

SONGS OF PARTING.

SINGERS AND POETS.

1.

The indications and tally of time;

Perfect sanity shows the master among philosophs;

Time, always without flaw, 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.

2.

The singers do not beget--only the POET begets;

The singers are welcomed, understood, appear often enough--but rare has the
day been, likewise the spot, of the birth of the maker of poems;

Not every century, or every five centuries, has contained 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, echo-singer, parlour-singer, love-singer, or something else.

3.

All this time, and at all times, wait the words of poems;

The greatness of sons is the exuding of the greatness of mothers and
fathers;

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

Divine instinct, breadth of vision, the law of reason, health, rudeness of
body, withdrawnness, gaiety, sun-tan, air-sweetness--such are some
of the words of poems.

4.

The sailor and traveller underlie the maker of poems,

The builder, geometer, chemist, anatomist, phrenologist, artist--all these
underlie the maker of poems.

5.

The words of the true poems give you more than poems,
They give you, to form for yourself, poems, religions, politics, war,
 peace, behaviour, histories, essays, romances, and everything else,
They balance ranks, colours, races, creeds, and the sexes,
They do not seek beauty--they are sought,
For ever 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.

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, habitué of the Alleghanies, treating man 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.

FIT AUDIENCE.

1.

Whoever you are, holding me now in hand,
Without one thing, all will be useless:
I give you fair warning, before you attempt me further,
I am not what you supposed, but far different.

2.

Who is he that would become my follower?
Who would sign himself a candidate for my affections?

The way is suspicious--the result uncertain, perhaps destructive;
You would have to give up all else--I alone would expect to be your God,
sole and exclusive;

Your novitiate would even then be long and exhausting,
The whole past theory of your life, and all conformity to the lives around
you, would have to be abandoned;

Therefore release me now, before troubling yourself any further--Let go
your hand from my shoulders,
Put me down, and depart on your way.

Or else, by stealth, in some wood, for trial,
Or back of a rock, in the open air,
(For in any roofed room of a house I emerge not--nor in company,
And in libraries I lie as one dumb, a gawk, or unborn, or dead,)
But just possibly with you on a high hill--first watching lest any person,
 for miles around, approach unawares--
Or possibly with you sailing at sea, or on the beach of the sea, or some
 quiet island,
Here to put your lips upon mine I permit you,
With the comrade's long-dwelling kiss, or the new husband's kiss,
For I am the new husband, and I am the comrade.

Or, if you will, thrusting me beneath your clothing,
Where I may feel the throbs of your heart, or rest upon your hip,
Carry me when you go forth over land or sea;
For thus, merely touching you, is enough--is best,
And thus, touching you, would I silently sleep, and be carried eternally.

3.

But these leaves conning, you con at peril,
For these leaves, and me, you will not understand,
They will elude you at first, and still more afterward--I will certainly
 elude you,
Even while you should think you had unquestionably caught me, behold!

Already you see I have escaped from you.

For it is not for what I have put into it that I have written this book,

Nor is it by reading it you will acquire it,

Nor do those know me best who admire me, and vauntingly praise me,

Nor will the candidates for my love (unless at most a very few) prove

victorious,

Nor will my poems do good only--they will do just as much evil, perhaps

more;

For all is useless without that which you may guess at many times and not

hit--that which I hinted at;

Therefore release me, and depart on your way.

SINGING IN SPRING.

These I, singing in spring, collect for lovers:

For who but I should understand lovers, and all their sorrow and joy?

And who but I should be the poet of comrades?

Collecting, I traverse the garden, the world--but soon I pass the gates,

Now along the pond-side--now wading in a little, fearing not the wet,

Now by the post-and-rail fences, where the old stones thrown there, picked
from the fields, have accumulated,

Wild flowers and vines and weeds come up through the stones, and partly
cover them--Beyond these I pass,

Far, far in the forest, before I think where I go,

Solitary, smelling the earthy smell, stopping now and then in the silence;

Alone, I had thought--yet soon a silent troop gathers around me;

Some walk by my side, and some behind, and some embrace my arms or neck,

They, the spirits of friends, dead or alive--thicker they come, a great
crowd, and I in the middle,

Collecting, dispensing, singing in spring, there I wander with them,

Plucking something for tokens--tossing toward whoever is near me.

