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The Raven
and Other Poems

TAMERLANE
AND OTHER POEMS*
(1827)

BY A BOSTONIAN

Young heads are giddy, and young hearts are warm,
And make mistakes for manhood to reform.

COWPER

TAMERLANE*

[1827 VERSION]

Preface

The greater part of the poems which compose this little volume were written in the year 1821–22, when the author had not completed his fourteenth year. They were of course not intended for publication – why they are now published concerns no one but himself. Of the smaller pieces very little need be said: they perhaps savour too much of egotism – but they were written by one too young to have any knowledge of the world but from his own breast.

In *Tamerlane* he has endeavoured to expose the folly of even *risking* the best feelings of the heart at the shrine of Ambition. He is conscious that in this there are many faults (besides that of the general character of the poem), which he flatters himself he could, with little trouble, have corrected, but, unlike many of his predecessors, has been too fond of his early productions to amend them in his *old* age.

He will not say that he is indifferent as to the success of these poems – it might stimulate him to other attempts – but he can safely assert that failure will not at all influence him in a resolution already adopted. This is challenging criticism – let it be so. *Nos hæc novimus esse nihil.**

I

I have sent for thee, holy friar,
 But 'twas not with the drunken hope
 Which is but agony of desire
 To shun the fate, with which to cope
 Is more than crime may dare to dream,
 That I have call'd thee at this hour:
 Such, Father, is not my theme –
 Nor am I mad to deem that power
 Of earth may shrive me of the sin
 Unearthly pride hath revell'd in –
 I would not call thee fool, old man,
 But hope is not a gift of thine;
 If I *can* hope (Oh God! I can),
 It falls from an eternal shrine.

10

II

The gay wall of this gaudy tower
 Grows dim around me – death is near.
 I had not thought, until this hour
 When passing from the earth, that ear
 Of any, were it not the shade
 Of one whom in life I made
 All mystery but a simple name,
 Might know the secret of a spirit
 Bow'd down in sorrow and in shame...
 Shame said'st thou?

20

Ay, I did inherit
 That hated portion, with the fame,
 The worldly glory, which has shown
 A demon light around my throne,
 Scorching my sear'd heart with a pain
 Not hell shall make me fear again.

III

I have not always been as now... 30
 The fever'd diadem on my brow
 I claim'd and won usurpingly...
 Ay... the same heritage hath given
 Rome to the Caesar, this to me –
 The heirdom of a kingly mind,
 And a proud spirit, which hath striven
 Triumphantly with humankind.

In mountain air I first drew life;
 The mists of the Taglay have shed*
 Nightly their dews on my young head; 40
 And my brain drank their venom then,
 When after day of perilous strife
 With chamois, I would seize his den
 And slumber, in my pride of power,
 The infant monarch of the hour –
 For, with the mountain dew by night,
 My soul imbibed unhallow'd feeling;
 And I would feel its essence stealing
 In dreams upon me – while the light 50
 Flashing from cloud that hover'd o'er
 Would seem to my half-closing eye
 The pageantry of monarchy!
 And the deep thunder's echoing roar
 Came hurriedly upon me, telling
 Of war, and tumult, where my voice –
 My *own* voice, silly child! – was swelling
 (Oh, how would my wild heart rejoice
 And leap within me at the cry)
 The battle cry of victory!

* * * * *

IV

The rain came down upon my head 60
 But barely shelter'd, and the wind
 Pass'd quickly o'er me, but my mind
 Was maddening, for 'twas man that shed
 Laurels upon me – and the rush,

The torrent of the chilly air
 Gurgled in my pleased ear the crush
 Of empires, with the captive's prayer,
 The hum of suitors, the mix'd tone
 Of flattery round a sovereign's throne.

The storm had ceased, and I awoke – 70
 Its spirit cradled me to sleep,
 And as it pass'd me by, there broke
 Strange light upon me, though it were
 My soul in mystery to steep:
 For I was not as I had been –
 The child of Nature, without care
 Or thought, save of the passing scene...

V

My passions, from that hapless hour,
 Usurp'd a tyranny, which men
 Have deem'd, since I have reach'd to power 80
 My innate nature – be it so:
 But, Father, there lived one who, then...
 Then, in my boyhood, when their fire
 Burn'd with a still intenser glow
 (For passion must with youth expire) –
 Ev'n *then*, who deem'd this iron heart
 In woman's weakness had a part.

