of the lines, which he declares "so give breath of life to my whole scheme that the bulk of the pieces might as well have been left unwritten were those lines omitted." "Difficult as it will be, it has become in my opinion imperative to achieve a shifted attitude from superior men and women towards the thought and fact of sexuality as an element in character, personality, the emotions and a theme in literature." These words express a truth which Walt Whitman did well to preach. But whether he hastened what he calls the normal recognizance of certain facts by his heroic nudity is another question. But even if he took the wrong way, he at least tried to do the right thing, and recognition is due to him even when we are compelled to mangle his verse.

There is always immense difficulty in touching upon the theme of sex relations. The Bible does it, no doubt, and Shakespeare and Milton, and so also does Walt Whitman. But although the sacred writers, both in the Old Testament and the New, draw their most striking illustrations of the union between God and Man, between Christ and the Church, from the nuptial union of the bridegroom and the bride, it is conventionally decided that such allusions and illustrations must be confined to the Canticles and the Apocalypse. Walt Whitman, who was the Bard of Democracy, demoralised everything, including this supreme expression of married love.

It is one of the most melancholy instances of the extent to which, what the Old Divines would have called the Fall, has corrupted the best and defiled the divinest in man that probably the majority of those who read Walt Whitman's "Children of Adam" will associate his "Adamic Chantings," not as ought to be the case with the nuptial rites of "the divine husband," united in a marriage of sincere affection with the bride of his choice, but rather with the illicit gratification of mere animal instinct.

"The rites
Mysterious of connubial love"

Milton preferred should remain in mystery. Whitman preferred to display them before the gaze of garish day. Therein few will be disposed to follow him; but it would be unjust to him, and unjust to the great truth which inspired his chanting, to pass over without word or comment the most distinctive of his teachings. The poet in his own relations with women, according to his biographer, was beyond reproach. What he perceived and what he teaches is the essential divinity of sex, and the beauty and goodness of its satisfaction, when it is as the supreme outcome of intense affection, and not the mere indulgence of a brute appetite. The recoil of the human conscience against the *corruptio optimi* has led too often to an indiscriminate branding of that which, in its proper place, is the highest physical manifestation of self-surrender and self-abandonment in union with the supremely loved, as if it were inherently animal and even devilish. The recoil is natural, but it has over-reached itself. In order to rear a barrier before the door of the strange woman, it has desolated and poisoned the married life of millions. Whitman, no doubt, goes too far the other way, and some of his verses read as if they were intended to justify the license which is the most fatal

enemy of married happiness. That, however, was but the reaction against the recoil of which I have spoken.

At the same time, without printing a word to which any one can object, it is possible to convey by a few characteristic extracts something of the essential element of Walt Whitman's Gospel of Sex.

"Sex contains all, bodies, souls,
Meanings, proofs, purities, delicacies, results, promulgations,
Songs, commands, health, pride, the maternal mystery, . . .
All hopes, benefactions, bestowals, all the passions, loves, beauties, delights of
the earth,
All the governments, judges, gods, follow'd persons of the earth,
These are contained in sex as parts of itself and justifications of itself."

Again he tells us that

"If anything is sacred the human body is sacred."

"The man's body is sacred, and the woman's body is sacred,
No matter who it is, it is sacred—is it the meanest one in the labourers' gang?
Is it one of the dull-faced emigrants just landed on the wharf?
Each belongs here or anywhere just as much as the well-off, just as much as you.
Each has his or her place in the procession.
(All is a procession,
The universe is a procession with measured and perfect motion.)"

But I will take the poems in order. The first of the "Children of Adam" series is entitled "To the Garden the World." It is brief, and sounds the keynote in praise of "My limbs and the quivering fire that ever plays through them." In "From Pent-up Aching Rivers," Whitman avows he has determined to make sex "illustrious, even if I stand sole among men." "I Sing the Body Electric" is the title of the third. He praises the body in all its limbs and joints, as seen in "the sprawl and fulness of babes," in the play of masculine muscle in marching firemen, in the natural, perfect, varied attitudes, the bent head, the curv'd neck and the counting. "Such-like I love." In the mere physical delight of being surrounded by human bodies he swims as in a sea.

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

Then he proceeds—

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

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

Of the male, not less than the female, he sings—

"He too is all qualities, he is action and power,
The flush of the known universe is in him."

He goes, before the war, to a slave-mart, and sees a man's body at auction.
Who, he asks, can bid high enough for this wonder?

“For it the globe lay preparing quintillions of years without one animal or plant,
For it the revolving cycles truly and steadily roll’d.

