




MEMORIES OF PRESIDENT
LINCOLN AND OTHER
LYRICS OF THE WAR

BY WALT WHITMAN : : : : :

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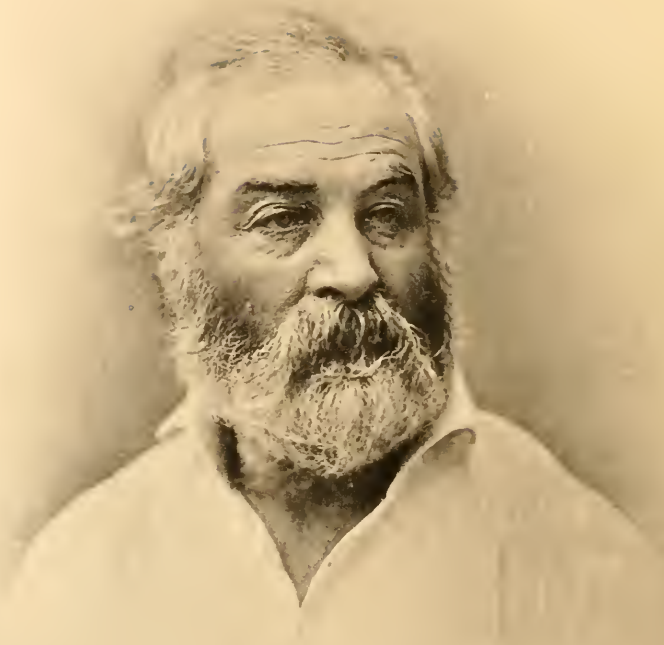
MEMORIES OF PRESIDENT LINCOLN
AND OTHER LYRICS OF THE WAR

WHITMAN

*Fifty copies of this book
have been printed on
Japan vellum of which
forty only are for sale.*

No. 3





Walt Whitman

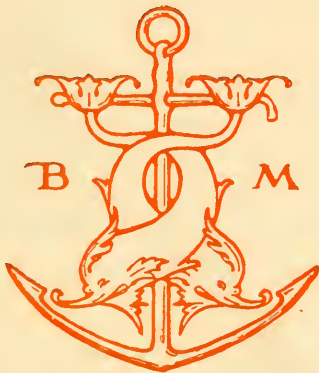
taken from life 1863

war time Washington
D C

to Horace L. Traubel
from his friend W W

June 1888-

MEMORIES OF PRESIDENT
LINCOLN AND OTHER
LYRICS OF THE WAR BY
WALT WHITMAN



PORTLAND MAINE
THOMAS B MOSHER
MDCCCCIV

*“He knew to bide his time,
And can his fame abide,
Still patient in his simple faith sublime,
Till the wise years decide.
Great captains, with their guns and drums,
Disturb our judgment for the hour,
But at last silence comes ;
These all are gone, and, standing like a tower,
Our children shall behold his fame.
The kindly-earnest, brave, foreseeing man,
Sagacious, patient, dreading praise, not blame,
New birth of our new soil, the first American.”*

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

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FOREWORD

WHITMAN did not subject Lincoln to the literary but to the human motive. Lincoln does not become a literary figure by his touch. Does not become a man in a book. After Whitman is done with him Lincoln still remains Lincoln. No way reduced. No way aggrandized. Only better understood. His background does not become a book. His background remains what it was. Remains life. Generic life. As life is where life finds life at the root. I may let Whitman put in a word for himself. Whitman said to me of Lincoln :

“Lincoln is particularly my man — particularly belongs to me ; yes ; and by the same token I am Lincoln’s man : I guess I particularly belong to him : we are afloat in the same stream — we are rooted in the same ground.”

