

BOOK XXXIV. SANDS AT SEVENTY

Mannahatta

My city's fit and noble name resumed,
Choice aboriginal name, with marvellous beauty, meaning,
A rocky founded island--shores where ever gayly dash the coming,
going, hurrying sea waves.

Paumanok

Sea-beauty! stretch'd and basking!
One side thy inland ocean laving, broad, with copious commerce,
steamers, sails,
And one the Atlantic's wind caressing, fierce or gentle--mighty hulls
dark-gliding in the distance.
Isle of sweet brooks of drinking-water--healthy air and soil!
Isle of the salty shore and breeze and brine!

From Montauk Point

I stand as on some mighty eagle's beak,
Eastward the sea absorbing, viewing, (nothing but sea and sky,)
The tossing waves, the foam, the ships in the distance,
The wild unrest, the snowy, curling caps--that inbound urge and urge
of waves,
Seeking the shores forever.

To Those Who've Fail'd

To those who've fail'd, in aspiration vast,
To unnam'd soldiers fallen in front on the lead,
To calm, devoted engineers--to over-ardent travelers--to pilots on
their ships,
To many a lofty song and picture without recognition--I'd rear
laurel-cover'd monument,
High, high above the rest--To all cut off before their time,
Possess'd by some strange spirit of fire,
Quench'd by an early death.

A Carol Closing Sixty-Nine

A carol closing sixty-nine--a resume--a repetition,
My lines in joy and hope continuing on the same,
Of ye, O God, Life, Nature, Freedom, Poetry;
Of you, my Land--your rivers, prairies, States--you, mottled Flag I love,
Your aggregate retain'd entire--Of north, south, east and west, your
 items all;
Of me myself--the jocund heart yet beating in my breast,
The body wreck'd, old, poor and paralyzed--the strange inertia
 falling pall-like round me,
The burning fires down in my sluggish blood not yet extinct,
The undiminish'd faith--the groups of loving friends.

The Bravest Soldiers

Brave, brave were the soldiers (high named to-day) who lived through
 the fight;
But the bravest press'd to the front and fell, unnamed, unknown.

A Font of Type

This latent mine--these unlaunch'd voices--passionate powers,
Wrath, argument, or praise, or comic leer, or prayer devout,
(Not nonpareil, brevier, bourgeois, long primer merely,)
These ocean waves arousable to fury and to death,
Or sooth'd to ease and sheeny sun and sleep,
Within the pallid slivers slumbering.

As I Sit Writing Here

As I sit writing here, sick and grown old,
Not my least burden is that dulness of the years, querilities,
Ungracious glooms, aches, lethargy, constipation, whimpering ennui,
May filter in my dally songs.

My Canary Bird

Did we count great, O soul, to penetrate the themes of mighty books,

Absorbing deep and full from thoughts, plays, speculations?
But now from thee to me, caged bird, to feel thy joyous warble,
Filling the air, the lonesome room, the long forenoon,
Is it not just as great, O soul?

Queries to My Seventieth Year

Approaching, nearing, curious,
Thou dim, uncertain spectre--bringest thou life or death?
Strength, weakness, blindness, more paralysis and heavier?
Or placid skies and sun? Wilt stir the waters yet?
Or haply cut me short for good? Or leave me here as now,
Dull, parrot-like and old, with crack'd voice harping, screeching?

The Wallabout Martyrs

Greater than memory of Achilles or Ulysses,
More, more by far to thee than tomb of Alexander,
Those cart loads of old charnel ashes, scales and splints of mouldy bones,
Once living men--once resolute courage, aspiration, strength,

The stepping stones to thee to-day and here, America.

The First Dandelion

Simple and fresh and fair from winter's close emerging,
As if no artifice of fashion, business, politics, had ever been,
Forth from its sunny nook of shelter'd grass--innocent, golden, calm
as the dawn,
The spring's first dandelion shows its trustful face.

