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The Wisdom of Walt Whitman

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The Wisdom of Walt Whitman

SELECTED AND EDITED, WITH INTRODUCTION

BY

LAURENS MAYNARD

NEW YORK

Brentano's, Fifth Avenue

MCMXVII

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THE great difficulty that confronts the compiler of a volume of selections from Walt Whitman is suggested by John Addington Symonds, when he says, that to speak of Whitman is like talking about the universe. When the limitation of the collection is the wisdom of the poet the task is rather one of elimination than of selection. Even those who are repelled by the form of expression generally recognize the deep significance and rare wisdom of Whitman's pregnant sentences. "What Walt Whitman has to say," writes Stevenson, "is another affair from how he says it. It is not possible to acquit any one of defective intelligence, or else stiff prejudice, who is not interested by Whitman's matter and the spirit which it represents." Such a problem, indeed, confronts him who led into some rich mine is permitted to carry forth only his arms full of its treasure. From every rock, smooth or rough, gleams the precious metal; very easily he fills his arms, only to find at every turn new nuggets alluring him still hesitant to drop a single one already appropriated.

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But as in the rich vegetation of the tropics the most hastily gathered garland will show beauty rich and unusual to the unfamiliar eye, so even a haphazard choice can hardly fail to arrest the attention and excite the interest of the reader who has not acquainted himself with the writings of this compelling master of the minds of men. As the present collection is expected to appeal mainly to such readers it has seemed best to limit the selections to certain broad topics which are most typical of Whitman's thought. He himself has indicated the three principal ideas which have dominated his philosophy.

"The following chants each for its kind I bring
My Comrade!
For you to share with me two greatnesses
and a third one rising inclusive and more
resplendent,
The greatness of Love and Democracy, and
the greatness of Religion."

Different as these topics appear they are in Whitman's thought subtly interdependent.

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Love, even in its physical expression, is filled with the deep religious instinct, for "the soul is not more than the body and the body is not more than the soul"; and Love, rising above the expression of passion becomes the adhesive element binding comrades universal into a cohesive body-politic while the impulses toward reproduction must be refined and sanctified into the purpose to produce "sons and daughters fit for these States."

The sublety of Whitman's thought is such that it is not always easy to classify excerpts. This passage relates to Democracy, but we find that in his ideal Democracy, Religion, an individual mystic communion with the divine principle, is a vital element, and the two ideas are so delicately interwoven that the extract would fit into place under either heading. The saving grace of these subtleties for the compiler is in the fact that if the reader finds under one topic a suggestion which leads his mind to another subject he will be equally likely to find in that place a reciprocal thought taking him back to the other.

In Whitman's conception of the universe

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everything centers upon the individual. The evolution of one's own personality is the key-note to his whole philosophy, and this subject therefore stands well as the entrance porch to any collection of his utterances. His ideas of Literature and Art and of the Conduct of Life are subjected always to the demands of Democracy and the modern spirit, and are expressed vigorously and with a facility of phrase that is often finely epigrammatic. His highest thought and his most original contribution to literature will perhaps be found in his attitude toward Death. Resignation to the inevitable, a serene agnostic calm, a leaning trust upon the divine mercy—all these have been sung by other poets, but none of these satisfies Whitman. He first approaches the terror of dissolution with a complete consciousness of continuance in a more perfect condition of being in which personal identity survives the ravages of the "earth beetles," and chants a welcome to the "Dark Mother" in whom he finds the "loosener of the stricture-knot called life."

LAURENS MAYNARD.

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I. THE EVOLUTION OF PERSONALITY

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One's-Self I sing—a simple separate person;
Yet utter the word Democratic, the word *En-Masse.*

Inscriptions.

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To a Historian

YOU who celebrate bygones!
Who have explored the outward, the surfaces of the races, the life that has exhibited itself,
Who have treated of man as the creature of politics, aggregates, rulers and priests;
I, habitan of the Alleghanies, treating of him as he is in himself in his own rights,
Pressing the pulse of the life that has seldom exhibited itself, (the great pride of man in himself,)
Chanter of Personality, outlining what is yet to be,
I project the history of the future.

Inscriptions.

—+—

A Clue to the History of the Past

I WAS looking a long while for a clue to the history of the past for myself, and for these chants — and now I have found it,
It is not in those paged fables in the libraries, (them I neither accept nor reject,)
It is no more in the legends than in all else,
It is in the present — it is this earth to-day,

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It is in Democracy — (the purport and aim
of all the past),
It is the life of one man or one woman to-day
—the average man of to-day,
It is in languages, social customs, literatures,
arts,
It is in the broad show of artificial things,
ships, machinery, politics, creeds, modern
improvements, and the interchange of na-
tions,
All for the average man of to-day.

I was Looking a Long While.

—+—

What is a Biography?

WHEN I read the book, the biography famous,
And is this then (said I) what the author calls
a man's life?
And so will some one when I am dead and
gone write my life?
(As if any man really knew aught of my life,
Why even I myself I often think know little
or nothing of my real life,
Only a few hints, a few diffused faint clues
and indirections
I seek for my own use to trace out here.)

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The Miracle of the Ego

THERE is, in sanest hours, a consciousness, a thought that rises, independent, lifted out from all else, calm, like the stars, shining eternal. This is the thought of Identity — yours for you, whoever you are, as mine for me. Miracle of miracles, beyond statement, most spiritual and vaguest of earth's dreams, yet hardest basic fact, and only entrance to all facts. In such devout hours, in the midst of the significant wonders of heaven and earth, (significant only because of the Me in the centre,) creeds, conventions, fall away and become of no account before this simple idea. Under the luminousness of real vision, it alone takes possession, takes value. Like the shadowy dwarf in the fable, once liberated and look'd upon, it expands over the whole earth, and spreads to the roof of heaven.

Democratic Vistas.

—+—

The Omnipotence of the Ego

DAZZLING and tremendous how quick the sunrise would kill me,
If I could not now and always send sunrise out of me.

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

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

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

Song of Myself.

All for You: Whoever you are.

WHOEVER you are! you are he or she
for whom the earth is solid and liquid,
You are he or she for whom the sun and moon
hang in the sky,
For none more than you are the present and
the past,
For none more than you is immortality.

A Song of the Rolling Earth.

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

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

Do you know so much yourself that you call the slave or the dull-face ignorant?
Do you suppose you have a right to a good sight, and he or she has no right to a sight?
Do you think matter has cohered together from its diffuse float and the soil is on the surface, and water runs and vegetation sprouts,
For you only, and not for him and her?

Children of Adam.

The Sacredness of the Individual

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Each of us Inevitable and Limitless

ALL you continentals of Asia, Africa, Europe, Australia, indifferent of place!
All you on the numberless islands of the archipelagoes of the sea!
And you of centuries hence when you listen to me!
And you each and everywhere whom I specify not, but include just the same!
Health to you! Good will to you all, from me and America sent!

Each of us inevitable,
Each of us limitless — each of us with his or her right upon the earth,
Each of us allow'd the eternal purports of the earth,
Each of us here as divinely as any is here.

Salut au Monde.

—+—

Underneath all Individuals

UNDERNEATH all, individuals,
I swear nothing is good to me now that ignores individuals,
The American compact is altogether with individuals,

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The only government is that which makes minute of individuals,
The whole theory of the universe is directed unerringly to one single individual—namely to You.

By Blue Ontario's Shore.

—+—

YOU Hottentot with clicking palate! you woolly-hair'd hordes!
You own'd persons dropping sweat-drops or blood-drops!
You human forms with the fathomless ever-impressive countenances of brutes!
I dare not refuse you—the scope of the world, and of time and space, are upon me.

You poor koboo whom the meanest of the rest look down upon for all your glimmering language and spirituality!
You Caffre, Berber, Soudanese!
You haggard, uncouth, untutor'd Bedowee!
You plague-swarms in Madras, Nankin, Kaubul, Cairo!
You bather bathing in the Ganges!

Latent Potentialities

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You benighted roamer of Amazonia! you Patagonian! you Fejee-man!
I do not prefer others so very much before you either,
I do not say one word against you, away back there where you stand,
(You will come forward in due time to my side).

Salut au Monde.

—+—

The Development of the Individual

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Faces.

—++—

Personal Evolution

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.

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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 genera-
tions guided me,
My embryo has never been torpid, nothing
could overlay it.

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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.

Song of Myself.

—++—

The Talk of the Beginning and the End

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.

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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.

Song of Myself, p. 30.

—+ +—

O THE joy of a manly self-hood!
Personality—to be servile to none, to defer to none, not to any tyrant known or unknown,
To walk with erect carriage, a step springy and elastic,
To look with calm gaze or with a flashing eye,
To speak with a full and sonorous voice out of a broad chest,
To confront with your personality all the other personalities of the earth.

—+ +— *A Song of Joys.*

The Joy of a Manly Self-hood

THE earth is not an echo, man and his life and all the things of his life are well-consider'd.

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

The Immortality of the Individual

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

To Think of Time.

—+—

Everything Tallied in the Individual

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

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All architecture is what you do to it when you
look upon it,
(Did you think it was in the white or gray
stone? or the lines of the arches and cor-
nices?)

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

A Song for Occupations.

—+—

Infinity and Eternity for Me

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.

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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 stop-
page,
If I, you, and the worlds, and all beneath or
upon their surfaces, were this moment re-
duced 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 far-
ther 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.

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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.

Song of Myself.

—+—

Aspiration

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

Song of Myself.

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II. DEMOCRACY

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

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THE purpose of democracy—supplanting old belief in the necessary absoluteness of establish'd dynastic rulership, temporal, ecclesiastical, and scholastic, as furnishing the only security against chaos, crime, and ignorance—is, through many transmigrations and amid endless ridicules, arguments, and ostensible failures, to illustrate, at all hazards, this doctrine or theory that man, properly train'd in sanest, highest freedom, may and must become a law, and series of laws, unto himself, surrounding and providing for, not only his own personal control, but all his relations to other individuals, and to the State; and that, while other theories, as in the past histories of nations, have proved wise enough, and indispensable perhaps for their conditions, *this*, as matters now stand in our civilized world, is the only scheme worth working from, as warranting results like those of Nature's laws, reliable, when once establish'd, to carry on themselves.

Democratic Vistas.

—+—

The Purpose of Democracy

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"Earth's Résumé Entire"

SAIL, sail thy best, ship of Democracy,
Of value is thy freight, 'tis not the Present only,
The Past is also stored in thee;
Thou holdest not the venture of thyself alone, not of thy western continent alone,
Earth's *résumé* entire floats on thy keel O ship, is steadied by thy spars;
With thee Time voyages in trust, the antecedent nations sink or swim with thee,
With all their ancient struggles, martyrs, heroes, epics, wars, thou bear'st the other continents,
Theirs, theirs as much as thine, the destination-port triumphant;
Steer, steer with good strong hand and wary eye O helmsman, thou carriest great companions,
Venerable priestly Asia sails this day with thee,
And royal feudal Europe sails with thee.