To know the Lincoln of Whitman you want to know the Whitman of Whitman. Whitman was literary. But he was not first of all literary. Or last of all literary. First

of all he was human. He was not the leaves of a book. He was the bone and flesh of a man. Yes, he was that something or other not bone or flesh which is also of a man — which finally is the man. Simply literary analysis can make little out of Whitman. He does not yield to the scalpel. He is not to be resurrected from an inkpot. His voice falls in with the prophet voices. He was not unlettered. He knew the alphabet. But he kept all alphabetical arrogance well in hand. The letter was kept in hand. The spirit was left free. You cannot buy a ticket for Athens or Weimar or Paris or London or Boston and reach Whitman. He is never reached in that circle. The literary centers do not lead to him. You have got to travel to him by another route. You go East and find the Buddhistic canticles. You consult the Zoroastrian avatars. And you take the word of Jesus for a great deal. And you may hit Socrates on the way. And you keep on with your journey, touching here and there in European history certain men, certain influences. Going into port now and then. Never going where men compete for literary judgment. Never where men set out to acquit themselves immortally as artists. Keeping forever close to the

careless rhythms of original causes. So you go on. And go on. And by and by you arrive at Whitman. Not by way of the university. Not by way of Shakespeare. Not by way of the literary experts and adepts. But by human ways. To try to find Whitman by way of Shakespeare or Molière would be hopeless. I do not disparage the other routes to other men. I am only describing this route to Whitman. This route, which is the only route. Whitman chants and prays and soars. He is not pretty. He is only beautiful. He is not beautiful with the beauty of beauty. He is beautiful with the beauty of truth. The pen can easily miss Whitman. But the heart reaches him direct. Whitman is therefore the best route to Lincoln. The same process which provides Whitman for you provided Lincoln for Whitman. Whitman said to me again about Lincoln :

“There was no reason why Lincoln should not have been a prophet rather than a politician ; he was in fact a divine prophet-politician ; in him for almost the first time prophecy had something to say in politics. I shouldn't wonder but that in another age of the world Lincoln would have been a chosen man to lead in some rebellion against ecclesiastical institutions and religious form and ceremony.”

HORACE TRAUBEL.

M^Y friend Horace Traubel having favored me with the above foreword it only remains to add a brief bibliographical note to what in his inimitable way he has said so well and wisely.

In early copies of the first edition that were put into cloth of Walt Whitman's | Drum-taps | New York, | 1865. | (12mo. Pp. i-iv: 5-72,) the monody on Lincoln is not to be found. Later on, after the assassination, it appeared in the Sequel to Drum-taps: | (Since the preceding came from the press.) When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd, | and other pieces. | Washington | 1865-6. | (12mo. Pp. 1-24.) The lyric "O Captain! My Captain!" is also in this Sequel, while "Hush'd be the Camps To-day" had already been included among the various poems that make up Drum-taps (Pp. 5-72). Last of all the quatrain, "This Dust was once the Man," was first printed in Leaves of Grass, | Washington, D. C. | 1871-2. | where the entire suite of four poems is entitled "President Lincoln's Burial Hymn." In Leaves of Grass | Boston, | 1881-2 | this section is finally grouped as "Memories of President Lincoln." Henceforth no further

changes are made either in the text or the order of the poems.

We are not told that Lincoln ever read Leaves of Grass or even knew of the existence of the book. Neither are we aware if Whitman ever had intimate personal speech with the liberator of three million souls in bondage. But we do know and rejoice that both men were in the world together, and near in heart and brain together, and that this greatest of all dirges, born of a nation's mourning for her dead, will remain an everlasting masterpiece when

*“The tumult of the time disconsolate
To inarticulate murmurs dies away,
While the eternal ages watch and wait.”*

T. B. M.



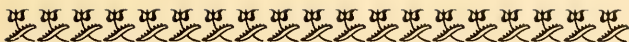
MEMORIES OF PRESIDENT LINCOLN

.

“THE main effect of this poem is of strong, solemn, and varied music ; and it involves in its construction a principle after which perhaps the great composers most work, — namely, spiritual auricular analogy. At first it would seem to defy analysis, so rapt is it, and so indirect. No reference whatever is made to the mere fact of Lincoln’s death ; the poet does not even dwell upon its unprovoked atrocity, and only occasionally is the tone that of lamentation ; but, with the intuitions of the grand art, which is the most complex when it seems most simple, he seizes upon three beautiful facts of nature, which he weaves into a wreath for the dead President’s tomb. The central thought is of death, but around this he curiously twines, first, the early-blooming lilacs which the poet may have plucked the day the dark shadow came ; next the song of the hermit thrush, the most sweet and solemn of all our songsters, heard at twilight in the dusky cedars ; and with these the evening star, which, as many may remember, night after night in the early part of that eventful spring, hung low in the west with unusual and tender brightness. These are the premises whence he starts his solemn chant.