America

Centre of equal daughters, equal sons,
All, all alike endear'd, grown, ungrown, young or old,
Strong, ample, fair, enduring, capable, rich,
Perennial with the Earth, with Freedom, Law and Love,
A grand, sane, towering, seated Mother,
Chair'd in the adamant of Time.

Memories

How sweet the silent backward tracings!

The wanderings as in dreams--the meditation of old times resumed

--their loves, joys, persons, voyages.

To-Day and Thee

The appointed winners in a long-stretch'd game;

The course of Time and nations--Egypt, India, Greece and Rome;

The past entire, with all its heroes, histories, arts, experiments,

Its store of songs, inventions, voyages, teachers, books,

Garner'd for now and thee--To think of it!

The heirdom all converged in thee!

After the Dazzle of Day

After the dazzle of day is gone,

Only the dark, dark night shows to my eyes the stars;
After the clangor of organ majestic, or chorus, or perfect band,
Silent, athwart my soul, moves the symphony true.

Abraham Lincoln, Born Feb. 12, 1809

To-day, from each and all, a breath of prayer--a pulse of thought,
To memory of Him--to birth of Him.

Out of May's Shows Selected

Apple orchards, the trees all cover'd with blossoms;
Wheat fields carpeted far and near in vital emerald green;
The eternal, exhaustless freshness of each early morning;
The yellow, golden, transparent haze of the warm afternoon sun;
The aspiring lilac bushes with profuse purple or white flowers.

Halcyon Days

Not from successful love alone,
Nor wealth, nor honor'd middle age, nor victories of politics or war;
But as life wanes, and all the turbulent passions calm,
As gorgeous, vapory, silent hues cover the evening sky,
As softness, fulness, rest, suffuse the frame, like freshier, balmier air,
As the days take on a mellower light, and the apple at last hangs
 really finish'd and indolent-ripe on the tree,
Then for the teeming quietest, happiest days of all!
The brooding and blissful halcyon days!

FANCIES AT NAVESINK

[I] The Pilot in the Mist

Steaming the northern rapids--(an old St. Lawrence reminiscence,
A sudden memory-flash comes back, I know not why,
Here waiting for the sunrise, gazing from this hill;)
Again 'tis just at morning--a heavy haze contends with daybreak,
Again the trembling, laboring vessel veers me--I press through
 foam-dash'd rocks that almost touch me,
Again I mark where aft the small thin Indian helmsman
Looms in the mist, with brow elate and governing hand.

[II] Had I the Choice

Had I the choice to tally greatest bards,
To limn their portraits, stately, beautiful, and emulate at will,
Homer with all his wars and warriors--Hector, Achilles, Ajax,
Or Shakspeare's woe-entangled Hamlet, Lear, Othello--Tennyson's fair ladies,
Metre or wit the best, or choice conceit to wield in perfect rhyme,
 delight of singers;
These, these, O sea, all these I'd gladly barter,
Would you the undulation of one wave, its trick to me transfer,
Or breathe one breath of yours upon my verse,
And leave its odor there.

[III] You Tides with Ceaseless Swell

You tides with ceaseless swell! you power that does this work!
You unseen force, centripetal, centrifugal, through space's spread,
Rapport of sun, moon, earth, and all the constellations,
What are the messages by you from distant stars to us? what Sirius'?
 what Capella's?
What central heart--and you the pulse--vivifies all? what boundless

aggregate of all?

What subtle indirection and significance in you? what clue to all in
you? what fluid, vast identity,
Holding the universe with all its parts as one--as sailing in a ship?

[IV] Last of Ebb, and Daylight Waning

Last of ebb, and daylight waning,
Scented sea-cool landward making, smells of sedge and salt incoming,
With many a half-caught voice sent up from the eddies,
Many a muffled confession--many a sob and whisper'd word,
As of speakers far or hid.

How they sweep down and out! how they mutter!
Poets unnamed--artists greatest of any, with cherish'd lost designs,
Love's unresponse--a chorus of age's complaints--hope's last words,
Some suicide's despairing cry, Away to the boundless waste, and
never again return.