Thou Mother with Thy Equal Brood.

—+—

Democratic Art

I SAY that democracy can never prove itself beyond cavil, until it founds and luxuriantly grows its own forms of art, poems,

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schools, theology, displacing all that exists, or that has been produced anywhere in the past, under opposite influences. It is curious to me that while so many voices, pens, minds, in the press, lecture-rooms, in our Congress, etc., are discussing intellectual topics, pecuniary dangers, legislative problems, the suffrage, tariff and labor questions, and the various business and benevolent needs of America, with propositions, remedies, often worth deep attention, there is one need, a hiatus, and the profoundest, that no eye seems to perceive, no voice to state. Our fundamental want to-day in the United States, with closest, amplest reference to present conditions, and to the future, is of a class, and the clear idea of a class, of native authors, literatuses, far different, far higher in grade than any yet known, sacerdotal, modern, fit to cope with our occasions, lands, permeating the whole mass of American mentality, taste, belief, breathing into it a new breath of life, giving it decision, affecting politics far more than the popular superficial suffrage, with results inside and underneath the elections of Presidents or Congresses — radia-

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ting, begetting appropriate teachers, schools, manners, and, as its grandest result, accomplishing (what neither the schools nor the churches and their clergy have hitherto accomplish'd, and without which this nation will no more stand, permanently, soundly, than a house will stand without a substratum) a religious and moral character beneath the political and productive and intellectual bases of the States. For know you not, dear earnest readers, that the people of our land may all know how to read and write, and may all possess the right to vote and yet the main things may be entirely lacking?

Democratic Vistas.

—+—

The Influences which Stamp History

TO the ostent of the senses and eyes, I know, the influences which stamp the world's history are wars, uprisings or downfalls of dynasties, changeful movements of trade, important inventions, navigation, military or civil governments, advent of powerful personalities, conquerors, etc. These of course play their part; yet, it may be, a single new thought, imagination, principle, even

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literary style, fit for the time, put in shape by some great literatus, and projected among mankind, may duly cause changes, growths, removals, greater than the longest and bloodiest war, or the most stupendous merely political, dynastic, or commercial overturn.

—++— *Democratic Vistas.*

"The Fervid and Tremendous Idea"

NOTHING is plainer than the need, a long period to come, of a fusion of the States into the only reliable identity, the mortal and artistic one. For, I say, the true nationality of the States, the genuine union, when we come to a moral crisis, is, and is to be, after all, neither the written law nor, (as is generally supposed,) either self-interest, or common pecuniary or material objects — but the fervid and tremendous IDEA, melting everything else with resistless heat, and solving all lesser and definite distinctions in vast, indefinite, spiritual, emotional power. —++— *Democratic Vistas.*

"The United States Essentially the Greatest Poem"

THE Americans of all nations at any time upon the earth, have probably the fullest poetical nature. The United States themselves are essentially the greatest poem. In

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the history of the earth hitherto, the largest and most stirring appear tame and orderly to their ampler largeness and stir. Here at last is something in the doings of man that corresponds with the broadcast doings of the day and night. Here is not merely a nation but a teeming nation of nations. Here is action untied from strings, necessarily blind to particulars and details, magnificently moving in vast masses. Here is the hospitality which forever indicates heroes. Here the performance, disdaining the trivial, unapproach'd in the tremendous audacity of its crowds and groupings, and the push of its perspective, spreads with crampless and flowing breadth, and showers its prolific and splendid extravagance. One sees it must indeed own the riches of the summer and winter, and need never be bankrupt while corn grows from the ground, or the orchards drop apples, or the bays contain fish, or men beget children upon women.

Preface, 1855.

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AS if in some colossal drama, acted again like those of old under the open sun, the Nations of our time, and all the characteristics of Civilization, seem hurrying, stalking across, flitting from wing to wing, gathering, closing up, toward some long-prepar'd, most tremendous dénouement. Not to conclude the infinite scenas of the race's life and toil and happiness and sorrow but haply that the boards be clear'd from oldest, worst incumbrances, accumulations, and Man resume the eternal play anew, and under happier, freer auspices. To me, the United States are important because in this colossal drama they are unquestionably designated for the leading parts for many a century to come. In them history and humanity seem to culminate. Our broad areas are even now the busy theatre of plots, passions, interests, and suspended problems compared to which the intrigues of the past of Europe . . . and even the development of peoples, as hitherto, exhibit scales of measurement comparatively narrow and trivial. And on these areas of ours, as on a stage, sooner or later, something like an *eclaircissement* of

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all the past civilization of Europe and Asia is probably to be evolved.

Preface, 1872.

—+—

"The Modern Composite Nation"

NOT to be acted, emulated here, by us again, that rôle till now foremost in history—not to become a conqueror nation, or to achieve the glory of mere military, or diplomatic, or commercial superiority—but to become the grand producing land of nobler men and women—of copious races, cheerful, healthy, tolerant, free — to become the most friendly nation (the United States indeed) — the modern composite nation, form'd from all, with room for all, welcoming all immigrants — accepting the work of our own interior development, as the work fitly filling ages and ages to come; — the leading nation of peace, but neither ignorant nor incapable of being the leading nation of war; — not the man's nation only, but the woman's nation — a land of splendid mothers, daughters, sisters, wives.

Preface, 1872.

—+—

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Natal Stars

LO! where arise three peerless stars
To be thy natal stars, my country—Ensemble — Evolution — Freedom,
Set in the sky of Law.

Thou Mother with Thy Equal Brood.

—+—

The Importance of the Individual

BUT sternly discarding, shutting our eyes to the glow and grandeur of the general effect, coming down to what is of the only real importance, Personalities, and examining minutely, we question, we ask, Are there, indeed, *men* here worthy the name? Are there athletes? Are there perfect women, to match the generous material luxuriance? Is there a pervading atmosphere of beautiful manners? Are there crops of fine youths, and majestic old persons? Are there arts worthy freedom and a rich people? Is there a great moral and religious civilization — the only justification of a great material one?

Democratic Vistas.

—+—

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A Great City

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

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

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

Song of the Broad-Axe.

The Real Man of Divine Essence

FOR after the rest is said—after the many time-honor'd and really true things for subordination, experience, rights of property,

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etc., have been listen'd to and acquiesced in— after the valuable and well-settled statement of our duties and relations in society is thoroughly conn'd over and exhausted — it remains to bring forward and modify everything else with the idea of that something a man is (last precious consolation of the drudging poor), standing apart from all else, divine in his own right, and a woman in hers, sole and untouchable by any canons of authority or any rule derived from precedent, State-safety, the acts of legislatures, or even from what is called religion, modesty, or art.

Democratic Vistas.

—+—

The Genius of the United States

THE genius of the United States is not best or most in its executives or legislatures, nor in its ambassadors or authors, or colleges or churches or parlors, nor even in its newspapers or inventors — but always most in the common people. . . . The largeness of the nation, however, were monstrous without a corresponding largeness and generosity of the spirit of the citizen. Not Nature nor

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swarming states, nor streets and steamships, nor prosperous business, nor farms, nor capital, nor learning, may suffice for the ideal of man — nor suffice the poet. No reminiscences may suffice either. A live nation can always cut a deep mark, and can have the best authority the cheapest—namely, from its own soul. . . . The pride of the United States leaves the wealth and finesse of the cities, and all returns of commerce and agriculture, and all the magnitude of geography and shows of exterior victory, to enjoy the sight and realization of full-sized men, or one full-sized man unconquerable and simple.

Preface, 1855.

"What Christ Appeared For"

WHAT Christ appear'd for in the moral-spiritual field for human-kind, namely, that in respect to the absolute soul, there is in the possession of such by each single individual, something so transcendent, so incapable of gradations (like life,) that, to that extent, it places all beings on a common level, utterly regardless of the distinctions of intellect, virtue, station, or any height or lowliness

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whatever — is tallied in like manner, in this other field, by democracy's rule that men, the nation, as a common aggregate of living identities, affording in each a separate and complete subject for freedom, worldly thrift and happiness, and for a fair chance for growth, and for protection in citizenship, etc., must, to the political extent of the suffrage or vote, if no further, be placed, in each and in the whole, on one broad, primary, universal, common platform. *Democratic Vistas.*

—+—

The Only Safe Formula

WE do not, (at any rate I do not,) put it either on the ground that the People, the masses, even the best of them, are, in their latent or exhibited qualities, essentially sensible and good — nor on the ground of their rights; but that good or bad, rights or no rights, the democratic formula is the only safe and preservative one for coming times. We endow the masses with the suffrage for their own sake, no doubt; then, perhaps still more, from another point of view, for community's sake. Leaving the rest to the sentimentalists, we present freedom as sufficient in its scien-

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tific aspect, cold as ice, reasoning, deductive, clear and passionless as crystal.

Democratic Vistas.

—+—

The People

THE People! Like our huge earth itself, which, to ordinary scansion, is full of vulgar contradiction and offence, man, viewed in the lump, displeases, and is a constant puzzle and affront to the merely educated classes. The rare, cosmical, artist-mind, lit with the Infinite, alone confronts his manifold and oceanic qualities — but taste, intelligence and culture (so-called,) have been against the masses, and remain so. There is plenty of glamour about the most damnable crimes and hoggish meannesses, special and general, of the feudal and dynastic world over there, with its *personnel* of lords and queens and courts, so well-dress'd and so handsome. But the People are ungrammatical, untidy, and their sins gaunt and ill-bred.

Democratic Vistas.

—+—

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LITERATURE, strictly consider'd, has never recognized the People, and, whatever may be said, does not to-day. Speaking generally, the tendencies of literature, as hitherto pursued, have been to make mostly critical and querulous men. It seems as if, so far, there were some natural repugnance between a literary and professional life, and the rude rank spirit of the democracies. There is, in later literature, a treatment of benevolence, a charity business, rife enough it is true; but I know nothing more rare, even in this country, than a fit scientific estimate and reverent appreciation of the People — of their measureless wealth of latent power and capacity, their vast, artistic contrasts of lights and shades — with, in America, their entire reliability in emergencies, and a certain breadth of historic grandeur, of peace or war, far surpassing all the vaulted samples of book-heroes, or any *haut ton* coteries, in all the records of the world.

Democratic Vistas.

—+—

Literature has never Recognized the People

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The Mission of Government

I SAY the mission of government, henceforth in civilized lands, is not repression alone, and not authority alone, not even of law, nor by that favorite standard of the eminent writer, the rule of the best men, the born heroes and captains of the race, (as if such ever, or one time out of a hundred, get into the big places, elective or dynastic) — but higher than the highest arbitrary rule, to train communities through all their grades, beginning with individuals and ending there again, to rule themselves.

Democratic Vistas.

—+—

Where the Great City Stands

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

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

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Where equanimity is illustrated in affairs,
Where speculations on the soul are encouraged,
Where women walk in public processions in the streets the same as the men,
Where they enter the public assembly and take places the same as the men;
Where the city of the faithfulest friends stands,
Where the city of the cleanliness of the sexes stands,
Where the city of the healthiest fathers stands,
Where the city of the best-bodied mothers stands,
There the great city stands.