Here lilac, with a branch of pine,

Here, out of my pocket, some moss which I pulled off a live-oak in Florida,
as it hung trailing down,

Here some pinks and laurel leaves, and a handful of sage,

And here what I now draw from the water, wading in the pond-side,

(O here I last saw him that tenderly loves me--and returns again, never to
separate from me,

And this, O this shall henceforth be the token of comrades--this Calamus-
root[1] shall,
Interchange it, youths, with each other! Let none render it back!)
And twigs of maple, and a bunch of wild orange, and chestnut,
And stems of currants, and plum-blows, and the aromatic cedar,
These I, compassed around by a thick cloud of spirits,
Wandering, point to, or touch as I pass, or throw them loosely from me,
Indicating to each one what he shall have--giving something to each.
But what I drew from the water by the pond-side, that I reserve;
I will give of it--but only to them that love as I myself am capable of
loving.

[Footnote 1: I am favoured with the following indication, from Mr Whitman himself, of the relation in which this word Calamus is to be understood:--"Calamus is the very large and aromatic grass or rush growing about water-ponds in the valleys--spears about three feet high; often called Sweet Flag; grows all over the Northern and Middle States. The recherché or ethereal sense of the term, as used in my book, arises probably from the actual Calamus presenting the biggest and hardiest kind of spears of grass, and their fresh, aquatic, pungent bouquet."]

LOVE OF COMRADES.

1.

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

2.

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.

3.

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.

PULSE OF MY LIFE.

Not heaving from my ribbed breast only;
Not in sighs at night, in rage, dissatisfied with myself;
Not in those long-drawn, ill-suppressed sighs;
Not in many an oath and promise broken;
Not in my wilful and savage soul's volition;
Not in the subtle nourishment of the air;
Not in this beating and pounding at my temples and wrists;
Not in the curious systole and diastole within, which will one day cease;
Not in many a hungry wish, told to the skies only;
Not in cries, laughter, defiances, thrown from me when alone, far in the
 wilds;
Not in husky pantings through clenched teeth;
Not in sounded and resounded words--chattering words, echoes, dead words;
Not in the murmurs of my dreams while I sleep,
Nor the other murmurs of these incredible dreams of every day;
Nor in the limbs and senses of my body, that take you and dismiss you
 continually--Not there;
Not in any or all of them, O Adhesiveness! O pulse of my life!
Need I that you exist and show yourself, any more than in these songs.

AUXILIARIES.

WHAT place is besieged, and vainly tries to raise the siege?

Lo! I send to that place a commander, swift, brave, immortal;

And with him horse and foot, and parks of artillery,

And artillerymen, the deadliest that ever fired gun.

REALITIES.

1.

As I walk, solitary, unattended,
Around me I hear that éclat of the world--politics, produce,
The announcements of recognised things--science,
The approved growth of cities, and the spread of inventions.

I see the ships, (they will last a few years,)
The vast factories, with their foremen and workmen,
And hear the endorsement of all, and do not object to it.

2.

But I too announce solid things;
Science, ships, politics, cities, factories, are not nothing--they serve,
They stand for realities--all is as it should be.

3.

Then my realities;
What else is so real as mine?

Libertad, and the divine Average-Freedom to every slave on the face of the
earth,

The rapt promises and luminé[1] of seers--the spiritual
world--these centuries-lasting songs,

And our visions, the visions of poets, the most solid announcements of any.

For we support all,

After the rest is done and gone, we remain,

There is no final reliance but upon us;

Democracy rests finally upon us, (I, my brethren, begin it,)

And our visions sweep through eternity.

[Footnote 1: I suppose Whitman gets this odd word luminé, by a process of
his own, out of illuminati, and intends it to stand for what would be
called clairvoyance, intuition.]

NEARING DEPARTURE.

1.

As nearing departure,

As the time draws nigh, glooming, a cloud,

A dread beyond, of I know not what, darkens me.

2.

I shall go forth,

I shall traverse the States--but I cannot tell whither or how long;

Perhaps soon, some day or night while I am singing, my voice will suddenly
cease.