On to oblivion then!

On, on, and do your part, ye burying, ebbing tide!

On for your time, ye furious debouche!

[V] And Yet Not You Alone

And yet not you alone, twilight and burying ebb,
Nor you, ye lost designs alone--nor failures, aspirations;
I know, divine deceitful ones, your glamour's seeming;
Duly by you, from you, the tide and light again--duly the hinges turning,
Duly the needed discord-parts offsetting, blending,
Weaving from you, from Sleep, Night, Death itself,
The rhythmus of Birth eternal.

[VI] Proudly the Flood Comes In

Proudly the flood comes in, shouting, foaming, advancing,
Long it holds at the high, with bosom broad outswelling,
All throbs, dilates--the farms, woods, streets of cities--workmen at work,
Mainsails, topsails, jibs, appear in the offing--steamers' pennants
 of smoke--and under the forenoon sun,
Freighted with human lives, gaily the outward bound, gaily the
 inward bound,
Flaunting from many a spar the flag I love.

[VII] By That Long Scan of Waves

By that long scan of waves, myself call'd back, resumed upon myself,
In every crest some undulating light or shade--some retrospect,
Joys, travels, studies, silent panoramas--scenes ephemeral,
The long past war, the battles, hospital sights, the wounded and the dead,
Myself through every by-gone phase--my idle youth--old age at hand,
My three-score years of life summ'd up, and more, and past,
By any grand ideal tried, intentionless, the whole a nothing,
And haply yet some drop within God's scheme's ensemble--some
 wave, or part of wave,
Like one of yours, ye multitudinous ocean.

[VIII] Then Last Of All

Then last of all, caught from these shores, this hill,
Of you O tides, the mystic human meaning:
Only by law of you, your swell and ebb, enclosing me the same,
The brain that shapes, the voice that chants this song.

Election Day, November, 1884

If I should need to name, O Western World, your powerfulest scene and show,
'Twould not be you, Niagara--nor you, ye limitless prairies--nor
 your huge rifts of canyons, Colorado,
Nor you, Yosemite--nor Yellowstone, with all its spasmic
 geyser-loops ascending to the skies, appearing and disappearing,
Nor Oregon's white cones--nor Huron's belt of mighty lakes--nor
 Mississippi's stream:
--This seething hemisphere's humanity, as now, I'd name--the still
 small voice vibrating--America's choosing day,
(The heart of it not in the chosen--the act itself the main, the
 quadriennial choosing,)
The stretch of North and South arous'd--sea-board and inland--
 Texas to Maine--the Prairie States--Vermont, Virginia, California,
The final ballot-shower from East to West--the paradox and conflict,
The countless snow-flakes falling--(a swordless conflict,
Yet more than all Rome's wars of old, or modern Napoleon's:) the
 peaceful choice of all,
Or good or ill humanity--welcoming the darker odds, the dross:
--Foams and ferments the wine? it serves to purify--while the heart
 pants, life glows:
These stormy gusts and winds waft precious ships,
Swell'd Washington's, Jefferson's, Lincoln's sails.

With Husky-Haughty Lips, O Sea!

With husky-haughty lips, O sea!

Where day and night I wend thy surf-beat shore,

Imaging to my sense thy varied strange suggestions,

(I see and plainly list thy talk and conference here,)

Thy troops of white-maned racers racing to the goal,

Thy ample, smiling face, dash'd with the sparkling dimples of the sun,

Thy brooding scowl and murk--thy unloos'd hurricanes,

Thy unsubduedness, caprices, wilfulness;

Great as thou art above the rest, thy many tears--a lack from all

eternity in thy content,

(Naught but the greatest struggles, wrongs, defeats, could make thee

greatest--no less could make thee,)

Thy lonely state--something thou ever seek'st and seek'st, yet

never gain'st,

Surely some right withheld--some voice, in huge monotonous rage, of

freedom-lover pent,

Some vast heart, like a planet's, chain'd and chafing in those breakers,

By lengthen'd swell, and spasm, and panting breath,

And rhythmic rasping of thy sands and waves,

And serpent hiss, and savage peals of laughter,

And undertones of distant lion roar,

(Sounding, appealing to the sky's deaf ear--but now, rapport for once,

A phantom in the night thy confidant for once,)

The first and last confession of the globe,
Outsurging, muttering from thy soul's abyssms,
The tale of cosmic elemental passion,
Thou tellest to a kindred soul.

