

“My heart gives you love,” a Walt Whitman poem for Memorial Day (1)

The Bethlehem Gadfly Memorial Day, Uncategorized May 25, 2019

(1st in a series of posts on Memorial Day)

DIRGE FOR TWO VETERANS

by Walt Whitman

THE last sunbeam

Lightly falls from the finish'd Sabbath,

On the pavement here, and there beyond it is looking,

Down a new-made double grave.

LO, the moon ascending,

Up from the east the silvery round moon,

Beautiful over the house-tops, ghastly, phantom moon,

Immense and silent moon.

I see a sad procession,

And I hear the sound of coming full-key'd bugles,

All the channels of the city streets they're flooding,

As with voices and with tears.

I hear the great drums pounding,

And the small drums steady whirring,

And every blow of the great convulsive drums,

Strikes me through and through.

For the son is brought with the father,

(In the foremost ranks of the fierce assault they fell,

Two veterans son and father dropt together,

And the double grave awaits them.)

Now nearer blow the bugles,

And the drums strike more convulsive,

And the daylight o'er the pavement quite has faded,

And the strong dead-march enwraps me.

In the eastern sky up-buoying,

The sorrowful vast phantom moves illumin'd,

('Tis some mother's large transparent face,

In heaven brighter growing.)

O strong dead-march you please me!

O moon immense with your silvery face you soothe me!

O my soldiers twain! O my veterans passing to burial!

What I have I also give you.

The moon gives you light,

And the bugles and the drums give you music,

And my heart, O my soldiers, my veterans,

My heart gives you love.

What poems, text excerpts, film clips should we be remembering this Memorial Day weekend? Send Gadfly your suggestions. Send Gadfly your recordings.