Song of the Broad-Axe.

—+—

America To-day a Seething Mass of Materials

OUR America to-day I consider in many respects as but indeed a vast seething mass of *materials*, ampler, better, (worse also,) than previously known — eligible to be used to carry towards its crowning stage, and build for good, the great ideal nationality of the future, the nation of the body and the soul, — no limit here to land, help, opportunities, mines, products, demands, supplies, etc.; —

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with (I think) our political organization, National, State, and Municipal, permanently establish'd, as far ahead as we can calculate — but, so far, no social, literary, religious, or esthetic organizations, consistent with our politics, or becoming to us — which organizations can only come, in time, through native schools or teachers of great democratic ideas, religion — through science, which now, like a new sunrise, ascending, begins to illuminate all — and through our own begotten poets and literatuses.

Preface, 1872.

—+—

"Land Tolerating All"

LAND tolerating all—accepting all—not for the good alone — all good for thee;
Land in the realms of God to be a realm unto thyself;
Under the rule of God to be a rule unto thyself.

. . . . .

Not for success alone
Not to fair-sail unintermitted always;

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The storm shall dash thy face — the murk of war, and worse than war, shall cover thee all over;

. . . . . .

But thou shalt face thy fortunes, thy diseases, and surmount them all.

Thou Mother with thy Equal Brood.

—+—

The Value of Politics

TO practically enter into politics is an important part of American personalism. . . . It is the fashion among dilettants and fops to decry the whole formulation of the active politics of America, as beyond redemption, and to be carefully kept away from. See you that you do not fall into this error. America, it may be, is doing very well upon the whole, notwithstanding these antics of the parties and their leaders, these half-brain'd nominees, the many ignorant ballots, and many elected failures and blatherers. It is the dilletants, and all who shirk their duty, who are not doing well. As for you, I advise you to enter more strongly yet into politics. I advise every

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young man to do so. Always inform yourself; always do the best you can; always vote.

Democratic Vistas.

—+ +—

The Evil of Parties

DISENGAGE yourself from parties. They have been useful, and to some extent remain so; but the floating, uncommitted electors, farmers, clerks, mechanics, the masters of parties — watching aloof, inclining victory this side or that side — such are the ones most needed, present and future. For America, if eligible at all to downfall and ruin, is eligible within herself, not without; for I see clearly that the combined foreign world could not beat her down. But these savage, wolfish parties alarm me. Owning no law but their own will, more and more combative, less and less tolerant of the idea of ensemble and of equal brotherhood, the perfect equality of the States, the ever-overarching American ideas, it behooves you to convey yourself implicitly to no party, nor submit blindly to their dictators, but steadily hold yourself judge and master over all of them.

Democratic Vistas.

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Faith in Democracy

FAITH is the antiseptic of the soul — it pervades the common people and preserves them — they never give up believing and expecting and trusting. There is that indescribable freshness and unconsciousness about an illiterate person, that humbles and mocks the power of the noblest expressive genius. The poet sees for a certainty how one not a great artist may be just as sacred and perfect as the greatest artist. *Preface*, 1855.

Democracy is Law

DEMOCRACY too is law, and of the strictest, amplest kind. Many suppose, (and often in its own ranks the error,) that it means a throwing aside of law, and running riot. But, briefly, it is the superior law, not alone that of physical force, the body, which, adding to, it supersedes with that of the spirit. Law is the unshakable order of the universe forever; and the law over all, and law of laws, is the law of successions; that of the superior law, in time, gradually supplanting and overwhelming the inferior one. (While, for myself, I would cheerfully agree — first covenanting that the formative tendencies shall be

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administer'd in favor, or at least not against it, and that this reservation be closely construed — that until the individual or community show due signs, or be so minor and fractional as not to endanger the State, the condition of authoritative tutelage may continue, and self-government must abide its time.) Nor is the esthetic point, always an important one, without fascination for highest aiming souls. The common ambition strains for elevations, to become some privileged exclusive. The master sees greatness and health in being part of the mass; nothing will do as well as common ground. Would you have in yourself the divine, vast, general law? Then merge yourself in it.

Democratic Vistas.

—+—

THE great master has nothing to do with miracles. He sees health for himself in being one of the mass — he sees the hiatus in singular eminence. To the perfect shape comes common ground. To be under the general law is great, for that is to correspond with it. The master knows that he is un-

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speakably great, and that all are unspeakably great — that nothing, for instance, is greater than to conceive children, and bring them up well — that to *be* is just as great as to perceive or tell.

Preface, 1855.

Centrifugal Forces

THE eager and often inconsiderate appeals of reformers and revolutionists are indispensable, to counterbalance the inertness and fossilism making so large a part of human institutions. The latter will always take care of themselves — the danger being that they rapidly tend to ossify us. The former is to be treated with indulgence, and even with respect. As circulation to air, so is agitation and a plentiful degree of speculative license to political and moral sanity.

Democratic Vistas.

The Gravitation-hold of Property

THE true gravitation-hold of liberalism in the United States will be a more universal ownership of property, general homesteads, general comfort—a vast, intertwining reticulation of wealth. As the human frame, or, indeed, any object in this manifold universe, is

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best kept together by the simple miracle of its own cohesion, and the necessity, exercise and profit thereof, so a great and varied nationality, occupying millions of square miles, were firmest held and knit by the principle of the safety and endurance of the aggregate of its middling property owners. So that, from another point of view, ungracious as it may sound, and a paradox after what we have been saying, democracy looks with suspicious, ill-satisfied eye upon the very poor, the ignorant, and on those out of business. She asks for men and women with occupations, well-off, owners of houses and acres, and with cash in the bank — and with some cravings for literature, too; and must have them, and hastens to make them. *Democratic Vistas.*

—+—

The Brotherhood of Democracy

AND, topping democracy, this most alluring record, that it alone can bind, and ever seeks to bind, all nations, all men, of however various and distant lands, into a brotherhood, a family. It is the old, yet ever-modern dream of earth, out of her eldest and her youngest, her fond philosophers and poets.

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Not that half only, individualism, which isolates. There is another half, which is adhesiveness or love, that fuses, ties and aggregrates, making the races comrades, and fraternizing all. Both are to be vitalized by religion, (sole worthiest elevator of man or State,) breathing into the proud, material tissues the breath of life. For I say at the core of democracy, finally, is the religious element. All the religions, old and new, are there. Nor may the scheme step forth, clothed in resplendent beauty and command, till these, bearing the best, the latest fruit, the spiritual, shall fully appear. *Democratic Vistas.*

—+—

The Cement of Affection

I DREAM'D in a dream I saw a city invincible to the attacks of the whole of the rest of the earth;
I dream'd that was the new city of Friends;
Nothing was greater there than the quality of robust love, it led the rest;
It was seen every hour in the actions of the men of that city,
And in all their looks and words.

Calamus.

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III LOVE AND COMRADESHIP

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Camerado, I give you my hand!
I give you my love more precious than money,
I give you myself before preaching or law;
Will you give me yourself? will you come travel
with me?
Shall we stick by each other as long as we live?

Song of the Open Road.

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AND now gentlemen,
A word I give to remain in your memories and minds,
As base and finalè too for all metaphysics.

(So to the students the old professor,
At the close of his crowded course.)

Having studied the new and antique, the Greek and Germanic systems,
Kant having studied and stated, Fichte and Schelling and Hegel,
Stated the lore of Plato, and Socrates greater than Plato,
And greater than Socratęs sought and stated, Christ divine having studied long,
I see reminiscent to-day those Greek and Germanic systems,
See the philosophies all, Christian churches and tenets see,
Yet underneath Socrates clearly see, and underneath Christ the divine I see,
The dear love of man for his comrade, the attraction of friend to friend,

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Of the well-married husband and wife, of
children and parents,
Of city for city, and land for land.

Calamus.

—+—

"I sing the Body Electric"

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

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

Children of Adam.

—+—

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

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

Children of Adam.

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"This is the Female Form"

THIS is the female form,
A divine nimbus exhales from it from head to foot,
It attracts with fierce undeniable attraction.
I am drawn by its breath as if I were no more than a helpless vapor, all falls aside but myself and it;
Books, art, religion, time, the visible and solid earth, the atmosphere and the clouds, and what was expected of heaven or fear'd of hell, are now consumed;
Mad filaments, ungovernable shoots play out of it — the response likewise ungovernable;

. . . . .

Bridegroom night of love, working surely and softly into the prostrate dawn;
Undulating into the willing and yielding day,
Lost in the cleave of the clasping and sweet flesh'd day. *Children of Adam.*

—+—

"Das Ewig Weib-liche"

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.

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The female contains all qualities, and tempers them — she is in her place, and moves with perfect balance.

. . . . .

As I see my soul reflected in nature;
As I see through a mist, one with inexpressible completeness and beauty,
See the bent head, and arms folded over the breast — the female I see.

Children of Adam.

—+—

"The Justified Mother of Men"

BEHOLD a woman!
She looks out from her Quaker-cap— her face is clearer and more beautiful than the sky.

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

Her ample gown is of cream-hued linen:
Her grandsons raised the flax and her granddaughters spun it with the distaff and the wheel.

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

Faces.

—+—

"The Full-spread Pride of a Man"

THE male is not less the soul nor more, he too is in his place,
He too is all qualities, he is action and power;
The flush of the known universe is in him;
Scorn becomes him well, and appetite and defiance become him well.
The wildest, largest passions, bliss that is utmost, sorrow that is utmost, become him well; pride is for him.
The full-spread pride of man is calming and excellent to the soul;
Knowledge becomes him, he likes it always; he brings everything to the test of himself.

Children of Adam.

—+—

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A MAN'S body at auction,
I help the auctioneer—the sloven does not half know his business.

Gentlemen, look on this wonder!
Whatever the bids of the bidders, they cannot be high enough for it;
For it the globe lay preparing quintillions of years, without one animal or plant;
For it the revolving cycles truly and steadily roll'd.

. . . . .

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

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

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

Children of Adam.

—+—

The Need for Perfect Women

UNFOLDED out of the folds of the woman's brain,
Come all the folds of the man's brain duly obedient;
Unfolded out of the justice of the woman, all justice is unfolded;
Unfolded out of the sympathy of the woman is all sympathy;
A man is a great thing upon the earth, and through eternity — but every jot of the greatness of man is unfolded out of woman.

Unfolded out of the Folds.

—+—

The Sacredness of the Body

IF anything is sacred the human body is sacred,
And the glory and sweet of a man is the token of manhood untainted;

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And in man or woman a clean, strong, firm-fibred body is more beautiful that the most beautiful face.

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

O my body! I dare not desert the likes of you in other men and women, nor the likes of the parts of you;
I believe the likes of you are to stand or fall with the likes of the soul, (and that they are the soul).