I have no words, alas, to tell
 The loveliness of loving well!
 Nor would I dare attempt to trace 90
 The breathing beauty of a face
 Which, even to *my* impassion'd mind,
 Leaves not its memory behind.
 In spring of life have ye ne'er dwelt
 Some object of delight upon,
 With steadfast eye, till ye have felt
 The earth reel, and the vision gone?
 And I have held to memory's eye
 One object... and but one – until
 Its very form hath pass'd me by, 100
 But left its influence with me still.

VI

'Tis not to thee that I should name...
 Thou canst not – wouldst not dare to think
 The magic empire of a flame
 Which even upon this perilous brink
 Hath fix'd my soul, though unforgiven,
 By what it lost for passion: heaven.
 I loved... and oh, how tenderly!
 Yes! She [was] worthy of all love!
 Such as in infancy was mine, 110
 Though then its *passion* could not be:
 'Twas such as angel minds above
 Might envy – her young heart the shrine
 On which my every hope and thought
 Were incense, then a goodly gift:
 For they were childish, without sin,
 Pure as her young example taught;
 Why did I leave it and, adrift,
 Trust to the fickle star within?

VII

We grew in age and love together, 120
 Roaming the forest and the wild –
 My breast her shield in wintry weather –
 And when the friendly sunshine smiled
 And she would mark the opening skies,
 I saw no heaven, but in her eyes...
 Even childhood knows the human heart;
 For when, in sunshine and in smiles,
 From all our little cares apart,
 Laughing at her half-silly wiles
 I'd throw me on her throbbing breast 130
 And pour my spirit out in tears,
 She'd look up in my wilder'd eye...
 There was no need to speak the rest –
 No need to quiet her kind fears...
 She did not ask the reason why.

 The hallow'd memory of those years
 Comes o'er me in these lonely hours,

And, with sweet loveliness, appears
 As perfume of strange summer flowers –
 Of flowers which we have known before 140
 In infancy, which seen, recall
 To mind... not flowers alone, but more:
 Our earthly life, and love... and all.

VIII

Yes! She was worthy of all love!
 Even such as from the accursed time
 My spirit with the tempest strove,
 When, on the mountain peak alone,
 Ambition lent it a new tone,
 And bade it first to dream of crime,
 My frenzy to her bosom taught: 150
 We still were young – no purer thought
 Dwelt in a seraph's breast than *thine*;^{*}
 For passionate love is still divine:
 I loved her as an angel might,
 With ray of the all-living light
 Which blazes upon Edis' shrine.*
 It is not surely sin to name,
 With such as mine, that mystic flame –
 I had no being but in thee!
 The world with all its train of bright 160
 And happy beauty (for to me
 All was an undefined delight),
 The world – its joy, its share of pain
 Which I felt not; its bodied forms
 Of varied being, which contain
 The bodiless spirits of the storms;
 The sunshine and the calm; the ideal
 And fleeting vanities of dreams,
 Fearfully beautiful; the real
 Nothings of midday waking life, 170
 Of an enchanted life, which seems,
 Now as I look back, the strife
 Of some ill demon, with a power
 Which left me in an evil hour –

All that I felt or saw or thought...
 Crowding, confused became
 (With thine unearthly beauty fraught)
 Thou – and the nothing of a name.

IX

The passionate spirit which hath known
 And deeply felt the silent tone 180
 Of its own self-supremacy
 (I speak thus openly to thee:
 'Twere folly *now* to veil a thought
 With which this aching breast is fraught);
 The soul which feels its innate right;
 The mystic empire and high power
 Given by the energetic might
 Of genius at its natal hour,
 Which knows (believe me at this time,
 When falsehood were a tenfold crime, 190
 There *is* a power in the high spirit
 To *know* the fate it will inherit) –
 The soul, which knows such power, will still
 Find *Pride* the ruler of its will.

