

most lamentable of failures, or the most glorious of triumphs, in the known history of literature."

Assuredly, the Brooklyn poet is no commonplace writer. That he is startling and *outré*, no one who opens his volume will doubt. The conventionalities, and proprieties, and modesties, of thought, as well as of language, hold him in no restraint; and hence he has a vantage ground from which he may claim such credit as its licence deserves. But, apart from this, there are unmistakeable freshness, originality, and true poetic gleams of thought, mingled with the strange incoherencies of his boastful rhapsody. To call his "Leaves" poems, would be a mistake; they resemble rather the poet's first jottings, out of which the poem is to be formed; the ore out of which the metal is to be smelted; and, in its present form, with more of dross than sterling metal in the mass.

To find an extractable passage is no easy task. Here a fine suggestive fancy ends in some offensive pruriency; there it dwines into incomprehensible aggregations of words and terms, which—unless Machiavelli was right in teaching that words were given us to conceal our thoughts,—are mere clotted nonsense! Were we disposed to ridicule: our selections would be easy enough; or gravely to censure: abundant justification is at hand. We rather cull—not without needful omissions—the thoughts that seem to have suggested the quaint title of "Leaves of Grass."

"Loafe with me on the grass.....loose the stop from your throat,
Not words, not music or rhyme I want: not custom or lecture, not even the best,
Only the lull I like, the hum of your valved voice.

.....
I know that the hand of God is the elderhand of my own,
And I know that the spirit of God is the eldest brother of my own,
And that all the men ever born are also my brothers....and the women
my sisters and lovers,
And that a kelson of the Creation is love;
And limitless are leaves, stiff or drooping in the fields.
A child said, what is the Grass? fetching it to me with full hands;
How could I answer the child?...I do not know what it is any more than he.
I guess it must be the flag of my disposition, out of hopeful green
stuff woven.
Or I guess it is the handkerchief of the Lord,
A scented gift and remembrancer designedly dropped,
Bearing the owner's name some way in the corners, that we may see and
remark, and say Whose?
Or I guess the grass is itself a child ...the produced babe of the vegetation.
Or I guess it is a uniform hieroglyphic,
And it means, Sprouting, alike in broad zones and narrow zones,