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

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

Then, waxing ecstatic, he sings one by one all the parts of the body, within
and without, which together go to make up

“The exquisite realization of health;
O I say these are not the parts and poems of the body only, but of the soul,
O I say now these are the soul!”

In “A Woman Waits for Me,” he sees waiting for him the women not cold,
anæmic, impassive nonentities, but women of another order, destined to be mothers
of fierce athletic girls, sons and daughters fit for these States. Here is Whitman’s
“Vision of Ideal Women” :—

“They are not one jot less than I am,
They are tann’d in the face by shining suns and blowing winds,
Their flesh has the old divine suppleness and strength—
They know how to swim, row, ride, wrestle, shoot, run, strike, retreat, advance,
resist, defend themselves;
They are ultimate, in their own right—they are calm, clear, well-possess’d of
themselves.”

“Spontaneous Me” is a poem with some wonderfully beautiful touches of
nature in praise of “the loving day,” “the mounting sun,” “the rich
coverlet of the grass,” but the most of it is a chant of “the mystic amorous
night,” leading up to “the great chastity of paternity,” which matches “the
great chastity of maternity.”

A more turbulent note is sounded in the short poem, “One Hour to Madness
and Joy,” full of the tumult and the surge of “my inebriate soul.”

“Out of the rolling ocean the crowd came a drop gently to me,
Whispering, I love you.”

They part, but “we are not so much separated.

“Be not impatient—a little space—know you I salute the air, the ocean and
the land,
Every day at sundown for your dear sake my love.”

I HEARD YOU SOLEMN-SWEET PIPES OF THE ORGAN.

I HEARD you solemn-sweet pipes of the organ as last Sunday morn I pass’d the
church,

Winds of autumn, as I walk’d the woods at dusk I heard your long-stretch’d
sighs up above so mournful,

I heard the perfect Italian tenor singing at the opera, I heard the soprano in
the midst of the quartet singing;

Heart of my love! you too I heard murmuring low through one of the wrists
around my head,

Heard the pulse of you when all was still ringing little bells last night under
my ear.

To these extracts from the "Children of Adam" may be appended two other poems touching upon the same theme.

WITH ALL THY GIFTS.

WITH all thy gifts America,
 Standing secure, rapidly tending, overlooking the world,
 Power, wealth, extent, vouchsafed to thee—with these and like of these vouchsafed to thee,
 What if one gift thou lackest! (the ultimate human problem never solving,)
 The gift of perfect women fit for thee—what if that gift of gifts thou lackest?
 The towering feminine of thee? the beauty, health, completion, fit for thee?
 The mothers fit for thee?

BY THE CITY DEAD-HOUSE.

By the city dead-house by the gate,
 As idly sauntering wending my way from the clang,
 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 odours 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.

III.—SONGS OF THE WAR.

WALT WHITMAN passed through the great Civil War as a nurse in the hospitals. He is said to have tended no fewer than 100,000 sick and wounded soldiers.

"Three unflinching years of work in that terrible suspense and excitement changed him," says Dr. Bucke, "from a young to an old man. Under the constant and intense moral strain to which he was subjected . . . he eventually broke down. The doctors called his complaint 'hospital malaria,' and perhaps it was; but that splendid physique was sapped by labour, watching, and still more by the emotions, dreads, deaths, uncertainties of three years, before it was possible for hospital malaria or any similar cause to overcome it. This illness (the first he ever had in his life), in the hot summer of 1864, he never entirely recovered from."

He sang of the war, of the life of a soldier, of stirring scenes in camp and field as few poets have ever sung, with a passionate human sympathy with the individual soldier. I wish I could have quoted all his "Drum Taps," but space

forbids. The following will, however, give the reader a taste of his quality, and share the thoughts which wound in procession through the poet's mind.

"O tender and wond'rous 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."

FIRST O SONGS FOR A PRELUDE.

FIRST O songs for a prelude,
Lightly strike on the stretch'd tympanum pride and joy in my city,
How she led the rest to arms, how she gave the cue,
How at once with lithe limbs unwaiting a moment she sprang,
(O Superb! O Manhattan, my own, my peerless!
O strongest you in the hour of danger, in crisis! O truer than steel!)
How you sprang—how you threw off the costumes of peace with indifferent
hand,
How your soft opera-music changed, and the drum and fife were heard in
their stead,
How you led to the war, (that shall serve for our prelude, songs of soldiers,)
How Manhattan drum-taps led.