Death of General Grant

As one by one withdraw the lofty actors,
From that great play on history's stage eterne,
That lurid, partial act of war and peace--of old and new contending,
Fought out through wrath, fears, dark dismays, and many a long suspense;
All past--and since, in countless graves receding, mellowing,
Victor's and vanquish'd--Lincoln's and Lee's--now thou with them,
Man of the mighty days--and equal to the days!
Thou from the prairies!--tangled and many-vein'd and hard has been thy part,
To admiration has it been enacted!

Red Jacket (From Aloft)

Upon this scene, this show,

Yielded to-day by fashion, learning, wealth,
(Nor in caprice alone--some grains of deepest meaning,) Haply, aloft, (who knows?) from distant sky-clouds' blended shapes,
As some old tree, or rock or cliff, thrill'd with its soul,
Product of Nature's sun, stars, earth direct--a towering human form,
In hunting-shirt of film, arm'd with the rifle, a half-ironical
 smile curving its phantom lips,
Like one of Ossian's ghosts looks down.

Washington's Monument February, 1885

Ah, not this marble, dead and cold:
Far from its base and shaft expanding--the round zones circling,
 comprehending,
Thou, Washington, art all the world's, the continents' entire--not
 yours alone, America,
Europe's as well, in every part, castle of lord or laborer's cot,
Or frozen North, or sultry South--the African's--the Arab's in his tent,
Old Asia's there with venerable smile, seated amid her ruins;
(Greets the antique the hero new? 'tis but the same--the heir
 legitimate, continued ever,
The indomitable heart and arm--proofs of the never-broken line,
Courage, alertness, patience, faith, the same--e'en in defeat

defeated not, the same:)

Wherever sails a ship, or house is built on land, or day or night,
Through teeming cities' streets, indoors or out, factories or farms,
Now, or to come, or past--where patriot wills existed or exist,
Wherever Freedom, pois'd by Toleration, sway'd by Law,
Stands or is rising thy true monument.

Of That Blithe Throat of Thine

Of that blithe throat of thine from arctic bleak and blank,
I'll mind the lesson, solitary bird--let me too welcome chilling drifts,
E'en the profoundest chill, as now--a torpid pulse, a brain unnerv'd,
Old age land-lock'd within its winter bay--(cold, cold, O cold!)
These snowy hairs, my feeble arm, my frozen feet,
For them thy faith, thy rule I take, and grave it to the last;
Not summer's zones alone--not chants of youth, or south's warm tides alone,
But held by sluggish floes, pack'd in the northern ice, the cumulus
of years,
These with gay heart I also sing.

Broadway

What hurrying human tides, or day or night!
What passions, winnings, losses, ardors, swim thy waters!
What whirls of evil, bliss and sorrow, stem thee!
What curious questioning glances--glints of love!
Leer, envy, scorn, contempt, hope, aspiration!
Thou portal--thou arena--thou of the myriad long-drawn lines and groups!
(Could but thy flagstones, curbs, facades, tell their inimitable tales;
Thy windows rich, and huge hotels--thy side-walks wide;)
Thou of the endless sliding, mincing, shuffling feet!
Thou, like the parti-colored world itself--like infinite, teeming,
 mocking life!
Thou visor'd, vast, unspeakable show and lesson!

To Get the Final Lilt of Songs

To get the final lilt of songs,
To penetrate the inmost lore of poets--to know the mighty ones,
Job, Homer, Eschylus, Dante, Shakespere, Tennyson, Emerson;
To diagnose the shifting-delicate tints of love and pride and doubt--
 to truly understand,
To encompass these, the last keen faculty and entrance-price,

Old age, and what it brings from all its past experiences.

