

BOOK X

Our Old Feuillage

Always our old feuillage!

Always Florida's green peninsula--always the priceless delta of

Louisiana--always the cotton-fields of Alabama and Texas,

Always California's golden hills and hollows, and the silver

mountains of New Mexico--always soft-breath'd Cuba,

Always the vast slope drain'd by the Southern sea, inseparable with

the slopes drain'd by the Eastern and Western seas,

The area the eighty-third year of these States, the three and a half

millions of square miles,

The eighteen thousand miles of sea-coast and bay-coast on the main,

the thirty thousand miles of river navigation,

The seven millions of distinct families and the same number of dwellings--

always these, and more, branching forth into numberless branches,

Always the free range and diversity--always the continent of Democracy;

Always the prairies, pastures, forests, vast cities, travelers,

Kanada, the snows;

Always these compact lands tied at the hips with the belt stringing

the huge oval lakes;

Always the West with strong native persons, the increasing density there,

the habitans, friendly, threatening, ironical, scorning invaders;

All sights, South, North, East--all deeds, promiscuously done at all times,

All characters, movements, growths, a few noticed, myriads unnoticed,
Through Mannahatta's streets I walking, these things gathering,
On interior rivers by night in the glare of pine knots, steamboats
 wooding up,
Sunlight by day on the valley of the Susquehanna, and on the valleys
 of the Potomac and Rappahannock, and the valleys of the Roanoke
 and Delaware,
In their northerly wilds beasts of prey haunting the Adirondacks the
 hills, or lapping the Saginaw waters to drink,
In a lonesome inlet a sheldrake lost from the flock, sitting on the
 water rocking silently,
In farmers' barns oxen in the stable, their harvest labor done, they
 rest standing, they are too tired,
Afar on arctic ice the she-walrus lying drowsily while her cubs play around,
The hawk sailing where men have not yet sail'd, the farthest polar
 sea, ripply, crystalline, open, beyond the floes,
White drift spooning ahead where the ship in the tempest dashes,
On solid land what is done in cities as the bells strike midnight together,
In primitive woods the sounds there also sounding, the howl of the
 wolf, the scream of the panther, and the hoarse bellow of the elk,
In winter beneath the hard blue ice of Moosehead lake, in summer
 visible through the clear waters, the great trout swimming,
In lower latitudes in warmer air in the Carolinas the large black
 buzzard floating slowly high beyond the tree tops,
Below, the red cedar festoon'd with tylandria, the pines and
 cypresses growing out of the white sand that spreads far and flat,

Rude boats descending the big Pedee, climbing plants, parasites with
color'd flowers and berries enveloping huge trees,
The waving drapery on the live-oak trailing long and low,
noiselessly waved by the wind,
The camp of Georgia wagoners just after dark, the supper-fires and
the cooking and eating by whites and negroes,
Thirty or forty great wagons, the mules, cattle, horses, feeding
from troughs,
The shadows, gleams, up under the leaves of the old sycamore-trees,
the flames with the black smoke from the pitch-pine curling and rising;
Southern fishermen fishing, the sounds and inlets of North
Carolina's coast, the shad-fishery and the herring-fishery, the
large sweep-seines, the windlasses on shore work'd by horses, the
clearing, curing, and packing-houses;
Deep in the forest in piney woods turpentine dropping from the
incisions in the trees, there are the turpentine works,
There are the negroes at work in good health, the ground in all
directions is cover'd with pine straw;
In Tennessee and Kentucky slaves busy in the coalings, at the forge,
by the furnace-blaze, or at the corn-shucking,
In Virginia, the planter's son returning after a long absence,
joyfully welcom'd and kiss'd by the aged mulatto nurse,
On rivers boatmen safely moor'd at nightfall in their boats under
shelter of high banks,
Some of the younger men dance to the sound of the banjo or fiddle,
others sit on the gunwale smoking and talking;