Yes! I was proud – and ye who know
 The magic of that meaning word,
 So oft perverted, will bestow
 Your scorn, perhaps, when ye have heard
 That the proud spirit had been broken,
 The proud heart burst in agony 200
 At one upbraiding word or token
 Of her, that heart's idolatry...
 I was ambitious... have ye known
 Its fiery passion?... Ye have not...
 A cottager, I mark'd a throne
 Of half the world as all my own,
 And murmur'd at such lowly lot!
 But it had pass'd me as a dream
 Which, of light step, flies with the dew,
 That kindling thought – did not the beam 210
 Of Beauty, which did guide it through

The livelong summer day, oppress
 My mind with double loveliness...

* * * * *

X

We walk'd together on the crown
 Of a high mountain, which look'd down
 Afar from its proud natural towers
 Of rock and forest, on the hills –
 The dwindled hills, whence amid bowers
 Her own fair hand had rear'd around
 Gush'd shoutingly a thousand rills, 220
 Which, as it were, in fairy bound
 Embraced two hamlets... those our own...
 Peacefully happy – yet alone...

* * * * *

I spoke to her of power and pride –
 But mystically, in such guise
 That she might deem it naught beside
 The moment's converse: in her eyes
 I read (perhaps too carelessly)
 A mingled feeling with my own;
 The flush on her bright cheek, to me, 230
 Seem'd to become a queenly throne
 Too well that I should let it be
 A light in the dark wild, alone.

XI

There, in that hour, a thought came o'er
 My mind it had not known before:
 To leave her while we both were young –
 To follow my high fate among
 The strife of nations, and redeem
 The idle words which, as a dream
 Now sounded to her heedless ear... 240
 I held no doubt... I knew no fear
 Of peril in my wild career:
 To gain an empire, and throw down
 As nuptial dowry... a queen's crown –

The only feeling which possessed,
 With her own image, my fond breast...
 Who, that had known the secret thought
 Of a young peasant's bosom then,
 Had deem'd him, in compassion, aught
 But one whom fantasy had led 250
 Astray from reason?... Among men
 Ambition is chain'd down – nor fed
 (As in the desert, where the grand,
 The wild, the beautiful, conspire
 With their own breath to fan its fire)
 With thoughts such feeling can command,
 Uncheck'd by sarcasm and scorn
 Of those who hardly will conceive
 That any should become “great” born
 In their own sphere* – will not believe 260
 That they shall stoop in life to one
 Whom daily they are wont to see
 Familiarly, whom Fortune's sun
 Hath ne'er shone dazzlingly upon
 Lowly... and of their own degree...

XII

I pictured to my fancy's eye
 Her silent, deep astonishment,
 When, a few fleeting years gone by
 (For short the time my high hope lent
 To its most desperate intent), 270
 She might recall in him, whom Fame
 Had gilded with a conqueror's name
 (With glory, such as might inspire
 Perforce a passing thought of one
 Whom she had deem'd in his own fire
 Wither'd and blasted – who had gone
 A traitor, violator of the truth
 So plighted in his early youth),
 Her own Alexis, who should plight*
 The love he plighted *then*... again, 280
 And raise his infancy's delight,
 The bride and queen of Tamerlane...

XIII

One noon of a bright summer's day,
 I pass'd from out the matted bower
 Where in a deep, still slumber lay
 My Ada. In that peaceful hour,
 A silent gaze was my farewell.
 I had no other solace: then
 To awake her and a falsehood tell
 Of a feign'd journey were again 290
 To trust the weakness of my heart
 To her soft, thrilling voice; to part
 Thus, haply, while in sleep she dream'd
 Of long delight, nor yet had deem'd
 Awake that I had held a thought
 Of parting, were with madness fraught.
 I knew not woman's heart, alas,
 Though loved and loving... let it pass...

XIV

I went from out the matted bower
 And hurried madly on my way, 300
 And felt, with every flying hour
 That bore me from my home, more gay.
 There is of earth an agony
 Which, ideal, still may be
 The worst ill of mortality.
 'Tis bliss, in its own reality –
 Too real to *his* breast who lives
 Not within himself but gives
 A portion of his willing soul
 To God, and to the great whole, 310
 To him whose loving spirit will dwell
 With Nature, in her wild paths, tell
 Of her wondrous ways, and telling bless
 Her overpowering loveliness!
 A more than agony to him
 Whose failing sight will grow dim
 With its own living gaze upon
 That loveliness around: the sun...
 The blue sky... the misty light

Of the pale cloud therein, whose hue 320
 Is grace to its heavenly bed of blue...
 Dim, though looking on all bright!
 O God! When the thoughts that may not pass
 Will burst upon him, and alas,
 For the flight on earth to fancy given,
 There are no words – unless of heaven.