Old Salt Kossabone

Far back, related on my mother's side,

Old Salt Kossabone, I'll tell you how he died:

(Had been a sailor all his life--was nearly 90--lived with his

married grandchild, Jenny;

House on a hill, with view of bay at hand, and distant cape, and

stretch to open sea;)

The last of afternoons, the evening hours, for many a year his

regular custom,

In his great arm chair by the window seated,

(Sometimes, indeed, through half the day,)

Watching the coming, going of the vessels, he mutters to himself--

And now the close of all:

One struggling outbound brig, one day, baffled for long--cross-tides

and much wrong going,

At last at nightfall strikes the breeze aright, her whole luck veering,

And swiftly bending round the cape, the darkness proudly entering,

cleaving, as he watches,

"She's free--she's on her destination"--these the last words--when

Jenny came, he sat there dead,

Dutch Kossabone, Old Salt, related on my mother's side, far back.

The Dead Tenor

As down the stage again,
With Spanish hat and plumes, and gait inimitable,
Back from the fading lessons of the past, I'd call, I'd tell and own,
How much from thee! the revelation of the singing voice from thee!
(So firm--so liquid-soft--again that tremulous, manly timbre!
The perfect singing voice--deepest of all to me the lesson--trial
and test of all:)
How through those strains distill'd--how the rapt ears, the soul of
me, absorbing
Fernando's heart, Manrico's passionate call, Ernani's, sweet Gennaro's,
I fold thenceforth, or seek to fold, within my chants transmuting,
Freedom's and Love's and Faith's unloos'd cantabile,
(As perfume's, color's, sunlight's correlation:)
From these, for these, with these, a hurried line, dead tenor,
A wafted autumn leaf, dropt in the closing grave, the shovel'd earth,
To memory of thee.

Continuities

Nothing is ever really lost, or can be lost,
No birth, identity, form--no object of the world.
Nor life, nor force, nor any visible thing;
Appearance must not foil, nor shifted sphere confuse thy brain.
Ample are time and space--ample the fields of Nature.
The body, sluggish, aged, cold--the embers left from earlier fires,
The light in the eye grown dim, shall duly flame again;
The sun now low in the west rises for mornings and for noons continual;
To frozen clods ever the spring's invisible law returns,
With grass and flowers and summer fruits and corn.

Yonnondio

A song, a poem of itself--the word itself a dirge,
Amid the wilds, the rocks, the storm and wintry night,
To me such misty, strange tableaux the syllables calling up;
Yonnondio--I see, far in the west or north, a limitless ravine, with
 plains and mountains dark,
I see swarms of stalwart chieftains, medicine-men, and warriors,
As flitting by like clouds of ghosts, they pass and are gone in the

twilight,

(Race of the woods, the landscapes free, and the falls!

No picture, poem, statement, passing them to the future:)

Yonnondio! Yonnondio!--unlimn'd they disappear;

To-day gives place, and fades--the cities, farms, factories fade;

A muffled sonorous sound, a wailing word is borne through the air

for a moment,

Then blank and gone and still, and utterly lost.

Life

Ever the undiscouraged, resolute, struggling soul of man;

(Have former armies fail'd? then we send fresh armies--and fresh again;)

Ever the grappled mystery of all earth's ages old or new;

Ever the eager eyes, hurrahs, the welcome-clapping hands, the loud

applause;

Ever the soul dissatisfied, curious, unconvinced at last;

Struggling to-day the same--battling the same.

"Going Somewhere"

My science-friend, my noblest woman-friend,
(Now buried in an English grave--and this a memory-leaf for her dear sake,)
Ended our talk--"The sum, concluding all we know of old or modern
learning, intuitions deep,
"Of all Geologies--Histories--of all Astronomy--of Evolution,
Metaphysics all,
"Is, that we all are onward, onward, speeding slowly, surely bettering,
"Life, life an endless march, an endless army, (no halt, but it is
duly over,)
"The world, the race, the soul--in space and time the universes,
"All bound as is befitting each--all surely going somewhere."