Children of Adam.

—+—

SEX contains all,
Bodies, souls, meanings, proofs, purities, delicacies, results, promulgations,
All hopes, benefactions, bestowals,
All the passions, loves, beauties, delights of the earth,

The Meanings of Sex

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All the governments, judges, gods, follow'd persons of the earth—
These are contain'd in sex as parts of itself and justifications of itself.

Children of Adam.

—+—

Love the Pulse of All

BLOW again trumpeter! and for thy theme
Take now the enclosing theme of all, the solvent and the setting,
Love, that is pulse of all, the sustenance and the pang,
The heart of man and woman all for love,
No other theme but love — knitting, enclosing, all-diffusing love.

O how the immortal phantoms crowd around me!
I see the vast alembic ever working, I see and know the flames that heat the world,
The glow, the blush, the beating hearts of lovers,
So blissful happy some, and some so silent, dark, and nigh to death;

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Love, that is all the earth to lovers — love,
that mocks time and space,
Love, that is day and night — love, that is
sun and moon and stars,
Love, that is crimson, sumptuous, sick with
perfume,
No other words but words of love, no other
thought but love.

The Mystic Trumpeter.

—+—

The Madness of Love

ONE hour to madness and joy!
O furious! O confine me not!
(What is this that frees me so in storms?
What do my shouts amid lightnings and raging
winds mean?)

. . . . .

O something improv'd! Something in a
trance!
O madness amorous! O trembling!
O to escape utterly from others' anchors and
holds
To drive free! to love free! to dash reckless
and dangerous!

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To court destruction with taunts—with invitations!
To ascend—to leap to the heavens of the love indicated to me!
To rise thither with my inebriate Soul!
To be lost, if it must be so!
To feed the remainder of life with one hour of fulness and freedom!
With one brief hour of madness and joy.

Children of Adam.

—+—

The Attraction of Affinity

OUT of the rolling ocean, the crowd, came a drop gently to me,
Whispering, *I love you, before long I die;*
I have travel'd a long way, merely to look on you, to touch you,
For I could not die till I once look'd on you,
For I fear'd I might afterward lose you.

(Now we have met, we have look'd, we are safe;
Return in peace to the ocean, my love;
I too am part of that ocean, my love—we are not so much separated;

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Behold the great rondure—the cohesion of all,
how perfect!
But as for me, for you, the irresistible sea is to
separate us,
As for an hour carrying us diverse—yet can-
not carry us diverse forever;
Be not impatient—a little space—know you, I
salute the air, the ocean, and the land
Every day, at sundown, for your dear sake,
my love.)

Children of Adam.

—+—

Remi-
nis-
cences

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,

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

Children of Adam.

—+—

The Safety of the Future

INTENSE and loving comradeship, the personal and passionate attachment of man to man—which, hard to define, underlies the lessons and ideals of the profound saviors of every land and age, and which seems to promise, when thoroughly develop'd, cultivated and recognized in manners and literature, the most substantial hope and safety of the future of these States, will then be fully express'd.

Democratic Vistas.

—+—

Companionship

I WILL sing the song of companionship,
I will show what alone must finally compact these;
I believe these are to found their own ideal of manly love, indicating it in me.
I will therefore let flame from me the burning fires that were threatening to consume me;
I will lift what has too long kept down those smouldering fires,—
I will give them complete abandonment.

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I will write the evangel-poem of comrades and
of love,
For who but I should understand love with
all its sorrow and joy?
And who but I should be the poet of comrades?
Starting from Paumanok.

—+—

"To be with Those I Like"

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

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

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The Adhesive Love in Democracy

IT is to the development, identification, and general prevalence of that fervid comradeship, (the adhesive love, at least rivaling the amative love hitherto possessing imaginative literature, if not going beyond it,) that I look for the counterbalance and offset of our materialistic and vulgar American democracy, and for the spiritualization thereof. Many will say it is a dream, and will not follow my inferences: but I confidently expect a time when there will be seen, running like a half-hid warp through all the myriad audible and visible worldly interests of America, threads of manly friendship, fond and loving, pure and sweet, strong and life-long, carried to degrees hitherto unknown — not only giving tone to individual character, and making it unprecedently emotional, muscular, heroic, and refined, but having the deepest relations to general politics. I say democracy infers such loving comradeship, as its most inevitable twin or counterpart, without which it will be incomplete, in vain, and incapable of perpetuating itself.

Democratic Vistas.

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COME, I will make the continent indissoluble,
I will make the most splendid race the sun ever shone upon,
I will make divine magnetic lands,
With the love of comrades,
With the life-long love of comrades.

I will plant companionship thick as trees along all the rivers of America, and along the shores of the great lakes, and all over the prairies.
I will make inseparable cities with their arms about each other's necks,
By the love of comrades,
By the manly love of comrades.

For you these from me, O Democracy, to serve you, ma femme!
For you, for you I am trilling these songs.
In the love of comrades,
In the high-towering love of comrades.

Calamus.

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OF the terrible doubt of appearances,
Of the uncertainty after all, that we may be deluded,
That may-be reliance and hope are but speculations after all,
That may-be identity beyond the grave is a beautiful fable only,
May-be the things I perceive, the animals, plants, men, hills, shining and flowing waters,
The skies of day and night, colors, densities, forms, may-be these are (as doubtless they are) only apparitions, and the real something has yet to be known.

. . . . .

To me these and the like of these are curiously answer'd by my lovers, my dear friends,
When he whom I love travels with me or sits a long while holding me by the hand,
When the subtle air, the impalpable, the sense that words and reason hold not, surround us and pervade us,
Then I am charged with untold and untellable wisdom, I am silent, I require nothing further,

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I cannot answer the question of appearances
or that of identity beyond the grave,
But I walk or sit indifferent, I am satisfied;
He ahold of my hand has completely satisfied
me.

Calamus.

—+—

IN my opinion it is by a fervent, accepted development of Comradeship, the beautiful and sane affection of man for man, latent in all the young fellows, North and South, East and West — it is by this, I say, and by what goes directly and indirectly along with it, that the United States of the future (I cannot too often repeat) are to be most effectually welded together, intercalated, anneal'd into a Living Union.

Preface, 1876.

The Welding of the Nation

—+—

I SAW in Louisiana a live-oak growing,
All alone stood it and the moss hung
down from the branches;
Without any companion it grew there uttering
joyous leaves of dark green,

The Yearnings of Solitude

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And its look, rude, unbending, lusty, made me think of myself.
But I wonder'd how it could utter joyous leaves standing alone there without its friend, its lover near, for I knew I could not;
And I broke off a twig with a certain number of leaves upon it, and twined round it a little moss,
And brought it away; and I have placed it in sight in my room.
It is not needed to remind me as of my own dear friends,
(For I believe lately I think of little else than of them,)
Yet it remains to me a curious token, it makes me think of manly love;
For all that, and though the live-oak glistens there in Louisiana solitary in a wide flat space,
Uttering joyous leaves all its life without a friend a lover near,
I know very well I could not.

Calamus.

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MY spirit has pass'd in compassion and determination around the whole earth;
I have look'd for equals and lovers and found them ready for me in all lands;
I think some divine rapport has equalized me with them. *Salut au Monde.*

—+—

I ALSO sent out *Leaves of Grass* to arouse and set flowing in men's and women's hearts, young and old, (my present and future readers,) endless streams of living, pulsating love and friendship, directly from them to myself, now and ever. To this terrible irrepressible yearning, (surely more or less down underneath in most human souls,) — this never-satisfied appetite for sympathy, and this boundless offering of sympathy — this universal democratic comradeship — this old eternal, yet ever-new interchange of adhesiveness, so fitly emblematic of America — I have given in that book, undisguisedly, declaredly, the openest expression. Poetic literature has long been the formal and conventional tender of art and beauty merely, and of a narrow, constipated, special amativeness. I say the sub-

Universal Brotherhood

A Vital Bond in Literature

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tlest, sweetest, surest tie between me and Him or Her, who in the pages of *Calamus* and other pieces realizes me — though we never see each other, or though ages and ages hence — must, in their way, be personal affection. And those—be they few, or be they many—are at any rate *my readers*, in a sense that belongs not, and never can belong, to better, prouder poems.

Preface, 1876.

—+—

Invisible Communion

WHEN you read these I that was visible am become invisible.
Now it is you, compact, visible, realizing my poems, seeking me,
Fancying how happy you were if I could be with you and become your comrade;
Be it as if I were with you. (Be not too certain but I am now with you.)

Calamus.

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IV. RELIGION

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Passage indeed O soul to primal thought,
Not lands and seas alone, thy own clear freshness,
The young maturity of brood and bloom,
To realms of budding bibles.

Passage to India.

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The Religious Purpose of Leaves of Grass

WHEN I commenced, years ago, elaborating the plan of my poems . . . one deep purpose underlay the others, and has underlain it and its execution ever since — and that has been the religious purpose. . . . Not of course to exhibit itself in the old ways, as in writing hymns or psalms with an eye to the church pew, or to express conventional pietism, or the sickly yearnings of devotees, but in a new way, and aiming at the widest sub-bases and inclusions of humanity, and tallying the fresh air of sea and land. I will see, (said I to myself,) whether there is not, for my purposes as poet, a religion, and a sound religious germenancy in the average human race . . . deeper and larger, and affording more profitable returns, than all mere sects or churches — as boundless, joyous, and vital as Nature itself— a germenancy that has too long been unencouraged, unsung, almost unknown.

With science, the old theology of the East, long in its dotage, begins evidently to die and disappear. But (to my mind) science — and may-be such will prove its principal service — as evidently prepares the way for One inde-

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scribably grander — Time's young but perfect offspring — the new theology-heir of the West — lusty and loving and wondrous beautiful. For America, and for to-day, just the same as any day, the supreme and final science is the science of God — what we call science being only its minister — as Democracy is, or shall be also.

Preface, 1872.

—+—

After Reading Hegel

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.

Roaming in Thought.

—+—

The Emancipation of Religion

THE time has certainly come to begin to discharge the idea of religion . . . from mere ecclesiasticism, and from Sundays and churches and church-going, and assign it to that general position, chiefest, most indispensable, most exhilarating, to which the others are to be adjusted, inside of all human character, and education, and affairs. . . . It must be con-

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sign'd henceforth to democracy *en masse*, and to literature. It must enter into the poems of the nation. It must make the nation.

Preface, 1872.

—+—

EACH is not for its own sake,
I say the whole earth and all the stars in the sky are for religion's sake.

I say no man has ever yet been half devout enough,
None has ever yet adored or worship'd half enough,
None has begun to think how divine he himself is, and how certain the future is.