XV

* * * * *
 Look round thee now on Samarcand,*
 Is she not queen of earth? Her pride
 Above all cities? In her hand
 Their destinies? With all beside 330
 Of glory which the world hath known?
 Stands she not proudly and alone?
 And who her sovereign? Timur, he*
 Whom the astonish'd earth hath seen,
 With victory on victory
 Redoubling age! And more, I ween,
 The Zinghis' yet re-echoing fame.*
 And now what has he? What! A name.
 The sound of revelry by night
 Comes o'er me, with the mingled voice 340
 Of many with a breast as light
 As if 'twere not the dying hour
 Of one in whom they did rejoice...
 As in a leader, haply... Power
 Its venom secretly imparts –
 Nothing have I with human hearts.

XVI

When Fortune mark'd me for her own,
 And my proud hopes had reach'd a throne
 (It boots me not, good friar, to tell
 A tale the world but knows too well, 350
 How by what hidden deeds of might
 I clamber'd to the tottering height),
 I still was young – and well I ween

My spirit what it e'er had been.
 My eyes were still on pomp and power,
 My wilder'd heart was far away
 In valleys of the wild Taglay,
 In mine own Ada's matted bower.
 I dwelt not long in Samarcand
 Ere, in a peasant's lowly guise, 360
 I sought my long-abandon'd land;
 By sunset did its mountains rise
 In dusky grandeur to my eyes –
 But as I wander'd on the way,
 My heart sunk with the sun's ray.
 To him who still would gaze upon
 The glory of the summer sun,
 There comes, when that sun will from him part,
 A sullen hopelessness of heart.
 That soul will hate the evening mist 370
 So often lovely, and will list
 To the sound of the coming darkness (known
 To those whose spirits hearken)* as one
 Who in a dream of night *would fly*,
 But cannot from a danger nigh.
 What though the moon, the silvery moon,
 Shine on his path, in her high noon?
Her smile is chilly, and *her* beam
 In that time of dreariness will seem
 As the portrait of one after death – 380
 A likeness taken when the breath
 Of young life and the fire o' the eye
Had lately been, but had pass'd by.
 'Tis thus when the lovely summer sun
 Of our boyhood his course hath run,
 For all we live to know is known,
 And all we seek to keep hath flown,
 With the noonday beauty, which is all.
 Let life, then, as the day flower fall* –
 The transient, passionate day flower, 390
 Withering at the evening hour.

XVII

I reach'd my home... my home no more...
For all was flown that made it so...
I pass'd from out its mossy door
In vacant idleness of woe.
There met me on its threshold stone
A mountain hunter I had known
In childhood, but he knew me not.
Something he spoke of the old cot:
It had seen better days, he said.
There rose a fountain once, and *there*
Full many a fair flower raised its head –
But she who rear'd them was long dead,
And in such follies had no part.
What was there left me *now*? Despair...
A kingdom for a broken heart.

400

FUGITIVE PIECES

To —

I saw thee on thy bridal day —
When a burning blush came o'er thee,
Though happiness around thee lay,
The world all love before thee.

And in thine eye the kindling light
Of young passion free*
Was all on earth my chained* sight
Of loveliness might* see.

That blush, I ween,* was maiden shame —
As such it well may pass —
Though its glow hath raised a fiercer flame
In the breast of him, alas,

10

Who saw thee on that bridal day,
When that deep blush *would* come o'er thee —
Though happiness around thee lay,
The world all love before thee...