Forty years had I in my city seen soldiers parading,
Forty years as a pageant, till unawares the lady of this teeming and turbulent
city,

Sleepless amid her ships, her houses, her incalculable wealth,
With her million children around her, suddenly,
At dead of night, at news from the south,
Incens'd struck with clinch'd hand the pavement.

A shock electric, the night sustain'd it,
Till with ominous hum our hive at daybreak pour'd out its myriads.

From the houses then and the workshops, and through all the doorways,
Leapt they tumultuous, and lo! Manhattan arming.

To the drum-taps prompt,
The young men falling in and arming,
The mechanics arming (the trowel, the jack-plane, the blacksmith's hammer,
tost aside with precipitation),

The lawyer leaving his office and arming, the judge leaving the court,
The driver deserting his waggon in the street, jumping down, throwing the
reins abruptly down on the horses' backs,

The salesman leaving the store, the boss, book-keeper, porter, all leaving ;
Squads gather everywhere by common consent and arm,

The new recruits, even boys, the old men show them how to wear their
accoutrements, they buckle the straps carefully,

Outdoors arming, indoors arming, the flash of the musket-barrels,
The white tents cluster in camps, the arm'd sentries around, the sunrise
cannon and again at sunset,

Arm'd regiments arrive every day, pass through the city, and embark from
the wharves,

(How good they look as they tramp down to the river, sweaty, with their
guns on their shoulders!

How I love them! how I could hug them, with their brown faces and their
clothes and knapsacks cover'd with dust!)

The blood of the city up—arm'd! arm'd! the cry everywhere,
 The flags flung out from the steeples of churches and from all the public
 buildings and stores,
 The tearful parting, the mother kisses her son, the son kisses his mother,
 (Loth is the mother to part, yet not a word does she speak to detain him,)
 The tumultuous escort, the ranks of policemen preceding, clearing the way,
 The unpent enthusiasm, the wild cheers of the crowd for their favourites,
 The artillery, the silent cannons bright as gold, drawn along, rumble lightly
 over the stones,
 (Silent cannons, soon to cease your silence,
 Soon unlimber'd to begin the red business;)
 All the mutter of preparation, all the determin'd arming,
 The hospital service, the lint bandages and medicines,
 The women volunteering for nurses, the work begun for in earnest, no mere
 parade now;
 War! an arm'd race is advancing! the welcome for battle, no turning away;
 War! be it weeks, months, or years, an arm'd race is advancing to welcome it.
 Mannahatta a-march—and it's O to sing it well!
 It's O for a manly life in the camp.

And the sturdy artillery,
 The guns bright as gold, the work for giants, to serve well the guns,
 Unlimber them! (no more as the past forty years for salutes for courtesies
 merely,
 Put in something now besides powder and wadding.)
 And you lady of ships, you Mannahatta,
 Old matron of this proud, friendly, turbulent city,
 Often in peace and wealth you were pensive or covertly frown'd amid all your
 children,
 But now you smile with joy exulting old Mannahatta.

EIGHTEEN SIXTY-ONE.

ARM'D year—year of the struggle,
 No dainty rhymes or sentimental love verses for you terrible year,
 Not you as some pale poetling seated at a desk lisping cadenzas piano,
 But as a strong man erect, clothed in blue clothes, advancing, carrying a rifle
 on your shoulder,
 With well-gristled body and sunburnt face and hands, with a knife in the
 belt at your side,
 As I heard you shouting loud, your sonorous voice ringing across the continent,
 Your masculine voice O year, as rising amid the great cities,
 Amid the men of Manhattan I saw you as one of the workmen, the dwellers
 in Manhattan,
 Or with large steps crossing the prairies out of Illinois and Indiana,
 Rapidly crossing the West with springy gait and descending the Alleghanies,
 Or down from the great lakes or in Pennsylvania, or on deck along the Ohio
 river,
 Or southward along the Tennessee or Cumberland rivers, or at Chattanooga on
 the mountain top,
 Saw I your gait and saw I your sinewy limbs clothed in blue, bearing weapons,
 robust year,
 Heard your determin'd voice launch'd forth again and again,
 Year that suddenly sang by the mouths of the round-lipp'd cannon,
 I repeat you, hurrying, crashing, sad, distracted year.

BEAT! BEAT! DRUMS!

BEAT! beat! drums!—blow! bugles! blow!
 Through the windows—through doors—burst like a ruthless force,
 Into the solemn church, and scatter the congregation,
 Into the school where the scholar is studying;
 Leave not the bridegroom quiet—no happiness must he have now with his bride,
 Nor the peaceful farmer any peace, ploughing his field or gathering his grain,
 So fierce you whirr and pound you drums—so shrill you bugles blow.