Small the Theme of My Chant

Small the theme of my Chant, yet the greatest--namely, One's-Self--
a simple, separate person. That, for the use of the New World, I sing.
Man's physiology complete, from top to toe, I sing. Not physiognomy alone,
nor brain alone, is worthy for the Muse;--I say the Form complete
is worthier far. The Female equally with the Male, I sing.
Nor cease at the theme of One's-Self. I speak the word of the
modern, the word En-Masse.
My Days I sing, and the Lands--with interstice I knew of hapless War.

(O friend, whoe'er you are, at last arriving hither to commence, I
feel through every leaf the pressure of your hand, which I return.
And thus upon our journey, footing the road, and more than once, and
link'd together let us go.)

True Conquerors

Old farmers, travelers, workmen (no matter how crippled or bent,)
Old sailors, out of many a perilous voyage, storm and wreck,
Old soldiers from campaigns, with all their wounds, defeats and scars;
Enough that they've survived at all--long life's unflinching ones!
Forth from their struggles, trials, fights, to have emerged at all--
in that alone,
True conquerors o'er all the rest.

The United States to Old World Critics

Here first the duties of to-day, the lessons of the concrete,
Wealth, order, travel, shelter, products, plenty;
As of the building of some varied, vast, perpetual edifice,

Whence to arise inevitable in time, the towering roofs, the lamps,
The solid-planted spires tall shooting to the stars.

The Calming Thought of All

That coursing on, whate'er men's speculations,
Amid the changing schools, theologies, philosophies,
Amid the bawling presentations new and old,
The round earth's silent vital laws, facts, modes continue.

Thanks in Old Age

Thanks in old age--thanks ere I go,
For health, the midday sun, the impalpable air--for life, mere life,
For precious ever-lingering memories, (of you my mother dear--you,
 father--you, brothers, sisters, friends,)
For all my days--not those of peace alone--the days of war the same,
For gentle words, caresses, gifts from foreign lands,
For shelter, wine and meat--for sweet appreciation,
(You distant, dim unknown--or young or old--countless, unspecified,

readers belov'd,
We never met, and neer shall meet--and yet our souls embrace, long,
close and long;)
For beings, groups, love, deeds, words, books--for colors, forms,
For all the brave strong men--devoted, hardy men--who've forward
sprung in freedom's help, all years, all lands
For braver, stronger, more devoted men--(a special laurel ere I go,
to life's war's chosen ones,
The cannoneers of song and thought--the great artillerists--the
foremost leaders, captains of the soul:)
As soldier from an ended war return'd--As traveler out of myriads,
to the long procession retrospective,
Thanks--joyful thanks!--a soldier's, traveler's thanks.

Life and Death

The two old, simple problems ever intertwined,
Close home, elusive, present, baffled, grappled.
By each successive age insoluble, pass'd on,
To ours to-day--and we pass on the same.

The Voice of the Rain

And who art thou? said I to the soft-falling shower,
Which, strange to tell, gave me an answer, as here translated:
I am the Poem of Earth, said the voice of the rain,
Eternal I rise impalpable out of the land and the bottomless sea,
Upward to heaven, whence, vaguely form'd, altogether changed, and
yet the same,
I descend to lave the drouths, atomies, dust-layers of the globe,
And all that in them without me were seeds only, latent, unborn;
And forever, by day and night, I give back life to my own origin,
and make pure and beautify it;
(For song, issuing from its birth-place, after fulfilment, wandering,
Reck'd or unreck'd, duly with love returns.)

Soon Shall the Winter's Foil Be Here

Soon shall the winter's foil be here;
Soon shall these icy ligatures unbind and melt--A little while,
And air, soil, wave, suffused shall be in softness, bloom and
growth--a thousand forms shall rise
From these dead clods and chills as from low burial graves.

