

BOOK IX

Song of the Answerer

1

Now list to my morning's romanza, I tell the signs of the Answerer,
To the cities and farms I sing as they spread in the sunshine before me.

A young man comes to me bearing a message from his brother,
How shall the young man know the whether and when of his brother?
Tell him to send me the signs. And I stand before the young man
face to face, and take his right hand in my left hand and his
left hand in my right hand,
And I answer for his brother and for men, and I answer for him that
answers for all, and send these signs.

Him all wait for, him all yield up to, his word is decisive and final,
Him they accept, in him lave, in him perceive themselves as amid light,
Him they immerse and he immerses them.

Beautiful women, the haughtiest nations, laws, the landscape,
people, animals,
The profound earth and its attributes and the unquiet ocean, (so
tell I my morning's romanza,)
All enjoyments and properties and money, and whatever money will buy,

The best farms, others toiling and planting and he unavoidably reaps,
The noblest and costliest cities, others grading and building and he
domiciles there,
Nothing for any one but what is for him, near and far are for him,
the ships in the offing,
The perpetual shows and marches on land are for him if they are for anybody.

He puts things in their attitudes,
He puts to-day out of himself with plasticity and love,
He places his own times, reminiscences, parents, brothers and
sisters, associations, employment, politics, so that the rest
never shame them afterward, nor assume to command them.

He is the Answerer,
What can be answer'd he answers, and what cannot be answer'd he
shows how it cannot be answer'd.

A man is a summons and challenge,
(It is vain to skulk--do you hear that mocking and laughter? do you
hear the ironical echoes?)

Books, friendships, philosophers, priests, action, pleasure, pride,
beat up and down seeking to give satisfaction,
He indicates the satisfaction, and indicates them that beat up and
down also.

Whichever the sex, whatever the season or place, he may go freshly
and gently and safely by day or by night,
He has the pass-key of hearts, to him the response of the prying of
hands on the knobs.

His welcome is universal, the flow of beauty is not more welcome or
universal than he is,
The person he favors by day or sleeps with at night is blessed.

Every existence has its idiom, every thing has an idiom and tongue,
He resolves all tongues into his own and bestows it upon men, and
any man translates, and any man translates himself also,
One part does not counteract another part, he is the joiner, he sees
how they join.

He says indifferently and alike How are you friend? to the President
at his levee,
And he says Good-day my brother, to Cudge that hoes in the sugar-field,
And both understand him and know that his speech is right.

He walks with perfect ease in the capitol,
He walks among the Congress, and one Representative says to another,
Here is our equal appearing and new.

Then the mechanics take him for a mechanic,
And the soldiers suppose him to be a soldier, and the sailors that

he has follow'd the sea,
And the authors take him for an author, and the artists for an artist,
And the laborers perceive he could labor with them and love them,
No matter what the work is, that he is the one to follow it or has
follow'd it,
No matter what the nation, that he might find his brothers and
sisters there.

The English believe he comes of their English stock,
A Jew to the Jew he seems, a Russ to the Russ, usual and near,
removed from none.

Whoever he looks at in the traveler's coffee-house claims him,
The Italian or Frenchman is sure, the German is sure, the Spaniard
is sure, and the island Cuban is sure,
The engineer, the deck-hand on the great lakes, or on the Mississippi
or St. Lawrence or Sacramento, or Hudson or Paumanok sound, claims him.

The gentleman of perfect blood acknowledges his perfect blood,
The insulter, the prostitute, the angry person, the beggar, see
themselves in the ways of him, he strangely transmutes them,
They are not vile any more, they hardly know themselves they are so grown.

2

The indications and tally of time,
Perfect sanity shows the master among philosophs,

Time, always without break, indicates itself in parts,
What always indicates the poet is the crowd of the pleasant company
of singers, and their words,
The words of the singers are the hours or minutes of the light or dark,
but the words of the maker of poems are the general light and dark,
The maker of poems settles justice, reality, immortality,
His insight and power encircle things and the human race,
He is the glory and extract thus far of things and of the human race.

The singers do not beget, only the Poet begets,
The singers are welcom'd, understood, appear often enough, but rare
has the day been, likewise the spot, of the birth of the maker
of poems, the Answerer,
(Not every century nor every five centuries has contain'd such a
day, for all its names.)

The singers of successive hours of centuries may have ostensible
names, but the name of each of them is one of the singers,
The name of each is, eye-singer, ear-singer, head-singer,
sweet-singer, night-singer, parlor-singer, love-singer,
weird-singer, or something else.

All this time and at all times wait the words of true poems,
The words of true poems do not merely please,
The true poets are not followers of beauty but the august masters of beauty;
The greatness of sons is the exuding of the greatness of mothers

and fathers,

The words of true poems are the tuft and final applause of science.

Divine instinct, breadth of vision, the law of reason, health,

rudeness of body, withdrawnness,

Gayety, sun-tan, air-sweetness, such are some of the words of poems.

The sailor and traveler underlie the maker of poems, the Answerer,

The builder, geometer, chemist, anatomist, phrenologist, artist, all

these underlie the maker of poems, the Answerer.

The words of the true poems give you more than poems,

They give you to form for yourself poems, religions, politics, war,

peace, behavior, histories, essays, daily life, and every thing else,

They balance ranks, colors, races, creeds, and the sexes,

They do not seek beauty, they are sought,

Forever touching them or close upon them follows beauty, longing,

fain, love-sick.

They prepare for death, yet are they not the finish, but rather the outset,

They bring none to his or her terminus or to be content and full,

Whom they take they take into space to behold the birth of stars, to

learn one of the meanings,

To launch off with absolute faith, to sweep through the ceaseless

rings and never be quiet again.