

WALT WHITMAN

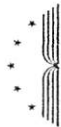
COMPLETE POETRY AND
COLLECTED PROSE

Leaves of Grass (1855)

Leaves of Grass (1891-92)

Complete Prose Works (1892)

Supplementary Prose



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Alas poor boy, he will never be better, (nor may-be needs to
be better, that brave and simple soul,
While they stand at home at the door he is dead already,
The only son is dead.

But the mother needs to be better,
She with thin form presently drest in black,
By day her meals untouch'd, then at night fitfully sleeping,
often waking,
In the midnight waking, weeping, longing with one deep
longing,
O that she might withdraw unnoticed, silent from life escape
and withdraw,
To follow, to seek, to be with her dear dead son.

Vigil Strange I Kept on the Field One Night

VIGIL strange I kept on the field one night;
When you my son and my comrade dropt at my side that day,
One look I but gave which your dear eyes return'd with a
look I shall never forget,
One touch of your hand to mine O boy, reach'd up as you
lay on the ground,
Then onward I sped in the battle, the even-contested battle,
Till late in the night reliev'd to the place at last again I made
my way,
Found you in death so cold dear comrade, found your body
son of responding kisses, (never again on earth
responding,)
Bared your face in the starlight, curious the scene, cool blew
the moderate night-wind,
Long there and then in vigil I stood, dimly around me the
battle-field spreading,
Vigil wondrous and vigil sweet there in the fragrant silent
night,
But not a tear fell, not even a long-drawn sigh, long, long I
gazed,
Then on the earth partially reclining sat by your side leaning
my chin in my hands,

Passing sweet hours, immortal and mystic hours with you
dearest comrade—not a tear, not a word,
Vigil of silence, love and death, vigil for you my son and my
soldier,
As onward silently stars aloft, eastward new ones upward
stole,
Vigil final for you brave boy, (I could not save you, swift
was your death,
I faithfully loved you and cared for you living, I think we
shall surely meet again,)
Till at latest lingering of the night, indeed just as the dawn
appear'd,
My comrade I wrapt in his blanket, envelop'd well his form,
Folded the blanket well, tucking it carefully over head and
carefully under feet,
And there and then and bathed by the rising sun, my son in
his grave, in his rude-dug grave I deposited,
Ending my vigil strange with that, vigil of night and battle-
field dim,
Vigil for boy of responding kisses, (never again on earth
responding,)
Vigil for comrade swiftly slain, vigil I never forget, how as
day brighten'd,
I rose from the chill ground and folded my soldier well in
his blanket,
And buried him where he fell.

*A March in the Ranks Hard-Prest, and the
Road Unknown*

A MARCH in the ranks hard-prest, and the road unknown,
A route through a heavy wood with muffled steps in the
darkness,
Our army foil'd with loss severe, and the sullen remnant
retreating,
Till after midnight glimmer upon us the lights of a dim-
lighted building,
We come to an open space in the woods, and halt by the
dim-lighted building,