3.

O book and chant! must all then amount to but this?

Must we barely arrive at this beginning of me?...

And yet it is enough, O soul!

O soul! we have positively appeared--that is enough.

POETS TO COME.

1.

Poets to come!

Not to-day is to justify me, and Democracy, and what we are for;

But you, a new brood, native, athletic, continental, greater than before
known,

You must justify me.

2.

I but write one or two indicative words for the future,

I but advance a moment, only to wheel and hurry back in the darkness.

I am a man who, sauntering along, without fully stopping, turns a casual
look upon you, and then averts his face,

Leaving it to you to prove and define it,

Expecting the main things from you.

CENTURIES HENCE.

Full of life now, compact, visible,
I, forty years old the eighty-third year of the States,
To one a century hence, or any number of centuries hence,
To you, yet unborn, these seeking you.

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

SO LONG!

1.

To conclude--I announce what comes after me;

I announce mightier offspring, orators, days, and then depart,

I remember I said, before my leaves sprang at all,

I would raise my voice jocund and strong, with reference to consummations.

When America does what was promised,

When there are plentiful athletic bards, inland and sea-board,

When through these States walk a hundred millions of superb persons,

When the rest part away for superb persons, and contribute to them,

When breeds of the most perfect mothers denote America,

Then to me my due fruition.

I have pressed through in my own right,

I have offered my style to every one--I have journeyed with confident step.

While my pleasure is yet at the full, I whisper, So long!

And take the young woman's hand, and the young man's hand for the last
time.

2.

I announce natural persons to arise,
I announce justice triumphant,
I announce uncompromising liberty and equality,
I announce the justification of candour, and the justification of pride.

I announce that the identity of these States is a single identity only,
I announce the Union, out of all its struggles and wars, more and more
compact,
I announce splendours and majesties to make all the previous politics of
the earth insignificant.

I announce a man or woman coming--perhaps you are the one (So long!)
I announce the great individual, fluid as Nature, chaste, affectionate,
compassionate, fully armed.
I announce a life that shall be copious, vehement, spiritual, bold,
And I announce an old age that shall lightly and joyfully meet its
translation.

3.

O thicker and faster! (So long!)
O crowding too close upon me;
I foresee too much--it means more than I thought,
It appears to me I am dying.

Hasten throat, and sound your last!

Salute me--salute the days once more. Peel the old cry once more.

Screaming electric, the atmosphere using,

At random glancing, each as I notice absorbing,

Swiftly on, but a little while alighting,

Curious enveloped messages delivering,

Sparkles hot, seed ethereal, down in the dirt dropping,

Myself unknowing, my commission obeying, to question it never daring,

To ages, and ages yet, the growth of the seed leaving,

To troops out of me rising--they the tasks I have set promulging,

To women certain whispers of myself bequeathing--their affection me more
clearly explaining,

To young men my problems offering--no dallier I--I the muscle of their
brains trying,

So I pass--a little time vocal, visible, contrary,

Afterward, a melodious echo, passionately bent for--death making me really
undying,--

The best of me then when no longer visible--for toward that I have been
incessantly preparing.

What is there more, that I lag and pause, and crouch extended with unshut
mouth?

Is there a single final farewell?

4.

My songs cease--I abandon them,
From behind the screen where I hid, I advance personally, solely to you.

Camerado! This is no book;
Who touches this touches a man.
(Is it night? Are we here alone?)
It is I you hold, and who holds you,
I spring from the pages into your arms--decease calls me forth.

O how your fingers drowse me!
Your breath falls around me like dew--your pulse lulls the tympan of my
ears,
I feel immersed from head to foot,
Delicious--enough.

Enough, O deed impromptu and secret!
Enough, O gliding present! Enough, O summed-up past!

5.

Dear friend, whoever you are, here, take this kiss,

I give it especially to you--Do not forget me,

I feel like one who has done his work--I progress on,--(long enough have I
dallied with Life,)

The unknown sphere, more real than I dreamed, more direct, awakening rays
about me--So long!

Remember my words--I love you--I depart from materials,

I am as one disembodied, triumphant, dead.