Beat! beat! drums!—blow! bugles! blow!
 Over the traffic of cities—over the rumble of wheels in the streets;
 Are beds prepared for sleepers at night in the houses? no sleepers must sleep
 in those beds,
 No bargainers' bargains by day—no brokers or speculators—would they continue?
 Would the talkers be talking? would the singer attempt to sing?
 Would the lawyer rise in the court to state his case before the judge?
 Then rattle quicker, heavier drums—you bugles wilder blow.

Beat! beat! drums! blow! bugles! blow!
 Make no parley—stop for no expostulation,
 Mind not the timid—mind not the weeper or prayer,
 Mind not the old man beseeching the young man,
 Let not the child's voice be heard, nor the mother's entreaties,
 Make even the trestles to shake the dead where they lie awaiting the hearses,
 So strong you thump, O terrible drums—so loud you bugles blow.

RISE O DAYS FROM YOUR FATHOMLESS DEEPS.

RISE O days from your fathomless deeps, till you loftier, fiercer sweep,
 Long for my soul hungering gymnastic I devour'd what the earth gave me,
 Long I roam'd the woods of the north, long I watch'd Niagara pouring,
 I travell'd the prairies over and slept on their breast, I cross'd the Nevadas,
 I crossed the plateaus,
 I ascended the towering rocks along the Pacific, I sail'd out to sea,
 I sail'd through the storm, I was refreshed by the storm,
 I watch'd with joy the threatening maws of the waves,
 I mark'd the white combs where they career'd so high, curling over,
 I hear the wind piping, I saw the black clouds,
 Saw from below what arose and mounted, (O superb! O wild as my heart,
 and powerful!)
 Heard the continuous thunder as it bellow'd after the lightning,
 Noted the slender and jagged threads of lightning as sudden and fast amid
 the din they chased each other across the sky;
 These, and such as these, I, elate, saw—saw with wonder, yet pensive and
 masterful,
 All the menacing might of the globe uprisen around me,
 Yet there with my soul I fed, I fed content, supercilious.

II.

'Twas well, O soul—'twas a good preparation you gave me,
 Now we advance our latent and ampler hunger to fill,
 Now we go forth to receive what the earth and the sea never gave us,
 Not through the mighty woods we go, but through the mightier cities,
 Something for us is pouring now more than Niagara pouring,

Torrents of men, (sources and rills of the Northwest are you indeed inexhaustible?)
 What, to pavements and homesteads here, what were those storms of the mountains and sea?
 What, to passions I witness around me to-day? was the sea risen?
 Was the wind piping the pipe of death under the black clouds?
 Lo! from deeps more unfathomable, something more deadly and savage,
 Manhattan rising, advancing with menacing front—Cincinnati, Chicago unchain'd;
 What was that swell I saw on the ocean? behold what comes here,
 How it climbs with daring feet and hands—how it dashes!
 How the true thunder bellows after the lightning—how bright the flashes of lightning!
 How Democracy with desperate vengeful port strides on, shown through the dark by those flashes of lightning!
 (Yet a mournful wail and low sob I fancied I heard through the dark,
 In a lull of the deafening confusion.)

III.

Thunder on! stride on, Democracy! strike with vengeful stroke!
 And do you rise higher than ever yet O days, O cities!
 Crash heavier, heavier yet O storms! you have done me good,
 My soul prepared in the mountains absorbs your immortal strong nutriment,
 Long had I walk'd my cities, my country roads through farms, only half satisfied,
 One doubt nauseous undulating like a snake, crawl'd on the ground before me,
 Continually preceding my steps, turning upon me oft, ironically hissing low;
 The cities I loved so well I abandon'd and left, I sped to the certainties suitable to me,
 Hungering, hungering, hungering, for primal energies and Nature's dauntlessness,
 I refresh'd myself with it only, I could relish it only,
 I waited the bursting forth of the pent fire—on the water and air I waited long;
 But now I no longer wait, I am fully satisfied, I am glutted,
 I have witness'd the true lightning, I have witness'd my cities electric,
 I have lived to behold man burst forth and warlike America rise,
 Hence I will seek no more the food of the northern solitary wilds,
 No more the mountains roam or sail the stormy sea.

COME UP FROM THE FIELDS FATHER.

COME up from the fields father, here's a letter from our Pete,
 And come to the front door mother, here's a letter from thy dear son.