Late in the afternoon the mocking-bird, the American mimic, singing
in the Great Dismal Swamp,
There are the greenish waters, the resinous odor, the plenteous
moss, the cypress-tree, and the juniper-tree;
Northward, young men of Mannahatta, the target company from an
excursion returning home at evening, the musket-muzzles all
bear bunches of flowers presented by women;
Children at play, or on his father's lap a young boy fallen asleep,
(how his lips move! how he smiles in his sleep!)
The scout riding on horseback over the plains west of the
Mississippi, he ascends a knoll and sweeps his eyes around;
California life, the miner, bearded, dress'd in his rude costume,
the stanch California friendship, the sweet air, the graves one
in passing meets solitary just aside the horse-path;
Down in Texas the cotton-field, the negro-cabins, drivers driving
mules or oxen before rude carts, cotton bales piled on banks
and wharves;
Encircling all, vast-darting up and wide, the American Soul, with
equal hemispheres, one Love, one Dilation or Pride;
In arriere the peace-talk with the Iroquois the aborigines, the
calumet, the pipe of good-will, arbitration, and indorsement,
The sachem blowing the smoke first toward the sun and then toward
the earth,
The drama of the scalp-dance enacted with painted faces and guttural
exclamations,
The setting out of the war-party, the long and stealthy march,

The single file, the swinging hatchets, the surprise and slaughter
of enemies;
All the acts, scenes, ways, persons, attitudes of these States,
reminiscences, institutions,
All these States compact, every square mile of these States without
excepting a particle;
Me pleas'd, rambling in lanes and country fields, Paumanok's fields,
Observing the spiral flight of two little yellow butterflies
shuffling between each other, ascending high in the air,
The darting swallow, the destroyer of insects, the fall traveler
southward but returning northward early in the spring,
The country boy at the close of the day driving the herd of cows and
shouting to them as they loiter to browse by the roadside,
The city wharf, Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Charleston, New
Orleans, San Francisco,
The departing ships when the sailors heave at the capstan;
Evening--me in my room--the setting sun,
The setting summer sun shining in my open window, showing the
swarm of flies, suspended, balancing in the air in the centre
of the room, darting athwart, up and down, casting swift
shadows in specks on the opposite wall where the shine is;
The athletic American matron speaking in public to crowds of listeners,
Males, females, immigrants, combinations, the copiousness, the
individuality of the States, each for itself--the moneymakers,
Factories, machinery, the mechanical forces, the windlass, lever,
pulley, all certainties,

The certainty of space, increase, freedom, futurity,
In space the sporades, the scatter'd islands, the stars--on the firm
earth, the lands, my lands,
O lands! all so dear to me--what you are, (whatever it is,) I putting it
at random in these songs, become a part of that, whatever it is,
Southward there, I screaming, with wings slow flapping, with the
myriads of gulls wintering along the coasts of Florida,
Otherways there atwixt the banks of the Arkansaw, the Rio Grande,
the Nueces, the Brazos, the Tombigbee, the Red River, the
Saskatchewan or the Osage, I with the spring waters laughing
and skipping and running,
Northward, on the sands, on some shallow bay of Paumanok, I with
parties of snowy herons wading in the wet to seek worms and
aquatic plants,
Retreating, triumphantly twittering, the king-bird, from piercing
the crow with its bill, for amusement--and I triumphantly twittering,
The migrating flock of wild geese alighting in autumn to refresh
themselves, the body of the flock feed, the sentinels outside
move around with erect heads watching, and are from time to time
reliev'd by other sentinels--and I feeding and taking turns
with the rest,
In Kanadian forests the moose, large as an ox, corner'd by hunters,
rising desperately on his hind-feet, and plunging with his
fore-feet, the hoofs as sharp as knives--and I, plunging at the
hunters, corner'd and desperate,
In the Mannahatta, streets, piers, shipping, store-houses, and the

countless workmen working in the shops,
And I too of the Mannahatta, singing thereof--and no less in myself
than the whole of the Mannahatta in itself,
Singing the song of These, my ever-united lands--my body no more
inevitably united, part to part, and made out of a thousand
diverse contributions one identity, any more than my lands
are inevitably united and made ONE IDENTITY;
Nativities, climates, the grass of the great pastoral Plains,
Cities, labors, death, animals, products, war, good and evil--these me,
These affording, in all their particulars, the old feuillage to me
and to America, how can I do less than pass the clew of the union
of them, to afford the like to you?
Whoever you are! how can I but offer you divine leaves, that you
also be eligible as I am?
How can I but as here chanting, invite you for yourself to collect
bouquets of the incomparable feuillage of these States?