The attitude, therefore, is not that of being bowed down and weeping hopeless tears, but of singing a commemorative hymn, in which the voices of nature join, and fits that exalted condition of the soul which serious events and the presence of death induce.”

JOHN BURROUGHS.



I.

WHEN LILACS LAST IN THE DOORYARD
BLOOM'D.

I.

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

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

2.

O powerful western fallen star!
O shades of night — O moody, tearful night!
O great star disappear'd — O the black murk that hides
the star!
O cruel hands that hold me powerless — O helpless soul
of me!
O harsh surrounding cloud that will not free my soul.

3.

In the dooryard fronting an old farm-house near the
 white-wash'd palings,
 Stands the lilac-bush tall-growing with heart-shaped
 leaves of rich green,
 With many a pointed blossom rising delicate, with the
 perfume strong I love,
 With every leaf a miracle — and from this bush in the
 dooryard,
 With delicate-color'd blossoms and heart-shaped leaves
 of rich green,
 A sprig with its flower I break.

4.

In the swamp in secluded recesses,
 A shy and hidden bird is warbling a song.

Solitary the thrush,
 The hermit withdrawn to himself, avoiding the settle-
 ments,
 Sings by himself a song.

Song of the bleeding throat,
 Death's outlet song of life, (for well dear brother I
 know,
 If thou wast not granted to sing thou would'st surely
 die.)

5.

Over the breast of the spring, the land, amid cities,
 Amid lanes and through old woods, where lately the
 violets peep'd from the ground, spotting the
 gray debris,
 Amid the grass in the fields each side of the lanes,
 passing the endless grass,
 Passing the yellow-spear'd wheat, every grain from its
 shroud in the dark-brown fields uprisen,
 Passing the apple-tree blows of white and pink in the
 orchards,
 Carrying a corpse to where it shall rest in the grave,
 Night and day journeys a coffin.

6.

Coffin that passes through lanes and streets,
 Through day and night with the great cloud darkening
 the land,
 With the pomp of the inloop'd flags with the cities
 draped in black,
 With the show of the States themselves as of crape-
 veil'd women standing,
 With processions long and winding and the flambeaus
 of the night,
 With the countless torches lit, with the silent sea of
 faces and the unbarred heads,

With the waiting depot, the arriving coffin, and the
sombre faces,
With dirges through the night, with the thousand
voices rising strong and solemn,
With all the mournful voices of the dirges pour'd
around the coffin,
The dim-lit churches and the shuddering organs —
where amid these you journey,
With the tolling tolling bells' perpetual clang,
Here, coffin that slowly passes,
I give you my sprig of lilac.

7.

(Not for you, for one alone,
Blossoms and branches green to coffins all I bring,
For fresh as the morning, thus would I chant a song
for you O sane and sacred death.

All over bouquets of roses,
O death, I cover you over with roses and early lilies,
But mostly and now the lilac that blooms the first,
Copious I break, I break the sprigs from the bushes,
With loaded arms I come, pouring for you,
For you and the coffins all of you O death.)

8.

O western orb sailing the heaven,
Now I know what you must have meant as a month
since I walk'd,

As I walk'd in silence the transparent shadowy night,
As I saw you had something to tell as you bent to me
 night after night,
As you droop'd from the sky low down as if to my
 side, (while the other stars all look'd on,)
As we wander'd together the solemn night, (for some-
 thing I know not what kept me from sleep,)
As the night advanced, and I saw on the rim of the
 west how full you were of woe,
As I stood on the rising ground in the breeze in the
 cool transparent night,
As I watch'd where you pass'd and was lost in the
 netherward black of the night,
As my soul in its trouble dissatisfied sank, as where
 you sad orb,
Concluded, dropt in the night, and was gone.

9.

Sing on there in the swamp,
O singer bashful and tender, I hear your notes, I hear
 your call,
I hear, I come presently, I understand you,
But a moment I linger, for the lustrous star has de-
 tain'd me,
The star my departing comrade holds and detains
 me.

10.

O how shall I warble myself for the dead one there I
 loved?
 And how shall I deck my song for the large sweet soul
 that has gone?
 And what shall my perfume be for the grave of him I
 love?

