

A LEAF (OF GRASS) FROM WALT WHITMAN.

“Then the eyes close, calmly close, and I speed forth to the darkness,  
“Resuming, marching, ever in darkness marching, on in the ranks,  
“The unknown road still marching.”—DRUM-TAPS.

Then the eyes close; the lamp is darkened now,  
    The spirit's prison is empty, the spirit free;  
A gentle hand smooths the unclouded brow,  
    Kind fingers seal the eyelids tenderly,  
And, maybe, in the darkness, ere he rise,  
The watcher plants a kiss on the shut eyes.

Asleep! asleep! the soothing night-air blows  
    The hair the wind may ruffle never more;  
The door is shut; the camp-fire cracks and glows,  
    The shadows waver darkly in its roar  
A shadow-play of death and life: the damp  
Of evening dews o'erspreads the little camp.

Sweet breeze, blow softly o'er the dead, the dead,  
    The day is passed, the night is starless, chill  
The herald-breeze of dawn, ere dawn is red  
    With sunlight, blows from the high eastern hill.  
The night is cold; draw close your cloaks, for lo!  
The unknown road far stretches. Let us go.