Dreams

Oh, that my young life were a lasting dream,
My spirit not awakening till the beam
Of an eternity should bring the morrow!
Yes! Though that long dream were of hopeless sorrow,
'Twere better than the cold reality
Of waking life to him whose heart must be,
And hath been still, upon the lovely earth,
A chaos of deep passion from his birth.
But should it be, that dream eternally
Continuing, as dreams have been to me
In my young boyhood — should it thus be given,

10

'Twere folly still to hope for higher heaven.
 For I have revell'd when the sun was bright
 I' the summer sky in dreams of living light
 And loveliness – have left my very heart
 In climes of mine imagining, apart
 From mine own home, with beings that have been
 Of mine own thought... What more could I have seen?
 'Twas once, and only once – and the wild hour
 From my remembrance shall not pass – some power 20
 Or spell had bound me: 'twas the chilly wind
 Came o'er me in the night, and left behind
 Its image on my spirit – or the moon
 Shone on my slumbers in her lofty noon
 Too coldly, or the stars... howe'er it was,
 That dream was as that night wind... let it pass.

I *have been* happy, though in a dream.
 I have been happy – and I love the theme:
 Dreams! In their vivid colouring of life
 As in that fleeting, shadowy, misty strife 30
 Of semblance with reality which brings
 To the delirious eye more lovely things
 Of paradise and love – and all our own! –
 Than young hope in his sunniest hour hath known.

Visit of the Dead

* * * * *

Thy soul shall find itself alone –
 Alone of all on earth, unknown
 The cause, but none are near* to pry
 Into thine hour of secrecy.
 Be silent in that solitude,
 Which is not loneliness – for then
 The spirits of the dead, who stood
 In life before thee, are again
 In death around thee, and their will
 Shall then o'ershadow thee: be still, 10
 For the night,* though clear, shall frown,
 And the stars shall look not down

From their thrones in the dark heaven,*
 With light like hope to mortals given,
 But their red orbs, without beam,
 To thy withering heart* shall seem
 As a burning, and a fever
 Which would cling to thee for ever.
 But 'twill leave thee, as each star
 In the morning light afar
 Will fly thee... and vanish –
 But its *thought* thou canst not banish.
 The breath of God will be still –
 And the mist upon the hill,
 By that summer breeze unbroken,
 Shall charm thee, as a token,
 And a symbol which shall be
 Secrecy in thee.*

20

Evening Star

'Twas noontide of summer,
 And midtime of night,
 And stars, in their orbits,
 Shone pale, through the light
 Of the brighter, cold moon,
 Mid planets her slaves,
 Herself in the heavens,
 Her beam on the waves.
 I gazed awhile
 On her cold smile –
 Too cold... too cold for me...
 There pass'd, as a shroud,
 A fleecy cloud,
 And I turn'd away to thee,
 Proud evening star,
 In thy glory afar,
 And dearer thy beam shall be –
 For joy to my heart
 Is the proud part
 Thou bearest in heaven at night,

10

20

And more I admire
Thy distant fire
Than that colder, lowly light.

Imitation

A dark, unfathom'd tide
Of interminable pride –
A mystery and a dream,
Should my early life seem.
I say that dream was fraught
With a wild and waking thought
Of beings that have been,
Which my spirit hath not seen,
Had I let them pass me by
With a dreaming eye!
Let none of earth inherit
That vision on my spirit –
Those thoughts I would control
As a spell upon his soul –
For that bright hope at last
And that light time have passed,
And my worldly rest hath gone
With a sigh as it pass'd on:
I care not though it perish
With a thought I then did cherish.

10

20

‘In Youth Have I Known One with Whom the Earth’

How often we forget all time when lone
Admiring Nature's universal throne –
Her woods, her wilds, her mountains, the intense
Reply of HERS TO OUR intelligence!

I

In youth have I known one with whom the earth
In secret communing held, as he with it,
In daylight, and in beauty from his birth –
Whose fervid, flickering torch of life was lit

From the sun and stars, whence he had drawn forth
 A passionate light: such for his spirit was fit –
 And yet that spirit knew not, in the hour
 Of its own fervour, what had o'er it power.

II

Perhaps it may be that my mind is wrought
 To a fever by the moonbeam that hangs o'er, 10
 But I will half believe that wild light fraught
 With more of sovereignty than ancient lore
 Hath ever told – or is it of a thought
 The unembodied essence, and no more,
 That with a quickening spell doth o'er us pass
 As dew of the night-time o'er the summer grass?