Thine eyes, ears--all thy best attributes--all that takes cognizance
of natural beauty,
Shall wake and fill. Thou shalt perceive the simple shows, the
delicate miracles of earth,
Dandelions, clover, the emerald grass, the early scents and flowers,
The arbutus under foot, the willow's yellow-green, the blossoming
plum and cherry;
With these the robin, lark and thrush, singing their songs--the
flitting bluebird;
For such the scenes the annual play brings on.

While Not the Past Forgetting

While not the past forgetting,
To-day, at least, contention sunk entire--peace, brotherhood uprisen;
For sign reciprocal our Northern, Southern hands,
Lay on the graves of all dead soldiers, North or South,
(Nor for the past alone--for meanings to the future,)
Wreaths of roses and branches of palm.

The Dying Veteran

Amid these days of order, ease, prosperity,
Amid the current songs of beauty, peace, decorum,
I cast a reminiscence--(likely 'twill offend you,
I heard it in my boyhood;)--More than a generation since,
A queer old savage man, a fighter under Washington himself,
(Large, brave, cleanly, hot-blooded, no talker, rather spiritualistic,
Had fought in the ranks--fought well--had been all through the
 Revolutionary war,)
Lay dying--sons, daughters, church-deacons, lovingly tending him,
Sharpening their sense, their ears, towards his murmuring, half-caught words:
"Let me return again to my war-days,
To the sights and scenes--to forming the line of battle,
To the scouts ahead reconnoitering,
To the cannons, the grim artillery,
To the galloping aides, carrying orders,
To the wounded, the fallen, the heat, the suspense,
The perfume strong, the smoke, the deafening noise;
Away with your life of peace!--your joys of peace!
Give me my old wild battle-life again!"

Stronger Lessons

Have you learn'd lessons only of those who admired you, and were
tender with you, and stood aside for you?

Have you not learn'd great lessons from those who reject you, and
brace themselves against you? or who treat you with contempt,
or dispute the passage with you?

A Prairie Sunset

Shot gold, maroon and violet, dazzling silver, emerald, fawn,
The earth's whole amplitude and Nature's multiform power consign'd
for once to colors;
The light, the general air possess'd by them--colors till now unknown,
No limit, confine--not the Western sky alone--the high meridian--
North, South, all,
Pure luminous color fighting the silent shadows to the last.

Twenty Years

Down on the ancient wharf, the sand, I sit, with a new-comer chatting:
He shipp'd as green-hand boy, and sail'd away, (took some sudden,
vehement notion;)
Since, twenty years and more have circled round and round,
While he the globe was circling round and round, --and now returns:
How changed the place--all the old land-marks gone--the parents dead;
(Yes, he comes back to lay in port for good--to settle--has a
well-fill'd purse--no spot will do but this;)
The little boat that scull'd him from the sloop, now held in leash I see,
I hear the slapping waves, the restless keel, the rocking in the sand,
I see the sailor kit, the canvas bag, the great box bound with brass,
I scan the face all berry-brown and bearded--the stout-strong frame,
Dress'd in its russet suit of good Scotch cloth:
(Then what the told-out story of those twenty years? What of the future?)

Orange Buds by Mail from Florida

A lesser proof than old Voltaire's, yet greater,
Proof of this present time, and thee, thy broad expanse, America,
To my plain Northern hut, in outside clouds and snow,
Brought safely for a thousand miles o'er land and tide,
Some three days since on their own soil live-sprouting,
Now here their sweetness through my room unfolding,

A bunch of orange buds by mall from Florida.

Twilight

The soft voluptuous opiate shades,
The sun just gone, the eager light dispell'd--(I too will soon be
gone, dispell'd,)
A haze--nirwana--rest and night--oblivion.