Sea-winds blown from east and west,
 Blown from the Eastern sea and blown from the West-
 ern sea, till there on the prairies meeting,
 These and with these and the breath of my chant,
 I'll perfume the grave of him I love.

11.

O what shall I hang on the chamber walls?
 And what shall the pictures be that I hang on the
 walls,
 To adorn the burial-house of him I love?

Pictures of growing spring and farms and homes,
 With the Fourth-month eve at sundown, and the gray
 smoke lucid and bright,
 With floods of the yellow gold of the gorgeous, indo-
 lent, sinking sun, burning, expanding the air,
 With the fresh sweet herbage under foot, and the pale
 green leaves of the trees prolific,

In the distance the flowing glaze, the breast of the
river, with a wind-dapple here and there,
With ranging hills on the banks, with many a line
against the sky, and shadows,
And the city at hand with dwellings so dense, and
stacks of chimneys,
And all the scenes of life and the workshops, and the
workmen homeward returning.

12.

Lo, body and soul — this land,
My own Manhattan with spires, and the sparkling and
hurrying tides, and the ships,
The varied and ample land, the South and the North
in the light, Ohio's shores and flashing Missouri,
And ever the far-spreading prairies cover'd with grass
and corn.

Lo, the most excellent sun so calm and haughty,
The violet and purple morn with just-felt breezes,
The gentle soft-born measureless light,
The miracle spreading bathing all, the fulfill'd noon,
The coming eve delicious, the welcome night and the
stars,
Over my cities shining all, enveloping man and land.

13.

Sing on, sing on you gray-brown bird,

Sing from the swamps, the recesses, pour your chant
from the bushes,

Limitless out of the dusk, out of the cedars and pines.

Sing on dearest brother, warble your reedy song,
Loud human song, with voice of uttermost woe.

O liquid and free and tender !

O wild and loose to my soul — O wondrous singer !

You only I hear — yet the star holds me, (but will
soon depart,)

Yet the lilac with mastering odor holds me.

14.

Now while I sat in the day and look'd forth,

In the close of the day with its light and the fields of
spring, and the farmers preparing their crops,

In the large unconscious scenery of my land with its
lakes and forests,

In the heavenly aerial beauty, (after the perturb'd winds
and the storms,)

Under the arching heavens of the afternoon swift pass-
ing, and the voices of children and women,

The many-moving sea-tides, and I saw the ships how
they sail'd,

And the summer approaching with richness, and the
fields all busy with labor,

And the infinite separate houses, how they all went on,
each with its meals and minutia of daily usages,

And the streets how their throbbings throb'd, and the
cities pent — lo, then and there,
Falling upon them all and among them all, enveloping
me with the rest,
Appear'd the cloud, appear'd the long black trail,
And I knew death, its thought, and the sacred knowl-
edge 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 hold-
ing the hands of companions,
I fled forth to the hiding receiving night that talks not,
Down to the shores of the water, the path by the
swamp in the dimness,
To the solemn shadowy cedars and ghostly pines so
still.

And the singer so shy to the rest receiv'd me,
The gray-brown bird I know receiv'd us comrades
three,
And he sang the carol of death, and a verse for him I
love.

From deep secluded recesses,
From the fragrant cedars and the ghostly pines so still,
Came the carol of the bird.

And the charm of the carol rapt me,
As I held as if by their hands my comrades in the
 night,
And the voice of my spirit tallied the song of the bird.

*Come lovely and soothing death,
Undulate round the world, serenely arriving, arriving,
In the day, in the night, to all, to each,
Sooner or later delicate death.*

*Prais'd be the fathomless universe,
For life and joy, and for objects and knowledge curious,
And for love, sweet love — but praise! praise! praise!
For the sure-enwinding arms of cool-enfolding death.*

*Dark mother always gliding near with soft feet,
Have none chanted for thee a chant of fullest welcome?
Then I chant it for thee, I glorify thee above all,
I bring thee a song that when thou must indeed come,
 come unfalteringly.*

*Approach strong deliveress,
When it is so, when thou hast taken them I joyously sing
 the dead,
Lost in the loving floating ocean of thee,
Laved in the flood of thy bliss O death.*

*From me to thee glad serenades,
Dances for thee I propose saluting thee, adornments and
 feastings for thee,*

*And the sights of the open landscape and the high-spread
sky are fitting,
And life and the fields, and the huge and thoughtful
night.*

*The night in silence under many a star,
The ocean shore and the husky whispering wave whose
voice I know,
And the soul turning to thee O vast and well-veil'd death,
And the body gratefully nestling close to thee.*

*Over the tree-tops I float thee a song,
Over the rising and sinking waves, over the myriad fields
and the prairies wide,
Over the dense-pack'd cities all and the teeming wharves
and ways,
I float this carol with joy, with joy to thee O death.*

15.