I say that the real and permanent grandeur of these States must be their religion,
Otherwise there is no real and permanent grandeur;
(Nor character nor life worthy the name without religion,
Nor land nor man or woman without religion.) *Starting from Paumanok.*

The Immanence of Religion

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The Conflict of Theology with Science

NOTE, to-day, an instructive, curious spectacle and conflict. Science, (twin, in its fields, of Democracy in its) — Science, testing absolutely all thoughts, all works, has already burst well upon the world — a sun, mounting, most illuminating, most glorious — surely never again to set. But against it, deeply entrench'd, holding possession, yet remains, (not only through the churches and schools, but by imaginative literature, and unregenerate poetry,) the fossil theology of the mythic-materialistic, superstitious, untaught and credulous, fable-loving, primitive ages of humanity.

Democratic Vistas.

—+—

A Child's Amaze

SILENT and amazed even when a little boy,
I remember I heard the preacher every Sunday put God in his statements,
As contending against some being or influence.

A Child's Amaze.

—+—

The Priest of the Future

THERE will soon be no more priests. Their work is done. A new order shall arise, and they shall be the priests of man, and

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every man shall be his own priest. They shall find their inspiration in real objects to-day, symptoms of the past and future. They shall not deign to defend immortality or God, or the perfection of things, or liberty, or the exquisite beauty and reality of the soul. *Preface*, 1855.

—+—

All-Inclusive Faith

I DO not despise you priests;
My faith is the greatest of faiths and the least of faiths,
Enclosing worship ancient and modern and all between ancient and modern.

Song of Myself.

—+—

The Divine Element in all Religions

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,

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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.

Song of Myself.

—++—

The Idea of God

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. *Song of Myself.*

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Joyousness and Health in Religion

A STRONG fibred joyousness and faith, and the sense of health *al fresco*, may well enter into the preparation of future noble American authorship. Part of the test of a great literatus shall be the absence in him of the idea of the covert, the lurid, the maleficent, the devil, the grim estimates inherited from the Puritans, hell, natural depravity, and the like. The great literatus will be known, among the rest, by his cheerful simplicity, his adherence to natural standards, his limitless faith in God, his reverence, and by the absence in him of doubt, ennui, burlesque, persiflage, or any strain'd and temporary fashion.

Democratic Vistas.

—++—

Adoration

AH more than any priest, O soul, we too believe in God,
But with the mystery of God we dare not dally.

Passage to India.

—++—

The Illumination of the Individual Soul

THE ripeness of Religion is doubtless to be looked for in the field of individuality, and is a result that no organization or church can ever achieve. As history is poorly retain'd

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by what the technists call history, and is not given out from their pages, except the learner has in himself the sense of the well-wrapt, never yet written, perhaps impossible to be written, history—so Religion, although casually arrested, and, after a fashion, preserv'd in the churches and creeds, does not depend at all upon them, but is part of the identified soul, which, when greatest, knows not bibles in the old way, but in new ways—the identified soul, which can really confront Religion when it extricates itself entirely from the churches, and not before.

Democratic Vistas.

CHANTING THE SQUARE DEIFIC

I

The Reign of Law

CHANTING the square deific, out of the One advancing, out of the sides,
Out of the old and new, out of the square entirely divine,
Solid, four-sided, (all the sides needed,) from this side Jehovah am I,

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Old Brahm I, and I Saturnius am;
Not Time affects me — I am Time, old, modern as any,
Unpersuadable, relentless, executing righteous judgments,
As the Earth, the Father, the brown old Kronos, with laws,
Aged beyond computation, yet ever new, ever with those mighty laws rolling,
Relentless I forgive no man — whoever sins dies — I will have that man's life;
Therefore let none expect mercy — have the seasons, gravitation, the appointed days, mercy? No more have I;
But as the seasons and gravitation, and as all the appointed days that forgive not,
I dispense from this side judgments inexorable without the least remorse.

2

CONSOLATOR most mild, the promis'd one advancing,
With gentle hand extended, the mightier God am I;

The Consolation of Affection

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Foretold by prophets and poets in their most
rapt prophecies and poems,
From this side, lo! the Lord Christ gazes —
lo! Hermes I — lo! mine is Hercules'
face;
All sorrow, labor, suffering, I, tallying it, ab-
sorb in myself.
Many times have I been rejected, taunted, put
in prison, and crucified, and many times
shall be again.
All the world have I given up for my dear
brothers' and sisters' sake, for the soul's
sake,
Wending my way through the homes of men,
rich or poor, with the kiss of affection:
For I am affection, I am the cheer-bringing
God, with hope and all-enclosing charity,
(Conqueror yet — for before me all the
armies and soldiers of the earth shall yet
bow—and all the weapons of war become
impotent:)
With indulgent words as to children, with
fresh and sane words, mine only,
Young and strong I pass knowing well I am
destin'd myself to an early death.

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But my charity has no death — my wisdom
dies not, neither early nor late,
And my sweet love, bequeath'd here and else-
where, never dies.

3

ALOOF, dissatisfied, plotting revolt,
Comrade of criminals, brother of slaves,
Crafty, despised, a drudge, ignorant,
With sudra face and worn brow, black, but in
the depths of my heart, proud as any,
Lifted now and always against whoever scorn-
ing assumes to rule me,
Morose, full of guile, full of reminiscences,
brooding, with many wiles,
(Though it was thought I was baffled and dis-
pel'd, and my wiles done, but that will never
be,)
Defiant, I, Satan, still live, still utter words, in
new lands duly appearing (and old ones
also),
Permanent here from my side, warlike, equal
with any, real as any,
Nor time nor change shall ever change me or
my words.

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The Fusing Spirit

4

SANTA SPIRITA, breather, life,
Beyond the light, lighter than light,
Beyond the flames of hell, joyous, leaping easily above hell,
Beyond Paradise, perfumed solely with mine own perfume,
Including all life on earth, touching, including God, including Saviour and Satan,
Ethereal, pervading all, (for without me what were all? what were God?)
Essence of forms, life of the real identities, permanent, positive, (namely the unseen,)
Life of the great round world, the sun and stars, and of man, I, the general soul,
Here the square finishing, the solid, I the most solid,
Breathe my breath also through these songs.

Whispers of Heavenly Death.

—+—

Mystic Communion

I SHOULD say, indeed, that only in the perfect uncontamination and solitariness of individuality may the spirituality of religion positively come forth at all. Only here, com-

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munion with the mysteries, the eternal problems, whence? whither? Alone, and identity, and the mood — and the soul emerges, and all statements, churches, sermons, melt away like vapors. Alone, and silent thought and awe, and aspiration — and then the interior consciousness, like a hitherto unseen inscription, in magic ink, beams out its wondrous lines to the sense. Bibles may convey, and priests expound, but it is exclusively for the noiseless operation of one's isolated self to enter the pure ether of veneration, reach the divine levels, and commune with the unutterable. *Democratic Vistas.*

—+—

The Subjectiveness of Religion

WE consider bibles and religions divine;
I do not say they are not divine,
I say they have all grown out of you, and may grow out of you still.
It is not they who give the life, it is you who give the life.
Leaves are not more shed from the trees, or trees from the earth, than they are shed out of you. *A Song for Occupations.*

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AS we have intimated, offsetting the material civilization of our race, our nationality, its wealth, territories, factories, population, products, trade, and military and naval strength, and breathing breath of life into all these, and more, must be its moral civilization — the formulation, expression, and aidancy whereof, is the very highest height of literature. The climax of this loftiest range of civilization, rising above all the gorgeous shows and results of wealth, intellect, power, and art, as such — above even theology and religious fervor — is to be its development, from the eternal bases, and the fit expression, of absolute Conscience, moral soundness, Justice. . . . Even in religious fervor there is a touch of animal heat. But moral conscientiousness, crystalline, without flaw, not Godlike only, entirely human, awes and enchants me forever. Great is emotional love, even in the order of the rational universe. But, if we must make gradations, I am clear there is something greater. Power, love, veneration, products, genius, esthetics, tried by subtlest comparisons, analyses, and in serenest moods, some-

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where fail, somehow become vain. Then noiseless, with flowing steps, the lord, the sun, the last ideal comes. By the names right, justice, truth we suggest, but do not describe it. To the world of men it remains a dream, an idea as they call it. But no dream is it to the wise—but the proudest, almost only solid, lasting thing of all. . . . Its analogy in the material universe is what holds together this world, and every object upon it, and carries its dynamics on forever sure and safe. Its lack, and the persistent shirking of it, as in life, sociology, literature, politics, business, and even sermonizing, these times, or any times, still leaves the abysm, the mortal flaw and smutch, mocking civilization to-day, with all its unquestion'd triumphs, and all the civilization so far known.

Democratic Vistas.

—++—

Nirvana

O THOU transcendent,
Nameless, the fibre and the breath,
Light of the light, shedding forth universes,
thou centre of them,
Thou mightier centre of the true, the good,
the loving,

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Thou moral, spiritual fountain — affection's
source — thou reservoir,
(O pensive soul of me — O thirst unsatisfied
— waitest not there?
Waitest not haply for us somewhere there the
Comrade perfect?)
Thou pulse — thou motive of the stars, suns,
systems,
That, circling, move in order, safe, harmonious,
Athwart the shapeless vastnesses of space,
How should I think, how breathe a single
breath, how speak, if, out of myself,
I could not launch, to those, superior universes?

Swiftly I shrivel at the thought of God,
At Nature and its wonders, Time and Space
and Death,
But that I, turning, call to thee, O soul, thou
actual Me,
And lo, thou gently masterest the orbs,
Thou matest Time, smilest content at Death,
And fillest, swellest full the vastnesses of
Space.

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Greater than stars or suns,
Bounding, O soul, thou journeyest forth;
What love than thine and ours could wider
amplify?
What aspirations, wishes, outvie thine and
ours, O soul?
What dreams of the ideal? what plans of
purity, perfection, strength?
What cheerful willingness for others' sake to
give up all?
For others' sake to suffer all?

Reckoning ahead, O soul, when thou, the time
achiev'd,
The seas all cross'd, weather'd the capes, the
voyage done,
Surrounded, copest, frontest God, yieldest,
the aim attain'd,
As fill'd with friendship, love complete, the
Elder Brother found,
The Younger melts in fondness in his arms.

Passage to India.

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V. DEATH AND IMMORTALITY

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O I see now that life cannot exhibit all to me, as the
day cannot,
I see that I am to wait for what will be exhibited
by death.

Night on the Prairies.

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DAREST thou now, O Soul,
Walk out with me toward the unknown region,
Where neither ground is for the feet nor any path to follow?

No map is there, nor guide,
Nor voice sounding, nor touch of human hand,
Nor face with blooming flesh, nor lips, nor eyes, are in that land.

I know it not, O Soul,
Nor dost thou, all is a blank before us,
All waits undream'd of in that region, that inaccessible land.

Till when the ties loosen,
All but the ties eternal, Time and Space,
Nor darkness, gravitation, sense, nor any bounds, bound us.

Then we burst forth, we float,
In Time and Space, O Soul, prepared for them,
Equal, equipt at last, (O joy! O fruit of all!)
them to fulfil, O Soul.

Whispers of Heavenly Death.

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"Whither O Mocking Life?"