Lo, 'tis autumn,
 Lo, where the trees, deeper green, yellower and redder,
 Cool and sweeten Ohio's villages with leaves fluttering in the moderate wind,
 Where apples ripe in the orchards hang and grapes on the trellis'd vines,
 (Smell you the smell of the grapes on the vines?)
 Smell you the buckwheat where the bees were lately buzzing?)
 Above all, lo, the sky so calm, so transparent after the rain, and with wondrous clouds,
 Below too, all calm, all vital and beautiful, and the farm prospers well.

Down in the fields all prospers well,
But now from the fields come father, come at the daughter's call,
And come to the entry mother, to the front door come right away.

Fast as she can she hurries, something ominous, her steps trembling,
She does not tarry to smooth her hair nor adjust her cap.

Open the envelope quickly,
O this is not our son's writing, yet his name is sign'd,
O a strange hand writes for our dear son, O stricken mother's soul!
All swims before her eyes, flashes with black, she catches the main words only,
Sentences broken, *gunshot wound in the breast, cavalry skirmish, taken to hospital,*
At present low, but will soon be better.

Ah now the single figure to me,
Amid all teeming and wealthy Ohio with all its cities and farms,
Sickly white in the face and dull in the head, very faint,
By the jamb of a door leans.
Grieve not so, dear mother (the just-grown daughter speaks through her sobs,
The little sisters huddle around speechless and dismay'd),
See dearest mother, the letter says Pete will soon be better.

Alas, poor boy, he will never be better (nor maybe 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.

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 odour 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 odour,
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 GREY AND DIM.

A SIGHT in camp in the daybreak grey 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,
Grey 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-grey'd hair, and flesh
all sunken about the eyes?

Who are you my dear comrade?

Then to the second I step—and who are you my child and darling?
Who are you sweet boy with cheeks yet blooming?

Then to the third—a face nor child nor old, very calm, as of beautiful yellow-white ivory;

Young man I think I know you—I think this face is the face of the Christ himself,

Dead and divine and brother of all, and here again he lies.

AS TOILSOME I WANDER'D VIRGINIA'S WOODS.

As toilsome I wander'd Virginia's woods,
To the music of rustling leaves kick'd by my feet, (for 'twas autumn,) I mark'd at the foot of a tree the grave of a soldier;
Mortally wounded he and buried on the retreat, (easily all could I understand,) The halt of a mid-day hour, when up! no time to lose—yet this sign left,
On a tablet scrawl'd and nail'd on the tree by the grave,
Bold, cautious, true, and my loving comrade.

Long, long I muse, then on my way go wandering,
Many a changeful season to follow, and many a scene of life,
Yet at times through changeful season and scene, abrupt, alone, or in the crowded street,

Comes before me the unknown soldier's grave, comes the inscription rude in Virginia's woods,

Bold, cautious, true, and my loving comrade.

THE WOUND-DRESSER

I.

AN old man bending I come among new faces,
 Years looking backward resuming in answer to children,
 Come tell us old man, as from young men and maidens that love me,
 (Arous'd and angry, I'd thought to beat the alarum, and urge relentless war
 But soon my fingers fail'd me, my face droop'd and I resign'd myself,
 To sit by the wounded and soothe them, or silently watch the dead;))
 Years hence of these scenes, of these furious passions, these chances,
 Of unsurpass'd heroes (was one side so brave? the other was equally brave);
 Now be witness again, paint the mightiest armies of earth,
 Of those armies so rapid so wondrous what saw you to tell us?
 What stays with you latest and deepest? of curious panics,
 Of hard-fought engagements or sieges tremendous what deepest remains?

II.

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.

III.

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.)

IV.

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.)

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.

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
 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, aides-de-camp 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-colour'd rockets.

ETHIOPIA SALUTING THE COLOURS.

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 colours greet?

('Tis while our army lines Carolina's sands and pines,
 Forth from thy hovel door thou Ethiopia com'st to me,
 As under doughty Sherman I march toward the sea.)

*Me master years a hundred since from my parents sunder'd,
 A little child, they caught me as the savage beast is caught,
 Then hither me across the sea the cruel slaver brought.*

No further does she say, but lingering all the day,
 Her high-borne turban'd head she wags, and rolls her darkling eye,
 And courtesies to the regiments, the guidons moving by.

What is it fateful woman, so blear, hardly human?
 Why wag your head with turban bound, yellow, red and green?
 Are the things so strange and marvellous you see or have seen?

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 rank, 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.