To the tally of my soul,
Loud and strong kept up the gray-brown bird,
With pure deliberate notes spreading filling the night.

Loud in the pines and cedars dim,
Clear in the freshness moist and the swamp-perfume,
And I with my comrades there in the night.

While my sight that was bound in my eyes unclosed,
As to long panoramas of visions.

And I saw askant the armies,
I saw as in noiseless dreams hundreds of battle-flags,
Borne through the smoke of the battles and pierc'd
with missiles I saw them,
And carried hither and yon through the smoke, and
torn and bloody,
And at last but a few shreds left on the staffs, (and all
in silence,)
And the staffs all splinter'd and broken.

I saw battle-corpses, myriads of them,
And the white skeletons of young men, I saw them,
I saw the debris and debris of all the slain soldiers of
the war,
But I saw they were not as was thought,
They themselves were fully at rest, they suffer'd not,
The living remain'd and suffer'd, the mother suffer'd,
And the wife and the child and the musing comrade suffer'd,
And the armies that remain'd suffer'd.

16.

Passing the visions, passing the night,
Passing, unloosing the hold of my comrades' hands,
Passing the song of the hermit bird and the tallying
song of my soul,
Victorious song, death's outlet song, yet varying ever-
altering song,
As low and wailing, yet clear the notes, rising and
falling, flooding the night,

Sadly sinking and fainting, as warning and warning, and
yet again bursting with joy,
Covering the earth and filling the spread of the heaven,
As that powerful psalm in the night I heard from
recesses,
Passing, I leave thee lilac with heart-shaped leaves,
I leave thee there in the door-yard, blooming, returning
with spring.

I cease from my song for thee,
From my gaze on thee in the west, fronting the west,
communing with thee,
O comrade lustrous with silver face in the night.

Yet each to keep and all, retrievments out of the
night,
The song, the wondrous chant of the gray-brown bird;
And the tallying chant, the echo arous'd in my soul,
With the lustrous and drooping star with the counte-
nance full of woe,
With the holders holding my hand nearing the call of
the bird,
Comrades mine and I in the midst, and their memory
ever to keep, for the dead I loved so well,
For the sweetest, wisest soul of all my days and lands
— and this for his dear sake,
Lilac and star and bird twined with the chant of my
soul,
There in the fragrant pines and the cedars dusk and dim.

II.

O CAPTAIN! MY CAPTAIN!

O CAPTAIN! my Captain! our fearful trip is done,
The ship has weather'd every rack, the prize we
sought is won,
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and
daring;

But O heart! heart! heart!
O the bleeding drops of red,
Where on the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear the bells;
Rise up—for you the flag is flung—for you the bugle
trills,
For you bouquets and ribbon'd wreaths—for you the
shores a-crowding,
For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces
turning;

Here Captain! dear father!
This arm beneath your head!
It is some dream that on the deck,
You've fallen cold and dead.

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still,
My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will,

The ship is anchor'd safe and sound, its voyage closed
and done,
From fearful trip the victor ship comes in with object
won ;
 Exult O shores, and ring O bells !
 But I with mournful tread,
 Walk the deck my Captain lies,
 Fallen cold and dead.

III.

HUSH'D BE THE CAMPS TO-DAY.

(*May 4, 1865.*)

HUSH'D be the camps to-day,
And soldiers let us drape our war-worn weapons,
And each with musing soul retire to celebrate,
Our dear commander's death.

No more for him life's stormy conflicts,
Nor victory, nor defeat — no more time's dark events,
Charging like ceaseless clouds across the sky.

But sing poet in our name,
Sing of the love we bore him — because you, dweller
in camps, know it truly.

As they invault the coffin there,
Sing — as they close the doors of earth upon him —
one verse,
For the heavy hearts of soldiers.

