

## OLD AGE CHEERFUL.

Symposium by Famous Contributors  
Upon the Close of Mortal Being.

## VERSES FROM TWO AGED POETS.

Whitman Says the End Comes Soothingly  
and Refreshingly.

## MATERIALISTIC VIEWS OF KOLA.

[WRITTEN FOR THE DISPATCH.]

Two poets have lately put forth, almost simultaneously, verses containing a singularly similar thought. Whitman, in his 83d year, writes of himself as of a shore bearing "the solemn monotone of a water calling unto him. Alfred Tennyson, past 80, rhymes of an embarkation upon a flood that will bear him "from out our bourne of Time and Place." The stanzas are quoted in the article contributed by the other "good, gray poet," Walt Whitman, to the original symposium which we present herewith to our readers. Whitman's own words of praise and poetry are pregnant with pathos, but illumined by a cheerful view of death in old age. In contrast is the materialistic view of the subject taken by Emilia Zola, while from the pen of Ella Dietz Clynzer, President of Seneca, we get a Christian, mystical idea, and from Frank Frell a most peculiar and whimsical account of an old man who grew wistful until he relapsed into babyhood.

## THE POET'S CAPTION.

A Death-Bonquet Fresh Picked January 1890 by Walt Whitman.

Death—too great a subject to be treated so—indeed the greatest subject—and yet I am giving you but a few random lines, collected, about it—as one writes hurriedly the last part of a letter, catch the closing mail. Only I trust the lines, especially the poetic bits quoted, may leave lingering odor of spiritualism after years. For I am probably fond of viewing all the great themes indirectly, and by side ways and suggestions. Certainly, in my old age, my voices or skillful players—then poetic glints still more—put the soul in rapport with death, or toward it. Hear a strain from Tennyson's late "The Charge of the Light Brigade":

"Twilight and evening bell,  
And after that the dark;  
And may there be no sadness of farewell,  
When I embark;

For tho' from your bourne of Time and Place  
The flood may bear me far,  
I hope to see you again, and hear you,  
And may there be no sadness of farewell,  
When I embark;

Am I starting the sail-craft of poets in line? Here, then, a quartet of Phrynicus long ago to one of old Athens' favorites:

"Thrice happy Sophocles in old old age,  
Bliss'd as a man, and as a craftsman bliss'd,  
He died; his many tragedies were fair,  
And not his end, but his was any more."

A happy (to call it so) and easy death is at least as much a physiological result as a psychological one. The foundation of it really begins before birth, and thence is directly or indirectly shaped and affected, even constituted, by extrinsic and intrinsic minute till the time of its occurrence. And yet here is something (Whitman's "Burning Driftwood") of an opposite coloring:

"I know no more of death,  
Of waters calling unto me;  
I know from whence the air has blown,  
That summer breeze that  
I know my fire of driftwood burn  
I hear that sea's deep tones increase,  
And, fair in music, catch the closing  
My surge-listed lanes of Peace."

Like an invisible breeze after a long and sunny day, death sometimes sets in so smoothly and refreshingly, almost lightly.

In not a few cases the termination even appears to be a sort of ecstasy. Of course there are painful deaths, but I do not believe such are the general rule. Of the man I remember myself saw die in the field at hospitals during the Secession War the cases of marked suffering or agony in extremis were very rare. Of the man I remember myself saw die in the field at hospitals during the Secession War the cases of marked suffering or agony in extremis were very rare.

Other enough than that adventure of the sea.

Outrigger cruising, studying the charts, Dying again to port, and hawser's tie, returning, But now they cherish, secret wish, Embrace thy friends, and all are old, To port, and hawser's tie, secret wish, Depart upon thy endless cruise, old sailor!

WALT WHITMAN.

## BURNING OUT OF LIFE.

Zola Says Stress Upon Many Folks' Impatience for Death.

Seriously in old age is beautiful, but some of us find life too hard to bear until we reach that tranquility. All around me here in Paris is evidence of this distaste for life, this craving for the rest of the grave. An epidemic of suicide has sprung up like a plague coming no one knows whence. On some days the lists mount up to ten suicides, while the average number is two or three. Never has the contagion of death been so common as to claim so many victims. Some, in their misery or madness, throw themselves from the bridges. Others prefer the rope. Of poisoning there are few instances; only women still swallow laudanum or the phosphorus from a bundle of matches, although the latter is sometimes a successful means of suicide. Women, on some occasions open the arteries while in the bath, and death puts them gently to sleep under the tepid water. A girl of 16 years, whose last week in life was devoted to love, chose last week to die. As to charcoal, it remains the poison of the poor, and even ready care for the suicidal is not sufficient to avert an odor of burning issues from under the bed. In the faubourgs inhabited by the working people, the first cry is, "Suicide!" They break in the door, and find the victim dead. Some save some poor wretch struggling in the agonies of death. Suicide by the knife is more rare, or it requires too much courage to plunge a gleaming blade into the throat. A more suitable weapon is the pistol; it demands only a slight movement of the finger—a nervous contraction of the muscles will suffice. Moreover, in the revolver is used, if the first ball misses there are still four or five shots to make before the work is done. The public punishments are no longer used for this deadly purpose. Scarcely one or two instances, each year, can be cited of persons who have thrown themselves from the parapets from the towers of Notre Dame, or from the summit of the Colonne Vendôme, and only the closest precaution has saved the Eiffel Tower from suicidal levity. It is a fine death—this tremendous jump, this leap into space—thus to plunge into the vortex of eternity.

One woman, after eight days vainly spent in seeking for work, obtained on credit a bushel of charcoal, to which she set fire, and then lay down, clasping in her arms two little children. The next day the three corpses were found, stiff and livid, and locked in a close embrace. Two old people of 80 years, husband and wife, in an aged and decrepit house, were found dead; they were lying together, and they wished to go together, so they incurred horrible wounds upon themselves with a razor. That a man in full vigor, urged on by the tumult of the blood in his veins, should wish to check the beating of his heart, can be easily understood; but at the suicide of an old man we feel a sense of revolt—we ask the reason for so much impatience when the miseries of life are already drained to the

## THE HOLLANDSCHE DAM.

UR course lay up a smooth canal  
Through tracts of velvet green,  
And shade that widdens  
The water's edge.

Their knees and ankles  
To temper  
To a sun's spilt  
And every where  
Of comfort and delight  
My wife, dear philosopher  
Saw here where she was  
Vain fools are we across the sea  
The coast numberless state  
Go north or south or east or west  
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Vain fools are we across the sea  
The coast numberless state  
Go north or south or east or west  
Or where'er you please,  
You shall find what's here  
Equality and ease!

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