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.

CAMPS OF GREEN.

Not alone those camps of white, old comrades of the wars,
 When as order'd forward, after a long march,
 Footsore and weary, soon as the light lessens we halt for the night,
 Some of us so fatigued carrying the gun and knapsack, dropping asleep in our
 tracks,
 Others pitching the little tents, and the fires lit up begin to sparkle,
 Outposts of pickets posted surrounding alert through the dark,
 And a word provided for countersign, careful for safety,
 Till to the call of the drummers at daybreak loudly beating the drums,
 We rise up refresh'd, the night and sleep pass'd over, and resume our journey,
 Or proceed to battle.

Lo, the camps of the tents of green,
 Which the days of peace keep filling, and the days of war keep filling,
 With a mystic army, (is it too order'd forward? is it too only halting awhile,
 Till night and sleep pass over?)

Now in those camps of green, in their tents dotting the world,
 In the parents, children, husbands, wives, in them, in the old and young,
 Sleeping under the sunlight, sleeping under the moonlight, content and silent
 there at last,
 Behold the mighty bivouac-field and waiting-camp of all.
 Of the corps and generals all, and the President over the corps and generals all,
 And of each of us O soldiers, and of each and all in the ranks we fought,
 (There without hatred we all, all meet.)

For presently O soldiers, we too camp in our place in the bivouac-camps of
 green.
 But we need not provide for outposts nor word for the countersign,
 Nor drummer to beat the morning drum.

ASHES of SOLDIERS.

ASHES of soldiers South or North,
 As I muse retrospective murmuring a chant in thought,
 The war resumes, again to my sense your shapes,
 And again the advance of the armies.

Noiseless as mists and vapours,
 From their graves in the trenches ascending,
 From cemeteries all through Virginia and Tennessee,
 From every point of the compass out of the countless graves,
 In wafted clouds, in myriads large, or squads of twos or threes or single ones
 they come,
 And silently gather round me.

Now sound no note O trumpeters,
 Not at the head of my cavalry parading on spirited horses,
 With sabres drawn and glistening, and carbines by their thighs, (ah, my brave
 horsemen!
 My handsome tan-faced horsemen! what life, what joy and pride,
 With all the perils were yours.)

Nor you drummers, neither at reveillé at dawn,
 Nor the long roll alarming the camp, nor even the muffled beat for a burial,
 Nothing from you this time O drummers bearing my warlike drums.

But aside from these and the marts of wealth and the crowded promenade,
 Admitting around me comrades close unseen by the rest and voiceless,
 The slain elate and alive again, the dust and debris alive,
 I chant this chant of my silent soul in the name of all dead soldiers.

Faces so pale with wondrous eyes, very dear, gather closer yet,
 Draw close, but speak not.

Phantoms of countless lost,
 Invisible to the rest henceforth become my companions,
 Follow me ever—desert me not while I live.

Sweet are the blooming cheeks of the living—sweet are the musical voices
 sounding,
 But sweet, ah sweet, are the dead with their silent eyes.

Dearest comrades, all is over and long gone,
 But love is not over—and what love, O comrades!
 Perfume from battlefields rising, up from the fœtor arising.

IV.—SONGS OF DEATH.

MINOT J. SAVAGE, writing in the *Arena* of Whitman's poems on Death, says: "In all literature I know of nothing like Walt Whitman's sublime attitude in the presence of Death." There are several of them. Among them first in order come the poems inspired by the death of President Lincoln, "When Lilacs last in the Dooryard bloom'd." It is too long to quote in full, but here are some extracts which give some idea of the melody and beauty of the above.

WHEN LILACS LAST IN THE DOORYARD BLOOM'D,

I.

WHEN lilacs last in the dooryard bloom'd,
 And the great star early droop'd in the western sky in the night,
 I mourn'd, and yet shall mourn with ever-returning spring.

Ever-returning spring, trinity sure to me you bring,
Lilac blooming perennial and drooping star in the west,
And thought of him I love.

II.

O powerful western fallen star!
O shades of night—O moody, tearful night!
O great star disappear'd—O the black mirk 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.

III.

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-colour'd blossoms and heart-shaped leaves of rich green,
A sprig with its flower I break.

V.

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 grey 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.

VI.

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.

VII.

(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.

XIV.

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,¹
 And the summer approaching with richness, and the fields all busy with labour,
 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 back 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 com-
 panions,
 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 grey-brown bird I know receiv'd us comrades three,
 And he sang the carol of death, and a verse for him I love.

*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.*