IV.

THIS DUST WAS ONCE THE MAN.

THIS dust was once the man,
Gentle, plain, just and resolute, under whose
cautious hand,
Against the foulest crime in history known in any land
or age,
Was saved the Union of these States.



LYRICS FROM DRUM-TAPS AND
SONGS OF PARTING

“THE *Drum-Taps* and the poems on Lincoln, unique in their imaginative and spiritual suggestiveness, . . . contain perhaps the most thrilling summons to arms and at the same time the most deeply moving aspects of suffering and death ever presented in song. . . . Collectively, these works completely identify the age of Lincoln, with its characteristic scenes, passions, ideas, and flame-like results. Finally, a new interpretation was given to life and the world, the “mystic army” and the “mighty bivouac-field and waiting-camp of all.”

As I ponder'd in silence,
Returning upon my poems, considering, lingering long,
A Phantom arose before me with distrustful aspect,
Terrible in beauty, age, and power,
The genius of poets of old lands,
As to me directing like flame its eyes,
With finger pointing to many immortal songs,
And menacing voice, *What singest thou?* it said,
Know'st thou not there is but one theme for ever-enduring
bards?
And that is the theme of War, the fortune of battles,
The making of perfect soldiers.

Be it so, then I answer'd,
I too haughty Shade also sing war, and a longer and
greater one than any,
Waged in my book with varying fortune, with flight,
advance and retreat, victory deferr'd and wavering,
(Yet methinks certain, or as good as certain, at the last,)
the field the world,
For life and death, for the Body and for the eternal Soul,
Lo, I too am come, chanting the chant of battles,
I above all promote brave soldiers.

And then —

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.

OSCAR LOVELL TRIGGS.



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 specu-
lators — 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.

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 dis-
may'd,)
See, dearest mother, the letter says Pete will soon be better.

Alas poor boy, he will never be better, (nor may-be
needs to be better, that brave and simple soul,)
While they stand at home at the door he is dead
already,
The only son is dead.

But the mother needs to be better,
She with thin form presently drest in black,
By day her meals untouch'd, then at night fitfully
 sleeping, often waking,
In the midnight waking, weeping, longing with one deep
 longing,
O that she might withdraw unnoticed, silent from life
 escape and withdraw,
To follow, to seek, to be with her dear dead son.

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 ?

O maidens and young men I love and that love me,
 What you ask of my days those the strangest and
 sudden your talking recalls,
 Soldier alert I arrive after a long march cover'd with
 sweat and dust,
 In the nick of time I come, plunge in the fight, loudly
 shout in the rush of successful charge,
 Enter the captur'd works — yet lo, like a swift-running
 river they fade,
 Pass and are gone they fade — I dwell not on soldiers'
 perils or soldiers' joys,
 (Both I remember well — many the hardships, few the
 joys, yet I was content.)

But in silence, in dreams' projections,
 While the world of gain and appearance and mirth
 goes on,
 So soon what is over forgotten, and waves wash the
 imprints off the sand,
 With hinged knees returning I enter the doors, (while
 for you up there,
 Whoever you are, follow without noise and be of strong
 heart.)

Bearing the bandages, water and sponge,
 Straight and swift to my wounded I go,

Where they lie on the ground after the battle brought
in,
Where their priceless blood reddens the grass the
ground,
Or to the rows of the hospital tent, or under the roof'd
hospital,
To the long rows of cots up and down each side I
return,
To each and all one after another I draw near, not one
do I miss,
An attendant follows holding a tray, he carries a refuse
pail,
Soon to be fill'd with clotted rags and blood, emptied,
and fill'd again.

I onward go, I stop,
With hinged knees and steady hand to dress wounds,
I am firm with each, the pangs are sharp yet unavoidable,
One turns to me his appealing eyes — poor boy! I never
knew you,
Yet I think I could not refuse this moment to die for
you, if that would save you.

3.

On, on I go, (open doors of time! open hospital doors!)
The crush'd head I dress, (poor crazed hand tear not
the bandage away,)

The neck of the cavalry-man with the bullet through
and through I examine,
Hard the breathing rattles, quite glazed already the eye,
yet life struggles hard,
(Come sweet death! be persuaded O beautiful death!
In mercy come quickly.)