DOWN from the gardens of Asia descending, radiating,
Adam and Eve appear; then their myriad progeny after them,
Wandering, yearning, curious, with restless explorations,
With questionings, baffled, formless, feverish, with never-happy hearts,
With that sad incessant refrain, *Wherefore unsatisfied soul?* and *Whither O mocking life?*

Ah, who shall soothe these feverish children?
Who justify these restless explorations?
Who speak the secret of impassive earth?
Who bind it to us? What is this separate Nature so unnatural?
What is this earth to our affections (unloving earth, without a throb to answer ours,
Cold earth, the place of graves)?

Yet soul be sure the first intent remains, and shall be carried out:
Perhaps even now the time has arrived.

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After the seas are all cross'd, (as they seem already cross'd,)
After the great captains and engineers have accomplish'd their work,
After the noble inventors, after the scientists, the chemist, the geologist, ethnologist,
Finally shall come the poet worthy that name,
The true son of God shall come singing his songs.

Then not your deeds only O voyagers, O scientists and inventors, shall be justified;
All these hearts as of fretted children shall be sooth'd;
All affection shall be fully responded to, the secret shall be told;
All these separations and gaps shall be taken up and hook'd and link'd together;
The whole earth, this cold, impassive, voiceless earth, shall be completely justified;
Trinitas divine shall be gloriously accomplish'd and compacted by the true Son of God, the poet,
(He shall indeed pass the straits and conquer the mountains)

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He shall double the Cape of Good Hope to some purpose,)
Nature and Man shall be disjoin'd and diffused no more,
The true son of God shall absolutely fuse them. *Passage to India.*

The Idea of Immortality in Democracy

I AM not sure but the last inclosing sublimation of race or poem is, what it thinks of death. After the rest has been comprehended and said, even the grandest — after those contributions to mightiest nationality, or to sweetest song, or to the best personalism, male or female, have been glean'd from the rich and varied themes of tangible life, and have been fully accepted and sung, and the pervading fact of visible existence, with the duty it devolves, is rounded and apparently completed, it still remains to be really completed by suffusing through the whole and several, that other pervading invisible fact, so large a part (is it not the largest part?) of life here, combining the rest, and furnishing, for person or State, the only permanent and unitary meaning to all, even the meanest life, consistently

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with the dignity of the universe, in Time. As from the eligibility to this thought, and the cheerful conquest of this fact, flash forth the first distinctive proofs of the soul, so to me (extending it only a little further) the ultimate Democratic purports, the ethereal and spiritual ones, are to concentrate here, and as fixed stars, radiate hence. For, in my opinion, it is no less than this idea of immortality, above all other ideas, that is to enter into, and vivify, and give crowning religious stamp to democracy in the New World. *Preface*, 1876.

—+—

"I know I am Deathless"

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.

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"I Know I am August"

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.

Song of Myself.

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"All, all for Immortality"

ALL, all for immortality;
Love like the light silently wrapping all,
Nature's amelioration blessing all,
The blossoms, fruits of ages, orchards divine and certain,
Forms, objects, growths, humanities, to spiritual images ripening.

Give me, O God, to sing that thought;
Give me, give him or her I love this quenchless faith.
In Thy ensemble, whatever else withheld withhold not from us,
Belief in plan of Thee enclosed in Time and Space,
Health, peace, salvation universal.

Is it a dream?
Nay, but the lack of it the dream,
And failing it life's lore and wealth a dream,
And all the world a dream.

Songs of the Universal.

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"The Smallest Sprout Shows that there is no Death"

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 any what one supposed, and luckier. *Song of Myself.*

To See the Soul

WAS somebody asking to see the soul?
See, your own shape and countenance, persons, substances, beasts, the trees, the running rivers, the rocks and sands.

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All hold spiritual joys and afterwards loosen them;
How can the real body ever die and be buried?

Of your real body and any man's or woman's real body,
Item for item it will elude the hands of the corpse-cleaners and pass to fitting spheres,
Carrying what has accrued to it from the moment of birth to the moment of death.

Not the types set up by the printer return their impression, the meaning, the main concern,
Any more than a man's substance and life or a woman's substance and life return in the body and the soul,
Indifferently before death and after death.

Behold, the body includes and is the meaning, the main concern and includes and is the soul;
Whoever you are, how superb and how divine is your body, or any part of it!

Starting from Paumanok, p. 25.

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The Spirituality of the Material

THE soul,
Forever and forever—longer than soil is brown and solid — longer than water ebbs and flows.

I will make the poems of materials, for I think they are to be the most spiritual poems,
And I will make the poems of my body and of mortality,
For I think I shall then supply myself with the poems of my soul and of immortality.

Starting from Paumanok, p. 21.

—+—

Assurances

I NEED no assurances, I am a man who is preoccupied of his own soul;
I do not doubt that from under the feet and beside the hands and face I am cognizant of, are now looking faces I am not cognizant of, calm and actual faces;
I do not doubt but the majesty and beauty of the world are latent in any iota of the world;
I do not doubt I am limitless, and that the universes are limitless, in vain I try to think how limitless;

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I do not doubt that the orbs and the systems of orbs play their swift sports through the air on purpose, and that I shall one day be eligible to do as much as they, and more than they;
I do not doubt that temporary affairs keep on and on millions of years;
I do not doubt interiors have their interiors, and exteriors have their exteriors, and that the eyesight has another eyesight, and the hearing another hearing, and the voice another voice;
I do not doubt that the passionately wept deaths of young men are provided for, and that the deaths of young women and the deaths of little children are provided for;
(Did you think Life was so well provided for, and Death, the purport of all Life, is not well provided for?)
I do not doubt that wrecks at sea, no matter what the horrors of them, no matter whose wife, child, husband, father, lover, has gone down, are provided for, to the minutest points;

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I do not doubt that whatever can possibly happen anywhere at any time, is provided for in the inherences of things.
I do not think Life provides for all and for Time and Space, but I believe Heavenly Death provides for all.

Whispers of Heavenly Death.

—+—

The Purpose and Essence of the Known Life

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

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

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

Pleasantly and well-suited I walk;
Whither I walk I cannot define, but I know it is good;

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The whole universe indicates that it is good,
The past and the present indicate that it is good.

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

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

I swear I think there is nothing but immortality!
That the exquisite scheme is for it, and the nebulous float is for it, and the cohering is for it!

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And all preparation is for it — and identity is for it — and life and materials are altogether for it!

To Think of Time.

—+—

A Carol to Death

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?

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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.

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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.

When Lilacs Last in the Door-yard Bloom'd.

—+—

To Explore the Vacant Vast Surrounding

A noiseless patient spider,
I mark'd where on a promontory it stood isolated,
Mark'd how to explore the vacant vast surrounding,
It launch'd forth filament, filament, filament out of itself,
Ever unreeling them, ever tirelessly speeding them.

And you, O my soul, where you stand,
Surrounded, detached, in measureless oceans of space,
Ceaselessly musing, venturing, throwing, seeking the spheres to connect them,

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Till the bridge you will need be form'd, till
the ductile anchor hold,
Till the gossamer thread you fling catch some-
where, O my soul.

Whispers of Heavenly Death.

—+—

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

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

To Think of Time.

—+—

AS I watch'd the ploughman ploughing,
Or the sower sowing in the fields, or the
harvester harvesting,
I saw there too, O Life and Death, your anal-
ogies,
(Life, life is the tillage, and death is the har-
vest according.)

Whispers of Heavenly Death.

Have You Dreaded these Earth-Beetles?

"Life is the Till-age"

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"Living are the Dead"

PENSIVE and faltering,
The words *the Dead* I write,
For living are the Dead,
(Haply the only living, only real,)
And I the apparition, I the spectre.

Whispers of Heavenly Death.

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VI. LITERATURE AND ART

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After all not to create only, or found only,
But to bring perhaps from afar what is already founded,
To give it our own identity, average, limitless, free.

Song of the Exposition.

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The Immortality of Judah and Greece

FEW are aware how the great literature penetrates all, gives hue to all, shapes aggregates and individuals, and, after subtle ways, with irresistible power, constructs, sustains, demolishes at will. Why tower, in reminiscence, above all the nations of the earth, two special lands, petty in themselves, yet inexpressibly gigantic, beautiful, columnar? Immortal Judah lives, and Greece immortal lives, in a couple of poems.

Democratic Vistas.

—+—

The Literature of Feudalism

IT is not generally realized, but it is true, as the genius of Greece, and all the sociology, personality, politics and religion of those wonderful states, resided in their literature or esthetics, that what was afterwards the main support of European chivalry, the feudal, ecclesiastical, dynastic world over there — forming its osseous structure, holding it together for hundreds, thousands of years, preserving its flesh and bloom, giving it form, decision, rounding it out, and so saturating it in the conscious and unconscious blood, breed, belief, and intuitions of men, that it still pre-

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vails powerful to this day, in defiance of the mighty changes of time — was its literature, permeating to the very marrow, especially that major part, its enchanting songs, ballads, and poems. *Democratic Vistas.*

Literature and Personality

THE literature, songs, esthetics, etc., of a country are of importance principally because they furnish the materials and suggestions of personality for the women and men of that country, and enforce them in a thousand effective ways. *Democratic Vistas.*

The Need of a New Literature

PASS'D! pass'd! for us forever pass'd that once so mighty world, now void, inanimate phantom world,
Embroider'd, dazzling, foreign world, with all its gorgeous legends, myths,
Its kings and castles proud, its priests and warlike lords and courtly dames,
Pass'd to its charnel vault, laid on the shelf, coffin'd with crown and armor on,
Blazon'd by Shakespeare's purple page,
And dirged by Tennyson's sweet sad rhyme.
Song of the Exposition.

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Superber Themes for Poets

AWAY with old romance!
Away with novels, plots, and plays of foreign courts,
Away with love-verses sugar'd in rhyme, the intrigues, amours of idlers.

To you ye reverent sane sisters,
I raise a voice for far superber themes for poets and for art,
To exalt the present and the real,
To teach the average man the glory of his daily walk and trade. *Song of the Exposition.*

—+—

The Scientific Basis

FOLLOWING the Modern Spirit, the real Poems of the Present, ever solidifying and expanding into the Future, must vocalize the vastness and splendor and reality with which Scientism has invested Man and the Universe (all that is called Creation), and must henceforth launch Humanity, into new orbits, consonant with the vastness, splendor, and reality, (unknown to the old poems,) like new systems of orbs, balanced upon themselves, revolving in limitless space, more subtle

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than the stars. Poetry, so largely hitherto and even at present wedded to children's tales, and to mere amourousness, upholstery, and superficial rhyme, will have to accept, and while not denying the Past, nor the Themes of the Past, will be revivified by this tremendous innovation, the Kosmic Spirit, which must henceforth, in my opinion, be the background and underlying impetus, more or less visible, of all first-class songs. *Preface*, 1876.

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Science Not All

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.

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

Song of Myself.