You Lingering Sparse Leaves of Me

You lingering sparse leaves of me on winter-nearing boughs,
And I some well-shorn tree of field or orchard-row;
You tokens diminute and lorn--(not now the flush of May, or July
clover-bloom--no grain of August now;)
You pallid banner-staves--you pennants valueless--you overstay'd of time,
Yet my soul-dearest leaves confirming all the rest,
The faithfulest--hardiest--last.

Not Meagre, Latent Boughs Alone

Not meagre, latent boughs alone, O songs! (scaly and bare, like
eagles' talons,
But haply for some sunny day (who knows?) some future spring, some
summer--bursting forth,
To verdant leaves, or sheltering shade--to nourishing fruit,
Apples and grapes--the stalwart limbs of trees emerging--the fresh,
free, open air,
And love and faith, like scented roses blooming.

The Dead Emperor

To-day, with bending head and eyes, thou, too, Columbia,
Less for the mighty crown laid low in sorrow--less for the Emperor,
Thy true condolence breathest, sendest out o'er many a salt sea mile,
Mourning a good old man--a faithful shepherd, patriot.

As the Greek's Signal Flame

As the Greek's signal flame, by antique records told,
Rose from the hill-top, like applause and glory,
Welcoming in fame some special veteran, hero,
With rosy tinge reddening the land he'd served,
So I aloft from Mannahatta's ship-fringed shore,
Lift high a kindled brand for thee, Old Poet.

The Dismantled Ship

In some unused lagoon, some nameless bay,
On sluggish, lonesome waters, anchor'd near the shore,
An old, dismasted, gray and batter'd ship, disabled, done,
After free voyages to all the seas of earth, haul'd up at last and
 hawser'd tight,
Lies rusting, mouldering.

Now Precedent Songs, Farewell

Now precedent songs, farewell--by every name farewell,
(Trains of a staggering line in many a strange procession, waggons,
From ups and downs--with intervals--from elder years, mid-age, or youth,)
"In Cabin'd Ships, or Thee Old Cause or Poets to Come
Or Paumanok, Song of Myself, Calamus, or Adam,
Or Beat! Beat! Drums! or To the Leaven'd Soil they Trod,
Or Captain! My Captain! Kosmos, Quicksand Years, or Thoughts,
Thou Mother with thy Equal Brood," and many, many more unspecified,
From fibre heart of mine--from throat and tongue--(My life's hot
 pulsing blood,
The personal urge and form for me--not merely paper, automatic type
 and ink,)
Each song of mine--each utterance in the past--having its long, long
 history,
Of life or death, or soldier's wound, of country's loss or safety,
(O heaven! what flash and started endless train of all! compared
 indeed to that!
What wretched shred e'en at the best of all!)

An Evening Lull

After a week of physical anguish,
Unrest and pain, and feverish heat,

Toward the ending day a calm and lull comes on,
Three hours of peace and soothing rest of brain.

Old Age's Lambent Peaks

The touch of flame--the illuminating fire--the loftiest look at last,
O'er city, passion, sea--o'er prairie, mountain, wood--the earth itself,
The airy, different, changing hues of all, in failing twilight,
Objects and groups, bearings, faces, reminiscences;
The calmer sight--the golden setting, clear and broad:
So much i' the atmosphere, the points of view, the situations whence
 we scan,
Bro't out by them alone--so much (perhaps the best) unreck'd before;
The lights indeed from them--old age's lambent peaks.

After the Supper and Talk

After the supper and talk--after the day is done,
As a friend from friends his final withdrawal prolonging,
Good-bye and Good-bye with emotional lips repeating,

(So hard for his hand to release those hands--no more will they meet,
No more for communion of sorrow and joy, of old and young,
A far-stretching journey awaits him, to return no more,)
Shunning, postponing severance--seeking to ward off the last word
 ever so little,
E'en at the exit-door turning--charges superfluous calling back--
 e'en as he descends the steps,
Something to eke out a minute additional--shadows of nightfall deepening,
Farewells, messages lessening--dimmer the forthgoer's visage and form,
Soon to be lost for aye in the darkness--loth, O so loth to depart!
Garrulous to the very last.