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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 abysses,
The tale of cosmic elemental passion,
Thou tellest to a kindred soul.
SANDS AT SEVENTY

Joys, travels, studio, silent panoramas, ephemeral,
The long past, battles, hospital, wounded and the dead,
Myself through every gone phase—my rude 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.

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 spasmodic 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.