—+—

Printed Pages Not Literature

WHAT however do we definitely mean by New World Literature? Are we not doing well enough here already? Are not the United States this day busily using, working, more printers' type, more presses, than any other country? uttering and absorbing more publications than any other? . . . Many will come under this delusion — but my purpose is to dispel it. I say a nation may hold and circulate rivers and oceans of very readable print, journals, magazines, novels, library-books, "poetry," etc., such as the States to-day possess and circulate—of unquestionable aid and value . . . and yet, all the while the said nation, land, strictly speaking, may possess no literature at all. *Democratic Vistas.*

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Originality in Art

IN the need of poems, philosophy, politics, mechanism, science, behavior, the craft of art, an appropriate native grand opera, shipcraft, or any craft, he is greatest forever and ever who contributes the greatest original practical example. The cleanest expression is that which finds no sphere worthy of itself and makes one. *Preface*, 1855.

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"Fear not, O Muse!"

FEAR not, O Muse! truly new ways and days receive, surround you;
I candidly confess a queer, queer race, of novel fashion,
And yet the same old human race, the same within, without,
Faces and hearts the same, feelings the same, yearnings the same,
The same old love, beauty and use the same.
Song of the Exposition.

—+—

The English Language

THE English language befriends the grand American expression — it is brawny enough, and limber and full enough. On the tough stock of a race who through all change

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of circumstance was never without the idea of political liberty, which is the animus of all liberty, it has attracted the terms of daintier and gayer and subtler and more elegant tongues. It is the powerful language of resistance — it is the dialect of common sense. It is the speech of the proud and melancholy races, and of all who aspire. It is the chosen tongue to express growth, faith, self-esteem, freedom, justice, equality, friendliness, amplitude, prudence, decision, and courage. It is the medium that shall well-nigh express the inexpressible. *Preface*, 1855.

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What is Real Literature?

REPEATING our inquiry, what, then, do we mean by real literature? especially the American literature of the future? Hard questions to meet. The clues are inferential, and turn us to the past. At best, we can only offer suggestions, comparisons, circuits.

It must still be reiterated, as, for the purpose of these memoranda, the deep lesson of history and time, that all else in the contributions of a nation or age, through its politics, materials, heroic personalities, military eclat,

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etc., remains crude, and defers, in any close and thorough-going estimate, until vitalized by national, original archetypes in literature. They only put the nation in form, finally tell anything — prove, complete anything — perpetuate anything. Without doubt, some of the richest and most powerful and populous communities of the antique world, and some of the grandest personalities and events, have, to after and present times, left themselves entirely unbequeath'd. Doubtless, greater than any that have come down to us, were among those lands, heroisms, persons, that have not come down to us at all, even by name, date, or location. Others have arrived safely, as from voyages over wide, century-stretching seas. The little ships, the miracles that have buoy'd them, and by incredible chances safely convey'd them, (or the best of them, their meaning and essence), over long wastes, darkness, lethargy, ignorance, etc., have been a few inscriptions — a few immortal compositions, small in size, yet compassing what measureless values of reminiscence, contemporary portraitures, manners, idioms and beliefs, with

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deepest inference, hint and thought, to tie and touch forever the old, new body, and the old, new soul! These! and still these! bearing the freight so dear — dearer than pride — dearer than love. All the best experience of humanity, folded, saved, freighted to us here. Some of these tiny ships we call Old and New Testament, Homer, Eschylus, Plato, Juvenal, etc. Precious minims! I think, if we were forced to choose, rather than have you, and the likes of you, and what belongs to, and has grown of you, blotted out and gone, we could better afford, appalling as that would be, to lose all actual ships, this day fasten'd by wharf, or floating on wave, and see them, with all their cargoes, scuttled and sent to the bottom.

Democratic Vistas.

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Our Inheritance from the Literature of the Past

GATHER'D by geniuses of city, race, or age, and put by them in highest of art's forms, namely, the literary form, the peculiar combinations and the outshows of that city, age, or race, its particular modes of the universal attributes and passions, its faiths, heroes, lovers and gods, wars, traditions,

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struggles, crimes, emotions, joys, (or the subtle spirit of these,) having been pass'd on to us to illumine our own selfhood, and its experiences — what they supply, indispensable and highest, if taken away, nothing else in all the world's boundless storehouses could make up to us, or ever again return.

For us, along the great highways of time, those monuments stand — those forms of majesty and beauty. For us those beacons burn through all the nights. Unknown Egyptians, graving hieroglyphs; Hindus, with hymn and apothegm and endless epic; Hebrew prophet, with spirituality, as in flashes of lightning, conscience like red-hot iron, plaintive songs and screams of vengeance for tyrannies and enslavement; Christ, with bent head, brooding love and peace, like a dove; Greek, creating eternal shapes of physical and esthetic proportion; Roman, lord of satire, the sword, and the codex; — of the figures, some far off and veil'd, others nearer and visible; Dante, stalking with lean form, nothing but fibre, not a grain of superfluous flesh; Angelo, and the great painters, architects, musicians; rich

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Shakspere, luxuriant as the sun, artist and singer of feudalism in its sunset, with all the gorgeous colors, owner thereof, and using them at will; and so to such as German Kant and Hegel, where they, though near us, leaping over the ages, sit again, impassive, imperturbable, like the Egyptian gods. Of these, and the like of these, is it too much, indeed, to return to our favorite figure, and view them as orbs and systems of orbs, moving in free paths in the spaces of that other heaven, the kosmic intellect, the soul?

Ye powerful and resplendent ones! ye were, in your atmospheres, grown not for America, but rather for her foes, the feudal and the old — while our genius is democratic and modern. Yet could ye, indeed, but breathe your breath of life into our New World's nostrils — not to enslave us, as now, but, for our needs, to breed a spirit like your own — perhaps, (dare we to say it?) to dominate, even destroy, what you yourselves have left! On your plane, and no less, but even higher and wider, must we mete and measure for to-day and here. I demand races of orbic bards, with unconditional un-

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compromising sway. Come forth, sweet democratic despots of the west!

Democratic Vistas.

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The Mastery of the Poet

WHATEVER stagnates in the flat of custom or obedience or legislation, the great poet never stagnates. Obedience does not master him, he masters it. High up out of reach he stands, turning a concentrated light — he turns the pivot with his finger — he baffles the swiftest runners as he stands, and easily overtakes and envelops them. The time straying toward infidelity and confections and persiflage he withholds by steady faith.

Preface, 1855.

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Historian and Prophet

WITHOUT effort and without exposing in the least how it is done, the greatest poet brings the spirit of any or all events and passions and scenes and persons, some more and some less, to bear on your individual character as you hear or read.

Past and present and future are not disjoin'd but join'd. The greatest poet forms the consistence of what is to be from what

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has been and is. . . . He says to the past, Rise and walk before me that I may realize you. He learns the lesson — he places himself where the future becomes present.

Preface, 1855.

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THE greatest poet hardly knows pettiness or triviality. If he breathes into anything that was before thought small it dilates with the grandeur and life of the universe.

No Theme Small to the Poet

Preface, 1855.

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THE land and sea, the animals, fishes and birds, the sky of heaven and the orbs, the forests, mountains and rivers, are not small themes — but folks expect of the poet to indicate more than the beauty and dignity which always attach to dumb real objects — they expect him to indicate the path between reality and their souls.

"The Path between Reality and the Soul"

Preface, 1855.

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THE greatest poet does not moralize or make applications of morals—he knows the soul. The soul has that measureless pride which consists in never acknowledging any

The Pride of the Soul

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lessons or deductions but its own. But it has sympathy as measureless as its pride, and the one balances the other, and neither can stretch too far while it stretches in company with the other. The inmost secrets of art sleep with the twain. The greatest poet has lain close betwixt both, and they are vital in his style and thoughts. *Preface*, 1855.

The Poet's Passion

THE known universe has one complete lover, and that is the greatest poet. He consumes an eternal passion, and is indifferent which chance happens, and which possible contingency of fortune or misfortune, and persuades daily and hourly his delicious pay. What balks or breaks others is fuel for his burning progress to contact and amorous joy. Other proportions of the reception of pleasure dwindle to nothing to his proportions. All expected from heaven or from the highest, he is rapport with in the sight of the daybreak, or the scenes of the winter woods, or the presence of children playing, or with his arm round the neck of a man or woman. His love above all love has leisure and expanse — he leaves

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room ahead of himself. He is no irresolute or suspicious lover — he is sure — he scorns intervals. His experience and the showers and thrills are not for nothing. Nothing can jar him — suffering and darkness cannot — death and fear cannot. To him complaint and jealousy and envy are corpses buried and rotten in the earth — he saw them buried. The sea is not surer of the shore, or the shore of the sea, than he is the fruition of his love, and of all perfection and beauty.

Preface, 1855.

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The Test of the Greatest Poet

THE direct trial of him who would be the greatest poet is to-day. If he does not flood himself with the immediate age as with vast oceanic tides . . . . if he be not himself the age transfigur'd, and if to him is not open'd the eternity which gives similitude to all periods and locations and processes, and animate and inanimate forms, and which is the bond of time, and rises up from its inconceivable vagueness and infiniteness in the swimming shapes of to-day, and is held by the ductile anchors of life, and makes the present spot

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the passage from what was to what shall be, and commits itself to the representation of this wave of an hour, and this one of the sixty beautiful children of the wave—let him merge in the general run, and wait his development.

Preface, 1855.

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The Poetic Quality

THE poetic quality is not marshal'd in rhyme and uniformity, or abstract addresses to things, nor in melancholy complaints or good precepts, but is the life of these and much else and is in the soul.

Preface, 1855.

—+—

The Fruition of Beauty

THE fruition of beauty is no chance of miss or hit—it is as inevitable as life—it is as exact and plumb as gravitation.

Preface, 1855.

—+—

Rhyme and Rhythm

THE profit of rhyme is that it drops seeds of a sweeter and more luxuriant rhyme, and of uniformity that it conveys itself into its own roots in the ground out of sight. The rhyme and uniformity of perfect poems show

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the free growth of metrical laws, and bud from them as unerringly and loosely as lilacs and roses on a bush, and take shapes as compact as the shapes of chestnuts and oranges and melons and pears and shed the perfume impalpable to form. *Preface*, 1855.

—+—

Simplicity in Art

THE art of art, the glory of expression and the sunshine of the light of letters, is simplicity. Nothing is better than simplicity—nothing can make up for excess, or for the lack of definiteness. *Preface*, 1855.

—+—

"The Flawless Triumph of Art"

TO speak in literature with the perfect rectitude and insouciance of the movement of animals, and the unimpeachableness of the sentiment of trees in the woods and grass by the roadside, is the flawless triumph of art. *Preface*, 1855.