From the stump of the arm, the amputated hand,
I undo the clotted lint, remove the slough, wash off
the matter and blood,
Back on his pillow the soldier bends with curv'd neck
and side-falling head,
His eyes are closed, his face is pale, he dares not look
on the bloody stump,
And has not yet look'd on it.

I dress a wound in the side, deep, deep,
But a day or two more, for see the frame all wasted
and sinking,
And the yellow-blue countenance see.

I dress the perforated shoulder, the foot with the
bullet-wound,
Cleanse the one with a gnawing and putrid gangrene,
so sickening, so offensive,
While the attendant stands behind aside me holding
the tray and pail.

I am faithful, I do not give out,
The fractur'd thigh, the knee, the wound in the abdomen,
These and more I dress with impassive hand, (yet
deep in my breast a fire, a burning flame.)

4.

Thus in silence in dreams' projections,
Returning, resuming, I thread my way through the
hospitals,
The hurt and wounded I pacify with soothing hand,
I sit by the restless all the dark night, some are so
young,
Some suffer so much, I recall the experience sweet and
sad,
(Many a soldier's loving arms about this neck have
cross'd and rested,
Many a soldier's kiss dwells on these bearded lips.)

SPIRIT WHOSE WORK IS DONE.

(*Washington City, 1865.*)

SPIRIT whose work is done — spirit of dreadful
hours!
Ere departing fade from my eyes your forests of
bayonets ;
Spirit of gloomiest fears and doubts, (yet onward ever
unfaltering pressing,)
Spirit of many a solemn day and many a savage scene
— electric spirit,
That with muttering voice through the war now closed,
like a tireless phantom fitted,
Rousing the land with breath of flame, while you beat
and beat the drum,
Now as the sound of the drum, hollow and harsh to
the last, reverberates round me,
As your ranks, your immortal ranks, return, return from
the battles,
As the muskets of the young men yet lean over their
shoulders,
As I look on the bayonets bristling over their should-
ers,
As those slanted bayonets, whole forests of them
appearing in the distance, approach and pass on,
returning homeward,
Moving with steady motion, swaying to and fro to the
right and left,

Evenly lightly rising and falling while the steps keep
time ;
Spirit of hours I knew, all hectic red one day, but pale
as death next day,
Touch my mouth ere you depart, press my lips close,
Leave me your pulses of rage — bequeath them to me
— fill me with currents convulsive,
Let them scorch and blister out of my chants when
you are gone,
Let them identify you to the future in these songs.

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 vapors,
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 battle-fields rising, up from the fœtor
arising.

Perfume therefore my chant, O love, immortal love,
Give me to bathe the memories of all dead soldiers,
Shroud them, embalm them, cover them all over with
tender pride.

Perfume all — make all wholesome,
Make these ashes to nourish and blossom,
O love, solve all, fructify all with the last chemistry.

Give me exhaustless, make me a fountain,
That I exhale love from me wherever I go like a moist
perennial dew,
For the ashes of all dead soldiers South or North.

PENSIVE ON HER DEAD GAZING.

PENSIVE on her dead gazing I heard the Mother of
All,
Desperate on the torn bodies, on the forms covering
the battle-fields gazing,
(As the last gun ceased, but the scent of the powder-
smoke linger'd,)
As she call'd to her earth with mournful voice while
she stalk'd,
Absorb them well O my earth, she cried, I charge you
lose not my sons, lose not an atom,
And you streams absorb them well, taking their dear
blood,
And you local spots, and you airs that swim above
lightly impalpable,
And all you essences of soil and growth, and you my
rivers' depths,
And you mountain sides, and the woods where my
dear children's blood trickling redden'd,
And you trees down in your roots to bequeath to all
future trees,
My dead absorb or South or North — my young men's
bodies absorb, and their precious precious blood,
Which holding in trust for me faithfully back again
give me many a year hence,
In unseen essence and odor of surface and grass, cen-
turies hence,

In blowing airs from the fields back again give me my
darlings, give my immortal heroes,
Exhale me them centuries hence, breathe me their
breath, let not an atom be lost,
O years and graves! O air and soil! O my dead, an
aroma sweet!
Exhale them perennial sweet death, years, centuries
hence.

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 moon-
light, 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.

















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