III

Doth o'er us pass when, as th' expanding eye
 To the loved object, so the tear to the lid
 Will start, which lately slept in apathy?
 And yet it need not be (that object) hid 20
 From us in life, but common – which doth lie
 Each hour before us... but *then* only, bid
 With a strange sound, as of a harp-string broken,
 To awake us... 'Tis a symbol and a token

IV

Of what in other worlds shall be, and given
 In beauty by our God to those alone
 Who otherwise would fall from life and heaven
 Drawn by their heart's passion, and that tone,
 That high tone of the spirit which hath striven –
 Though not with faith: with godliness, whose throne 30
 With desperate energy 't hath beaten down,
 Wearing its own deep feeling as a crown.

‘A Wilder’d Being from My Birth’

A wilder’d being from my birth,
 My spirit spurn’d control,
 But now, abroad on the wide earth,
 Where wanderest thou, my soul?*

In visions of the dark night
 I have dream’d of joy departed –
 But a waking dream of life and light
 Hath left me broken-hearted.

And what is not a dream by day
 To him whose eyes are cast
 On things around him with a ray
 Turn’d back upon the past? 10

That holy dream... that holy dream,
 While all the world were chiding,
 Hath cheer’d me as a lovely beam
 A lonely spirit guiding...

What though that light through misty night
 So dimly shone afar?...*
 What could there be more purely bright
 In Truth’s day star? 20

‘The Happiest Day, the Happiest Hour’

The happiest day, the happiest hour
 My sear’d and blighted heart hath known:
 The highest hope of pride and power
 I feel hath flown.

Of power, said I? Yes! Such I ween,
 But they have vanish’d long, alas!
 The visions of my youth have been...
 But let them pass.

And, pride, what have I now with thee?
 Another brow may even inherit 10
 The venom thou hast pour’d on me –
 Be still, my spirit.

The happiest day, the happiest hour
 Mine eyes shall see – have ever seen –
 The brightest glance of pride and power,
 I feel, have been.

But were that hope of pride and power
 Now offer'd with the pain
 Even *then* I felt, that brightest hour
 I would not live again: 20

For on its wing was dark alloy,
 And, as it flutter'd, fell
 An essence – powerful to destroy
 A soul that knew it well.

The Lake

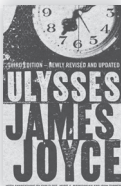
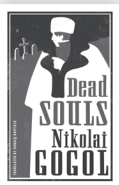
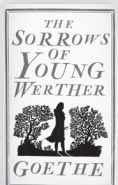
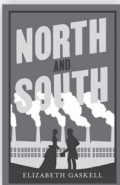
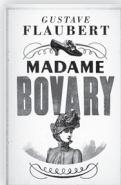
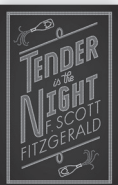
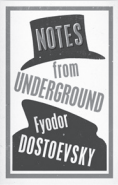
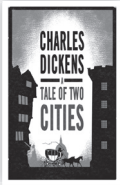
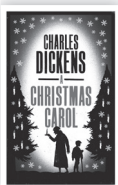
In youth's spring* it was my lot
 To haunt of the wide world* a spot
 The which I could not love the less,
 So lovely was the loneliness
 Of a wild lake, with black rock bound,
 And the tall pines that tower'd around.
 But when the night had thrown her pall
 Upon that spot, as upon all,
 And the wind would pass me by
 In its stilly melody, 10
 My infant spirit would awake
 To the terror of the lone lake.*
 Yet the terror was not fright,
 But a tremulous delight,
 And a feeling undefined,
 Springing from a darken'd mind.*
 Death was in that poison'd wave,
 And in its gulf a fitting grave
 For him who thence could solace bring
 To his dark* imagining – 20
 Whose wildering thought could even make*
 An Eden of that dim lake.

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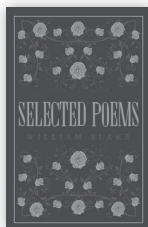
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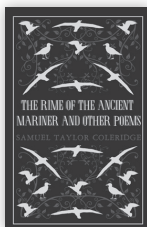
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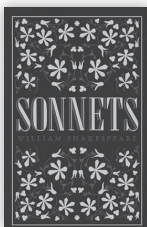
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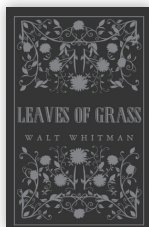
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