—+—

How to Live Poetry

THE fluency and ornaments of the finest poems or music or orations or recitations are not independent but dependent. All beauty comes from beautiful blood and a beau-

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tiful brain. If the greatnesses are in conjunction in a man or woman, it is enough — the fact will prevail through the universe; but the gaggery and gilt of a million years will not prevail. Who troubles himself about his ornaments or fluency is lost. This is what you shall do: Love the earth and sun and the animals, despise riches, give alms to every one that asks, stand up for the stupid and crazy, devote your income and labor to others, hate tyrants, argue not concerning God, have patience and indulgence toward the people, take off your hat to nothing known or unknown, or to any man or number of men—go freely with powerful uneducated persons, and with the young, and with the mothers of families . . . . re-examine all you have been told in school or church or in any book, and dismiss whatever insults your own soul; and your very flesh shall be a great poem, and have the richest fluency, not only in its words, but in the silent lines of its lips and face, and between the lashes of your eyes, and in every motion and joint of your body.

Preface, 1855.

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The Final Test of Poems

STILL the final test of poems, or any character or work, remains. The prescient poet projects himself centuries ahead, and judges performer or performance after the changes of time. Does it live through them? Does it still hold on untired? Will the same style, and the direction of genius to similar points, be satisfactory now? . . . . Have the marches of tens and hundreds and thousands of years made willing detours to the right hand and the left hand for his sake? Is he beloved long and long after he is buried? . . . .

A great poem is for ages and ages in common, and for all degrees and complexions, and all departments and sects, and for a woman as much as for a man, and a man as much as a woman. A great poem is no finish to a man or woman, but rather a beginning.

Preface, 1855.

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VII. THE CONDUCT OF LIFE

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

Song of Myself.

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The Greatness of the Present

AS if it were necessary to trot back generation after generation to the eastern records! As if the beauty and sacredness of the demonstrable must fall behind that of the mythical! As if men do not make their mark out of any times! As if the opening of the western continent by discovery, and what has transpired in North and South America, were less than the small theatre of the antique, or the aimless sleep-walking of the middle ages!

First Preface.

—+—

Now is Our Time

I KNOW that the past was great and that the future will be great,
And I know that both curiously conjoint in the present time,
And that where I am or you are this present day, there is the centre of all days, all races,
And there is the meaning to us of all that has ever come of races and days, or ever will come.

With Antecedents.

—+—

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No Better Minute than this

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

Song of Myself.

—+—

The Divinity of the Ego

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

Laws for Creations.

—+—

Miracles Everywhere

WHY, who makes much of a miracle?
As to me I know of nothing else but miracles,

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Whether I walk the streets of Manhattan,
Or dart my sight over the roofs of houses toward the sky,
Or wade with naked feet along the beach just in the edge of the water,
Or stand under trees in the woods,
Or talk by day with any one I love, or sleep in the bed at night with any one I love,
Or sit at table at dinner with the rest,
Or look at strangers opposite me, riding in the car,
Or watch honey-bees busy around the hive of a summer forenoon,
Or animals feeding in the fields,
Or birds, or the wonderfulness of insects in the air,
Or the wonderfulness of the sundown, or of stars shining so quiet and bright,
Or the exquisite delicate thin curve of the new moon in spring; . . . .
These with the rest, one and all, are to me miracles,
The whole referring, yet each distinct and in its place.

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To me every hour of the light and dark is a miracle,
Every cubic inch of space is a miracle,
Every square yard of the surface of the earth is spread with the same,
Every foot of the interior swarms with the same.

To me the sea is a continual miracle,
The fishes that swim — the rocks — the motion of the waves — the ships with men in them,
What stranger miracles are there?

Miracles.

—+ +—

A Model for Manliness

ATTEMPTING, then, however crudely, a basic model or portrait of personality for general use for the manliness of the States, (and doubtless that is most useful which is most simple and comprehensive for all, and toned low enough,) we should prepare the canvas well beforehand. Parentage must consider itself in advance. (Will the time hasten when fatherhood and motherhood shall become a science—and the noblest science?)

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To our model, a clear-blooded, strong-fibred physique is indispensable; the questions of food, drink, air, exercise, assimilation, digestion, can never be intermitted. Out of these we descry a well-begotten selfhood — in youth, fresh, ardent, emotional, aspiring, full of adventure; at maturity, brave, perceptive, under control, neither too talkative nor too reticent, neither flippant nor sombre; of the bodily figure, the movements easy, the complexion showing the best blood, somewhat flush'd, breast expanded, an erect attitude, a voice whose sound outvies music, eyes of calm and steady gaze, yet capable also of flashing — and a general presence that holds its own in the company of the highest. (For it is native personality, and that alone, that endows a man to stand before presidents or generals, or in any distinguish'd collection, with *aplomb* — and *not* culture, or any knowledge or intellect whatever.)

Democratic Vistas.

—+—

The Blight of Money-Getting

IN business (this all-devouring modern word, business), the one sole object is, by any means pecuniary gain. The magician's ser-

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pent in the fable ate up all the other serpents; and money-making is our magician's serpent, remaining to-day sole master in the field.

Democratic Vistas.

—+—

Reticence

I SWEAR I see what is better than to tell the best,
It is always to leave the best untold.

A Song of the Rolling Earth.

—+—

Self-Consciousness

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

Song of Myself.

—+—

Individuality

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

Song of the Broad-Axe.

—+—

Affirmations

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,

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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. *Song of Myself.*

—+—

Conviction

LOGIC and sermons never convince,
The damp of the night drives deeper into my soul. *Song of Myself.*

—+—

Courage

SAIL forth — steer for the deep waters only,
Reckless O soul, exploring, I with thee, and thou with me,

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For we are bound where mariner has not yet
dared to go,
And we will risk the ship, ourselves and all.

O my brave soul!
O farther, farther sail!
O daring joy, but safe! are they not all the
seas of God?
O farther, farther, farther sail!

Passage to India.

—+—

To Fill One's Place is Enough

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

Song of Myself.

—+—

Appreciation

I BELIEVE a leaf of grass is no less than
the journey work of the stars,
And the pismire is equally perfect, and a grain
of sand, and the egg of the wren,
And the tree-toad is a chef-d'œuvre for the
highest,
And the running blackberry would adorn the
parlors of heaven,

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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. *Song of Myself.*

—+—

Contentment

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.

Song of Myself.

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Nature's Lesson

WHEN I heard the learn'd astronomer,
When the proofs, the figures, were ranged in columns before me,
When I was shown the charts and diagrams, to add, divide, and measure them,
When I sitting heard the astronomer where he lectured with much applause in the lecture-room,
How soon unaccountable I became tired and sick,
Till rising and gliding out I wander'd off by myself,
In the mystical moist night-air, and from time to time
Look'd up in perfect silence at the stars.

When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer.

—+—

Compensation

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

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

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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.

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.

Song of Myself.

—++—

EVER the right explanation remains to be made about prudence. The prudence of the mere wealth and respectability of the most esteem'd life appears too faint for the eye to observe at all, when little and large alike drop quietly aside at the thought of the prudence suitable for immortality. What is the

Pru-
dence

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wisdom that fills the thinness of a year, or seventy or eighty years — to the wisdom spaced out by ages, and coming back at a certain time with strong reinforcements and rich presents, and the clear faces of wedding guests as far as you can look, in every direction, running gaily toward you? *Preface*, 1855.

—+—

The Joy of Living

I DOTE on myself; there is that lot of me and all so luscious.
Each moment and whatever happens thrills me with joy.

Oh, I am wonderful!
I cannot tell how my ankles bend, nor whence the cause of my faintest wish,
Nor the cause of the friendship I emit, nor the cause of the friendship I take again.

That I walk up my stoop, I pause to consider if it really be;
A morning-glory at my window satisfies me more than the metaphysics of books.

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

Song of Myself.

—+—

CAUTION seldom goes far enough. It has been thought that the prudent citizen was the citizen who applied himself to solid gains, and did well for himself and for his family, and completed a lawful life without debt or crime. The greatest poet sees and admits these economies as he sees the economies of food and sleep, but has higher notions of prudence than to think he gives much when he gives a few slight attentions at the latch of the gate. . . . Beyond the independence of a little sum laid aside for burial-money and of a few clap-boards around and shingles overhead on a lot of American soil own'd, and the easy dollars that supply the year's plain clothing and meals, the melancholy prudence of the abandonment of such a great being as a man is, to the toss and pallor of years of money-making, with all their

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scorching days and icy nights, and all their stifling deceits and underhand dodgings . . . and the ghastly chatter of a death without serenity or majesty, is the great fraud upon modern civilization and forethought.

Preface, 1855.

—+—

Heroism

A HEROIC person walks at his ease through and out of that custom or precedent or authority that suits him not.

Preface, 1855.

—+—

Living Impulses —Not Duties

I GIVE nothing as duties.
What others give as duties I give as living impulses.
(Shall I give the heart's action as a duty?)

Song of Myself.

—+—

The Superb Individual

AN individual is as superb as a nation when he has the qualities which make a superb nation.

Preface, 1855.

—+—

Thrift

THRIFT without the loving nod of the soul is only a fetid puff.

Preface, 1855.

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To those who have Fail'd

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.

. . . . .

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

Song of Myself.

—+—

Self-Appreciation

I DO not snivel that snivel the world over,
That months are vacuums and the ground but wallow and filth.
That life is a luck and a sell, and nothing remains at the end but threadbare crape and tears.

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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 calcu-
lated 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. *Song of Myself.*

—+—

The Influence of the Open

I THINK heroic deeds were all conceiv'd
in the open air, and all great poems
also;
I think I could stop here myself and do mira-
cles.

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Now I see the secret of the making of the best persons,
It is to grow in the open air and to eat and sleep with the earth.

Here a great personal deed has room.
A great deed seizes upon the hearts of the whole race of men,
Its effusion of strength and will overwhelms law and mocks all authority and all argument against it. *Song of the Open Road.*

—+—

The Test of Wisdom

Here is the test of wisdom:
Wisdom is not finally tested in schools;
Wisdom cannot be pass'd from one having it to another not having it;
Wisdom is of the soul, is not susceptible of proof, is its own proof,
Applies to all stages and objects and qualities and is content;
Is the certainty of the reality and immortality of things, and the excellence of things;
Something there is in the float of the sight of things that provokes it out of the soul.

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Now I re-examine philosophies and religions:
They may prove well in lecture-rooms, yet not
prove at all under the spacious clouds and
along the landscape and flowing currents.
Song of the Open Road.

—+—

Assurance

SPOTS or cracks at the window do not
disturb me;

Tall and sufficient stand behind and make
signs to me;
I read the promise and patiently wait. *Faces.*

—+—

Optimism

I DO not know what is untried and after-
ward,
But I know it will in its turn prove sufficient,
and cannot fail. *Song of Myself.*

—+—

Patience

I HAVE no mockings or arguments—I
witness and wait. *Song of Myself.*

—+—

Egotism

DO I contradict myself?
Very well, then, I contradict myself;
(I am large. I contain multitudes).
Song of Myself.

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The Wisdom of Walt Whitman

SELECTED AND EDITED, WITH INTRODUCTION

BY

LAURENS MAYNARD

NEW YORK

Brentano's, Fifth Avenue

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